

A Couple of Months

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EXT. A CHICAGO SUBURB. DAY.

BETH DRISCOLL, 30, dirty hair, in yoga pants and a sweatshirt, sits in her car on Jackson Street. She stares at a Halloween decoration in a NEIGHBOR's yard, a green doll emerging from a fake grave. Beth gets out of her car, rings the doorbell. The NEIGHBOR, a woman in her 60s, cell in hand, answers.

BETH

Can you take that fake dead baby
out of your yard?

NEIGHBOR

What? Who are you?

BETH

I live a couple of blocks over.
Can you get rid of it?

NEIGHBOR

Why?

BETH

Because I can't stand to look at
it anymore.

NEIGHBOR

(irritably)
It's Halloween, for Christ's sake.

Beth stares at her.

BETH

You know this, but I'm going to
tell you anyway. Kids die. They
get shot at school or their cells
go rogue. Maybe some perv kills
them. Then they all get put in the
ground. Real kids. You know this,
right?

NEIGHBOR

(condescendingly)
Yes.

BETH

Then what the fuck were you
thinking?

Beth walks to her car and gets in, slamming the door. The Neighbor, still on her doorstep, talks on her cell, glaring at Beth and gesturing towards her car.

INT. BETH'S CAR/INT. GARRETT DRISCOLL'S LAW FIRM. DAY.

Beth starts the car and immediately calls her husband, GARRETT DRISCOLL, an attorney, early 30s, impeccably dressed, at his office. She drives with one hand, holds her cell with the other. Garrett picks up his cell from his desk.

BETH

(agitated)

There's this green doll coming out of a grave.

Garrett gets up, closes his office door.

GARRETT

Beth, I have no idea what you're talking about.

BETH

A woman on Jackson Street has a fake baby in her yard for Halloween, like it's a corpse or something.

GARRETT

That's horrible. She clearly doesn't have--

BETH

--a dead child?

GARRETT

(calmly)

--any idea how offensive that is. I'll take care of it when I get home.

(beat)

You doing okay?

BETH

Yeah, got groceries and everything. Big day for me.

GARRETT

Let me know when you get home, sweetheart.

Beth tosses her cell on the passenger seat and drives home.

EXT./INT. BETH'S HOME. DAY.

Beth pulls into the garage of her house, a small brick tudor. She grabs her purse and the one grocery bag, slams the car door, and walks into the kitchen. She puts the bag and her purse on the counter, then looks around the room. She sits down at the kitchen table, both hands flat on the table. One leg jiggles nervously.

EXT. CEMETERY. DAY. (FLASHBACK)

Beth, her face registering nothing, looks at the small white casket sitting above the open grave. Garrett supports her, one arm around her waist. Mourners pat Garrett's back or touch the casket before walking slowly back to their cars.

END FLASHBACK

INT. KITCHEN. DAY.

Beth sits at the kitchen table, staring. The front door bell rings, rings again. Beth swears under her breath, gets up.

BETH
(irritably)
Jesus Christ.

I/E. FRONT DOOR. DAY.

Beth opens the door halfway. PAT BURNS, a middle-aged woman in a blue polyester pantsuit with a faux leather satchel on her shoulder, stands there.

BETH
Yes?

PAT
Beth? I'm from Children's
Hospital.

BETH
And you brought lasagna.

PAT
Sorry?

BETH
Forget it.

PAT

My name's Pat Burns, I'm a social worker. Could I come in for a few minutes?

BETH

Not a good time. Ice cream melting on the counter and so forth.

PAT

Maybe I could help you get it into the freezer.

BETH

Not necessary.

Beth starts to close the door but Pat brushes by her and, after hesitating a moment, locates the kitchen. Beth closes the door and apathetically follows Pat to the kitchen.

INT. KITCHEN. DAY.

Pat puts down her satchel, peers into the grocery bag.

PAT

I don't see any ice cream.

BETH

I was trying to get rid of you.

PAT

Yet here I am.

BETH

Not your first rodeo.

PAT

My job is to check on parents who had children at the hospital.

BETH

And lay on the doorbell until they let you in?

Pat smiles slightly.

PAT

It's better if I visit at home. Nobody wants to go back to the hospital. Not afterwards.

(beat)

How are you getting on?

BETH
Trick question, right?

PAT
(kindly)
Beth, I don't want to spar with you. I came to see you, that's all. It's been a couple of months since your son died, is that right?

BETH
(sarcastically)
Guess you didn't hear. Ben's not dead after all. He's a 'shining star in the firmament'.

Beth rummages in her purse, lights a cigarette, sits down at the table.

BETH
Anyway, that's what all the cards say.

Beth turns her head, blows smoke away from Pat.

PAT
How's your husband?

BETH
He's either nailing this whole grief thing or been replaced by a robot. Can't tell which.

PAT
Is he seeing a therapist?

BETH
No, just playing one at home.

PAT
You mean yours.

BETH
(irritably)
Look, this is costing me.

PAT
I don't understand.

BETH
Have you buried a child?

PAT

No.

BETH

Then you won't.

Beth drags on her cigarette. Pat looks at Beth for a long moment, then gets a business card out of her satchel. She puts it on the counter.

PAT

My cell's on here. Call me if you need help with ice cream.

Pat puts the satchel on her shoulder and leaves. Beth rubs out her cigarette, tosses Pat's card in the trash, and picks up her purse on the way to the garage.

EXT. HOUSE ON JACKSON ST. DAY.

Beth drives slowly past the Neighbor's house. When she sees the doll is still in the yard, she lays on the horn, puts her window down, and gives the finger.

A school bus approaches, comes to a stop, lights flashing. Beth stops her car. A NERVOUS FATHER helps his daughter up the steps, then stands guard until the bus pulls away. Beth watches him, then calls out through her open window.

BETH

Excuse me. I saw you with your daughter.

He looks around.

NERVOUS FATHER

Are you talking to me?

BETH

Afternoon kindergarten, right?

NERVOUS FATHER

Do I know you?

Beth waves towards her street.

BETH

We're neighbors, sort of. I live that way. You're going to have to trust me on this.

NERVOUS FATHER

On what?

BETH

I saw how careful you were with her.

NERVOUS FATHER

What? Of course I was careful.

He looks at the school bus, then starts up his front walk.

BETH

Just listen a moment. Sometimes stuff happens, to our kids--

NERVOUS FATHER

What are you talking about?

He reaches his front door, turns around.

NERVOUS FATHER (CONT'D)

I'm going inside now. Get some help, okay?

He shuts the door. Beth lights a cigarette and blows smoke out the window.

EXT. BETH'S HOUSE. DAY.

Beth pulls into her driveway. GLORIA, Beth's mother, late 50s, classy, is parked on the street in her Benz. Gloria waves to Beth, gets out of her car with a fancy shopping bag.

BETH

(under her breath)
Perfect.

GLORIA

I'm not coming in. I thought you and Garrett might need a break from lasagna. You look tired, are you okay?

BETH

If 'okay' is code for 'pregnant', I'm not okay.

Gloria puts one arm around Beth.

GLORIA

I didn't mean that at all,
darling. You just look exhausted.

Garrett's car swings into the driveway. The garage door opens and he pulls in.

GLORIA

Isn't this early for Garrett?

BETH

They send him home. They're afraid
I'm going to eat Tide pods, stick
my head in the oven, something.

GLORIA

Don't say things like that,
darling, even in jest. You worry
me.

Gloria hands Beth the bag, kisses her cheek.

BETH

Sorry.

GLORIA

Please eat some of this. I'll call
you later.

Gloria walks towards her car.

BETH

(calling after her)
I still won't be pregnant.

Garrett comes out, takes the bag from Beth, waves to
Gloria.

GARRETT

What's that about?

BETH

She thinks we should have another
baby.

GARRETT

No way, you're imagining that.

BETH

I'm not, Garrett. She's mentioned
it a couple of times.

Garrett and Beth walk towards the front door.

GARRETT
(shaking his head)
Well, that's a very bad idea.

BETH
I told her a mother should know
you can't just swap out kids.

Garrett stops, looks at Beth.

GARRETT
Oh, Beth, you didn't say that to
her, did you?

BETH
Unfortunately.

They reach the front door, Garrett's arm around Beth.

GARRETT
This is hard on her too. She's
lost her grandson and now she's
watching her child suffer.

BETH
But a baby? It's insane.

GARRETT
She's grasping at straws--exactly
what desperate parents do.
(beat)
We know something about that.

They walk through the front door.

INT. KITCHEN. DAY.

Garrett takes food out of the bag, makes up two plates.
He pours glasses of wine. He brings everything over to
the table. Beth, sitting at the table with her knees up,
watches him.

GARRETT
What? Why are you looking at me
like that?

BETH
I don't understand why you can do
this and I can't.

GARRETT
What's 'this'?

BETH
(looks at the food,
looks around the
kitchen
Any of it. All of it. You eat,
sleep--function--and I sit in the
garage.

GARRETT
(carefully)
I know you go out there, but I'm
not sure why.

BETH
Just crazy shit.

Garrett reaches for her hand across the table.

INT. KITCHEN. DAY.

Beth, in pajamas and saggy socks, her hair unbrushed, sits at the kitchen table, hugging her knees. Garrett, freshly shaven, in a suit and tie, walks in and makes coffee. He sits down next to Beth while it brews.

GARRETT
I was going to steal that doll
last night, but you were sitting
in your car. I didn't want to
startle you.

BETH
(defensively)
I told you I sit out there.

Garrett brings their coffee to the table and sits down.

GARRETT
It wasn't a criticism.

Silence.

BETH
I'm going to the cemetery today,
take Ben his truck.

GARRETT
Beth--

BETH
What's wrong with that?

GARRETT

No, it's fine. I was going to ask
you something else. I had an idea.
(takes a quick look
at her)

What do you think about subbing at
your school every once in a while?
Not full time, just when you're up
to it.

Beth puts her head down on her knees.

GARRETT (CONT'D)

Okay, it's probably too soon.
Forget I said anything.

Garrett gets up, pours his coffee down the sink. He puts
his hand gently on Beth's head.

GARRETT (CONT'D)

I'll call you later, sweetheart.

Garrett leaves.

INT. KITCHEN. DAY (FLASHBACK)

BEN, 2 years, a chubby toddler dressed in overalls, sits
in his blue booster chair at the kitchen table. He puts
Cheerios on the ends of his sticky fingers and holds them
up proudly.

