

L Drew

Money Problems

2001, WHITSTABLE, ENGLAND

EXT. STREET- EARLY MORNING

TALIA, a 19-year old girl, is running through the street. A large, aggressive-looking **DOG** following her close behind, teeth bared and barking.

TALIA

Get the fuck away from me! I swear! Fuck off!

Talia knocks into a bin on the street causing her to stumble. The **DOG** bites into the bottom hem of her long skirt. Talia rips it from the **DOG's** mouth and scrambles up, running away again, the dog still on her tail.

Talia runs into an alleyway and jumps up onto a painter's ladder. She looks down at the dog on its hind legs, snarling at her.

TALIA

(yelling)

You fucking cunt! You ripped my skirt! Get outta here!

The dog barks at her again, over and over again. Talia reaches into her pocket and lights up a cigarette.

Card: MONEY PROBLEM

CUT TO:

INT. FLAT- EARLY MORNING

MARY, Talia's 36-year old mother, is sitting at the bedside of a sleeping figure. Her shaky hands are busy with a small bag and a spoon. She carefully spoons out the remainder of white powder in the baggy onto the bedside table in the small flat. Mary shakes the bag empty, rubbing the rest of the residue on her gums after realizing it was the last of her cocaine.

MARY

(whispering)

Fuck.

Mary stands up, grabbing her bag. She rummages around it before dumping the content onto the kitchen table. Mary quickly checks everything and shakes her bag once more. She grabs her driver's license from her wallet and sits back down at the bedside table. She cuts the coke with the card with a smile on her face.

JUNI, Talia's 18-year old sister, talks into the room to see Mary snorting cocaine. She walks up to her mother, grabbing her hands away from the substance. Juni uses all of her force to push her mother into the kitchen.

JUNI

What the fuck are you doing mum? Right next to Seb's bed? I thought you were clean! You told us you weren't doin' it anymore! Gran told us you got help! You lying?

MARY

Darling, I wouldn't lie to you! Does that sound like me?

JUNI

Yeah. It does.

MARY

Since when did you become such a bitch Ni? We both know Seb wasn't meant to be born.

JUNI

Don't say that! You are leaving drugs around! You were meant to get better so we could be a family again. Seb could think it's fucking sugar! He could overdose and die!

MARY

It's his fault, he'd be taking it.

JUNI

You are a child! You were our mum once, now you are just a fucking cunt.

MARY

Whatcha just call me?

JUNI

(whispering)

You are a...

(pause)

(yelling)

FUCKING COKED UP CUNT OF A MOTHER!

Mary reached across the counter top and grabbed a hold of the stem of the wine bottle. She smashed it over Juni's shoulder, taking the rest of the broken bottle and shoving it into her stomach.

JUNI

You've gone insane mum.

MARY

Get outta my flat before you get in more trouble. I'm the adult, you meant to listen to me.

Juni grabs a hold of her flip phone and her small bag before running out of the door.

CUT TO:

EXT. FLAT COMPLEX- MORNING

Juni runs down the stairs, stumbling a bit, having to hold onto the handrail for support. She looks down to see her stomach bleeding, small shards of glass protruding out of her skin. Juni moves into the alleyway, sitting down to take a deep breath.

CUT TO:

INT. FLAT- LATE MORNING

Mary tries to wake up **SEBASTIAN**, Juni and Talia's 6-year old brother, roughly, moving his shoulders back and forth with her shaky hands.

MARY

Get up! Get up Seb! You gotta go! Wake up Seb!

SEBASTIAN

Mum? Is it morning mum?

MARY

Obviously Seb. You're going to Gran's now. Get your shit together.

Seb sits up in his bed, bundling the covers in front of him as he wipes the sleep from his eyes. He looks up at his surroundings,

gazing back at Mary. Mary throws a backpack on his bed with a few pieces of clothes and an old tin lunch box.

SEBASTIAN

K, mum. Where you going?

MARY

Nonna fucking business. Seb, do ya know where Tal and Ni hid their money, darling?

SEBASTIAN

I can't tell ya, they'll be mad.

