

Heartstrings

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FADE IN:

INT. KATHERINE'S BEDROOM

From the quiet, rises a voice. It is feminine and speaks with a British accent. It sounds calm, as if caught reminiscing.

KATHERINE

My mum was a storyteller. When we were little, she told my sister and I a story I never quite forgot. "This is the story," she said, "of how your Daddy died."

(pause)

I never presumed to know what most parents in that situation do. I hoped that some told their children a version of the truth, accurate if somewhat abridged. My mum decided to weave a tale to help me deal with my loss.

(pause)

"Nothing breaks like a heart," she cautioned us, holding my sister's head to her chest with one hand, "it falls apart string by string, until nothing remains to keep circulating blood throughout the body. That's how you know that someone's broken a heartstring," she paused and I remembered her making Arianne laugh by tickling her nostrils with a feather, "they start bleeding through their nose."

(pause)

Sometimes, I would catch myself wishing that my death could be that dramatic. A result of some sort of vendetta or murder plot that landed my heart

broken. Of course, I recognized that the story was simply our mum's way of telling her two little girls that their daddy was a cocaine addict who snorted his way to the grave, nothing more.

(pause)

It never stopped bothering me, though, that concept. My mum told me that heartstrings can -

Just then, the sound of glass shattering is heard. It interrupts yet somehow underlines the end of Katherine's line. We hear the sound of a door opening. It creaks slightly.

KATHERINE

(Screams)

Arianne!

Steps, akin to the tune of high-heeled shoes, lead us to a different room of the house.

KATHERINE

What is happening here?

ARIANNE

It's nothing, Kitty. You can get back to your room, I promise.

KATHERINE

It's Katherine, sister, and this doesn't sound like nothing. Why does Don have a broken bottle of beer in his hands?

ARIANNE

It doesn't matter, really. Just leave us to it.

Don chuckles wryly, unamused.

DON

Of course, it doesn't matter to *you*,
Bug. You've made that clear.

ARIANNE

Donnie, please, let me finish...

DON

Fucking Roger behind my back? I don't
think so. You are my girlfriend!

ROGER

Don, brother, come on! Don't get hot.

DON

Don't get hot? That's *my* Bug, you have
an arm around, *brother*. I'll get as
fucking mad as I want about this. What
kind of best friend are you anyways?

ROGER

The best one you ever had, that's what.

DON

Yeah?

ROGER

Oh yeah. And a better man that you are
too.

DON

Yeah?

ROGER

Oh yeah.

DON

Prove it.

We hear Katherine's heels again, stepping furiously. We assume
she approaches the boys.

KATHERINE

Nobody is proving anything, boys.
Regardless of what happened between
you, you've got to walk it off.

(addressing Don)

You in particular, Don. Go outside and
don't come back until you've cooled
off.

We hear the sound of sneakers leaving followed by a door
closing. We can assume that door leads to the backyard.

KATHERINE

Well, that's settled.

(pause)

Arianne, a word? In my bedroom.

We hear the sound of someone standing up, as well as ruffling
clothing. Then the high-heels and a pair of flip-flops make
their way through another doorway. The door we'd heard open
before, the one with the slight creak, closes.

KATHERINE

Care to explain?

ARIANNE

Reggie and I were trying to talk to
Donnie, that's all.

KATHERINE

About how you've been cuckolding him?

ARIANNE

(exasperated breath)

I haven't been
"cuck-whatever-you-said-ing" him. I've
just been seeing Roger at the same time
for a while, that's all.

KATHERINE

(stumbles)

That's - whatever. You've been cheating on your boyfriend of two years -

ARIANNE

Four years!

KATHERINE

Like I said, four years, with his best friend. That's ridiculously cruel on both your parts. He doesn't deserve that. Nobody does.

Arianne chuckles ironically.

ARIANNE

No offense, Kitty, but how do you know? Reggie and I had it all under control.

KATHERINE

I'll have you know that I, Katherine, happen to know a lot of things. Remember! I'm your older sister by *four* years...