BEN

Mommy! Look!

END FLASHBACK

INT. KITCHEN. DAY.

Beth raises her head from her knees, rummages in her
pajamas for a pack of cigarettes, comes up empty.

BETH

Fuck me.

EXT. JACKSON STREET. DAY.

Garrett parks on the side of the street and walks
casually, bag in hand, towards the green doll in the
Neighbor's yard. Suddenly the front door opens. The
Neighbor stands there.

NEIGHBOR

What are you doing on my lawn?

Garrett fakes a smile, tucks the bag under his arm, and walks up to her.

GARRETT

Sorry for not coming up to the door. I live a couple of blocks over. I wonder if I could ask you a favor.

The Neighbor scowls at him.

GARRETT (CONT'D)

Would you mind taking that doll inside?

NEIGHBOR

Again with the doll! That was your wife here yesterday, wasn't it? She should be ashamed of herself. Do you know what she said to me?

GARRETT

Look, I'm going to level with you. We're going through a tough time. We lost our little boy a while back and--

NEIGHBOR

I'm sorry, but that doesn't give you or your wife the right to trespass or verbally abuse me on my property.

The Neighbor shuts the door. Garrett walks to his car, throws the bag in the back seat.

GARRETT

She's got to sleep sometime.

INT. GROCERY STORE. DAY.

Beth, hair in a messy pony tail and wearing yoga pants and an old sweatshirt, pushes an empty grocery cart through the neighborhood market. A TODDLER in a Halloween costume bobs up and down in a cart. THE MOTHER is nearby picking out cereal.

BETH

Wow, are you Nemo? My little boy loves Nemo.

TODDLER

I'm Dory! I swim fast. See, I got
a tail like Dory...

The Mother eyes Beth and Beth's empty cart suspiciously,
then pushes the Toddler down the aisle.

THE MOTHER

Okay, sweetie, we gotta go.

Beth follows them with her cart.

BETH

Jeez, what's the matter with you?
I was just talking to her.

The Mother ignores her, turns the corner.

BETH (CONT'D)

(calls after her)

I'm a mother too, you know.

A couple of shoppers look over. Beth leaves her cart in
the aisle and walks out of the store.

EXT. PARKING LOT. DAY.

Beth sits in her car, finds the number for Children's
Hospital on her cell and waits for someone to answer.

BETH

I'd like to leave a message for
one of your social workers. I lost
her card. Her last name's Burns,
something like that... Thanks.

She waits for the beep.

BETH (CONT'D)

Hey, it's Beth Driscoll, the
asshole. Could you call me? I
bought ice cream.

EXT. CEMETERY. DAY.

Beth drives into the cemetery. Children's graves are
decorated for Halloween with balloons, stuffed animals.
She parks by Ben's grave, takes the red truck, and sits
down by his headstone.

BETH

I brought your truck. The little
guy's in there.

A family walks towards a new grave near Beth. The mother and kids put a pumpkin and stuffed animal on the mounded dirt. The GRIEVING FATHER stands apart. Beth averts her eyes.

EXT. BACK YARD. DAY. (FLASHBACK)

Beth and Garrett sit in lawn chairs. Ben, wearing his blue jacket, is running his red truck along the arms of their chairs. Ben looks up, sees squirrels chasing each other in the tree over their heads. He laughs and points. Garrett puts Ben on his shoulders so he can see them better. Ben looks at Beth.

BETH

(smiling)

I see them.

END FLASHBACK

EXT. CEMETERY. DAY.

Beth puts Ben's red truck on the grave.

BETH

I'm sorry, Ben.

Beth looks up and sees the Grieving Father and his family walking back to their car.

EXT. BETH'S HOUSE. DAY.

Beth holds the front door open for Pat Burns. Pat is wearing the same pantsuit. Her satchel's on her shoulder.

PAT

There's ice cream?

BETH

No, I lied. Let's talk in the
kitchen.

(dryly)

You know where it is.

INT. KITCHEN. DAY.

Pat puts her satchel on the counter. Beth gestures to a kitchen chair. Pat sits down.

PAT
I didn't think I'd hear from you.

Beth goes to the refrigerator.

BETH
I didn't think I'd call. Water?

PAT
That's fine.

Beth gets a bottle of water, hands it to Pat, sits down at the table.

PAT
So why did you?

BETH
I need to stop being like this.

PAT
Like what?

BETH
A hot mess. I don't want Garrett dealing with it anymore.

Beth gets up to get her cigarettes, flops back down in her chair.

PAT
Where do I come in?

BETH
You told me you deal with people who've lost kids.
(shrugs)
That means you know crazy. I figured you might be able to help. Besides, I've scared everybody else off. I could use a friend.

Pat studies her.

PAT
I think we got off on the wrong foot the other day.

BETH

Yeah, I was being a dick. I was pissed off at a woman with a fake dead baby in her yard.

PAT

What? For Halloween?

Beth lights a cigarette.

BETH

Yeah, sick, right? Garrett's going to get rid of it for me.

PAT

Where is it? I'll steal it myself.

Beth smiles slightly, drags on her cigarette.

BETH

That's the kind of shit Garrett has to deal with.

PAT

That's not so bad.

BETH

Wait, there's more. I sit in the dark in the garage, warn people I see on the streets, give off this pervy vibe--

PAT

Warn people about what?

BETH

That bad stuff can happen to kids.

PAT

You told somebody that?

BETH

Yeah, some nervous dad.

PAT

Why?

BETH

So he'd be ready for it.

PAT

(shakes her head)
Ready, you mean prepared for bad news?

BETH

Yeah. We never saw it coming with Ben. I took him in for pink eye, it's fucking leukemia.

PAT

You think there's a way to be ready for something like that?

BETH

There has to be a way not to be so screwed up afterwards.

PAT

I've been doing this for a long time. I don't think there is.

BETH

You haven't met my husband. Christ, he's doing fine, considering.

PAT

You told me he might be some kind of robot.

BETH

(snorts)

Garrett? I don't even remember saying that.

PAT

You said he's either handling Ben's death or he's a robot.

(shrugs)

What if he's found a way not to feel what you're feeling?

BETH

Then that's genius.

PAT

As long as he can keep it up.

BETH

What's that supposed to mean?

PAT

Just that I don't think there are any shortcuts.

(checks her phone)

I'm late.

Pat gets up from the table and puts her satchel on her shoulder.

BETH
Can I ask you something?

PAT
Sure.

BETH
This doesn't seem like a social worker-client-patient thing.

PAT
No, it doesn't.

BETH
Is that okay?

PAT
You said you needed a friend.

Pat smiles, leaves.

INT. KITCHEN. DAY.

Garrett comes in from the garage and puts his keys down. Beth is standing at the sink looking at an aluminum tray of lasagna.

BETH
Who puts tofu in lasagna?

GARRETT
Pitch it. Let's go to The Depot, get the Early Bird Special.

Beth starts putting the lasagna down the garbage disposal.

BETH
I don't know, I'm gross.

Garrett puts his arms around her as she watches the lasagna go down the disposal.

GARRETT
Who cares? We won't see anybody we know.

BETH
Promise? People suck.

Garrett smiles, loosens his tie.

GARRETT

I'll change.

Garrett starts upstairs.

BETH

(calling after him)

Yeah, try to look disgusting.

INT. THE DEPOT. DAY.

Garrett and Beth sit at a table by the bar in The Depot, a local joint. Their jackets are on the backs of their chairs. They have burgers and beers, but Beth's food sits untouched. Her knees bounce nervously under the table.

GARRETT

Your burger too rare?

BETH

God, it's loud in here.

GARRETT

I'll get them to turn it down.

A smartly dressed couple, TRISH and JACK, comes up to their table. Trish bends to hug Beth. Garrett gets up, shakes Jack's hand, kisses Trish on the cheek.

TRISH

Gosh, we haven't seen you since--
well, since--

Her voice trails off. Garrett to the rescue.

GARRETT

It's been a while.

Garrett sits back down and, unseen by Jack and Trish, puts his hand under the table to quiet Beth's knees.

GARRETT (CONT'D)

Heard you added an IP guy, Trish.

TRISH

A woman, actually. From LA.

Jack leans down to Beth.

JACK

Let us know if there's anything--

Beth stiffens.

BETH

Sorry I haven't thanked you guys
for your donation to the hospital.

Trish pats Beth's arm.

TRISH

It's okay. Garrett sent us a nice
note.

Awkward silence.

JACK

Let's get lunch downtown next
week.

GARRETT

Absolutely.

Trish and Jack look at each other.

JACK

We're going to grab a bite--
(gestures toward the
end of the bar)
Down there. You take care, Beth.

Trish and Jack walk away and sit on stools at the far end
of the bar. Beth jumps up, grabs her jacket from the back
of her chair.

BETH

That was a blast. Can we go home
now?

Garrett puts money on the table, leans towards Beth as
they exit.

GARRETT

I should have told you I've been
sending out notes.

INT. BETH AND GARRETT'S CAR. NIGHT.

Garrett drives, tries to take Beth's hand but she shakes
him off.

BETH

I don't care about thank you notes. I hate writing them--I mean, I would hate writing them.

(beat)

People treat me like I'm mental.

GARRETT

No they don't.

(beat)

Wait, do you mean me? Do I do that?

BETH

No. You and Pat are the only ones who don't.

GARRETT

Who's Pat?

BETH

A social worker.

GARRETT

You asked to talk to someone?

BETH

No, the hospital sent her.

GARRETT

That's great, and you're talking to her? Did she come to the house?

Beth isn't listening.

BETH

Trish couldn't say his name.

GARRETT

Sorry?

BETH

Trish couldn't say Ben's name in front of me--

(beat)

And your senior partner, what's his name, sending you home early every day to check on me like I'm going to make a noose out of your ties. Jesus.

GARRETT

Nobody knows what to do. They don't want it make worse.

BETH

(snorts)

How could it be any worse? Ben died.

GARRETT

They're not going to get it right. How could they? This hasn't happened to them. They want to help--

BETH

They want to help? Easy. Leave me the fuck alone.

Beth looks out the window. Garrett, miserable, drives.

INT. KITCHEN. NIGHT.

Beth puts her purse on the counter and tries to get her jacket off. Her arm gets caught.

GARRETT

It'll be better tomorrow.

Beth tries to get her arm out.

BETH

Jesus, could you be any more patronizing?

