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Love is a Rebel Bird

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LOVE IS A REBEL BIRD

John Achomuma

FADE IN:

EXT. CHURCH - NIGHT

LEE, a 14-year-old boy narrates:

LEE (V.O.)

I've never been outside. I once asked my dad what the town is like. He said it's mundane. He said the outside world is a dark place with bad people, and up the hill is a church that no one ever goes to.

We see an old dusty church, followed by a close up on the rusty church bells.

EXT. HOUSE - NIGHT

A house on a slope.

LEE (V.O.)

My dad only leaves the house to throw the trash away.

Looking down the slope, there is a dumpster on the roadside.

INT. HOUSE - PARLOR - NIGHT

Lee's dad (appears to be in his forties, wears pants, a dress shirt and a green scarf) is holding a broom and dustpan. He is yelling at Lee, but his dialogue is inaudible. Behind him is a broken clock that reads 5:55 am.

LEE (V.O.)

(regarding clock)

Ever since my mom died, the clock stopped ticking. Dad says she went to throw the trash away and was killed

by a drunk driver. Dad always says he won't move forward. He says he needs to find peace. He hasn't found peace yet... maybe that's why the clock stopped ticking. But what do I know I can't even read time.

Focused on the clock, Lee's father grabs his son's arm with force.

LEE (V.O.)

Dad likes to wear mom's scarf. Its smell reminds me of her too...lavender.

Shaking Lee's arm:

DAD

Lee, are you listening?!

(tilts son's head to a broken urn on the floor)

LEE (V.O.)

(regarding urn and it's ashes, freaking out)

That's my mom! I'm screwed.

DAD

Lee!

(inhales, exhales)

Go to my room. Get a belt.

LEE

(about to cry)

But dad-

DAD

(points at him with broom)

No punishment, no dinner. And no tears for men!

Lee holds tears in. Heads to dad's room.

EVER SINCE
MY MOM DIED,
THE CLOCK
STOPPED TICKING.
DAD SAYS SHE
WENT TO THROW
THE TRASH AWAY
AND WAS KILLED
BY A DRUNK
DRIVER.

DAD ALWAYS SAYS
HE WON'T MOVE
FORWARD.
HE SAYS HE NEEDS
TO FIND PEACE.



INT. HOUSE -

DAD'S ROOM/CORRIDOR - NIGHT

Lee scans the room. On a coat hanger, he sees a pair of black pants. Taking them off, he looks at the belt on them in fear. He slowly starts taking the belt off when he hears a squeaking sound. Scanning around, his eyes fix upon dad's bed. Unmade, there is a framed picture of his mother on the pillow opposite dad's side of the bed. Putting the belt on top of the bed, he grabs the picture. Putting it back on the night stand:

LEE (V.O.)

Where's my picture?

(looks around, finds his 4-year-old framed picture under the bed, dusty, sarcastically)

I love you too dad.

As Lee crawls under the bed to get the framed picture of himself, he hears another squeaking sound. Suddenly, a rat runs toward him. Startled, he crawls backwards hitting the back of his head.

LEE

(scratching back of head)

OUCH!!!

(stands up)

Wiping the dust off his 4-year-old picture, eerie music starts playing. Staring intensely at frame, it suddenly cracks. Startled, he drops frame breaking it. Lee starts panicking. As he tries to reassemble it, a soothing MALE VOICE whispers:

MALE VOICE

It's okay Lee! Your dad won't find out.

LEE (V.O.)

(looking around, curious)

I've heard this voice before.

MALE VOICE

Looking for me? Cabinet.

Lee enters dad's cabinet. Getting a clearer look inside, Lee **only** finds his mom's clothes. They are clean and ironed.

LEE (V.O.)

(smells)

Lavender.

A vinyl **SCRATCHES**. The song "Habanera: Love is a Rebellious Bird" from opera play Carmen starts playing faintly. Lee partially recognizes the song.

MALE VOICE

(chuckle)

Ears perked? A closer listen always helps memory. Need a clue? It's from the attic.

LEE

(nervous)

What song is this?!

MALE VOICE

Check the attic!

Walking reluctantly to the attic, Lee sees his dad cutting carrots on the counter top. Through the window, Lee notices rain falling.

LEE

(worried)

Dad?

Lee's dad can't hear him. Walking to the stove, he is also unable to see Lee even though he waves his arms in front of him.

MALE VOICE

Don't worry about him. He was always oblivious to begin with.

LEE (V.O.)

(resumes walk to attic, volume of song increases)

I remember this song. I remember going to pee when I saw someone sneak in.

