

JACKSON IS GONE

By Joanne Hoersch

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CHARACTERS

NATALIE. GRAYSON: Married to Sam. To others she seems extremely sensitive and somewhat high strung. 58.

SAM. GRAYSON: Married to Natalie. Constant in his affections, irascible. Deeply in love with Natalie. Late 50s.

SLICK. GRAYSON: Sam and Natalie's son. Somewhat charming but suspicious of the world. He has a sardonic sense of humor and is a deft observer of character. 23.

ROBERT BLAKEMORE: Sergeant in the New Beacon police department. He is needy, imaginative, unpredictable. 37.

HIRAM JUNIPER BANDO.: A criminal. Mid 30s (Voice Only).

JACKSON: A Chocolate Labrador Retriever.

DUKE: A Boxer.

Production Note: The action takes place in New Beacon, NJ, a wealthy suburb near the Hudson River, in 2011. Jackson can be off stage in the first scene. Natalie and Sam have let him off the leash. His interaction with Hiram Juniper Bando can be done upstage where the audience cannot see him. Duke, however, should be played by a real person.

SCENES

Act I

- Scene 1 Sunday afternoon. A street in New Beacon, New Jersey.
- Scene 2 New Beacon police station, later the same day.
- Scene 3 The Grayson's living room, later the same night.
- Scene 4 The Grayson's backyard, three weeks later.
- Scene 5 Sgt. Blakemore's apartment, a few days later.
- Scene 6 The Grayson's bedroom, later the same night.

Act II

- Scene 1 The Grayson's dining room, later the same night.
- Scene 2 The Grayson's living room, daybreak, the next day.
- Scene 3 Sgt. Blakemore's apartment, one week later.
- Scene 4 Birdwing Park, later the same evening.
- Scene 5 Birdwing Park, minutes later.
- Scene 6 The Grayson's dining room, a few days later.
- Scene 7 The Grayson's backyard, a few minutes later.
- Scene 8 The Grayson's dining room, a few minutes later.
- Scene 9 Birdwing Park, a few minutes later.

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ACT I
SCENE 1

Sunday afternoon on a quiet street near NATALIE and SAM GRAYSON's house. They are walking their dog, JACKSON.

NATALIE. I don't think slick would agree with you, sam. I don't think I'M overbearing. All i'm asking is that our son calls us once a day to let us know he's all right. He doesn't even have to talk to us. Leave a message. *(She stops to pick up a rock. She runs her hand over the surface.)* Beautiful coloring. It's like red sand.

Rough. (Natalie rubs the rock hard against the back of her hand. Sam gently takes the rock from her and places it on the ground.)

SAM. Stop. Please. *(He takes her hand in his and kisses it).* Slick is 23 years old. We can loosen the reins a little...earth to natalie. Are you listening to me?

NATALIE. Of course i am. But we are paying for his education. Doesn't that buy us some privileges? Doesn't he, - wouldn't a little guilt motivate him to call? Soothe the waters of this vast ocean of my mind?

SAM. What is it? You're on edge today.

NATALIE. You're too sensitive to my moods....

SAM. I'm a sensitive guy.

NATALIE. You are indeed. Jackson thinks so too. Come here, Jackson.

SAM. We could drive up to the reservoir, take him swimming.

NATALIE. Or he could go in the pond. At home.

SAM. Sure. It was just an idea.

NATALIE. Next week. A Sunday drive.

SAM. Of course.

NATALIE. We could bring our bathing suits and walk over to that private cove. Sam... *(Offstage: The sound of loud music being*

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blasted from the radio of a car which is stopped at a traffic light. A man is singing along with the music.) Do we have to...? (Quick sounds of the station being changed and then the music gets even louder.)

SAM. Listen to this? No, we don't. How long is that light anyway? Inconsiderate. For God's sake.

NATALIE. Let's go home. Jackson says he wants to go home, Sam.

SAM. Mister! Excuse me! Hey! Excuse me! *(To Natalie)* Of course, he can't hear me because the ...excuse me!

NATALIE. Sam, really. The light's about to change.

SAM. Excuse me! Could you turn down the music? Hello! What the hell was that? *(To Natalie)* What did he just do? Did you see that? He gave me the finger. *(Sam takes a few steps towards the car, holding up his middle finger.)* Yeah, you too asshole! I'm talking to you!

NATALIE. Sammy, let's keep the peace. It's Sunday.

SAM. You're trying to control me Natalie! I've asked you a million times not to do that! *(Natalie grabs Sam's arm to drag him away. Sam pulls away from Natalie and starts running toward the car. Natalie runs after him, with Jackson.)*

NATALIE. All right, fine. Go smash his head in. Will that make you feel better?

HIRAM JUNIPER BANDO. *(Offstage)* Yeah? What do you want?

SAM. Turn down the music.

HIRAM JUNIPER BANDO. Free country man. Know what I mean?

NATALIE. Sam, please. Jackson's ready to go home now.

