

PHRENIC

Written by

Address
Phone Number

INT. MIND ROOM - UNKNOWN

Tick-tick-tick-

The second hand slowly pushes time.

On the floor in the middle of the barren, white walled room is a young boy no older than 13. He sits crisscross style with his face in his hands. A soft whimper comes from him. This is JASPER.

Looking up, tears run down his face with bloodshot eyes. He sniffles.

In front of him is a rotten steel door that is slightly ajar.

JASPER
Please be okay.

The door.

JASPER (CONT'D)
Please Mom.

Slowly.

JASPER (CONT'D)
I can't live with Dad.

Opens.

Pure blackness greets him followed by the hollow sound of air being sucked out of the room.

THUMP. THUMP. THUMP--

The faint outline of a woman emerges. Blonde hair covers her face, her frame slim like she has pencils for bones. Her stomach and legs all have STAB WOUNDS where the muscle can be seen under the skin. This is MOM.

THUMP. THUMP-- she stops just at the foot of the door.

KELLY (V.O.)
It's okay to let her in.

JASPER
That's my mom?

KELLY (V.O.)
Yes.

Jasper stares at his Mom for a moment, then nods.

She takes two steps into the room and stops.

JASPER
Do you still hurt?

Mom turns her head to the side, curious.

She proceeds to walk towards Jasper and stops just an arm's length away before sitting across from him.

She reaches out, almost touching Jasper's cheek, then retracts her arm and shakes her head-- NO.

Jasper's bottom lip tightens as tears begin to flow.

JASPER (CONT'D)
I'm sorry, Mommy. I'm sorry I
couldn't do anything that night to
help you.

Mom bows her head, looking at her hands, and reaches out.

JASPER (CONT'D)
Can I touch her?

KELLY (V.O.)
Yes, this is how she will
communicate with you.

Jasper hovers his hands over Mom's, hands trembling.

KELLY (V.O.)
It's okay.

Jasper rests his hands in Mom's. Looking up, Mom's blonde hair is now lush, her face vibrant. She no longer looks menacing but welcoming.

JASPER
Mom?

MOM
(choking)
Hey sweetie.

Jasper lunges forward and hugs her, crying.

JASPER
I miss you so much.

MOM
I miss you too, little bug.

Mom hugs him back, tight, then slowly loosens her hug to push him back.

MOM (CONT'D)
I know you have so much to ask and
so much to say, but my time is
limited here.

JASPER
Are you okay?

MOM
Yes. But that's not what you're
here for-- is it?

Jasper shakes his head as he falls to his knees.

JASPER
I blame myself a lot for that
night. I should have stopped Dad.

Mom shakes her head.

MOM
No, no. You couldn't have done
anything, Jasper. I'm glad he
didn't hurt you; it would have
killed me to see you here with me.

JASPER
But wh-

MOM
(cuts Jasper off)
Listen to me. I'm so proud of you
and the man you have grown into. I
still see everything you do here.
I'm still with you baby.

Mom rubs his cheek and cuddles him slightly.

MOM (CONT'D)
Keep making me proud by living your
life, sweetie. I'm okay.

Jasper's lip tightens again.

JASPER
I miss you so much.

MOM
I do too. And when the time comes,
we'll be together again.

(MORE)

MOM (CONT'D)
(beat)
But not now. Okay?

Jasper nods.

MOM (CONT'D)
Keep making Mommy proud.

Jasper hugs her one last time before pulling away and letting go of Mom. Her transformation of dirty hair, stab wounds, and pale skin comes back.

Mom looks down at her hands, then stands and gets SUCKED out of the room with the door SLAMMING as she whisks away into the darkness.

KELLY (V.O.)
What do you see, Jasper?

Jasper stares at the door, tears falling down his cheek.

JASPER
I'm in a room.

KELLY (V.O.)
And what's in that room?

JASPER
Four walls.

KELLY (V.O.)
Is there a door?

JASPER
No.

