

DYSFUNCTIONAL

an original screenplay by

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INT. OFFICE - DAY

DR. KRISTOFF, 52, wears a dark suit, white shirt, and power tie with a red-themed pattern. He sits at a desk in a large comfortable-looking leather chair.

He pecks away at a computer. Folders and papers lie in meticulous stacks on the desk and in trays.

The office is furnished with other chairs, bookshelves with psychology texts, and a filing cabinet.

A knock comes to the door.

DR. KRISTOFF

Come in!

The door opens shyly. In walks LIZ, 22, thin, dressed casually with a nod toward grungy, sunglasses, and a school backpack with one strap slung over her shoulder.

She pauses.

LIZ

Doctor Kristoff?

DR. KRISTOFF

Yes, come in.

She slinks in, closing the door behind her, and approaches the desk.

DR. KRISTOFF (cont'd)

Please, sit down.

She sits in one of the chairs facing the desk and hugs the backpack on her lap. She looks at him expectantly.

LIZ

My name is Liz.

DR. KRISTOFF

How can I help you, Liz?

LIZ

There's this paper you assigned?

DR. KRISTOFF

Analyzing a dysfunctional family?

LIZ

Yes, that one.

DR. KRISTOFF
You here to get your topic
approved?

LIZ
I...yes.

He waits for her to say more.

DR. KRISTOFF
Great! Tell me about it.

LIZ
Okay. Um, there's this family with
a daughter named Beth. Her father
abandoned her and her mother when
she was eight.

DR. KRISTOFF
So, a broken family. Will you have
access to the father?

LIZ
Uh, yes, I know where he is.

DR. KRISTOFF
Good. A broken family typically
means more work. Are you okay with
that?

LIZ
It's...yes. I want to do this
family.

DR. KRISTOFF
Okay, tell me more.

LIZ
Her mother worked to help put her
father through school. After he
graduated and got a job, he left
them both.

DR. KRISTOFF
I see.

LIZ
He used to beat Beth and her
mother.

He studies her.

DR. KRISTOFF
You're pretty close to this family,
aren't you?

LIZ
Is that a problem?

DR. KRISTOFF
Can you remain objective?

She pauses.

LIZ
I'm...I th--yes.

DR. KRISTOFF
You're not convincing me.

LIZ
(more forcefully)
Her mother struggled hard to
survive. She got laid off from her
work.

He leans back with his arms folded.

LIZ (cont'd)
Beth got caught up in...things.
Alcohol, drugs. She turned tricks
to pay for it all.

DR. KRISTOFF
Liz, I'm concerned--

LIZ
Her mother felt shitty about
herself after what he did to her.
She ended up on drugs, too.

Her tone becomes sharper.

LIZ (cont'd)
She ended up dead.

An intense pause.

DR. KRISTOFF
I don't think this is the right
case study for you.

LIZ
Beth ended up living on the
streets. Dr. Kristoff, do you know
(MORE)

LIZ (cont'd)
what it's like for an adolescent
girl to live on the streets?

DR. KRISTOFF
I'm not going to approve--

LIZ
She hit rock bottom. Lying in the
gutter kind of thing.

DR. KRISTOFF
Liz, stop.

She peers at him with a scowl.

DR. KRISTOFF (cont'd)
You're not here for the project,
are you?

LIZ
What makes you think that, Doctor
Kristoff?

DR. KRISTOFF
Who are you?

She removes the sunglasses, revealing a wild look in her
eyes.

LIZ
Elizabeth...Kristoff.

Her gaze pierces him. He slowly stands.

DR. KRISTOFF
Lizzy?

Her face is hard and expressionless.

He starts around the desk toward her.

She leaps up and backs off, clutching her backpack.

LIZ
Don't get closer!

He stops in his tracks.

DR. KRISTOFF
What do you want?

Her gaze is fierce.

He takes a step forward. She backs off one step.

DR. KRISTOFF (cont'd)
God knows what you must think of
me.

He takes another step.

She backs off and flips open the flap on her backpack. He glances down at it.

DR. KRISTOFF (cont'd)
I had a problem.

LIZ
No shit you had a problem.