HIRAM JUNIPER BANDO. Listen to your old lady, man.

NATALIE. The light's green sir. You're holding up traffic.

HIRAM JUNIPER BANDO. Screw you. You boss *him* around, bitch. You don't boss *me* around.

NATALIE. What did you call me? You have some nerve, you Neanderthal, you... you....

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SAM. Get out of your fucking car. You fucking piece of raw meat. Natalie, take Jackson and go stand on the sidewalk.

NATALIE. I'm calling the police. *(She pulls out her cell phone. Jackson jumps up on the side of the car.)* Jackson, get down off the car. *(Sam starts banging on the side of the car. Natalie is trying to pull Jackson away while at the same time talk on her cell phone.)*

NATALIE. Hello? I need the police.

SAM. You fucking asshole...

NATALIE. Yes, it's an emergency. Jackson! *(Natalie's cell phone drops and as she bends to pick it up she crashes into Sam who has come around to the side window of the car.)*

HIRAM JUNIPER BANDO. Jackson, come here! Come here boy! *(Jackson jumps in the car. Sam begins running after him, screaming.)*

SAM. My God. He took Jackson! *(Natalie, breathing heavily, takes her cell phone and snaps a picture.)*

Scene 2

The New Beacon police station. Sam and Natalie are sitting at the desk of SGT. ROBERT BLAKEMORE, who is taking notes as he listens to their story.

SAM. And because I am a reasonable, civilized man, Detective....

SGT. BLAKEMORE. Right here on the tag, sir. Blakemore. It's Sergeant Blakemore.

SAM. Right. Since I am a reasonable man, I asked him very politely if he would please turn down the music. Just a little. Early Sunday afternoon, peace and quiet - you know what I mean. Asking for a little consideration.

NATALIE. *(She is distraught and nervous.)* The point is... Excuse me, I'm just a little upset. I took a picture of the license plate. Sergeant, perhaps...

SGT. BLAKEMORE. Would you care to give me...

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NATALIE. Of course. I'm sorry. I want to... *(She shows him a picture of Jackson on her iPhone.)* Here, I have...here he is. Jackson. You see? So beautiful. *(Her hand begins to shake slightly.)*

SGT. BLAKEMORE. May I please...?

NATALIE. Oh! Of course. *(Natalie nervously hands Blakemore her iPhone)*

SGT. BLAKEMORE. Are you nervous about something? You seem pretty upset.

NATALIE. Well, of course I am! Someone just stole our dog, our beautiful dog.

SGT. BLAKEMORE. He is beautiful. Lab?

NATALIE. Yes. Chocolate. *(Natalie stands up. She picks up a glass of water, dips her finger into it, rubs water onto her lips, then takes a sip of the water.)* I could use a little fresh air.

SAM. I can answer any questions, sergeant. My wife has given you all the information she has.

SGT. BLAKEMORE. No, she hasn't. Looks like he's got some Boxer in him.

SAM. No, he doesn't. What information do you need?

SGT. BLAKEMORE. I've got a Boxer myself, Duke. Nobody messes with Duke. He walks into a room, it's like 'Duke in Charge'. Little white bands around his legs, the way human boxers tape up their paws. You know? Nice brindle color. He does this great trick where he turns his lips up and he smiles. Shows off his big, white teeth. Never took his picture though. Can you believe that?

NATALIE. It's wrists. The way human boxers tape up their wrists. You said paws.

SGT. BLAKEMORE. Did I? I said that? Well, what do you know. Thank you for pointing that out, Mrs. Mrs...(he fumbles through some papers)...can't seem to remember your name.

NATALIE. Oh! Uh,

SGT. BLAKEMORE. Simple question.

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SAM. You didn't ask a question.

SGT. BLAKEMORE. *(softly)* I'm talking to your wife.

NATALIE. *(Places a hand on Sam's arm)* I didn't mean to insult you, sergeant. Not in any way. We would so appreciate...any help you can provide us with. Any help at all. *(She is on the verge of tears)*.

SGT. BLAKEMORE. I'm going to do everything I can Mrs.,

NATALIE. Sam, who am I...?

SAM. Mrs. Grayson.

NATALIE. You seem like a kind, like a very kind man. Isn't he, Sam?

SAM. What my wife means is, what else do you need from us?

SGT. BLAKEMORE. First I need you to finish filling out these forms. Name, address, how I can reach you if something develops.

SAM. Just give them to me and I'd be more than happy to provide any pertinent... *(Sgt. Blakemore imitates Sam)*

SGT. BLAKEMORE. ...any pertinent information. Why don't we let your wife fill out her form and you can fill out yours? In fact she has to since she's a material witness to a crime.

NATALIE. Of course. I'd forgotten. So, you *will* treat it as a crime?

SGT. BLAKEMORE. It is a crime. Whether we have the man power to hunt this guy down... You see the way the system works is, we're understaffed. That's how the system always works. So a human kidnapping would have to get priority over canine abduction, or a homicide for instance, would have to come first, a human homicide, or assault, or B&E or...

