

Last Message

written by

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INT. GINA'S CHILDHOOD BEDROOM - NIGHT

GINA (21) is revealed as she parts the hung clothing in her closet. She casually grabs a black dress.

She walks over to her bedside table, which is perfectly organized--not a single makeup brush out of place, her necklaces hanging untangled from a small stand.

A phone and answering machine sit on the table.

A man's voice on the answering machine:

ANSWERING MACHINE

You have three new messages. Press  
1 for playback.

Gina puts a record on. "Older Sister" by Carly Simon plays as she tries on the dress.

She turns around to see LAUREN (19) sitting on her bed. She's watching her sister get ready.

GINA

(startled)

Jesus, how long have you been  
sitting there?

LAUREN

Is that what you're gonna wear?

Gina scoffs at Lauren's tone.

GINA

What's wrong with it?

LAUREN

It's mine.

GINA

So?

LAUREN

So? Is my closet just free real  
estate to you?

GINA

Come on. You never liked this one  
anyway.

LAUREN

That's not true. I stopped liking  
it.

GINA

Whatever.

LAUREN

You said--let me know if I got this right--when I tried it on for the first time you said I looked like a tube sock stuffed with cottage cheese.

Gina laughs.

GINA

I did not.

LAUREN

You did.

GINA

That's hilarious.

LAUREN

I was like, 13.

GINA

I honestly can't believe I fit into the shit you wore in middle school.

A beat.

She examines herself.

LAUREN

Yeah...around the time you got my whole class to call me "Shamu."

Gina unzips the dress which fits her like a glove.

GINA

That was so long ago. I can't believe you even remember that.

Lauren scoffs.

LAUREN

Remember when we were kids, and any time mom would play with me you'd get up on the kitchen counter and threaten to jump?

Gina throws her hair up in a bun.

GINA

No, I don't. Probably because I was 5.

LAUREN

So you don't remember it happened but you remember how old you were?

GINA

Yeah because Mom always tells the story. It was funny.

LAUREN

You mean the time when she was outside with me, and you couldn't **bear** being alone for more than 5 seconds, so she ran inside, only to find that you were fine and I'd fallen off the tire swing and broken my nose?

GINA

You cannot blame me for your side profile, Lauren.

Gina sits down at her desk. She takes her makeup off, staring at herself in the mirror.

GINA (CONT'D)

Why are you bringing all this up anyway? We're adults now. Water under the bridge.

Lauren speaks to the back of her head.

LAUREN

I feel like you remember our childhood as all sunshine and rainbows.

GINA

I had a great childhood.

Lauren laughs.

LAUREN

(Mocking disbelief)  
Did you?

GINA

Yes. And I'm grateful for that. Now would you get lost? I have a big day tomorrow.

LAUREN  
Right, right. *Your big day, isn't it?*

GINA  
I didn't mean it like that.

LAUREN  
I thought I was helping.

GINA  
How?

LAUREN  
I figure you're gonna talk about your best memories of me, you know?

GINA  
I already have something prepared.

Lauren walks over to Gina. She hovers behind her, staring into the mirror.

LAUREN  
Yeah, but I bet it's bullshit. Come on, read me what you've got so far.

GINA  
Lauren—

Gina glances into the mirror to meet Lauren's eyes.

Lauren is not there.

Gina is alone in her room.

The record comes to an end.

Gina stares back into the mirror again. She looks around, feeling Lauren's presence, but no longer able to see her.

Gina exhales deeply, consumed by the silence.

She pulls a notebook out of the desk drawer. A folded sheet of lined paper lies between the pages. She pulls out a red pen.

She clears her throat.

GINA (CONT'D)  
My mom told me that when I was 2, I begged her for a sister. Little did I know, my sister would also become my best friend.

Gina lets out a shakey breath.

She rewinds.

GINA (CONT'D)  
...my sister would also become my  
best friend.

She cracks a fake smile at the mirror.

GINA (CONT'D)  
Lauren always wanted to be like me.

She pauses. She looks back at the mirror.

Quickly, she scratches out the line with her red pen.

GINA (CONT'D)  
The night of the accident, I was...

She gazes at herself. She scratches out words aggressively.

GINA (CONT'D)  
The night my sister...

Her breath shortens.

GINA (CONT'D)  
The night she...

She gasps for air suddenly.

GINA (CONT'D)  
I'm fucking trying, Lauren!

Lauren is not there.

GINA (CONT'D)  
The night she called me and said...

She squeezes the paper, her hands shaking.

She looks down to find the red pen ink all over her fingers.  
It bleeds from the page onto her hands.

GINA (CONT'D)  
The night I found out she wasn't  
coming home...

She exhales, trying to calm herself down.

GINA (CONT'D)  
It broke my heart. It was like my  
world had shattered.

Suddenly, the song plays again. She walks over to her record player, but it remains idle.

She wanders around the room.

GINA (CONT'D)  
(Under her breath)  
Who the fuck is playing that?

