

The Surprise

An Original Screenplay
by
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8TH DRAFT: Rev 1 -- 9 FEBRUARY 2003

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FADE IN ON:

1 A PHOTOGRAPH-- 1 *

A man and a woman sit at a table, behind the remains of a birthday cake, smiling at the camera. *

The CAMERA PANS to reveal more photographs: the same happy couple at Thanksgivings, Christmases, and Easters; Weddings, Anniversaries, and Birthdays. A distant GAGGING sound becomes audible and increases in volume.

2 INT. BATHROOM -- CONTINUOUS 2 *

The PAN reveals KATIE, 30, the woman from the photographs, in the bathroom adjacent to the bedroom, kneeling half-dressed over the toilet and gagging.

Her dry-heaves subside, and she relaxes onto the toilet seat.

Katie is young and attractive, and her face, as she rests it on the edge of the toilet, emanates purity and innocence, and even on the day of her thirtieth birthday we can still see the young girl hovering just below the surface. *

A phone begins RINGING. *

3 INT. BEDROOM -- CONTINUOUS 3 *

Katie rises and crosses the bedroom to answer it.

KATIE

Hello?

MOTHER (O.S.)

Thirty years ago today, I woke up in labor pains. I shook your father awake and he said that all our dreams were finally coming true. We rushed to the hospital and he held my hand through eleven hours of labor, and when you were born, he brought you to me in his arms and said, 'darling, look what we made.'

KATIE

Hi Mama.

MOTHER (O.S.)

So, tell me: what's Jack done? *

KATIE

I haven't seen him yet. He's probably
up working already. *

MOTHER (O.S.)

Are you two still having problems? *

KATIE

Mom, I never said that. That's not
what I meant.

MOTHER (O.S.)

Frank, get the maple syrup, someone's
being a waffler.

KATIE

Mother. Stop it, you know I hate it
when you do this-- *

MOTHER (O.S.)

I'm serious, Katie, I've been worried
about you-- *

KATIE

It's fine. I'm already running late,
and who knows what Jack's got
downstairs-- *

MOTHER (O.S.)

Call me tonight. *

KATIE

Okay. Bye. And Mom? Thanks. *

Katie hangs up and heads back to the bathroom.

4 INT. KITCHEN -- SHORTLY THEREAFTER 4

Katie steps into the kitchen fully dressed. Her husband,
JACK, early 30s, the man from the pictures, stands at the
counter eating cereal and poring over a thick stack of paper.

Jack is winning in appearance; the boy-next-door all grown-
up into an up-and-coming lawyer; a mother-in-law's dream.

As Katie enters, he speaks a dizzying string of legalese
into small, shiny tape recorder.

JACK

*Blah blah blah blah blah All work
and no play makes Jack a dull boy,
blah blah blah.*

Katie stands next to him expectantly until he finishes.

Eventually, he pauses the recorder just long enough to kiss
her on the cheek.

Katie begins fixing her own breakfast.

JACK (CONT'D)
Blah, blah, blah, blah.

KATIE
 Anything special happening today?

JACK
 Same-old, same-old. Judge Paully was assigned last week, so we're going over everything one more time.

*
 *
 *

KATIE
 What's the date today?

JACK
 The sixth.

Jack rumages in a drawer.

JACK (CONT'D)
 I've lost my pen. Have you seen my pen?

Very casually, Katie goes and gets the newspaper.

KATIE
 Oh, wait, no, it's the seventh.

JACK
 (checking his watch)
 Look at that, so it is. Good God, look at the time. Got to run. Don't wait up tonight. Sure you haven't seen that pen? It was a gift.

KATIE
 I know, Jack.

JACK
 Right. Bye.

A kiss on her cheek, and Jack is gone.

Katie pours her bowl of soggy, gloppy cornflakes down the sink. Suddenly, another wave of nausea overtakes her.

5 INT. DOCTOR'S OFFICE -- MORNING

5

Katie waits in a small examination room. She stares into space.