She wrestles free of the jacket, flings it on the counter. Garrett unsnarls her jacket, hangs it on the hook.

GARRETT

Was I? Sorry.

BETH

You said it'll be better tomorrow.
(nastily)
How?

GARRETT

Come on, Beth, you know what I meant. Tonight was a bust, that's all.

BETH

So it's not going to be better tomorrow?
(sarcastically)
I didn't think so.

Beth walks towards the stairs.

GARRETT

Are you going to bed? It's pretty early.

BETH

Yeah, I'm tired of being a bitch.

Beth leaves the kitchen. Garrett picks up his keys and goes to the garage.

EXT. JACKSON STREET. NIGHT.

Garrett parks his car by the Neighbor's house, and closes his car door quietly. He walks slowly to the doll. Suddenly outside lights come on. The Neighbor opens the front door.

NEIGHBOR

(angrily)

That's about enough of this. I'm calling the police.

Garrett grabs the doll, runs to his car, throws it in the back seat. He pulls away, grinning.

GARRETT

For you, Beth.

EXT. THE CEMETERY. DAY.

Beth walks to Ben's grave with another little truck. The Grieving Father is kneeling by his child's grave. Beth keeps her head down as she passes him. She bends down at Ben's grave, puts the truck down, and pats the grave.

BETH

For you, Ben.

She gets up and starts walking back to her car, averting her eyes as she passes the Grieving Father.

INT. KITCHEN. DAY.

Beth and Pat sit at the kitchen table talking and drinking coffee.

BETH

Garrett's right. At least if I subbed I'd be out of the house. It feels like Ben's still here, you know? I haven't even taken the sheet off his crib.

PAT

Want me to help you with his things?

Beth shakes her head, gets her cigarettes out of the bread box and sits back down.

BETH

No, I've got to man up.

Beth holds out the pack to Pat. Pat shakes her head.

PAT

Never did that.

Beth lights up, blows smoke away from Pat.

BETH

I do a lot of stuff I never did.

PAT

Like what?

BETH

Sit in the garage. I told you that.

PAT

Does it help?

BETH

At least I don't see Ben out there. Garrett's freaked out by it, probably thinks I'm going do something stupid.

PAT

Are you?

BETH

What?

PAT

Going to hurt yourself?

Beth holds up the pack of cigarettes.

BETH

Do these count?

PAT

Maybe Garrett thinks if you go back to work you won't sit out there as much.

Beth shrugs.

PAT (CONT'D)

Can you see yourself in a classroom again?

BETH

I don't know. I'd have to shower.

PAT

Seriously, what about being around kids?

BETH

I don't think of seventh graders as kids. They're like adults, but shorter--and a whole lot better. I love that age.

PAT

For real?

BETH

Yeah, they don't care if you're weird. All they want is for you to take them seriously. And they're funny as hell.

PAT

You must have been a good teacher.

BETH

I had my moments.

Beth puts out her cigarette.

BETH (CONT'D)

I loved it, being in the classroom with those kids.

PAT

Did you stop teaching when you had Ben?

BETH

We were lucky. Garrett made enough that I could stay home. I didn't want to miss a thing.

(smiles)

Garrett'd call about twenty times a day, 'What's he doing now?', 'Did he say any new words?'. God, we were happy. It seemed too good to be true.

(bitterly)

Turns out it was.

Beth gets up, refills Pat's mug, flops back down.

BETH (CONT'D)

What a self-pitying piece of crap that was.

PAT

You have a right to feel cheated. You only had a couple of years with him.

BETH

I'm not going to use Ben's death that way.

PAT

What do you mean?

BETH

I hate when people want to make sure you know how badly they've been screwed. Christ, everybody's had their share. I don't want to be like that. I want to get back to how I used to be, when Ben was here.

PAT

It's a respect thing.

BETH

Yeah, he deserves that.

Pat looks at Beth.

PAT

I don't think you have any idea how strong you are.

BETH

It has nothing to do with strength.

Beth gets up, dumps her coffee in the sink and washes her mug. She keeps her back to Pat.

BETH

You have any family here?

PAT

My mom passed a while back. I got a sister in Indiana.

Beth sits back down with the tea towel.

BETH

She's doesn't talk to dead kids' parents, does she?

PAT

No, she's smarter than I am. You have any brothers or sisters?

BETH

My parents were one and done. They had me, then got a divorce. My father moved away, remarried. My mom's here though.

PAT

What about Garrett's folks?

BETH

Totally destroyed by Ben's death. They're back in Florida licking their wounds.

PAT

Like everybody else.

BETH

Yeah, Garrett says, 'One tragedy, lots of victims'.

PAT

Can I use that?

BETH

Take full credit.

PAT

Seriously, you ever think about hurting yourself?

BETH

Mrs. Hines said I'd go to hell if I did.

PAT

Who's that?

BETH

My fourth grade Sunday School teacher. Scared the bejesus out of me.

PAT

You believe in hell?

BETH

No, I think we die and decompose in a box, but if I'm wrong and end up in hell--

PAT

You won't see Ben.

BETH

Exactly.

PAT

You're not taking any chances.

BETH

Not anymore.

PAT

Where are your friends?

BETH

I told you, I've scared them off. They leave lasagna on the porch and drive away.

(beat)

Nobody gets it, this grief stuff. That's okay, I hope they never have to.

PAT

You can say that again.

Beth studies her.

PAT (CONT'D)

Why are you looking at me like that?

BETH

(shrugs)

Trying to figure out why you do
this for a living.

PAT

Be a social worker?

BETH

The kind that goes into a house
after a kid dies.

(shaking her head)

I don't see how you get out of bed
in the morning.

PAT

Thanks for the pep talk.

BETH

Seriously, you've been doing this
how many years?

PAT

Twenty some.

BETH

Does it get easier?

PAT

What do you think?

BETH

I bet you hate ringing that
doorbell.

Pat looks at Beth.

PAT

I do.

Neither speaks for a couple of moments.

BETH

I had a friend who freaked when
Ben was diagnosed. She dropped me
so quick.

PAT

She have any kids?

BETH

Yeah, one.

PAT

It hit too close to home.

BETH

I get it. If it happened to my kid, it could happen to hers.

Pat nods.

BETH (CONT'D)

Maybe I should tell her leukemia's not contagious.

PAT

You're a piece of work, you know that?

BETH

I like how you cleaned that up.

(beat)

Hey, Garrett stole that green doll. Took him a couple of tries.

PAT

If that's not true love, I don't know what is.

(beat)

I'm heading out, I've got an appointment downtown.

They both get up from the table.

BETH

I'm glad Halloween's over. Now comes the mother of them all, Christmas.

Beth hands Pat her satchel.

BETH (CONT'D)

That woman on Jackson Street better put Baby Jesus above ground.

EXT. THE CEMETERY. DAY.

Beth parks near Ben's grave. She sees the Grieving Father leaning against his car, looking towards his child's grave. Beth walks over, holds out her hand. The Grieving Father hesitates, then shakes her outstretched hand.

BETH
(nods towards Ben's
grave)
My son.

He looks at her hand in his, then nods towards his
child's grave.

GRIEVING FATHER
My daughter.

They lean, side by side, against the Grieving Father's
car.

INT. CAFE. DAY.

Beth and Gloria are finishing lunch. Gloria is
beautifully dressed, freshly coiffed. Beth looks a little
more pulled together.

GLORIA
You're going to teach again? I
can't believe it.

Beth moves the french fries around her plate.

BETH
I'm thinking of subbing when
they're down an English teacher,
that's all. They might not even
call me, maybe they all got flu
shots.

Gloria looks at her with concern, pushes her salad to one
side.

GLORIA
I worry about you, darling. It's
only been a couple of months since
we lost Ben. I thought you would
take some time to adjust, feel
better.

BETH
I don't think 'adjusting' and
'feeling better' are cards in the
deck anymore.

The server comes with their bill.

GLORIA
What does Garrett say?

BETH

He suggested it--thought it would be good for me to get out of the house.

GLORIA

But you're out right now.

Gloria puts her credit card on top of the bill.

BETH

He means something besides getting lunch and hanging out at the cemetery.

GLORIA

Don't be angry with me, Beth, but I think if you and Garrett tried again, had another child to love--

BETH

This would all go away? Mom, I can't just replace Ben. You should know better.

Gloria's face falls. Neither speaks for a few moments.

GLORIA

I don't know how to help you.

Beth reaches across the table for her mother's hand.

BETH

You do help me, mom, every day. I'm just being a jerk.

The waiter takes the credit card.

INT. JUNIOR HIGH. DAY.

Beth walks into the office of the junior high where she used to teach. She is dressed nicely, hair pulled back.

RECEPTIONIST

May I help you?

BETH

Yes, I'm Beth Driscoll. I used to teach here. I was hoping I could talk with Mrs. Adams.

RECEPTIONIST

Let me see if she's available.

Before Beth can sit down, MRS. ADAMS, principal, comes out of her office and shakes Beth's hand.

MRS. ADAMS

I thought I heard your voice. You and your husband have been in our prayers these past months.

BETH

Thanks--and for the donation to the hospital, everything.

MRS. ADAMS

Of course.

BETH

I'll cut to the chase. I'm not ready to teach full-time again, but I'd like to try to sub. What do you think?

MRS. ADAMS

Having you back in any capacity would be wonderful.

BETH

I can't promise anything.

MRS. ADAMS

I understand. Let's see how it goes. If it doesn't feel right, we'll wait until it does. Sound reasonable?

BETH

Absolutely. I appreciate it.

Beth says good-bye to Mrs. Adams and leaves the office. She runs into two teachers, JOSH and HOLLY, in the hall. Holly is mid-thirties, effusive, bouncy.

JOSH

Hey, Beth, I hope this means what I think it does.

Beth and Josh shake hands.

JOSH (CONT'D)

Oh, sorry. This is Holly Getz, new science teacher.

BETH

Beth Driscoll, nice to meet you.

Holly pumps Beth's hand.

HOLLY

(big smile)

Great to meet you too! So you used to teach here? Isn't it the best school?

BETH

It is. I took some time off.

HOLLY

Me too! But now my little girls, Emily and Tegan Rose, are school-age, well, first grade and preschool, so I'm back doing what I love. Best of both worlds, right? Do you have kids?

Beth keeps her expression neutral.

BETH

A little boy. Good to meet you. See you, Josh.

