

Unbreakable Bond

By

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FADE IN:

EXT. T-INTERSECTION - DAY

Light traffic stopped in all directions.

LIAM HUNTER (65), broad shoulders, black suit and tie, hobbles toward a sidewalk with MYA HUNTER (35), petite, limp in his arms. Blood seeps from a gash in her head, stains her wedding dress.

At the sidewalk, he lays her down, wriggles out of his jacket, slides it under her head.

Liam shakes his head as he catches a glimpse of a church at a distance, hobbles back toward two mangled cars.

T-boned by an SUV, a town car with an open back door, engulfed in flames. In the midst of the fire, a lifeless DRIVER slumped over the steering wheel. Smoke rises from the SUV's hood.

NAOMI HUNTER (30), Mya's sister, slim, pink dress, facial cuts and bruises. Dazed, she stumbles out the SUV's passenger side, staggers away.

A MAN waves at Liam, rushes to Naomi's side as she drops to her knees, pukes.

INT. SUV - DAY

In the driver's seat, behind a deflated airbag, ADAM CRAWFORD (40), graying hair, exceeding waistline, dressed in a tuxedo. Lifeless with his head against a blood-smeared side window.

Between the back seats, CHLOE HUNTER (6), curly hair, bruises on her leg, motionless in a car seat. Blood seeps from her nose onto her pink frilly dress. Scattered rose petals. An empty basket beside her.

Liam dives into the passenger seat, struggles to unbuckle Adam. Yanks on the seat belt. Jammed.

A whoosh sound.

Liam whips his head, peers through a cracked windshield as flames erupt from the hood.

He jerks his head at Chloe, unsnaps her, lifts her up.

EXT. T-INTERSECTION - DAY

A WOMAN drops her coat on the sidewalk next to Mya as Liam lays Chloe down beside her mother, wraps the coat around Chloe.

Sirens at a distance as he hobbles back to the mangled wreck.

INT. HOSPITAL - INTENSIVE CARE UNIT - ROOM7 - NIGHT

Surrounded by medical equipment, Mya lies on her back, eyes closed with a side shaved bandaged head. Intravenous in her arm. A heart monitor shows a regular beat.

Liam leans over Mya, wipes her face with a washcloth.

On the other side of the bed, Adam stares at Mya, wipes his eyes. One side of his face darkened with blemishes.

In a chair, Liam loosens his tie, thumbs family photos on his phone, pauses, stares at a photo of a gravestone marked, "Grace Hunter May 1, 1960 - May 10, 2020."

As he touches the photo, GRACE HUNTER (60), ashen colored face, disheveled grey hair, deep dark eye sockets, steps up behind him.

Liam lifts his head, rubs his neck as he scans the room. His eyes land on Mya. He pockets his phone, holds Mya's hand.

An eerie silence.

Barefoot, wrapped in a ragged dress, Grace circles the bed, shuffles to Adam. Her eyes glued on Mya.

ADAM

I saw the fear in her eyes, Grace.

Adam shakes his head.

ADAM

Everything happened in slow motion.
So unreal. Like time stood still.

Grace puts a hand on his shoulder.

ADAM

Felt like I had time to avert the
crash, but didn't. What if I had
been more alert?

GRACE

What if the town car Driver hadn't
run the red light?

Adam turns to Grace with a slight nod.

Liam pulls a smiley-face card from an inner jacket pocket,
leans forward, opens it.

CHLOE (V.O.)

(reads card)

Grandpa, I hope your throat is
feeling better soon. I miss talking
to you and laughing with you. Lots
of love, Chloe.

Liam leans back, sniffles as his eyes well up. He coughs,
pulls a handkerchief from a breast pocket, wipes his mouth,
stuffs the bloodstained handkerchief in a pants pocket.

INT. HOUSE - ENTRYWAY - NIGHT

A key in a lock. A front door swings open.

Naomi enters with a white teddy bear in one hand and Chloe
asleep on her shoulder.

She swipes a light switch, kicks the door shut behind her.

At the bottom of the stairs, she slips off her high heels,
climbs the stairs.

UPSTAIRS HALLWAY

On top of the stairs, Naomi catches her breath, winces.

