

FAMILY PORTRAIT (SAMPLE)

Written by

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FAMILY PORTRAIT

FADE IN:

INT. THE JONES' HOME

Extreme close up on a little girl's fingers, DINAH aged 10, fidgeting with a puffy dress. Her mother, GLYNIS' hand taps her child.

GLYNIS

Stop that. Be still.

Extreme close up on the shiny ring on Glynis' finger as she tightens the bow on Dinah's head.

DINAH

You won't be able to see it anyway.

Extreme close up on a man's hands, PAUL, as he sets the timer on an camera circa 1979.

PAUL

Hold your smiles.

Extreme close up on his hands as he pulls his wife closer to him and touches his daughters shoulder.

The FLASH whites out the screen. It forms like a polaroid into the image of a mantel. A frame prominently displayed, holds the picture that we just witnessed being taken. Father, Mother, Daughter all rigid but tucked close together and smiling.

TITLE: FAMILY PORTRAIT

DINAH (O.S.)

(sings)

*You better watch out. You better
not cry. You better not pout I'm
telling you why.*

The photo time lapses twice aging everyone in the photo by two years as the credits appear on the mantel beside the frame. The family is similarly close. Tinsel and holly decorate the mantel around it.

DINAH (O.S.) (CONT'D)

(sings)

It's the most wonderful time-

PARTY GUESTS ENSEMBLE (O.S.)
 (sings along)
Of the year.

Photo time lapses. The family is still close, Dinah's a teen and her face shows that she hates the dress she's wearing.

GLYNIS (O.S.)
 No! Absolutely not. No daughter of mine-

Photo time lapses. Dinah is wearing what she wants and Paul is in the center creating a clear divide between Mother and Daughter.

GLYNIS (O.S.) (CONT'D)
 GO TO YOUR ROOM AND PRAY FOR FORGIVENESS!

A door slams.

Photo time lapses, Dinah is pregnant and barely hiding her baby bump with a Christmas stocking. She stands to the side of Paul and Glynis. All smiles seem forced.

DINAH (O.S.)
 (sings)
*Round yon virgin, mother and child.
 Holy infant-*

Photo time lapses and a baby cries O.S. This photo Dinah is holding a baby, HANNAH. Glynis and Paul stand to the side. The four look like two separate families.

GLYNIS (O.S.)
 Give her to me you're not holding her right.

Photo time lapses several times almost as if the baby is being handed over 'stock motion style' aging Hannah from baby to 7 years old.

HANNAH (O.S.)
 (sings)
We wish you a merry Christmas. We wish you a merry Christmas.

DINAH (O.S.)
 (sings)
We wish you a merry Christmas.

Paul and Glynis' stand on either side of Hannah all seem genuinely happy. Dinah doesn't seem like she is meant to be in the photo.

A maid crosses the screen dusting the mantel transforming it into a different mantel.

SLAM. The wall vibrates and the photo collapses on the mantel.

PAUL (O.S.)
LET GO. Let go NOW!

O.S. Sounds of a scuffle and crying.

The photo is lifted up by a maid and a massive time lapse has occurred aging Hannah to a teen. The frame holds a picture of Glynis, Paul and Hannah. Dinah is noticeably absent.

PAUL (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Everyone say Cheese!

PARTY GUESTS ENSEMBLE (O.S.)
Chee-se!

A FLASH whites out the screen and fades into the harsh light of day. Close up on Dinah's hand holding a postcard of the group photo which reads: "You're Invited".

A large label reads "Royal Mail Redirection - First Class Expires: February 2021."

The photo on the postcard features Dinah, although the label almost covers her entirely, her mother, father, daughter and a group of mostly white people all dressed festively. Dinah stands out in the photo as the only person wearing blue.

Dinah considers throwing away the invite but bites her lip staring hard at Hannah and decides against it.

DINAH is now a 45 year old brunette who looks like she would clean up well if she ever managed to clean up. With the postcard she starts walking from the mail station of her flat complex towards her building.

INT. AIRPLANE - SAME

CU. On hands holding a phone taking a photo of HANNAH, a 29 year old who is obviously used to luxury. Hannah turns her neck pillow just-so and then pretends to be asleep. The sound of the camera is her cue to perk up. She smiles.

HANNAH
I don't get paid unless they can see the logo.

She reaches over for the phone from a stranger who we only see the back of.

HANNAH (CONT'D)

Thank you.

CU. On her manicured fingers as she accesses her Instagram account. She has thousands of followers and is verified. She posts the picture with the caption: "2hrs in to a 7hr flight. Cheers @neckpillow it's too early for this for the Zzz! #holidays #manchesterbound" The post receives instant likes. She seems pleased with herself and sits back in her luxury seat.

Beside her is a YOUNG FATHER, African-American, holding a baby. Hannah longingly watches how tender the man is with the infant. Her focus is not on the baby but on the man's gentle touch.