Beth starts down the hall. The bell rings. Kids pour out of classrooms and swarm the hall. Suddenly Holly appears, calling Beth's name as she approaches.

HOLLY

(winded, upset)

Oh my gosh, Josh just told me about your little boy! I could kill myself. Here I'm going on and on about Emily and Tegan Rose--

Holly suddenly wraps her arms around Beth, her purse swinging wildly. Beth's arms are pinned down while Holly rocks her from side to side.

HOLLY (CONT'D)

I can't even imagine. I mean, if something ever happened to Emily or Tegan Rose, if they got sick or somebody hurt them, well, I'd go nuts. They'd have to put me right in the ground with them--

Holly lets Beth go, digs in her purse for a tissue, blows her nose.

HOLLY (CONT'D)

You must think I'm crazy, grabbing you like that. Anything about my girls and I just lose it, you know?

Beth starts walking backwards.

BETH

Don't worry about it.

Beth turns and heads for the exit. Holly stands in the middle of the hallway blowing her nose. Kids weave around her.

EXT. SCHOOL PARKING LOT. DAY.

Beth, rattled, goes down the wrong row of cars in the school parking lot. She stops, turns around, sees her car. She fumbles with the keys. Finally she gets inside and pulls out her cell phone from her purse, her hands shaking.

INT. HOSPITAL. DAY. (FLASHBACK)

Beth has newborn Ben on her chest. Garrett, euphoric, talks on his cell by her hospital bed.

GARRETT

Mom, it's a boy! We have a little boy. He's perfect, almost nine pounds...

END FLASHBACK

INT. BETH'S CAR. DAY.

Beth calls Garrett's cell.

BETH

Garrett?

GARRETT (V.O.)

'You've reached Garrett Driscoll...'

Beth listens to the prompt, then hangs up.

EXT. DRIVEWAY. DAY.

Beth parks her car on the driveway and goes in the front door.

INT. HOUSE. DAY.

Beth walks into the living room. Garrett, in his suit and tie, is taking a thick folder out of the desk drawer.

BETH
(confused)
I just called you.

Garrett, surprised, closes the drawer, turns to Beth.

GARRETT
I thought you were at school.

BETH
What are you doing home? Are those
Ben's medical records?

GARRETT
I came home to make a sandwich.

They walk towards the kitchen.

GARRETT (CONT'D)
How did it go at school?

BETH
Wait, why do you have Ben's
records?

GARRETT
I'm going to keep them at the
office. Actually, I'd better get
back.

Garrett puts the folder under his arm, kisses Beth on the cheek, turns towards the garage.

BETH
What about lunch?

GARRETT
I stopped at the diner.

BETH
But you said--

GARRETT

I'll call you later. Love you,
sweetheart.

Garrett opens the door to the garage.

BETH

Garrett, wait.

GARRETT

Nothing's wrong, Beth.

BETH

No, I wanted to tell you my car's
in the driveway. I didn't want you
to back into it.

GARRETT

Oh.

He goes into the garage. Beth pokes her head out.

BETH

Why did you say 'Nothing's wrong'?

Garrett gets into his car, his hand on the door handle.

GARRETT

I thought you were worried about
something.

BETH

Should I be?

GARRETT

No.

BETH

Okay.

Garrett closes the car door. Beth stands in the open
doorway, watches him back out of the garage.

INT. LIVING ROOM. DAY.

Beth, in a skirt and boots, and Garrett, in a sport coat,
are standing by the coat closet. Garrett puts on his
topcoat.

BETH

How long do you have to work? My
mom said she'd have dinner at
three.

GARRETT

I'm looking over a draft. It won't take long.

They walk to the kitchen. Garrett picks up his car keys.

GARRETT (CONT'D)

Are things open on Thanksgiving?
I'll get flowers for your mom.

(beat)

You okay? You look like you don't feel well.

BETH

I'm fine. I'll see you over there.

Garrett kisses her and leaves. Beth watches from the kitchen window until his car pulls away. She gets a trash bag and throws in cigarettes from all her hiding places in the house: the bread box, her purse, her coat pockets. She sits down on the living room couch and pulls two pregnancy test sticks from her skirt pocket. She looks from one to the other.

BETH

We are so fucked.

INT. LIVING ROOM. DAY. (FLASHBACK)

Garrett and Beth sit close together on the couch in the living room looking at a pregnancy test stick.

GARRETT

There are lines there. I definitely see lines.

BETH

They're dark, right?

GARRETT

Let's do another test. To be sure.

BETH

I don't know if I can pee anymore.

GARRETT

Wait here. I'll get the orange juice. Oh my God, Beth, what if it's true?

They look at each other with dazed, goofy grins.

END FLASHBACK

INT. LIVING ROOM. DAY.

Beth drops the test sticks in the bag with the cigarettes and walks to the kitchen. She opens the trash can and throws the bag in.

EXT. THE CEMETERY. DAY.

Beth drives to Ben's grave. As she gets close, she sees Garrett, in his topcoat, kneeling on the ground next to Ben's headstone. She stops and turns around before he can see her. As she drives away she looks at him in her rear view mirror.

INT. GLORIA'S HOME. DAY.

Gloria fusses with her dining room table, beautifully set for Thanksgiving. Beth stands to one side idle.

BETH

Mom, you didn't have to do all this.

GLORIA

I love using my good things. Where's Garrett?

BETH

He'll be here. Just the three of us for dinner?

GLORIA

I thought of inviting your aunt and uncle, but I decided--

BETH

Thanks, mom.

GARRETT (O.C.)

Hello?

INT. GLORIA'S KITCHEN. DAY.

Garrett, big bouquet in hand, gives Gloria a hug as she and Beth come from the dining room. Gloria gets a bottle of champagne from the bar fridge.

GARRETT

Hope you weren't waiting for me.
Here, I'll open that.

GLORIA

They're beautiful, Garrett, thank
you.

Gloria goes to get a vase. Beth follows Garrett to the
bar.

BETH

(whispering)

You weren't at work. I saw you at
Ben's grave. Why did you lie to
me?

Garrett doesn't answer, focuses on the champagne.

BETH (CONT'D)

I need to talk to you.

Garrett wraps a bar towel around the open champagne.

GARRETT

This isn't the right time. Your
mother's gone to all this trouble.

BETH

I know that, but--

GARRETT

Let's wait until we're alone.

He carries the bottle back to the kitchen and starts
pouring champagne into flutes. Gloria hands champagne to
Beth and keeps a glass for herself. Beth continues to
stare at Garrett but he won't meet her eyes.

GARRETT

(raising his glass)

To Gloria. Thanks for doing this
today. Not an easy task.

Gloria and Garrett tap glasses and sip their champagne.

GARRETT (CONT'D)

Ready for me to carve?

GLORIA

I went in a different direction
this year. I hope duck's okay.

GARRETT

Absolutely. Mix it up, right,
sweetheart?

Beth stares at Garrett.

GLORIA

Are you alright, dear? You
haven't touched your champagne.

BETH

With good reason, actually.

Beth sets her flute on the counter.

BETH (CONT'D)

From your lips to God's ear, mom.
I think I'm pregnant.

Gloria cries out, rushes over to Beth, spilling champagne as she goes. Garrett blanches, sets his glass down on the counter.

GLORIA

Oh, darling, have you seen the
doctor? I can't believe it. Are
you sure?

BETH

Well, there were two lines on the
stick.

(dryly)

Both times.

GLORIA

I feel like I'm dreaming. Garrett,
what a poker face. I never
suspected a thing. I can't believe
it. Simply too good to be true.

Gloria embraces Beth. Beth tries to catch Garrett's eye, but he's crouched down wiping up champagne.

INT. DINER. DAY.

Pat and Beth are in a corner booth, coffee cups in front of them. Beth, in jeans and a sweatshirt, has her elbows on the table, her head in her hands.

PAT

(incredulous)

You're pregnant?

BETH

You couldn't make this shit up.

PAT

You must have conceived this baby right after Ben passed.

BETH

I know exactly when it was.

(picks up her head)

Gloria wanted us to have a nice dinner at her club--this was a couple of weeks after the funeral--but her friends kept coming over--

PAT

They knew about Ben?

BETH

Yeah, and they kept saying the same stuff, 'No parent should have to bury a child', 'God only gives us what we can bear'. I wanted to shoot myself. I kept drinking, Garrett too. I felt like hell the next day.

PAT

Hungover.

BETH

Yeah, that, but I felt bad about having sex so soon after Ben died, like--

(flippantly)

his death had just slipped my mind.

PAT

You weren't disloyal, Beth.

BETH

Whatever. We got drunk and made this baby.

PAT

What are you going to do?

Beth looks at Pat.

BETH

Well, I threw away all my cigarettes.

PAT
That answers my question.

Neither speaks for a moment.

PAT
Your mother must be happy.

BETH
It's like she's on speed.

PAT
How's Garrett?

BETH
I totally blindsided him, blurted
it out at my mom's on
Thanksgiving.

Beth picks up the check.

BETH (CONT'D)
I'll get this.

Beth puts money on the table, reaches for her coat.

BETH (CONT'D)
Remember what I told you Garrett
says?

Pats puts on her coat.

PAT
About a tragedy?

BETH
Yeah, well, here's the latest
victim.

Beth buttons up her coat.

BETH (CONT'D)
Poor little fucker.

EXT. CEMETERY. DAY.

Beth sits by Ben's grave, her head on her knees. A shadow
crosses the ground. She looks up. The Grieving Father is
standing there.

GRIEVING FATHER
Does it get better?

Beth looks at the GRIEVING FATHER with compassion and then shakes her head. He turns and walks towards his daughter's grave.

INT. LIVING ROOM. DAY.

Beth is talking to Gloria on her cell when Garrett walks into the living room unbuttoning his coat.

BETH

Yes, mom, about ten weeks...let me get through the first trimester before you...no, not even my aunt.

Beth ends the call, turns to Garrett.

BETH (CONT'D)

Do you want the good news or the bad news? Wait, we've already had the bad news.

Garrett smiles sadly, hangs his coat up.

GARRETT

Then I'll take the good news.

BETH

We're not having lasagna.

GARRETT

I'm not hungry. Are you?

BETH

Not really.

Beth and Garrett walk to the kitchen. Garrett pours himself wine, sits down, scrolls through his phone.

BETH

So how long can you keep squeezing around the elephant?

GARRETT

Sorry?

