

TWINKLING LIGHTS

Written by

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BLUE REVISION - Carol/Table Read
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EXT. NEIGHBORHOOD STREET - NIGHT

Everything is lit up with bright Christmas cheer. Every house on the block is decked out with lights and decorations.

A minivan pulls into a driveway of a house that is a little more sparse than the others. There is only a single string of lights across the porch and a plastic snowman that's seen better days.

INT. SAWYER HOUSE - DAY

A small house, with an open floor plan. The living room, kitchen and dining rooms are all one space, with a sliding glass door leading to the back yard.

The front door opens. JENNIFER SAWYER (36, frantic, frazzled single mother) enters, her arms filled with overflowing grocery bags.

Even though the house is small, the Christmas tree is an explosion of Christmas cheer, overflowing with bright lights and ornaments, some handmade, with a large star on top.

Her two kids TOMMY, 10, and EMMA, 5, follow her.

Emma gravitates to the TV turning it on to a NOISY KIDS SHOW.

Tommy goes straight for the fridge and grabs a juice box, leaving the fridge open. He sits on the couch next to Emma.

Jennifer drops the groceries on the counter. She sees the open fridge and shakes her head, trying not to lose her temper.

JENNIFER

Hey! Close the fridge.

Tommy gets up off the couch.

TOMMY

Sorry, Mom.

He goes to shut the door but Jennifer pulls a half gallon of milk out of a grocery bag and hands it to him to put away.

JENNIFER

How do you forget to close the fridge?

Tommy moves bottles of condiments to make room for the milk. He shrugs.

TOMMY
I thought I did.

Jennifer is too tired to argue.

Tommy shuts the fridge.

JENNIFER
Well, now that you're here, help me
put these away.

Tommy GROANS, but puts his hands out for groceries.

She kisses him on the head, hands him a couple boxes of macaroni and cheese, and nudges him towards the pantry.

He puts the mac and cheese away.

Jennifer shoves the empty bags into a grocery bag holder.

In the living room, Emma is oblivious to this drama, absorbed in what's on TV.

A FLASH OF LIGHT in the back yard catches her eye. She slips off the couch and stands at the sliding glass door.

In the kitchen, Jennifer pulls Tommy in for a hug. When Tommy struggles to get away, she kisses him on the head.

Emma jumps into the kitchen, excited.

EMMA
Mom, Mom, can I go out and look at
the lights?

JENNIFER
I don't know, honey. It's late. And
I have to clean if your granny's
coming over.

She lowers her voice, mumbling to herself.

JENNIFER (CONT'D)
And I really don't want to hear
anything from your granny this
year...

EMMA
Please, Mom!

Emma looks to Tommy, big puppy eyes in full effect.

Tommy SIGHS.

TOMMY
I can take her.

Jennifer thinks about it.

JENNIFER
Are you sure?

TOMMY
Yeah.

JENNIFER
Okay, but just for a couple
minutes. And I want you to stay on
this street. Don't go far.

Emma SQUEALS and runs for the door.

JENNIFER (CONT'D)
And don't forget your jacket!

Tommy picks up Emma's jacket and pulls the door open for her.
He's careful to close the door completely behind him.

Jennifer looks around the house. She turns off the TV and
basks in the quiet for a moment.

She sighs.

She pulls a box of wrapping paper out from underneath the
kitchen table.

She goes to the closet next to the front door. She pulls a
plastic tote down off the shelf and takes it to the kitchen
table. She opens up the tote and takes a seat.

She pulls a box containing a remote controlled car out of the
tote and turns it over in her hands. She smiles.

She pulls a roll of wrapping paper out of the box, and lays
it out on the table, unrolling it.

She digs around in the box and pulls out a pair of scissors,
cutting off a large square of wrapping paper.

From outside we hear a child SCREAM.

Jennifer snaps to attention. She throws the scissors down and
rushes to the front door.

Another high-pitched SCREAM. Emma's scream.

EXT. SAWYER HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Jennifer bursts out of the front door.

JENNIFER

Emma!

She goes down the driveway, looking up and down the street.

