

The Past is Held Within

By

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EXT. BIRTHDAY PARTY - DAY (1986)

We open in the backyard of a typically idyllic suburban home. The bright decorations imply that it is a child's birthday party.

The birthday boy, seven-year-old ADAM TURNER, comes tearing out from a screen door, chased by his confidant, a pretty six-year-old girl named CAITLIN RILEY.

The children race down the yard and are headed for a swing set when Adam is snagged by his mother, 28-year-old HEATHER TURNER, who is dressed a bright dress and a chipper smile.

HEATHER

Where do you think you're going?

YOUNG ADAM

I--

HEATHER

You have something all over your face, what--?

Heather wipes a dark brown smudge off her son's cheek.

HEATHER

This is chocolate, where did you get--?

(Beat)

Is this cake? Did you get into the cake?

Adam giggles instead of answering.

HEATHER

Adam!

She leans in conspiratorially.

HEATHER

Did you leave me any?

They share a laugh, and Heather clasps her son's hands in her own.

HEATHER

Don't go far, okay? We're gonna do presents soon, and you need to look surprised when Grandma Hudson gives you that sweater vest from JC Penney.

(CONTINUED)

YOUNG ADAM

Another one?

HEATHER

Another one.

Adam groans and turns to chase after Caitlin, but Heather has not let go of his hands.

HEATHER

Hey, Adam?

She smiles.

HEATHER

I love you.

Adam tries to reply that he loves her, too, but can't seem to get the words out.

Something is wrong.

INT. ADAM'S BEDROOM - NIGHT (PRESENT)

35-year-old Adam's eyes open and he sits upright in his bed. He is wearing a pair of flannel pajamas printed with mini schnauzers and his dark brown hair is mussed. The alarm clock reads 3:21 AM.

A figure rises beside him in bed; it is Caitlin. She is still exceptionally pretty, but she has a worn face for a 34-year-old woman.

She wraps her arms around his shoulders.

CAITLIN

Jesus Christ, Adam.

The room is silent.

ADAM

Do you remember my seventh birthday party?

Caitlin sighs. They've had this conversation before.

CAITLIN

Of course, I do.

ADAM

What were we doing? I mean, what were we doing before my mom stopped me to talk to her?

(CONTINUED)

CAITLIN

I don't know.

ADAM

I thought you said you remembered.

CAITLIN

I remember you had a Transformers birthday cake. I don't remember exactly what we did that day.

ADAM

(Dejectedly)

I don't either.

(Beat)

You know my mom died three days later.

CAITLIN

I know.

She smooths out his hair and kisses his forehead tenderly.

CAITLIN

Don't you think you should talk to someone about this?

ADAM

I'm talking to you, aren't I?

CAITLIN

You know what I mean, Adam. This is the fourth time this week you've woken up in the middle of the night. You're obsessing.

Adam recoils.

ADAM

I'm not obsessing, okay? It's natural. My mother died. This is natural, Caitlin.

CAITLIN

Your mother died in a car accident when you were just seven. That's awful, Adam. But... But it was just a freak sort of thing, you know? The sort of thing that you need to accept and move on from.

(Beat)

I know it's hard. But maybe someone can help you. A friend of

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CAITLIN (cont'd)
mine recommended a therapist, his
name is Dr. Cox--

Adam gets out of bed in one swift movement and glares at
Caitlin.

ADAM
I'm not going to a shrink.

CAITLIN
(Pleading)
I'm worried about you, Adam.

Adam begins pacing the room, but his movements become more
and more deliberate, until he's reached the dresser.

CAITLIN
Adam, what are you--?

He reaches into the topmost drawer for a small, metallic
box, secured shut with twine.

CAITLIN
Is that what I think--?

He handles it very carefully as he sets it atop the
comforter on the bed.

CAITLIN
Is that what I think it is?

Adam gives her a disconcerting smile.

ADAM
What do you think it is?

Caitlin is suddenly very tense. She deflects the question.

CAITLIN
There's no point in chasing after
the impossible, Adam.

Suddenly, Adam is seized by a frenzy of indignation.

