

(Printed with an unregistered version of Fade In)

POPSICLE

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EXT. PLAYGROUND - DAY

ELIZABETH, 8, is one kid of many on the playground. With ruddy blonde bob and sneakers dirtied gray, she is overshadowed by the other smiling youths. She looks rather tomboyish, wearing a shirt and jeans at that age and with that particular haircut. The playground is sprinkled with slides, roundabouts, and swings.

A group of children run around her in a game of tag, and everyone else is playing with the playground sets. The playground is not in the best shape, but still everyone looks happy. Everyone but Elizabeth.

"Pop Goes the Weasel" is heard from out of screen. All the kids drop everything at once and race to the sound. For a beat Elizabeth looks excited.

The kids clamor at the ice cream truck. The truck dates the time period to 1960s, selling popsicles for 35 cents.

We hear excitable shouts as the ice cream man pops his head out the truck window and greets the kids.

CHORUS OF KIDS
(shouting one over
the other)
Strawberry! Cherry! Lemon! Orange!

Elizabeth reaches her hand deep in her pocket, coins lightly jingling. She pulls out her coins. She has 10 cents.

SUSAN, 8, approaches Elizabeth. She is rosy-cheeked, probably skips more than she walks, her hair lovingly parted into pigtails.

SUSAN
Hi, Elizabeth! What flavor are you getting? I think I'll get the lemon myself!

Elizabeth immediately stuffs the coins back in her pocket.

ELIZABETH
I'm not in the mood for popsicles today.

SUSAN
I can buy you one! Mama gave me enough money to share with a friend this week.

Elizabeth looks torn. She is obviously tempted by the offer. The feeling of a popsicle would be so nice... Happy-go-lucky Susan is unaware of Elizabeth's inner struggle.

ELIZABETH

That's alright, Susy. I have to get home anyway.

SUSAN

(waving, happily)

Bye!

Elizabeth finds LINDA near the back in the crowd of children.

ELIZABETH

Com'on, Linda. We have to go back home!

Linda, 7, turns around. She is a prettier version of her sister, her hair a little finer, her face a little softer.

LINDA

But, sissy! I'm almost at the front! Can I have 35 cents?

ELIZABETH

(sternlike)

No, we don't have time! We have to go!

Elizabeth's expression, serious and authoritative, does not betray the fact that she doesn't have enough money for popsicles, or that she also yearns for one.

Linda frowns. There's no fighting her older sister.

LINDA

Okay...

Elizabeth walks away from the crowd, Linda trailing behind her. We see their difference in gait. Elizabeth is deliberative. There's a fire. Linda walks with regret, looking back at the ice cream truck.

FADE TO:

INT. LIVING ROOM - DUSK

Elizabeth and Linda enter the house, greeted by no one. Neither of them appear surprised.

They turn on the lights, and we see the living room is sparse. There is an obvious lack of photos or a homey touch.

LINDA

Do you know when Mother will be back?

ELIZABETH

Later, after dinner. Let's eat first.

CUT TO:

INT. KITCHEN

Elizabeth opens the fridge, the light inside flickering. Her face is lit up with the glow of light, and we see her eyes searching around the fridge. They land on an empty glass milk jug, then a carton of eggs.

She opens the egg carton, revealing one egg.

LINDA

Sissy, I'm hungry...

ELIZABETH

We can eat in a couple of minutes.

Elizabeth fills a pot with water. She grabs a potato, slicing off what she can of the skin with a knife. She accidentally cuts her index finger.

ELIZABETH (cont'd)

OW!

She places the finger in her mouth, but it's only a minor cut, more of a surprise than an actual wound.

She cuts up the potato, boils it along with the egg. Elizabeth stares intently at the bubbling water, as if her gaze would speed up the cooking.

FADE TO:

INT. DINING ROOM - EVENING

Elizabeth and Linda eat their dinner in silence. The boiled potato and egg is split between the two of them.

FADE TO BLACK

INT. BATHROOM

The sisters crowd around the bathroom sink, with Linda on tippy-toes. When Elizabeth is done, Linda continues to brush with enthusiasm.

ELIZABETH

I think we're done here...

Linda spits out the paste, and cups water into her mouth.

LINDA

(gargling)

Uh huh!

Linda chokes on water, and spits it out. Water goes everywhere, making a mess of the bathroom. Her face is red, and Elizabeth laughs at her mistake.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

The room is dimly lit by the bedside lamp. The sisters have tucked themselves in bed. Linda's feet are by Elizabeth's head and vice versa. The room is void of any childhood paraphernalia.

LINDA

(sotto)

Sissy...

(beat)

Did we not have enough money for a popsicle?

ELIZABETH

No.

Before there is time for the girls to say another word, we hear the door downstairs close with a thump, and the sound of feet walking up the stairs. From the crack under the door, we see the lights turn on and hear a heavy sigh from behind the door.

LINDA

(sotto)

Mom's home! Bedtime story?

ELIZABETH

Sh! She's tired. Maybe tomorrow.