BETH

The one in the kitchen with us.

Garrett looks blankly at her.

BETH (CONT'D)

The pregnancy, Garrett.

Garrett turns his palms up. He's got nothing. Beth takes her jacket off the hook, turns to face Garrett.

BETH (CONT'D)

Remember before Ben, how we used to hope we'd get pregnant? Christ, every month we'd buy that test--
(sad smile)
This pregnancy's just more bad news.

Beth picks up her car keys, goes to the door.

BETH (CONT'D)

I'm going to the cemetery before it closes.

GARRETT

Let me go with you.

BETH

No, you stay with the elephant.

INT. DOCTOR'S OFFICE. DAY.

Garrett sits alone in the waiting room of DR. WHITLOCK, Ben's pediatric oncologist. Dr. Whitlock, late 40s, opens the door, smiles.

DR. WHITLOCK

Come in, Garrett.

Garrett follows Dr. Whitlock to her office. She motions him to have a seat and then sits behind her desk.

DR. WHITLOCK

I've thought of you and Beth so often.

GARRETT

I know how busy you are, thanks for seeing me.

DR. WHITLOCK

Actually, I'm not taking on any new patients. I'm going back to research.

GARRETT

(surprised)
This is something you wanted to do?

DR. WHITLOCK
Needed to do. I realized that even
when I wasn't at the hospital or
here, I was still with my
patients.

She smiles sadly at Garrett.

DR. WHITLOCK (CONT'D)
I know you understand what I'm
saying.

GARRETT
I do. Ben was a beneficiary of
your compassion.

Neither speaks for a moment.

DR. WHITLOCK
Why did you want to see me?

GARRETT
I've been looking at everything
from Children's, all of Ben's
records.

DR. WHITLOCK
Why?

GARRETT
I think, if I'm honest with
myself, that I'm looking for
something I might have missed.

DR. WHITLOCK
Some way to help Ben.

GARRETT
Yes.

DR. WHITLOCK
I'm a parent, Garrett, but not one
who has lost a child. I'm not
going to pretend I know what
you're going through.

(beat)
My job is to try to save children
like Ben, and if I can't, to help
their parents understand why I
couldn't.

Dr. Whitlock leans across her desk.

DR. WHITLOCK (CONT'D)

There was--and is--no cure for Ben's type of leukemia. Sometimes we achieve remission, but there is no long term answer. Not at this time.

Garrett exhales.

GARRETT

That's what you've always said.
I guess I needed to hear it again.
(slight pause)
On this side of things.

Garrett stands up.

GARRETT (CONT'D)

Thank you.

Garrett extends his hand, they shake. Dr. Whitlock holds on to his hand.

DR. WHITLOCK

You didn't miss anything, Garrett.

INT. COFFEE SHOP. DAY.

Pat and Beth carry their lunches to a booth in a corner of a coffee shop.

BETH

You're not hanging out with me because you've got some sort of weird fetish.

Pat chuckles. They sit down in a booth.

PAT

Such as?

BETH

You get off on verbal abuse.

PAT

No, I had enough of that with my ex. Five years of keeping my mouth shut while he blamed me for everything that went wrong in his life.

BETH

I didn't know you'd been married.
Wait, how could everything be your
fault?

PAT

Lord knows, but that's how he saw
it. Believed it too.

BETH

What happened if you didn't keep
your mouth shut?

PAT

The usual.

BETH

Why'd you wait so long to leave
him?

PAT

Some part of me thought it was my
fault.

BETH

How'd you get out?

PAT

Got some help. Realized he had the
problem.

BETH

Did he come after you?

PAT

No, he found somebody new to
blame.

BETH

Right back in business, the
bastard.

They eat their lunch. Pat scrolls through her phone.

BETH

I figured I might as well know the
sex of this baby. Enough with the
surprises, right?

Pat looks up from her phone.

PAT

And?

BETH

A boy.

PAT

You okay with that?

BETH

The asshole part of me wants to say, sure, why not? Just pile on, make this as fucking difficult as possible.

PAT

What's the non-asshole part say?

BETH

This baby isn't Ben, so what difference does gender make?

Beth puts the fork down in disgust.

BETH (CONT'D)

This kid is screwed.

PAT

Why do you say that?

BETH

Seriously? You want me to explain it?

PAT

Yes.

BETH

Well, for starters, his dad's in denial and his mom's, um, questionable. Then there's the whole Kennedy thing.

PAT

What Kennedy thing?

BETH

Oh, you know all this, how Joe, Sr. was obsessed with a son being President, but his first son died in the war, so Jack had to run, but he got assassinated, so Bobby--

Pat puts her hand up, signaling 'stop'.

PAT
Got it, this baby shouldn't have
to be Ben.

BETH
Or President.

Beth pushes her plate away.

INT. THE LOCAL JUNIOR HIGH. DAY.

Beth, now wearing maternity clothes, is subbing for a class of seventh graders. She leans against the desk at the front of the classroom.

BETH
Okay, before class ends, I'd like
to ask you something. Mrs. Katz
told me you are all experts on To
Kill A Mockingbird. Is that right?

Students look at each other, smile.

BETH (CONT'D)
Well, it's one of my favorite
books, and I'd love to hear what
you think is the hardest thing
Scout has to face in her life.
(beat)
This is what you think, your
opinion.

Students look at each other. STUDENT #1's hand goes up,
then STUDENT #2's hand.

STUDENT #1
(unsure)
That some people hate her dad for
defending Tom Robinson?

BETH
Okay, good. Yes?

STUDENT #2
That she's poor?
(beat)
Really poor.

Students laugh.

BETH
(smiling)
Anyone else?

SARAH's hand goes up in the back row.

BETH (CONT'D)
Sarah, is it? Yes, go ahead.

SARAH
That she has to live without her
mom?

Beth's face falls. She buys time by going behind her desk and picking up her planner.

BETH
Okay, good. Tomorrow Mrs. Katz
comes back. I'm not saying there
will be a quiz on Mockingbird,
but---

Kids groan good-naturedly. The bell rings and they gather their backpacks, move towards the door. Beth stops Sarah.

BETH (CONT'D)
Your answer was excellent. Why
don't you teach tomorrow and I'll
tell Mrs. Katz to stay home?

Sarah, pleased, smiles.

SARAH
I tried to put myself in Scout's
place. Her life's really hard. I
wouldn't want to live without
someone I loved.

Beth looks down.

BETH
Me either.
(beat)
Wait, am I making you late for
class?

SARAH
I'm good, Mrs. Driscoll. Thanks.

EXT. PARKING LOT. DAY.

Garrett, in his suit and tie, waits by Beth's car.

GARRETT
I thought you'd be finishing up.

BETH

This is early, even for you.

GARRETT

I left, couldn't focus.

Beth puts her satchel in the back seat.

BETH

I know all about that.

Garrett opens the front door for Beth, waits while she gets in the driver's seat.

GARRETT

You okay?

BETH

Yeah, I'm pretty good at keeping Ben out of the classroom, but today one of the kids said something. It threw me.

(beat)

Why are you here?

GARRETT

Can you go home now? I want to talk to you about something.

Garrett walks towards his car, parked a couple spaces away.

BETH

The elephant, right?

EXT. DRIVEWAY. DAY.

Beth and Garrett pull their cars into their driveway and get out. Pat, parked on the street, walks up to them.

BETH

Jeez, Pat, I totally forgot. I got called in to sub. Garrett, this is my friend Pat.

GARRETT

I feel as if I know you. Thanks for all the support.

PAT

I'm sorry about Ben. He sounds like an amazing little boy.

Garrett's face clouds over.

GARRETT

One in a million.

Garrett turns around abruptly, walks in the house. Pat and Beth watch him.

PAT

I'll see you another time, Beth.

INT. KITCHEN. DAY.

Garrett stands in the kitchen, coat still on. Beth takes her jacket off, sits down.

BETH

What's going on?

GARRETT

I'm taking some time off.

BETH

I knew something was up. You've been weird. Is it because of me? Your partners think I need more supervision or, I don't know, uppers?

GARRETT

It has nothing to do with you.

BETH

Then what's going on?

GARRETT

I told you, I can't focus. I'm afraid my work's suffering. I don't want to let my partners down.

BETH

I don't give a fig about your partners.

(beat)

Something's off. You always go to work--you went back right after Ben died.

GARRETT

We had bills. The insurance didn't cover everything.

Garrett kisses Beth on the cheek.

GARRETT

I'll be home later. Get some rest.

BETH

You still didn't tell me what's going on.

GARRETT

Just a focus thing, sweetheart.

INT. LAW FIRM. DAY.

Garrett sits in the office of DON KINSEY, the firm's founding partner. Garrett looks around at the awards, diplomas, plaques. Don Kinsey, a distinguished older man, comes in and extends his hand to Garrett. Garrett rises, shakes hands, resumes his seat. Don sits down behind his desk.

DON

I want you to know I fully support your decision to take some time away.

GARRETT

Thank you, sir, and thank you for the firm's donation to Children's Hospital in Ben's memory.

DON

We were honored to do it.

GARRETT

I asked for this meeting because I want to be completely transparent.

DON

I appreciate that.

GARRETT

I'm rethinking my practice here. I may not--worst case scenario--come back after my leave.

Don studies Garrett, leans back in his chair.

DON

I would be surprised by this, Garrett, if it weren't for the timing.

GARRETT

By 'timing' you mean the death of my son.

DON

Something of that magnitude lays waste to everything.

GARRETT

I hope that doesn't mean you have personal knowledge.

DON

No, but I have been close enough to see the devastation.

Garrett leans forward.

GARRETT

My work has always been important to me. My father practiced contract law as well. It's been a special bond between us--

Garrett looks down at his hands.

GARRETT (CONT'D)

This is hard to articulate.

(hesitates)

At this point in time, the transfer of wealth or goods doesn't seem very important to me.

DON

Of course it doesn't.

(beat)

Look, Garrett, there is no timetable here. When you are ready to address this part of your life, come talk to me.

Garrett gets to his feet, extends his hand.

GARRETT

Thank you, sir.

The men shake.

INT. BETH'S BEDROOM. NIGHT.

Beth cannot sleep. She gets out of bed, goes to the bathroom, comes back. She checks the clock, checks her phone. Finally she tries Garrett's cell. She waits for him to pick up. It goes to voicemail.

GARRETT (V.O.)
'You've reached Garrett Driscoll.
Please leave a message.'

