

SECRETS

Written by

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SECRETS

FADE IN:

EXT. CEMETERY - GRAVESIDE - DAY

From ABOVE, a crowd of people surround two caskets suspended side-by-side over empty graves.

SUPERIMPOSE:

"NORFOLK, ENGLAND"

A CHURCH OF ENGLAND PRIEST, solid and balding, early 40s, wearing a white funeral vestment reads from the Book of Common Prayer.

PRIEST

Thou knowest, Lord, the secrets of
our hearts...

The CAMERA PANS AWAY to a series of shots while the Priest continues...

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

Shut not thy merciful ears to our
prayer; but spare us, Lord most
holy, O God most mighty, O holy and
merciful Saviour, thou most worthy
Judge eternal, suffer us not, at
our last hour, for any pains of
death, to fall from thee...

SERIES OF SHOTS

Mourners surround the tall and slim KATE NIXON, 30s, dressed in elegant black. She's holding a handkerchief to her eye. Staring at the caskets before her, she sobs quietly. Near her are aunt JENNIFER DAVIDSON, 70s; cousin COLIN DAVIDSON, 40s; family friend DOROTHY RAMPLING, 60s; close friend LUKE TAYLOR, 30s.

Behind the priest are a group of sullen-faced men and women. But there, standing off to one side is JACK, 60s. He's tall and dressed in a black suit. A tear runs down his cheek as he looks over his shoulder into the distance.

BACK TO SCENE

Kate gnaws at her lip and tears flow freely down her face as the priest goes on...

PRIEST (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Forasmuch as it hath pleased
Almighty God of his great mercy to
take unto himself the souls of our
dear brother and sister here
departed: we therefore commit their
bodies to the ground...

EXT. CEMETERY - CAR PARK - DAY

Kate is standing alone with aunt Jennifer, who is dressed in a dark grey outfit and pale pink coat. She is stroking Kate's arm.

JENNIFER
I still can't grasp it, pet. Your
parents...

Jennifer chokes back her sadness.

JENNIFER (CONT'D)
My sister...

They tightly embrace in shared grief.

JENNIFER (CONT'D)
Are you planning to stay on for a
while?

Kate looks towards Luke. He's standing on his own watching Kate intently. She forces a smile.

KATE
I wish I could. I have to return to
New York in a couple of days. But,
I'm coming back to take care of
things as soon as I can.

JENNIFER
(looking towards Luke)
It's good to see you and Luke
together again.

KATE
Just friends these days, aunt Jen.

EXT. FAMILY HOME - FRONT - DAY

A neat two-story detached house in an urban street. A FOR SALE SIGN is erected just outside the front gate.

SUPERIMPOSE:

"ONE MONTH LATER"

INT. FAMILY HOME - ATTIC - DAY

The attic has a dusty pitched roof with cobwebs hanging from the exposed beams. A single lightbulb illuminates the untidy jumble of boxes and other family memorabilia with a yellowish hue.

Kate in jeans and t-shirt sits cross-legged on the floor.

In front of her is a tatty old school case. It contains documents and other odd items.

She picks up a bundle of 20 or more envelopes tied together with a blue ribbon. The top one is of interest, so she removes it for closer examination.

Opening the envelope, Kate removes the single page from it and starts reading.

After a pause she smirks, shakes her head in disbelief.

KATE

What the!

She calls out below.

KATE (CONT'D)

Luke!

INT. FAMILY HOME - DINING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Kate sits at the head of the dining table. Next to her is the small dusty school case. Luke, unshaven, is brooding over the envelope in front of him.

LUKE

And you say these were in the case.

KATE

Yep.

He studies the envelope.

KATE (CONT'D)
They're all addressed to my mother
and sent to her work address.

Luke turns the envelope over. Curious.

LUKE
No return address.

KATE
(pointing)
No. And look at the postmark. This
one's dated only one month before
the car crash.

LUKE
Okay. Who's it from?