SAM. In New Beacon? Come on Sergeant. This has got to be at the top of your list. Slide it in right above overtime parking.

Natalie, let's hurry this up.

SGT. BLAKEMORE. Natalie? That's a very nice name.

NATALIE. Why, thank you. This is my husband, Sam.

SGT. BLAKEMORE. Nice to meet you. You want to know my first name? It's a very reassuring name, Natalie. And I want to reassure you...

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SAM. Mrs. Grayson.

SGT. BLAKEMORE. Anyway you're going to love it. You're going to sleep better tonight - because my name is...Robert Barker Blakemore!. Like the guy on The Price is Right? The guy who loves animals!

NATALIE. Oh! Well, that is reassuring. In fact...

SGT. BLAKEMORE. And just like your husband so keenly observed, what else do I have to do? My own deep affection for our canine companions compels me to say that this case is a rocket to the top, straight up the flagpole, full steam ahead. For you. For Jackson. Unless of course, like I said, we happened to get a case involving humans.

NATALIE. We can't ask for more, Robert Barker Blakemore. We appreciate your help. Don't we Sam? Well I guess I'd better fill out this form. *(Sgt. Blakemore gets up, walking around and rubbing his legs.)*

SGT. BLAKEMORE. If someone kidnapped the Dukester – forget it. Dukey would turn that guy into steak tartare inside of a minute. *(Natalie opens her purse and pulls out a piece of blue stationery. She begins writing on it. Sgt. Blakemore. stands behind Sam., reading the form.)* 256 Sagamore Road. Prime real estate up there.

SAM. 646-585-1123.

NATALIE. Is this sufficient sergeant? My name and address are printed at the top. I wrote down the rest of it. Phone number and...I'm sorry, the phone number is already there. On the stationery. Those little boxes on forms are difficult for me. My hands.

SGT. BLAKEMORE. Understood. Myself, I've got a few ailments too. I happened to be pre-diabetic.

NATALIE. I hope it's not too serious.

SGT. BLAKEMORE. You want me to fill out the form for you? *(Sgt. Blakemore gently takes the form from Natalie.)*

SAM. Give me that! Material witness to a crime. My ass. Address! 256 Sagamore Road. Phone number! 64645851123,

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7472234587, 6469896351, 6442286544. Zip code! Forget this! Forget this! You don't need that. Done. Call us when you have something. Natalie, let's go. That last number is our son's cell phone. Call it only as a last resort.

NATALIE. Our son's name is Slick.

SAM. Let's go.

SGT. BLAKEMORE. I'm going to find your dog.

NATALIE. I believe you sergeant. Good- bye and thank you.

(Natalie and Sam exit. Sgt. Blakemore holds Natalie's stationery up to his nose. He inhales deeply, with satisfaction.)

SCENE 3

Later the same night. Living room of the Grayson's home. Sam is sitting in an armchair by the unlit fireplace, leaning forward, looking exhausted. Natalie calls from the kitchen.

NATALIE. Bloody Mary?

SAM. Yes, spicy.

NATALIE. Hello?

SAM. I said "spicy."

NATALIE. You mumble sometimes. I can't hear you.

SAM. You can't hear me because you're losing your hearing. A bit. *(Natalie appears in the living room doorway with two Bloody Marys)*

NATALIE. What did you just say?

SAM. I rest my case.

NATALIE. No, I heard you. I meant, "*How dare you say what you just said.*" Accusing me of losing my hearing. All I did was ask you if you wanted a Bloody Mary. What do I get for an answer? That I'm going deaf. I needed that, really I did.

SAM. Whatever. *(Sam puts his head in his hands.)* Oh, God, I'm sorry about Jackson. I'm so sorry. This whole thing is my fault. Why did I lose my temper? I could have just walked away.

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NATALIE. *(She kneels in front of Sam and strokes his head.)* No, no. Someone took our dog. Stole him from us. Don't hold back and blame yourself, Sammy. I need you with me. We're going to find him. I got the impression that Sergeant Blakemore was sincere.

Here. (Natalie hands Sam a Bloody Mary. They drink in silence.)

SAM. You did OK. In there. A couple of times I thought you were going a little off the rails.

NATALIE. I felt I was in safe hands. Strange sensation in a police station. Sam, you were pretty rude to Sgt. Blakemore.

SAM. What idiot would name their kid after a game show host? What's going on in this country anyway?

NATALIE. I think he really wants to help us.

SAM. I think he really wants to help *you*.

NATALIE. What are you talking about?

SAM. Don't tell me you didn't notice the way he was looking at you. Just do not tell me because I will not believe it.

NATALIE. Sam, he was maybe 30. I'm 57.

SAM. No you're not. You're 58. And you're beautiful.

NATALIE. Sorry, I couldn't hear you. *(Natalie laughs)* Am I really 58? I'd forgotten.

