

THE PACKAGE

Written by

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FADE IN:

EXT. SUBURBAN HOME - LONG ISLAND - DAY

MOVERS unload furniture from a large truck.

Two CHILDREN pose in front of a real estate sign. Their MOTHER, 40, a famous photographer and former "it girl", snaps a photo with an old SLR camera.

The SISTER, 10, is mischievous and often in trouble for taunting her little BROTHER, 5, who is a sensitive soul.

A sticker that reads "SOLD" is pasted across the sign.

MOTHER

Done deal. This is actually happening.

A family-style SUV pulls up and parks. The family's FATHER, 40, a buttoned-up type in stark contrast to his whimsical wife, steps out carrying bags of take-out.

FATHER

(shouting)

Hey kids! Come help me carry this stuff inside.

He approaches the movers.

FATHER (CONT'D)

We've got lunch for everybody in the kitchen. Please, help yourself.

Everyone piles into the house with the exception of one MOVER, who is preoccupied on the phone.

A courier truck rolls up and the DELIVERY MAN jumps out with a medium-sized box. He approaches the mover.

DELIVERY MAN

(interrupting)

Hey, can you sign for this?

MOVER

(covering the phone,
whispering)

The folks who live here are inside.

DELIVERY MAN

Look man, I'm in a bit of a hurry.

The mover nods, signs for the package and places it on top of a pile of other boxes.

INT. LIVING ROOM - SAME DAY - NIGHT

The mother collapses onto a couch -- the only piece of unpacked furniture. Surrounded by boxes, she pulls one close to fashion an ottoman.

The father joins her with two sizable glasses of wine and kicks back with his wife, exhausted.

FATHER

Well, we're in. Cheers.

MOTHER

(forced)

Cheers.

FATHER

I know it's not the city, but we're not far away and it's a good neighborhood.

MOTHER

Did I do something to indicate I wasn't happy?

(sarcastic)

I mean, look at all this space! You could fit our entire apartment into this square footage five times over.

FATHER

We have a yard now - that's something?

MOTHER

We do have a yard. A great yard!

FATHER

Not sure I'm buying your enthusiasm.

MOTHER

It was the right move. Hey, maybe we'll wake up tomorrow and everything will be magically put away?

FATHER

Maybe we put the kids to work while we supervise?

MOTHER

Not a chance. We'll end up with your vinyl collection in the powder room or my Pulitzer in the pantry.

FATHER

Hey, how are things coming along for your show next week?

MOTHER

Disaster. I'm never going to be ready in time.

FATHER

But you have so many great pieces to choose from. Really, some of your best work yet.

MOTHER

It's not easy curating a comeback when you hit your career peak at twenty two.

FATHER

That's not true and you know it. You'll feel better once your studio is set up.

The mother gets up and begins organizing some of the boxes.

FATHER (CONT'D)

Babe, leave it for tomorrow.

MOTHER

I just want to begin grouping things by category. Wait, this one doesn't have a label.

She lifts the box that was delivered earlier by courier.

MOTHER (CONT'D)

That's weird. It's addressed to John Smith. How did this get in here?

FATHER

Old tenant maybe? The owners mentioned they rented this place out.

She places the mysterious package on a bench by the front door and sits back down, nestling into her husband.

MOTHER
You're right, I'm spent. I'll look
into it tomorrow.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

The family of four is unpacking boxes. Coffee brews in the background.

The brother wanders into the foyer and sits down next to the unclaimed box, examining it's packing slip. He lifts it up to gage the weight, shakes it gently, smells it and places it back down.

MOTHER (O.S.)
Breakfast is ready!

The mother joins her son in the foyer.

MOTHER (CONT'D)
Sweetie, breakfast is ready.

BROTHER
What's in the box, mama?

MOTHER
I'm not sure. It was delivered to
us by accident.

BROTHER
What if someone is looking for it?

MOTHER
I'm sure that's the case. In the
meantime, we'll take care of it for
them. Okay?

BROTHER
Okay.

MOTHER
Come on, I've got pancakes.

INT. BEDROOM - SAME DAY - NIGHT

The father is in bed with his laptop open.

He searches for "John Smith New York" in Google, LinkedIn, Facebook - all the usual places. Dozens of search results appear.

MOTHER (O.S.)
Can you pick up the kids tomorrow?
I have an important meeting at the
gallery that might run late.

The mother emerges from the en suite.

MOTHER (CONT'D)
Honey?

FATHER
Yes! Sure, no problem.

She crawls into bed.

MOTHER
Whatcha's lookin' at?

FATHER
I'm trying to find the recipient of
that lost package, but with a name
like John Smith, it's basically
impossible.