Mary kneels down to his eye level and grabs his face with her hand, squeezing his cheeks together.

MARY

Don't ya love me Seb? Ain't I your mum?

SEBASTIAN

Yeah. Of course, I love ya. You're my mum.

MARY

Then tell me, love. I promise I won't take it, I wanna know what they've got, that's all.

Sebastian points towards the bed across the room that has a large, purple quilt on it.

SEBASTIAN

Under their pillow.

Mary stands up and walks out of the room, Sebastian gets out of his bed and decides to follow her. He watches from the afar as Mary rips apart a pillow and feathers fly out of it. A small wad of cash falls out onto the bed spread.

MARY

Thank fuck.

Mary turns around to face Sebastian.

MARY

Pack!

Sebastian leaves, leaving MARY alone. Mary lights a cigarette from the pack on the nightstand and starts counting the cash.

MARY

(muttering)

1...5...10...15...20...25...30... Fuck

She recounts the money over and over again, slowly crumpling the money as there is only a small amount of it.

Sebastian appears by the kitchen table with his backpack in his hand. His large jacket, clearly not made for him, was loosely sitting on his shoulders underneath his run down backpack. He looks down to see the glass and rag of wine under his feet.

SEBASTIAN

I packed mum, can you take me there?

MARY

No. You know where she is, no?

SEBASTIAN

I guess so, mum.

Sebastian looks at the small baggy and money that's on the table and attempts to reach over to examine it further. Mary forcefully grabs ahold of the boy's arm.

MARY

Get outta here, Sebastian. Gran should be expecting ya.

SEBASTIAN

You okay, mum? You can talk to us, you know?

(pause)

We do love ya. Me, Tal and Ni. We love ya.

Mary rolls her eyes at Sebastian, letting go of his hand and stuffing the money into her bra before leaving Sebastian alone in the room, him about to burst into tears.

CUT TO:

EXT. FLAT COMPLEX- LATE MORNING

Talia walks along the hallway to see Sebastian sitting down crying, on the edge of the wall. Sebastian clutching ahold of his lunch box and coat, his backpack thrown beside him. His cheeks red from tears. Talia kneels down, sitting herself next to Sebastian and begins to rub his back to try and calm him down.

TALIA

Whatcha doing Seb?

SEBASTIAN

(muttering)

I got to go to Gran's.

TALIA

Mum say that?

SEBASTIAN

(muttering)

Yeah, she ain't right today.

TALIA

She do some'ing else?

SEBASTIAN

Ni and her arguing early I think...

(pause)

Don't know, can't remember. I was sleeping.

TALIA

And?

SEBASTIAN

She found your money.

(starts crying again)

'M really sorry. Really sorry.

Sebastian buries his face into Talia's shoulder, hugging her tightly.

TALIA

Hey, it's okay. It's okay Seb.

Talia runs her fingers through his hair, attempting to soothe him. They sit there quietly for a few moments.

SEBASTIAN
(muttering)

'M sorry.

TALIA
'M gonna take ya to gran's now. Okay?

She gazes at Sebastian, making sure he isn't crying anymore.

SEBASTIAN
Okay.

Talia stands up, grabs Sebastian's hand, and gently takes his bag. Talia slings it over her own shoulder and holds the lunchbox. She helps Sebastian stand up. The two walk down the hallway of the flat complex and down the stairs. Talia sees a few drops of blood on the ground in front of them; she quickly smudges the blood away so Sebastian won't see.

CUT TO:

EXT. STREET- LATE MORNING

Talia holds onto her brother's hand as they walk along the street. Sebastian watches his feet as he plays hopscotch with the lines in the pavement. Talia waits patiently for her brother to move each step. Sebastian looks at the hem of Talia's skirt, grabbing the ripped fabric loosely in his hand.

SEBASTIAN
What happened?

TALIA
You 'member that dog we saw last week, the one by the lorry lot. It chased me down this mornin'.

SEBASTIAN
That scary lookin' one?

TALIA
Yeah, Seb. That scary lookin' one.