Up the street, she can see the distant outline of Tommy as he runs around the corner.

Jennifer runs after him, the lights flashing past.

JENNIFER (CONT'D)

Tommy! Tommy, wait!

She turns the corner.

The houses on this street are very plain with their Christmas decorations. Only a few have put up lights or lawn displays.

It is dark. Tommy stands in the middle of the street. He's staring off into the distance

Jennifer rushes up and grabs him.

JENNIFER (CONT'D)

Are you okay?

TOMMY

She's gone!

JENNIFER

What happened?

Tommy clings to his mother, his voice high and hysterical.

TOMMY

She's gone!

JENNIFER

Where is your sister?

TOMMY

It took her!

JENNIFER

What? What are you talking about?

TOMMY

The lights! The lights took her.

JENNIFER
What are you talking about?

TOMMY
The lights!

Jennifer shakes him roughly.

JENNIFER
Stop! Where is your sister?

TOMMY
She wanted to look at the lights,
but the lights--

Jennifer shakes him again.

JENNIFER
Stop! This is serious. Where is
your sister?

Tommy grabs his mother's wrist.

TOMMY
Why aren't you listening to me?

JENNIFER
Did she go into somebody's yard?

TOMMY
No! You're not listening!

JENNIFER
Did someone take her? Jesus Christ,
Tommy, did somebody take her?

TOMMY
The lights!

Jennifer tightens her grip on his shoulders, ready to shake him again, but he stiffens under her fingers. His eyes widen in terror as he looks behind her and he screams.

Jennifer turns, shielding Tommy with her body, ready to rip apart anyone hurting her babies.

But there's no one there.

Instead, hovering in the middle of the street, is a swarm of light, as if the Christmas lights had removed themselves from the houses and begun to bob around like multi-colored lightning bugs.

Tommy is in a full on panic, pulling at his mother.

She resists him, staring at the lights, her mouth falling open. She's mesmerized, and takes a step towards the lights.

Tommy pulls harder.

TOMMY (CONT'D)
Mom! Don't!

Jennifer looks to her son, confused.

TOMMY (CONT'D)
Mom! Don't! It took her!

JENNIFER
What?

Tommy tries to pull her away.

TOMMY
Don't look at it! It took Emma!

JENNIFER
How?

TOMMY
I don't know!

The lights continue to bob and pulse. The lights flash rhythmically, like the bioluminescence of a deepwater fish.

The lights begin to drift towards them.

Tommy lets go of Jennifer's hand and back up down the street.

Jennifer manages to tear her eyes away from the light show and look back at her son. The look of fear in his eyes triggers something in her and her spine straightens.

Jennifer looks back at the lights.

The lights are bobbing towards them, picking up speed.

Jennifer puts herself between the lights and her son.

A faint WHISPERING sound comes from the

Tommy pulls at the back of her jacket.

TOMMY (CONT'D)
Mommy! Please!

The lights surge forward.

Jennifer flinches.

She turns and runs

They sprint down the street.

The lights streak after them.

Jennifer keeps Tommy in front of her as they run. She sneaks a peek behind her.

The lights are advancing, the flashing getting brighter. The WHISPERING gets louder, and individual voices can be heard.

Jennifer slows.

The whispers get louder and louder.

Jennifer comes to a stop.

Tommy keeps running, but skids to a stop when he realizes his mother isn't right behind him.

TOMMY (CONT'D)

What are you doing? Run, we have to run!

The lights pulse rhythmically, and the WHISPERS increase in volume. One voice stands out: Emma's.

Jennifer pulls out of Tommy's grip, and he takes a few steps back, horrified.

TOMMY (CONT'D)

Mom? What are you doing?

Emma's voice comes as if from a long distance.

EMMA

Mommy!

Jennifer jolts, her maternal instinct forcing her to move, even though there is nowhere to go.

JENNIFER

Emma? Baby, where are you?

EMMA

I don't know!

The lights pulse, and a voice speaks, a collection of human voices from somewhere within the cloud of lights. The lights ripple in time with the words.

LIGHTS

What is your relationship?

JENNIFER

My what?

LIGHTS

Your relationship with this individual. You have an emotional attachment.

