

DIALOG EDITS: PHOENIX FALLING

written by

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CONTEXT - DIALOG REWRITE - PHOENIX FALLING

INT. THERAPIST OFFICE

9-year-old JENNY, tiny on a big leather couch, playing with Buster the stuffed dog.

The Psychologist, MIRIAM SWENSON, slumped in a wingback chair, smoking a cigarette, staring at Jenny. Pad on her knee open to an empty page, pen clipped to the spiral.

Miriam glances at the clock: 4:53. She stabs her cigarette out in a full ashtray, her last drag hissing between her teeth.

She tosses the pad next to the ashtray.

MIRIAM

Your Grandma will want to know what we talked about.

She waits for a response. Jenny bounces Buster on the arm of the couch.

MIRIAM (CONT'D)

What am I going to tell her?

Jenny stops bouncing the dog, looks at the doctor. Sets her little mouth.

MIRIAM (CONT'D)

Shall I tell her you're being a bad girl?

Jenny whispers conspiratorially in Buster's ear, one eye on the doctor. Holds the dog's nose to her own ear, nods, still watching the doctor. Puts Buster in her lap.

JENNY

You're not supposed to tell her what we talk about.

Doctor Swenson leans forward, arms on knees, face to face with Jenny.

MIRIAM

Your Grandma pays the bills, young lady. She gets what she wants. And she wants you to stop pretending.

JENNY

I'm NOT pretending! Stupid!

The doctor stands, makes herself big over Jenny.

MIRIAM

Jenny, your mommy is gone! There is no blue light! There is no magic garden!

(hisses)

Your father is a bad man who did a terrible thing. You have to stop being... ridiculous.

Jenny clutches Buster. Her eyes narrow, lip quivers, tears in spite of her anger.

Miriam relaxes almost imperceptibly. Looks at Buster, cocks her head as though listening.

MIRIAM (CONT'D)

(off Buster)

I know.

(to Jenny)

Buddy knows better. You should listen to him.

Jenny clutches Buster to her chest.

JENNY

His name is Buster!

A stare-off. Two beats beyond comfortable.

Miriam sits, lights another cigarette, looks across the room. It's cluttered and musty, no personal effects. Just books, references, files. She speaks matter-of-factly.

MIRIAM

You know, you're a very lucky young lady to have such a nice Grandma to take care of you. You should appreciate that. A lot of children don't have any family.

Jenny's fingers worry at Buster.

MIRIAM (CONT'D)

That would be a shame, to have no family. Don't you think? Can you imagine what that would be like? All alone? I don't think you can. It's a terrible thing, Jenny. Your Grandma doesn't want that to happen to you. She wants you to be good, so you can stay with her.

Jenny sighs a little, squeezes the dog.

MIRIAM (CONT'D)

But you need to stop this nonsense,
don't you?

She produces a JOURNAL, holds it out for Jenny.

MIRIAM (CONT'D)

I got you something to help. I want
you to write your true thoughts in
this, okay? No nonsense. Just
what's real. How you miss your
mommy. How you're angry at your
father.

Jenny shoots her a look.

MIRIAM (CONT'D)

It's okay to be angry at him,
Jenny. It's reasonable. It's good.
Writing about it will help you
understand that. Every day. That's
the rule.

Jenny flips through the book. Empty pages stare back.

BUZZZZZZZZ! A timer breaks the silence. Jenny JUMPS.

MIRIAM (CONT'D)

I think we're all done here.

She turns to the desk, flips open a file. Jenny hops off the
couch, the journal and her dog clutched tight.

Miriam holds out a folded paper.

MIRIAM (CONT'D)

Give this to your Grandma. Tell her
I'll see you next week.

Jenny takes the paper, heads to the door, pushes it open

MIRIAM (CONT'D)

Jenny.

Jenny turns.

MIRIAM (CONT'D)

Every day.

The door CLICKS shut. The doctor stares at it. Sighs. Grabs a
pack of cigarettes off the desk, plops in her chair, pulls
one out, lights it.