She points at the envelope.

KATE
Read it.

He removes the letter, studies it silently. Then hesitates...

LUKE
I don't know that I should be
reading this.

Luke's brow wrinkles as he looks deep into Kate's eyes.

KATE
Then just read the last paragraph.

LUKE
(reading)
I always look forward to our times
together at Evensong. All my love.
Jack.

KATE
Who is he?

Luke is uncomfortable and shakes his head rather than
speaking straight away.

LUKE
The priest?

KATE
(scornful)
No.

LUKE
Your father? A nickname perhaps.

KATE
No, it can't be. You've known the family since we were teenagers. Have you ever heard dad referred to as Jack? Anyway, he never went to church with mum.

Luke is confident that he's on the right track.

LUKE
You're sure of that?

KATE
What do you mean?

LUKE
It just seems reasonable. Have you looked at any of the other letters?

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. FAMILY HOME - DINING ROOM - LATER

Next to the case is a pile of envelopes scattered between Kate and Luke. They've been through them and the mood is tense. The answer seems obvious now.

KATE
(confident)
I think she was having an affair.

LUKE
You can't --

KATE
Rubbish. It's all there. Written down. Some of them mention my father. So it couldn't be him.

LUKE
And you're sure you don't know who Jack is? There must be a simple explanation.

Kate is positive. She stares at the letter in her hand.

EXT. FAMILY HOME - REAR - MOMENTS LATER

Kate stands in the yard staring into the sky. Her eyes are watering.

Luke comes to her and wraps his arm around her shoulder.

LUKE

Hey.

She sniffs and forces a smile.

KATE

They've clearly known each other a long time. It seems like most of my life.

Kate turns and embraces Luke, her face against his chest. Hugs him tight. Inhales his scent, then looks into his eyes. The moment is intense. They're locked together. Are they going to kiss?

KATE (CONT'D)

I'm glad your here.

Luke leans closer towards her lips.

She tilts away, while still remaining in his embrace.

KATE (CONT'D)

Let's go back inside for a drink.

Luke laughs and kisses the top of her head.

LUKE

That sounds like a good idea.

INT. FAMILY HOME - DINING ROOM - MINUTES LATER

Kate and Luke are back at the table sharing a bottle of red wine. Luke's arm is stretched out on the table, his hand resting on hers.

KATE

You know, I really miss them both. Sometimes I wake up and it feels like they're still here in the house. I can almost hear their voices.

LUKE

You don't have to stay here, you know.

Kate withdraws her hand.

KATE

At the moment it's kind of right,
though. I like feeling close to
them. Something inside me.

LUKE

That's good.

There's an uncomfortable moment of quiet. Luke breaks the
silence.

LUKE (CONT'D)

(awkward)

You don't ever have to forget them,
you know.

KATE

The worst thing is not having had
the opportunity to say goodbye.
It's like important matters left
unresolved.

LUKE

It will get easier over time.

For Kate this is a logical statement. She returns to the
matter at hand.

KATE

The last thing I want right now is
this business with Jack, whoever he
is.

LUKE

Then let it go.

KATE

He seems to know a lot about me. I
should find him and get to the
bottom of it.

LUKE

(concerned)

Is there any point in confronting
him?

KATE

Yes.

(beat)

No. Confront is not the right word.

LUKE
You sure?

KATE
(clearly confused)
I don't know.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. DOROTHY'S HOUSE - SITTING ROOM - EVENING

A sitting room, on the small side, cramped with furniture.
Kate and Luke sit with Dorothy, petite and grey haired.
They're drinking tea.

DOROTHY
It's such a lovely surprise to see
you again so soon, my dear.

KATE
Thank you.

DOROTHY
Anyway, what did you want to ask
me?

KATE
(hesitantly)
Aunty Dot, I was sorting through my
mother's things and came across
something...

DOROTHY
Yes.

KATE
You're mum's oldest friend. I
thought you might know something.

