

PARCHMENT

False Conviction

By

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Film 312
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FADE IN:

1 INT. KATE'S HOME OFFICE — DAY

KATE, age thirty, average, brunette wakes up to an empty bed, with no sign of anyone having slept beside her. WE SEE QUICK SNAPSHOTS of KATE getting ready for the day, making coffee and finally sitting at her desk. KATE takes a sip of coffee and begins her morning journaling.

WE HEAR rustling coming from another room. KATE is startled.

KATE

Tom? Is that you?

Silence.

KATE slowly creeps out of her office, and turns the corner to see HELEN, KATE's mother, age 65, silver hair in a tight bun and wearing a white fur coat, sifting through miscellaneous papers and mail on the kitchen island.

KATE

(Relieved) Ugh — Mom, you scared me. What are you doing here? How did you even get in?

HELEN

(Aloof) Oh, I still have that key you gave me that one Christmas eve.

KATE

That was like three years ago... How often do you let yourself in like this?

HELEN

I usually come to check things out every Tuesday morning around this time. It's odd, you're usually never here.

KATE

(Grabbing the mail out of HELEN's hand) Check things out? For what, mom? God, don't you have something better to do, instead of snooping around my house?

HELEN

I just wanted to make sure that you're doing alright, is all.

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KATE

(impatient) You can't make up for those 20 years of my life that you couldn't care less, if I was safe at home or lying in a ditch somewhere. What is it that you need? Are you looking for money again?

HELEN

Oh god no! I don't need your money. I've got my alimony to thank for that. Speaking of, when are you going to finally divorce that horrible husband of yours?

KATE

I have all of the papers ready to go. I - I just need to sign them.

HELEN

Well what the hell is stopping you Kate? He hasn't slept here in months, you know that he's cheating on you, and don't think that I haven't seen those bruises that you try to hide. (Pause) Pack up your things and leave. What are you waiting for?

KATE

Mom, it's not that simple. We've been married for 8 years. Tom, well he has his demons, but -

HELEN

Kate, stop making excuses for him.

Kate looks defeated.

KATE

Fine, I'll sign them today.

HELEN

(giving her a kiss on her forehead) Good. I'm going to go now sweetie, call me if you need me.

HELEN leaves.

KATE walks back to her office and sits at her desk. She glances at the divorce papers on her right, goes to reach for them, but retreats. Kate picks up her pen and continues to journal.

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WE HEAR VOICEOVER of KATE reading a journal entry aloud:

For the past 2 years, Tom and I have seen over five different marriage counsellors. Two of which I'm sure just banked on our toxicity to make a bang for their buck. The last one that we met however, gave us – well me – some great advice: (WE HEAR DR RANDALL'S VOICE) "one of the greatest illusions in life is denial." She was right, I've been in denial, thinking and hoping that things would get better – that he would come home one night and not throw me around after having a few drinks. Surely enough Tom hated her advice and has "forbidden" us to ever go back. Little does he know; Dr. Randall and I have met up every Tuesday morning for the past six months. She knows everything. She helped me get a lawyer and gain the confidence to finally file for divorce. The only catch is, if he sees this divorce coming, I'll never get out of this alive.

During KATE's VOICEOVER, WE SEE a MONTAGE of KATE AND TOM visiting counsellors over a two-year period.

2 INT. COUNSELLOR ONE'S OFFICE— DAY

KATE and TOM, on either ends of a stiff, grey couch.

COUNSELLOR ONE enters, sits on a black leather sofa and introduces himself, breaking the tense silence.

CUT TO KATE and TOM screaming over COUNSELLOR ONE.

KATE

(Shouting) Of course you would say that! I am always the villain in this relationship!

TOM

(Shouting) Oh come on, you know that I'm right!

3 INT. COUNSELLOR TWO'S OFFICE – DAY

KATE and TOM each sitting on single chairs, on opposite ends of the room.

COUNSELLOR TWO

And Kate, how does that make you feel?

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KATE

I guess, I feel that Tom isn't putting as much effort into this relationship, as I am.

TOM

Oh Bullshit!

