

C.U.L.T.
EPISODE 1 - MADE OF MAGIC

Written by
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INT. APARTMENT - AFTERNOON

A FINGER presses down on the RECORD BUTTON of an audio mixer.

SAM PERKINS, late 30s and well groomed, sits at a table, adjusting two resting MICROPHONES and their POP FILTERS along with a portable AUDIO MIXER.

TAYLOR MITCHELL, a young woman in her late 20s and a bit disheveled looking, sits across from her, watching Sam.

Mid-afternoon RAIN falls outside as Sam leans in towards the microphone closest to her.

SAM

Alright, testing, one, two, three.
Pop. Pop. Pop. Okay. Taylor, can you lean into the microphone and say a few words and a couple of letter P sounds please?

TAYLOR

Uh, a few words and a couple of letter P sounds please.

Sam laughs.

SAM

Ha. Okay. That works. Thank you. Alright. Everything sounds good on my end. You ready to get started?

TAYLOR

Yeah. I'm ready.

SAM

I'm just going to say a little intro and then I'll start asking you some questions. Sound good?

TAYLOR

Yup.

SAM

Okay, great.

Sam takes a deep breath.

SAM (cont'd)

Today is April 11th. My name is Sam Perkins and this is my first official interview with Miss Taylor Mitchell at her apartment.

Sam claps her hands to denote a start slate.

SAM (cont'd)

Alright. Thanks for sitting down to talk with me today, Taylor. I really appreciate it. First, I just want to ask you if you could tell me your name and a little bit about yourself. If you want, you can start with where you grew up and then take it from there to the present. No pressure.

TAYLOR

Sure. Um, so my name is Taylor Mitchell. Born and raised in San Diego, California. My mom is an elementary school teacher for special needs kids. Always been an amazing mom to me but we're just really... different. Politically, socially, theologically. But I still love her a lot. My dad was a police officer for 20 years in the San Diego Police Department. He, uh... he... how personal can I be again?

SAM

As much or as little as you want. Like I said, no pressure.

TAYLOR

Okay. He... He was killed in a car accident when I was 13 so I didn't really get to know him as much as I wanted to but I was really close with him growing up, closer than I was with my mom. After he died though, I kind of struggled to understand why my mom grieved the way she did, why my brother and I grieved the way we did. Ended up learning a lot about mental health and long story short, I'm finishing up my Master's in Behavioral Psychology at UCLA. Doing a paid internship on the side right now.

(MORE)

TAYLOR (cont'd)

So I'm living in this apartment off campus and eating ramen for dinner tonight because my tuition won't let get any better shit. Ah, sorry! Can I curse or...

SAM

It's quite all right. So, you mentioned you have a brother. How was growing up with him?

TAYLOR

Yeah, Charlie. He's got two years on me. He always called me "Tay" because he knew how much I hated being called that. Typical big brother stuff. He was always more of a creative type than I was. I could talk to people. Charlie could draw, paint, program. He loved making things with his hands. I remember helping him build his first computer when we were kids, some type of IBM PC. His eyes practically popped out of his sockets when he tried turning it on the first time and it didn't boot. He went nuts trying to figure out what happened. We tore apart the guts of that thing over and over, double and triple checking every cable, every screw. Of course, Charlie just forgot to flip the switch on the power strip. So from then on, I ended up being kind of the left brain to Charlie's right.

SAM

How's your relationship with Charlie been recently?

TAYLOR

Well, after our dad died, he retreated emotionally. That's the best way to put it, I guess. We both went to see grievance counselors the first few months after everything happened. I still do. Charlie said he was fine though after a year. Said he didn't to talk about it anymore. He just kind of focused on making stuff. Didn't go out a lot, didn't go to any high school graduation parties or anything, barely graduated actually.

(MORE)

TAYLOR (cont'd)

College didn't end up being an option either so he was still living at home when I went off to San Jose State to get my bachelor's. I could have stayed in San Diego and lived at home, went to school there but I had to get out. I had to get away for a few years. So Charlie and I stopped talking except when I would come home for the holidays. And then one day, a few years ago, I got a call from him out of the blue. He never called by the way. Ever. He only texted. So it seemed really weird to me that he was calling.

SAM

What was the call about?

TAYLOR

Well, I didn't pick up. I had my phone off because I was in class so he left a message. I still have it on my phone actually.

SAM

Wow. That's a few years old at least, right?

TAYLOR

Yeah. I guess it is.

SAM

If you don't mind me asking, are you comfortable playing it back to me?

TAYLOR

Oh, uh, sure. Yeah. I mean, the police have heard it and I've played it back to friends and media so yeah, sure. Let me just, uh, bring it up on my phone.

SAM

Thank you so much. And please, take your time. No rush.

Sam waits as Taylor scrolls through her CELLPHONE to find the recorded message.

TAYLOR

Okay. Here we go. Do you want me to just hold it up to the mic or what?

SAM

Yeah, just hold it up about a hand's length away and I'll record it.

TAYLOR

Okay. Let me know when you're ready.

SAM

Ready when you are.

TAYLOR

Okay. Pressing play.

CHARLIE (V.O.)

Hey, it's me. Sorry I couldn't catch you but I just wanted to call to tell you that I've got a job offer to join this company that specializes in, uh, entertainment tech. I applied to be junior product designer for an unannounced project and I got it! I actually got it. Crazy, right? I can't say what this thing is because they made me sign an NDA and all that. But I'm telling you, when I got the job, they showed it to me and this device is so advanced it might as well be made of magic. I can't wait for you to see it one day. But taking this job means I'm moving to Canada so I don't know when I'll be back. Hopefully one day soon. Hope to see you then. I love you, Taylor. Goodbye.

The audible CLICK of a phone hanging up is heard as the voice message ends.

