

FADE IN:

INT. CARI'S GARAGE - NIGHT - 2AM

CARI LAWSON (39) tosses a small DUFFEL BAG into her SUV. She gets in, starts the engine and presses the automatic GARAGE DOOR OPENER on the VISOR. As the door raises, it reveals a car parked in the driveway, an old SAUB, blocking her from backing out.

She stares at it in the rearview mirror and catches her own reflection--drawn and disheveled, like looking into the abyss.

She looks away, turns the car off and gets out.

INT. CARI'S HOME - KITCHEN - NIGHT (CONT'D)

Cari enters from the door leading to the garage. She places her set of keys on the kitchen counter and glances up at the KEY HOLDER that reads "HOME". There are two key rings hanging. One with multiple keys, and one SOLO KEY on a "CELTICS" chain.

Pained, she slowly lifts the Celtics key off its hook.

The dimly lit kitchen reveals multiple bouquets of flowers. She turns and finds herself staring into an arrangement of MUMS.

Nestled into the large bouquet is a tiny card.

With a spike of disgust, Cari snatches the card from the arrangement and reads it.

She crumples it in her fist and walks out.

INT. CAR - DRIVEWAY - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

Sitting in the driver's seat of the old Saub, Cari stares ahead.

She clicks the automatic garage door switch on the visor and watches the garage door lower to the ground.

Hollowed out, she starts the engine and backs out of the drive.

INT. CAR - RESIDENTIAL STREETS - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

Cari drives through her neighborhood, lit only by street lamps. Through both the rearview and side view mirror, we catch glimpses of her glazed expression.

She hones in on a STOP SIGN up ahead. Her stare fixates as she approaches the sign, her heart races, and instead of slowing down she puts her foot on the gas and speeds through.

INT. CARI'S HOME, KITCHEN - DAY

FLASHBACK

Music plays. Cari thoughtfully packs various food items into a SMALL COOLER BAG. Her husband TOM, sits at the island and watches football on a FLAT SCREEN on the wall.

JEREMY LAWSON (18) walks in hauling a duffel bag and a grin. He winks at his dad, drops the bag and rushes behind Cari and lifts her up.

CARI
(startled)
Hey!

Jeremy and Tom share a laugh. Jeremy plunks Cari back down and grabs the cooler bag.

JEREMY
It's like I'm five again. Packed lunch, first day of school.

CARI
You'll appreciate it on that bus ride in.

Cari crosses to a drawer in the island and takes out an ENVELOPE.

Jeremy grabs a piece of CHEESE off the counter and slips it to HANK, their chunky chocolate LAB, tail wagging.

TOM
Still think we should drive you.

JEREMY
I've got my earbuds and hours of podcasts. You'd just wanna talk the whole way.

TOM
Podcasts are talk.

Cari slides the envelope to Jeremy. He smiles quizzically as he opens it. His eyes light up as he removes a TICKET.

JEREMY
Peru?

CARI
(smiles)
Years of human civilization waiting
to be excavated.

TOM
For our future archeologist.

JEREMY
--Who's destiny is digging up the
past.

CARI
You can start with Peru right after
graduation.

Jeremy gives them a suspicious eye.

JEREMY
You just want to turn my room into
a Peloton studio, don't you?

CARI
We don't Peloton.

TOM
We don't Peloton.

CARI
Your room will always be your room.

TOM
Unless we start a meth lab.

CARI
Solid investment.

Cari and Tom make a playful face. Jeremy waves the ticket.

JEREMY
This is amazing.

He reaches out, open arms to Cari. They hug tight, his chin
nestled on her shoulder.

JEREMY (CONT'D)

Thanks Mom.

The love between them is strong. Tom smiles.

TOM

And dad.

Cari wipes a tear and Jeremy releases her with a warm smile. She gives him a goofy face and as always, he returns it, then turns into Tom's extended arms.

END FLASBACK

INT. CAR - RESIDENTIAL STREETS - NIGHT - CONT'D

Cari speeds along the quiet street--her eyes fixed ahead. She approaches a stop sign and accelerates.

Foot on the gas, her car sails through the intersection.

FLASHBACK

CARI'S HOUSE - FRONT HALL - DAY

TOM

We'll bring the rest of your stuff next week once you're settled.

JEREMY

Take care of the Beast.

They all look out the front door to the old Toyota on the driveway.

CARI

I'm actually glad you don't need that at school.

JEREMY

"Her", mom. "She" is a beast.

Cari smirks and nods.

TOM

OK, call when you--

JEREMY

Get there? Dad. I'm going to school, not Mars. I'll see you next week.

He pulls them both into a group hug and with a playful pat of his little cooler bag, he turns and heads down the driveway.

CARI

I love you!

JEREMY

I know!!

They watch him turn the corner out of sight.

Beat.

JEREMY (O.S.) (CONT'D)

(calls out)

Love you, too!

Cari and Tom share a big grin. Tom pats her on the shoulder.

TOM

Did good.

She gives a little nod through watery eyes. Tom heads back inside as Cari returns her gaze up the road.

END FLASHBACK

INT. CAR - STREETS - NIGHT - CONT'D

Cari races, eyes straight ahead. Houses blur in her periphery.