MOTHER
Did you call the courier company?

FATHER
I did. And because our mover signed
for it, it shows that it was
delivered successfully.

MOTHER
No one's called in to report it
missing?

FATHER
Nope.

MOTHER
I'm sure someone will turn up.

The father closes his laptop, kisses his wife and turns out
the lights.

A FEW WEEKS LATER

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Everyone is gathered for breakfast.

The father is packing lunches, toast is popping and children
are arguing amidst first-day-of-school chaos.

The mother is reading the newspaper, distracted.

SISTER

(teasing)

I bet you'll be the smallest in
your class.

BROTHER

No I won't. I'm almost three whole
feet.

MOTHER

(distracted)

Stop teasing your brother.

FATHER

You're going to make a lot of
friends. Just be yourself.

The mother tosses the paper into a bin, fixes two to-go mugs
of coffee and hands one to her husband.

MOTHER

Do you think we should open the
package? It's been a few weeks.

FATHER

Wait, what did the review say?

MOTHER

I don't want to talk about it.

FATHER

Oh babe.

MOTHER

It's fine.

The father puts his arm around his wife and pulls her in
warmly.

MOTHER (CONT'D)

(pivoting)

The package - are we opening it, or
what? What do you think, kids?

FATHER

Noway. Remember the Fedex package
Tom Hanks didn't open in Castaway?

MOTHER

Definitely not.

FATHER

It could be something important.

SISTER

I think we should open it!

FATHER

No, you kids leave it alone.

MOTHER

Your father is right. Finish up,
the party wagon pulls out in five.

The brother slides off his stool and meanders into the foyer.

He runs his tiny fingers across the package, slowly sounding out "John Smith" in a low whisper.

The rest of the family files in. The mother's old SLR camera hangs from her neck.

MOTHER (CONT'D)

Go stand with your brother. And smile, it's the first day of school!

The brother picks up the box and delivers a forced but endearing grin.

SISTER

Put the box down, silly.

BROTHER

No, I want it in the picture.

MOTHER

It's fine, honey. Everybody say I love learning!

BOTH CHILDREN

(unenthusiastic)

I love learning.

2 MONTHS LATER

EXT. FAMILY HOME - NIGHT

It's Halloween and the house is decked out in spooky decor. Intricately carved jack-o-lanterns litter the front walkway.

INT. FOYER - SAME NIGHT

The father is handing out candy to the constant stream of trick-or-treaters as the mother gets the children suited up.

The sister is dressed as a pirate and her brother, a parrot.

A small jack-o-lantern sits on top of the package, which hasn't moved from the bench in the foyer.

The children are ready to roll.

FATHER

You two look great!

MOTHER

Wait, let me get a quick photo.
Have you seen my camera?

The mother searches as the children get impatient.

SISTER

Mom, let's go!

MOTHER

Here it is. Okay, say aye aye,
captain!

BOTH CHILDREN

(unenthusiastic)
Aye aye captain.

MOTHER

Come on, give me your best Jack
Sparrow!

The children pose and humor their mother. The package, with it's jack-o-lantern on top, is in frame.

ONE MONTH LATER

INT. DINING ROOM - NIGHT

The family is hosting Thanksgiving dinner and the home is decorated elaborately. GUESTS are digging into dessert.

GUEST

So how are you adjusting to Long
Island? Must feel like you're on
another planet.

MOTHER

It's been great, actually. Very productive. And the kids love it.

GUEST

Do you have any shows or big shoots planned?

The father glances up from his pie and smiles reassuringly at his wife.

MOTHER

I do, yeah. A few really exciting projects coming up.

(shoots to her feet)

That reminds me, we need a group photo.

INT. FOYER - SAME NIGHT

The mother locates her camera near the front door.

The package is adorned with seasonal embellishments. She takes a photo of it just as her husband appears.

FATHER

We've already ripped through one pumpkin pie, going to grab another. Hey, you alright?

MOTHER

Yep, just getting my camera.

FATHER

I see you've decorated the package.

MOTHER

(nostalgic)

My grandparents had this weird stuffed mountain goat above their fireplace when we were kids. We'd always decorate it for each holiday.

FATHER

That is weird. Look, I know this move hasn't been easy. And you've run into some creative blocks lately.

MOTHER
 (dismissive)
 We better get back in there. You're
 on pie, I'm on group photo.

FATHER
 Coming right up.

A FEW WEEKS LATER

INT. FAMILY HOME - LIVING ROOM - DAY

The holidays are in full swing and still no one has claimed the package, which remains on the same bench in the foyer and is now festively festooned with bows and tinsel.