She looks down at her hands. They're covered with ink.

She rushes to the bathroom.

INT. GINA'S BATHROOM - NIGHT

She scrubs her hands with soap but the water still runs red.

Her breathing gets heavier.

She stifles tears and tries again.

GINA  
(Rushing through)  
My mom told me that when I was 2, I  
begged her for a sister. Little did  
I know, my sister would also become  
my best friend.

She gasps for air.

GINA (CONT'D)  
The night that she died—

She splashes water on her face.

GINA (CONT'D)  
(to no one)  
No! You didn't fucking kill  
yourself! They said it was an  
accident!

Gina cries into her reflection.

She catches her breath.

GINA (CONT'D)  
(speech mode)  
The night of the accident she  
called me and said she loved me.  
And I didn't know it would be the  
last time.

She screams.

GINA (CONT'D)  
I didn't know!

A beat, as if she's listening to a response.

GINA (CONT'D)  
No, I didn't!

GINA (CONT'D)  
I DIDN'T FUCKING KNOW. I AM TELLING  
THE TRUTH.

Gina sobs, trying to wipe her red hands on white towels.

Shaking, she returns to the bedroom.

"Older Sister" is still playing, but as she looks around the room for Lauren, the song comes to an end. Silence.

Suddenly, the answering machine plays again.

ANSWERING MACHINE  
You have three new messages. Press  
1 for playback.

She ignores the phone, closing her eyes and taking a deep breath.

Before she can open her eyes:

ANSWERING MACHINE (CONT'D)  
You have three new messages. Press  
1 for playback.

She slowly walks over to the phone.

Again:

ANSWERING MACHINE (CONT'D)  
You have three new messages. Press  
1 for—

She rips the phone cord out of the wall.

She exhales and wipes her eyes. She sits on her bed and tries to relax.

Gina grabs a stuffed animal. She rolls her eyes at how ridiculous this is, and tries to shake it off.

All of a sudden:

ANSWERING MACHINE (CONT'D)  
You have three new messages. Press  
1 for playback.

She picks up the answering machine and throws it across the room. She stares at it.

A silent beat.

Then:

ANSWERING MACHINE (CONT'D)  
Thursday, June 12th. 11:27pm.

We hear Lauren's voice over the answering machine. Her voice shakes.

Beep.

LAUREN (V.O.)  
Gina, hey, it's Lauren. I tried  
calling mom and dad but they didn't  
pick up. I need a ride home. Can  
you call me? Ok. Bye.

Beep.

ANSWERING MACHINE  
Friday, June 13th. 12:52am.

Gina, practically paralyzed, crawls out of bed towards the answering machine on the floor.

Beep.

LAUREN (V.O.)  
(with more urgency)  
Hey, it's me again. I promise I'm  
not being dramatic. I don't know  
where I am, or how I got here. Just  
please don't call the police. I'm  
on, uh, Venice Boulevard. I think.  
I don't know the cross street.  
There's a gas station. Can you call  
me?

Beep.

ANSWERING MACHINE  
Friday, June 13th. 12:59am.

Tears stream down Gina's face. She holds the answering machine and slams it on the floor.

The answering machine breaks.

Gina closes her eyes for a moment, in relief.

Suddenly her eyes shoot open. She covers her ears.

GINA  
I DON'T WANT TO HEAR THE LAST  
MESSAGE. STOP! PLEASE! STOP!

A Birdseye shot of the room shows it's empty. She weeps into the carpet, her hands still stained red.

Beep.

LAUREN (V.O.)  
(Sobbing)  
Gina I need you right now,  
please pick up. I smoked  
something at the party and I  
said I wouldn't do it anymore  
and you said my life would be  
ruined but it's already  
fucking ruined Gina, it is. I  
need you please come get me I  
know I fucking embarrass you  
but I'll shut up forever if  
you just please—

GINA (CONT'D)  
No, no. Please. I can't do  
this again, please.

Lauren gasps.

LAUREN (V.O.) (CONT'D)  
(relieved)  
Oh my god it's you! It's you! I see  
your car! Oh thank god!

GINA  
(wailing)  
IT'S NOT ME, LAUREN. DON'T GO INTO  
THE—

LAUREN (V.O.)  
Thank you! Thank you thank you  
thank you! I love you, Gina. I love  
you!

A car horn blares over the answering machine.

Beep.

ANSWERING MACHINE  
End of final message.

Gina crumbles to the floor, distraught. She screams into her hands.

She uses her last bit of strength to lift her body onto the side of the bed. She sees herself in the mirror, alone and quaking.

Breaking the silence, "Older Sister" plays once more. Gina sobs into the bed, and we watch her through the mirror.

A shot of her hair sprawled across the bedspread.

Suddenly, a hand runs through her hair. Gina does not look up.

The camera pulls back, and we see a ghostly (but still seemingly alive) Lauren, stroking her sister's hair.

Lauren is wearing her black dress.

Fade to black as the song plays and credits roll.

THE END