SPARE BEDROOM

Naomi drops the white teddy bear on a dresser, flicks on a
table lamp. A mirror sits atop the dresser.

She lays Chloe on a bed, places the stuffed animal next to
her, sits. She runs a hand through Chloe's curls. Chloe moans
as Naomi touches the bruises on her leg.

NAOMI

Sorry.

Chloe's eyes flutter open.

CHLOE
Auntie, is mommy still sleeping?

NAOMI
Yes, mommy needs a lot of rest.

CHLOE
Are daddy and grandpa coming home?

Naomi kisses Chloe's forehead.

NAOMI
Soon, sweetie. They want to be at
the hospital when mommy wakes up.

Big eyes on Naomi.

NAOMI
Let's get you into some jammies.

EXT. HOUSE - DAY

The sun bleeds through ominous clouds.

INT. HOUSE - KID'S ROOM - DAY

Bright colored walls. A princess poster above a pink bed.
Against a wall, a dresser and a storage bin with toys.

Chloe climbs onto a windowsill. On her knees, she grips her
white teddy bear with both hands, stares out a window at
Naomi down below in a driveway.

EXT. HOUSE - DAY

Armed with scissors and gloves, Naomi snips off roses, closes
her eyes as she inhales the scent of the flowers.

EMMA (O.S.)
Is Chloe home?

Naomi jerks, stares at EMMA TAYLOR (6), pigtails, freckled
pale face and barefoot. Around her neck, a heart-shaped vial
necklace filled with blood and a white teddy bear tucked
under one arm.

EMMA
It's our playdate and my mommy said
I can play with Chloe again.

NAOMI

Emma. Good to see you again.
Where's your mommy?

EMMA

My mommy is working at the
hospital. She'll be calling you.

As Emma paces up the driveway, Naomi's phone rings. It shows,
"Isabella."

INT. HOUSE - KID'S ROOM - DAY

Chloe steps down from the windowsill, dangles her stuffed toy
in one hand as she rushes across the floor.

At a nightstand, Chloe stares at a framed photo of Emma and
Chloe with great smiles and arms wrapped around each other.

NAOMI (O.S.)

Chloe, Emma's here.

Chloe clutches her stuffed toy, eyes glued on a doorway.

(O.S.) Footsteps.

Emma pauses in the doorway.

EMMA

You want to play?

Emma steps closer to Chloe.

CHLOE

We got the same bear.

Chloe points to the heart-shaped vial necklace.

CHLOE

What's that?

EMMA

A gift from my mommy.

CHLOE

I missed you.

They hug.

KITCHEN

With a phone to her ear, Naomi paces the floor.

NAOMI

A bit confused, but I think it helps having Emma here.

She nods, sticks the roses in a vase with no water.

NAOMI

Thank you so much, Isabella. Really good to hear your voice again.

KID'S ROOM

Emma on the floor and Chloe on the bed play dress-up with their stuffed animals.

Knocks on the door.

NAOMI

Snacks anyone?

Naomi puts a bowl of snacks next to Emma. As Emma grabs a handful, Naomi catches a glimpse of black and blue bruises on Emma's elbow pit.

Naomi leaves. At the doorway, she turns, stares at Emma.

EXT. HOUSE - NIGHT

In the driveway, a taxi stops behind a truck. Liam exits.

The taxi backs up as Liam shuffles toward the front door.

INT. HOUSE - ENTRYWAY - NIGHT

Hunched over, Liam drags his feet up the stairs.

SPARE BEDROOM

In bed, Naomi snores next to Chloe sound asleep.

At the doorway, Liam stares through a half open door. He takes a deep breath, shakes his head, leaves.

Chloe's eyes snap open. She turns to her stuffed animal, puts a finger to her mouth, "shush", gets out of bed, tip-toes toward the door.

UPSTAIRS HALLWAY

As Chloe peeks around the doorway, a smile spreads across her face as she catches a glimpse of Liam.

GUEST ROOM

Liam plops down on a bed, flicks on a side table lamp next to a framed photo of Grace and Liam.

As he dips his head, his eyes land on a gun safe. With his heel, he pushes it further under the bed.