The door opens and a DOCTOR, 50s, clinical in white, enters.

DOCTOR
 You're not sick; you're pregnant.

*

KATIE
You're kidding.

*

DOCTOR
No.

The Doctor holds out a phone.

DOCTOR (CONT'D)
Would you like to call your husband?

Katie shakes her head.

DOCTOR (CONT'D)
I take it this pregnancy was not
planned.

*

Katie shakes her head again.

KATIE
This isn't possible; I don't even
remember the last time we...
(beat)
We've both been so busy lately. Now
just isn't the best time--we said
after he makes partner, then we can
afford for me to take off work...

*

*

The Doctor rummages through his files and extends a small
white card.

DOCTOR
This is pretty simple. You can either
have this baby or not. That's it.
Here's the name of a clinic. I don't
do terminations myself, but these
people are very good.

Katie takes the card.

DOCTOR (CONT'D)
Take as long as you want. If you
decide to keep it, make an appointment
for early next week. You and your
husband.

The Doctor exits, Katie does not move.

6 EXT. PARKING LOT -- DAY

6

Katie climbs into her car and shakily dials her cell phone.

It rings and a perky female voice answers.

SECRETARY (O.S.)
John A. Miller's office?

KATIE

Hi Melissa, it's Katie, is he in?

MELISSA (O.S.)

Hi, Katie. I'm sorry, he's in a meeting.

KATIE

It's kind of important that I speak to him. Can't you get him out? Just for a few minutes?

*

MELISSA (O.S.)

Is there an emergency? Is there anything I can do?

KATIE

No, no, it's nothing like that, it's just that I've really got to speak with him. Could you please just go see if you can get him out of the meeting? Tell him it's really necessary that I talk to him.

*

*

MELISSA (O.S.)

Okay, I'll try...hold on.

Melissa clicks off; Katie waits.

CUT TO:

7 INT. ANOTHER CAR -- SAME TIME

7

A cell phone rings on the dash; through the windshield Jack is visible entering a Party Store.

*

CUT TO:

8 INT. KATIE'S CAR -- CONTINUOUS

8

Katie still sits and waits.

MELISSA (O.S.)

Hi, Katie, listen, he can't come right now. He's with a real important client, but he said to tell you that he'd call you back later, okay?

KATIE

Fine.

Katie snaps her phone shut.

Katie looks out the window for a moment before she punches the steering wheel, the horn HONKS.

9 INT. RESTAURANT -- DAY

9

Katie hugs SARA, early 30s, glitzy and fashionable, tautly assembled, in a cute little mexican restaurant. A bottle of Champagne chills beside the table.

KATIE

I'm so sorry, I got held up.

SARA

Forget it, it's your birthday. Do you still have time? *

KATIE

What? Oh, yeah, I told Erica I wouldn't be in till later this afternoon--I had a Doctor's appointment this morning. *

SARA

(As she wrestles with the cork)
Everything okay?

KATIE

Fine. Just a little flu.

The cork pops out of the bottle like a gunshot.

The cute waiter is suddenly at her side, taking the bottle out of her hands and filling their glasses. Sara smiles at him. He leaves.

SARA

Isn't he darling? Do they keep getting younger or do I keep getting older? Don't look at me like that. Besides, what is it they say? Single women over thirty have a better chance of falling down a manhole than getting married? I'm just trying to take advantage.

Sara raises her glass for a toast; Katie follows suit.

SARA (CONT'D)

Welcome to my decade. To the big three-oh. Happy Birthday.

They clink glasses and Sara drinks deeply. Katie bring her glass to her lips but stops. She pulls the glass away and stares into the golden liquid.

SARA (CONT'D)

It's a damn shame. I'm totally wasted on you. *

(MORE)

SARA (CONT'D)

I need a disciple; someone corruptible. When are you going to have some kids? Don't say a word, I'll be the perfect auntie Sara. They're gonna need me. Change of subject. So I'll bet Jack really outdid himself this time; what'd he do?

