Broken

By:

Will Carter

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Will Carter
(404)-388-3987
wmcarter@bu.edu
217 Buckland Drive
Alpharetta, GA 30022

Characters

RICHARD: Forties, husband to Nancy, father of Jason, middle-class, trying to cope with his son's brain-injury, his guilt, and be a polite host to the constant stream of visitors.

NANCY: Forties, wife to Richard, mother of Jason, middle-class, trying to cope with her son's brain-injury and her guilt, put off by the stream of visitors.

RICK: Forties, husband to Carol, father of Derrick, upper-class in income only, Southern, a charmer, a card-carrying member of the "Good-Ole-Boy" system.

CAROL: Forties, wife to Rick, mother of Derrick, sister to Nancy, upper-class, Southern but much less so than her husband.

Setting

The home of Richard and Nancy in Roswell, Georgia, a suburb of Atlanta. Roswell is a city that, while harboring traces of the culture, colloquialisms, accents, and characters of the South and geographically located below the Mason-Dixon, is, for all intents and purposes, not the South. Roswell has good schools, a variety of races and religions of people, Starbucks, Targets, and a high enough average income that, apart from dwindling traces of Southern culture, make it almost indistinguishable from any other affluent part of the country.

Time

Present, over the course of five days.

BROKEN

BY: WILL CARTER

(The kitchen of RICHARD and NANCY: a counter-top upstage center with a sink, hand-soap on it, drying-rags to the right. Downstage right, there is a kitchen-table, several bills and pieces of mail on it, as well as several pill bottles. Mixed in with that, littered on the counter, table, and all around the kitchen, there is a mess of get-well cards, balloons, wilting flowers, and a variety of other items that create a menagerie of brightly colored middleclass sympathy. Around the table, there are three wooden chairs. There is a wheelchair against the wall, a football in it. On both sides of the stage, there are doorways: offstage-left is the front door; offstage-right is Jason's room. NANCY, forties, enters from off left, carrying bags full of groceries. She puts down the bag of groceries, when she sees a recently opened letter on the table. She looks at it, reads it, breathes, a moment. RICHARD, forties, enters from off-right.)

NANCY

Did you...?

RICHARD

Yep.

NANCY

Ok.

(A beat)

RICHARD

Only one.

NANCY

Yeah.

RICHARD

Just to get him through the morning.

(Silence)

Said it was a ten out of ten this time.

(Silence)

All these days after the cranioplasty.

(She does not respond. A moment of silence. RICHARD tries again to engage.)

RICHARD

Still a 10 out of a 10.

(Silence. NANCY unloads the groceries.)

NANCY

(Unloading the groceries)

You'll never guess who I saw this morning.

RICHARD

Did you hear from the Shepherd Center?

NANCY

When I was at Kroger, filling some Keppra and Darvocet for Jason? When who should I bump into in line, but my sister. I mean, I was surprised to see her out shopping for groceries on a Sunday morning. Thought it was against the Ten Commandments or something, but, clear as day, I saw her there. Well, actually, I mean, if I *saw* her, I wouldn't've *hit* her.

RICHARD

Nance, what did you-

NANCY

I was on my phone, talking to insurance, thinking about a lawyer for Jason, how to get Jason in the Shepherd Center, when-bang! I look up, and there's Carol, hands frozen on their cart, with enough stuff thrown in it, youd've thought my sister was prepping for the apocalypse. In fact, I had to *peer around* to apologize.

RICHARD

Then, how did you not see it?

NANCY

I was in my head, thinking about Jason, court, insurance, calling Shepherd, all the things I have to do.

RICHARD

I know.

NANCY

I couldn't believe it, after all her cards, all of her texts of bible verses, there was my sister in the flesh and blood. And we had an actual, real-life conversation. I mean, sure, it was short, but she asked how I was doing and then, get this, waited for a response. Of course, she didn't have *too* much time to talk. No, couldn't be distracted from buying all the supplies before their big trip this weekend…She and Rick are taking Derrick up to visit Harvard, meet with the coaches.

(A beat)

RICHARD

Oh.

(A beat)

NANCY

Got the news today.

RICHARD

I thought he was wait-listed.

NANCY

She said a spot opened up.

RICHARD

A spot.

NANCY

One spot.

RICHARD

Jason's?

NANCY

Mmhmm.

RICHARD

I don't even know what to say.

(Silence, as NANCY cleans up.)

NANCY

(Gathering a number of get-well cards)

And given such a fortunate turn of luck-

RICHARD

You can't be-

NANCY

This Friday, I thought it would be nice if Derrick-

RICHARD

No.

NANCY

my sister thought it would be nice for Derrick to come over for dinner.

RICHARD

We haven't heard from them in weeks, no sign of Derrick, now, when he takes-

´NANCY

She said Derrick really wants to.

RICHARD

Now he wants to come.

NANCY

She said Derrick found it hard to see Jason in the coma.

RICHARD

Yeah, it was hard for me too.

NANCY

Look, I don't know why he wants to come, but I'm sure Jason will be excited to see Derrick.

RICHARD

Just Derrick, right?

NANCY

(Throwing the few cards she's gathered into the trash)

Yes, clear your Friday night, Derrick will be dining with us.

RICHARD

You think Jason's ready for that much stimulation? We can't risk it. We told the police that he couldn't do an interview yet, and you're-

NANCY

Dr. Weaver said it's important for him to get reintegrated to talking to people, being social.

RICHARD

He's been home one night, and already-

NANCY

I wasn't *expecting* to see my sister at Kroger, I-

RICHARD

Nance, we can't go rushing into his recovery.

NANCY

We at least need to start it.

RICHARD

Look, I know you're disappointed, and I know you want to try and help-

NANCY

Trust me, it'll be good for him.

RICHARD

What if Rick runs his mouth that Jason is well enough for a dinner conversation? The police might come knocking-

NANCY

Do you think he's ready for an interview with the police?

RICHARD

Do you think he's ready to for a dinner with your family?

NANCY

I need to believe that he can get better, get him into Shepherd Center, and if we start-

RICHARD

We cannot afford for the police to interview him right now.

NANCY

It was an accident, Richard.

RICHARD

Manslaughter, Nance-

NANCY

You think I don't remember? All I do-

RICHARD

Someone in the other car died, Nancy, and if Jason was being reckless-

NANCY

I understand the consequences.

RICHARD

We need to be careful.

NANCY

I just want him to get better, get back to his normal life.

RICHARD

Our life- *his* life will be ruined if-

NANCY

You don't know if he-

RICHARD

He might be guilty of driving recklessly, of being on his phone. We don't know.

NANCY

He's not guilty.

RICHARD

Nancy.

NANCY

He's not like his father.

(Silence. NANCY picks up the recently opened letter, reading it. A moment.)

RICHARD
(Picking up the football)

Rick still driving him up?

(Getting no response)

That man is nuts. Back in October, when Derrick and Jason were just applying? Rick said he was going to make the trip from Atlanta to Boston in one day, 21 hours.

(Silence)

NANCY
(Still reading)

Crazy.

RICHARD

There's no talking Rick out of it, "Listen Rich, if you don't live life without some drive, what's the damn point?"

NANCY

Did you-

RICHARD

Somehow though, he connected with Jason. I never got it though. I don't know why everyone finds him so damn charming. To me, it's like if insecure masculinity had an avatar.

NANCY
(Holding the paper up)

You opened this?

RICHARD

I am trying to figure out what to do. They want to start the case.

NANCY

When? When have you ever known him to be on his phone?

RICHARD

He did cross the line.

NANCY

We don't know if he is at fault.

RICHARD

We do know that the passenger in other car died.

NANCY

What did Don say about the lawyer?

RICHARD

I already left a message.

NANCY

We need more than just message. If they are going after us-

RICHARD

We're screwed, but that's why I called-

NANCY

We barely have enough for the medical bills. If he gets into Shepherd Center, we have to pray insurance covers that, and if he's guilty?

RICHARD

We go to jail. Jason's life is over. Maybe Carol and Rick take him?

NANCY

It can't be his fault. His life was just coming together. He was going to go to Harvard.

RICHARD

He always had that dream.

NANCY

Has. Richard.

RICHARD

What?

NANCY

Has.

RICHARD

We have to accept things the way they are.

NANCY

He has a brain injury, Richard. An *injury*. He can heal; he can recover. If he can get into the Shepherd Center-

RICHARD

We just need to see how he's doing, take it day by day.

NANCY

Is that how you live?

RICHARD

Nancy.

NANCY

Day by day? Really?

RICHARD

I thought we were past this.

NANCY

Funny. You're funny, Richard.

RICHARD

I said I was sorry.

NANCY

That's supposed to make it better? Really? Just one little apology?

RICHARD

No.

NANCY

That's supposed to fix everything?

RICHARD

I've slept on the couch for weeks.

NANCY

Whose bed before that?

RICHARD

And I hate myself for it every single day. I can't help but think all *this* is God's judgement or something

NANCY

Isn't that just like you to turn everything back on you.

RICHARD

Yeah, and speaking of me, gosh when was the last time we had sex? Which president was it?

NANCY

Don't you dare blame me for your affair.

RICHARD

Was it the Taft administration?