ADAM
(Shouting)
It's not impossible! I know
exactly what to do--

CAITLIN
Adam--

ADAM

He told me! The guy who gave it to me, he told me that all I have to do is open up the box and think really, really hard about where I want to go.

Adam pauses a moment to peer at the box. He unravels the twine.

CAITLIN

Adam, listen to me--

ADAM

(Calmly)

He told me, 'the past is held within', whatever that means--

CAITLIN

(Shouting)

There is no such thing as time travel!

There is a deafening silence for a beat.

CAITLIN

(Quietly)

There is no such thing as time travel.

ADAM

Okay, let's say you're right. What's the worst that can happen if I try?

CAITLIN

It'll destroy you. It'll destroy us, Adam. Isn't what we have good enough?

ADAM

It could be perfect, Caitlin.

CAITLIN

There is no such thing, Adam.

Adam is seized by a crazed look.

ADAM

There could be! I mean, if my mom had never died, who knows what would have happened. Maybe I could have gone to college! Gotten a decent job!

(CONTINUED)

(Beat)
 Maybe you and I could have a
 perfect life.

CAITLIN
 There is no such thing as perfect,
 Adam. This is your life. You need
 to accept it as it is.

Adam leans across the bed and kisses Caitlin.

ADAM
 You know I love you, right?

Caitlin doesn't answer, and Adam begins to open up the box.

ADAM
 You do know that, right? That I
 love--

EXT. BIRTHDAY PARTY - DAY (1986)

YOUNG ADAM
 --you, too, mom.

Heather smiles and releases Young Adam's hands. He joins
 Caitlin and they run down the yard, past Adult Adam, who's
 surveying the birthday party incredulously.

HEATHER
 Um, excuse me? Can I help you?

Adam turns and is face-to-face with his mother. He seems to
 be in a stupor and cannot answer her.

HEATHER
 Can I help you?

ADAM
 Mom?

HEATHER
 What?

(Beat)
 What are you doing here?

ADAM
 I'm-- Ah-- I'm here for the
 birthday party.

(CONTINUED)

HEATHER

Into mini schnauzers, huh?

Adam looks down and realizes he is, in fact, still wearing his pajamas.

ADAM

I'm-- Ah--

HEATHER

Who did you say you were, again?

He finally snaps back to life.

ADAM

I didn't. My name's Adam.

Heather frowns.

HEATHER

That's my son's name.

ADAM

Really? It's-- It's a great name.

Heather puts her hands on her hips.

HEATHER

Look it--

ADAM

You're mad. Like, really mad. That's what you do when you're mad, you put your hands on your hips. Just like that.

(To himself)

I forgot about that.

HEATHER

Who the hell are you?

ADAM

I told you, my name's Adam.

Heather starts to object, but he speaks over her.

ADAM

Three days from now, you're gonna go to the grocery store.

HEATHER

What?

ADAM

No, please, just listen to me. Three days from now, you're gonna go to the grocery store. Just like you always do.

HEATHER

I'm calling the police--

Adam takes a step closer.

ADAM

On the hill by the high school, there's a drunk driver. He's gonna swerve into your lane.

HEATHER

You leave now, or I'll call the police, so help me--

Another step closer.

ADAM

Just don't go grocery shopping.

HEATHER

What the hell are you talking about?

ADAM

You love your son, right?

HEATHER

Of- of course I do.

Another step closer.

ADAM

Then just don't go grocery shopping.

HEATHER

You're insane.

Adam is close enough that he could touch his mother. He reaches out but stops abruptly. Puts his hand down.

ADAM

(Calmly)

Couldn't hurt, right?

Adam takes one last look at his mother and begins to leave the party. Once he's reached the edge of the lawn, however, he bumps into Young Adam.

(CONTINUED)

YOUNG ADAM

Hey. What did you say to my mom?

Adam peers down at his younger self, clearly uncomfortable.

ADAM

I... I was giving her some advice.

YOUNG ADAM

Why are you in your pajamas?

ADAM

I was just so excited for your party I forgot to get dressed.

Young Adam is not buying it.

ADAM

Hey, kid. I'm doing you a favor, okay?

He turns to go but pauses.

ADAM

By the way, the sweater vests? They just keep on coming till you're 22.