Dorothy smiles and chuckles with approval.

DOROTHY
I still know quite a few things, my
dear.

KATE
Jack?

The cup and saucer Dorothy is balancing on her knee rattles
in her hand.

KATE (CONT'D)
Do you know him?

Dorothy laughs evasively. Then...

DOROTHY

Jack who?

KATE

You must know him. He seems to have been a long standing acquaintance.

Dorothy stares at the ceiling for a beat.

DOROTHY

(shaking her head)

No. It doesn't ring any bells, my dear. Is it important? Perhaps you should talk to your mum's sister.

KATE

Aunt Jenny?

DOROTHY

Hmmm. Yes. Perhaps she can be of more help.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. JENNIFER'S HOUSE - LOUNGE - DAY

A sunny lounge room with caramel walls and dark exposed beams. Kate and Luke sit on a lounge opposite Jennifer, a short solid woman with a pale complexion and straight hair. On her lap is a furry old ginger cat.

JENNIFER

So, who is it you're trying to find, pet?

KATE

He seems to have been an old friend of mum's.

(beat)

His name's Jack?

Jennifer urges the cat off her lap.

JENNIFER

Jack. No, pet. I don't know anyone by that name.

KATE

Are you sure? They were in frequent contact over many years.

JENNIFER
How do you know that?

KATE
Letters. Lots and lots of letters
from him in a box in the attic at
home.

Jennifer shifts nervously.

JENNIFER
Oh. Umm. I don't know.

Kate leans forward towards Jennifer.

KATE
(miffed)
Yes you do. Please. Tell me.

JENNIFER
Why, pet?

KATE
I... I want to know. It seems the
two of them were very... close.

JENNIFER
(on the defensive)
What do you mean?

KATE
(blurts it out)
Okay. I think mum and him were
having an affair.
(beat)
I just want to meet him, talk to
him. Find out the truth.

JENNIFER
Oh, no. You're mistaken. Liz wasn't
like that. No. And anyway, why dig
up the past now?

CUT TO:

INT. LUKE'S CAR - MOVING - DAY

Luke is driving and Kate is beside him, staring out the
window at the passing countryside.

KATE
That was a waste of time.

Luke nods in agreement.

Kate focuses on Luke.

KATE (CONT'D)

I've never seen her so defensive.
She refused to tell us anything.
And then, she just makes excuses
for us to leave. She's hiding
something. So's Dot. It's stupid to
keep it as some sort of secret,
when I already know he exists. What
don't they want me to find out?

Luke's sideways glance says it all.

KATE (CONT'D)

What?

LUKE

Do you think you might be taking
this too far?

KATE

No... No! I need to know what was
going on.

LUKE

That's just it. What was going on.
It's not happening any longer.
Digging it up is not going to
change anything, except stress you
out even further. Wouldn't it be
better to just let it go?

KATE

(is resentful)

You sound just like the others. If
you don't want to help me, just say
so.

LUKE

I didn't say that.

KATE

(determined)

Then just take me to see my cousin,
Colin. Turn right up ahead.

EXT. COLIN'S HOME - BACK GARDEN - DAY

Colin is tall, dark hair greying around the edges, well
dressed and neatly groomed.

Standing with Kate next to some rose bushes well in bloom. Luke is visible in the background sitting in a garden chair on the patio.

COLIN

So, my mother is not talking.
Doesn't surprise me really.

KATE

Nor me.

COLIN

I think she's trying to protect
you.

KATE

(surprised)

From what? Do you know something?

Colin smiles and continues deadheading the old roses.

COLIN

Have you finished clearing out the
house?

KATE

Not yet.

COLIN

I reckon you should find a wooden
case about the size of a shoe box
somewhere. The lid is decorated
with an inlaid gold crest.

KATE

How do you know that?

COLIN

I've seen it. There's a lock on it.
You should find the key in that
ghastly orange vase in the lounge
room.

KATE

When was this?