NANCY

I didn't make you sleep with her.

RICHARD

No, that was a mistake.

NANCY

Yeah, I know about those.

RICHARD

Me too, sweetheart. Me too.

NANCY

Don't worry, you'll be off the hook soon enough. Like we had said, like we agreed that morning, when I confronted you. when he goes to college, and it's just us-

RICHARD

I am not so sure about him going to college just yet.

NANCY

He will heal. Recover.

RICHARD

But, think, do we need that to happen so fast?

NANCY

Of course.

RICHARD

Then, he's got to talk to police. *We've* got to go to court.

NANCY

If he didn't-

RICHARD

But if he did, we're screwed. If he did, we lose the house, the cars, our freedom.

NANCY

I need you to believe in your son.

RICHARD

We are talking about manslaughter. Wake up Nancy.

NANCY

Excuse me?

RICHARD

If this goes bad, if he was on his phone, or worse, if he did it intentionally, you can kiss that dream life of yours goodbye.

NANCY

You already did that for me.

RICHARD

Oh no, Nancy, I'm not just talking about me.

NANCY

That's a first.

RICHARD

If we go to jail, now, I know it's not divorce, but with different prisons, you will get that separation wish.

(Silence)

RICHARD

I'll see what the lawyer says.

NANCY

We thought we were doing the right thing getting him that SUV.

RICHARD

I need you to think about the possibility-

NANCY

It was a car *accident*, Richard. These happen.

RICHARD

Sure.

NANCY

You don't want it to be?

RICHARD

Is it really better for you if it is?

NANCY

No. Don't you dare-

RICHARD

He's not ready, I said. He needs more time, I said-

NANCY

He's seventeen years old.

RICHARD

You had to push.

NANCY

He needed to grow up, needed to be ready. He can't rely on his mom to take him everywhere.

RICHARD

Well, it looks like growing up might be delayed a bit.

NANCY

At least I've tried to parent him. He's got a better relationship with his uncle than with his own father.

RICHARD

Let's keep it down. You don't want your son to wake up.

NANCY

You first.

RICHARD

He doesn't need to hear his mother blaming his father for a possible attempted-

NANCY

One of us has already shown him he doesn't care about being a parent.

(RICHARD does not respond. He turns away, busies himself with something else. Silence. NANCY busies herself with stacking the papers.)

RICHARD

How Rick Freed fathered a kid who's going to Harvard, I'll never know.

(Silence. RICHARD comes to NANCY.)

When someone in the other car dies, of course they are going to accuse Jason. We'll beat this, get him into Shepherd Center. They'll help him recover,

NANCY

I wish I could've tackled this sooner.

RICHARD

From what I could see online, the call log goes blank when he gets to Oxbo, dead zone, right when the accident happens.

NANCY

So, from what he know, he's innocent.

RICHARD

I hope so. We need the official phone records sent to us that show what was going on when he went on Oxbo. They should be here by the end of the week.

NANCY

The phone?

RICHARD

I hope not.

NANCY

Derrick? If he was on the phone with Jason, I'm sure he would fess up.

RICHARD

You want to interrogate him?

NANCY

I need to know.

RICHARD

Will it make it better?

NANCY

We need to get the facts before we meet with the lawyer.

RICHARD

Let me make sure Don's guy is actually any good.

NANCY

I need to not feel like garbage.

RICHARD

Trust me, I know.

NANCY

No, it's- it's different.

(Silence. There is a physical space between RICHARD and NANCY. RICHARD looks like he means to fill it but doesn't.)

NANCY

I told him to get it.

RICHARD

You did.

NANCY

He was scared, didn't like driving. He wanted more time.

RICHARD

That's what I said.

NANCY
(Turning,)

But you have to in Atlanta. And sure, yes, he didn't feel comfortable behind the wheel, but I was getting him ready for college. I was getting him independent. Because even before you, you...*We* decided, the two of us...together.

RICHARD
(Going to the fridge)

You were talking about dinner earlier?

NANCY

We decided. Once we knew what the future held with us-

RICHARD

We had started that talk before-

NANCY

We decided. *We* decided that divorce was coming post-graduation.

RICHARD

You decided, and I went along.

NANCY

You decided to sleep with her. *You* made me want it immediately.

RICHARD

Your sister decided to tell you about Jennifer and I, and that's what-

NANCY

Don’t you dare blame Carol-

RICHARD

You had to confront me that morning, couldn’t wait until Jason left for school.

NANCY

You had an affair. You started it.

RICHARD

You were done with me long ago.

NANCY

You had to strike the match and blow it all up.

RICHARD

With a son in a wheelchair, light years from who he was, looks like we’re back in it now.

NANCY

God. How did this happen? We were so close, and then, poof. Just like-

RICHARD

Friday.

NANCY

Our marriage. Poof.

RICHARD

What time is Derrick coming on Friday?

NANCY

Just like my dreams, one college relationship. One stupid night. Poof.

RICHARD

I hope he’s coming early because Jason needs his sleep.

NANCY

He wasn’t good at driving. I don’t know how we didn’t see that.

RICHARD

(Peering in the fridge)

Should I grill up some burgers?

NANCY

That’s what Derrick said to me.

RICHARD

I'll have to go by Kroger again.

NANCY

In the waiting room.

RICHARD
(Shutting the fridge)

Kroger meat alright with you?

NANCY

Said everyone knew it. They didn't talk about it, but going to games, players preferred the bus.

Silence. RICHARD can't even look at her.)

RICHARD

Why did you push him?

NANCY

He was seventeen.

RICHARD

He barely passed.

NANCY

He was seventeen years-old, Richard. Transportation was going to get harder, and whether he admitted or not, he needed to drive.

RICHARD

Hmm. Needed. I don't know what he needed. I needed a way out, and we were so close. For him, I don't even know if…God…what if it wasn't an accident-

NANCY

Don't you dare say that.

RICHARD

I can't help but wonder, no? He had to be going fast down Oxbo-

NANCY

No. Your son did not cause this.

RICHARD

He had a lot on his shoulders. Not like we would know. He talked to his cousin more than he ever talked to us.

NANCY

The phone records will show nothing once he got on Oxbo, and then, it's just an accident.

RICHARD
I get why you want him to have done it. Then, you're off the hook.

NANCY
No, no. Don't say that.

RICHARD
It's Jason's fault, not his mother's.

NANCY
The other driver is lying Richard. Who does he call?

RICHARD
I can't think about this right now.

NANCY
You need to. This is our lives we're talking about.

RICHARD
(Moving to go)
Do we need anything else?

NANCY
What?

RICHARD
(Grabbing his keys from the counter)
From the store, anything else?

NANCY
Really? While our lives are on fire?

RICHARD
(Stopping at the door)
I'm sure insurance is already working on an appeal.

NANCY
He is a good boy. He was happy.

(RICHARD looks to her, goes. NANCY washes her hands. Once finished and hands dried, she takes a pill bottle off to Jason's room. A moment of no-one onstage. RICHARD enters on the phone.)

RICHARD
(On phone)
He can't interview right now….He has a brain injury, and he just woke up from a coma…No of course not…Of course not…I don't know what we can afford. Credit cards are pretty maxed out as it is…I know Don. You think I don't think every day about going to jail?...I'll see. I don't know if he can answer yes or no questions…Ok…Bye.

(RICHARD hangs up. NANCY enters.)

NANCY
Who was that?

RICHARD
Don says the police need to interview Jason.

NANCY
He can't Richard.

RICHARD
The other driver's family is pushing for it. The cops are pushing for it.

NANCY
Then, I need you to stall.

RICHARD
I don't know who you think I am.

NANCY
I thought you were his father-

RICHARD
You know what I mean. If the police want him to-

NANCY
You want to jeopardize our- *his* future?

RICHARD
I'm doing all that I can.

NANCY
Do more.

RICHARD
You think I want it like this? I was ready to be gone.

NANCY

Then go.

RICHARD

You know I can't.

NANCY

Then help me.

RICHARD

I've got the phone records coming. We've got an appointment with an attorney.

NANCY

He was not on the phone-

RICHARD

But-

NANCY

No buts, we're screwed.

RICHARD

He didn't answer the phone before Oxbo Road. Maybe, once he got on it-

NANCY

Who was calling him before Oxbo?

RICHARD

Several calls from his uncle.

NANCY

Rick? Rick caused the crash?

RICHARD

But we don't know if Jason ever answered.

NANCY

First, we need to figure out what those phone calls were about.

RICHARD

We can ask Derrick on Friday.

NANCY

I can try my sister.

RICHARD

Surprised we haven't seen her.

NANCY

Though, a number of texts, emailed bible verses, cards, no visits at the hospital, but on the other hand, lots of comforting typeface.

RICHARD

Honestly, I prefer the typeface.

NANCY

Asking me if I need prayer.

RICHARD

Did she ask you if you *found* Jesus yet?

NANCY

I thought she was done with evangelism.

RICHARD

Rick asked me that.

NANCY

We just agreed to disagree.

RICHARD

As though he's behind a curtain or under a couch-cushion somewhere.

NANCY

It's fine if she needs religion.

RICHARD

I've looked everywhere.

NANCY

I don't.