Beth waits for the beep.

BETH
It's two am. Where are you?

She puts Garrett's ratty old robe over her pajamas and heads downstairs.

INT. KITCHEN. NIGHT.

Beth turns on the kitchen light.

BETH
Garrett?

She pokes her head into the living room.

INT. LIVING ROOM. NIGHT. (FLASHBACK)

Beth finds Garrett, in a t-shirt and sweatpants, holding newborn Ben.

BETH
There you are.

GARRETT
Ben woke up. I brought him down here so you could sleep.

BETH
(doubtful)
He woke up? Why didn't I hear him?

GARRETT
(sheepishly)
Okay. I wanted to hold him.

END FLASHBACK

INT. THE KITCHEN. NIGHT.

Beth grabs her jacket from the hook in the kitchen.

BETH

Screw this.

She goes into the garage, slamming the door behind her.

INT. THE KITCHEN. DAY.

Garrett, pale, his suit ruffled, stands in front of the coffee maker in the kitchen. Beth comes in from the garage, her jacket over Garrett's robe.

BETH

What the hell, Garrett? You didn't answer your cell. I've been out there all night. Where were you?

(beat)

And where's your car?

Garrett walks over to her.

GARRETT

Sweetheart, I thought you'd go to bed--

BETH

What, and not notice you didn't come home?

GARRETT

I knew I wasn't in any shape to drive, so I left my car--

His voice trails off, he looks down miserable.

BETH

In all the time we've been together you've never done anything like this. Great timing, Garrett.

Beth walks out of the kitchen.

INT. JUNIOR HIGH. DAY.

Beth and a SEVENTH GRADE STUDENT walk down the hall after school. Students and teachers weave around them. Lockers bang shut, kids call to each other.

SEVENTH GRADE STUDENT

I hope this isn't too personal,
Mrs. Driscoll, but, um, can you
feel the baby moving around?

BETH

If I'm really still. Like at
night.

SEVENTH GRADE STUDENT

My mom would be so mad if she knew
I asked you that.

BETH

It's okay. What names do you like?
I need some help in that
department.

Holly Getz, winded, catches up to Beth and taps her on the shoulder.

HOLLY

Here you are!

SEVENTH GRADE STUDENT

I'll be thinking of names, Mrs.
Driscoll. Bye.

The Seventh Grade Student walks away.

BETH

Hi, Holly. How are you?

HOLLY

(grinning broadly)
I can see how you are!
(patting Beth's bump)
I heard about this little one, and
I knew right away.

BETH

(losing patience
quickly)
Knew what right away?

HOLLY

That it was God's doing. He always
makes things right.

Beth tries to keep her expression neutral. She slowly backs away from Holly.

BETH
Yeah, well, if you say so.

Beth starts down the hall.

HOLLY
(calling after her)
And now you get to be a mother again!

Beth stops in her tracks, turns around.

BETH
Again?

Holly, confused, stands there.

BETH (CONT'D)
You think because my son died, I stopped being his mother?

Beth walks away. Holly, cowed, digs in her purse for a tissue.

INT. RENTAL AGENCY. DAY.

Garrett sits across from JEN, a realtor, late 20s, in a real estate agency downtown. She has a monitor in front of her but spends most of her energy texting on her cell. Garrett waits patiently.

JEN
(finally looking at the computer)
And you wanted a two bedroom?

GARRETT
Can I get something by the week? I don't know how long I'll need a place.

JEN
Um, by the week, no. I can get you a two bedroom by the month.

GARRETT
I didn't say a two bedroom. What about a studio?

Jen looks at her cell again, smiles, then texts back. She turns reluctantly back to the monitor.

GARRETT (CONT'D)
Sorry, am I keeping you from something?

Jen flashes him a smile.

JEN
No, why?

Garrett sighs.

GARRETT
I asked if you had any studios.

JEN
Oh, right.

She studies the monitor. Garrett stares out the window.

EXT. DRIVEWAY. DAY.

Garrett waits for Beth in his car on the driveway. Beth pulls in. Garrett gets out, goes over to her.

BETH
You got your car back.

GARRETT
Let's go inside. You'll freeze out here.

INT. THE KITCHEN. DAY.

Garrett stands by the kitchen table, his hands in his coat pockets. Beth starts to take her coat off.

GARRETT
I don't think I can be here right now.

Beth, halfway out of her coat, stops.

BETH
What? What do you mean? Here--
(looking around)
--as in here?

GARRETT
I'm sorry--

Beth, standing with her coat half on, looks at him.

BETH
Wait, are you serious, you're
leaving?

GARRETT
It's a temporary--

BETH
I get the whole sabbatical thing.
You never had any time, after he
died...

Her voice trails off. She slowly takes her coat off, sits
down at the kitchen table, holds the coat on her lap.

BETH (CONT'D)
But our home? Me?

Garrett stands there, miserable.

BETH (CONT'D)
Look, I'm better now. You don't
have to protect me anymore. I can
handle whatever's going on.

Garrett looks at her.

GARRETT
It's me, Beth. I'm protecting me.

BETH
(confused)
From what?

Garrett looks down, keeps his hands in his coat pockets.

GARRETT
All of it.
(hesitates)
Ben's jacket hanging next to
mine... that innocent baby we
made...

Beth's face starts to collapse.

GARRETT (CONT'D)
You sitting out there in the
dark...

Beth's face falls further.

GARRETT (CONT'D)

His nightlight that comes on even
after all this time...

Beth gets up, puts her arms around Garrett, buries her
head in his shoulder.

GARRETT (CONT'D)

All of it.

INT. GLORIA'S LIVING ROOM. NIGHT.

Beth and Gloria stand in Gloria's living room, decorated
for Christmas. They look at baby clothes Gloria has
bought.

GLORIA

I had such a wonderful time
shopping for the baby. The windows
were decorated, big crowds in the
stores. It brought back so many
good memories.

Beth puts her arm around Gloria's shoulder.

BETH

I got your Christmas present a
couple of months ago. You wanted a
grandson, right?

Gloria pats Beth's arm.

GLORIA

Don't, Beth. I feel awful about
that. I was trying to help, but
all I did was make you angry.

BETH

(teasing her)
Yeah, well, don't think you're
getting any credit for this baby.
He was a total accident.

GLORIA

But a good one, nonetheless?

Beth puts the new baby clothes back in their boxes.

BETH

Nonetheless.

GLORIA
 (tentatively)
 Will Garrett be here for
 Christmas?

BETH
 I'm not sure.

GLORIA
 You know how much I love Garrett.
 He was a rock when we lost Ben.
 But I don't understand what he's
 doing. You're over there alone,
 pregnant--

BETH
 Mom, Garrett took care of me after
 Ben died. He's taking care of
 himself now. He needs this.

GLORIA
 But it's Christmas.

BETH
 Not this year.

INT. KITCHEN. NIGHT.

Beth, still wearing her coat, puts leftovers from her
 dinner at Gloria's in her refrigerator. Her cell rings.
 She digs in her coat pocket, answers.

GARRETT (V.O.)
 How are you, sweetheart?

BETH
 Just got home from my mother's.
 She's bought out Nordstrom's.

GARRETT (V.O.)
 I was thinking about my cousin's
 wake.

BETH
 Charlie's?

GARRETT (V.O.)
 My uncle was so drunk. He kept
 saying he should have been a
 better dad to Charlie, that he
 should have stepped up.

BETH

That's not you, Garrett.

GARRETT (V.O.)

What if I let Ben down in some way?

BETH

Not possible. You were the best father I ever saw. You know that, right?

No answer from Garrett. Beth looks at her phone, then puts it back in her pocket and sits down at the kitchen table. The refrigerator door hangs open.

INT. A CHURCH BASEMENT. NIGHT.

Garrett enters the church basement and quickly takes a seat in the circle of metal chairs. He leaves his coat on. Adults come in, put their coats on the back of their chairs, nod to each other. JUDY, a therapist, 40s, comes in, smiles and takes a seat in the circle.

JUDY

Hello, everyone.

Murmured hellos.

JUDY

Welcome to those who are with us for the first time.

(beat)

Last week we were talking about re-entering or re-joining after a loss, whether that means going back to your workplace--

(beat)

Or running to the store for milk. Would anyone like to share how their week went, what worked, what didn't?

People shift in their chairs, look around.

MAN #1

I'd used up my vacation days when my wife was sick, so I had to go back to work.

(hesitates)

Word had gotten around that she'd died. People I hardly know acted like we were best friends.

WOMAN #1

Yeah, all that fake shit.

MAN #1

They asked personal questions, like if she suffered.

(sad smile)

They'd never even met her.

JUDY

You must have been very uncomfortable.

MAN #2

People are idiots, man. They have no fucking clue. They talk like they know what you're going through, but they don't know shit.

WOMAN #2

Or they act like they've got it worse than you, like it's a competition.

WOMAN #3

A woman in my church said her loss was greater than mine because I'd--

(air quotes)

'only' lost my sister.

Scattered appreciative sounds.

JUDY

Well, let's go there. How do we respond to those who presume to know what we're feeling? Or think there's a hierarchy to loss?

Garrett gets up as quietly as he can. His metal chair scrapes across the floor and everyone in the circle looks over.

GARRETT

I'm so sorry.

He walks quickly to the door and leaves. Outside, he leans over, puts his hands on his knees, sucks air.

INT. BETH'S KITCHEN. NIGHT

Beth makes pasta sauce in her kitchen. Pat opens a bottle of wine for herself and sets the table.

BETH

Did you want to have kids? You never talk about that.

PAT

I wanted to, sure, but I couldn't bring kids into that mess. I told you about my ex. My mother warned me about him, but I wouldn't listen.

(chuckles)

She was right one time in her life, and that was it.

Beth stirs the sauce.

BETH

This is probably going to come out wrong--

(hesitates)

But when you see people gutted after their kid dies--

Pat pours herself a glass of wine.

PAT

Am I relieved I don't have any?

BETH

Yeah.

PAT

No, I'm sorry I never got the chance to love something that much.

(shrugs)

Who knows, maybe I'll find some man who needs help raising his.

BETH

You won't if you spend all your time with me.

PAT

There are worse things.

Beth puts pasta in the pot, gives it a swirl.

BETH

You want to hear how crazy I was
when Ben was sick?

Pat takes her wine to the table, sits down.

BETH (CONT'D)

I tried making deals with God.

