

More Than a Sum of Her Thoughts
By
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FADE IN ON:

INT. SUBURBAN DINING ROOM - TABLE - DAY

A camera CLICKS softly. A tripod SQUEAKS. Lamps wink on.

KATIE (30s) flinches in sudden, blinding light.

POV: CAMERA

Her delicate features fill the frame. Smooth dark hair. Brown doe eyes. Innocence personified.

Unnerved by the machine's gaze, Katie squirms in her chair. A male voice (BRYAN, 30s), chimes in:

BRYAN
Feeling nervous?

KATIE
Somewhat. Is it that obvious?

BRYAN
We're in no hurry. Let's break for now.

His ringed hand reaches for "off". Katie extends a palm.

KATIE
Stop.

BRYAN
That's just what I'm doing.

KATIE
I mean, please keep recording. You already stopped once for me.

BRYAN
Three times, actually.

She winces at the comment.

BRYAN
Then again, who's counting?

Katie pats the table, points to a chair.

KATIE
Let's get this over with. Um - I forget your name...

BRYAN
Bryan Campbell.

KATIE

Like Bruce?

BRYAN

For the chin, maybe. Not the fame.

Bryan focuses the lens. Walks over and sits down.

At first, he's just a silhouette with a mike. But within the lamp's glare, Bryan's features are easy to make out:

Light brown hair, hazel eyes. Except for his chiseled jaw, he's the "boy next door" defined.

Bryan pulls a doily and TEA SET into frame. He pours, offers a cup to Katie.

BRYAN

Your hands are shaking. This'll calm your nerves.

KATIE

What if I spill it on my dress?

BRYAN

But it's Peppermint. Your favorite!

KATIE

My favorite? How'd you know?

BRYAN

Good journalists do their research.

Katie cradles the cup; sips and smiles.

KATIE

Not half bad.

BRYAN

Half relaxing, I hope?

KATIE

You think of every detail, don't you?

BRYAN

Some days, when I drink coffee first. Caffeine helps me get things right.

Bryan clips a MINI-MIKE to Katie's collar. His fingers linger. He leans back.

KATIE

Mr. Campbell, where do we go from here?

BRYAN
Easy-peasy. You simply... start.

Katie blinks, waits for more direction. Bryan hides his impatience with a Starbuck's mug.

BRYAN
Remember, this video's for your eyes only. When we're done, no-one'll ever see it... but you.

KATIE
You want me to *talk* to myself?

BRYAN
Pretend you're chatting with a friend.

KATIE
About what?

BRYAN
Up to you. How you feel. Things you remember, and don't want to forget.

Katie spies her reflection in the camera lens. Smooths her hair. Intent on getting the look *just right*.

BRYAN
No particular order needed, ether. Just let the stories flow.

KATIE
Stories are *usually* best from the beginning.

BRYAN
If you're not Quentin Tarantino, yeah.

KATIE
I DO remember being a kid and growing up. I don't recall my parent's names. But whoever they were, they spoiled me lots. Toys and dolls *everywhere*. And I remember being a teenager after that. Now THERE'S some memories better forgot. Like 80's pleather jackets. Aqua net hair.

Katie laughs. Bryan instinctively joins in.

BRYAN
Tell me about it! Back then, I had a mullet, and listened to Duran Duran.

KATIE
Hopefully not for long.

BRYAN
No. Eventually, I grew up.

Katie's grin flickers - fades.

KATIE
So did I. But as an adult, things get vague. I remember getting my first job. I was so excited to be working at - some big company everybody knows. I just can't recall the name!

BRYAN
Is the name important to the story?

KATIE
No.

BRYAN
Then let's move on. What else is on your mind?

KATIE
I remember falling in love. Getting married - exactly a year after we met. But his face: that's a blur. I know we discussed having kids. I didn't want them, which led to fights. Especially after -

Katie's voice cracks. Bryan holds her hand.

BRYAN
After what?

A sudden memory energizes Katie's features. She bolts upright; yanks her hand away.

KATIE
The diagnosis! Every detail's crystal clear.

BRYAN
(beat)
Don't you want to focus on happier times?

KATIE
Don't distract me. This part's crucial: you gotta remember the good. And the bad!

Katie swivels towards the camera. She talks directly to it; urgent passion in her eyes.

KATIE

Katie, you were thirty when things changed. Finally figuring it all out: you were at the prime of life and career. Sure, it was stressful. But you always were a good soldier when it came to work - nothing on Earth could beat YOU down. Then the panic attacks started. At least, that's what you *thought* they were. That roller coaster feeling in your gut, and a weird flash of *deja vu*. Then BAM - memory black out. You blink and three hours are suddenly gone.

Katie's voice drops. She leans closer to the lens.

KATIE

You thought you were losing it. Cracking up. That's why you stayed silent - for three whole *years*. Until the headaches started. And they sent you for that MRI.

Her hand shakes; splashes tea on her clip-on mike. Bryan grabs Katie's cup, sets it down.

KATIE

Don't baby me!

BRYAN

Hey, just trying to protect that dress. Guess you're ready for that break?

