

FADE IN

INT. GAS STATION - NIGHT

Near the back of the store, JESS DAVIS, a young woman in her early twenties, is restocking the beers in a small gas station located in a dead town. She is the only one working tonight.

The sound of a bell is heard throughout the store, causing Jess to go to the front, where she finds JACK WILLIAMS, an eleven year old boy.

JESS  
(surprised)  
Oh, hey

JACK  
Hi

The boy keeps his head down as he disappears into an aisle. Jess shrugs, going behind the counter to check her phone when she gets a call from her friend LUCY.

LUCY (O.S.)  
Hey! So you on your way yet?

JESS  
You know we close at 12 Lucy, I got an hour left.

LUCY (O.S.)  
So close early!

Jess looks up, scanning the aisles quickly and noting

JESS  
Lucy-

LUCY (O.S.)  
Come on, it's my last night here before college and you're really gonna spend it working??

JESS  
Seriously Lucy, you think this is my choice?

LUCY (O.S.)  
Yeah, just like it was my choice to open the bottle and drink half of the

wine.

JESS  
 Seriously?

LUCY (O.S.)  
 Yes! Just close early like you have a bunch of times before and get over here! Besides, there's a whole blizzard outside right now, no one is going to that store.

Jess looks out the window, noting the fresh, dense layer of snow.

JESS  
 (whispering)  
 Yea except this kid who just walked in.  
 (beat)  
 Fuck it though you're right, I'll close after I get him out. try not to get too trashed without me

LUCY (O.S.)  
 Too late for that, see you soon!

Jess hangs up and sets her phone down. After a few minutes of silence, Jess looks up to find the boy still browsing, but not grabbing anything. Sighing, she makes her way towards the back and continues restocking the beer silently, glancing at the boy every once in a while

JESS  
 Hey, is there anything I can help you find?

JACK  
 Oh um, I'm just looking

JESS  
 Ok, just keep in mind were closing soon

JACK  
 (worried)  
 You are?

JESS  
 Yeah, especially with the blizzard outside, wouldn't want to get stuck

out here.

Jack starts fidgeting with his hands.

JESS

Are you ok-

JACK

Do you have a bathroom?

JESS

(gesturing)

Uh yeah it's right back there to the right.

JACK

(muttering)

Thanks

Jack doesn't spare a second before he makes his way to the bathroom and closes the door.

EXT. PARKING LOT - NIGHT

Jess stands by the door. Glancing around confirms that there are no cars not only in the parking lot but in the area. As she glances left, she notices the bar, which has closed due to the weather.

She steps forward and walks further away from the store until she is at the side of the road. She stops and looks at the ground leading from where she is up to the store, noting the only marks in the snow are her own and small feet. Jess then turns, following the footprints with her eyes as they lead down the road only disappearing when the road curves.

INT. GAS STATION - NIGHT

The ding is heard as Jess walks back into the store. A quick glance to the bathroom shows that the boy has still not left. Jess makes her way towards the back of the store and continues restocking until Jack walks out.

JESS

So you're here all by yourself?

Jack stiffens but continues to keep his head down, avoiding eye contact.

JACK

I'm waiting to get picked up.

JESS  
You walked here all by yourself  
though?

Jack shrugs, not wanting to talk more.

JESS  
(nodding)  
Ok  
(beat)  
Do you maybe want to sit while you  
wait?

Jack looks up at her for the first time, nodding furiously. It's at this moment that Jess notices a cut on his lip and two bruises on his cheek. Remaining silent, Jess takes him towards the front, bringing him into the office by the side of the counter.

JESS  
Just make yourself comfortable,  
alright?

Jack sits down.

JACK  
Thank you.

JESS  
I'm gonna go and finish stocking, but  
I'll be right back. Just don't touch  
anything, ok?

Jack nods, and then Jess leaves the room, walking to the back of the store. She walks past the abandoned beer, going into the stock room and pulling out her phone. On it the time reads 11:40. She continues to go through her phone until she lands on the name SARAH-MANAGER, hesitating for a moment before pressing the call button.

JESS  
Hello?

SARAH(O.S.)  
One of those pumps better be on fire  
if you're calling me this late.