JENNIFER

I'm her mother.

Tommy grips Jennifer's hand. Jennifer pulls him close.

JENNIFER (CONT'D)

Where is she?

LIGHTS

She is here.

JENNIFER

Give her back.

LIGHTS

I'm afraid I cannot. She is needed.

JENNIFER

Needed? What the fuck does that mean?

LIGHTS

I am a vanguard of a nomadic race. We are studying this planet.

JENNIFER

I don't give a shit what you are here for, or where you're from. Give her back.

The lights pulse.

EMMA (O.S.)

Come here, Mommy!

Tommy shakes his head.

TOMMY

Don't! It's a trick!

EMMA (O.S.)

It's beautiful, Mommy! Come here!

Jennifer stands, torn between her two children.

JENNIFER

What do you want with her?

LIGHTS

We are looking to see if this planet is suitable for my kind.

JENNIFER

And then what?

LIGHTS

We will take it for our own.

Jennifer pulls Tommy behind her, putting herself completely between the lights and her son.

JENNIFER

No.

LIGHTS

It is not up to you. If we can use this planet, we will take it. Any kindness we show you will be for your benefit only.

JENNIFER

No!

LIGHTS

We can just take it by force. We can take all of you by force.

JENNIFER

Give me back my daughter.

The swarm of lights surge forward. Jennifer turns and pushes Tommy out of the way, and then the lights are on her.

The lights fall on her, and she is stuck, half of her body disappearing inside the swarm.

Jennifer SCREAMS in pain.

Tommy grabs Jennifer's hand and pulls with all her strength. Jennifer is caught in the middle of a game of tug-of-war.

The lights flash and pulse at epileptic speed, and the WHISPERING has changed into a demonic chorus of ENRAGED SCREAMS.

Jennifer struggles against the lights. Her eyes widen in surprise and she begins to pull with Tommy.

Inch by inch, her face contorted in pain, her body is pulled out of the lights. When her body is free, she pulls at her arm.

The lights shift, dimming like a manic Christmas display about to blow a fuse.

Jennifer and Tommy give a final pull, and then they all collapse onto the street.

Wrapped around Jennifer's arm is the small body of Emma. Jennifer lays her on the ground.

For a horrifying moment, it looks like the girl is not breathing. Then she shudders, and opens her eyes.

EMMA

Mommy!

Jennifer snatches her up and hugs her close. The little girl wraps her arms and legs around her mother and buries her face in her mother's neck.

Jennifer stands and pulls Tommy close.

TOMMY

Mom, look.

Jennifer looks up.

The lights are writhing and flashing, uncoordinated. The whispering has devolved into a NOISE.

Jennifer stands, grabbing Tommy's hand, ready to run.

The lights dim, then go out, evaporating into a cloud of ash that is carried off on a puff of wind.

Jennifer, Emma and Tommy stand in the middle of the street, watching the remains of the lights drift away on the wind.

Jennifer pulls her children close and walks back up the street towards the house.

They pass lovely Christmas decorations and festive lights. Emma keeps her eyes down, and Tommy snuffles as he quietly cries. Jennifer just puts one foot in front of the other.

INT. SAWYER HOUSE - NIGHT

Jennifer kicks the door open and sets Emma down on the floor. Tommy hugs his little sister, and she clings to him.

Jennifer touches the faces of her kids.

JENNIFER
Are you okay?

TOMMY
I don't know.

Jennifer nods.

JENNIFER
You're safe now.

Emma and Tommy nod, their faces streaked with tears and dirt.

Jennifer stands and goes to the Christmas tree. She begins pulling the ornaments off the tree.

Her kids watch her, silent and wide-eyed.

Jennifer unplugs the tree, and drags it across the floor, leaving a trail of shed needles. She gestures for the kids to get out of the way.

They step back from the front door.

EXT. SAWYER HOUSE

Jennifer drags the tree down to the edge of the road.

Then she pulls the single string of lights down from the gutters, gathers them up in her arms and takes them down to the road, throwing the lights on top of the tree.

Then she goes into the house, slamming the door behind her.

THE END