In casual wear, he wriggles into a coat, slides the smiley-face card in an inner pocket, drops the framed photo of Grace and Liam in a backpack, slings it over his shoulder.

KITCHEN

Coffee brews on a counter next to an overturned cup on a plate. The backpack leans against a wall.

From a side door, Liam enters with a boombox and a few compact discs.

He flips the cup, eyes the pink inscriptions, "Best Grandpa Ever", pours coffee.

He cradles the cup, sips, stares through a window.

ENTRYWAY

Chloe descends the stairs with a hand on the banister and her care bear tucked under her arm.

CHLOE

Grandpa.

KITCHEN

Liam tightens the grip on the cup as his face twitches.

As Chloe leaps into the doorway, Liam spins with a hoarse scream, hurls the cup across the room.

It explodes against a wall.

Chloe recoils, drops on her butt with big eyes on Liam. She gets up, rushes away.

ENTRYWAY

Chloe hurries up the stairs with rampant tears.

KITCHEN

Liam drops to his knees. His hand trembles as he picks up a piece marked, "Grandpa." He chokes out sobs.

UPSTAIRS HALLWAY

On top of the stairs, Chloe sits cross legged, squeezes her stuffed toy, eyes Liam as he crosses toward the front door with the backpack over one shoulder, boombox in his hand.

She sniffles, wipes her eyes.

CHLOE

I love you, grandpa.

EXT. HOUSE - DAY

Liam gets in the truck, shuts the door. As it rumbles to life, birds shred from trees. The truck backs down the driveway, roars down a street.

INT. HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

Chloe's eyes glued on a small pile of broken cup pieces on the table.

NAOMI (O.S.)

Chloe.

Chloe turns. Her eyes well up.

CHLOE

Grandpa came home, but he broke his birthday present. Is he mad at me?

Naomi kneels next to Chloe. They hug.

NAOMI

Grandpa's not mad at you, sweetie. He's mad at what happened to us. He cares about all of us very much.

CHLOE

I love grandpa.

NAOMI
And grandpa loves you.

INT. HOSPITAL - INTENSIVE CARE UNIT - ROOM7 - DAY

On a side table, the boombox fills the air with soft tunes next to the framed photo of Grace and Liam.

In the chair, Liam saw logs.

Adam paces the floor with his head down.

Mya's hand moves. Her eyelids flutter. The heart monitor shows irregular beats.

EXT. HOUSE - NIGHT

Silhouetted under a flickering streetlight, barefoot in pajamas, Emma stares at the house, dangles her stuffed toy in one hand.

INT. HOUSE - FAMILY ROOM - NIGHT

Against a wall, shelves with books and family photos.

In a lazy chair, Naomi moans, throws her head from side to side, screams, jerks forward with wide open eyes at Emma.

EMMA
My mommy says to keep the doors
locked to be safe. Is Chloe home?

Naomi rummages for air as she taps her phone, "8.30pm."

EMMA
Sleepover. My mommy knows I'm here.

CHLOE (O.S.)
Emma.

Emma dashes away. Her vial necklace dangles around her neck.

UPSTAIRS HALLWAY

Emma trips on top of the stairs, falls flat on her stomach. As she gets up, blood leaks from the heart-shaped vial necklace. They hug.

KITCHEN

At the counter, Naomi splashes water on her face. Water drips off her chin as she stares through the window.

ENTRYWAY

Naomi locks the front door.

CHLOE (O.S.)
Auntie.

NAOMI
Go to bed. I'll be up ...

Naomi jerks as she gawks at Chloe on top of the stairs in her bloodstained pajamas with her stuffed animal under one arm.

Naomi leaps up the stairs.

NAOMI
You okay?

Chloe nods, squeezes her cuddly bear to her chest, points at a half open door.

KID'S ROOM

On the floor, a white teddy bear with a bloody backside.

NAOMI
Emma.

In a corner, Emma trembles, hugs her legs with bloody hands.

Naomi kneels next to Emma.

EMMA
I want my mommy.

NAOMI
Are you hurt? Did you cut yourself?

As Naomi puts a hand on Emma's shoulder, Emma clasps the heart-shaped vial necklace, yells with wide eyes.