ARIANNE

Four years that you haven't been around because of Hogwarts.

KATHERINE

Oxford, you mean?

ARIANNE

Same thing! It's far! You're separate from all this, okay, and you don't know anything about what's going on in my life so let me handle it. I don't need you to pull one of your older sister schemes.

Arianne opens the door, so we hear it creak, but not close. Her flip flops carry her back to the other room.

KATHERINE

Arianne's words had awakened some innate yet dormant impulse within me to look after her. It was a decision I didn't even have to make, I just followed her trajectory back to the living room with my eyes.

(pause)

After a quick exchange with her best friend, Carl, she made her way to the door Don had disappeared through. She seemed so resolute.

We hear the backyard door close once more, followed by the creaking door.

KATHERINE

I knew what I had to do.

FADE TO:

INT. LIVING ROOM

Katherine's high-heels can be heard approaching, then the sound of someone sitting on a couch.

KATHERINE

Roger, right?

ROGER

Yeah. And you're Ari's older sister who lives in England, right?

KATHERINE

Precisely, I'm Katherine.

ROGER

I gathered as much, Kate, don't worry.
You did correct Ari about that earlier.

KATHERINE

Again, it's Katherine. I really much
rather be called by my name. That's why
it's there and why it's so beautiful. I
wouldn't like for any syllable to be
cut out when there's no reason for it.

ROGER

(sigh)

Sure. *Katherine*, then.

KATHERINE

Thank you. Now, tell me, why did you
and my baby sister think it was a good
idea to cuckold her boyfriend of many
years?

ROGER

I don't know what that is, but we
didn't do it. I swear. All we did was
cheat on the guy and even that wasn't
with any bad intentions. We didn't
think he'd care.

Katherine laughs with an air of incredulity.

KATHERINE

You didn't think he'd mind? In what
world does one not care when they're
being played for a fool?

Carl clears his throat.

KATHERINE

Yes, Carl, what?

CARL

Well, it's a well-known fact that Dickless the Clown fucked half the school the past four years.

KATHERINE

Are you serious?

CARL

Yeah. He's made a show of it. It's not even like he's been keeping it on the down-low. Everyone knows about it at school.

ROGER

Everyone but Ari, of course. He's never told her.

CARL

She has to put up with the whispers at school and with his temper.

ROGER

Don't forget about the way he literally flirts with anyone with a skirt. It's disgusting.

We hear the high heels take a couple of steps.

KATHERINE

The only solution at this point is for them to end things, then.

ROGER

Well, yeah, I would say so.

KATHERINE

I better ensure that happens.

The heels continue on their way until we hear the backyard door open and close.

FADE TO:

EXT. THE BACKYARD

There is a slight breeze and the feeling of space. Katherine's heels sound muffled on the grass. As she approaches the back of the yard, we can hear the voices again.

DON

Does he feel about it the same way you do?

ARIANNE

I wouldn't lie to you about that. You know it's true.

KATHERINE

You, sir, should be ashamed of yourself for accusing my sister of absolutely anything!

ARIANNE

Kitty, what are you-?

KATHERINE

No, Arianne, I simply must voice my discontent. He has no right to complain to you about your level of fidelity or any such matter. The sheer amount of leniency you've demonstrated up to this point already defies explanation.

ARIANNE

I don't know why you decided to come out here -

DON

(to Arianne)

Did you decide to run to your older sister and tell her about what I did, then, Bug? Is that what's going on?

ARIANNE

I didn't tell her anything. She doesn't know what she's saying, Donnie, please. We were getting somewhere just a minute ago...

DON

I thought so too, but it seems like every damn second there's something new for you to bitch at me about! You've always been such a goddamned bitch!

ARIANNE

Donnie!

We hear breathing accelerate, then Katherine sighs in discomfort.

KATHERINE

That was the first time it happened, right then and there in my backyard while a gentle breeze was blowing. I was looking at the grass, I believe, when I noticed the drop of blood.

