

A Furtive Response
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FADE IN:

EXT. SUBURBAN HOUSE - DAY

A thin back-to-back house in the middle of a long row of copycat boxes.

Paint peels from a blue front door. The garden is overgrown and unkempt, hidden amongst the weeds are half glimpsed children's toys.

A small, bird like, woman walks up the street, FAYE, in her mid thirties, her clothes dull and slightly old fashioned. Her blonde hair lacks shine and is a tonal match for her drab clothes and defeated demeanour.

As she approaches her house, a bald headed old man opens the door of the house next to it and steps out.

MR ADAMS, late 70s, wears a formal shirt and tie for no apparent reason, on his nose a small pair of glasses making it look like he looks down his nose at everyone - which he does.

MR ADAMS

Not good enough you know.

He points at the garden.

Faye winces from the harsh Northern tones.

FAYE

Not today, please Mr Adams.

MR ADAMS

It's never today though is it Mrs Bryce?

She glances at the garden, the toys hiding in the overgrown grass, and shakes her head slightly.

MR ADAMS

I could call the council you know.

FAYE

(dejected)

You do that Mr Adams.

Mr Adams glowers at Faye as she fishes into her hand bag pulls out her house keys and lets herself in.

Mr Adams stares after her as the door shuts. With a last glance at the garden he retreats into his own house.

INT. HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Faye eases the door shut and leans back against it.

Something between a sigh and a sob escapes her lips and her shoulders quiver slightly.

The hallway is drab and dusty.

An untidy pile of letters behind the door look like they have been waiting there for days.

Faye kicks off her shoes, wriggles out of her coat and hangs it up.

She tilts her head to one side - listening - intently.

(beat)

When she is satisfied that the house is empty Faye moves through a doorway off from the hall.

INT. LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

The room is lifeless, the colour leached from it.

The only exceptions are the mantelpiece and the TV.

The TV is free of dust, as is the Sky box and DVD player beneath it, remote controls sit in ordered fashion on the TV stand.

On the mantelpiece there is a jumble of picture frames, different sizes, same subject in each picture. A small girl, about 8, smile beaming out of each one.

The frames look recently dusted and polished.

Faye moves to the mantelpiece picks up one of the pictures and stares at the girl for a few seconds.

Reluctantly she puts the picture down and picks up the TV and Sky remotes.

The TV flickers into life as Faye drops onto the sofa like a cut string puppet.

An inane soap starts on the TV.

Times passes and the daylight starts to become dusk, Faye remains motionless seemingly oblivious to the approaching dark.

A rattle of keys in the lock, door opens and then swings quietly shut.

Footsteps in the hall.

A tall imposing figure appears in the doorway.

MARTIN wears the look of a funeral director, skin ashen, face emotionless.

MARTIN
Getting dark, you want the light
on?

FAYE
(quietly)
No, not yet.

MARTIN
Sure?

Faye doesn't answer.

Martin looks at his wife, starts to step forward, glances towards the mantelpiece and stops.

MARTIN
Going downstairs for a bit.

FAYE
(perfunctorily)
Will bring you a cuppa later.

MARTIN
Thanks love...

Martin is on the verge of saying something else, more, but stops - a pained look crosses his face.

Martin moves from the doorway and back into the hall out of sight. The sound of a door opening is followed by footsteps descending down the stairs, echoing ominously.

Faye glances up at the mantelpiece, her first movement since her husband arrived home.

Downstairs, in the basement, sounds of cupboards and drawers opening permeate upwards.

Faye picks up the TV remote and turns the volume up.

INT. BASEMENT WORKROOM - CONTINUOUS

Martin carefully takes out a variety of tools and painting implements and arranges them on the work table in front of him.

From a drawer in front of him Martin takes an alarm clock and puts it carefully on the table to one side. Small pieces of cloth have been placed on the clapper and bell pieces of the clock.

From a larger cupboard Martin removes an intricate model of a Wellington bomber. The plane is half assembled on it's own tray.

Martin puts this onto the table but carefully to one side.

He reaches back to the larger cupboard and removes a another tray. The item on the tray is large and bulky but is hidden from view by the sheet that covers it.

CLOSE UP: On martin so the item under the sheet is obscured.