SAM. You don't remember we had dinner at Café Napoli for your birthday?

NATALIE. The year I was born shifts around a lot.

SAM. Café Napoli is our history. It's where we met.

NATALIE. No, we met at St. Mark's bookstore. I was reading Tolstoy in the non-fiction section because... oh God. I was reading his essay on the morality of slaughtering animals. Oh my God! Oh my God! What will this man do to Jackson? He's going to torture him.

SAM. Hey, hey! Come here.

NATALIE. I know what these people do. These people sell dogs to laboratories, they put them in cages, they slice open their brains. These people sell dogs to fight; they starve them and chain them.....

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SAM. I've been thinking about this...listen to me, Natalie, listen to me, you can't go there. You want me beside you, not blaming myself. I need you too. With me, not off in your imagination, which always goes to the darkest, most horrific....

NATALIE. Not fair! I earned that place in my mind. I still have the keys. I lived there.

SAM. I know, I know....shhh, shhh, I want to tell you these things that I've been thinking about. Whoever this guy was. Let me hold you....

NATALIE. I'm cold.

SAM. You're always cold.

NATALIE. I have bad circulation. *(Sam gets up and walks over to a pile of newspapers in a basket and begins crumpling them to put into the fireplace. Natalie watches him.)*

SAM. I'll build a fire. He didn't plan on taking Jackson. It was spur of the moment. Just spite. He's not going to sell Jackson to a lab. Nothing like that. My guess is, he'll take him to his house. Then give him away or keep him, but nothing....nothing like what you're thinking.

NATALIE. *(Watching as Sam begins to build a roaring fire.)*
It's July, Sam.

SAM. You're cold. This will warm you up. *(He starts reading one of the newspapers.)* The news sucks.

NATALIE. We could just turn off the air conditioning.

SAM. The fucking world sucks. *(He crumples the newspaper and throws it into the fire.)*

NATALIE. It would be better for the environment.

SAM. Do you know what I am Natalie? I am a man of good intentions.

NATALIE. Will you promise me that you'll try to get along with that sergeant? I know he can help us. But you kept provoking him. *(Natalie wraps herself in a shawl.)*

SAM. You...you were right on the verge of telling him about yourself. I saw it in your eyes, I saw it Natalie, so I decided to run interference for you.

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NATALIE. It crossed my mind. It's been so long. At first I felt calm, slightly apart from the situation, which is a good strategy. When he started asking questions, I heard it as if it was an interrogation. I believed for a moment that I was there to make a confession.

SAM. Whatever you did or thought, you certainly impressed the young sergeant.

NATALIE. So what? I don't care why he wants to help us. I want my dog back!

SAM. Café Napoli was our first date, not where we met. The worst blizzard of the decade. You were so cold your teeth were chattering. I had no money but I tipped the waiter and he moved us to a table by the fireplace. Tell me you don't remember that.

NATALIE. Of course I do. I remember it so well...you wore that awful green corduroy suit that smelled like mothballs...

SAM. Sit down. The fire feels good.

NATALIE. I'll turn down the lights. I don't think I understand silence anymore. I understand it on the inside, that I understand, but when it surrounds me, I get nervous. Talk to me Sammy, about yourself. Tell me a story.

SAM. You've heard them all a million times.

NATALIE. The best bedtime stories are the familiar ones. Little Sammy Grayson, tell me about him.

SAM. Best wide receiver at John Donne High School in 25 years. I wasn't really so little. The other guys were really big.

NATALIE. I wish I'd known you then. What was that quote in the paper? "He doesn't catch the ball, he reunites with the ball that is rightfully his, with balletic leaps into the end zone..."

SAM. Well, that's because I studied ballet. Much more precise than football. A physical expression of language. The shout of a grand jete, the tiny, whisper of a bourree. Every movement converses with the audience. In silence.

NATALIE. I went away to Girl Scout camp. When we sat around the fire and sang songs, I always sang too loud. I wanted to huddle as close as I could to tighten the circle. I had this primal feeling at

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the base of my spine. I imagined that just beyond our circle of light were the wolves. I could sit safe and warm at the fire, a young Girl Scout. And in an instant I could decide to stand up and walk away into the woods. Into the trees and the darkness.

SAM. I would have run after you.

NATALIE. Like a fawn.

SAM. I would have.

NATALIE. My sweet husband. Just beyond the circle of light, there are always wolves. I was frightened; so quiet and safe near the fire, yet so alert to danger. It made me feel very alive. Some ancient feeling of raw survival that we recognize only in silence. It's magnetic, really. It pulls you towards it.

SAM. I know what this about, but we've both made a promise to stay in the present. We'll find him Natalie. We'll bring him home. Out of the wilderness.

SCENE 4

The Grayson's backyard, two weeks later. Sam, Natalie, and their son SLICK are looking at the sky. It is almost twilight. Natalie holds a wilting lily in her hand.