(pause)

When I said "the first time it happened", I meant in my whole lifetime. It would be the first of exactly four times. I wasn't prepared for the shock. It had never happened to me before.

ARIANNE

Kitty, you're bleeding.

KATHERINE

It would seem. Can you run inside real quick for some toilet paper so I can wipe my nose?

ARIANNE

(hesitant)

You sure? Because, I mean, you could head inside...

KATHERINE

(sternly)

Please, Arianne.

We hear Arianne's bare feet pad across the grass, as well as the backyard door opening and closing.

KATHERINE

You should go, Don.

DON

I don't think you agree with what she did, Kat.

KATHERINE

It's Katherine, actually, and that's for her and me to discuss, don't you think? All that's left for you to do is leave this yard and never come back.

DON

To this yard?

KATHERINE

To this yard. To this house. To her life. Or so help me...

(pause)

I *will* find you and our second conversation will not be as pleasant. Now, come on.

We hear their labored steps through the grass, and then the sound of sneakers and heels on pavement. We then hear the backyard door open and the bare feet on pavement return.

ARIANNE

Here's the toilet paper.

KATHERINE

Thank you. Can you cut a piece for me please, sister?

We hear the toilet paper tear.

ARIANNE

Here.

KATHERINE

That's too much. I just need like three squares. Come on, it's just a small nose bleed.

ARIANNE

Okay, it'll cut a smaller one.

KATHERINE

No, forget it. It'll use this one.

We hear toilet paper tear again.

KATHERINE

Take the rest to the bathroom in case someone can use it.

ARIANNE

Okay. I'll leave this here for you though.

KATHERINE

Sure. Get inside.

Silence settles for a spell as the heels and the sneakers move again. We hear the backyard fence open. It rubs against the pavement and isn't easy to move.

KATHERINE

Arianne. Get inside.

The backyard door closes and the steps proceed. Finally, the sound of a motorcycle revving is heard. It drives away.

KATHERINE

I stopped to consider my actions up to that point then. I felt like my mission had been completed and my sister was safe again. Hardly sparing a second to the singular drop of blood on my squares of toilet paper, I resolutely threw it away. When I turned around though, ready to head back through the backyard into my house, I noticed something peak from behind my car.

(pause)

I shouldn't have investigated.

The heels move then step onto grass again.

KATHERINE

What are you doing outside, Carl?

Carl coughs, startled. He releases a breath.

CARL

Nothing much. Just smoking.

(pause)

Would you like one, Kathy?

Katherine chuckles, moderately amused.

KATHERINE

Carl, you've known me long enough that you should know better.

CARL

That's right, you only indulge on the occasional fag now, right? That's what they call cigarettes on the other side of the pond.

KATHERINE

Yeah, but that isn't tobacco you're smoking.

(pause)

And I meant my name.

Carl chuckles mischievously.

CARL

Come on! I don't get special treatment?

KATHERINE

Arianne doesn't, why should you?

CARL

(smokes)

You know she doesn't like to be called that, don't you? She has everyone call her Aria now.

KATHERINE

"Aria"? Like an operatic solo?

CARL

I guess, if you say so. You've always used the strangest words.

Katherine chuckles.

KATHERINE

Well, I can't fathom why she'd want that. Arianne is a wonderful name. It means: "very holy".

CARL

If I had a dime for every time you've
ever mentioned that...

KATHERINE

Do you know what "Katherine" means,
too, Carl? I'm sure I've told you.

CARL

(sarcastic)

Oh, don't tell me. Is it "wise"?

KATHERINE

It means "pure". Now tell me I haven't
lived up to that?

CARL

It's not like it matters.

KATHERINE

Of course it does. Your name is like a
promise. A grand design of fate. You
absolutely must live up to it.

We hear a car drive by and stop abruptly. One of its doors
opens, and a pair of sneakers approach. Katherine is suddenly
quiet.

CARL

I was beginning to think you weren't
going to show up.

KITHARA

I told you I was on my way, Tweeds.