RICHARD

I just *caaaaan't* seem to find him.

(Chuckles at his own joke)

NANCY

(Pause, remembering)

Though, she hassled me more at first.

RICHARD

Oh yeah, when Jason was young.

NANCY

When he was starting school, and, wow, I completely forgot. She roped me into getting him into football.

RICHARD

That rec league.

NANCY

When there was no tackling?

RICHARD

I remember.

NANCY

And good ole Coach Rick tried to convince the parents to have it?

RICHARD

They were six years old.

NANCY

“Boys who can’t tackle become men who can’t tackle.”

RICHARD

I almost tackled *him.*

NANCY

Do you think that’s something he learned at church? I know my bible’s a little shaky, but…

RICHARD

(Picking up the football)

Oh, I think Rick might think it’s in there.

(They laugh. A moment.)

NANCY

Carol keeps apologizing and assuring me that she and Rick are going to be more present.

RICHARD

If they gave out awards for intentions, your sister’d definitely win gold.

NANCY

God, a part of me wishes Carol would come by.

RICHARD
There's a sentence I never thought I'd live to hear.

NANCY
I don't know where to begin, but I need to know why Rick was calling Jason.

RICHARD
What are you going to say?

NANCY
I don't know. Why didn't you tell me that Rick was calling Jason?

RICHARD
I'm sure she'll respond positively to that.

NANCY
But I need time to process everything. We are talking about losing everything. I'm a mess right now, like I'm always halfway from dissolving.

RICHARD
Gravity pulling at the seams.

NANCY
I just need an answer to something. I want to see Carol, so I can get that.

RICHARD
Who knows, you might get your chance. Maybe, soon, one of those "I've been meaning to come by" will materialize.

NANCY
No, those are just words. She feels guilty.

(There is a knock at the door; they look at each other, wait; maybe, it was a collaborative imagination. Then, RICHARD goes. NANCY quickly moves to cleaning up papers. A moment. CAROL enters, walking on eggshells, carrying a gift bag. RICHARD follows behind. CAROL goes to NANCY.)

CAROL
Nancy.

(Hugs NANCY)

NANCY
(Accepting the hug)
Mmmmm.

CAROL
I'm so sorry I haven't been by sooner.

NANCY
Really, it's-

CAROL
I mean, I would've come by yesterday after we spoke, but, but Mondays are better for me.

NANCY
Yeah.

(A beat.)

NANCY
Carol-

CAROL
I can't believe it. Awake. After, what, three weeks?

NANCY
Is Rick with you?

CAROL
No. Just me. I'm sorry Nancy.

NANCY
I just have questions.

CAROL
It's perfectly natural to question.

NANCY
I have so many…

RICHARD
Questions for Rick.

CAROL
Oh? Well, I, I uh…He's usually home by 8?

RICHARD
Does he ever talk to Jason on the phone?

CAROL
He uh…he has all the players' numbers. I-I don't know which ones he calls.

NANCY
The night of the-

CAROL
He just, he just loved Jason. He really did.

NANCY
Jason's not dead. He's here if Rick ever wants to visit.

CAROL
I'm sorry. I mean, I'm sorry that he had to be in a coma…so sorry for you guys. But…I….I am….I'm so glad he's awake.

RICHARD
Me too.

NANCY
Carol, we need to-

CAROL
(To NANCY)
Before I forget, did you see my text?

NANCY
Which one?

CAROL
About mom. I've been trying with her, but she keeps asking for you.

NANCY
I never know why.

CAROL
She really wants *you* to call. She always said she loves her children equally.

NANCY
Stop it.

CAROL
No, Nancy, you are the favorite.

NANCY

That's not true. I wanted to ask-

CAROL

Did you see my text about her doctor?

NANCY

Been a little busy.

CAROL

I'm sure.

RICHARD

Been trying to get Jason on the road to recovery. Trying to get him into the Shepherd Center.

CAROL

Yeah?

RICHARD

It's the top brain injury rehabilitation center, right here in Atlanta.

CAROL

That's great!

RICHARD

Still have to get him in and pay for it.

NANCY

And still have to fight this manslaughter case.

CAROL

But it was a car accident.

NANCY

They are saying Jason caused the crash because he was on his phone.

CAROL

Oh. Nancy. I'm so, so sorry.

NANCY

When was my son on the phone? For what?

CAROL

A lot on his plate? I mean, maybe, he was checking emails or something, a lot to juggle with school and football.

RICHARD

He was a focused kid.

CAROL

Just football and getting into Harvard.

NANCY

Yep, so-

CAROL

He had so much on his plate, and after…you know…

RICHARD

So, Carol-

CAROL

Derrick's just as focused.

NANCY

Carol, I really-

CAROL

The other day, Derrick was studying, and Rick closed his science textbook on him and said, "Son, there's so many pretty girls at your school. Why don't you go and try and get you one?"

RICHARD

Always the charmer.

NANCY

Do you know why Rick was calling Jason that night?

(The air leaves the room for a second.)

CAROL

Oh…uh…I don't know for sure-

RICHARD

He did call Jason several times.

CAROL

I know Rick, he said, he said-

NANCY

What did he say?

CAROL

He uh… Right. He was callin to check on him. Said he looked real sad.

CAROL (CONTINUED)
(To NANCY)
I-I-I'm sorry. I really am.

NANCY
Hmm.

CAROL
Is Jason here? I got him a little something.

NANCY
He's asleep.

CAROL
Oh.

RICHARD
Yeah, after a brain injury, sleep is very important for recovery.

CAROL
Oh. I understand.

RICHARD
Yeah.

CAROL
Do you think he'll get better?

RICHARD
If we can get him in the Shepherd Center, we'll see.

CAROL
Oh.

RICHARD
I mean, we hope.

NANCY
Carol, why does your husband call my son so much?

CAROL
(To NANCY)
I can ask him. I will ask him. I will.

RICHARD

Thank you.

CAROL

Does he remember the accident? I don't know why, but at least, at least…at least he's awake? The coma was so he could heal- he *did* heal, right? I mean, after what happened, I hope he doesn't remember what happened.

RICHARD

He *will* heal. Memory's really spotty though, side effect of the coma drugs.

CAROL

Good.

NANCY

Is it good? Really? It's good?

CAROL

Something so traumatic.

NANCY

I would love if he could remember, if someone, anyone could remember why your husband was calling my son so many times that night.

CAROL

Like I said, I think, I think he- now, I don't want to get anything wrong.

NANCY

It's strange that he never mentioned it to us.

CAROL

It didn't seem necessary.

NANCY

Necessary? Really? You didn't think it might be necessary to know that your husband calling my son so many times might be the reason my son got into a car accident? You didn't think that might impact whether my son is guilty of manslaughter?

CAROL

I'm-I'm sorry Nancy. I-I, I was just coming by to check on you guys.

RICHARD

Thanks for checking.

NANCY

If you have nothing else, we'll see you in another month.

CAROL

Oh. Oh my I....I....I'm...well, I uh…

(RICHARD and NANCY look at her.)

CAROL
(Earnest)

Whatever you find out, just, just remember, God's in control.

RICHARD

Sure.

CAROL
(To Nancy)

This is his plan, and…and, and I know it's hard. And, and we, we wanna find a reason, we don't wanna believe the bad things. We wanna find answers, but...but, but...This is his plan.

NANCY

Really? That's all you have for me? Nothing else you want to tell me?

CAROL

And Jason's gonna be okay. I just know it. I know it's hard, I know, but…it's…it's…There is a reason for this. This is not some random tragedy.

RICHARD

Thanks for coming by Carol.

CAROL

Nancy, I know you're not-

NANCY

I'm not.

RICHARD

Whenever your husband is available-

CAROL

But I..I...I...There is a plan, there is a design. Even though you just don't understand what you did to deserve this-

RICHARD

See you later Carol.

CAROL

God has a plan. I mean, I know it's hard. For this to happen to Jason of all people.

RICHARD

Carol?

CAROL

He was just so smart.

(NANCY goes to wash her hands. CAROL looks after her, unsure.)

RICHARD

Goodbye, Carol. Thanks for coming by.

CAROL

Nancy, I'm sorry. I really, really am. I hope to make it all up to you.

(NANCY turns off the water. Carol raises her gift-bag.)

CAROL
(Hopeful)

Got Jason a little get well present.
(Giving the bag to NANCY)
Maybe you can give it to him, when he wakes up?

(She gives the bag to NANCY, who opens it, revealing a brightly colored teddy-bear. NANCY stares at it.)

CAROL

Nancy?

RICHARD

Honey?

(NANCY hugs the teddy-bear to her chest, burying her face in it.)

CAROL

It's just…I remember you always got him different colored ones when he was little. Every time we were at the store, you'd always say, "I know I shouldn't, but what the heck?"
(Putting a hand on Nancy)
You were always such a good mother.

(NANCY drops her arms, bear falling to the floor, and leaves the room. RICHARD starts to go after her.)

RICHARD

Nance.

(NANCY is gone.)

CAROL
(To herself)
Stupid. Stupid. Stupid.

RICHARD
(Turning)
Carol.

CAROL
I picked it up on the way over, thought it would be nice.