He begins to close the box as he walks away, leaving Young Adam with a bitter look on his face.

INT. ADAM'S BEDROOM - MORNING (PRESENT)

Although Adam has returned to his bedroom, it is conspicuously different; it's more upscale.

ADAM

(Shouting)

Caitlin!

Adam finishes closing the box.

ADAM

Caitlin! Hey, Caitlin! I'm back!

Adam sets the box on top of his dresser, and moves to the closet, where there is a row of crisply pressed black suits.

ADAM

(To himself)

Sharp dressed man.

(Beat)

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

ADAM (cont'd)
Caitlin, I'm back, I think it
worked--

He reaches out to touch one of the suits when the doorbell rings. He jumps visibly, then relaxes and goes to the door.

INT. ADAM'S KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS (PRESENT)

The doorbell rings again. Adam rushes to the door.

ADAM
Coming, coming! Jesus Christ,
don't get your panties in a--

Adam opens up the door.

HEATHER
Is that any way to greet your
mother?

Adam freezes. He's staring into the face of his mother, which is noticeably older. She's smiling.

ADAM
It worked?

HEATHER
What worked?

ADAM
You're okay?

Heather is confused. She laughs.

HEATHER
Of course, I'm okay! Why wouldn't
I be?

ADAM
I... Ah...
(Beat)
I thought you were sick. A couple
days ago.

HEATHER
No. Not me. Must have been
someone else.

ADAM
Yeah. Must have been.

(CONTINUED)

Heather's smile alters when she sees the mini schnauzer pajamas. She looks distraught.

HEATHER
Mini schnauzers?

Adam is dumbfounded.

ADAM
Huh?

Heather points to the pajamas. Adam looks down.

ADAM
Oh. Ah. They were a gift. From
my girlfriend.

HEATHER
I didn't know you had a girlfriend.

She changes the subject reluctantly.

HEATHER
Aren't you going to let me in?

Adam scratches his head, clearly grasping for something to say, and backs up, allowing his mother into the kitchen.

Adam glances around, seeing the kitchen for the first time.

ADAM
Is this all... mine?

HEATHER
What are you talking about?

Adam dashes to the counter and lifts up a silver object.

ADAM
Like this. Whose is this?

He inspects it.

ADAM
Is this a... panini press?

Heather doesn't get the chance to respond.

ADAM
(Excitedly)
I've always wanted a panini
press! Did you know that about me?

HEATHER

Are you feeling well?

Adam sets the panini press back down and dashes back over to his mother, seizing her by the shoulders.

ADAM

I feel brilliant! Better than I've felt in a really long time.

HEATHER

Well, I'm glad. But, why aren't you ready?

ADAM

Ah...

HEATHER

Don't tell me you forgot, Adam!

ADAM

Forgot what?

Heather puts her hands on her hips.

HEATHER

Adam! The ceremony!

ADAM

What ceremony? What are you talking about?

HEATHER

Your promotion!

ADAM

What... promotion?

HEATHER

Your promotion! It's all you've been talking about for weeks!

ADAM

Mom, I don't think I--

HEATHER

Go get dressed!

Heather begins pushing Adam down the hall for his bedroom. He enters and shuts the door behind him.

INT. ADAM'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS (PRESENT)

Adam begins rummaging for a suit. He shouts over his shoulder through the door to his mother.

ADAM
Can I ask you something?

INT. ADAM'S HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS (PRESENT)

Heather responds from the hall.

HEATHER
Sure.

INTERCUT BETWEEN ADAM AND HEATHER

ADAM
Um. Where do I work? Like, what do I do?

HEATHER
You work in that big, fancy building downtown!

Adam frowns. He begins to change into a black suit and tie.

HEATHER
Something to do with computers! Every time I ask you about it, you tell me I should stick to Facebook!

This clearly was not Adam's job before. He looks at himself in the mirror, confused.

HEATHER
You got a job right out of college, though. I know that. Your father and I were so proud.

Adam turns his gaze to the door.

ADAM
I went to college?

HEATHER
Are you sure you're feeling okay?

Adam finishes tying his tie and runs his hand through his hair. He exits the bedroom and rejoins Heather in the hall.