WE HEAR fading noise of KATE and TOM arguing.

4 INT. DR RANDALL'S OFFICE - DAY

Six months ago.

TOM and KATE are sitting on opposite sides of a long white couch.

DR RANDALL, age 45, blonde, wearing all black from her kitten heels to her Chanel reading glasses, takes notes while listening to KATE, not glancing up once.

DR RANDALL

(In sync with KATE's Voiceover) You know, one of the greatest illusions in life is denial.

DR RANDALL looks up at KATE.

5 INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT (Present Day)

KATE pours herself a big glass of red wine, and sips it, wallowing in the moment.

KATE chops vegetables up, preparing for dinner. WE HEAR soft classical music playing in the background. TOM enters, barely acknowledging KATE and heads straight upstairs. VOICEOVER ends.

TOM, loosening his tie and holding the divorce papers.

TOM

What the hell is this?

KATE

Where did you get those?

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TOM

What - you weren't going to tell me that you want a divorce?

KATE

I was going to tell you, I -

TOM

(Cutting her off) Oh yeah? When?

TOM inches closer and closer to KATE. KATE sighs, shakes her head and continues chopping.

TOM goes behind KATE and puts his arms around her waist, kissing her neck. KATE, repulsed, pulls away.

TOM

Kate, baby, come on. We can get through anything together. What will it take? We can see another counsellor... I'll stop drinking, I - I'll help out around the house more.

KATE

(Sneering) Tom, it's not something that counselling will fix! There's a lot more wrong than just your drinking habits. And help out around the house? Yeah right, you are never home to begin with.

TOM, still standing behind KATE, angrily grabs the knife out of KATE's hand. KATE, taken aback stares at TOM incredulously.

KATE

(Shaken) Jesus Tom, what are you doing? Put that down.

TOM

(confused) Relax! I was just showing you that I can do more around the house. See.

TOM begins to chop the vegetables in front of him. KATE unconvinced continues to back away.

TOM

Kate, come on. Are you really that scared of me?

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KATE
I know what you're capable of.

TOM drops the knife on the counter and walks towards KATE.
KATE tries to back away, but TOM grabs her wrist.

TOM
Oh yeah, what am I capable of Kate, huh?

KATE
Tom, let go.

KATE pushing TOM off and crying, storms up the stairs. TOM follows behind. Both continue to scream at each other.

6 INT. KITCHEN – NIGHT

Establishing shot of the empty kitchen. Beneath the now intense Classical music, WE HEAR KATE and TOM indistinctively yelling in another room.

Classical music gets louder, drowning out their voices.

TOM
I'm not letting you do this.

KATE
You're not gonna stop me!

TOM
Where are you going to go – huh?

KATE
...Oh what? Are you going to hit me again? Go on, show me just how much you're capable of, you pathetic –

WE HEAR a loud "thud" and KATE gasps.

TOM, irately storms into the kitchen, rubbing his hand and cracks his knuckles. He grabs his keys off of the counter and slams the front door shut behind him.

The Classical music stops as the door slams shut. WE HEAR his car unlocking, the engine starting and TOM driving away.

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WE HEAR mutters of KATE crying in the background.

7 INT. HOME OFFICE - NIGHT

KATE is crying alone at her desk. She carefully feels her bruised eyebrow. She hesitantly looks at her fingers and sees blood.

To her right sits the pile of shredded divorce papers. Still crying, KATE grabs her phone. She calls her mother and sits anxiously as it rings. No answer. KATE, frustrated and hysterical, grabs a pen and her journal. She begins to write frantically.

8 EXT. CAR - DAY (The next morning)

TOM walks out of his empty office building and into an underground parking lot. He gets into his car, reaches into the glove compartment, grabs his phone and turns it on.

TOM sees 20 missed calls from HELEN. He tries to call back, but there is no answer. TOM then tries to call KATE, but she does not answer either. Tom wails and punches his steering wheel. He begins to drive home with an overwhelming sense of frustration.

9 EXT. TOM and KATE'S HOUSE - DAY

HELEN is standing beside the front door crying hysterically. Police cars and an ambulance are parked in the driveway.