The father is taking measurements where the Christmas tree will sit while the children wait impatiently to go out and choose their tree.

SISTER
 (whining)
 Come on, dad. All the good trees
 are going to be gone.

FATHER
 Not true, they replenish them
 daily.

SISTER
 Can we go now?

FATHER
 Hang tight, I just want to see how
 much space we have...
 (scoops up his son)
 ...so we can choose the biggest
 tree possible, right champ?

The little boy giggles in his father's arms.

The mother emerges bundled up and ready to go - camera in hand.

MOTHER
 Okay, team! Let's go find our tree.

The family files into the foyer to finish getting dressed for the elements.

SISTER
 Can we open this package, already?
 It looks like a present.

BROTHER
 (protective)
 Don't touch it!

SISTER
 I was just kidding.

BROTHER
 No you weren't.

The brother places his arm lovingly around the box.

BROTHER (CONT'D)
 (adamant)
 We're not opening it.

FATHER
 (firm)
 No one is opening it.

MOTHER
 You're absolutely right, honey.
 Your sister was just teasing.

FATHER
 Your sister may be getting a lump
 of coal in her stocking.

MOTHER
 Alright, you three. Let's get a
 quick snap before we head out.

The father lifts both children in his arms and the mother snaps a photo. The package is in frame.

INT. LIVING ROOM - SAME DAY - NIGHT

A bare Christmas tree stands in the same spot the father surveyed earlier. It's top branches gently graze the ceiling.

The mother arrives with boxes of ornaments, placing them down on a coffee table.

MOTHER
 Lights! Forgot the lights.

She leaves for a beat and returns with a few strands of bulbs draped over her shoulders.

MOTHER (CONT'D)
 (shouting)
 Guys! It's time to trim the tree!

Winding her way around the patchy Ponderosa, she thoughtfully applies the strands of tiny sparks, spacing each row just so.

The kids pile into the living room excitedly, as the father balances a tray of eggnog.

FATHER

We need some holiday tunes!

He puts on a record as the kids take stock of their favorite ornaments.

MOTHER

Lights are done. You guys do the ornaments and dad will put on the star.

SISTER

(patronizing)

Don't forget to space them out.

BROTHER

I know how to do it!

FATHER

Come on, you two. Where's your Christmas spirit?

MOTHER

I know where mine is. Right here in this eggnog. What did you put in this?

FATHER

Santa's recipe. Trade secret.

The parents kick back and enjoy their spiked libations as the kids go to work.

The brother notices one ornament has already made it's way to the tree.

BROTHER

Hey, ornaments are our job mama.

MOTHER

I know, the tree is your canvas now, honey.

BROTHER

Why did you hang your ornament?

MOTHER

What ornament?

The sister joins her brother at the back of the tree. A heart-shaped ornament with the word "Mama" across it glistens in the light.

SISTER

The ornament he made you last year.

The mother gets up to see for herself.

MOTHER

Strange, I didn't put that there.

She watches the ornament twist and twinkle for a beat. Unfazed, the kids continue to trim the tree as the father sings along horribly off-key to the holiday music.

A FEW MONTHS LATER

EXT. FAMILY HOME - DAY

Winter lingers on. Snow falls as the father shovels the driveway.

INT. KITCHEN - SAME TIME

The mother is making heart-shaped pancakes.

MOTHER

(shouting)

Kids! Breakfast is ready.

The sister and brother burst into the room. The brother grins ear-to-ear in delight.

BROTHER

Yum!

MOTHER

Happy Valentine's Day, my loves.
Have you packed all your notes for
your friends today?

SISTER

Yep!

BROTHER

(teasing)

For all your boyfriends.

SISTER

Gross! Pass the syrup, weirdo.

MOTHER

Be nice. It's supposed to be a day
to celebrate love. Even for your
brother.

The father comes in from the cold and kisses his wife.

FATHER

Good morning, my talented
Valentine.

She lovingly hands him a coffee and dishes up some pancakes.

INT. FOYER - SAME DAY

The brother is first to the front door, ready for school. He carefully places a Valentine on top of the package, which still sits on the same bench, unclaimed. The card is addressed to John Smith.

A beat later, the father and sister fly through the foyer, grabbing the brother en route.

FATHER

Running late, let's go kids.
(shouting)
Bye, babe!

MOTHER

Have a good day, everybody!

The mother notices the note her son left on the box, locates her camera and takes a photo.

INT. DARKROOM - SAME DAY

A red light casts a warm hue over the mother's face, as she processes photos in her studio.

She watches the wilted paper float and glisten in a tray of liquid until an image of the photo she just took renders.