KATHERINE

Gesundheit.

KITHARA

Thank you?

(pause)

Anyways, when have I ever left you standing by the side of the road?

CARL

Are we counting this time?

KITHARA

Well, it was you who changed the meeting place. Nice house.

KATHERINE

(addressing Kithara)

Thank you. What are you doing here, if I may ask?

KITHARA

(addressing Carl)

Is she serious? She's a new buyer or something?

KATHERINE

Buyer?

CARL

It's her house but that's all, Kithara. Don't even pay her any attention.

Katherine scoffs as we hear the sound of bills shuffling, and a small plastic bag exchanging hands. Carl steps on the stub of his cigarette.

KATHERINE

(addressing Carl)

You're a dealer now.

CARL

Good observation, Katherine.

KITHARA

Thanks, Tweeds.

KATHERINE
Gesundheit.

KITHARA
Thanks?

CARL
I'll see you at the same time next
week?

KATHERINE
(addressing Carl)
Does Arianne know you're doing this
right now? Outside of our house?

KITHARA
Arianne?

CARL
No, she doesn't. She has no idea I do
this now.

KITHARA
Are you talking about Ladybug Moreno?

KATHERINE
"Ladybug"? People call her that instead
of her name, too?

CARL
(addressing Kithara)
Yeah, Kithara, her. This is her older
sister, Hermione.

KATHERINE
It's Katherine, thank you very much.

CARL
You never use your real name when
you're doing these things, Katherine.
It's part of the rules.

KITHARA

(addressing Carl)

It is? I wanted some reliable dope for cheap, not to join a secret cult.

KATHERINE

Your name is honest-to-God Kithara? I'd never heard that before.

CARL

(addressing Kithara)

Leave that alone. We go to school together. Did you honestly think my name was "Tweeds"?

KATHERINE

Gesundheit.

KITHARA

I didn't question it. Unlike some people, I don't judge people based on their name.

Carl makes a sound of surprise, realizing Kithara's meaning towards Katherine.

KATHERINE

(addressing Kithara)

Okay. I think I'll let that one pass if you tell me why you call my sister "Ladybug".

CARL

We've been calling her that for years, literally since second grade. Do you remember that day when she overreacted because a ladybug fell on her nose?

KATHERINE

No. Are you sure that happened?

CARL

(scoffs)

Yeah. I was there. I came up with the nickname myself. She was such a little bitch back then...

KITHARA

Back then? Huh. Have you not seen her boyfriend?

CARL

I don't think they'll be together much longer.

KATHERINE

They won't be together at all. I made sure of it.

CARL

You did what?

KITHARA

Yeah. How did you manage to get rid of Roger? He's convinced he's in love with her. It must have taken a miracle to wrestle them apart.

KATHERINE

Roger? Nono, I meant Don. I'm afraid he was unbelievably terrible.

KITHARA

Oh, you have no idea. Nothing Don's ever done compares to the hell Roger is capable of. You can take it from me.

CARL

(coughs)

Well, thank you Kithara, but you know the rules. You've got to clear out as soon as the transaction is complete.

KATHERINE

Oh sod off, Carl. Let her speak.

Carl sighs exasperatedly.

KATHERINE

It was then that it happened again. This time it felt like rain, compared to the gentle breeze of before. A pair of medium sized drops landed on my right palm. A new discomfort. At least I felt something.

CARL

Uhm, Katherine, your nose.

KATHERINE

Do you mind fetching the toilet paper roll? It should be by the backyard door.

CARL

Sure.

KATHERINE

I think I also left the backyard fence open, if you don't mind. On your way back, close it!

We hear his steps through the grass.

KATHERINE

What did Roger do?

KITHARA

He was lovely, daring, and sensitive. Everything was going fine until I got pregnant. I thought he'd be overjoyed, but he wasn't. From one minute to the other, he told me to get an abortion or else. He said he'd tell my family about what a slut I was.