*

KATIE

Nothing. Sara, he forgot.

Katie gulps down her entire glass of Champagne.

SARA

You're kidding.

KATIE

No. He did. I don't know why I'm surprised, ever since Walter dangled the partnership... I don't mind him working. You remember, when he was finishing law school, we barely saw each other, but what time we did have was more precious because of how little it was. Now, whenever we do get a minute together, he isn't really there. He looks right through me. He loves his work.

*

*

*

SARA

Come on, you two've had rough times before.

KATIE

Never like this. It's never gone on so long. It's been months. It feels like forever.

*

SARA

God, Katie, why didn't you tell me?

*

KATIE

I don't know. Sara, he doesn't love me anymore.

*

*

SARA

No, no, Katie--listen to me, Jack loves you, I know he does.

*

*

*

KATIE

My Jack would never forget my birthday. It's all just so fucking pathetic. My husband doesn't pay enough attention to me.

*

(MORE)

KATIE (CONT'D)

It isn't all working out like I planned. I don't have the perfect life that everyone wants, the one I thought I had, the one no one gets. Why do I even care? It's all so stupid.

*

SARA

Katie, listen to me, Jack loves you, in fact--

Katie jumps out of her seat and bolts to the back of the restaurant.

CUT TO:

10 INT. RESTAURANT BATHROOM -- SECONDS LATER 10

Katie kneels over a toilet and sticks her finger down her throat. She gags and throws up the Champagne.

CUT TO:

11 INT. RESTAURANT -- MOMENTS LATER 11

Katie walks quickly out of the restaurant.

SARA

Katie! Katie!

Sara rises and grabs her things, pausing just to throw some money on the table, but she is too slow and Katie is gone.

12 EXT. CENTRAL PARK -- DAY 12

Katie has been wandering the city. She finds herself in central park. She sits on a bench.

*

*

Katie takes her purse out of her wallet and removes a small stack of cards and paper. The little white card is on top. She takes it off the top to find a small photo beneath it.

*

*

*

Jack and Katie smile as Katie holds up a hand with an engagement ring on it.

*

*

13 EXT. ROOF -- SUNSET 13 *

A younger Jack stands on top of the roof of an old Brooklyn apartment building. He offers a younger Katie a hand as she climbs up after him.

*

*

*

YOUNG KATIE

*

This is scary.

*

JACK

*

Look up.

*

YOUNG KATIE

Now, why have you dragged me up here
in the freezing cold?

JACK

Look.

Katie turns to see the sun setting behind Manhattan in the distance. Katie shivers. Jack puts his coat around her shoulders and embraces her from behind. They gaze at the sunset.

YOUNG KATIE

It's beautiful.

Pause.

JACK

You know how you said that we are too young to think about marriage? And how right after college there's too many changes in life to make that kind of commitment? And how every marriage that starts in those circumstances is doomed to failure?

Jack holds a ring out in front of her.

JACK (CONT'D)

Well, I want to do it anyway. Happy Birthday.

Young Katie stares at the ring in shock. She turns and throws her arms around Jack.

YOUNG KATIE

I love you.

JACK

I love you too. Is that a yes?

Young Katie laughs and the memory fades away.

14 EXT. CENTRAL PARK -- DAY

14 *

The older Katie stares at the picture. Eventually she puts it all away and rises to go.

15 EXT. HOUSE -- DAY

15

Jack pulls his car up in front of his house to find Sara knocking on his door. He walks around to his trunk as Sara comes over to him.

JACK

Hey, what're you doing here so soon?
Didn't you have lunch with Katie?

SARA

She was really upset, Jack, and she
ran out on me--

JACK

She what?

SARA

She ran out of the restaurant--

JACK

You didn't follow her?

SARA

I tried, Jack, but by the time I
paid the check...

JACK

It's okay. I'm sorry, I just--it's
already been a long day. And it
isn't over yet, either.

Jack hands Sara a shopping bag from the trunk.