Elizabeth turns to the bedside table to turn off the lights.

CUT TO BLACK

EXT. SIDEWALK IN FRONT OF THEIR HOUSE - THE NEXT DAY

Elizabeth and Linda play with jacks. Elizabeth looks up to see Susan with Susan's mother carrying a bag of lemons.

SUSAN

Hi, Elizabeth! Hi Linda! I'm going to have a lemonade stand tomorrow. You two should come by!

Linda looks on with wide-eyed innocence, waving hi. We can almost see the wheels turning in Elizabeth's mind.

ELIZABETH

(remembering to smile)
We will! See you!

Susan and her mom walk out of shot. Linda has already returned to her game of jacks.

ELIZABETH (cont'd)

Linda, let's go back inside. I have an idea.

INT. LIVING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Elizabeth, by the door, hops in place to put on her shoes.

ELIZABETH

Linda, let's go!

LINDA (O.S.)

Coming! ...I can't find my socks!

Elizabeth waits a beat before heading upstairs. We hear drawers opening and closing. Finally, Elizabeth rushes down the stairs, dragging Linda behind. We see Linda wearing red and green striped socks, embellished with a Santa face.

EXT. DIFFERENT SIDEWALK - SAME DAY

Elizabeth and Linda walk on the sidewalk in a different neighborhood, obviously searching for something.

LINDA

(pointing) I see one!

Elizabeth kneels and interlaces her fingers so that Linda can use it to step on and climb into a tree on someone's front lawn.

ELIZABETH

Reach!

Linda grunts a little, and plucks one off. They tumble and laugh, the lemon rolling out of Linda's hand and onto the street. The two look onto the street with shock as a car runs the lemon over with a soft squish.

ELIZABETH (cont'd)

We just gotta try again.

FADE TO:

EXT. HOME SIDEWALK - DUSK

Elizabeth and Linda walk with their hands holding the hems of their shirts, which act as a basket for the lemons. They're happy, hopeful, laughing even.

INT. BEDROOM - THE NEXT DAY

Elizabeth wakes up, and shakes Linda's legs to wake her up.

ELIZABETH

Today's the big day!

Linda mumbles, with a little drool on the pillow.

ELIZABETH (cont'd)

We'll make enough lemonade for ourselves, too!

LINDA

Five more minutes...

Elizabeth reaches over to tickle Linda. Linda, upset by the rude awakening, chases her sister out of the room.

EXT. FRONT DOOR - DAY

The sisters walk side by side. The sun is shining, the sky is the blue. Elizabeth even has a slight skip to her step?

ELIZABETH

I think I saw someone moving in down the next street the other day.

The camera is behind the sisters, and a trash pick-up truck enters the screen and drives down the mentioned street.

ELIZABETH (cont'd)
We have to get there before the
trashman does!

The sisters start running and catch up to the truck, which has already stopped at the house.

Breathless and panting, Elizabeth approaches the truck.

ELIZABETH (cont'd)
Excuse me! We need the cardboard
boxes!

The garbage man turns around with a toothpick dangling in his mouth.

GARBAGE MAN
Sorry, missy. It's all been dumped.

ELIZABETH
I just need one... please?

GARBAGE MAN
You're better off going into town and
buying them at the hardware store.

Elizabeth pushes her sister forward and whispers something in her ear. Linda furrows her brow, obviously trying to understand the furtive instructions.

LINDA
(with puppy dog
eyes)
Please, sir? It's for our lemonade
stand.

The garbage man's face softens.

GARBAGE MAN
Eh, alright. But wash up the box --
I wouldn't eat off of it if I were
you!

He reaches in the truck and throws the cardboard box down.

The truck drives off. Elizabeth and Linda look at the box, which has moldy ham stuck on it.

ELIZABETH AND LINDA
(in unison)
Ew...

EXT. FRONT YARD - AFTERNOON

Elizabeth has a jug of lemonade and spare cups on the upside down cardboard box. The ham stain has been covered with an awkwardly placed dinner mat. The box shows "LEMONADE 5 CENTS" written crookedly with a marker.

ELIZABETH

(under her breath)

I just need to sell seven lemonades.

A parent and child walk by. Elizabeth beams invitingly.

PARENT (O.S.)

Susy's house is just one block away!

CHILD

Okay!

The two walk past Elizabeth, not even glancing in her direction.

Elizabeth takes her lemonade off the box, and flips the box rightside up. She stows her lemonade away, gripping the box awkwardly and heads back home. She pushes the door open with her back. We see she is glum.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

The sisters sleep in the same formation, same warm lighting.

LINDA

Did you sell any lemonade today?

ELIZABETH

No...

LINDA

That's okay. Everyone was going to Susy's. I passed by. Her stand was so nice. I think her dad built it!

ELIZABETH

One day, Linda. I don't have a popsicle today, or even tomorrow. But I'll have it some day. And one day, I'll have enough to buy the whole truck.

LINDA

As long as you save me one, I'll be happy.