Sebastian let go of Talia's skirt, grabbing her hand once again. He looks up to her with a smile on his face.

SEBASTIAN

I miss ya and Ni. You always gone nowadays. 'M always at Gran's. She and Ms.Ame are so borin'.

TALIA

Ni and I gotta make a livin' for us. You at school now, you do well and ya could have a totally new life Seb. You don't wanna be broke like mum. K? You get that, yeah?

SEBASTIAN

I wanna be like you and Ni then.

Talia stopped walking, accidentally causing Sebastian to be slightly yanked backwards. He looks back at his sister. She moves down to his level and places both her hands lightly on his shoulders.

TALIA

Seb, ya' don't. You're gonna understand that one day.

SEBASTIAN

Then I wanna make your lives betta. Can I do that?

TALIA

Okay Seb, why don't ya do that for us?

Talis pats Seb on the shoulder a couple of times before standing back up, extending her hand for him to grab once again.

CUT TO:

EXT. FRONT STOOP OF GRANDMOTHER'S HOUSE- LATE MORNING

Talia and Sebastian stand on the front stoop of their grandmother, **GERTRUDE MORROW**'s home. Talia kneels down to Sebastian, pulling his coat forward to make it look neater and more fitting.

TALIA

Now, what do we do?

SEBASTIAN

Be kind and helpful to Gran and Ms. Ame. Do my homework and eat lots of free food.

TALIA

Yes, good then.

Talia brushes the hair out of Sebastian's forehead, planting a light kiss on his forehead before standing back up. She rings the doorbell and the two wait.

The door opens, revealing **MS. YAMAMOTO AME**, Getrude Morrow's caretaker, who warmly smiles at Talia and Sebastain.

MS. AME

Ohayo Gozaimasu! (Good Morning!)

SEBASTIAN

Ohayo Gozaimasu! (Good Morning!)

TALIA

Whatcha just say Seb?

SEBASTIAN

It's 'Good Morning' in Japanese. Ms. Ame is teaching me.

MS. AME

He is a very good student. Maybe I can teach you and Juni as well. I am sure Ms. Morrow would enjoy your company more often.

Ms. Ame opens the door, allowing Talia and Sebastian to enter the home. Talia hands Ms. Ame Sebastian's bags, giving her a small smile before entering.

CUT TO:

INT. GRANDMOTHER'S HOUSE- LATE MORNING

Ms. Ame gestures to Talia and Sebastian to sit down on the couch across from the loveseat Gertrude is sitting at. Sebastian fiddles with a small figurine he picked up from the center table. Talia looks across the table at Ms. Ame, who hands her a small plate with a sandwich and another for Sebastian. Talia placed the other sandwich on Sebastian's lap, taking the figurine from his hands and placing it beside him so he can eat.

TALIA

Thank you. I should get going soon though.

MS. AME

Of course Talia. You must have a lot to do.

GERTRUDE

Your mother won't do it.

TALIA

I know, Gran. Juni and I are taking care of everything.

GERTRUDE

You are 19, Talia. You shouldn't need to be a mother to your sister and your brother. That is Mary's job.

Talia watches as Ms. Ame slowly and carefully guides Sebastain off the couch and out of the room, leaving Talia alone with Gertrude.

GERTRUDE

Sebastain is a talented child, Talia. You must know this. You want a better life for him, right? I want someone to care for him properly.

TALIA

(defensive)

I am caring for him properly.

GERTRUDE

My daughter, your mother, is an addict. I doubt she is clean and that puts my grandson at risk. You and Juni are fit to grow up and survive, you've been doing that. Sebastian shouldn't have to do that and you don't need another mouth to feed.

TALIA

So Seb gets saved, but Juni and me are left for dead.

GERTRUDE

It's not a choice, I'm telling you what's going to happen. I am not letting another child of Mary's get kicked in the mud. You and Juni are already addicted to those death sticks. It wouldn't be a surprise if one day it progresses farther.

TALIA

Why not help us properly then? You've got money! Why aren't you saving us lot?