SLICK. Tonight, there's going to be a waxing gibbous. *(Natalie giggles, then covers her mouth.)*

NATALIE. Sorry. It just sounds odd.

SLICK. The moon, it's a phase of the moon called...

SAM. Oh, your mother and I remember very well. Helping you study for those exams. General Knowledge, right? A jumble of mismatched facts. Mrs. Biaggio, right? What was it, 8th grade? One week you were learning phases of the moon, then the next week it was Magna Carta signed in 1215, Battle of Hastings fought in 1066.

SLICK. I'm impressed...

SAM. Oh, I've got a lot more rattling around up there. Tess of the d'Urbervilles by Thomas Hardy. Sing it, Slick!

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SAM, SLICK, and NATALIE. What is the leveling force in the book? The heath, the heath! Oh, what is the leveling force in the book? The heath, the heath!

SLICK. Wait a minute! That wasn't General Knowledge, that was English!

SAM. OK, OK, you're right. But what about this other oldie? 'Visigoth, Vandal, Hun. Got the Romans on the run. Visigoth, Vandal, Hun. Got the Romans on the run.' Sacking and plundering. That's all I know about them. But I will never forget their names.

SLICK. But then the Romans sacked and plundered too. Why don't we call them barbarians?

NATALIE. Because they had laws about how to slack and punder. I mean sack and plunder. I was thinking of you- 'Slick' – and I said "Slack."*(She giggles and covers her mouth.)*

SLICK. This is mom. *(He giggles and then immediately covers his hand with his mouth.)* Hey! Are you feeling better?

NATALIE. Always. When you're home, I always feel better. But these lilies aren't doing well.

SAM. Everything in that high school was about lists. About stuffing your brain with totally unrelated facts, turning yourself into a walking encyclopedia. College is much more interesting. It's when you get to sort it all out. Right Slick? You're getting it all sorted out now.

SLICK. Let's see. That's right. Eighth grade was Mrs. Biaggio.

NATALIE. Everything she said sounded like a question. I remember Back to School Night. 'Mrs. Grayson? I'm Mrs. Biaggio? Slick's General Knowledge teacher? It's nice to meet you?'

SLICK. Very existential. A perfect teacher for the adolescent mind. And she was so hot.

NATALIE. Then I had to go in and fight the headmaster for the C+ you finally got in science. He retired that year. What was his name? An odd name, weird...

SLICK. Smith. Dr. Smith.

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NATALIE. Don't be a wise ass. His first name.

SLICK. It was Tallahassee. Tall Tal Smith.

SAM. How could we forget? He tormented us.

NATALIE. He told me the reason you didn't study was because you were lazy. Of course, the fact that you had ADD didn't seem to enter into his head at all. Very old school. Extremely rigid. Discipline and order, that's what Tall Tal was proud of. He simply wasn't comfortable with you. You absorbed information in odd ways. You questioned authority.

SLICK. I wanted to lead a student walk out against the war in Iraq. Remember I called you to get your permission?

NATALIE. I do. Slick, I was very proud of you. You were so passionate. So few people have passion anymore. *(Silence as they all stare at the sky.)*

SLICK. Sun's still out. There! There's the moon, like a chalk outline.

NATALIE. It's been so hot these past few weeks. The garden is struggling. The lilies most of all. They're actually burned around the edges.

SLICK. Mom, you gave me good advice.

NATALIE. No. I gave you terrible advice. I told you not to do it. I was trying to protect you in the wrong way. I thought, 'What if he stages a walk out and they kick him out of school?' Tall Tal said he'd have you arrested for trespassing if you left the school and tried to get back in. Arrested! Do you know what happens when a man like Tallahassee Smith calls the police? I needed to keep you safe. There he was, threatening to suspend you just for talking about a walk out. I had a talk with Dr. Smith. I was so angry I think I scared the hell out of him. Though in the end, the only thing I accomplished was to crush your passion.

SAM. You did your job, Natalie. You're his mother. Your job is to protect him. You let him flower within the warmth of your protection. Look at him. He's such a lucky kid.

SLICK. She fights the battles, you keep the spoils.

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SAM. Please! I said that once, years ago. Why do you insist on always bringing it up?

SLICK. Because...I don't know. Maybe because I get nervous when we're all getting along?

NATALIE. Obviously it bothered him, Sam. Maybe that's the question you should be asking.

SAM. I'd like to understand why he keeps bringing it up. It was an offhand remark I made ...well, it's not a secret that I thought you were using your mother as a cover, an excuse not to do your work. I thought Tall Tal had a good point. About your studying.

SLICK. But then you found out I was simply stupid.

SAM. You're getting A's and B's in college, so obviously I was wrong.

SLICK. So, it *is* what you thought!

NATALIE. I'd rather not fight. Slick is home for the weekend. I'm sorry we got off on this tangent. It started out so well.

