

Rich Ideas

INT. CARLA'S KITCHEN - EVENING

The rusty faucet drips. The worn state of the kitchen and dining area indicate a financial struggle. CARLA (39) sits at the small circular dining table holding a calculator and scribbling on a notebook, clearly flustered.

A stack of receipts and envelopes marked "*Carla Gleeson: Overdue*" scatter the table top. Carla adjusts her glasses while her bun hangs loosely at the top of her head, and she looks at the dripping faucet with a deep sigh.

Carla's daughter, JOSIE (10), walks in through the front door.

CARLA  
Hello, darling.

Josie glowers as she puts away her coat.

CARLA (CONT'D)  
Renee was okay driving you home?

Josie ignores her mother, kicking off her sneakers with added force.

CARLA (CONT'D)  
Is something wrong?

Josie whips her head around to look at Carla. Carla sits up straighter in her seat and Josie exhales audibly.

JOSIE  
(holding back fury)  
Ben didn't like his gift.

CARLA  
What? But we picked it out so carefully!

JOSIE  
You picked it out.

CARLA  
Josie, honey, you agreed with me.

JOSIE  
He didn't like it because it looked cheap.

Carla's words are stuck in her throat as she wraps her head

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

around what to say. Finally, she extends a hand out to Josie.

CARLA

Why don't you come sit with Mommy?

Josie crosses her arms, stiff in her spot at the door.

JOSIE

No.

Carla slowly lowers her arm as her anxiety visibly grows.

CARLA

Ben is spoiled and rude for putting down your gift. No one must have taught him that it's the thought that counts, right sweetie?

JOSIE

You're wrong, because his mom said she didn't like it either.

Carla squints at Josie.

CARLA

Are you telling me everything?

Josie nods. Carla tightens her lips.

CARLA (CONT'D)

I never liked Renee.

Josie's bottom lip trembles. Carla stands up from her seat, accidentally pushing the calculator onto the floor. Flustered, she picks it up and puts it back onto the table quickly. She kneels in front of Josie and grips onto her arms gently.

CARLA (CONT'D)

Josie, you *cannot* let anyone make you feel like you're not good enough.

JOSIE

I know, I hear that on T.V. all the time.

CARLA

Good. What we have is *more* than enough. I've shown you that right?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

JOSIE  
No, you haven't.

Carla's face drops, and she lets her grip on Josie fall.  
Josie takes a step back.

CARLA  
Honey, you're in grade five now so  
you're a big girl. You should know  
that I'm working with what we've got.

Carla quickly looks around and pauses on the dripping faucet.

JOSIE  
Ben's dad got his backpack from  
Portgal.

Carla looks confused at Josie's pronunciation.

CARLA  
Portugal?

Josie shrugs.

CARLA (CONT'D)  
Well yours is *pink* and holds your  
pretty pens, *diamond* notebook, and Mr.  
Teddy.

Josie looks back at Carla's encouraging smile unfazed.

JOSIE  
I think Daddy would have gotten me a  
backpack from Portugal.

Carla looks taken aback, then tilts her head suspiciously.

CARLA  
I think I'll text Renee to let me pick  
you up from now on.

Josie's eyes widen.

JOSIE  
No! No. We didn't talk about Dad.

CARLA  
I didn't ask if you did.  
(pause)  
Who drove you home today, Josie?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

Josie's demeanour falters momentarily, but she straightens up quickly as though Carla had accepted her challenge.

JOSIE

I'm going to sleep by myself tonight  
and I'm going to *call* him.

CARLA

You're going to leave me alone with  
the eyes on the wall?

JOSIE

You're such a baby. Just tell it to go  
away like you told Daddy to, and now  
no one can *fix* the eyes in the wall.

Carla springs up and grabs Josie by the arms again with more force this time.

CARLA

Josie, that is ENOUGH! I don't know  
who put these ideas in your head, but  
it is absolutely unacceptable for you  
to talk to me this way.

Josie looks up at Carla fiercely, but her lips tremble.

JOSIE

Ben had a *big* cake at his birthday and  
his dad hugged his mom and she kissed  
him and they took pictures together  
and we *don't have pictures like that!*

CARLA

None of that matters! I love you and  
you know that!

JOSIE

No.

Josie shakes her head and a tear falls down her cheek.

JOSIE (CONT'D)

I think you hate me.

Carla immediately lets go of Josie and her face loses colour,  
astonished with the words that came out of her girl's mouth.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (5)

CARLA

How could you say that?

JOSIE

You hate me and I'm sure of it.

CARLA

You're hurting me, Josie.

Carla and Josie stare at each other in a painful silence. After too many moments, Carla opens her mouth to say something, but Josie speaks first.

JOSIE

I'm going to sleep.

Josie moves past Carla, wiping her eyes, and goes toward the hallway. Carla watches her in shock as she turns the corner, then looks at the time on the microwave: 6:18pm.

INT. JOSIE'S ROOM - NIGHT

Josie is cuddled with a teddy bear in her bed sheets, staring into space. She turns to look at the wall in front of her where a black, rusty vent is shaped as two eyes.

The eyes stare back at Josie and she frowns uncomfortably, pulling the sheet over her head.

INT. CARLA'S ROOM - NIGHT

Carla lies on her side in bed. The light from the cellphone she's holding makes it clear that she has been crying. She types to a contact labeled as 'RICHARD': *Stop picking up Josie without telling me. You're making it worse for her.*

Carla's bedroom door creaks, and she turns to see Josie standing sheepishly at the entrance holding a night light. Josie looks at the vent identical to the one in her room.

Carla puts her cellphone away and extends an arm out to Josie. Josie leaves the night light next to Carla's phone, and cuddles into the bed with her mother, shutting her eyes.

Carla wraps an arm around her with a kiss before nuzzling into her.

FADE OUT:

THE END