GERTRUDE

You are bad children. Your mother raised you with a crude tongue and crude behavior. I'm sorry, I wish that I would have opened my eyes sooner.

TALIA

You's just as bad as her. What if Seb gets taken in by some nonce? He's could be just as ruined as me and Ni. I can't have that! We's need to stick together.

GERTRUDE

You can't even speak properly. If the queen was to have tea with you, she'd be absolutely appalled by your behavior and your tongue. It isn't very lady-like, is it?

TALIA

I'm sorry but why are ya doing this to us?

GERTRUDE

When you see your brother in a cozy house, sipping tea with well-dressed people who most certainly are not bad people, you will be thanking me.

Talia stands up, looking down at Gertrude.

TALIA

I've got to meet up with Ni now, I'll be back for Seb later and we's can talk about this with Ni. Please hear us out.

GERTRUDE

Fine, say hello to Juni for me. Sebastian will be safe.

TALIA

Here. Nowhere else.

Gertrude sips from her tea cup, taking a newspaper into her hands.

GERTRUDE

Yes dear. Here.

CUT TO:

EXT. STOOP- EARLY AFTERNOON

JUNI, Talia's 17-year old sister, leans down on the railing of a stoop in the center of town, peering up and down the road looking for Talia as she lights up a cigarette with her white lighter. Her side bleeding underneath her old, worn coat.

JUNI

(muttering, cold)

Where the fuck are you?

Juni takes out her flip phone and starts to dial a number as someone appears next to her.

TALIA

Hey, sorry 'm late, mum's fucked off again, left me with Seb. Had to take him to Gran's.

Talia takes the cigarette from Juni's mouth and takes a drag from it herself.

TALIA

You wouldn't believe what Gran told me today.

JUNI

What's that then?

TALIA

She's wants to take Seb from us and mum. Like proper take him away, to a new family or somethin' Ni.

JUNI

That legal?

TALIA

Probably. Seb told mum were our stash was so now we don't have money to have a proper scan.

JUNI

Life's really just fucked us in the end, hasn't it Tal?

TALIA

Yeah.

Talia looks down at the ground to see droplets of blood where Juni was standing, she looks up to see her younger sister holding onto her stomach underneath her coat.

TALIA

What's happened to ya? Why ya bleeding?

Talia carefully opens the coat to see a pool of blood in her sister's hand.

TALIA

Ni, what's this? Did mum do this to ya?

Juni covered the coat up with her other hand, the cigarette falling from her hand in doing so.

JUNI

I didn't do shit, doesn't matter Tal!

TALIA

Ni, you have to tell me who's done this to ya.

Talia places her hands on her sister's shoulders, trying to comfort her. She moves her forehead closer to rest on her sisters.

TALIA

You've got to let me know how serious it is, Ni.

JUNI

Mum isn't a nice person when she's outta it.

TALIA

Mum did this to ya?

Talia opens up Juni's coat and looks closely at the wound. There are shards of small pieces of broken glass still sticking out.

TALIA

She smash ya with a bottle?

JUNI

Yeah, she was doing blow right next to Seb. I got pissed off real bad and that twat got wound up.

TALIA

Ni, we should take ya to a hospital or call the coppers.

JUNI

They'll separate us Tal! Remember the pact we made? We aren't leaving Seb behind and we aren't separating. I couldn't do it, Tal. I wouldn't wanna.

TALIA

We got to be sensible. Yeah? This has to be sorted. What 'bout Gran's?

JUNI

Gran's? She doesn't like us...You know this Tal. She likes Seb, you said it ya'self, She wanna take Seb from us! You're being thick.

TALIA

(yelling)

I'm thinking about you's not bleeding to death!

A large truck drives by the two, startling them to silence.

TALIA

We's got to think differently now Ni, I'ma help ya the best I can your way. If it don't work, you're going to hospital or to Gran's.

JUNI

Mum says we can't go there! She says their evil twats, you 'member?

TALIA

You could have internal bleeding, Ni!

JUNI

Internal bleeding? Where'd you get that kinda language from, Tal?

TALIA

You know, them hospital shows. All that drama, people being stupid.