JESS  
There's a kid here and he's all alone,  
I think he walked here by himself-

SARAH(O.S.)

You've got to be kidding me, this is why you called?

JESS

Sarah, it's like a blizzard out there  
(beat)

And he's bruised up. I'm closing right now and he says he's getting picked up but he's been here for a while now and I don't think anyone is coming.

SARAH(O.S.)

Ok and what do you want me to do about it?

JESS

Well I was thinking because you live closer to here than I do and because my shift is almost over and you're the manager that maybe you could come here an-

SARAH(O.S.)

If you think I'm leaving my house in this weather over some kid you must be out of your mind. Listen, you're there to do your job so do it. If you want to involve yourself in anything else that's your problem.

Sarah hangs up and Jess sighs, frustrated. She leaves the stockroom, going towards the coffee maker. She pours the remaining coffee for herself and makes a hot chocolate, grabbing a muffin too before going into the office where Jack is.

JESS

Here, you must be cold after that walk you made.

Jack looks embarrassed but quickly takes the items from her hands and begins to eat.

JACK

Thank you

JESS

No problem, how about in return you give me a name to work with?

JACK

Jack

JESS

Well Jack, I'm Jess.

He nods and silence falls over the room again.

JESS

(softly)

So do you know when they'll be here?

JACK

(shaking his head)

Who?

(beat)

Oh um yeah they should be here soon,  
like 30 minutes.

JESS

Oh, we close in 20 minutes. Is there  
maybe someone you want to call and let  
them know? You could use my phone if  
you want?

Jack tenses and Jess stays quiet, not wanting to push. After  
a moment, Jack interrupts the silence.

JACK

I just didn't want to be home anymore

Jess nods her head as realization sets in.

JESS

No one is coming, are they?

JACK

No.

JESS

Ok.

(beat)

I have to close down right now, but  
I'm going to help you figure something  
out, ok?

Jack nods, not saying anything. Jess once again goes towards  
the back of the store.

Jack's POV:

As Jack starts faintly hearing Jess talk on the phone, he reaches into his pocket and pulls out an old torn photo. On it is him and another woman, his mother. Both are smiling. From the torn side there is only an arm left in the photo, the rest of the body obviously torn off. Jack begins to quietly sob while hugging the photo.

JACK

I wish you were here.

Jess POV:

Jess emerges from the stockroom, phone still to her ear as she finishes her call with Lucy.

JESS

I just got off the phone with the police, they're going to be here in like 20 minutes and then I'm going straight there, ok? Just try to leave something for me to drink.

Jess hangs up and then begins going through the store, completing her closing routine. As she heads towards the door to lock it, she notices a car coming down the empty road. It stands out as being the only car she has seen in hours. Jess stands there watching the car, surprised when she sees it pull into her parking lot.

Jess walks away from the door, continuing to sweep, until she hears a knock. Looking over she sees a tall MAN standing there, looking frantic.

JESS

I'm sorry, we're closed.

MAN

Please, I'm looking for my son, have you seen him?

Relief takes over Jess' features as she makes her way towards the door.

JESS

Oh my god yes! I'm so glad you're here!

MAN

That's him!

Jess turns around to see the boy, who has now left the office

and peered around the corner to see the encounter. He stands there shaking, clearly frightened, and Jess notices his tear stained cheeks. Suddenly Jess demeanor changes, her relieved expression changing with one of concern, and fear.

JESS  
(sternly)  
Jack, go back in the office NOW

Jack scurries back to the office and Jess looks back at the man standing outside, clearly growing impatient.

MAN  
What are you doing!

The Man starts pulling on the door, his hands slamming against the glass.

JESS  
I'm sorry sir, I called the police a while ago and I don't think I should open the door until they are here.

MAN  
Why would you call the police?

JESS  
A kid walked here completely by himself in a blizzard 30 minutes before closing with no where to go.

MAN  
And that why I'm here, to take his ass home.

JESS  
I'm sorry sir but I really don't think I can-

MAN  
Did he say something to you? That kid is always going around and getting himself into trouble!

JESS  
It looks like he's been hurt.

MAN  
That idiot fell down the stairs he doesn't know how to keep still-



JESS  
(interrupting)  
Sir! I am not opening the door for  
anyone until the police get here!