INT. ADAM'S HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS (PRESENT)

ADAM
Mom, I'm fine.

She reaches out and begins fussing over his hair.

HEATHER
Tuck in your shirt, Adam.

Adam rolls his eyes.

ADAM
Were you always this bossy?

Heather smiles.

HEATHER
Were you always this helpless
without me?

ADAM
Yes.

Heather tucks one last strand of hair behind his ear.

ADAM
So, there's a ceremony?

HEATHER
Yes.

ADAM
And you're coming?

HEATHER
You did invite me.

ADAM
Then, ah. Shouldn't Caitlin be
coming?

HEATHER
Who's Caitlin?

Adam is astonished.

ADAM
My girlfriend?

HEATHER
This is the second time today
you've mentioned her, and I've
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

HEATHER (cont'd)
never known you to have a
girlfriend.

ADAM
Really? Never?

HEATHER
Mmm, no. You were always so
involved in your work. Said you
didn't have time for women. You
brought a date to your cousin
Vince's wedding, but that was it.

Adam is at a loss.

ADAM
You know Caitlin!
(Beat)
She was my best friend!

Heather's face is blank.

ADAM
She was at my seventh birthday
party!

Heather becomes upset.

HEATHER
Adam! That isn't funny!

ADAM
Mom, what--

HEATHER
It's awful what happened to
Caitlin, and I know that she was
your best friend, but, honey--

ADAM
What are you talking about?

Heather puts her hand on Adam's shoulder.

HEATHER
Honey. You know Caitlin's dead,
right? You remember that?

Now, Adam is distraught. He backs away from Heather's hand.

(CONTINUED)

ADAM

What- what are you talking about?

HEATHER

She died. A drunk driver on the--

ADAM

--On the hill right by the high school.

Heather gives him a wan smile.

HEATHER

Three days after your birthday.

She reaches out for him again, but he evades her.

ADAM

No, no. No. Something's wrong. There's been a mistake.

HEATHER

Adam--

Adam shrugs her off and heads for the kitchen.

INT. ADAM'S KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS (PRESENT)

Adam goes to the sink and fills a glass with water. He's choking it down when Heather approaches.

HEATHER

Adam. Please tell me what's happened.

Adam laughs.

ADAM

You wouldn't believe me if I told you.

HEATHER

Try me.

ADAM

Okay. Sure. Let's just say - theoretically - you knew someone was supposed to die. And it's someone you love - someone you love a lot - and you don't want them to die.

Adam pauses. Heather takes a deep breath.

(CONTINUED)

ADAM

And let's say there's this other person. That you love a lot, too. Maybe even more. Except you love them in totally different ways, so it's kind of like comparing apples to oranges, you know?

HEATHER

I... think I follow.

ADAM

Okay, well, let's say - again, completely hypothetical - that by saving the person you know is going to die, you accidentally... cause the death of the other person.

Heather closes her eyes.

ADAM

What would--

HEATHER

Adam. I know.

ADAM

What?

Heather opens her eyes and takes Adam's hands in hers.

HEATHER

I know it was you.

ADAM

You... You know? How long have you known?

HEATHER

When I saw the pajamas. Mini schnauzers tend to stick out in the memory.

Adam smiles sadly.

HEATHER

I always thought it might have been you. I never knew how, but I always thought that maybe - somehow - it was you that day who told me to stay home.

(CONTINUED)

ADAM

And it worked.

HEATHER

No, Adam. It didn't work.

(Beat)

Caitlin died in my place. She was on that hill instead of me that day. I've had that on my conscience for 28 years. Watching her parents bury her. Watching them grow old without their daughter. I've had to keep quiet. That it should have been me.

Heather squeezes his hands.

HEATHER

I didn't think that guilt could get much worse, but then I come here today. And I find out that she was supposed to be your girlfriend. That she would have grown up to be the woman you love.

ADAM

But, Mom--

HEATHER

Can you fix it?

Adam is taken aback.

ADAM

What do you mean, can I fix it?

HEATHER

Can you go back again? And let me... Let me go to that hill instead of Caitlin?

ADAM

Mom!

HEATHER

I had a very good life, Adam. Don't you think Caitlin should get one, too?

ADAM

But, Mom.