SARA

She said you forgot her birthday.

JACK

Oh.

SARA

What "oh," Jack? You were supposed
to say you two would go out to dinner
or something.

JACK

I know, I just thought this would
make it a better surprise.

SARA

God, Jack, how could you be so--so
thoughtless.

JACK

Oh come on, it's just a birthday--

SARA

Just a birthday, Jack? She thinks
that you don't love her anymore.

JACK

How can she say that? I've put my
whole life on hold for this.

SARA

She doesn't know that, Jack. She
thinks you've forgotten, Jack.

JACK
No, I know. But--

SARA
And I don't think it's just "this,"
Jack. I think it's a lot of things.

CUT TO:

16 INT. JACK'S OFFICE -- DAY

16 *

Katie enters Jack's outer office as MELISSA, his Secretary,
comes out of his inner office.

KATIE
Melissa, tell Jack I'm here.

MELISSA
Katie, hi, what can I do for you?

KATIE
I need to talk to my husband.

MELISSA
I'm sorry, he's very busy, he can't
talk right now.

KATIE
He's going to have to talk to me.

MELISSA
Katie, he's extremely busy.

KATIE
I don't care. I'm going in there
and he is going to deal with me. If
he's too busy to be my husband, then
he can take two seconds out of his
precious schedule to tell me so
himself.

Katie recovers first from her outburst and steps around
Melissa to enter the inner office.

17 INT. JACK'S INNER OFFICE -- DAY

17

The office is neat, and empty. Jack is nowhere to be found.

KATIE
Jack, we're pregnant.

She exits.

18 INT. ABORTION CLINIC -- LATER 18

Katie enters the sterile waiting room. A couple women wait, read magazines; there is no happiness in this room.

CUT TO:

19 INT. HOUSE -- LATE AFTERNOON 19 *

Bags bursting with decorations litter the floor of the living room as Sara and Jack decorate it.

CUT TO:

20 INT. ABORTION CLINIC -- CONTINUOUS 20

Katie approaches the nurses' stand and speaks to a pleasantly professional NURSE behind the desk.

KATIE

Hello, I--I don't have an appointment.
I need to see the Doctor, I--

Katie's emotions finally begin to unravel.

The nurse comes around and gently steers her to a seat.

NURSE

It's all right dear. Don't you worry.
We'll take care of everything. I
know it's hard. You leave it all to
us. Everything's going to be just
fine. You just sit here and I'll
see what I can do.

Katie nods as the Nurse bustles off.

CUT TO:

21 INT. HOUSE -- LATER 21

The living Room is fully decorated and Jack is greeting the first guests.

CUT TO:

22 INT. ABORTION CLINIC -- LATER 22

Katie is alone in the waiting room. She has been waiting for some time. Her tears are dried; her face is colorless. She stares off into space, into her future, into her past.

NURSE

The Doctor will see you now.

Katie looks at the Nurse but does not move.

*

As Katie stares motionlessly at her, the nurse's voice sounds far away.

*
*

NURSE (CONT'D)

Miss?

*
*

CUT TO:

23 INT. HOUSE -- SAME TIME 23

The living room is crowded with guests and Jack stares out the window into the darkening driveway.

CUT TO:

24 EXT. ABORTION CLINIC -- EVENING 24

Katie walks quickly out of the abortion clinic.

25 EXT. HOUSE -- NIGHT, LATER 25

Katie pulls up to a dark house. She gets out of the car and walks to the front door.

26 INT. HOUSE -- CONTINUOUS 26

Katie steps into the entryway of her dark house and relaxes against the door as it closes behind her.

Suddenly, the room is filled with light and thirty people shout:

*

GUESTS

Surprise!

Katie watches in shock as Jack approaches her.

JACK

Happy Birthday, sweetheart. I love you so much.

*

*

Jack pulls Katie into an embrace; she holds him tight.

*

KATIE

I have something to tell you.

*

*

FADE OUT.