COLIN

While you were back in New York and
we were watching the house. I went
there a couple of times with
mother. She didn't know I saw her
with the case. It seemed a little
strange at the time.

KATE

Didn't you ask her?

COLIN

No. She was in a foul mood. Mumbling to herself. I remember her saying the name Jack a couple of times though.

KATE

Where's the case now?

COLIN

That, I don't know. My phone rang and she disappeared with it while I was talking. I remember that she went up into the attic at some point.

KATE

Do you think it's important?

COLIN

I don't know. But it might be a good place to start.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. FAMILY HOME - ATTIC - DAY

Kate is back in the gloom of the dimly lit attic. She's searching through the mess of boxes and other stuff. Nothing.

Suddenly, there on a shelf in the corner is something neatly wrapped in a towel. It's about the size of a shoe box.

She unwraps it. A dark brown wooden case. The gold crest on the lid glimmers, even in the dim light.

CUT TO:

INT. FAMILY HOME - DINING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Kate is sitting at the dining table, staring at the closed box in front of her. She hesitates before putting the key in the lock. It turns easily with a CLICK. She opens the lid.

CUT TO BLACK.

INT. FAMILY HOME - DINING ROOM - EVENING

The dining table is clean and clear of everything except for a rudimentary dinner setting for one, and a very old vase covered in a Chinese decoration. It has a long thin neck and a ball-like body. Beside it is a card.

Kate is humming a weird melody that seems like some old hymn as she enters the dining room with a plate of food for herself. She places it carefully on the table. Sits down.

Kate looks at the vase, smiles.

INT. FAMILY HOME - DINING ROOM - LATER

Luke and Kate are sitting opposite each other at the dining table with glasses of wine. The vase sits between them.

LUKE

(looking intently at Kate)
I thought I would drop around. You didn't answer your phone. Is everything okay?

KATE

Yes, of course. I mustn't have heard it.

LUKE

You seem different. Happier. What's happened?

He reaches for the vase. Kate grabs his hand.

KATE

Don't touch that!

LUKE

Sorry.

KATE

It's a very old family heirloom and belonged to my father.

LUKE

I've never seen it before --

KATE

Neither had I until this afternoon. Aunt Jen had it hidden away.

LUKE

That doesn't make any sense.

Kate stands, takes the vase over to the side table and carefully places it back inside its box.

Luke watches on with amusement.

INT. FAMILY HOME - DINING ROOM - LATER

Kate and Luke are still at the table, talking, empty glasses.

LUKE

(laughs)

You seemed rather quiet after seeing Colin today. What did he say to you?

KATE

Nothing really.

LUKE

You kept glancing over at me and smiling.

KATE

Did I?

LUKE

Yep.

Kate looks away. Changes subject.

KATE

I've been thinking about moving back home.

LUKE

Well, that's a sudden turn around.

KATE

Not really. I've been having some thoughts lately.

LUKE

About me I hope?

He reaches out to take her hand.

She pulls back.

KATE

About a lot of things.

LUKE

I'd like it if you did stay.

KATE
I know you would.

LUKE
You know my feelings. They haven't changed.

KATE
But I'm not sure how I feel. I need more time.

No she doesn't. She is fully aware of her real feelings.

KATE (CONT'D)
Sometimes I think we went too far, too quick.

LUKE
Quick? We've known each other for what, fifteen going on twenty years. Forgive me, but I don't think anything between us now qualifies as quick.

KATE
That's not the point. At times you're more like a brother. We'll always be --

LUKE
Friends.

KATE
You're putting words in my mouth.

LUKE
No, I'm not. Things are different now, aren't they?

KATE
(urgently)
Yes. I mean, I'm not sure.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. JENNIFER'S HOUSE - LOUNGE - DAY

Kate and Jennifer sit together in the lounge room.

JENNIFER
I might have known. Colin has always had big eyes and ears. So, you know everything then?

KATE
I don't think so. That's why I'm
here.