JUNI

Was we being stupid, Tal?

TALIA

No, Ni. You real smart for telling me, okay? Never be 'fraid to call me.
Talia wrapped her arm around Juni's shoulder, helping her walk down the stoop and starting to walk down the road.

CUT TO:

EXT. ALLEYWAY- AFTERNOON

Juni sits on the side of a building in an alleyway, small whimpers coming from her mouth as she presses her wound down to stop any blood from getting out.

Talia walks out from a shop and kneels down next to Juni with several packages of bandages, plasters and ointment. Juni watches as Talia takes out a bottle of sanitiser and carefully puts it on her hands before removing a pair of tweezers from its plastic casing.

TALIA

This is gonna hurt. I'm going to need you to bite down on something.

Talia unbuckles the loose belt around her waist and quickly sanitizes a portion of the belt and gives it to Juni.

JUNI

Why do I got to bite down on ya dirty belt?

TALIA

Ni, we've snuck into the cinema enough, ya got to bite down on something when they take bullets outta people in action films. It's just like it. Don't complain now. Bit it.

Juni bites down on it and grunts in pain. Talia places her hand on top of Juni's head to keep her still as she begins to pull pieces of glass from Juni's skin. Juni's eyes slightly bulge out of her face as she nearly begins to pass out. Talia lightly slaps her on the cheek to keep her awake.

TALIA

You gotta stay awake, Ni. You pass out, ya going to hospital.

Talia watches Juni's eyes begin to flicker and her body becomes limp in her arms. Talia begins to tap on her face again but she is unresponsive. Talia starts to scream at her sister for her to wake up, tears starting to pour down her face.

CUT TO:

EXT. GRANDMOTHER'S HOUSE- LATE AFTERNOON

Talia hobbles towards the front door of the house, hoisting Juni next to her, trying to not have her slip out of her grasp. Her tears are

falling down from her face. Talia collapses on the ground, crying for help. Ms. Ame runs out of the house to see Juni and Talia covered in blood.

TALIA
(weeping)

Help! Please! Please help us! She's been stabbed.

MS.AME
Talia...what happened to Juni?

Ms. Ame kneels down to Talia and rolls Juni's body over.

TALIA
(weeping)
I told ya, she's been stabbed.

MS. AME
(calmly)
Who stabbed her? Talia, it is very important you tell me who stabbed your sister.

Talia looked up to see the front door open to see two people in suits standing beside Sebastian who looked mortified.

TALIA
Whose them?

Talia gestures her head towards the two strangers as she stands up, her head in her hands.

TALIA
Ms. Ame, you trying to take Seb from us?

MS. AME
Talia, who hurt your sister?

Talia looked down at Juni and back up at Sebastian, the two strangers making eye contact with her. The woman turns Sebastian around to face her so that Sebastian doesn't have to look at the ungodly sight in front of them.

TALIA

Our mum made a mistake and accidentally hurt Ni. I wasn't there. I didn't see it happen. She needs help, she needs...I can't help her. I can't with this.

Ms.Ame looks over at the two people in suits and yells to them.

MS.AME

Call 999. Get Sebastian inside, Talia, go with these nice people. Okay?

TALIA

I can't leave Ni here.

MS. AME

You can, Talia. These nice people have to speak to you about Sebastian's future.

Talia looks over at the two people who start to come up to her, they reach out to her and help her move away from her sister. Talia glances down at her sister and struggles against the strangers' grasp. **MR.CHRISTOPHER HEMMING** and **MX.ADA OSEI** sit Talia down on the front stoop.

TALIA

Who the fuck are ya people?

MR. HEMMING

We are social workers here to assess the situation with Sebastain Morrow and your mother, Ms. Mary Morrow. You can call me Mr. Hemming or Christopher. My coworker here is Mx. Ada Osei. Your grandmother called us in due to your mother's ongoing addiction issues. Are you aware of this addiction occurring in the household? Sebastian says that you and your sister are gone quite often.

TALIA

I've got to work to keep us alive! And so does Juni, you ignorant cunts!