EMMA
I want my mommy.

NAOMI
Okay, I'll call your mommy now.

Naomi taps her phone, puts it to her ear.

EXT. HOUSE - NIGHT

Drizzle. Wind rustles through trees as leaves drop, drift past the flickering streetlight.

INT. HOUSE - ENTRYWAY - NIGHT

Naomi opens the front door.

ISABELLA TAYLOR (30), pasty face, dark circles under her eyes, barefoot in scrubs with Emma over her shoulder.

ISABELLA

Her second day out of the house since the accident last year.

NAOMI

Why not a locket with a photo?

ISABELLA

A photo doesn't bond our souls. Blood does.

Isabella reaches under her scrubs, pulls out a heart-shaped vial necklace filled with blood.

ISABELLA

I carry hers. She carries mine. Good night.

Naomi closes the front door, pauses with a hand on the door handle, shakes her head, locks the door.

She shuffles to the bottom of the stairs, sits next to Chloe.

CHLOE

I don't want to lose Emma again. She's my best friend.

Naomi shakes her head, hugs Chloe.

NAOMI

Emma will be okay, sweetie.

CHLOE

Are you staying with me, auntie?

NAOMI

Yes. I'm not going anywhere.

KITCHEN

The last rose petal drops on the table.

INT. HOSPITAL - INTENSIVE CARE UNIT - ROOM7 - NIGHT

A white sheet draped over Mya. The heart monitor turned off. Intravenous removed from her arm.

Liam drops into the chair, motionless.

He puts the framed photo of Grace and Liam in the backpack, slings it over his shoulder, picks up the boombox, drags his feet across the floor.

At a sliding door, he pauses. He dips his head, takes a deep breath, exits.

EXT. HOSPITAL - PARKING LOT - NIGHT

In pouring rain, Liam limps past a few cars.

He leans on the truck, picks a set of keys from his pocket. His hand shakes as he struggles to key the door lock.

With his fist, he hammers the door, drops to his knees. A harsh cough racks his body.

He whips his head up. A hoarse scream as strings of spit and blood dribble down his chin as rain pelts his face.

INT. HOSPITAL - INTENSIVE CARE UNIT - ROOM7 - NIGHT

Dim lights. The white sheet covers the bed. All medical equipment off.

Sounds of feet shuffling across the floor.

EXT. HOUSE - NIGHT

The truck clunks onto the driveway. High beams flood a garage door as the truck comes to an abrupt stop.

INT. HOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Muddy footprints.

The backpack hits the floor.

Liam grabs a bottle of booze from a cabinet top shelf.

He unscrews the cap, takes a long swig from the bottle, coughs, pounds his fist on the counter.

GUEST ROOM

A door swings open, bangs against a wall.

Liam dangles the bottle of booze in one hand, the backpack in the other hand.

With the bottle, he swipes a light switch. A ceiling light turns on. He sways, takes a long pull from the bottle.

The backpack flies through the air, hits the side table. The table lamp wobbles.

He plops down on the bed, takes a swig from the bottle, swallows hard.

With his head down, elbows on his thighs, he dangles the bottle between his legs.

CHLOE (O.S.)
Grandpa, I really miss you.

Liam squeezes his eyes shut.

Silhouetted in the doorway, Chloe hugs her white teddy bear.

CHLOE
I just wanted to tell you that I
love you very much and hope you
feel better soon.

Chloe rushes away.

As her footsteps fade, the bottle slips from his hand, hits the floor, tips over, soaks the carpet. He lifts his head, pauses, bloodshot eyes at an empty doorway.

With squinted eyes, he scribbles on a notepad, "Dear, Family." He snuffles as a tear carves a path down his cheek, free falls off his chin, smears the ink.

A huff transitions into a hideous laughter as he hurls the notepad across the room.

He reaches under the bed for the gun safe, opens it, drops his gun in a coat pocket.

INT. HOUSE - KID'S ROOM - NIGHT

In the windowsill, Chloe peers through the window as Liam staggers to his truck.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

The truck bangs over potholes, blows a stop sign. Cars honk.