JENNIFER
(concerned)
Hmmm.

She studies Kate.

JENNIFER (CONT'D)
Perhaps you're right. You tell me
what you know, pet. And we'll carry
on from there.

EXT. CAFE - DAY

Luke sits at an outdoor table. Drinking coffee. His phone
RINGS. Picks it up, looks at it. He's surprised. Answers.

LUKE
(into phone)
Kate.
(beat)
What's wrong?

Listens.

LUKE (CONT'D)
(into phone)
Where are you now?

Listens.

LUKE (CONT'D)
(into phone)
Okay. Go back to the house and I'll
meet you there.

INT. FAMILY HOME - DINING ROOM - DAY

Luke and Kate are sitting at the dining table again.

KATE
I wish I'd never found those
letters.

LUKE
It doesn't matter.

KATE

I feel like a fool for being so suspicious. It seems Jack and my mother were an item, way back before she married dad. Somewhere along the way, Jack and dad had a massive falling out, but mum kept in touch. Dad would have been furious if he knew.

LUKE

I did say that there would be a simple explanation.

KATE

Aunt Jen has been in contact with Jack. He will be at church this evening for Evensong. What should I do?

LUKE

I think you should go and meet him. You've come this far. And this might be the only opportunity you get.

KATE

Yes. I'm quite nervous about it.

LUKE

I'll come with you.

KATE

Don't. Please, I want to do this on my own.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. CHURCH - EVENING

SERIES OF SHOTS

Kate sits alone in a pew towards the back. There's not many at Evensong, pretty much just all the regulars sitting closer towards the front.

The priest stands before the congregation. The service is nearing the end.

PRIEST

Fulfil now, O Lord, the desires and petitions of thy servants, as may be most expedient for them;

(MORE)

PRIEST (CONT'D)
granting us in this world knowledge
of thy truth, and in the world to
come life everlasting. Amen.

Kate stands along with everyone else as the choir and clergy
exit the church.

BACK TO SCENE

Kate is looking while the congregation departs. Some smile at
her as they walk by. She's getting anxious now.

Then from behind her...

JACK (O.S.)
Kate.

She jumps and spins around, nearly losing her balance.

Jack dashes forward and takes a controlling hand on her arm.

JACK (CONT'D)
Are you okay? I'm sorry. I didn't
mean to startle you.
(beat)
I'm Jack.

KATE
(staring)
Yes. Thank you. You just gave me a
start, that's all.

JACK
I'm sorry.

She is studying him closely. There's something familiar in
his face.

KATE
You were at the funeral.

JACK
(smiling)
I was, yes. I'm surprised you even
noticed.
(beat)
Look, let's go outside and sit
down. There's still lots of
daylight, and they will want to
shut the church up pretty soon.

EXT. CHURCH - MOMENTS LATER

The sun is just setting. Kate and Jack sit together on a bench in the church yard, grave stones nearby. There's a gap between them.

JACK
Jennifer called me this morning.
I'm pleased.

KATE
It seems like you're well known to everyone, except me. Why have I never heard of you before, and why is it such a big secret?

Jack is restless. Sighs.

JACK
It's complicated, and --

They both watch in silence as a woman in her 40s hurries by with her small mongrel terrier straining on the leash. They watch her go.

JACK (CONT'D)
You see your mother, Liz, and I go back a long way, before she married Len.

KATE
I know that. You were in a relationship.

JACK
Well. Ah... I guess you could say that.

KATE
Then my father came along?

JACK
Yes. He was very impressive. Athletic. He was set on Liz something fierce and wanted me out of the way.
(beat)
I let him win. I kept my true feelings for Liz to myself. Things might have been different if I had spoken out.

KATE

But you've stayed in contact with
mum.

JACK

Yes.

KATE

I don't understand your
relationship with her. I've read
the letters you sent.

JACK

I didn't think she would've kept
them.

KATE

You loved her.

