

Claire

1.1

Foster Home: Claire's Room

Little Miss No-Name

Dim lights up on Claire, sitting on her bed alone, playing with (or more like just talking to) an old “rag” doll that she has apparently made (“put-together”) for herself out of old clothes. She talks to the doll.

Claire

Good morning, Mr. Roosevelt. How are you today?

Claire looks at the doll as if expecting a reply, but gets nothing. She picks up an arm of the doll and lets it drop, displaying its lifelessness.

Really? Nothing? After all this time? It's like I'm not even here? **(Pause)** We've known each other for a long time now, haven't we? You know, if you could just talk, then I might not feel so . . . **(struggling for the right word: picks up and drops the arms again)** so . . . invisible. **(Pause)** Yeah, invisible **(approving of her word)**. ^{To herself} (I have a super power.) And you could give me a name—a last name, that is. I already have a first name.

Claire pretends to be the doll talking to her.

“Good morning, Claire. How is Miss Invisible today?” Nah. How about . . . “Good morning, Claire. How is little Miss . . . No-Name today?” Better. “How is Miss . . .”

Claire is thinking for the right name and then remembers that she forgot last night's chore. In a bit of a panic . . .

Uh oh. I forgot to set out the trash. Ms. Applegate's gonna kill me.

Claire quickly puts the doll down and starts to hop up to go take out the trash, but then has a revelation.

That's it. **(Grabs the doll and reenacts the previous but with an English accent.)** “Good morning, Claire. How's Miss Rubbish today?”

Claire then looks at the doll, recognizing its worn out, lifeless condition. She chuckles with a sort of ironic resistance and awakening to the moment.

Huh **(grunt)**. My name'll be “mud” if I don't get the trash out.

She tosses the doll onto the bed (as if throwing it away) and scurries off to take out the trash.

Lights out.

Claire

1.7
Miller's Market

Share the Season . . . ing

The next day Claire enters Miller's Market with freshly made French cakes and greets Paris with a smile. Paris points to where Thoman is standing. Claire gives her an approving nod and she carefully approaches him.

Claire

Hi. Remember me, from the other day?

She gives him a half wave. He peers at her from the corner of his eye.

Hi.

No response.

Nervously>I don't mean to be nosy or rude sir, but you just seem to be kind of lonely. So I was wondering if you would . . . if you could . . . would you mind . . .

Thoman turns to look at her. She covers back a bit.

Uh, these are for you.

Nervously, she hands him the package. He takes it hesitantly with no response.

I kind of made them myself. Well, Ms. Applegate helped me. She's a real good cook. I hope that's okay.

Still no response.

Well, what I was trying to say was . . . uh . . . would you like to join us for our "Share the Season" dinner? Ms. Applegate likes to call it the "Share the Seasoning" dinner 'cause she cooks these international foods with strange seasonings and . . . I'm sorry. Uh. That is, if you're not doing anything. It's a thing we do every year. And we always invite a guest, and I was wondering if you would come.

He gives no response. She hands him the invitation and begins to leave.

Okay (**not knowing what his lack of response means**), well . . . I'll see ya.

She turns on herself to face Thoman.

Oh by the way, my name is Claire. Sir.

She turns again to leave . . .

Thoman

Baker. **(Pause)** Thoman Baker.

Claire

Mr. Baker.

Thoman

Thank you . . . Claire.

Claire exits. Thoman cracks a faint smile as she leaves, then studies the invitation. He smells the French Cakes and gives a sigh of surprise and approval. His eyes then meet Paris's. Paris smiles and Thoman's smile is replaced with a frown, as he returns to his shopping.

Lights out.

Claire, Thoman

1.2
City Market

Claire, Meet Thoman: An Unexpected Spark

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Claire and Bethany race across the street to catch up with the candy-cane man passing Miller's Market & Deli. Claire busses by, bumping slightly, Wilson standing in front of his own store. As they come up to Miller's door, out comes Thoman Baker. Claire slams right into him, almost knocking him over. Thoman drops the French bread and the rose onto the ground; the red balloon flies away (symbolic of a possible "letting go" and "picking up" of important things, as they pick up the items). Both characters are startled for a moment, taking in the situation.

Claire

I'm sorry. I'm so sorry.

As Thoman bends over to pick up the bread, Claire goes for the rose.

Thoman

Look what you've done!

He grabs her by the arm.

Claire

^{Frantic}>Please sir, I didn't mean to . . . I was just . . . trying to get to the candy-cane man. Here, here's some money to buy you another balloon (**offering him Ms. Applegate's money without really thinking about it**).

A small crowd begins to gather around.

Thoman

I don't want your money. What's the matter with you? Running around knocking people over! Just so you can have some candy. What are you, a spoiled brat or something?