With a set of tongs, she gently lifts the photograph and hangs it to dry, alongside several other images -- a growing collection of photos of her family with the package. She stands back to observe.

A FEW MONTHS LATER

INT. FAMILY HOME - FOYER - DAY

Children in bunny ears run rampant.

A basket filled with chocolate eggs sits on top of the package, which still remains unclaimed.

As children stream in and out of the foyer, snatching eggs from on top of the package and filling their little baskets, the mother snaps several photos.

INT. FOYER - SAME DAY - NIGHT

The sister, donning pajamas and ready for bed, sneaks into the foyer.

She begins handling the package, tugging at the masking tape that has held it together for many months now.

SISTER

(whispering)

I can re-tape this. No one will notice.

She pulls at the tape as her brother busts in on her.

BROTHER

(pleading)

No! Stop it!

(shouting)

Mama! Dad!

Both parents run into the foyer, pulling on their robes.

FATHER

What's going on in here?

BROTHER

(emotional)

She's trying to open it!

The mother scoops up her son and tries to console him.

FATHER

No one is opening anything.

The father sits his daughter down to reason with her.

FATHER (CONT'D)

How would you feel if you lost something? Your backpack. Your diary. And someone else opened it. How would you feel?

SISTER
(sheepish)
Not very good, I guess.

FATHER
That's right. Not very good at all.

SISTER
I'm sorry, dad.

FATHER
It's alright. Okay, everybody, time
for bed.

The mother shuts off the lights and the family turns in.

INT. BEDROOM - SAME DAY - NIGHT

Both parents are in bed reading. The mother puts down her book.

MOTHER
He's become quite protective of the
package, hasn't he?

FATHER
He's a sensitive kid. Just like his
mother.

MOTHER
The house is growing on me.

FATHER
(warmly)
I know.

They kiss goodnight.

A FEW MONTHS LATER

EXT. FAMILY HOME - DAY

It's Fourth of July and the house is decked out in Americana.

INT. FOYER - SAME DAY

True to form, the mother is decorating the package, which still remains a lost entity. Her husband catches her in the act.

FATHER

Oh, man. It's like the mystery package has become a fifth member of this family.

MOTHER

I was hoping for a dog, but I suppose this is easier to house train. Here, take my photo.

She hands him her camera and poses next to the package, wearing her best red, white and blues. The father snaps a few photos.

FATHER

It's been almost ten months. Maybe we should we open it?

MOTHER

(teasing)

What about Tom Hanks?

FATHER

Right. What if it's something silly? Like a shower curtain? Or, some bizarre eBay memorabilia, like Elvis' toilet seat cover?

MOTHER

Definitely a case for not opening it.

The father extends his hand in a gentlemanly manner.

FATHER

Come with me, young lady. I have a very patriotic pyrotechnic display queued up and ready to blow.

The couple head out towards to the backyard arm-in-arm.

A FEW MONTHS LATER

INT. FAMILY HOME - FOYER - DAY

It's Labor Day and the family is hosting a barbecue. FRIENDS and NEIGHBORS stream past the box en route to the backyard.

EXT. BACKYARD - SAME DAY

The father is manning the grill as the mother meanders over with two bottles of beer.

MOTHER

Cheers.

FATHER

Cheers.

MOTHER

Remember to keep the veggie burgers away from the beef burgers.

FATHER

Way ahead of you. I've strategically separated them with the veggie skewers no one will eat.

MOTHER

Genius.

Kids run past, chasing each other.

FATHER

You know, it's been over a year.

MOTHER

Since we moved in? I know, time has flown by...

FATHER

(interrupting)

No, since we got the package. And moved in.

MOTHER

Wow, I guess it has been.

FATHER

We should open it? Maybe we'll find a clue that leads us to the recipient?

MOTHER

Or, we'll find a shower curtain.

FATHER

Or, Elvis' toilet seat cover.

The father carries a tray of barbecue to a nearby table.

FATHER (CONT'D)

Hot off the grill! Help yourselves, everybody.

INT. BEDROOM - SAME DAY - NIGHT

The father is in bed reading. His mobile rings.

FATHER

Hello? Yes, this is he. Wow, it's great to hear from you! We have it, yes. Completely unopened.

The mother pops her head out from the en suite, curious.

FATHER (CONT'D)

Tomorrow should be fine. Alright, John. Thanks for calling.

She jumps onto the bed.

MOTHER

Was that him?

FATHER

Yep. Turns out he's been trying to track the package down all this time.

MOTHER

How did it happen? I mean, what was the mix-up?

FATHER

Not sure. He has a receipt from the courier service, though. He'll be by tomorrow to pick it up.

MOTHER

(excited)

Did he say what was in it?

