

SEVEN SECRETS

written by
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INT. GIRL'S DARK BEDROOM - NIGHT

We will never see the faces of adults. Only the kids.

A door SLAMS. A nine-year-old girl who's lying in bed, CLARA, blinks with a jolt. She rolls over, burrowing into a pile of brightly colored pillows and plush stuffed animals.

CLARA'S MOM (O.S.)
(on edge, but quiet)
They're saying it could be over the
ridge by sunrise!

CLARA'S DAD (O.S.)
(reasoned, calm)
We're not leaving until I say it's
okay.

CLARA'S MOM (O.S.)
Let me out. Please. John.

Clara rolls over onto her back and closes her eyes, pretending to sleep.

CLARA'S DAD (O.S.)
This is what you always do. You get
hysterical.

CLARA'S MOM (O.S.)
This house could be gone by morning!

CLARA'S DAD (O.S.)
Ten percent chance. You're staying
put 'til I get back.

A streak of light from the hallway graces Clara's face for a moment, as her bedroom door opens and closes. Her wavy, strawberry blonde hair matches her freckles. She's frozen...

Until the RUMBLE of a garage door signals that her dad's car is heading down the driveway. She leaps from her bed --

INTO THE HALLWAY OF HER SUBURBAN HOME

-- where she scurries up the stairs, finding a KEY in a huge potted palm tree. She rushes to unlock a bathroom door...

...where her MOM (30's) has been trapped inside.

INT. CLARA'S HOUSE - BATHROOM - THAT MOMENT

CLARA

I gotta pee right now.

CLARA'S MOM

(startled, fake laughs)

I locked myself in! I didn't... know
how! I didn't want to wake you up.

With a nod to the hallway, Clara requests privacy. Her mother holds out a TREMBLING HAND to ask for the key...

CLARA

I'll put it back.

Okay. Her mom nervously steps out into the dark hallway.

As Clara relieves herself, she looks out the bathroom window: a bright, orange GLOW illuminates massive plumes of SMOKE, rising beyond the distant hills into an ink-blue sky.

Clara seems both fascinated and frightened by the sight.

She opens the door. Her mother's FEET, in trendy sandals, pace the hall. She SWEATS through fraying CARGO SHORTS.

CLARA'S MOM

Back to bed, okay?

Clara pushes open the bathroom door: a silent command for her mother to go back in. After a moment's hesitation, she does -- and the girl uses the KEY to re-lock the door.

BACK TO CLARA'S BEDROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Back in her room, Clara climbs atop her TOY CHEST to gaze out her bedroom window. Bright flickers of flame seem to dance along the distant horizon. The forest fire is growing bigger.

Anxious, Clara pulls on her strawberry blond curls.

CLARA'S MOM (O.S.)

(yelling)

CLARA! CLARA!!! I need you to let me
out! Right now! We need to go!

INT. CLARA'S HOUSE - PARENT'S BEDROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Clara's mom pulls two SUITCASES from a high closet shelf, already packed. A pink BAG lies open on the floor.

CLARA'S MOM

(voice shaking)

I've got these all ready to go for us, okay, so you just fill that with your toys, or trophies... your most important things, okay? Grandma's earrings. I need you to hurry. Five minutes okay?

CLARA

Dad said the red powder planes--

CLARA'S MOM

No. Hurry, now, sweetheart. We don't have time.

BACK TO CLARA'S BEDROOM

Clara ransacks her room, frantically choosing her favorite STUFFED ANIMALS and tossing them in the bag. She scans a shelf of TROPHIES and selects just one, along with a framed PHOTO of a koala bear. One necklace, three pairs of earrings. She strips two BARBIES of their outfits, leaving the dolls.

Clara's frightened, but she wipes her tears. Takes a breath.

Years of childhood, smushed into a pink pleather bowling bag.

INT./EXT. CLARA'S MOM'S SUV - NIGHT [DRIVING]

Clara shudders in the back seat. Her mom weaves between police cars and fire trucks. With flashing lights and sirens, firemen coordinate the evacuation of a California suburb.

CLARA'S MOM (ON PHONE) (O.S.)

(through tears)

This is it! Yes! It's happening! I'm going to really need you, okay? Yes! Yeah, I can see the fire from here, and... well, you know something? Believe it or not, it's beautiful!