EXT. CHURCH - PARKING LOT - NIGHT

A wheel skids in murky water, bounces off a concrete stopper.

INT. TRUCK - PARKED - NIGHT

Windshield wipers work overtime as Liam slumps over the steering wheel.

He lifts his head. His hand trembles as he kills the ignition. Wipers stop in the middle of a swipe.

EXT. CHURCH - PARKING LOT - NIGHT

The church bathes in floodlights.

Boots splash in a puddle as Liam stumbles out. He slams the door shut, loses his balance, bumps up against the truck.

He plods past the truck, stops, turns, squints into headlights, shrugs.

At a gate, he lifts his head, closes his eyes, mumbles as rain slams his face.

EXT. CEMETERY - NIGHT

Liam trudges across the grounds as lightning paints the sky. Thunder swipes the horizon.

An engraved cross divides Grace's tombstone in two halves. The right half of the stone, blank. With a finger, he draws, "Liam" on the blank half of the stone.

He kneels, folds his hands, lowers his head, closes his eyes.

INT. HOUSE - KID'S ROOM - NIGHT

In the windowsill, Chloe yawns, with her stuffed toy in her lap.

Her eyes pop. She gets on her knees, palms the window with both hands as she catches a glimpse of Mya and Adam under the flickering streetlight.

With her white teddy bear tucked under her arm, she slides off the windowsill, hurries across the floor.

CHLOE
Auntie. Auntie.

EXT. HOUSE - NIGHT

The front door bursts open. Chloe and Naomi rush toward Mya and Adam in the driveway. A family embrace in the afterlife.

EXT. CEMETERY - NIGHT

Next to Grace's gravestone, a lamppost throws dim light over a freshly dug grave covered with a tarp.

A hand peels the tarp off the grave.

Liam kneels at the edge of the open grave, drops the gun in his lap. His eyes lock onto the dark empty hole.

He pulls the smiley-face card from the inner coat pocket, opens it, rocks back and forth as rain rips the ink off the card.

Motionless, he stares at a blank card. He presses the card to his chest.

The lamppost flicks off.

He slides the card back in the inner pocket, closes his coat. His lips move as he raises his head, squeezes his eyes shut, jams the gun to his temple. His finger cramps the trigger.

A shot rings out.

Lightning strikes. Thunder roars.

Water runs off the tarp, seeps past a single bullet hole. Pops penetrate the sound of heavy rain as bullets rip into the tarp.

Liam pumps the trigger, unloads the entire magazine.

His shoulder and chest heave as he stuffs the gun in the coat pocket, buries his head in his hands, bawls.

EXT. HOUSE - DAY

Birds chirp as the sun rises, paints an orange glow on the horizon.

INT. HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

On the counter, a bouquet of four lilies with baby's breath.

In a dark suit and tie, Liam sips coffee from the cup with pink inscriptions, "Best Grandpa Ever." He runs a finger across hairline cracks, cradles the cup, gazes out the window.

His phone chimes. He taps it, picks up the bouquet of flowers, leaves.

Chloe tip-toes to the counter, overturns the cup on the plate.

Liam pauses at the doorway, turns.

An empty room. No withered roses on the table. The cup sits right side up on the counter next to the coffee maker.

As Liam places the cup upside down on the plate, Chloe smiles with her white teddy bear tucked under one arm.

EXT. HOUSE - DAY

Liam gets in a taxi.

EXT. STREET - DAY

The taxi sputters along. The church looms ahead.

EXT. CEMETERY - DAY

The sun shines from a clear sky.

Liam places flowers next to a ceramic teddy bear and a white cross marked, "Chloe, Mya, Adam, Naomi."

SUPER: "One Month Later."

He pulls the smiley-face card from an inner pocket, opens it, eyes the blank card. He clears his throat.

LIAM

I will never forget your words and
your love.

He sidesteps to Grace's gravestone, touches the blank side of the stone.

LIAM

I know you miss me ...

A cough. He pulls a clean handkerchief from a pants pocket, wipes his mouth. No blood.

LIAM

... but it looks like you have to
wait for my company. The doctor
gave me a clean bill of health.

He stuffs the handkerchief back in the pocket, saunters away.

FADE OUT.