RICHARD
It's just... it's just been a rough couple of weeks.

CAROL
I know.

RICHARD
We got the call about Jason, and then, facing manslaughter. Hard. It's just been really hard.

CAROL
Oh, I'm sure.

RICHARD
After weeks of, of fear.

CAROL
Course.

RICHARD
And...and the guilt. And now...god... what if he was on the phone? That morning, Nancy confronted me, and what if it was because of…because of me. What if he was on the phone because of me? What if somebody's dead because of me?

CAROL
I'm...I'm...I'm sorry. I'm, I'm so, so sorry.

(CAROL hugs him, and RICHARD collapses into her arms.)

RICHARD
And it sucks Carol. It just...it really sucks. And I...can't...I hate...I hate my-

CAROL

No, you can't.

RICHARD

I just keep thinking, what if I hadn't-

CAROL

No, you can't think like that. We want to think we made this happen, that somehow we are responsible.

RICHARD

Yeah?

CAROL

Just remember, God's in control. There is a reason for all this.

(RICHARD moves to pick up the football. A moment.)

CAROL

This is part of his perfect plan. One day, you'll see.

RICHARD

Sure, Carol.

(A moment.)

CAROL

I'm sorry I told Nancy about you and Jennifer.

RICHARD

It's okay.

CAROL

She's in my bible study. I didn't pry. She confessed it to me.

RICHARD

I know.

(Silence)

CAROL

I...I...I'll come by tomorrow? Same time?

RICHARD

Think it would be best.

CAROL

Bring some food, maybe some people from church?

RICHARD

Trying to keep the people to a minimum.

CAROL

Oh.

RICHARD

You understand.

CAROL
(After a pause, unsure)

Maybe, when he's better?

RICHARD

Sure.

CAROL

I guess...I guess I'll see you tomorrow.

RICHARD

Bye, Carol.

(She smiles. She opens her mouth to say something else. Richard waits. She shakes her head, exits. A moment. RICHARD picks up the teddy-bear, looks at it. He looks back at the football. He looks at the teddy-bear, as NANCY creeps in, unseen by Richard. RICHARD throws the teddy-bear as hard as he can.)

NANCY

God's in control? What is she talking about?

RICHARD
(Turning)

She means well.

NANCY

To tell *me* in *my* situation?

RICHARD

Just trying her best.

NANCY

Of course he's in control for her. Miraculously, a spot just opened up for her son at Harvard.

RICHARD

I'm sure she's not-

NANCY

Our son got in first! But she has to brag that hers is the one going.

RICHARD

Nancy.

NANCY

How do we know this isn't Rick's fault?

RICHARD

Nancy.

NANCY

Distracting Jason by blowing up his phone while he's driving once Derrick gets waitlisted is a great way to go.

RICHARD

Don't be crazy.

NANCY

He goes for the only person she knows around here who's got a spot-

RICHARD

Let's be reasonable.

NANCY

But to say those words, to my face, it's-

RICHARD

She didn't mean anything by-

NANCY

I can't because, because if he's in control Richard?

RICHARD

We can't respond-

NANCY

If God's in control?

RICHARD

Nance.

NANCY

He’s garbage.

RICHARD

Please, let’s-

NANCY

If he exists, if he has any power at all?

RICHARD

Nance.

NANCY

He’s a monster.

RICHARD

I know.

NANCY
(Tears in her eyes)

And she comes in here...

RICHARD

I know.

NANCY

I can’t. I just...

RICHARD

I know.

NANCY

I can’t.

(RICHARD goes to her. She waves him off. He stands there unsure.)

RICHARD

Do you want me-?

NANCY

Just go, go. Go to the store. I’ll text you.

(RICHARD stands there, almost goes to her. Then, he exits. NANCY washes her hands. She looks at them, a moment, studying them. She washes them again. She looks at her hands, then to Jason’s room. She moves to Jason’s room, opening his door.)

NANCY
(Quiet, a sweetness)
Sorry buddy. Just checking on you.
(Exiting into Jason's room)
What's that?

(A moment of no one onstage. NANCY enters from off-right. She goes to the fridge, selecting a tomato, a head of lettuce, some cheese, takes them to the counter, opens the cabinet, bringing down a cutting board, and begins chopping the tomato. She works on the salad throughout. RICHARD enters with grocery bags.)

RICHARD
(Setting the bags on the table)
Did the best I could Nance. Grocery shopping, take-two.

NANCY
If you had only read my text yesterday.

RICHARD
You'll never guess who I saw there.

NANCY
Jesus.

RICHARD
(A smile, leaving the rest of the groceries on the table)
No, no, Jesus wasn't half as religious. Nor as big a Falcons fan.

NANCY
Oh, let me guess.

RICHARD
Rick.

NANCY
Did you ask him?

RICHARD
No. I-

NANCY
Richard, it's a simple question.

RICHARD

I was taken off guard, and then, he kept going on about Friday.

NANCY

No.

RICHARD

Don’t worry, he knows he’s not invited.

NANCY

Good.

RICHARD

Little bitter about it, though, honest, he did say something really interesting.

NANCY

He’s been reading.

RICHARD

He did say Jason looked very depressed that day.

NANCY

(Picking up a bag of produce)

How long have we lived here?

RICHARD

Nance.

NANCY

Fruit and vegetables do not just go on the table.

RICHARD

This is serious.

NANCY

(Putting items in the fridge)

They always go in the fridge.

RICHARD

Says he wouldn’t be surprised if he did it on purpose.

NANCY

(Turning)

No. I can’t even entertain that.

RICHARD

I don’t like it, but-

NANCY

Just think. Does that sound like your son? And why are we only hearing about this when Jason cannot defend himself?

RICHARD

We could ask Jason.

NANCY

Hey honey, your uncle thinks you tried to kill yourself.

RICHARD

Don't put it like-

NANCY

You know it's not true.

(Silence, as RICHARD opens the fridge.)

RICHARD

Still asleep?

NANCY

Darvocet knocks him out.

(RICHARD stands in front of the open fridge, pretending to take notes.)

NANCY

What are you-?

RICHARD

Trying to memorize the correct food placement.

NANCY

Things have their place.

RICHARD

I'm totally going to fail the quiz. Think I'm working off an old edition.

NANCY

I have a system, a place where things go. *And* I need to make sure I have the food I need for Friday.

RICHARD

When hopefully, just Derrick comes over. Ooh, maybe he'll study with me.

(A knock at the door. RICHARD looks to NANCY.)

RICHARD

Do you want me to...?

NANCY

Yes, Richard. Get the door.

(RICHARD goes to the door, leaving the fridge wide-open. NANCY studies the food, shuts it.)

RICHARD
(Offstage)

Hey...uhh...what uh...what's going on?

RICK
(Offstage)

Rich, buddy.

NANCY
(Realizing who's at the door)

Shoot.

RICK
(Offstage)

Mind if I come in real quick?

(NANCY goes to wash her hands.)

RICHARD
(Offstage)

Before we go in, I wanted to ask you-

RICK
(Offstage)

I'll just be a minute.

(RICK, forties, enters, a large Southern man, wearing khakis and a polo. He is a product of the "Good-ole-Boy" System, with his smile and handshake reflex.)

NANCY
(Turning)

Hey...uh...Rick, how's it going?

RICK

My favorite sister-in-law! Man, I can never believe that you are the older one. Look the same as you did in college.

NANCY

You've never been a good liar, but Rick, I do have some questions-

RICK

(Giving her a hug)

How's Jason doin? Sorry I ain't, ya know, been ta see ya guys since Jason, well, since Jason woke up. Really sorry. Been a lot a college scouts comin by.

RICHARD

Only three days.

RICK

He doin' okay? Please say he's doin better. I just wept when I found out.

NANCY

Oh, you know, he's recovering. I did want to talk to you about the night of the accident.

RICK

First, is he doin better?

RICHARD

No, not better, still really struggling. Wouldn't you say so, Nancy? Definitely would really struggle to have a long conversation.

NANCY

He's recovering. He's doing these activity books, and if we can get insurance to pay for it, we're going to get him into Shepherd Center, best brain injury rehab in the country.

RICK

That's great news.

RICHARD

What Nancy means-

NANCY

Better, but Rick-

RICK

Carol an me been worried sick bout this. I was tellin Richey at Kroger. Sorry, feels like I'm followin ya home. Just got so excited, I had to come by an see the boy myself. Carol was tellin me all about how he was. Is he up?

NANCY

I'm afraid not, but I do have some questions.

RICK

Dang. I was hopin to see him, talk to him, give him a bear-hug or something.

RICHARD

Next time.

RICK

He ain't mentioned his Uncle Rick? Aain't said nothin bout no ole Coach Freed?

RICHARD

Sorry Rick.

RICK

It's all good. I'm just worried bout him is all. Always close to the boy. I just want to make sure he's okay, you know?

NANCY

(With a forced smile)

Thank you, Rick.

RICK

Sorry we ain't been by. I mean, I could say it's college scoutin season and Derrick gettin into Harvard, but really, it's just messed me all up to think bout him like this.

RICHARD

Sure.

RICK

But now, I promise, we're gonna be around a lot more.

(With a good-natured laugh)

This ain't the last ya seen a' this fat fool.

NANCY

Thanks, Rick.

RICK

It's just, we've been so busy with gettin Derrick ready for Harvard. After being wait-listed for so long they said-

(Remembering)

Right, you was told.

NANCY

Rick, why were you on the phone with Jason the night of the accident?

RICK

Night a' the accident? Dang, I don't know. Call the boys across the team, go over plays, offer encouragement, but the night of the accident? Sorry, my memory's all kindsa awful. Sometimes, I think I mighta had a brain injury or two in my life. Actually, all the football I played, I most definitely had a couple.

(RICK laughs heartily at his own joke to RICHARD and NANCY, a beat.)

RICHARD

You called him several times.

RICK

God, I'm sorry. It might take me a while to get that memory workin.

NANCY

Rick, why are you here?

RICK

Oh, ya know, just thought I'd come by an see how that ole rascal was. Richey boy toll me he came home Sunday? Dang, you didn' wanna phone me up?

RICHARD

Rick, I'm sorry, but-

RICK

That's okay buddy. Don't mind havin ta wring information outta ya. Once I heard he woke up, I, hell, I knew I'd havta see that boy myself. I've always been a mentor- I mean, you know, I ain't tryin to step on anyone's-

NANCY

We need to know why-

RICK

What I mean is, I only got but one nephew, and after I was damn sure I lost him for good, I can't tell you how happy I am that I didn't. Just had to make sure he was gettin back ta tip-top shape....Yep, tip-top shape.

(After a pause)

At least in better shape than this old man.

(Jabbing RICHARD in the stomach, with a hearty laugh)

Am I right?

RICHARD
(Stepping back)

Okay, okay.

NANCY

Rick.

RICK

Tell me, his...uh...his brain damage, his-

RICHARD

No, it's not damage.

RICK

I'm sorry. Carol told me he had brain-damage.

NANCY

No, my son has a brain *injury*.

RICK

What's the difference?

NANCY

A brain injury means he will heal.

RICHARD

We think.

NANCY

Get better.

RICHARD

We hope.

RICK

You mean like a full recovery?

RICHARD

No, Jason will never be the person he was before the accident, no matter how much he heals.

RICK

Hold on.

NANCY

What Richard means is that-

RICHARD

He will never fully recover. It's what the doctor told us.

NANCY

But Jason is different from every-

RICK

Is he going to remember his life before?

RICHARD

We don't know Rick. We just don't know.

RICK

Cuz, I did my best.

(To RICHARD)

Right? You first met Jennifer at the Car Max?

RICHARD

(To Nancy, opening the fridge)

Say, has Jason had his Ensure?

(Getting an Ensure)

NANCY

(To RICHARD)

He can wait.

RICK

An I introduced ya'll, sorry bout that, an-

RICHARD

Nah, we need to try for the best Nance, you know that.

RICK

(Standing)

Rich, buddy, c'mon.

NANCY

Richard.

RICHARD

(Exiting with the Ensure)

What? Jason needs his Ensure.

(RICHARD is off.)

NANCY

Hmm.

(NANCY looks off after Richard. RICK comes to her.)

RICK

If it is true, an Jason did try to end it, we can try and help.

NANCY

You're wrong. My son did not attempt suicide.

RICK

If you need anything-

NANCY

Thank you.

(A beat)

RICK

I'm still struggling with that night. He was tellin me about his dad, that his mom and dad were splitting up-

NANCY

We had talked about that many times before. Once Jason went to college, we would split.

RICK

But that day sounded like it was going to happen.

NANCY

I just found out about the affair.

RICK

I was worried bout him.

NANCY

So, that's why you kept calling him?

(RICK collapses back into chair.)

NANCY

Answer the question.

RICK

I shoulda stopped him.

NANCY

Rick.

RICK

Last one who coulda. Big cookout before seniors stop showing up, where I get some time just me an the boys. Feel like a father to em, an it's a final, relaxed sorta send-off. Now Jason, he ain't stay long, didn't talk much, but that night, he stayed to talk. An he…toll me bout Richard.

NANCY

Told you what-

RICK

He was so upset, and I accepted him, hugged, encouraged him, toll him I'd do my best to help guide him. But then, I, I saw him leave, hell, waved goodbye, an I coulda...I coulda said some'in, ya know? Coulda told him not to. Coulda driven him home myself He just looked so sad.

NANCY

Did he say anything that made you think that he was-

RICK

Imean, he uh, he just looked so tired.

NANCY

He always looked tired.

RICK

But that day especially.

NANCY

All those AP classes, football, as much as Derrick, I'm sure.

RICK

Nah, I mean that day, he looked like he'd been through the ringer.

NANCY

He had some rough words for his father.

RICK

Even in college, I always had a feelin bout Richard.

NANCY
(Straightening some papers)
Sorry, Rick, lots to do.

RICK
Felt there was somethin underneath that outward do-good persona a' his.

NANCY
We'll see Derrick Friday, around six thirty?

RICK
(Standing)
What happened with you guys was Richard's fault, not yours.

NANCY
Can you not park on the street when you drop him off?

RICK
We're on your side one hundred percent.

NANCY
(Turning)
There aren't sides.

RICK
Look, we support you-

NANCY
When I found out, we had it out, and I-

RICK
I'm just sayin, ya don' havta-

NANCY
I've dealt with it. I've moved on.

RICK
Sure.

NANCY
I've forgiven him.

RICK
Right.

NANCY

Rick, my husband and I are good.

RICK

For Jason's sake, I hope that's true.

(A beat)

RICK

Jason here?

NANCY

Gave him a Darvocet a couple hours ago.

RICK

Darvawhat?

NANCY

Step down from Percocet.

RICK

Can't go gettin too much a' that stuff in his body.

NANCY

Just as much Darvocet as he needs.

RICK

You let us know how we can-

NANCY

You're good, Rick. Just need to prove the other driver is lying and then, get Jason in The Shepherd Center.

RICK

I mean, we can help a bit, happy-

NANCY

If the records show Jason is guilty of being on the phone, we need more than a bit.

RICK

Just let me know.

NANCY

Sure.

(Silence)

RICK

(Going)
Hell, I'll get outta ya hair. But when Jason wakes up, tell em, tell em I'm sorry, sorry bout everythin.

(He is off. NANCY goes to wash her hands. RICHARD enters, drinking the Ensure.)

RICHARD
He gone?

NANCY
For now.

RICHARD
Good.

NANCY
(Noticing the Ensure)
Those are for Jason.

RICHARD
Eh, he was asleep.

NANCY
Those aren't for you.

RICHARD
(Moving to her)
Have you tried this stuff? It's actually pretty good.

NANCY
No, Dr. Weaver said Jason needs to drink three of those a day, remember?

RICHARD
(Making to give her some, teasing)
Just one sip.

NANCY
I'm good.

RICHARD
C'mon.

NANCY
No.

RICHARD

Just a taste.

(Trying to put the bottle to her lips)

NANCY

(Batting the bottle to the floor)

NO!

(A moment, then, softly)

I said...I said I didn't want it.

(Silence. NANCY gets paper-towels to wipe the mess up, but RICHARD takes them from her and cleans up the Ensure. A moment.)

RICHARD

What did Rick want?

NANCY

Ask questions about the accident.

RICHARD

Rick? Asking questions?

NANCY

It was weird.

RICHARD

After yesterday, Carol probably sent him over to figure out what she did wrong.

(RICHARD throws the bottle and paper-towels away.)

NANCY

Does he really not know anything? I doubt that.

RICHARD

He's not very smart.

NANCY

You didn't want to help in there? You didn't want to try and do something?

RICHARD

How did you want me to do to get him to remember? Beat it out of him? Great idea.

NANCY

Just something, Richard. Anything. It would be nice if you had a backbone.

RICHARD

It would be nice if you had any ounce of faith in me. Can you do that?

NANCY
Once you show me you're worth having faith in.

RICHARD
Thanks, honey. Really appreciate it.

NANCY
Sorry.

RICHARD
I don't believe you.

(Silence)

NANCY
Remind me, when did you tell him to come over?

RICHARD
I didn't.

NANCY
That's not what Rick said.

RICHARD
He invited himself over.

(Beat)

NANCY
They can stay distant.

RICHARD
Look-

NANCY
I don't want anyone else.

RICHARD
Nancy.

NANCY
We just...we need some time alone, the three of us.

RICHARD
(Coming closer)

Or...the two of us.

NANCY

Yeah.

RICHARD

But now, when we need it the most? That's when we get visitors.

NANCY

I much prefer the bible verses over text.

(They smile at each other. NANCY goes to sit.)

RICHARD

If we could just lock that door for good. Get some time to ourselves.

NANCY

That's what I tried to tell my sister, but she takes everything personally.

RICHARD

Makes her feel more guilty.

NANCY

I do want to want to talk to her.

RICHARD

Soon, you two are gonna be gabbin like two gals on *Sex and the City.*

NANCY

If you ever hear that we are, I give you permission Richard, take me out back.

RICHARD

What?

NANCY

And pull. The. Trigger.

(Mimes blowing her brains out)

RICHARD
(With a smile)

Noted.