(Beat)

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

ADAM (cont'd)
I didn't get enough time with you.

HEATHER
And Caitlin didn't get enough time
with you.

Adam takes a deep breath.

ADAM
I just thought everything could be
perfect.

HEATHER
There is no such thing as perfect,
Adam.

Adam closes his eyes for a long time. Heather leans forward
and kisses Adam on the forehead.

HEATHER
I love you, Adam.

She exits the apartment, leaving Adam in silence for a
moment.

EXT. BIRTHDAY PARTY - DAY (1986)

YOUNG ADAM
I love you, too, mom.

Heather smiles and releases Young Adam's hands. He joins
Caitlin and they run down the yard, past Adult Adam, whose
gaze follows Caitlin down the hill.

He purses his lips, sets his shoulders, and approaches
Heather. The little metallic box is trembling in his hand.

HEATHER
Can I help you?

ADAM
Yeah. You can. You can just sit
here and listen.

(Beat)
You're a really great
mom. Seriously. You're really
smart and funny and you do this
thing when you get mad where you
put your hands on your hips...
Okay, no, that's not
important. What's important is

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

ADAM (cont'd)
that someday your son is gonna look
back on his life with you and he's
gonna wish he could get it all
back. But he can't.

HEATHER
What are you talking about?

ADAM
I just want you to know how much
your son loves you. And how much
he's always gonna love you.

HEATHER
Who are you?

ADAM
Someone who knows.

Adam leans forward and kisses the top of his mother's
hand. She looks taken aback.

ADAM
Goodbye.

Adam turns to leave and Heather watches him go.

Adam is at the edge of the yard when he bumps into Young
Adam.

YOUNG ADAM
Hey. What did you say to my mom?

ADAM
I said goodbye.

Adam moves his gaze from Young Adam to Young Caitlin, who is
picking flowers off the lawn.

ADAM
She's your best friend, isn't she?

YOUNG ADAM
Yeah, so?
(Beat)
She's not my girlfriend!

Adam laughs.

ADAM
No, I know she's not. But,
hey! When she starts wearing that
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

ADAM (cont'd)
ridiculous eye shadow in the
seventh grade, don't comment on
it. She'll probably just cry a
lot.

Young Adam clearly does not understand.

ADAM
And when she starts dating that
massive asshole Junior year, just
let her do it, it's just a phase.
(Beat)
Oh! And when she asks you if she
looks pretty at her sister's
wedding, please, for the love of
God, don't say that her cousin
Meredith looks better.

YOUNG ADAM
What?

Adam smiles.

ADAM
Don't worry, you'll be fine. Just
go play, okay? It's your birthday
party. Go play.
(Beat)
Hey, and give your mom a hug.

Young Adam, still visibly confused, turns and dashes away to
his mother. He points to where Adam had been standing, but,
by the time Heather follows his gaze, he is gone.

INT. ADAM'S BEDROOM - NIGHT (PRESENT)

Adam is back, standing in the middle of his sparsely
decorated bedroom in his mini schnauzer pajamas.

CAITLIN
Adam! You're scaring me!

He finishes closing the box and turns to look at
Caitlin. She is sitting on the bed, exactly where he left
her.

ADAM
Caitlin!

(CONTINUED)

CAITLIN

Adam?

Adam ties the twine around the box.

ADAM

You're okay? Like, you're okay? Really?

CAITLIN

That depends. Are you gonna put that stupid box away and come back to bed?

Adam puts the box on the dresser, then leans down and kisses Caitlin.

ADAM

I will! I promise! We never have to talk about that again.

(Beat)

You were right. It didn't work.

CAITLIN

I'm sorry, Adam.

ADAM

It's okay. Really, it's okay.

(Beat)

I did figure it out, though.

CAITLIN

Figure what out?

ADAM

'The past is held within'. I think it means that you can keep the past inside you, you know? Without changing it.

Caitlin frowns.

CAITLIN

Yeah, I think it's time to go to sleep. 'Cause you're talking like a philosophy textbook.

Adam laughs and flops onto the bed beside Caitlin. The pair begin speaking in quiet tones, but the focus remains on the closed box on the dresser, tied shut with twine.