KATIE

Let me finish my story. Please don't stop this now - for my sake.

BRYAN

As you wish.

He hands her his microphone.

BRYAN

So what did the MRI find?

KATIE

A "mass". Though not the cancer kind.

She laughs suddenly - like a child.

BRYAN

How's that funny?

KATIE

I just remembered when Dr. Ross explained to me what it was. At first, all I could think of was *Kindergarten Cop*.

(fake Austrian accent)

"It's not a Tumah." You saw that film, right?

BRYAN

While listening to Duran Duran? Of course! What was it, if not the big, bad "C"?

KATIE

I can't quite recall.

BRYAN

Does CCM or "Cavernous Malformation" ring a bell? How about "Angioma"?

KATIE

(brightens)

That last one: yes! Dr. Ross called it a "brain berry" to help me relax. A mess of capillaries on my temporal lobe - a place where no blood vessels should be. And they'd been bleeding... all over my grey cells. That's what those "panic attacks" were: seizures. I wasn't "cracking up" at all. Here I was, thinking seizures were what everyone sees in movies. Falling down and foaming at the mouth.

BRYAN

Like a "grand mal", you mean?

KATIE

Yeah! But temporal lobe seizures are different. Weird smells, sights and feelings. It's like you're *Alice in Wonderland* - falling down that rabbit hole.

BRYAN

I hear Louis Carroll had seizures, too.

KATIE

With drug trips like that? No doubt.

Katie glances up at a clock.

KATIE

How're we doing for time?

BRYAN

We have all of it in the world. Do you remember anything else?

KATIE

That's it. And then wheeling me into surgery. Brain surgery's scary, of course. I cried for days before the operation. But I figured: better to chop that ticking time bomb out. I remember... the needle they stuck in me was so cold. The nurse told me to count backwards from ten. The anesthesia was so strong, I never even got past three.

A shadow lingers on Katie's face.

KATIE

Great. I remember counting in the hospital. But not my parents - or my husband's - name?

Suddenly, her bottled anger explodes. Katie swipes at the china tea cups. Bryan shields them with one arm.

KATIE

I'm... I'm sorry. It's the seizure meds. They put me in a rage.

BRYAN

Don't blame yourself. The bleeds affected your memory. But they can't touch who you are.

KATIE

Bullshit. They destroyed my life!

BRYAN

I know it must *feel* bad. But you've gotta remember, it could be worse.

KATIE

"Remember"? That's the problem. I can't!

Katie grabs a camera REMOTE, hits a button. The lens zooms in on her anguished face.

KATIE

Listen up, "Future Katie" or whoever you call yourself next week. Here's the reason I asked this guy to film your video: because remembering things for me - and "us" - is a BITCH.

But no matter how hard it is, there are some things one shouldn't forget. They say everyone should live their lives like each day's their last. That's true for us more than most. Every day, it's like starting from scratch. Grasping at the shadows of people I used to know. They say a person builds themselves from life experience. And that means half of me is destroyed. Everything I learned in school. The times I sacrificed for who I'd someday be. Thanks to the damage that "brain berry" wreaked, I can't even focus. Everything I was burned down - totally gone!

Katie sobs. Bryan runs over, hugs her tight.

BRYAN

Shhhh. That's not *totally* true. You may not remember now: but earlier today, you gave me a tour of your garden. And recited some poetry from when you were a girl. Very fleeting and beautiful. Just the way you appeared - to me.

Katie groans in his arms.

KATIE

Charming, Mr. Campbell. No offense, but I'm calling bullshit on that line.

BRYAN

No, it's true! This may seem forward, Ms. At-This-Moment-Katie, but you are a terrific person. Brain berry and memory loss, or not!

Katie wipes her nose. Spots her reflection in the camera.

KATIE

Ew. Turn that off!

BRYAN

Are you sure?

KATIE

Positive.

BRYAN

If you insist.

CLICK. The camera - and the moment - fade to black.

INT. SUBURBAN BEDROOM - NIGHT

Now peaceful, Katie lies in bed. Bryan tucks in her comforter. Katie snuggles against it, warm.

Tea steams on the bedside table. Next to it, a PICTURE of Bryan and Katie: a young couple very much in love. Next to that: the CAMERA still records.

KATIE
(eyes closed)
You're still filming, aren't you?

BRYAN
How'd you know?

KATIE
I heard the whir.

BRYAN
Ouch. You got me. Promise me you weren't scared? Figured I'd get in extra footage. End this documentary on a happy note.

KATIE
Better film my *good* side, Mr. Campbell. Now - before you leave.

BRYAN
Which one? Both sides look good to me.

He waits for her reply; hears a SNORE. Bryan reaches into frame, strokes her hair with his gold-ringed hand.

BRYAN
I guess I bored you to sleep. It's been a long day, Mrs. Katie Campbell. Time to rest.

He leans over and kisses his wife's cheek.

BRYAN
Sweet dreams. Whatever you remember tomorrow, you'll always be unforgettable to me.

Bryan turns off the camera, picks it up. Walks out the bedroom softly. CLICK.

FINAL FADE OUT: