

THE INTERNET COMES BACK

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NFC Feature Short Challenge 2025

1 EXT. FIELD - DAY

1

ELLA (13) is walking her dog, Bonnie, in a field. As she walks along, she looks at the birds in the sky, she notices the mud squelching beneath her feet. Bonnie runs around happily and Ella watches her, content.

2 EXT. FOREST - CONTINUOUS

2

Ella and Bonnie walk through the forest. Ella climbs a tree. She gets dirt under her fingernails. Ella realises that she has lost track of time and looks at her phone - a Nokia 3310. There are 15 missed calls from Mum. Ella's face drops - her stomach in knots.

3 EXT. SUBURBAN STREET - CONTINUOUS

3

Ella rushes back home - she looks nervous.

4 INT. KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

4

Ella timidly opens the back door and lets herself into the kitchen. It is meticulously clean like a show home. Along with positive affirmation plaques on the walls, here are photo shoot photos of Diana, Ella and Richard on the walls with huge fake smiles.

DIANA (mid 40's) She has stern features, a full face of makeup, a tan, eyelashes and nails all done. She looks like a WAG.

DIANA

Where the HELL have you been?

ELLA

(timidly) I was walking the dog.
You said I was allowed...

DIANA

I called you FIFTEEN times! FIFTEEN TIMES! It's not hard, when I call, you pick up. Its just respect Ella, you do not treat this place like a hotel, going off for hours, not answering my calls and coming back whenever you feel like it, looking like you've been dragged through a hedge backwards traipsing mud all through the house. Look at the fucking state of you.

Diana turns away from her and rests her hands on the sink.

ELLA

I'm sorry mum. Why were you calling. Is everything ok?

DIANA

Everything is fine. Better than fine actually, which is what's so infuriating. I was in a really good mood - which you've now ruined.

Diana breathes in and out (takes some deep breaths), turns around to face Ella with delight in her eyes and happiness on her face like the last exchange hasn't happened.

It's coming back! Our channel is coming back!

5 INT. DINING TABLE - EVENING

5

Diana, Ella and RICHARD, Ella's father, sit round the table. The TV is on and Richard is watching intently, not paying attention to his wife or daughter at all. Diana puts plates of a roast chicken dinner down in front of them - Richard's overflowing with all the trimmings and on Ella's, there is a small portion of chicken and green vegetables. Diana doesn't have a plate, only a gin and tonic. Ella looks between the two plates, looking at her dad digging in, still watching television - then back to her meagre portion. Diana catches Ella's eye.

DIANA

Don't start Ella, we've both got to get screen-ready. Look at me, I'm not having anything!

6 INT. LIVING ROOM - EVENING

6

Flashback scene of when Diana and Ella had their channel. Diana is being recorded by a full crew. There are lights, and sound equipment.

DIANA

Hi Guys! Welcome back to our channel! Don't forget to hit like and subscribe if you're new here! Today, gorgeous Ella is going to give you a fashion show! We are so excited to show you the newest range, kindly gifted to one of our favourite ever brands Pretty Little Dream Girl. First up is an adorable pyjama set, perfect for slumber parties or duvet days!

Diana gestures off screen for Ella to join her. She is wearing a dressing robe - underneath it a vest top and short shorts. Ella is visibly uncomfortable - she freezes, her hands clasped on her robe, the sound of her heartbeat thumping and ringing in her ears as she looks round the room at all the men in the room and the red camera light flashing. Her breathing quickens.

DIANA

Ella, come on now girl, come and show our followers your outfit...
(smiling through clenched teeth)
Ella!

Diana's face drops

DIANA

CUT! Give me five.

Diana is fuming. She gets up and grabs Ella's wrist and drags her out of the room into the dining room next door - still within ear shot of the production crew. She holds her wrist as she speaks to her.

DIANA

(through gritted teeth)

Ella begins to cry and shakes her head.

ELLA

I don't like it. They always say I'm too skinny.

DIANA

There's No such thing -

ELLA

Mum, please. You're hurting me.

DIANA

(snarling) Now stop being a baby.
Get out there and do your job. And
remember to smile.

7 INT. DINING TABLE - PRESENT DAY 7

Ella looks at her mother across the table as she takes a sip of her drink.

8 INT. LIVING ROOM - EARLY MORNING. A WEEK LATER 8

Ella is on an exercise bike. She is sweating, exhausted, hunched over the handlebars but her legs keep going. She looks up at Diana, who is watching her with no sympathy in her eyes.

9 INT. DINING TABLE - CONTINUOUS 9

Ella is given lemon water and half a grapefruit for breakfast. Bonnie sits by her side. (With head resting on her leg)

10 MONTAGE 10

Montage of clips showing the 'internet coming back' getting closer and closer. The exercise regime and the food restriction intensifying.

11 INT. CLASSROOM - DAY. 11

Ella falls asleep sitting at her desk.

12 INT. KITCHEN/ DINING ROOM - EVENING. 12

Diana is in the middle of feeding Bonnie when her phone rings. Ella is doing a set of sit-ups. Diana picks up the phone.

DIANA
(excitedly) Oh hello darling! Yes
yes we are all ready for re-launch
day tomorrow woop woop!

Bonnie begs at Diana's feet

So let me just check with you...
 the lads will be here at 6am is
 that right? Oh Roy of course we'll
 do breakfast - I'll put on a spread
 for them! Sausage, bacon, hash
 browns, the lot.

Bonnie paws at Diana. Diana scowls.
 Ok darling. I will see you all
 then! Fantastic, we can't WAIT.

Diana hangs up the phone and her expression instantly drops.
 She grimaces at Bonnie.

Get away from me you stupid fucking
 animal! Jesus Christ give me space.

Diana kicks Bonnie and sends her whimpering away. Ella
 watches this happen and her expressions becomes stony.
 Something has changed in her.

13 INT. ELLA'S BEDROOM. NIGHTTIME.

13

Ella packs her bag quietly.

14 INT. LIVING ROOM - EVENING - FLASHBACK

14

Diana does makeup on a very young Ella (6) who is wriggling
 in her seat.

DIANA

Sit still Ella! You know... when I
 was your age, I used to beg my mum
 to do makeup with me. I would have
 given anything for her to sit with
 me like this.

She pauses briefly. Reminiscing.

When I was your age, all I wanted
 to do was get on stage. I was
 always dancing and singing and
 doing cartwheels - anything to get
 people to look at me. I wanted her
 to put me in talent shows, but she
 said there was no point, said that
 only nice looking girls win those
 sorts of things.

She gets sad at this memory. Her voice cracks and she
 swallows back tears.

I just wanted to be on television.
 I wanted the whole world to see me.
 I wanted her to say I was pretty.

15 INT. ELLA'S BEDROOM - EARLY MORNING**15**

Diana pulls back the duvet on Ella's bed to reveal it is empty.

16 EXT. STREET. DAWN.**16**

Ella and Bonnie walk off into the distance.

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