NANCY

For now, I'll settle for miss. guilty, asking me what she can do for me, apologizing for every little thing. She doesn't get it. It's like all she has is

(Rapidly)

band-aid band-aid band-aid!

(Mimes slitting her wrists)

(It goes on for a bit too long, complete with sound-effects. A moment. RICHARD comes closer.)

RICHARD

Did she ever say anything about me before we got married?

NANCY

You know my mom never liked you.

RICHARD

And that rubbed off on Carol?

NANCY

I'm sure, but there's no getting that out of her with that precious moments figurines personality of hers.

RICHARD

You think she's mad that I knocked up her sister?

NANCY

And forced me to marry you.

RICHARD

But we were happy to do it.

NANCY

And we had to do it.

(RICHARD opens the fridge.)

NANCY

I'm about to make dinner.

RICHARD

So, when I was talking to Rick at Kroger, he was buying a pack of cigars, "You ever smoke these Rich?" I don't respond, pretend I didn't hear him. "Rich, you ever smoke these things? I smoked them from the moment Carol got pregnant with Derrick, an tell ya the truth, an Carol hates me for saying this- think that's why he came out so great."

NANCY

I don't know why she married him.

RICHARD
Then, he drove off in his Corvette, smoking his cigar.

NANCY
Idiot.

RICHARD
I almost shouted after him, "Rick, just out of curiosity, how small is your penis!?"

NANCY
(A smile)
Richard.

RICHARD
After all these years, I think he still thinks I *like* him.

NANCY
Oh, he thinks you're his best-friend.

RICHARD
Giving me parenting advice.

NANCY
Just smoke more cigars.

RICHARD
Why didn't I think of that?

NANCY
Easy.

RICHARD
Maybe I should get some cigars, since we're basically at the beginning anyway.

NANCY
(Backing her chair into him, standing)
Don't.

(NANCY goes to wash her hands. A long, deep silence between them. RICHARD looks to the garage, then, slowly comes beside her.)

RICHARD
I did try to smoke one when he was born, remember? Trying to be like my dad.

NANCY

Hmm.

RICHARD

Playing like I could be this iconic fifties father with a cigar.

NANCY

That hideous mustache.

RICHARD

And a drinking problem.

NANCY

Hey, kicking two out of three ain't bad.

RICHARD

Back when we were good. We were good, right?

NANCY

We talked more.

RICHARD

Smiled more.

NANCY

Hmm.

(RICHARD comes behind her, wrapping his arms around her stomach. She turns to react but accepts them.)

RICHARD

I couldn't hold him. Remember that?

NANCY

Too scared.

RICHARD

Paralyzed.

NANCY

I remember.

RICHARD

Too afraid of dropping him.

NANCY

You almost did. A couple of times.

RICHARD

We were so young and stupid.

NANCY

Every first parent is.

RICHARD

But we tried.

NANCY

That huge pile of books. Experts, upon experts.

RICHARD

What to feed him.

NANCY

How he should sleep.

RICHARD

(Putting his head on her shoulder)

Remember, that first night, when we brought him home? All we did was whisper?

NANCY

(Whispering)

Don't even know why.

RICHARD

Then, you smiled wide, looking down at him in your arms. You said, "As long as we don't screw him up."

NANCY

"He's perfect."

RICHARD

The beginning.

NANCY

"We made this." I couldn't believe.

(Her head to his head)

We made this.

RICHARD

You did most of the work.

NANCY

We made this, the two of us...together.

RICHARD

And now.

NANCY
(Breaking out of his arms)

No.

RICHARD

Nance.

NANCY

We just don't know. Once we figure this out, what happened, once we know it's not our fault-

RICHARD

Will it make him not have a brain injury?

NANCY

No.

RICHARD

We need to talk about what Rick said-

NANCY

I don't believe it.

RICHARD

We have to deal with what is.

NANCY

I don't need that.

RICHARD

Let's be honest, realistic.

NANCY

What I need you to do is just be here, okay? In my corner.

RICHARD

I'm trying.

NANCY

I need you to support me.

RICHARD

I can barely support myself.

NANCY

I need you to help me.

RICHARD

Look, all I can do is go. Wake up and go, stand up and go. Because if I can go, I can keep from thinking. If I just keep moving and going, I might make it. Because, because if I stop? Nance, if I linger or hold, I-I I can't.

(A moment. They look at each other.)

NANCY

I can't stop either. I have to keep trying, putting in my best effort, to get *him* going, so *he'll* heal. *He'll* get better.

RICHARD

And if he doesn't?

NANCY

I can't think about that right now.

RICHARD

We have to accept where he is. As hard as it is.

NANCY

No.

RICHARD

I can't, but if you accept-

NANCY

No.

RICHARD

I need to know what he was talking to Rick about that made Rick call. I need to know if Jason was really that depressed-

NANCY

Do you want it to be true? Do you want him to have done it on purpose?

RICHARD
It's not about what's true. It's about being a good parent.

NANCY
Oh yeah, what about a good husband?

RICHARD
When did you love me? Remind me. Was it when you said, "I do," or are you still waiting to see?

NANCY
When you said, "I do," didn't you promise to be faithful?

RICHARD
I don't even think you like me. I definitely think you screaming that you hated me and storming off to find a divorce attorney probably left an impact on Jason.

NANCY
More than your affair?

RICHARD
I just can't stand to be in here with you. I am trying to do all I can to be a better man for our son, to do right by him. I'm on the phone with Don every other hour, trying to figure out who to talk to about the accident, about how we can get Jason into the Shepherd Center.

NANCY
Why does this feel too little too late?

RICHARD
Too little too late, so what about "Mom, I don't know if I'm ready"-

NANCY
It's easy to shout parenting advice from the sidelines.

RICHARD
Maybe, if we listened then, maybe, he would feel comfortable talking to us about other things.

(Silence)

NANCY
(Washing her hands)
I got a call from my mom earlier.

RICHARD

To accept what is-

NANCY

She is all kinds of messed up.

RICHARD

That *he* crossed the line, that *he* might not have his parents-

NANCY

You should never have gotten her that computer Richard. She doesn't know the first thing about using it.

RICHARD

That he is not the Jason of before.

NANCY

I swear. I think she got a virus from opening another email from a stranger. It's like her compassion has more power than her intelligence.

RICHARD

Nancy, listen to me!

NANCY

Her internets are broke. That's what she called them. Her internets. She really does need some help.

(Silence)

RICHARD

I'll head over there some time tomorrow.

(Moving to go)

NANCY

Where are you going?

RICHARD

I'm beat.

NANCY

Don't you want to finish talking?

RICHARD

Talking?

NANCY

Yeah.

RICHARD

Later.

RICHARD exits. NANCY stays a moment, hangs her head. A pill-bottle catches her eye. She picks it up, reads the label, contemplates. She looks around for Richard, takes one, swallows, a moment. She takes another, looks around for Richard. She exits off to Jason's room. A moment of no-one onstage. RICHARD enters with a crockpot, sets it on the counter. He looks inside it, as NANCY enters, hangs her keys up. She sees RICHARD.)

NANCY

Cooking?

RICHARD

Thought I'd surprise you.

NANCY

Remember, we have all that food in the freezer.

RICHARD

Eh, tired of reheating. It'll be a nice change of pace.

NANCY

How many meals you think we got in there?

RICHARD

Could probably feed the entire football team for a week and still have room for seconds.

NANCY

You did all this, while I was looking at rehab hospitals?

RICHARD

(Checking the crockpot timer, a voice of split attention)

I...was also...helping...your...mother.

NANCY

You didn't take Jason over there, did you?

RICHARD

Longest phone call of my life.

NANCY
(Sitting)

Her internets?

RICHARD

She's so lonely, so she is happy to have any kind of communication, even emails from strangers.

NANCY

Her friends in the African royalty?

RICHARD
(Imitating her mother, a bad Southern accent)

"Oh Richard, ya don' undastand, I'm tryin ta be a good woman. Pastor said if you look out for othas, they'll look fa you. An once I saw that email."

NANCY

Sounds like mom.

RICHARD

And don't you dare question her TV pastors.

NANCY

I don't know why you and Carol insisted on bringing her into the 21st Century.

RICHARD

Thought it would be good for her.

NANCY

Well, it certainly has brought you and mom closer together.

RICHARD
(Imitating her mom)

"Now, explain it to me again, but this time, do it even slower."

NANCY

I told you, knew she'd become dependent.

RICHARD

I'm going to change my number.

NANCY

She needs you.

RICHARD

No, what she needs is a parrot.

NANCY

Richard.

RICHARD

"Did I ever tell you the time-" Yes! Yes! A thousand times yes! Unless it happened just *before* I called.

NANCY

She's lonely.

RICHARD

Told me she thinks the bug-man is stealing her food.

NANCY

No.

RICHARD

But I said, "Louise, if that's true, I think you might have something else dead, sides roaches."

(Looks to NANCY, expecting a laugh)

Pretty good, right?

NANCY

And to think, I had to grow up with her.

RICHARD

I don't know how you did it.

NANCY

Me neither.

RICHARD

Glad she wasn't my mother.

NANCY

She had us too young. She didn't know how to be a mom.