HANNAH (CONT'D)

You're so good with her.

The Young Father seems surprised he's being engaged.

YOUNG FATHER

It's funny how no one says that to a woman.

HANNAH

Huh?

YOUNG FATHER

She's my daughter. I'm not a babysitter. I'm her father. So what does that mean, I'm 'good' with her?

HANNAH

Alright, don't get your pants in a bunch. I wasn't trying to get into gender politics with you man. She just looks really peaceful. You seem like you have it together. That's all.

YOUNG FATHER

But why wouldn't I have it together?

HANNAH

I don't know. I mean, I wouldn't. I wouldn't know the first thing to do with a baby. My boyfriend wants kids. I'm not sure.

(MORE)

HANNAH (CONT'D)

There are just so many ways to screw it up. Parenting is insane. It's for the big hearted and the insane.

The Young Father is softened by Hannah's ramble of insecurity, realizing she was projecting and not targeting him.

YOUNG FATHER

You just do the best you can. It's never going to be perfect.

HANNAH

Right? There's no real perfect family. I mean, the Obama's look close but it can't be easy having your dad be the President and your mum's got, what? Two ivy league degrees. You really gotta do something special to make someone proud in that family, right? Like discover Uranium or something.

YOUNG FATHER

I guess.

Hannah sits back realizing the Young Father really doesn't want to talk and she has a feeling of rejection that is rare for her. She doesn't like it.

INT. DINAH'S FLAT - MORNING

A modest flat with an eclectic artsy vibe. Dinah doesn't look any more prepared for the day.

SERIES OF SHOTS - TIDYING UP

1) Dinah hand-washes two wine glasses at a double sink. Paint brushes dry on the counter.

2) Dinah takes a bag of shrimp from the freezer and puts it in the fridge.

3) Dinah dusts and sings along with a Lady Gaga song, "Bad Kid" purposefully making her way over to a record player. She pauses dancing beside the accent table it sits on as the record begins to skip. She gently tips the table and lets it go knocking the record back on track. She dances away.

4) CU. On Dinah's hands as she straightens a picture frame on a the mantel (not from opening credits).

The photo is at the Woman's March. In it, Dinah wears a 'pussy' hat and Hannah is bent over with laughter.

5) Dinah wearing dark glasses, she holds a paintbrush to her nose and raises an eyebrow taking a selfie. She laughs to herself and hits send.

INT. AIRPLANE - SAME

The phone buzzes on Hannah's lap. She receives Dinah's photo and raises and shakes her head. She looks at the silly photo and then at the doting father that sits beside her.

HANNAH

This is my mum.

Hannah shares the photo she received.

YOUNG FATHER

(alarmed)

Is she pretending to be Hitler?

HANNAH

No. She's...well...

(beat)

I'm staying with her for the holidays this year.

YOUNG FATHER

(uncomfortable)

Ok? That's nice.

Hannah looks at the photo uncertain of how 'nice' it will be. The man turns away from Hannah as much as possible.

INT. MAN AIRPORT - MORNING

Dinah anxiously waits by the bustling threshold of the terminal exit.

A few feet away an older woman stands with a child holding a sign that reads "Welcome Home". Dinah watches the family happily reunite with another woman. Dinah smiles sadly.

Dinah spots Hannah from a distance and lights up. Dinah waves excitedly.

DINAH

Hannah!

Hannah shyly acknowledges her. She's lost for a moment in and out of the crowd. Hannah reaches the threshold and Dinah wraps her in a big animated hug.

DINAH (CONT'D)
Was the flight ok?

HANNAH
Fine.

The Young Father and baby walk by Hannah with judging looks.

DINAH
Oh my, your hair got so long.

HANNAH
Yeah. Yours is-

DINAH
A mess. I know. I worked late last night. How many bags did you check?

HANNAH
Just the one.

DINAH
I feel like I haven't seen you in years. You need to tell me everything.

HANNAH
Everything about what? We faceted like last week. Right?

DINAH
Yeah.

HANNAH
My life isn't very exciting. I procrastinated packing for a full five days and that's about all that happened.

DINAH
Well you can tell me about that.

HANNAH
I just did.

DINAH
Ok.
(Awkward silence)
What color bag are we looking for?

INT. DINAH'S CAR- CONTINUOUS

Dinah's car is a modest sedan like a 2012 Sentra. Dean Martin's "Christmas Blues" plays at a medium volume. Dinah can't stop smiling every time she peeks over and sees Hannah who is engrossed in her phone and reading Instagram comments.

DINAH

Are you hungry for breakfast?

HANNAH

(without looking up)

Not really. I could do either a coffee or a nap.

DINAH

Ok. I'll stop at a Starbucks because you're not going to sleep without catching up first.