(pause)

It broke my heart to do it. I went to that clinic alone. I dealt with the aftermath alone. He never looked at me again. Next thing I knew, he had already moved on.

(pause)

You should try to keep Ladybug from what happened to me. I assure you women are like trophies to him. Once he unlocks the achievement, he moves on.

KATHERINE

Oh, Kithara, I'm so sorry.

The fence closes and Carl's steps tell us he's back.

KITHARA

No, I am.

CARL

Here's the toilet paper.

(pause)

What did I miss?

KATHERINE

Can you cut me a piece? Just a couple squares will do.

CARL

How much is "a couple"? Are we talking two or six?

KATHERINE

Just cut enough for the amount you see
on my nose, okay?

We hear toilet paper rip.

CARL

Is this enough?

KATHERINE

That's fine.

A car drives by and honks the horn.

KITHARA

That's my cue. I'll get going then.

CARL

I'll see you next week, Kithara.

(pause)

You know, you should consider getting
an alias for the next time we meet?

KITHARA

I'll think about it.

A door opens and closes. The car drives away.

CARL

Are you feeling better?

KATHERINE

Not in the least. If anything, I'm
worse.

CARL

Listen, nose bleeds are nothing to
stress over. I've gotten a billion of
those from snorting cocaine. It goes
away after a little.

Katherine laughs mirthlessly.

KATHERINE

Come inside, you. No more dealing
outside my bloody house. And don't
forget the toilet paper.

We hear the front door open and close.

FADE TO:

INT. LIVING ROOM

KATHERINE

Things were falling apart. I *felt* them.
All the pieces, disjunct and shuffling
within me.

(pause)

Arianne!

We hear the high heels and the sneakers move into the living
room.

KATHERINE

A word, again? In the Kitchen.

The heels continue moving, along with the bare feet. We hear a
plastic bag shuffle, and a glass hit a countertop. Liquid is
poured into it.

ARIANNE

Yes, Kitty?

KATHERINE

Don't you "Kitty" me! You're surrounded
by abusive assholes. It's unfathomable.
Despicable!

ARIANNE

You're overreacting, sister. They're really not that awful when you get to know them.

KATHERINE

I am serious, Arianne. You must eliminate them from your life henceforth.

(pause)

If you won't do it, then I will.

Arianne scoffs, incredulous.

ARIANNE

You think you can walk into my life one day and organize it based on who you think should be a part of it when you don't even know the first thing about me?

KATHERINE

(scoffs)

"Don't know anything about you"? I'll have you know that maybe two hours ago I didn't, but at this point I have spent a considerable amount of time learning about you.

(pause)

For some reason I ultimately failed to understand, I didn't shut up and listen to her. I kept talking. I should have listened, but I didn't.

(pause)

See, I spoke to every single person with a level of honesty you can't even conceive of. In a way that, I'd venture to say, you never even have. I know more about your life, the true

circumstances of it anyways, than you do.

(pause)

Of course I can do you a favor and organize it.

Arianne exclaims in exasperation.

ARIANNE

Are you even listening to yourself? I know you haven't listened to a word I said all day, but what about you?

(pause)

You think that in one afternoon you know all there is to know about this? You may know it, but I assure you that you don't understand it at all. You never will.

KATHERINE

Did you know that Don was cheating on you?

A pause settles between them. Then a breath.

ARIANNE

Since we started dating, yes.

KATHERINE

What about Carl? Apparently, he's this big-shot drug dealer...

ARIANNE

He's very picky about who he sells to, actually. I sent him some friends of Don's looking for coke at a decent price. They call him "Tweeds".

KATHERINE

Gesundheit.

ARIANNE

Kitty, I know about everything you just told me.

KATHERINE

Even about Roger's ex-girlfriend?

ARIANNE

I was the first person he told about her pregnancy. I was the one who suggested that he should tell her to get an abortion.

Katherine exclaims in shock.

KATHERINE

You did what, Arianne?

ARIANNE

You heard me. It was the most reasonable thing to do.

Katherine groans.

KATHERINE

Oh God. Who are you? What have you become?