SAM. In case you haven't noticed, your mother is like a tiger when it comes to you. It's indiscriminate. Hurt my son and I'll kill you.

SLICK. Is that wrong?

NATALIE. Sam, it's also that I don't like injustice. For some completely unknown reason, injustice pushes my buttons. A child vs. an entire school system. Someone needs to level the playing field.

SAM. All right, here we go again...the wounded warrior is about to emerge.

NATALIE. What did you just say?

SAM. Nothing. All right, it's not nothing. In the last few weeks, ever since Jackson was...taken...you've been overly sensitive. You've been reliving the past, letting your imagination run wild. Don't look at me like that, Natalie, you have. And you've been acting like you're the only one who's entitled to feel anything about this, or about anything. Since I'm the one who's responsible...

NATALIE. Hold on, hold on. I wasn't remotely talking about Jackson just now....

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SAM. Oh really? I know you, Natalie. Somehow, you're going to link everything together and it's all going to be my fault. Twenty years from now you'll still be reminding me of what I did and what I didn't do and I don't want to be blamed.

NATALIE. Have I missed something here? I told you I wasn't even talking about Jackson. Did I even mention his name? I don't blame you and there's no innuendo going on here. Tell me, Sam. Tell me how I've done that. I want to hear.

SAM. You don't have to say it. There's a lot you do with your body language, with the tone of your voice...

NATALIE. I don't understand what you're saying. *(To Slick)* Do you understand what he's saying? *(Slick holds up his hands to indicate he doesn't want to get involved.)* I'm not going to fight about this. Slick's home for the weekend. I'm going to... withdraw...and go replant the lilies. Under the moon. *(Natalie walks to the other end of the stage and begins to dig up the lilies.)*

SLICK. Oh man.

SAM. She's planting with a vengeance. I've told her that worrying about it, isn't going to help find Jackson. We've put up posters, we're offering a reward, and this Blakemore guy is actually working pretty hard. He likes your mother a lot. I think he's got a crush on her.

SLICK. Please don't fight with her this weekend. I'd like to spend time with you guys. I'm upset about Jackson too. He was a great dog.

SAM. She keeps harping on this idea that someone is hurting him. On what people do to "innocent things," and she's putting horrible images in my head.

SLICK. Dad, she was in prison for 7 ½ years. She went to prison for 7 ½ years and *she* was totally innocent.

SAM. Yeah. *(Beat)*. It's exactly that. It's her history, it's so encompassing, so definitive, that it's become the history of our lives too, and the lens for the way we look at things. She gets a lot of emotional passes...

JACKSON IS GONE

SLICK. Come on dad. That's not fair. She expresses her ideas but doesn't force them on anyone. If anything, it's just the opposite.

SAM. So... you didn't answer my question. It is all coming together in college, isn't it?

SLICK. Sure, sure. School's not easy for me, I'm an older student. But I'm getting there.

SAM. You've got a 3.5 average. So what's so hard?

SLICK. I drift, I dream.

SAM. Your mother thinks there should be more of that in the world. Hey, would you please call home once a day? That really is something she's tyrannical about.

SLICK. I'll try to remember. I know it drives her crazy.

SAM. Hey! Do you blame me for Jackson?

SLICK. No dad.

SAM. But you're angry at me because a long time ago you thought that I thought that you were stupid.

SLICK. I would rather you'd thought of me as a fuck-up. Dad, are you trying to find something to feel bad about? (*Sam nods.*) Gardening always makes mom feel better. She loves it. So why don't you take a few dance classes? You used to love ballet.

(*Natalie enters*)

NATALIE. I put them where there's more shade. But the crab apple tree has a lot of dead leaves. It's just so hot. It's always so hot.

SAM. Slick has decided that you and I should take a ballet class together.

SLICK. I..

NATALIE. H'mmm. What gave you that idea?

SLICK. It was...

NATALIE. I think it's a great idea.

SAM. It's good exercise; it's a beautiful language.

NATALIE. Plus, it would help my circulation. You're brilliant. As always.

SLICK. Thanks mom. (*Blackout*)

JACKSON IS GONE

SCENE 5

Sgt. Blakemore's apartment a few days later. Natalie and Sgt. Blakemore are sitting at his kitchen table drinking tea. Natalie wears a bright summer dress. Her hair is done up. She wears some jewelry. She is nervous. A dog is barking in the background.

NATALIE. I don't mind if you let Duke out of the bedroom. I'd like to meet him.

SGT. BLAKEMORE. In a minute, Mrs. Grayson. In a minute.

NATALIE. So, you have some news?

SGT. BLAKEMORE. It turns out the car was stolen which at first gave us some hope but which led to a complete dead end. The owner of the car wakes up one morning, looks out the bedroom window and whhht! The car is gone. No witnesses, no other crimes associated with this vehicle, no speeding tickets. Nothing on the cameras at the toll booths. But, on the bright side, we have a stolen car and a stolen dog. And that means we've got a pattern and probably a guy who's got a record and is somewhere in the system.
(Brief Silence)

NATALIE. OK. But couldn't you have told me this on the phone?