MX. OSEI

We are simply trying to understand the situation unfolding, you come here with blood on your hands, saying your sister has been stabbed, what are we to make of the kind of family life you have?

TALIA

Do you's know how hard it is to survive in this place? You aren't gonna help me cause Imma an adult. Gran's not gonna help Juni cause she's too much like me. So, I ain't letting ya take my brother away from us. We need to stick together. I don't have nothing unless I got my family.

Talia stood up from the stoop, glaring at Mr. Hemming and Mx. Osei. She looked across the front yard at her sister and the faint sounds of ambulances with red and blue lights flashing from far away. Talia could see Ms. Ame clutching onto Juni, comforting her, rocking her back and forth.

Talia looks towards the open door to the house and begins to run.

CUT TO:

INT. GRANDMOTHER'S HOUSE- EVENING

She sees her grandmother sitting on the couch half asleep and Talia picks up her brother. Talia runs into Gertrude's bedroom, locking the door behind them. She sets her brother down, patting his hair and face, making sure he was okay. His face is red and puffy from crying. She accidentally smears Juni's blood across Sebastian's face.

TALIA

Seb, I'm sorry you have to be 'part of all this nonsense.

SEBASTIAN

Blood.

Sebastian smears the blood from his face onto his hand and tears start to build up once again in his eyes.

SEBASTIAN

Where is Ni, Tal?

TALIA

You don't got to worry 'bout that. Do you want to live with me and Juni, or do you want a life with new people? We'd still see ya' maybe but you'd be better.

SEBASTIAN

I don't want to live without you.

TALIA

Are you scared of mum?

SEBASTIAN

Yes.

There is banging on the locked door, Mr. Hemming and Mx. Osei both on the other side of the door.

MX. OSEI

Don't do anything rash, Talia.

MR. HEMMING

Are you okay, Sebastian? What is your sister doing?

SEBASTIAN

She's hugging me. She's got blood on her.

TALIA

Why's you gotta take him?

MR. HEMMING

He's in an unsafe situation! You are acting irrationally!

TALIA

What would ya do in my place?

MR. HEMMING

I'd make sure my brother would get the best from the life given to him.

MX. OSEI

You tell us the truth and you'll be able to see your brother and your sister in the future. They will be safe.

TALIA

You are lying!

Talia gazes at her brother, tears now falling from her eyes again. She holds her brother tightly.

TALIA

'M sorry, 'M sorry, I wish life was better. For you, for me, for Ni. I don't wanna let you go.

SEBASTIAN

You don't have to let me go, Tal.

Sebastian kissed Talia on the forehead, similar to what she had done many times before.

SEBASTIAN

It's going to be okay. Ya need to go with what's going on. Something's happening to you, something's happening to me, and Juni, and mum and Gran and Ms. Ame. We's going to try our best, yeah? You always tell me to try my best, and you have done that. I love you, Talia.

TALIA

You's going to leave me, huh?

Sebastian leaves Talia's side and goes to unlock the door. Talia stands up and raises her hands.

TALIA

Fine, I'll explain what happened to Ni and my mum. You's take Sebastian to a good home and me and Ni betta be able to visit.

MX. OSEI

Of course, Talia. You will be able to see him whenever you'd like. You are family. We need to help enact the consequences of what your mother has done to all of you.

Talia moves towards Mr. Hemming and Mx. Osei, she moves her hands onto Sebastian's folders.

MR. HEMMING

We're going to take you to the station to fill out a report.

MX. OSEI

We will help you out as much as we can.

Mx. Osei moves Talia and Sebastian out of Gertrude's bedroom.

EXT. GRANDMOTHER'S HOUSE- NIGHT

Talia, Sebastian, Mr. Hemming, Mx. Osei exits the home. The ambulance is loading Juni into the back. Ms. Ame is climbing in, sitting beside the working paramedics. Talia watches as Gertrude comes out of the door, a soft expression on her face. Talia collapses to the ground in

tears, her brother begins to comfort her on the stoop of the home as the ambulance leaves.

FADE TO BLACK:

THE END