Approaching another intersection, AN OLD MAN with a SMALL DOG steps off the sidewalk to cross the street. Cari slams on the brakes and the car skids, stopping inches from the man.

Cari's heart races. The man's frightened expression shifts to anger and he shakes his fist at her to show it as he hurries across the road with his dog.

The car sits in the middle of the intersection.

FLASHBACK

INT. CARI'S HOUSE - DINING ROOM - EVENING

LAUGHTER as Cari, Tom, and their friends RENA and ASHOK enjoy a wine-infused dinner. They're comfortable, clearly used to each other.

ASHOK

We're considering downsizing just to force them to get places of their own!

TOM

(animated)

When I turned eighteen I couldn't move out fast enough. Out of my way, I'm an adult now.

Nods of agreement and chuckles. Cari is lost in thought. Rena notices.

RENA

Welcome to empty-nesting.

CARI

I hate that expression.

RENA

Well, at least you're one and done. When you have three, they leave in waves.

ASHOK

(thoughtfully)

Yes, and then they come back--

RENA

With more people!

Burst of laughter.

RENA (CONT'D)

(sighs)

When I think back to life before kids...

CARI

It's another lifetime.

TOM

Cari was in final year at UofT studying PoliSci when we found out.

Cari smirks at Tom with a playful eyebrow raise.

CARI
 Removing all speculation about
 where we disappeared to during
 study hall.

RENA
 Wait, you? Politics??

Cari shrugs, nonchalantly.

TOM
 She had a knack for changing
 people's minds.

Tom winks at Cari.

TOM (CONT'D)
 Back when we first started dating I
 was impressed by her
 diplomacy...and also a little
 afraid of it.

RENA
 You could read people.

TOM
 And then apply it persuasively.

ASHOK
 The qualifications of a great
 politician.

Cari shrugs.

CARI
 I chose to be a mom.

RENA
 Similar skillset.

They all laugh.

The phone RINGS. Cari and Tom look quizzical.

CARI
 Home phone?

TOM
 Didn't know we still had one of
 those.

Laughter.

Cari gets up and pretends to search around. Checking behind a CABINET, under the table...

CARI
Gotta be around here somewhere.

More laughter.

Cari walks to the dining room doorway and reaches around the corner, and eureka! She picks up the receiver, holding it like a microphone, she gives it a tap.

CARI (CONT'D)
Is this thing on?

Laughter at her playfulness. She puts the phone to her ear.

CARI (CONT'D)
Hello...(pause)Yes...no--

Cari loses her breath. Her eyes dart to Tom. Her face flashes with terror and pain. The phone slips from her hand. Her knees buckle.

Tom rushes over and grabs her. She lets out a guttural moan as she crumbles in his arms to the ground.

END FLASHBACK

INT. CAR - NIGHT

Her breath shallow and heavy, Cari tries to collect herself. Beside her, a few CD's have slid into the centre console.

Honing in on one labeled, 'ELECTRO BEATS', she picks it up and shakily slips it into the CD player.

Dark electro beats blare out. She rests her head on the steering wheel, closing her eyes to allow the blast of music to fill her mind.

After a moment, Cari leans back. She turns her head to find Jeremy in the passenger seat looking at her with a kind, but critical stare.

The music fades. The streetlight illuminates them both.

JEREMY
Not sure what we're going for here.

CARI
(tapping the steering
wheel)
She's got some guts.

JEREMY
(smiling)
She's the Beast.

Cari huffs and nods with a feint smile.

JEREMY (CONT'D)
Remember that toothbrush you guys
gave me for Christmas when I was
seven?

CARI
The blue one with the dolphin
handle.

JEREMY
Christmas morning, you guys handed
it to me and said that was my only
present.

CARI
Silly joke. Dad wanted you to
appreciate just one gift because
there were piles of them under the
tree.

JEREMY
(sarcasm)
Yeah, and a toothbrush to boot,
cause kids love to brush their
teeth.

CARI
He was just playing.

JEREMY
(fondly remembering)
I was pissed.

CARI
You were disappointed.

JEREMY
I was pissed. But what's crazy is I
actually thought of that every time
I brushed my teeth.

CARI

And you did spend the next hour
opening loads of presents.

JEREMY

Yeah, but it worked, y'know. I
really appreciated that brush. I
don't remember any other gifts from
that year. It really could have
been the only one.

Cari smiles gently at Jeremy. He looks out the windshield.

JEREMY (CONT'D)

Where to now?

Cari slowly looks away from him and out at the quiet street.
She knows what's next.

Turning back--Jeremy's gone.

CARI

The only one.

A heaviness overtakes her. She shifts the car into drive and
slowly heads down the road.

EXT. HOTEL - NIGHT

Cari pulls into a hotel roundabout, the car vibrating with
electro beats. She turns off the engine and silence fills the
air.

She lifts her overnight bag from the passenger seat and under
it is a Boston University BACKPACK. Her brow furrows.

INT. HOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

Cari sits on the bed staring at Jeremy's backpack. She
glances down at the BOTTLE OF PILLS in her hand, then angles
back on the backpack.

She places the pills down and gently pulls the backpack
toward her. She unzips it and peeks inside.

Reaching in, she pulls out a coffee thermos. She curiously
unscrews the top. It's empty but she savors the scent.