Looking back at where the door was, it is gone.

KELLY (V.O.)
Is there anything on the walls?

JASPER
Yes.

Tick-tick-tick--

Jasper looks to his right and sees a clock.

KELLY (V.O.)
What do you see?

JASPER
A clock.

KELLY (V.O.)
Good. Now I want you to feel like
you're slowly floating back to the
ground.

The plane walls slowly turn into decorated shelves with
plaques of achievements.

A few windows appear, allowing light to enter the room.

Jasper slowly turns older, MUCH OLDER, late 30s, as he sits
in a chair. He continues staring at the clock.

Across from him a woman appears, seeming to be in her late
20s. She's wearing a flowery dress with short blonde hair and
is holding his hand. This is KELLY.

Soon we are transported back to...

INT. KELLY'S THERAPY ROOM - CONTINUOUS

As the sun rays hit Jasper's face, his eyes roll back and
eyelids flutter shut, and all that is left is-- TICKING from
the clock.

KELLY (O.S.)
And when you're ready, gently open
your eyes, and you will be back in
my office.

Jasper does as such, looking up at the clock that reads four
o'clock.

He turns to see Kelly still holding his hands.

KELLY (CONT'D)
How do you feel?

JASPER
I feel-- different.

KELLY
How so?

JASPER
Like-- I don't quite have the words
to describe it.

KELLY
It's okay, it'll take some time to
get used to that.
(beat)
(MORE)

KELLY (CONT'D)
Now, once you let go, you're
letting go of all that trauma that
you have had pent up.

Jasper looks down at Kelly's hands he's holding, slightly
confused.

JASPER
Like, I won't remember her?

KELLY
No, no. That guilt you've had for
so many years. That part won't be
there anymore.

Jasper stares at his hands, eyebrows narrowing.

JASPER
And I won't see her anymore? She
won't be haunting me in my dreams?

KELLY
The version you saw of her will be
the last you see. Hopefully, what
comes is nothing but good to
follow.

Jasper nods, looking back at Kelly. A slight fear in his
eyes.

JASPER
It's odd, I found a slight comfort
in that.

KELLY
And now you'll be at peace.

Jasper nods looking back down at his hands-- then let's go.

He lets out a deep breath and rubs his hands together.

KELLY (CONT'D)
Okay. Now the homework.

INT. KELLY'S HOUSE, LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

The front door to her house opens and she enters. As she
closes the door behind her, she takes her jacket and scarf
off before looking deep into her house.

She reaches for the light switch and flips it on.

It's just her in the beautiful house.

She turns on the Television.

Pours a glass of wine.

Slumps down on the couch.

Then passes out.

VICTOR (V.O.)
So, are you able to tell me how it
works?

INT. KELLY'S THERAPY ROOM - DAY

Kelly sits in her chair with a man in a suit and tie sitting
across from her. This is VICTOR (M,47).

Kelly pulls herself forward.

KELLY
It's trauma that's set in the brain
and festers. It can be a thing
you're afraid of, a person, an
experience even. I usually have to
sit with the patient and do a few
sessions before getting comfortable
with the idea of diving into their
brain.

VICTOR
And why is that?

KELLY
Because there are some minds we
should never wander through, even
if the person appears to have good
intentions.

Victor pulls himself forward as he nods.

VICTOR
Your-- studies?

KELLY
Methods.

VICTOR
Methods, they are impactful and
seem to be doing wonders for
people.

KELLY
They have.

VICTOR

I was wo-

KNOCK-KNOCK!

Victor is cut off by someone standing at the door of the room.

A young woman, no older than 20, stands in sweatpants and a hoodie. She leans against the frame of the door with her arms crossed over her chest. This is NYLA.

KELLY

Oh, hello Nyla.

NYLA

Our appointment is today, right?

Kelly nods and turns her attention back to Victor.

KELLY

I'm so sorry, we can continue this another day. What was your name?

VICTOR

Victor.