RICHARD

No one just *knows.*

NANCY

But you get used to it. You live your life in a stream of vague incidents. A glaze over your eyes, still dreaming, but he cries, you get up, instinct.

RICHARD
I remember those nights.

NANCY
And we thought college was rough.

RICHARD
She was adamant about coming over by the way.

NANCY
When?

RICHARD
Wants me to bring her by as soon as I can.

NANCY
But not tomorrow, because-

RICHARD
I remember. Derrick.

NANCY
Jason needs to see him.

RICHARD
You mean, you do.

NANCY
We do.

RICHARD
Why?

NANCY
Did he say anything to Derrick?

RICHARD
You could ask your son.

NANCY
You know he doesn’t remember.

RICHARD
Do you really think Derrick will tell us if he or his dad was on the phone if that phone call killed somebody?

NANCY

I need to know.

RICHARD

Do you believe it?

NANCY

I need to know who to hate, myself or you.

RICHARD

Isn't it both?

NANCY

Because then, it makes sense, but no, no, no, I cannot accept Jason being guilty. I cannot accept that our lives, his life is over.

RICHARD

If we can prove that Rick was calling because he was worried about Jason, maybe worried he was depressed, that might help Jason.

NANCY

Clocks ticking though.

RICHARD

And Rick and Carol are fleeing with Derrick to Boston on Saturday.

NANCY

That's what your son wants to do.

RICHARD

Your mom, oh God, that's what she called me, a Yankee. Then, she told me I'd changed, that I was getting those, "City ways."

NANCY

She's closer to the city than we are. Roswell is a *suburb.*

RICHARD

Don't worry, I tried.

NANCY

I really am wondering if she should live alone.

RICHARD

Oh please, I beg of you, for the love-

NANCY

Not here.

RICHARD

Oh, thank you Jesus.

NANCY

I don't think we can handle her now that she's…

RICHARD

Fading.

NANCY

Yeah.

RICHARD

She does really want to come by.

NANCY

Let's just hope she stays positive.

RICHARD

Oh, because of last-

NANCY

I don't know what to do with her when she gets like that, and I don't want Jason to hear that.

RICHARD

Yeah.

NANCY

He's getting better, you know? He was able to remember everything he did yesterday.

RICHARD

Everything?

NANCY

Of course, he did take a four-hour nap.

RICHARD

But still, that's huge.

NANCY

We just need to get him in the Shepherd Center.

RICHARD

And get the money to pay for it.

(Silence. RICHARD gets out some bowls and serves dinner.)

NANCY

I called the insurance.

RICHARD

What?

NANCY

I wanted to sort things out.

RICHARD

Nancy, I told you, Don is working them, and it was my job to-

NANCY

I'm just trying to do the best for Jason.

RICHARD

I don't want to bother him.

NANCY

Bother him, Richard-

RICHARD

He's already working on it, I don't-

NANCY

This is your son, our lives we're talking about.

RICHARD

I have a strategy. I know what I'm doing.

NANCY

Hmm.

RICHARD

And you can't just, just *subvert* me.

NANCY

Subvert you?

RICHARD

Let me talk to Don. We need him to be on our side.

NANCY

What are you trying-

RICHARD

I'm not trying to do anything. This is my responsibility.

NANCY

We can share that responsibility. I'm just worried-

RICHARD

Please Nance. I'm asking you to not do this one thing.

NANCY

Hmm.

RICHARD

You can't just take that away from me.

NANCY

I'm sorry.

RICHARD

Well, what did Don say?

NANCY

He think can get them to speed up the investigation, possibly get some money for Shepherd.

RICHARD

We don't need it to go too fast. Remember?

NANCY

I know. Can't have him talking to the police, but we need to get him in the Shepherd Center because from all I've read, the first months are crucial to recovery.

RICHARD

How quickly will it go?

NANCY

This is your son we're talking about.

RICHARD

I need to know.

NANCY
They'll call us when a spot opens up, and then, it's about 3 to 6 months in-patient, hopefully.

RICHARD
God, will that be enough time?

NANCY
Don't you want him to recover?

RICHARD
It's not that.

NANCY
I'm sorry that I want him to recover to his fullest potential.

RICHRD
You know that's what I want.

NANCY
Is it?

RICHARD
He cannot be interviewed, because-

NANCY
Is that all you think about?

RICHARD
It's my job to take care of my family.

NANCY
Now, you want to think about your family.

RICHARD
Cheap shot.

NANCY
We need them to see that the other driver is lying.

RICHARD
We do not need rush their investigation. Instead, we'll get our own answers first.

NANCY
Fine. Good.

RICHARD
First, we'll have our interrogation of Derrick.

NANCY
Don't put it like that.

RICHARD
Am I wrong?

NANCY
No, but I don't like how that sounds.

RICHARD
I'll try to work the question in naturally.

NANCY
You mean, not at all.

RICHARD
How dare you.

NANCY
Don't put on that big man energy now.

RICHARD
Do you enjoy making me feel small?

NANCY
Now you know how I felt when I found out about your affair.

RICHARD
I need to know what Rick was calling Jason about.

NANCY
You worried it's about you and Jennifer?

RICHARD
If it is, I won't be able to live with myself.

NANCY
(Richard-

RICHARD
That morning was the worst fight we ever had.

NANCY

You mean, me and-

RICHARD

Me and you, me and Jason.

NANCY

Worst things you've ever said.

RICHARD

Worst things he ever said to me.

NANCY

You did sleep with her.

(A beat)

RICHARD

Do we have anymore wine?

(Seeing Nancy is about to open her mouth)

Right. The garage.

(RICHARD exits off-left. NANCY picks up and looks at the pill bottle, takes it off-left. A moment of no one onstage. RICHARD enters, holding a bottle of wine. He takes out his phone, dials.)

RICHARD

(On phone)

Hey Don…No, I know you're working on it…Forgive me- look, I didn't make her call you. She just wants to get everything cleared….No, I asked her not to…We're fine...But Don, Don…I….Can't you have a little sympathy for us?...Look, I'm sorry for the other driver, I am, but…I could go to jail! My son could lose his parents!

(Breaking)

Don…How can I make that not happen? Can you tell me how? If you can…if you can help me, if you can really help me? Can you really help me?....He's not ready. He's not ready….I don't know, but it's not now…My son….I'll…I'll let you know.

(He hangs up the phone. Breathes. NANCY enters.)

NANCY

What did he say?

(RICHARD does not turn to her.)

NANCY
What did Don say?...You were on the phone with Don, right?

RICHARD
I don't know.

NANCY
Richard.

RICHARD
I don't know about so much.

NANCY
Answer me.

RICHARD
He's trying for Shepherd Center, but the police want an interview next week.

NANCY
First, Shepherd Center.

RICHARD
That's not a magic bullet.

NANCY
It's the best in the country. It's all we've got.

RICHARD
It's not going to solve the problem of whether or not Jason crossed the line, whether or not Jason did it on purpose or not.

NANCY
He did not. It cannot be true. I will have failed as a mother.

RICHARD
But I do want it to be simple.

NANCY
What?

RICHARD
I want to be cut and dry. I want to know who I need to hate.

NANCY
Richard

RICHARD
I just fear knowing is not going to help. Then, where will we be?

NANCY
I need you.

RICHARD
Some mornings, I wake up shaking.

NANCY
Can you help me?

RICHARD
I'm just so pissed Nance.

NANCY
At me?

(Silence)

Richard?

(Silence)

Richard, at me!?

RICHARD
I want to be angry at something.

NANCY
Not me.

RICHARD
To put my anger somewhere.

NANCY
Somewhere else.

RICHARD
I don't know about God, so I want a target.

NANCY
Not me.

RICHARD
The car.

NANCY
That was your call; that was all you.

RICHARD
We didn't have the money for a good one. SUV, sure-

NANCY
You're the one-

RICHARD
But you pushed me out the door that morning.

NANCY
We agreed.

RICHARD
Said he has to drive *something*.

NANCY
Did you know, Richard, that you also have a force of will? You could have not bought one.

RICHARD
You told me not to come back till I found one.

NANCY
You just don't want it to be because of her.

RICHARD
Said come back with the best car I could find.

NANCY
Because of what you did.

RICHARD
On our budget, that wasn't-

NANCY
Because you slept with her.

RICHARD
Yeah, of course! Of course I want it to not be my fault. Because, what if he doesn't get better? What if he doesn't heal?

NANCY

Because you cheated. You were selfish.

RICHARD

I won't be able to live with myself! Do you get that? Do you see that?

NANCY

And left me to be the parent.

RICHARD

Can't you just listen?

NANCY

You're still leaving me to be the parent.

RICHARD

I'm trying to accept him as he is because if I find out he didn't want to talk to me because of what I did.

NANCY

A lonely bed that night.

RICHARD

I don't know what to do. So, yes, I want it to be an accident. I want it to just be an accident, yeah, so it can be easy for me.

NANCY

You know, I don't need this.

RICHARD

So I can blame you.

NANCY

How dare you!

RICHARD

I want it to be easy, for it just to be your fault-

NANCY

You're the villain, Richard! Not me!

(A moment.)

RICHARD

I shouldn't have.

NANCY

I mean, I get why you think it.