HANNAH

(makes eye contact)

What do you want to know?

DINAH

I dunno. Everything. Tell me about Joel. How is he? Is he being good to you?

HANNAH

Always.

DINAH

Maybe when you facetime him here I can finally see him? Talk to him? Threaten him a little.

HANNAH

Sweet, Mum.

DINAH

He's gotta know the score if he's dating my daughter. I have a feeling you haven't been reading him the text messages I've sent to you for him.

HANNAH

Mainly because when he meets you I don't want him to think you're a homicidal maniac.

DINAH

Right. Best we keep that a secret.

HANNAH

The last one, you said something like 'If he hurt me you'd tear off his balls, bake them in a sauce of his peen blood and force feed them to him with spaghetti, fennel and a parsley garnish.'

DINAH

Not my best. I got distracted half way through by an Instagram of someone's tea.

HANNAH

You may have aggression issues.

DINAH

Or A.D.D.

HANNAH

This January is mine and Joel's one year anniversary.

DINAH

And yet you haven't shown me a single photo.

HANNAH

I know.

DINAH

I told you if he was ugly I wouldn't make any jokes about him. I'd just ask you'd be responsible and not reproduce.

HANNAH

Mum.

DINAH

Think of the children!

HANNAH

I'm going to introduce you to him face-to-face. He'll actually be here in two days.

DINAH

Really? Wow! Okay.

Dinah smiles and nods pleased with this development.

HANNAH

He's prepared to get a hotel unless you're alright with him staying at yours?

DINAH

Of course he can stay with us.

HANNAH

Thanks Mum.

DINAH

So, this is getting serious, huh?

HANNAH

It is. I think he might propose.

DINAH

WHAT? NO.

Dinah sits forward gripping the steering wheel at this news. Her mouth hangs open and she looks over at Hannah who seems mildly amused by Dinah's reaction.

DINAH (CONT'D)

I mean, yes of course. You love him, right? If it's what you want, yes.

HANNAH

I do love him.

DINAH

Wow.

Dinah laughs and shakes her head at first with disbelief but when she sits back in her seat she nods with acceptance.

DINAH (CONT'D)

My baby's in love.

INT. LOCAL STARBUCKS - CONTINUOUS

Dinah approaches the table where Hannah sits and delivers their coffees and pastries. Dinah sits. Hannah takes a bite of her pastry and begins posing her coffee for a photo.

Dinah watches her for a moment and then turns her attention to a mother and daughter sitting a few tables away both engrossed in their cellphones. She focuses back on her daughter. Hannah's phone chimes with 'likes'.

DINAH
Hannah?

HANNAH
(without looking up)
Mmhm?

DINAH
(delicately)
You're not pregnant are you?

HANNAH
God NO! I'm just in love, Dinah.

DINAH
You know I hate when you call me
that.

HANNAH
Listen, ok? The reason I haven't
introduced him is because...

Hannah looks around focusing for a moment on a couple sitting
by the window with someone who seems to be a realtor. Hannah
leans forward and Dinah instinctively leans in.

HANNAH (CONT'D)
(reluctantly)
He's African American.

Dinah laughs almost in Hannah's face.

DINAH
That's it? You wouldn't introduce
me because of that? How could you
think I would-

HANNAH
No Mum. I know you wouldn't care.
But Papa...

DINAH
Yeah, well, he's gonna hate it.

Hannah sighs and holds her face with worry.

HANNAH
I know it's not going to go over
easily. That's why I really need
you on my side.

DINAH
Always, Love. Always.

HANNAH
Pinky swear?

Hannah holds out her pinky. Her eyes earnestly searching her mother's for hope in this alliance. Dinah smiles touched by the juvenile gesture and locks pinkies with her.

DINAH
Pinky swear.

Dinah looks back at the mother and daughter combo. The daughter is looking around the shop as if lost, like she's suddenly realized where she was. The woman remains engrossed in her phone.

DINAH (CONT'D)
So, hold on. Are you sure you're ready for this?

HANNAH
I'm 29 years old.

DINAH
I don't mean the relationship. I mean Papa. He's. Going. To. Flip.

HANNAH
No. Please don't say that.

DINAH
Are you sure you want to tell him now? Maybe wait a couple of years until he dies and then get married. That way you won't get cut out of the will.

HANNAH
That's terrible.

DINAH
It's clever.

HANNAH
No. I want him to walk me down the aisle.

DINAH
Why him?

HANNAH
Because I don't know my DAD, *Mum*.

DINAH
So! I can walk you down the aisle.
I'm your parent.

HANNAH
Traditionally-

DINAH
Patriarchal bollocks.

HANNAH
He always says I'm his favorite.

DINAH
True.

HANNAH
So he will have to come around
eventually.

DINAH
I hope so for your sake. But, I
have known him my whole life. He's
really good at holding grudges.