**ON A COAT
HANGER, HE SEES
A PAIR OF BLACK
PANTS. TAKING
THEM OFF, HE
LOOKS AT THE
BELT ON THEM
IN FEAR.**

**HE SLOWLY
STARTS TAKING
THE BELT OFF
WHEN HE HEARS
A SQUEAKING
SOUND.
SCANNING
AROUND, HIS
EYES FIX UPON
DAD'S BED.**

At this moment, we see a visual of a 4-year-old Lee witness a dark figure with blue eyes dash to his dad's bedroom.

LEE (V.O.)

(walking)

I remember laughter in the bedroom.

I remember this voice.

Thunder **CRACKLES**. Lee is standing below door to the attic. Looking up, the door to the attic opens and ladder unfolds on its own.

Lights flicker. The song pauses...

THUNDER **CRACKLES**.

CUT TO:

INT. HOUSE - ENTRANCE - NIGHT

Thunder **CRACKLES** again. Rain keeps falling. The door bell rings. Lee's dad opens the door to a 30-year-old, male **STRANGER** in a trench coat.

STRANGER

Good evening sir!

Are you Mr. Fukunaga?

DAD

(holding a tomato and a knife, he starts closing the door)

Sorry, but I'm not interested in buying any-

STRANGER

(holds door, pathetically)

One day... I was coming back from a party with friends. I drank a little too much but still took to the wheel.

(MORE)

None of us could drive frankly... not to put the blame on others... it was my fault.

(after a beat)

I'm the man who ran over your wife. I was young and stupid. This was 10 years ago... I was released from prison today.



TRISHA
Gilbert Hu

(takes a deep breath)

I'm here to make amends.

Lee's dad is speechless. Tilting his right arm, light reflects on the knife. The Carmen song crescendos.

CUT TO:

INT. ATTIC - NIGHT

MALE VOICE

Do you remember the toys

I bought you?

Entering the attic, Lee follows a trail of expensive toys. A train set, action figures, robots and at the end of the trail - the dark figure with blue eyes in a suit, bleeding on the floor. Frightened, Lee runs back to the attic door. It slams shut. Looking behind, the figure approaches him. Paralysed, the figure swallows Lee.

GONG! GONG! GONG!

Church bells ring 6:00 am.

**DAD HAS KILLED
DARK FIGURE
WITH KNIFE.**

**THE LADDER
LEADING TO THE
ATTIC IS OPEN.**

LEE'S MOM PANICS.

**STANDING OUTSIDE
THE RESTROOM,
4 YEAR OLD LEE
HAS WITNESSED
MURDER.**

INT. HOUSE - DAD'S ROOM - NIGHT

Church bells wake Lee up from under his dad's bed. After scratching the bump on the back of his head, he looks for the belt he put on the bed. He doesn't find it.

INT. HOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT

The house phone is disconnected from the dialer. Recent phone call reads 911.

Lee's dad has been hanging himself with his belt. The belt snaps. Hearing Lee walk in, his dad takes the belt off his neck and hastily throws it away. Lee stares at the dead body of stranger with fear filled eyes. A bloody knife is next to corpse. Lee then pans right to his father who is recuperating. Finally, Lee looks at the clock. The hands on the clock are struggling to move but still stay on 5:55 am.

STRANGER (CONT'D)**DAD**

(panting, wearing scarf)

Lee! Please come here.

LEE

(approaching dad, looking at murder scene)

Dad... what... what happened?

Dad lifts stool up and takes a seat. A sad piano tune plays.

INT. HOUSE - DAY

Flashback: It is 5:00 am. The dark figure is kissing Lee's mother. Then, they run into Lee's dad's room.

CUT TO:

Lee's dad arrives home. He walks in on Lee's mother in bed with dark figure. "Love is a Rebellious Bird" is playing on a vinyl record player. After smashing the vinyl, he gets in a fight with dark figure. Lee's mom tries to break up the fight.

CUT TO:

Dad has killed dark figure with knife. The ladder leading to the attic is open. Lee's mom panics. Standing outside the restroom,

4-year-old Lee has witnessed murder. Dad forcefully drags Lee back to his room. Dad begins to drag dark figure's body to the attic.

CUT TO:**EXT. HOUSE - DAY**

It is 5:55 am. Lee's mom tries to leave house. Dad holds her. She slaps him. He pushes her off slope. Recovering from fall, she gets hit by drunk driver.

CUT TO:**INT. HOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT**

Present: Dad is crying heavily. Lee's mom's makeup is running down Dad's eyes. Lee hugs him. Dad hugs him back. Looking at the clock, Lee still reads 5:55 am.

EXT. HOUSE - NIGHT

Sirens blaring. Cops surround the house.

LEE (V.O.)

I asked my dad if he needed help finding peace. He didn't say anything. For the first time since mom died, he laughed.

Sad piano tune fades.

FADE TO BLACK.**EXPOSED****EXPOSED 2****EXPOSED 4**

Michael Nguyen