Claire

I'm really sorry. Please let me go.

Thoman lets go, realizing that he probably shouldn't have grabbed her.

Thoman

Don't you care about anybody but yourself? Young people these days! You think you can just run all over the place and have everything you want. Well I got news for you. Life ain't like that.

Claire

I know. I haven't had any candy since last Christmas. **(moving toward him to give him the rose)**. The candy-cane man sometimes gives away little ones. Ms. Applegate puts a big one in our stocking at Christmas.

Thomas is struck by the comments. Claire gives him the rose. When he reaches out to take it, she lays it gently into his hand. There is a brief pause as her hand rests in his, prompting them to look up at each other. Their eyes meet and for a "frozen" moment, they both sense something in the other that seems very familiar and warm. As they stare at each other, not really knowing what to say, Bethany bumps in between them, grabbing Claire and running off. Thoman snaps out of his stupor as he watches the two girls disappear into the crowd.

Thoman

You little s . . . **(as if he were going to say "spoiled," but leaves it out)** brat! Get outta here!
Next time, I'll . . .

Someone in the Crowd

. . . call the cops on you.

Claire and Bethany run out of the crowd (upstage). Focus fades on the crowd and up on the two girls.

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Claire, Thoman

2.4
Jail

Broken and Unwanted

An hour later, Claire goes to the jail and requests to see Thoman. She talks to him about the toys.

Thoman

So is this what you meant, John: let God catch me? Okay, you got me. Although, I'm not exactly sure how this works. . . . is it supposed to be like this? I mean, **(Pause)** I'm in jail—and for nothing I've done!

Claire enters the jail room. They make eye contact, but Thoman says nothing.

Claire

Mr. Baker . . . I'm so sorry.

He doesn't respond.

I just wanted to . . .

Thoman

What do you want? Why can't you just leave me alone?

Claire

(Pause) I'm sorry. **(She goes silent.)**

Thoman

(Growing more irritated) You follow me around, you destroy my privacy, you break into my house, you . . . ruin my life. Why? What do you want?!

Pause.

What were you doing there?

Claire

The toys. I just wanted to . . .

Thoman

I told you not to go in the back room.

Claire

But why? And why all those toys . . . There were so many? Why don't you give them away?

Thoman

They are defects. They don't work.

Claire

What do you mean they don't work? They were just . . .

Thoman

(Growing more irritated) They're broken and they're worthless, and I can't fix them.

Claire

But they were . . .

Thoman

They are all bad and nobody wants them! Why can't you understand that?

Claire

I understand that. But didn't they used to belong to people? I don't understand. You say they don't work, but I just saw . . .

Thoman

(Progressively getting winded)

Listen, young lady! Those toys used to belong to children and they worked, but they stopped working. So they sent them back to me. But as you can see, I can't fix them. I don't know how to fix them. I don't know how to make them work again. And that is why they are still here! Okay?! I am not some great toy maker! I don't have some special gift. I don't have some anything. So will you please leave me alone?!

Thoman slumps down on his cot very defeated and ashamed. There's a silence, and Claire sees Thoman's deeper hurt and pain.

Claire

They're for her aren't they?

Thoman

I beg your pardon?

Claire

The balloons, the roses, **(Claire begins to cry)**—they're for your wife, aren't they? You miss her a lot.

No one says anything for a moment, as Claire's and Thoman's sadness seem to connect and merge.

Claire

You're lucky.

Thoman

Excuse me?

Claire

(Upset) At least you loved someone, and they loved you back. At least you had a family to care for, to laugh and cry with. I've never had a family. No one has ever made toys for me or bought me flowers or given me balloons. At least somebody wanted you. No one ever wanted me. I don't know what it feels like to have someone say, "I love you."

(A little angry) Hundreds of kids like me would give anything to have just one of your toys and you're living there in that dump feeling sorry for yourself. Why have something like the ability to give people joy if you keep it all to yourself? What's the use? And you do have something special, something like no one I've ever known.

But now you're just a scared, mean, selfish old man. *Goodbye!*

She starts to leave.

Thoman

Claire!

Claire

(Mad) And you don't have to worry about me anymore because I'm leaving. I'm being adopted by wonderful people, and I'm happy about it.

(She starts to leave again but turns again.)

I can't believe I wanted you to be my father. I never want to see you again. I . . . I hate you!

Claire storms out of jail room.

Thoman

Claire!

Thoman stares in shock at the statement the young child just made.

Thoman

Adopted? **(Pause)** Why, God?! Why are you doing this? I was fine. Okay, I was miserable! But, I was fine with miserable! I was okay with miserable. And now this. What do you want?

Lights out.