Martin takes the sheet from the item, looks down at it as a smile slowly starts to spread on his face.

Martin looks at the clock and makes a mental note of the time before picking a brush up and starting.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Faye watches the TV soap with rapt attention, but it is clear from the blank look in her eyes that she is actually paying no attention at all.

In a few moments the programme finishes, the end credits start to roll as an all too familiar theme tune begins.

Faye pushes herself up from the sofa and moves towards the hall.

INT. BASEMENT WORKROOM - NIGHT

Martin shoots his hand out and silences the clock just as it starts to ring. The TV theme tune seeps down through the floorboards at the exact same time.

Above Faye's footsteps tread softly overhead.

Martin throws the sheet back over the obscured shape and moves it deftly back into the hiding place from where it came.

INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT

Faye comes out of the kitchen with a steaming cup of tea in her hand and descends the basement steps.

Martin is working on the bomber as Faye reaches the bottom of the stairs.

FAYE

Cuppa.

Faye puts the mug down on the table.

FAYE
How's it coming?

MARTIN
Oh you know, it's fiddly.

FAYE
Many more nights?

MARTIN
I don't know...

FAYE
It's the anniversary coming up
soon, we need to decide...

MARTIN
No, not now...

FAYE
(exasperated)
So when then?

MARTIN
Soon - honestly.

FAYE
Yeah, yeah, you always say that!

Faye turns and heads back upstairs without waiting for an response.

Martin watches her retreat wincing at each half stamped footstep.

INT. LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Faye settles back into the sofa as another theme tune starts and another soap starts it's half hour run.

Her eyes glaze over and there is the hint of a tear in the corners of them.

INT. BASEMENT WORKROOM - NIGHT

Martin pushes the bomber to one side as the theme tune filters down.

He turns and retrieves the other item, shaking off the dust sheet again as he sets it down.

He picks up the alarm clock and carefully re-sets the alarm hand before setting it down again.

The clock ticks at his side as he recommences his work.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

The midway theme and adverts start in the soap.

Faye sits motionless.

INT. BASEMENT WORKROOM - NIGHT

Martin stops the alarm clock almost before it starts and listens, ear cocked towards the sounds of the TV, his spare hand hovering ready over the dust sheet.

There is no movement from above.

Martin tentatively puts down the sheet, re-sets the alarm and begins again.

Soon he is lost in his work again.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

The TV soap finishes, the theme starts and Faye gets up and moves to the doorway.

FAYE
(shouting)
Food?

MARTIN O.S.

(indistinct shouting) Later... thanks...

Faye turns and sits down again.

The first soap starts it's second episode of the night.

INT. BASEMENT WORKROOM -NIGHT

Martin puts the dust sheet down as he hears the theme tune start up again.

He looks at the clock, 8pm.

MARTIN
(muttering to himself)
Last half hour.

Martin re-sets the alarm again, picks up a fine brush and dips it in some paint.

A look of concentration settles into his face as he starts.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

The soap drones in the background.

Suddenly the soap is interrupted by a newsflash.

Faye is jolted from her reverie and the look of lassitude passes from her face as the announcer details a natural disaster claiming many lives.

Faye moves quickly and quietly from the sofa and heads towards the hallway.

INT. BASEMENT WORKROOM - CONTINUOUS

Martin paints thoughtfully, unaware that Faye has come halfway down the stairs.

FAYE
(sadness in her voice)
Oh Martin...

Martin looks up, startled.

His hands go to the dust-sheet and stop.

A look of embarrassment clouds his face.

FAYE
Every night?

MARTIN
Always.

FAYE
Why though love?

MARTIN
I promised her... for her birthday.

Martin looks down at the table, an intricate and almost finished dolls house in front of him.

FAYE
It's beautiful love, but...

MARTIN
(interrupting)
I know, I do, but I still promised her, that morning, just before the car...

Tears roll down Martin's face.

FAYE
(through her own tears)
More tea then?

MARTIN

Please love.

Faye turns and steps quietly back up the basement stairs.

Martin looks after her, picks up the alarm clock. pulls the cloth from the clapper and puts it back in the drawer.

He picks up the fine brush and continues with his promise.

FADE OUT:

THE END