JACK

It's true. I've never stopped
loving her. Always will.
(beat)
I never married.

Kate nods.

KATE

But why the hush-hush. Is it all
because my father and you had a
falling out?

He studies Kate. Yes, it's time...

JACK

You don't have any idea, do you?

KATE

I'm beginning to feel that I know
less and less about what's going
on.

JACK

I suppose you have a right to know.
Especially now they're gone.

KATE

About what?

Jack looks into the sky, thinking.

JACK

Do you remember back when you were about five-years old? You fell off a swing and broke your arm.

KATE

It's all a bit hazy now. But, yes, of course.

JACK

Len was away on business at the time. Anyhow, they did a routine blood test at the hospital, and the result was that your blood group is Type-A.

Kate nods. That's true.

JACK (CONT'D)

Well.

(beat)

Your mother, being a nurse, recognised it straight away. She and Len were both Type-O.

KATE

(not getting the idea)

So?

JACK

That's not possible.

KATE

What are you saying?

JACK

I'm Type-A.

The penny drops. Kate is mortified.

Jack takes her hand. She pulls away.

INT. FAMILY HOME - DINING ROOM - NIGHT

Kate and Luke are standing face-to-face. Luke's just been told. He's dumbfounded.

They hug.

LUKE

What are you going to do?

KATE

Try and let it sink in. I feel cheated, lied to. How could they all keep this from me.

LUKE

Was it Jack's idea?

She shakes her head, suppressed anger.

KATE

Mum's.

LUKE

She was trying to protect you and your father.

Kate moves away to the other side of the room and looks back at Luke.

KATE

Which father?

LUKE

Oh, Kate.

KATE

I can understand what happened. Jack and mum had it off one last time before the wedding. Jack called it a gross mistake they both regretted afterwards. Okay, I'm disappointed in her. It happens.

LUKE

The pregnancy?

KATE

To mum and dad, there was nothing unusual, except that it happened so soon. Then, five years later, when she found out, she kept it a secret from dad, just to protect her marriage. How could she. They weren't happy together, not for many years.

Kate opens the wooden box and looks at the vase laying inside.

KATE (CONT'D)

And this thing. It's from Jack. For me.

(MORE)

KATE (CONT'D)

It was handed down to him through his parents. Yet another secret kept from me.

Kate caresses the vase.

KATE (CONT'D)

He wanted me to have it one day.

LUKE

That's natural. He wants to be part of your life.

KATE

And I should just push dad aside?

LUKE

Of course not. Do you blame Jack for this?

KATE

Not really. It's been hard for him too. He, and the others, went along with what mum wanted. He told me how proud he is of me. How he missed out on watching me grow up. Of being his daughter.

They come together. Kate hugs Luke tight, her head against his shoulder. Her eyes are closed, then slowly open as she thinks.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. AIRPORT TERMINAL - BUSINESS LOUNGE - DAY

SUPERIMPOSE:

"TWO WEEKS LATER"

Kate reclines back in a chair talking on her cell phone.

KATE

(into phone)

I wanted to tell you that I'm no longer selling the house. I've decided to come back home permanently.

JACK (V.O.)

I hope we can see more of each other.

KATE
(into phone)
I'd like that very much.

JACK (V.O.)
How are things between you and
Luke?

KATE
(into phone)
Moving forward.

JACK (V.O.)
He loves you, you know.

KATE
(into phone)
He's quite open about it.

JACK (V.O.)
You're very fortunate he is.

KATE
(into phone)
I agree. It's me that's the
problem. I find it hard to talk to
him about...
(beat)
I guess I'm afraid to express my
real emotions.

JACK (V.O.)
Your relationship with Luke is
special. Keeping things secret is
not the solution for you. Hiding
from reality is no sanctuary from
the truth. Trust your heart, Kate.
Things might have turned out
different if I had.

KATE
(into phone)
Love conquers all?

JACK (V.O.)
That's a great place to start.

FADE OUT.

THE END