He rises from his seat, straightening his jacket.

KELLY

Here's a card, call me and we'll straighten whatever has been bothering you.

Kelly reaches into a drawer and pulls out a business card. She hands it to Victor who stares at it for a moment, then accepts the offer.

VICTOR

This wouldn't be for me.

KELLY

I'm sorry?

VICTOR

The help you offer, it wouldn't be for me.

KELLY

Then who for?

Victor smiles.

VICTOR
Another day.

Victor exits the room, skimming past Nyla who continues to stand in the doorway.

KELLY
Everything okay?

NYLA
Can I come in?

KELLY
Yes, have a seat. We'll get started.

INT. KELLY'S THERAPY ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Sitting directly across from Nyla, Kelly has her hands out with her shirt sleeves rolled up to the pits of her elbows.

NYLA
And this isn't going to hurt?

KELLY
No, but it will feel very real.

NYLA
In what way?

KELLY
Like me sitting across from you right now. You won't see me, but I'll be able to see everything that's going on and guide you.

Nyla looks at Kelly's hands awaiting hers.

KELLY (CONT'D)
Lastly, don't pull from me. Remember, this is trauma, and the best way to face it is--

NYLA
Head on.

Kelly nods.

KELLY
Yes.

Nyla rubs her palms on her sweatpants, taking in a deep breath before reaching out and hovering her hands over Kelly's.

NYLA
Is it normal to feel scared?

KELLY
Very. I'd be scared if you didn't.

Nyla nods and slowly sets her hands down on Kelly's.

Nothing happens... yet.

Nyla scoffs at this.

KELLY (CONT'D)
You okay?

NYLA
Yeah, I just thought it would be instant? I don't know.

Kelly shakes her head and closes her eyes.

KELLY
I need you to focus on anything in this room. Something that calls to you.

Nyla looks, not landing on anything.

NYLA
Anything?

KELLY
Something that calls your attention.

Nyla continues to look until something flashes at her.

A picture of Kelly with her father.

KELLY (CONT'D)
Have you found something?

NYLA
Yes.

KELLY
Good. Now I want you to focus on that and feel as though your body is drifting.

NYLA
Drifting?

KELLY
Like floating on top of waves.

Nyla's eyes roll to the back of her head as her eyelids flutter shut.

NYLA
I feel it.

KELLY
Good.

Slowly, the walls consume the shelves and decorations until just four flat walls are present.

KELLY (CONT'D)
Now sink.

Nyla's eyes open as she takes a deep breath.

INT. MIND ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Nyla sits on the floor of the room, rising to her feet, not seeing a door or window of any kind-- but a picture of Kelly and her father hanging on the wall.

She looks around the room, confused.

NYLA
Where am I?

Rising to her feet, she looks for a door or window, but finds nothing that allows her to see out of the room.

KELLY (V.O.)
A safe place. What do you remember about your dad?

Nyla looks around the room some more, and suddenly a door appears. It's an all white wooden door with paintings of flowers.

Nyla looks at the door in fear.

NYLA
He wasn't a good dad.

KELLY (V.O.)
How so?

Nyla's hand shakes as she takes a step back away from the door.

NYLA
He was a bad man.

KELLY (V.O.)
Why? What did he do?

The room slowly morphs as a small bed, toys, a desk, and a television fuse into the room.

The door's handle twists and opens-- CREEEEEEEEKING as someone from the other side pushes.

A leg emerges from the darkness, followed by the torso of a man and the face of her father. Having glasses that sit on his deadpan face, he takes only two steps into the room before closing the door behind him. This is GLEN.

Nyla stares at him, frozen.

KELLY (V.O.)
You have to speak to me, what's going on?

NYLA
(soft)
He's in the room.

KELLY (V.O.)
What is he doing?

NYLA
He's just staring at me.

KELLY (V.O.)
Remember, you're in control here.
Not him.

Nyla starts to tear up, shaking her head.

NYLA
I don't know what to do.