TOM, barely putting his car in park, races to the front door.

HELEN
Tom! What did you do?

TOM
(Confused) What happened? Where's Kate?

HELEN
You did this to her didn't you? You, sick bastard!

TOM
Helen, what are you talking -

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PARAMEDICS wheel a gurney out from the house, with KATE's body zipped up in a black body bag.

TOM
(In shock) Kate? No, no, no. Kate?

POLICE OFFICER exits house with a clear plastic bag with a bloody knife. WE HEAR intense music, as we watch TOM and HELEN react to KATE's death.

Without hearing what they are saying, we watch as police officers tell TOM to head to the police station for questioning.

10 INT. POLICE STATION - DAY

A few hours later.

TOM sits in an interrogation room with a cup of water in front of him, his head in his hands.

DETECTIVE, tall man with dark features and an intensity to him, enters. WE SEE SNAPSHOTS of TOM yelling in frustration.

TOM
I'm telling you! I left around 9pm and I went straight to my office, where I spent the night.

DETECTIVE
Tom, just admit it. Her blood is all over your shirt, we found your fingerprints on the weapon, and you have no witnesses to back up your alibi -

TOM
(Defensive, cutting him off)
Are you seriously accusing me of killing my wife?

There is a tense charge in the air. TOM pauses to think.

TOM
I - I think I need a lawyer.

11 INT. HELEN's LIVING ROOM - NIGHT (Three Days Later)
HELEN is sitting on her couch sobbing with the news playing on her TV, in the background.
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She attempts to pull herself together and pours herself a big glass of red wine.

She reaches into her purse, pulls out KATE'S journal and begins to flick through it. WE SEE snippets of KATE'S writing in the journal, exposing the emotional and physical trauma that TOM has put KATE through as well as HELEN'S negligence as a mother.

Journal Entry 1:
April 18th, 2018

... It's Christmas Eve and I feel suffocated... I'm pretty sure Tom is cheating on me with that blonde assistant of his... My mother is driving me nuts... Ever since I let her back into my life, she has done nothing but take my money and remind me of why I cut her off in the first place... I feel so alone now, more than ever.

HELEN lands on the last page that KATE wrote in. WE SEE an entry from the night KATE died. WE SEE a CLOSE UP of the last sentence.

Journal Entry 3: (Night of Kate's death)
January 3rd, 2020

...If I don't kill myself now, he will.

WE HEAR the NEWS ANCHOR in the background.

NEWS ANCHOR

Tom Henderson, local businessman at TWC INC. has been convicted of his wife Kate Henderson's murder...

HELEN quickly mutes the television and shuts the journal. She walks towards the fireplace, gently caressing each page. Helen then rips each page out and throws it all in the fire.

HELEN, on her knees, watches as the fire consumes the only evidence of TOM'S false conviction. She sips her wine and stares pensively into the flames, grappling with what she has just done.

12 INT. PRISON VISITING ROOM – DAY. (2 years later)

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HELEN, well-dressed in a black leather coat and black gloves, sits on one end of the visiting booth.

TOM enters, messy grown out hair, in an orange jumpsuit. TOM sits and picks up the phone.

HELEN
Hello Tom, I would say it is a pleasure to see you, but that would be a lie.

TOM
Oh - trust me, you're the last person I want to see right now, but I couldn't resist hearing what it is that you could possibly have to say to me.

HELEN looks around and lowers her voice.

HELEN
I know that you didn't do it.

TOM
(Confused) What are you saying?

HELEN
I read Kate's journal. That night, she wrote her final words: "if I don't kill myself now, he will."

TOM taken aback, sighs with a sense of relief and looks up at HELEN who is smirking.

HELEN
Don't get too excited. You're still the reason why she's gone. That's why I got rid of it - The only evidence that could get you out of this place.

TOM
You bitch.

Helen
(laughing) Kate once told me, one of the greatest illusions in life is denial, don't forget that. Goodbye Tom.

HELEN, smug, puts her sunglasses on and leaves. WE HEAR indistinct yelling from TOM, as he is carried away by guards.

FADE OUT.