MAN  
Fucking bitch!

The Man slams on the glass one final time before abandoning his efforts to get in. He lights a cigarette and walks to his car, not leaving. From inside the store Jess can hear his screaming profanities. Quickly, she makes her way back to Jack, who is now hunched in a corner on the floor with his hands over his ears. Jess sits next to him and holds him.

JESS  
Help will be here soon Jack, just a  
few more minutes.

JACK  
Help?

JESS  
The police are going to get here and  
they're going to help you.

Jack pulls away, seeming even more distraught than he once was.

JACK  
(scared)  
Why would you call them?

Jess looks at him confused for a moment.

JESS  
Because they're going to help you.

Jack stays silent. They sit there for a few moments, until the sound of a car pulling up can be heard. Jess stands up and sees the familiar red and blue lights lighting up the parking lot.

JESS  
They're here

Jess walks to the door and sees OFFICER ONE talking to the Man. OFFICER TWO approaches the store front, prompting Jess to unlock the door.

OFFICER TWO

What's going on here? I've got a dad who says you won't let him see his kid?

JESS

Well I called because this kid ran away from home and came into my store. From what I can tell he walked a distance and he's pretty bruised up.

(beat)

He's clearly scared of his dad and he told me he didn't want to be home.

OFFICER TWO

Can I see the kid?

Jess brings him to Jack, who is now standing behind the counter.

OFFICER TWO

Hey buddy, are you ok? You seem a bit cut up.

JACK

I just slipped.

JESS

Jack-

OFFICER TWO

Thanks, don't worry we're going to take it from here.

Jess hesitantly nods and continues to shut everything down. As she starts shutting down her register, Officer Two approaches the counter with Jack standing close behind him, keeping his head down once again.

OFFICER TWO

Thanks, we got everything we need, were just gonna take Jack here to the station.

JESS

Of course

(addressing Jack)

And if you ever need ANYTHING, you know where to find me.

Jack looks up one last time to meet Jess eyes. His eyes are

filled with tears as he quickly nods before looking back down and then following the officer outside. Jess watches as he takes a seat in the back of the police car and Officer Two goes toward his partner and the man, who are still talking.

She looks on in confusion as she sees the three of them laughing with one another, a stark contrast to the angry man at her door. Suddenly the Man enters his car again and starts it up while both officers walk back towards their car.

As he walks in front of the store, Jess opens the door.

JESS

I know it's not any of my business,  
but what's going to happen to Jack?

Officer Two hesitates as he seems to be contemplating what to tell Jess.

JESS

Please tell me something

OFFICER TWO

Well we're going to take them both to  
the station and file a report so this  
can be further investigated.

JESS

But what's going to happen to him  
tonight?

OFFICER TWO

He's going to be released to his  
father until we can gather further  
evidence.

JESS

(stressed)

But you can't, there has to be some  
other family or something that he can  
stay with. His dad is clearly the one  
who is doing that to him, what if he  
gets hurt again?

OFFICER TWO

The kid says he fell and the dad  
seemed worried.

JESS

Ok and they're lying, you're telling  
me that you actually believe that?

OFFICER TWO

Listen, they don't have other family around here, they just moved.

(beat)

Besides, it doesn't matter what I believe, protocol is protocol. I'm sorry but our hands are tied.

Without another word, Officer Two walks away and into his car. Jess watches as the police pull out, followed by the man. She shakes her head before shutting the door and turning to the counter.

The sound of the register drawer closing is heard before Jess grabs her coat, ready to leave when she receives a phone call.

LUCY (O.S.)

(slurring)

Girl where have you been? I'm about to open another one if you're not here in five minu-

JESS

(sighing)

Fuck Lucy, I don't think I can make it tonight.

LUCY (O.S.)

What! We've been planning this for weeks, what do you mean?

JESS

It's that kid, he's in the position he's in because I called the cops, I need to do something.

LUCY (O.S.)

What-

JESS

I'm going to the police station, I love you and I'm sorry about tonight, I'll make it up to you in the morning with breakfast, your hangover is gonna need it anyways.

Jess hangs up without another word, now standing outside, and turns the lock before she gets into her car and leaves.

FADE OUT