SGT. BLAKEMORE. And thanks to your powers of observation, we have a pretty good description of this guy, so maybe you could come down to the station one day and take a look in the book.

NATALIE. Of course. *(Brief Silence.)*

SGT. BLAKEMORE. Also, we know where some of these dog fighting rings are and..

NATALIE. You don't think..? No, no, Sam doesn't think..

SGT. BLAKEMORE. We've got our eyes on them. Jackson has not shown up anywhere near these places. But if he does, wham!
(Brief Silence) Mrs. Grayson, I'm trying to make you feel better. I'm trying to give you some hope.

NATALIE. Sgt. Blakemore, I rarely give in to hope. It's one of my few strengths. When I see Jackson again, then I won't need hope, will I? I'll have him.

JACKSON IS GONE

SGT. BLAKEMORE. We're going to get the son of a bitch. I'm going to nail him.

NATALIE. Sam and I both appreciate your efforts. I was simply wondering if you couldn't have told me all of this on the phone.

SGT. BLAKEMORE. Was that a question?

NATALIE. Yes.

SGT. BLAKEMORE. No.

NATALIE. OK. *(Brief Silence)* I should be going. It's a long walk.

SGT. BLAKEMORE. I made the tea myself. It's Bigelow's. I stuck six bags in the pot and poured six cups of boiling water on top. Six bags, six cups of water. It's supposed to give you six cups of tea. But it doesn't. Ever notice that? Same thing happens with coffee. *(Natalie has opened a backpack and is rummaging through it.)*

NATALIE. Oh! I almost forgot. I brought some....

SGT. BLAKEMORE. You brought me a present?

NATALIE. No. This is Beastie Bear, Jackson's favorite toy. And Jack Rabbit. Here's Tidy Cat. And Boris the Mouse.

SGT. BLAKEMORE. I certainly didn't make enough tea for all of them! *(Sgt. Blakemore laughs. Natalie hesitates for a second and then bursts out laughing.)*

NATALIE. That's wonderful!

SGT. BLAKEMORE. It's nice to see you laughing. I bet you don't laugh a lot.

NATALIE. I thought maybe one of the police dogs could pick up a scent. Or is that not possible?

SGT. BLAKEMORE. It's possible. I was just thinking that you have very nice teeth. They almost look fake.

NATALIE. Really, sergeant.

SGT. BLAKEMORE. That was not meant to embarrass you. Just the opposite. You know Dukey has very good teeth. When he smiles he lights up the room. Speaking of which, you gotta see this trick. His smiley trick.

JACKSON IS GONE

NATALIE. Oh wonderful! I get to meet the talented Duke. Because it is getting late and I should...

SGT. BLAKEMORE. Because sometimes bad nutrition over an extended period of time can damage the teeth. It's not really the teeth, it's the gums. Isn't that right?

NATALIE. I suppose. Come on, let's have the dog show!

SGT. BLAKEMORE. OK. Here we go. *(He opens the bedroom door. DUKE comes bounding out. Sgt. Blakemore whistles and Duke immediately sits.)*

NATALIE. *(petting Duke)* So well behaved. Hello, sweetheart. And the brindle color, the white bands around his paws. Your description was very accurate.

SGT. BLAKEMORE. Yeah. In my book, he's the best. Rescue dog.

NATALIE. My brother had a rescue dog. Leo. *(To Duke)* Such a good boy.

SGT. BLAKEMORE. What kind of dog was Leo?

NATALIE. Oh! No, Leo was my brother. Both of my parents loved Tolstoy. And so do I. *(Brief Silence)*

SGT. BLAKEMORE. I'll tell you a secret. I knew you were a nice lady the minute I met you. A great lady. Just now, you didn't say 'Oh sergeant, you've probably never heard of Tolstoy. Oh sergeant, let me explain slowly to you who Tolstoy was.' You said, 'My parents loved Tolstoy.' Now I say, 'Thank you, Mrs. Grayson. You assumed the stupid police sergeant had a brain. An education. Which means that what you have, is a heart - pretty amazing considering...nevermind. That doesn't matter. What I was gonna say is, they never forget, these rescue dogs. They want to please you so bad. Maybe 'cause they're grateful, maybe 'cause they're afraid they'll get sent away again. Dukey, right paw. *(Duke gives his right paw. Sgt. Blakemore gives Duke a treat.)* So, as I was saying, the minute I met you.., Duke left paw. *(Duke gives his left paw. Sgt. Blakemore gives Duke a treat.)*

NATALIE. He's wonderful.. What about when you met me?

SGT. BLAKEMORE. Nothing. *(To Duke)* Dukey, roll over.