GLEN
Get undressed.

Nyla's eyes FILL with FEAR as she shakes her head.

NYLA
Please, Dad. Please.

GLEN

NOW!

The yell makes Nyla jump-- but she begins to peel off her shirt. Then her pants.

Now she stands in her underwear.

KELLY (V.O.)

I need you to know you have control of the situation, Nyla. You have to let this part of you go.

NYLA

I can't. I can't do it.

KELLY (V.O.)

You can, this isn't what you want. What was the last memory you had of your father?

Nyla slowly takes off her bra--

INT. FUNERAL HOME - CONTINUOUS

--which turns into a coat-- and suddenly she's in a room full of people with a CASKET in the front of the room.

She's dressed in all black, standing at the back of the room.

NYLA

Seeing him at the funeral home.

KELLY (V.O.)

Is that where you are now?

Nyla takes a deep breath and manages to muster up the courage to walk to the casket.

As she approaches and walks up to the side, she sees the corpse of Glen.

NYLA

He shouldn't be able to touch me. But when I dream, or try to date another man, I get these triggers tha--

Glen's body reaches up out of the casket, ripping his sewn eyes open to look at Nyla. His hand sits in space waiting for Nyla to meet it.

She takes a step back, baffled.

NYLA (CONT'D)
Oh, my god.

KELLY (V.O.)
What?

NYLA
He's-- I don't. I-I--

KELLY (V.O.)
Nyla, take a breath. You're okay.

Nyla hugs herself, staring at the hand wanting to shake hers.

NYLA
He wants to shake my hand.

KELLY (V.O.)
When you're ready.

Nyla narrows her brow.

NYLA
What do you mean?

KELLY (V.O.)
Leap.

Nyla stares at Glen, who stares at her.

She hesitantly takes a step forward, reaches out, and shakes his hand.

INT. MIND ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Glen suddenly stands before Nyla, as the room drastically changes to a WHITE ROOM. It's just Nyla and Glen; everything else has vanished.

He holds her hand, almost as if shaking it.

Nyla stares at him with fear and confusion.

GLEN
I'm sorry, Ny.

Nyla looks more confused.

GLEN (CONT'D)
I don't want you to excuse my
behavior for what I've done to you,
but I wanted to apologize.

Nyla's look almost turns angry and quickly shoves Glen.

NYLA

No!

She shoves him again, harder.

NYLA (CONT'D)

No! You don't get to do that!

He gets down on both knees as Nyla collapses to the floor.

GLEN

I was a bad father, even worse to
your mother. But, please hear me
out when I say-- don't push your
resentment of me onto other people.
I did that. I take full
responsibility for it.

Nyla shakes her head.

NYLA

Why?

GLEN

Why do I take responsibility?

NYLA

Why did you do it?

Glen looks down at the floor, ashamed of the question.

GLEN

Because it happened to me so much,
I thought it was okay.

(beat)

But it wasn't. None of it was. And
I'm sorry.

Nyla breaks down, curling herself up in a ball, and weeps.

INT. KELLY'S THERAPY ROOM - DAY

Nyla sits in her chair as she lets go of Kelly's hands.

Nyla's shoulders drop as she takes a breath.

She lunges forward and hugs Kelly.

NYLA

Thank you.

Kelly pats Nyla's back.

INT. KELLY'S HOUSE, LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

She opens the door and walks in, setting her jacket on the rack next to the door.

In the darkness we see HUNDREDS of SHADOWS staring at her from within.

She reaches for the light switch and flips it on-- the SHADOWS disappear.

She makes her way to the KITCHEN area where she grabs a wine glass from a cupboard and opens up a bottle.

Pouring a decent amount, she holds onto it as she makes her way to the LIVING ROOM area to sit on the couch.

Turning the television on, she seems to ignore the multiple shadows emerging from behind her to watch her drink.

She sips, eyelids slowly blink.

Another sip, eyelids blink slower.