PAT

Thought you didn't believe in Him.

BETH

I don't. Shows you how desperate I
was.

(beat)

Anyway, I thought if I died, God
might let Ben live.

Pat shakes her head.

PAT

God never takes that deal.

(beat)

But He came through for you
anyway.

BETH

(snorts)

Hardly. I'm here and Ben's dead.

PAT

You asked God for a life--He gave
you one.

BETH

Yeah, but not the one I wanted.

Pat looks at Beth, frowns.

PAT

I know that. I'm saying something
else.

Beth and Pat look at each other. Beth's cell rings. She
digs it out of her pocket.

BETH

It's Garrett. Watch this for me.

INT. BETH'S LIVING ROOM/INT. GARRETT'S APARTMENT. NIGHT.

Beth takes her cell to the living room. She stands, one hand on her abdomen, while she talks. Garrett, unshaven, in sweats, sits on the couch in his rental apartment.

BETH

Are you outside?

GARRETT

No, sitting in the rental. How are you feeling?

BETH

I'm making Pat dinner.

GARRETT

I wondered if I could come over.

BETH

Sure, now?

GARRETT

No, on Saturday.

BETH

That's Christmas.

GARRETT

Oh.

BETH

Yeah, I was hoping they'd call it off this year.

GARRETT

Maybe I'll come by after Saturday.

BETH

Did you try that loss group?

GARRETT

I couldn't breathe in there.

BETH

You want me to go with you?

GARRETT

You'd hate it, Beth.

BETH

What about the therapist Pat suggested?

GARRETT

I'm seeing him, but I don't think it's helping. Maybe I'm not saying it right.

BETH

Maybe you're not saying it at all.

Silence.

BETH (CONT'D)

Have you eaten? Do you want to have pasta with Pat and me?

GARRETT

I don't think so, sweetheart.

Beth puts her cell in her pocket. Garrett puts his cell on the couch.

INT. KITCHEN. NIGHT.

Pat looks up when Beth enters.

PAT

How is he?

BETH

Treading water.

Pat and Beth make up their plates, sit down at the table, start eating.

INT. LIVING ROOM. NIGHT.

Beth is curled up in the big chair looking straight ahead. There's an open book in her lap. She's wearing Garrett's old robe over her pajamas.

INT. LIVING ROOM. NIGHT. (FLASHBACK)

Ben, in footed pajamas, sits on Beth's lap. She holds him close, reads to him from a storybook. Ben points to the pictures, looks up at her.

END FLASHBACK

INT. LIVING ROOM. NIGHT.

Beth's phone rings. She digs in the robe pocket and answers it.

GARRETT

I'm outside. Is the alarm on?

BETH

Come through the garage.

INT. THE KITCHEN. NIGHT.

Garrett, unshaven, pale, comes in and takes off his boots and coat.

GARRETT

You're beautiful.

BETH

It's the robe.

Garrett smiles, walks to the liquor cabinet, pours himself a Scotch and carries it to the living room.

INT. LIVING ROOM. NIGHT.

Beth climbs back into the chair. Garrett sits on the edge of the couch with his drink. Beth waits for him to speak.

GARRETT

I came to get a couple of suits.

BETH

Okay.

GARRETT

I know you're upset with me.

BETH

I'm not.

GARRETT

You should be.

BETH

I don't remember you being pissed at me when I sat in the garage.

GARRETT

That's different.

BETH

All crazy is the same, Garrett.

They fall silent.

BETH

You're going back to work, that's why you need the suits?

GARRETT

I'm going to try.

BETH

That's what I said when I started subbing. I didn't know if I could face those kids.

Garrett takes a drink of his Scotch, looks at her.

GARRETT

But you did.

Silence.

GARRETT (CONT'D)

Jack took me to lunch. He kept asking me so I finally went.

BETH

What'd he want?

GARRETT

To tell me he believed Ben was watching over us.

BETH

(skeptically)
From where, heaven?

GARRETT

I guess. Do you think it's true?

BETH

No, total crap. What'd you say?

Garrett moves the ice cubes around with his finger.

GARRETT

I thanked him, but I don't believe it either. He was trying to make me feel better.

BETH

Yeah, I know.

(beat)

You don't want Ben watching over us, do you?

GARRETT

No, I don't want him seeing me like this.

Beth gets out of her chair, sits next to Garrett on the couch. He leans against her.

BETH

Come home.

INT. THE CHURCH BASEMENT. NIGHT.

Garrett walks into the church basement and finds a seat in the circle of metal chairs. He leaves his coat on. Adults mill around. JUDY comes in and takes a seat, smiles at the group. The adults take their seats.

JUDY

Good evening, everyone. There's coffee on the table if you're interested.

Some say 'Good evening'.

JUDY (CONT'D)

We've been talking about how to respond to friends or acquaintances who, while meaning well, make us angry. Any advice on how to deal with them?

YOUNG WOMAN

Easy. When somebody tells me to 'get over it, already', I tell them to f*** off.

Chuckles around the circle.

MIDDLE AGED WOMAN

People think there's a time limit on grieving. They start to lose patience with you.

Murmuring in the group.

YOUNG WOMAN

Like you're feeling sorry for yourself.

Lots of nodding among the adults. Garrett sits stiffly, not looking to his right or left.

JUDY

Is there anyone here who has someone who gets it? Somebody you can be yourself with?

The WOMAN NEXT TO GARRETT, middle-aged, raises her hand tentatively.

JUDY (CONT'D)

(smiling kindly)

Oh, no need to raise your hand.

WOMAN NEXT TO GARRETT

(timidly)

That's why I came tonight. I saw the flyer.

(hesitates)

Our daughter took her life a couple of months ago. My husband left his job soon after. We don't know anyone who's lost a loved one this way.

The other adults look down or over at Judy.

JUDY

I'm very sorry for your loss. Let's talk afterwards. I can put you in touch with people who are going through what you and your husband are. I can help too.

Adults around the circle express their condolences, shift in their chairs. Judy tries to re-focus the group.

JUDY (CONT'D)

I want to share with you some ways to deal with a friend or co-worker who is being insensitive--

While the group is focused on Judy, the Woman Next To Garrett reaches her hand across and takes one of Garrett's hands, never speaking or looking at him. Garrett freezes. He looks straight ahead, panic in his eyes.

INT. BETH'S OB/GYN OFFICE. DAY.

Beth, in a cotton gown, a sheet across her lap, sits on the edge of the table in an examining rooms. DR. SINGER, Beth's obstetrician, 40s, talks with her.

DR. SINGER

You're feeling less movement because this baby's running out of real estate. Things are pretty tight for him now.

BETH

I couldn't remember exactly when I noticed this with Ben.

DR. SINGER

Probably in the last month.

(beat)

Everything's good. I'll see you in a week.

Beth shakes his hand.

BETH

Thanks so much.

Dr. Singer leaves. Beth, alone in the room, takes a deep breath, exhales.

INT. BETH'S CAR. DAY.

Beth sits in the parking lot and calls Pat.

PAT (V.O.)

I'm about to see a family. You okay?

BETH

Yeah, Dr. Singer said the baby's fine.

PAT (V.O.)

Glad to hear that.

BETH

I didn't want Garrett to freak, so I didn't say anything. Hell, I didn't know I was worried until the doctor said everything was okay.

PAT (V.O.)

That's what he's there for.

BETH

Yeah, he didn't make me feel like an idiot.

PAT (V.O.)

You're a mom. You were checking on your kid.

BETH

I'll let you go.

(beat)

Thanks, Pat.

I/E GARRETT'S CAR. NIGHT.

Garrett drives aimlessly through the streets and finds himself at the cemetery. He pulls in, but the iron gate is locked. His cell phone rings. He looks down, lets it go to voicemail, then listens to it.

BETH (V.O.)

Hey, I saw Dr. Singer today. The baby's doing great. Okay, that's all. Love you.

Garrett backs out of the cemetery, and drives away.

EXT. BACK YARD. DAY.

Beth, now full term, sits in a lawn chair in her back yard. It's a late spring day. Pat brings two glasses of lemonade from the kitchen and sits in the lawn chair next to Beth.

PAT

You want a sweater?

BETH

No, I'm good.

(beat)

Will you take me to the hospital tomorrow? I'd ask Gloria, but she'd get a police escort.

PAT

What time?

BETH

6:30, C-section's at 9.

PAT

I'll be here.

Beth drinks her lemonade.

BETH

(smiling)

Actually, we could have used a police escort with Ben. I almost had him in the car.

PAT

(skeptical)

What do you mean 'almost'?

BETH

He was crowning.

PAT

(chuckling)

That qualifies. Why'd you wait so long to go to the hospital?

BETH

We'd gone earlier--

PAT

(smiling)

They sent you home.

BETH

Yeah, we were mortified. So, he wasn't born in the car, but I didn't make it to the birthing room either.

PAT

So where'd you have him?

BETH

In the lobby.

PAT

(shakes her head)

I'll get you there on time tomorrow--not having my godson born in some broom closet.

They sit in comfortable silence.

PAT

You seem ready.

BETH

To have him?

PAT

To bring him home.

Beth puts her head back, looks up at the sky.

BETH

Yeah, that was a long time coming.
I didn't like thinking of him
here, using Ben's crib, wearing
his things.

Pat looks over at her.

PAT

What changed your mind?

BETH

I realized Ben's things are no
good to Ben now.

(beat)

That goes for me too. I can't take
care of him anymore. I can't help
him.

Beth continues to look up at the sky.

BETH (CONT'D)

I can only do what's ahead of me.

PAT

This baby.

Beth looks over at Pat.

BETH

Thanks for helping me get there.

Pat, emotional, stands up, picks up her empty glass.

PAT

Don't start with me.

Beth smiles. Pat walks towards the kitchen, turns around.

PAT (CONT'D)

You told Garrett the C-section's
tomorrow, right?

BETH

He's calling me later.

PAT

He might want to take you himself.

INT. BETH'S BEDROOM/INT. GARRETT'S APARTMENT. NIGHT.

Beth is sitting up in bed. Her hospital bag is packed and ready. She calls Garrett's cell. Garrett is on the couch in his rental apartment wearing sweatpants and a t-shirt. There are old take-out containers on the coffee table in front of him. He picks up his cell.

GARRETT

I was going to call. You okay?

BETH

I'm having the C-section tomorrow morning.

Silence on Garrett's end.

GARRETT

Beth, I can't do this.