TAYLOR

Those are the last words I ever heard from him. And that's when I realized I hadn't been listening to my brother.

SAM

Why's that?

TAYLOR

I just knew something was off though. Especially the way he called me "Taylor." He never called me that. Ever. So I called him back as soon as I finished listening to the message.

(MORE)

TAYLOR (cont'd)
No answer. I called my mom. No answer. I called one of my dad's friends who still worked in the San Diego PD to go check on our house. About an hour later, he called me back. He told me that Charlie was missing and my mother...

Taylor takes a deep breath, trying to maintain her composure.

TAYLOR (cont'd)
Hey, is it okay if I take a quick smoke break?

SAM
Yeah. Yeah, of course. No worries. We have time.

Sam yawns a bit.

TAYLOR
You're okay with me smoking in here by the way, right?

SAM
Yeah. Of course. It's your place.

TAYLOR
Cool, cool. Just figured I asked.

A LIGHTER flickers on for a moment as Taylor drags on a cigarette before blowing out some smoke.

TAYLOR (cont'd)
You smoke?

SAM
Just weed here and there.

TAYLOR
Alright. Can I get you anything to eat or drink since we're on a bit of a break then?

SAM
Maybe a glass of ice water actually if that's okay?

TAYLOR
Absolutely. I'll pour you a glass.

SAM

You sure? I don't wanna have to make you get up if you don't-

TAYLOR

It's fine. I need to stretch my legs a bit anyway.

SAM

Okay.

The sound of the STOP BUTTON being clicked in is heard as the voices of Taylor and Sam become a bit more distorted and echoing.

The sound of a FAUCET running can be heard before abruptly stopping.

INT. VAN - CONTINUOUS

JENNY

Is that it?

The voices of two unknown women, SARAH and JENNY, chime in clearly, the sounds of Los Angeles muffled in the background.

SARAH

I mean, not unless you wanna hear them talk about traffic...

JENNY

Jesus, you know what I mean.

SARAH

Well, the webcam feed has "Taylor" out on the balcony. Looks like she stepped out while she waits for the tranquilizers to kick in for our Barbara Walters over here. And hey, I'll admit, the girl's pulling it off so far. The way she choked up when she said "my mother." I mean, Amy Adams, eat your heart out, am I right? Night and day compared to the rehearsal.

JENNY

Wow! She's doing exactly what we expected her to be doing. Let's give her an Oscar while we're at it.

SARAH

Hey. Small victories. Sam couldn't tell her voice was any different from the phone call she had with the real Taylor so we should be home free at this point.

JENNY

Alright, I-Wait. Look! She's passing out! Tell T to get back in there! Now! Jesus! How much did she put in that fucking glass?

INT./EXT. APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

The sound of a HORN honking can be heard as Taylor casually strolls back into the apartment, the door opening and closing again as she walks back over to the table.

TAYLOR

Alright, I'm ready to get started again. Hey, you okay? You don't look so good.

SAM

I, uh, I guess I'm more tired than... than... than I...

Sam tries to stand up and instead falls roughly to the FLOOR.

TAYLOR

Oh shit. What's wrong?

SAM

I don't know... I... I don't feel so great.

TAYLOR

Oh God, you're bleeding! I'll call 911. Just stay there. Don't move!

SAM

Okay...

The SOUND of three buttons being dialed is heard.

TAYLOR

Hi, yes. This is Taylor Mitchell. A guest in my house is passing out on the floor. She fell, she's bleeding, I don't know what to do!

(MORE)

TAYLOR (cont'd)
Can you send an ambulance? Yeah. My
address is 10965 Strathmore Drive.
Apartment 7A. Yeah. Okay. Thank you.
Thank you so much.

She hangs up the phone.

TAYLOR (cont'd)
Alright, ambulance is on its way.
I'll be right here by your side until
they get here.

SAM
Thank-thanks.

TAYLOR
Shh. Just relax. You're gonna be
okay.

Three quick KNOCKS from Taylor's hand rap against the wood
floor.

INT./EXT. VAN - CONTINUOUS

JENNY
Alright. Show time, folks.

The sound of VAN DOORS opening and shutting quickly is
heard.

INT./EXT. APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

TAYLOR
Hey, you asleep? Sam? You asleep?

Taylor takes a deep sigh.

TAYLOR (cont'd)
Thank God.

The door to the apartment abruptly opens and shuts.

TAYLOR (cont'd)
Jesus. What took you so long? She's
bleeding. She isn't supposed to be
bleeding.

JENNY
We'll take it from here. Good work.

TAYLOR

Thanks. But what's the gun... oh.

The sound of PUNCHES, GRUNTS, silenced PISTOL FIRE, more punches, a TABLE breaking, and more GUNFIRE is heard before two bodies fall to the floor.

The sound of deep, heavy BREATHING can be heard as Taylor begins to cry.

She falls to her knees as she starts to shake Sam awake.

TAYLOR (cont'd)

Hey! Wake up! Wake up Sam!

Two loud SLAPS can be heard against Sam's face as Taylor tries to stir Sam awake.

TAYLOR (cont'd)

Wake the fuck up!

Sam opens her eyes as she looks around and sees the shot up bodies of Sarah and Jenny near her.

SAM

Ugh. I-Jesus! What the hell happened? Who are those people? Did you shoot them?

TAYLOR

Yeah, they tried to kill us. Now c'mon! We gotta go!

SAM

Go where?

TAYLOR

Anywhere! We have to get out here before their back up arrives.

SAM

Who Taylor? Who's backup?

TAYLOR

My name's not Taylor, Sam. And, well, let's just call them my "creators" for now because a minute ago, I'd have called them my "family" but... given their current state as corpses, I don't think that word really applies anymore, does it?

END OF EPISODE.