RICHARD

I'm sorry.

NANCY

But you don't say it.

(Silence)

RICHARD

I just want to figure out how to get better.

NANCY

I want to feel like it's not my fault. I want to believe that he will recover, that he will be not guilty, and he will go to Harvard.

RICHARD

Ok.

NANCY

I want him to get into the Shepherd Center, and I want insurance to pay for it.

RICHARD

Ok.

NANCY

Then, I won't have trouble getting out of bed in the morning.

RICHARD

Ok.

NANCY

And I won't have to fight to get out of bed…Lie to me, and maybe…maybe…Maybe when I get out of bed, when I look at myself in the mirror, when I look at him, lost in his wheelchair, a million miles from who he used to be, maybe, I won't want to die.

(RICHARD comes closer.)

RICHARD

I could've done more. I could've driven with him more.

NANCY

I could've too.

RICHARD

No, I drove with him. That was my responsibility.

NANCY

Still.

RICHARD

Gone on the road more, made sure he understood, checked in with him more, talked with him more. Worked harder, so I could've bought him a more advanced car, a safer one. I could've been with him more, loved him more. More, more, more, I could've done more.

NANCY

Yeah, you could've.

RICHARD

What?

NANCY

You could've done more.

RICHARD

Nance-

NANCY

Could've been a better husband, better father.

RICHARD

You think I don't know that?

NANCY

Sometimes.

RICHARD

I hate myself more than you ever could.

NANCY

(Laughing)

If we just would've split before the affair-

RICHARD

I know.

NANCY

But we agreed: stay together until he went to college.

(Realization, correction)

Goes to college. But now that he's back for.

RICHARD

Good.

NANCY

A few months.

(NANCY looks at him. A moment.)

RICHARD

Phone records came today.

(He throws the envelope down.)

NANCY

Why are just now showing this to me?

RICHARD

Open it.

NANCY

What?

RICHARD

I couldn't.

(NANCY takes it. She opens it.)

NANCY

(Reading the paper)

Last call from Rick, and he answered it, but there's no duration.

(A knock at the door.)

NANCY

No.

RICHARD

Wait, now?

NANCY

It's Derrick, remember?

RICHARD

Should I tell him to-

NANCY

This is for Jason.

RICHARD

I'm just-

NANCY
(Looking to Richard)

Can you?

RICHARD

Nancy. Is this really what we need right now?

NANCY

Go.

(NANCY goes to the fridge and gets out a salad, as RICHARD enters with RICK and CAROL.)

RICHARD

I don't know why I'm surprised.

RICK

Yeah, sorry bout that. We didn' come over to offer no surprises.

RICHARD

It's just…you know, we uh, we were expecting Derrick.

CAROL
(Going to NANCY)

Derrick meant to come. Really, he did.

RICK

Boy's always had the best a' intentions.

RICHARD

Where's he at tonight?

RICK

Well, ya know, Derrick is mighty busy with Harvard an everything.

RICHARD

Heck, I was touched Derrick wanted to spend his last night in Atlanta with Jason, not to mention his boring old aunt and uncle. So, Rick, where's he at tonight anyway?

CAROL

but oh…oh…Derrick, he…well...

NANCY

What happened?

CAROL

It's just…he's…he's…

RICHARD

Did he make other plans?

RICK

No, it's just a, it's a busy time for him right now.

RICHARD

You know, I bet Daddy didn't want him to come.

NANCY
(To CAROL)

Why couldn't you tell me about the phone calls?

RICHARD
(To RICK)

Last chance. Anything you want to say?

CAROL

Don't get upset with me Nancy. I did everything within my power to get him here.

RICK

Don't say it like that Carol. You makin it sound like ya failed.
(To RICHARD and NANCY)
This ain't our fault.

NANCY

Then, whose is it?

RICK

Hey Nance, I'm just tellin ya. Don' shoot the messenger.

RICHARD

Where's Derrick?

RICK

What about Jason? I thought Jason was-

RICHARD

Sleeping. We were going to wake him up when Derrick got here.

NANCY

This was *for* Derrick.

CAROL

Nancy, really, this's just-

NANCY

For *Jason* to see *Derrick*.

RICK

Honest, I think it's cause he ain't sleepin myself.

NANCY

Where is Derrick!?

CAROL

Now Nancy, Rick was in the middle a' explainin that.

RICK

Is it jus' common practice ta interrupt a man's story? Cause I was gonna tell ya. See, he hangin with his friends, an he packin for Harvard-

RICHARD

Rick, my wife asked you a simple question.

RICK

He ain't sleepin, an if ya was followin long closely-

CAROL

Nancy, he's sick.

NANCY

Sick?

CAROL

Very sick.

RICK

Yeah, sick as a dog tell ya. He was pukin up half his body this mornin. Since ya saw him in Kroger Sunday, boy, since then, he jus ain't been feelin too well.

NANCY
(To CAROL)

Why wouldn't you tell me? With the manslaughter charge, you should've told me.

CAROL

I didn't know he was going to be sick.

RICHARD
That's a nice story. Don't ya think, Nance?

NANCY
(To Carol)
You should've told me.

CAROL
I'm sorry, Derrick got sick-

NANCY
No. Not that.

RICHARD
(To RICK)
Rick, what did my son say to you on the phone that night?

RICK
Now, now, I don't like the aggression or the accusation.

RICHARD
Why did you call him so many times? Why did you send call after call after call?

RICK
I was worried, and when he didn't pick up-

RICHARD
When he answered, what did you talk about?

RICK
What?

NANCY
(To CAROL)
Why can't you tell me?

CAROL
(To NANCY)
I'm sorry. I'm sorry.

NANCY
Screw your "I'm sorry's"!

RICK

Don’t you speak to my wife like that.

RICHARD

Answer the question!

RICK

Look, Jason calls me all the time-

RICHARD
(Holding up the phone history)

From what I see here, you call him a heckuva lot. What I see is a desperate situation that night, and I wonder why you were so desperate.

RICK

I was worried about him. It could’ve been an attempted suicide.

RICHARD

Really? But it didn’t go straight to voicemail. It just rang and rang and rang and rang. I wonder what did he say to you? What were his words that got you so concerned? Then, why did he finally pick up? What did he say?

CAROL
(To NANCY)

I knew, and I should’ve told you.

RICK

Carol.

CAROL

Should’ve said something before.

RICK

Carol, shut your mouth.

NANCY

What, Carol?

RICK

Don’t you say another word!

CAROL

Ashamed, so ashamed!

NANCY
(To CAROL)

About What?

RICK
Carol, shut your mouth!

CAROL
About Rick and Jason!

(RICK goes to stop CAROL from saying more. RICHARD stops him.)

RICK
Let go of me you coward!

RICHARD
What did you do to my son!?

RICK
I was more of a father to him than you ever were!

RICHARD
What did you do!?

CAROL
I couldn't believe it!

RICK
Nothing you can prove!

CAROL
He touched him!

(The air goes out of the room for a moment.)

NANCY
What?

CAROL
Rick touched Jason.

RICHARD
(To RICK)
You molested my son?

RICK
(Backing up)
Now, I didn't do-

CAROL
That night, he touched him-

RICK

SHUT YOUR MOUTH-!

(RICHARD punches RICK in the face. RICK falls to the ground.)

RICHARD

You molested my son!?

RICK

Richard, I-

(RICHARD kicks him.)

RICHARD

Answer the question.

RICK

You assaulted me.

(Taking out his phone and dialing)

RICHARD

Go ahead.

RICK

(Getting up and scrambling, into phone)

911, I would like to report an assault.

RICHARD

(Stepping towards him, kicking him again)

Call the cops.

RICK

(On phone, getting up)

I'm at 321 Sadlebrook Court.

RICHARD

I want them to see this.

RICK

(On phone)

I was just assaulted.

RICHARD

(Spits on RICK)

Coward.

NANCY
(To CAROL)

How could you?

CAROL

I'm so sorry, Nancy.

RICK
(On phone)

Thank you.

(Grabbing CAROL)

Let's go.

RICHARD

Don't you want to face me like a man?

CAROL

I'm so sorry Nancy.

NANCY

Bye, Carol!

RICK

C'mon, we gotta go.

CAROL

I'll call you!

NANCY

Goodbye!

(RICK and CAROL exit. A long moment.)

RICHARD

What happened?

NANCY

I can't believe it.

(A beat.)

RICHARD

What do we…what do we do?

NANCY

I don’t know.

RICHARD

I’m so angry.

NANCY

Me too.

(A beat.)

NANCY

They’ll be coming soon.

RICHARD

I don’t care.

NANCY

Looks like you got him good.

RICHARD

Still got some strength in me yet.

NANCY

I’m so confused.

RICHARD

Me too.

NANCY

I don’t know where to start.

RICHARD

Me neither.

NANCY

Richard, I-

RICHARD

It’s okay.

NANCY

I'm lost.

(Red and blue lights shine as if from outside.)

RICHARD

I'm sorry.

NANCY

I forgive you.

RICHARD

I love you.

NANCY

I love you.

(The police lights shine through. NANCY's phone rings. Silently, she answers it. Silently, RICHARD and NANCY embrace, kiss. Lights out. End of play.)