BETH

You don't have to. Pat's taking me.

GARRETT

I can't do any of it.

Silence on Beth's end.

GARRETT (CONT'D)

Ben took that first breath and then it was us, you and me, responsible for that little boy.

BETH

We did great.

GARRETT

Did we?

BETH

This baby won't get sick like Ben did.

GARRETT

It's more than that. There's too much out there, you know?

BETH
It's a leap of faith, like with
Ben.

GARRETT
And that almost killed us.

BETH
We can do this.

GARRETT
(voice thick)
One of us can.

Garrett ends the call, slumps back on the couch. Beth sets her cell on the nightstand and turns off the lamp. After a few seconds, she turns it back on and picks up her cell phone.

BETH
Pat? Hey, I need that ride
tomorrow.

INT. PAT'S CAR. DAY.

Pat and Beth are in Pat's car heading to the hospital in the early morning. Beth's overnight bag is in the back seat. Pat has her coffee in the cup holder.

PAT
(gesturing to her
coffee)
I shouldn't have brought that. I
know you can't have anything until
after the surgery.

BETH
(subdued)
It's not bothering me.

Pat looks over.

PAT
Something is.

BETH
Garrett told me last night that
he's basically out.

PAT
Out?

BETH

Bailing. He's scared. I can hear it in his voice. He thinks something will go wrong again.

PAT

Understandable.

BETH

Yeah, I get it.

Beth looks out the window.

BETH (CONT'D)

I'm not happy about it, but I get it. Christ, I'm scared too.

They drive through the empty streets.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM. DAY.

Beth is propped up in her hospital bed after the C-section. She has on a hospital gown and there is an I.V. attached to her arm. She looks towards the hallway every couple of seconds. Gloria, beaming, comes into the room carrying roses.

GLORIA

How are you feeling, my darling?
Why have they started an I.V.?

BETH

Just fluids. I'm good, mom.
They've gotten me up and moving.

GLORIA

(euphoric)
He's perfect, isn't he? I never
thought--well, it's wonderful.

Gloria looks towards the hall.

GLORIA (CONT'D)

Where's Garrett?

BETH

Pat called him.

Gloria looks at Beth, then puts the flowers on the window sill.

BETH (CONT'D)

It's okay, mom. He'll be here.

Gloria bites her tongue.

BETH (CONT'D)

How about naming the baby 'Cal'?
Wasn't there a 'Calvin' somewhere
on your side?

Gloria follows Beth's lead.

GLORIA

You're right, I had an Uncle
Calvin on my mother's side. The
loveliest man...

INT. THE NURSERY. DAY.

Nurses are moving newborns around. Garrett, unshaven,
wan, stands at the glass window looking at the 'Driscoll'
bassinet. Pat walks up to him.

PAT

He's beautiful.

He turns to her.

GARRETT

Beth okay?

PAT

Solid. She's in room 214.

GARRETT

Tell her I saw the baby, okay?

He turns away from the nursery window, walks towards the
elevators.

INT. LIVING ROOM. DAY.

Beth is nursing Cal in the big chair in the living room.
She has on Garrett's old robe over her nightgown. The
bassinet is beside the chair. The kitchen door opens.
Beth looks towards the kitchen.

BETH

I'm in here, Pat. Could you bring
me some water? Cal's nursing.

Garrett walks in with a glass of water, puts it down
carefully next to Beth, and sits on the couch. Beth
follows him with her eyes.

GARRETT

(quietly)
Cal, is it?

BETH

Calvin Garrett, actually.

Garrett shakes his head.

GARRETT

You didn't have to do that.

BETH

You're his father.

Beth puts Cal on her shoulder, pats his back gently.

GARRETT

I saw him the day he was born. Did Pat tell you?

BETH

(impatiently)
Why are you here, Garrett?

GARRETT

I should have been with you for the surgery.

BETH

I did okay.

GARRETT

I know that, but I should have been there.

BETH

I thought you'd come.

GARRETT

I got as far as the elevator.

Beth adjusts Cal's blanket, puts him in the bassinet. She sits back down in her chair and waits.

GARRETT (CONT'D)

Do you know what people said to me, those weeks after Ben died?

Beth shakes her head.

GARRETT (CONT'D)

That I saved you. That you wouldn't have made it without me.

BETH

Fair.

Garrett looks up.

GARRETT

Not to you. You saved yourself.

BETH

I had a lot of help--Pat, you.

GARRETT

Until I left.

(beat)

You did what I couldn't. I only faked it for a while.

BETH

We survived. It doesn't matter who did what.

GARRETT

Only to me, I guess.

BETH

Why didn't you tell me what was going on with you?

GARRETT

Do you remember any of those weeks? You were in bad shape, Beth. You didn't want to go to Ben's funeral. I got you dressed, held you up at his grave. Then you'd sit in the garage, wouldn't eat. I didn't know what was going to happen.

Cal stirs. Beth picks him up, sways back and forth with him.

GARRETT (CONT'D)

I did the best I could.

BETH

You were incredible to me. I remember that part.

Garrett leans back on the couch.

GARRETT

As long as I focused on you, I was okay. Dealing with the hospital, Ben's funeral--even stealing that doll--they were things I could do for you.

Beth stops, looks at him with sadness.

BETH

Until there was nothing left to do.

GARRETT

You got better. And I was so relieved that you were--

(pauses)

But then I couldn't hold it off anymore. Ben's jacket against mine, you pregnant, I was--

BETH

Fucked.

Garrett looks at her.

GARRETT

Yes.

(beat)

You know the rest. I tried, Beth. I didn't want to let you down.

(looks at Cal)

Or him. I wanted to be here with you.

Beth puts Cal in the bassinet and sits on the couch.

BETH

Look, we don't have to be in this house. We could take Cal, go some place Ben never was.

Garrett leans back, shuts his eyes.

GARRETT

It wouldn't make any difference. I'm always going to be back there somewhere trying to understand, make it right.

BETH

That is so fucked up. From the moment Ben was born, you did everything right.

GARRETT

(wearily)

I know what I did. How I feel has nothing to do with it.

Beth gets up, turns to Garrett, her palms up.

BETH

So this is it? This is what you're going to do from now on--take Ben's death apart and put it back together until it fits the way you need it to?

(beat)

Don't you get it? What happened to him is never going to make sense. You can't make it right--there is no right. There's only what happened.

Beth, spent, goes over to the bassinet, her back to Garrett.

BETH (CONT'D)

You know all this.

Garrett leans forward on the couch.

GARRETT

I told you, it doesn't matter what I know.

Beth turns to face Garrett.

BETH

Then at least be honest about what you're doing. You're choosing to stay behind with Ben. Over us, over Cal--

(puts her palms up)

Over whatever's next.

GARRETT

I'm not choosing. I can't do what you want me to. Not again. Not one day of it.

(beat)

I watched what happened to Ben. Watched it, Beth, in slow motion. I couldn't stop it, I couldn't do anything.

Garrett leans back on the couch.

GARRETT (CONT'D)

And then I saw you gutted by it.
And what could I do to make it
right?

(bitterly)

Pick out Ben's casket? Steal some
doll?

Beth walks closer to the couch.

BETH

Garrett, listen to me--

GARRETT

If I loved you enough, loved Cal,
I could do it. That's what you're
going to say, isn't it?

He looks up at her.

GARRETT

Now you're the one who doesn't
understand. The problem WAS loving
you and Ben, loving that much and
doing so little.

(shakes his head)

I'm sorry, Beth. I can't watch
anymore.

Beth goes still. After a few moments she goes to the
bassinet and picks Cal up. She walks towards the stairs
and turns back to Garrett.

BETH

Cal and I will be okay. You need
to know that.

Beth goes up the stairs with Cal. Garrett slumps back on
the couch, watches them until they are out of sight.

EXT. BACK YARD. DAY.

A table in Beth's back yard is filled with presents,
party hats, and a chocolate cake with three candles. A
colorful bunch of balloons is tied to a lawn chair.

Gloria comes from the kitchen with lemonade and cups. Pat
carries a tray with ice cream. CAL, now a sturdy 3 year
old, runs to the table, pulling Beth along.

CAL

I see it! There it is--one, two, three candles. And it's chocolate, right, mommy?

BETH

(smiling)
Yes, sweetheart.

Cal hops up and down.

CAL

See it, grandma? It's chocolate all over.

GLORIA

I do, my darling. And you can blow out the candles all by yourself.

Beth, Gloria, and Pat gather around Cal.

CAL

Auntie Pat, you going to put the fire on them?

PAT

Yes, but stand back a little.

Cal moves closer to Beth.

PAT (CONT'D)

Okay, do you have a wish? You know you have to make a wish.

CAL

Mommy says it's a secret.

BETH

Ready? Blow!

Cal blows, blows again. The women hug him, cut the cake, help Cal unwrap presents...

EXT. BACK YARD. DAY.

Cal and Beth are alone in the back yard after his party. Cal sits on Beth's lap, holding the bunch of balloons by the string. He looks up at them moving in the breeze. Beth pulls a red truck from her pocket.

BETH

This is from your daddy.

CAL

He's not here.

Beth kisses the top of his head. Cal takes the truck, runs it along the arm of the lawn chair.

CAL (CONT'D)

I wished for that little boy to come play with me. When I blew the candles.

BETH

What little boy, Cal?

CAL

The one in the pictures. He's got a truck.

BETH

Oh, sweetie, remember I told you, that's your brother.

CAL

Oh.

BETH

His name's Ben.

CAL

Where is he?

BETH

He was too sick, he couldn't be here anymore.

CAL

Oh.

BETH

But I can tell you stories about him, all the silly things he did.

CAL

What's a silly one he did?

Beth pulls him closer.

BETH

One time, when he was a little guy, he sat in the blue chair to eat oatmeal.

Cal looks up at her, confused.

CAL
You're his mommy?

BETH
Yes, and your mommy.

Cal smiles.

BETH
So he picked up his oatmeal and
turned it upside down on his head--

CAL
It went on his eyes?

BETH
Yes, and down his ears and
pajamas...

She runs her hands down Cal, tickling him. The truck falls in the grass and Cal lets go of the balloons. Beth and Cal gasp. They watch the balloons start to float away.

CAL
(bravely)
It's okay.

The balloons float further away.

CAL (CONT'D)
(unsure)
Is it, mommy?

BETH
Yes, sweetheart, it's okay.