DR. KRISTOFF
You don't understand. I nearly
killed your mother the night I
left.

LIZ
(alarmed)
No.

DR. KRISTOFF
I had a problem, and I knew it.

LIZ
You don't get to do this.

He moves to the window and gazes through the blinds.

DR. KRISTOFF
I loved her. I loved you. That's
why I had to leave.

LIZ
She's dead. You killed her after
all.

He turns to her.

DR. KRISTOFF
I'll make it up to you.

Liz cries out in anguish.

LIZ
Shut up!

DR. KRISTOFF
I swear. There's still time.

He moves toward her.

She pulls a gun out of the backpack and aims it at him.

LIZ
(fierce whisper)
Shut the fuck up!

He stops and eyes the gun.

DR. KRISTOFF
This is a gun-free campus.

LIZ
(smirking)
What?

DR. KRISTOFF
Listen to me, Lizzy. I've regretted
that day. I've lived in torment for
what I had to do.

LIZ
Shut up! You don't get to be
reasonable now.

DR. KRISTOFF
Every day I've wished I could see
you--

She claps her hands to her ears and screams. She flees into
the corner and crouches down in a fetal position, sobbing.

Dr. Kristoff lunges for the phone on his desk and punches
buttons.

DR. KRISTOFF (cont'd)
This is Doctor Kristoff. I need
Security here immediately.

LIZ
No!

She jumps up and points the gun at him as she rushes toward
the desk.

LIZ (cont'd)
Get away from the phone.

He hangs the phone up and backs off.

DR. KRISTOFF
Calm down.

LIZ
Why did you leave?

DR. KRISTOFF
I told you, I had to. There's still
time to make things--

LIZ
Right? You wanna make things right?

DR. KRISTOFF
Yes...sweetheart.

She wavers.

LIZ
You're just trying to save
yourself.

DR. KRISTOFF
There's no excuse for what I did. I
never came back because I was
ashamed. But...you're here now...

She peers at him with an uncertain expression.

DR. KRISTOFF (cont'd)
You know what I've thought about
all these years? That Christmas we
went to see *The Nutcracker*
together. Remember that?

She trembles.

DR. KRISTOFF (cont'd)
Remember how enchanted you were,
over the mice and the dancers and
the music? You came out of the
theater talking about how you were
going to be a ballerina.

Her eyes tear up.

DR. KRISTOFF (cont'd)
I think that's the happiest I've
ever seen you.

He takes a step toward her.

DR. KRISTOFF (cont'd)
You know what I'd like to do? I'd
like to go see it again this
Christmas. You and me, just like
before.

She slowly lowers the gun.

DR. KRISTOFF (cont'd)
Lizzy, I love you. Won't you give
me a chance to make it up to you?

LIZ
Daddy?

She drops the gun on the desk and runs to him. They embrace.

LIZ (cont'd)
Daddy...

He caresses the back of her hair.

DR. KRISTOFF
My little girl.

They stay in the embrace for a moment. Her eyes are closed.

LIZ
I'm tired, Daddy.

He pulls his chair away from the desk and sits. She slides
onto his lap, curling up into a ball. She wraps her arms
around his arm and rests her head against his chest with
eyes closed.

A soft knock comes to the door.

LIZ (cont'd)
Who's that?

DR. KRISTOFF
No one, sweetheart. No one at all.

The door opens, revealing a SECURITY MAN.

Dr. Kristoff nods to the gun.

The Security Man creeps in and takes the gun.

DR. KRISTOFF (cont'd)
Now get her out of here.

Her eyes pop open. She sees the Security Man coming toward
her.

LIZ

No!

She clings tightly to Dr. Kristoff.

The Security Man and Dr. Kristoff pry her off.

LIZ (cont'd)

Daddy, what--? Don't! Why? Daddy!

The Security Man wraps an arm around her and pulls her out of the room.

LIZ (cont'd)

(screaming)

Daddy!

Dr. Kristoff goes to the door and closes it as Liz continues to protest.

He wheels his chair back to the desk and sits. He listens as her protests fade away.

He shakes his head.

DR. KRISTOFF

God, she needs help.

He returns to pecking at his computer.

FADE TO BLACK