Last sip and her eyes flutter shu--

RING-RING!

Sitting up as her motor functions kick back on, she is handed her phone by Jasper's Mom.

This does not seem to phase Kelly as she grabs the phone and answers.

KELLY

Hello?

(beat)

Yes, um-- we can set an appointment for whatever date works for you.

(beat)

I'm sorry, no. I can't do tomorrow.

She sets her wine glass down that's nearly empty now and rubs her temples in frustration.

KELLY (CONT'D)

Yes, we can set it for that day. I just can't do tomorrow because I have to take care of some things on my end.

She rises from her seat on the couch and turns to look behind her... It's just her in the room.

KELLY (CONT'D)
Okay great. I'll see you then.
(beat)
Okay, bye-bye.

Kelly hangs up the phone as she looks back at the television. She turns it off and leaves the room, shutting the lights off on her way out.

INT. COFFEE SHOP - DAY

People line up for their daily fix of caffeine. Kelly stands off to the side at the counter, waiting to receive her drink.

She scrolls through her phone, stumbling across an article that states: **"Future of Mind & Body: Finding Your Inner Peace."**

She shakes her head at this as a coffee slides on the counter, a BARISTA (F, 22) is quick to move on towards the next drink.

Kelly looks down, spinning the cup and seeing her name written in Sharpie.

KELLY
(softly)
Thank you?

Moving through the small crowd of people, she makes her way to a table where an older lady sits and is enjoying her cup of coffee.

CAMILA, 56, with curly white hair and a buttoned-up white shirt and black pants, sits with one leg over the other, awaiting Kelly's presence.

CAMILA
About time, I was starting to worry
they forgot your order.

KELLY
No, I just have a long list of
things I like to have in my coffee.

Camila leans forward, spinning Kelly's cup to see the items mixed in her coffee.

CAMILA
Jesus, almond milk, cold foam, four
shots of espresso, caramel driz-
(overload)
Kelly, come on. That's not even
coffee at that point.

KELLY
Oh shush. We all can't be like you,
drinking straight black coffee.

Camila leans back with a soft smile.

CAMILA
You sip on it. You have to delve
into the flavor. Let it dance
across your taste buds.

KELLY
I taste dirt and burnt shit when I
do.

Kelly takes her cup and sips from it.

KELLY (CONT'D)
That tastes like coffee.

CAMILA
Tastes like diabetes.

Kelly shakes her head and looks out the window.

People pass, leave the store, and enter as well. Camila
notices this as she follows Kelly's gaze.

CAMILA (CONT'D)
Has everything been okay?

KELLY
Yeah, I've been staying busy.
Helping.

CAMILA
But what about you? This doesn't
work unless you're okay.

Kelly nods and sips her coffee.

KELLY
For the most part, I'm still trying
to figure things out.
(spins cup, thinking)
I just-- I've been thinking of you.
Helping me stay grounded.

Camila nods as she leans back in her chair.

CAMILA
Any particular reason?

KELLY
I get afraid sometimes.

CAMILA
Of?

KELLY
What if I'm met with something that
I can't handle? Someone I can't
fix?

CAMILA
You're doubting yourself.

Camila reaches over and grabs Kelly's hand.

KELLY
Sometimes.

CAMILA
You helped me Kell. You brought me
peace. You did. God gave you this
gift to help us who--
(beat)
I wouldn't have been able to move
on if it wasn't for what you did.

KELLY
I know.

CAMILA
And for you to not be able to help
others with this gift, even when
things can get dark and scary,
well, that would be a waste.

Kelly nods.

KELLY
I know.
(beat)
I just needed your help to keep
pushing. It can get dark sometimes.

CAMILA
And I'll always be here for you
baby. All you have to do is call on
me.

Kelly nods, picking up her coffee cup and taking a sip from it.

As she sets it back on the table, Camila is gone with Kelly sitting by herself.

KELLY
(to self)
Thanks for the talk.

She rises from the table and leaves the cafe.