(pause)

All this time I thought that you were some sort of victim, but no, it turns out that you're no better than the addicts you surround yourself with.

(pause)

You know what? I'll do what mum could never do for dad. You'll thank me later.

The heels begin to move away.

ARIANNE

(alarmed)

What are you talking about? Kitty?

Kitty?

(pause)

Kathy!

Her bare feet join the heels on their way back to the living room.

KATHERINE

Out of my house, both of you!

CARL

What are you talking about, Katherine?

KATHERINE

You heard me, Carl. Leave. Now.

CARL

On what grounds?

KATHERINE

How awful a human being you are. That reason should be more than sufficient.

CARL

(scoffs)

You can't be serious. After the conversation we just had outside, you think I'm suddenly the worst person in existence?

KATHERINE

Not in the whole of existence. Just the worst best friend.

(pause)

Please don't make me ask you again.

We hear the sneakers make their way to the door.

KATHERINE

You too, Roger. Get going.

ROGER

Katherine, please.

KATHERINE

I'm sorry, but your actions speak for themselves.

ROGER

I don't regret what I did to Don. It was necessary and he was a worse friend. The things he put Ari through! You can't seriously be preferring him over me, right now.

KATHERINE

You're right. I'm not. I'm disqualifying you both.

ROGER

"Disqualifying"?

KATHERINE

Neither one of you is worthy of Arianne. Not you. Not Don. Not Carl. All of you are not welcome in Arianne's life anymore. You're all terrible, abusive influences.

The steps move, along with the heels.

KATHERINE

The third time felt as if my head had suddenly been buried under the earth. The pressure upon the bridge of my nose was unbearable. The droplets were enormous, falling like apples straight

into the leather of my shoes. I was in too deep.

ROGER

Katherine, you're bleeding. Maybe you should sit down?

KATHERINE

Nothing will change my mind, Roger.
Nothing you or Carl or Arianne can say.

(pause)

The evidence against you is
overwhelming.

The sneaker steps get closer. We can hear toilet paper tearing.

ROGER

I understand. Please, take this. For
your nose.

KATHERINE

It's a little too much, for my liking,
but I guess it isn't exactly wasteful.

ROGER

You might need some more, actually.

KATHERINE

No, I won't. I assure you.

(pause)

Just get out. You disgust me.

Both sets of sneakers leave as we hear the front door open. A second after it closes, the bare feet pat closer again.

ARIANNE

What have you done? They'll never speak
to me again.

KATHERINE

(inhales deeply)

You're better off without them.

ARIANNE
(incredulous)
Am I?

KATHERINE
Yes! They were a controlling, meddling,
manipulative, lying, cheating lot of
bloody bastards.

A pause settles. Then, in a lower tone, Arianne replies.

ARIANNE
Aren't you just like that too? Wonder
where I got that from, *Katherine*.

We hear a new door slam, hard.

KATHERINE
The fourth time came on the heels of
the third. I didn't have time to
properly recover before I felt myself
light on fire. The temperature of the
room rose. I became sluggish,
disoriented. This time around, I could
feel the rivulets stream from my
nostrils to my chin. They felt like
flames, much in the way that the
previous ones had felt like boulders
dropping on my toes.

(pause and snort)
I turned to look for the toilet paper.
"It can't be far," I thought. I reached
my hands around the couch. I walked
myself to the front porch. In a stupor,
I walked through the grass of my front
lawn all the way around to the backyard
door. I grew desperate, the more steps
I took. It was burning up everywhere.

(pause and snort)

By the time I made it to the bathroom door, my hands were slippery. That was when I finally looked at them. What had begun with a couple droplets, wipings, and smudges, had become a piece of artwork. My hands were covered in blood.

(pause)

It never stopped bothering me, that concept. What she said, and how I didn't listen. My mum told me that heartstrings can -

(breath)

Break. And with my last strand of conscious thought, all I could think of was that somebody had stolen the toilet paper.

FADE TO BLACK.