FATHER

(puts down his book)

Babe, I didn't ask.

MOTHER

Aren't you curious?

FATHER

Sure, but we may never know what's in that box.

MOTHER

Would it be rude to ask him?

FATHER
 (picks his book back up)
 Yes.

MOTHER
 You're right.

The mother lies back in bed, contemplative.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

The brother is sitting by the window staring out onto the street. He holds the package close to his chest.

BROTHER
 (whispering)
 We'll miss you, but you have to go
 home now.

We see a car pull up. A beat later, a man steps out.

JOHN SMITH, 60s, refined in a suit and tie checks his phone and begins walking towards the house.

The brother breathes in sharply.

BROTHER (CONT'D)
 (shouting)
 He's here!

The rest of the family rush into the living room.

The doorbell rings, causing everyone to jump a little.

MOTHER
 Everybody stay put. I'll get the
 door.

INT. FOYER - SAME DAY

The mother peers out of the peep hole and straightens her shirt before pulling the door open.

MOTHER
 Hello!

JOHN SMITH
 Hello.

MOTHER

You must be John, you spoke to my husband on the phone. About your misplaced package?

JOHN SMITH

That's right.

MOTHER

Please, come in.

JOHN SMITH

I really shouldn't. I don't mean to be rude, but I've got a plane to catch.

MOTHER

Oh! Of course.

The rest of the family piles into the foyer, as if on cue.

JOHN SMITH

Hello, everyone.

FATHER

Hi there, we spoke on the phone. I'm so glad we were able to connect with you after all this time.

JOHN SMITH

Me too.

The mother bends down to her son.

MOTHER

Honey, can you please hand the package to Mr. Smith?

The brother nods and carefully lifts the package to the strange man standing before him.

John Smith smiles and bends down to meet the brother's gaze.

JOHN SMITH

Thank you for taking such good care of it.

He takes the package from the boy's gentle grip.

BROTHER

(low voice)
You're welcome.

The mother kisses her son on the cheek.

JOHN SMITH

I'd like to offer you some sort of compensation. A thank you for being so respectful and not opening it.

He hands the mother a check.

MOTHER

Oh, no. That's very kind, but we're happy to help.

JOHN SMITH

I insist.

FATHER

Seriously, not necessary.

MOTHER

Oh! I do have something for you, though.

The mother leaves for a beat and returns with a large envelope.

MOTHER (CONT'D)

Here you go. Please, don't open it until later, I'll be embarrassed.

JOHN SMITH

Alright.

He carefully tucks the envelope under his arm.

JOHN SMITH (CONT'D)

Thank you, again.

FATHER

No problem at all, really. Have a safe flight.

John walks back towards his car. The brother watches him from the front door.

He turns to wave at the boy and smiles. The brother waves back.

INT. AIRPORT LOUNGE - SAME DAY - NIGHT

John is sitting alone at a table as hasty travelers pass by. The package sits on the table next to him.

He finishes his drink before pulling the envelope the mother gave him out from his carry-on.

Examining it for a beat, he opens it to reveal a stack of photographs.

Flipping through the images, he endears himself to the family posing with his package during each holiday or special occasion over the past year.

He laughs, at first, until tears begin to well in his eyes.

INT. FAMILY HOME - BEDROOM - NIGHT

The father is sitting in bed with his laptop open.

He scrolls through a seemingly endless list of email until he notices something from a John A. Smith, subject title "Thank you."

JOHN SMITH (V.O.)

Thank you again for the care and respect your family has shown over the past year. I can't begin to express my gratitude, particularly the photographs you were kind enough to share with me.

His eyes widen.

FATHER

Babe? Can you come here please?

The mother emerges from the en suite and joins the father in bed.

MOTHER

What is it?

FATHER

It's a note from John Smith. Here.

He pushes his laptop towards her.

JOHN SMITH (V.O.)

The package contained the ashes of my dear mother. She loved holidays and special occasions. Above all else, she valued family. To know she spent this past year cared for and, in some small way, part of your family gives me an immeasurable sense of relief and peace. I can't thank you enough for your kindness. Sincerely, John.

The mother slowly closes the laptop. The father wraps his arm around her and pulls her in close.

ONE MONTH LATER

INT. ART GALLERY - MANHATTAN - NIGHT

The room is crowded as revelers circulate and peruse a buzzy photography exhibition.

An eclectic mix of art purveyors sip on passed champagne as the mother watches intently from a quiet corner.

A beat later, we reveal the photographs - curated chronologically - documenting her family's journey with the package.

The mother, elated by the renewed interest in her work, smiles to herself.

MOTHER
(whispering)
Thank you.

FADE OUT.