JACKSON IS GONE

(Duke rolls onto his back with his paws sticking straight up in the air.) He loves lying on his back. I take him to the beach and he just lies there all day on his back. I thought his little tummy might get a sunburn, so I bought him a little beach umbrella. You think that's OK? To buy a dog a beach umbrella? My big mouth mother says I anthropomorphize Duke. But, so what? I say I anthropomorphize my mother.

NATALIE. Sergeant, why am I here? When you called, my husband had the strangest idea about you. He's positive you're trying to seduce me.

SGT. BLAKEMORE. Is that funny?

NATALIE. I'm not laughing at you. I'm 49 years old. My seductive powers have been gone for quite a few years now.

SGT. BLAKEMORE. The day I met you, it was funny because I was -...nevermind, that doesn't matter either. I came home from work, and I googled you. Natalie Grayson, no hits.

NATALIE. Why did you do that? I'm...

SGT. BLAKEMORE. Free country.

NATALIE. Anyway, I got rid of all my personal information. Except for...

SGT. BLAKEMORE. You can't get rid of the newspapers. And it's pretty hard to get rid of Wikipedia. Anyway, then I googled Sam. And what do you know? There he is in Wikipedia. But Sam, he's just a stub. A Wikipedia stub. There's only one reason he's in there. Because he married you. Because he married a convicted bank robber, a quite famous convicted bank robber named Natalie Thorndike.

NATALIE. I was exonerated. I was innocent.

SGT. BLAKEMORE. I know. You went to prison. You were only 19 years old. Man, that is a tough story.

NATALIE. I was 20. The trial took a long time.

SGT. BLAKEMORE. 1970. You were very famous. Even my stupid mother remembers you. My stupid mother still thinks you were guilty.

JACKSON IS GONE

NATALIE. Your stupid mother is entitled to her stupid opinions. Listen, I don't talk about this much with strangers. It just causes confusion. *(Natalie stands up to leave.)* Ooh - I feel a little dizzy. Do you think I could have a glass of water? It's very hot in here.

SGT. BLAKEMORE. Sure, sure. Damn it, my foot fell asleep. *(Sgt. Blakemore limps toward a pitcher of water and returns to the table. Natalie holds onto the back of a chair, then sits down. Duke comes over to her and she smiles at him.)*

NATALIE. You're so cute.

SGT. BLAKEMORE. I figured something was going on down at the station. Boy, were you nervous. With your hands all shaking, with the way you put the water on your lips. That's when I got a peek at your teeth. Probably you didn't want to be in a police station. After I read about you, that's what I figured. *(Sgt. Blakemore hands Natalie the glass of water. She drinks it and hands him the empty glass.)* We scare you a little bit. Is that the idea? Huh? Think we're going to throw you back in jail?

NATALIE. I'd better be going.

SGT. BLAKEMORE. Don't get me wrong, if it'd been me, if I sat in a prison cell for 7 ½ years for nothing, I wouldn't come out saying, "Please may I have a glass of water, thank you for the tea." I'd be wearing a big "Fuck you!" sign on my back. Everyone could go to hell.

NATALIE. You can only be angry for so long. After a while it's just noise in your head. You start arguing with yourself, with people you've never met. With the dead. There's this substrata of your life that's just – anger.

SGT. BLAKEMORE. I'll tell you, I've got noise in my head. Every day of my life. Are you OK?

NATALIE. I think so.

SGT. BLAKEMORE. What about more tea? Or how about cookies? I have some but I didn't put them on the table 'cause I'm pre-diabetic. People have to ask .

NATALIE. Just give me a minute.

JACKSON IS GONE

SGT. BLAKEMORE. That creep who testified against you, that Blair Atkins. What kind of name is that?

NATALIE. Sergeant, you know what kind of name it is. You work in New Beacon. Just like the town where Blair Atkins and I lived. It's a WASP's nest.

SGT. BLAKEMORE. But this guy owned a candy store. I mean he sold dime candy, cigarettes...he said you were never in his store that day, but he swore up and down that he saw you standing next to the getaway car. Cool as a cucumber.

NATALIE. He never said, "cool as a cucumber." That was editorialized in the papers. And I didn't have a political agenda either. I had political opinions that were different from Mr. Atkins – and his wife.

SGT. BLAKEMORE. He hated you, huh? Hippie chick with long, long hair. You had a headband, a tear drop painted under one eye. A little peace symbol inside the tear drop. That's very cool. I want one.

NATALIE. I was in his store. At 9:00 in the morning on a Saturday. I bought a bottle of Coke. Fifteen cents. I wasn't even thirsty. I gave him a quarter and asked for change in nickels for the parking meter. He flipped the quarter into the air and made me guess. It was my lucky day, he said. Heads. He placed one nickel in my hand. He stroked my open palm with his fingertips and stared into my eyes. "Call it again. For the second nickel." I said, "No, thank you," and turned to walk out the door. "What's wrong with you?" he said. "Why are you so uptight? Just a damn game. You don't like games?" I put the Coke and the nickel on the counter and left. I heard him say "Commie hippie. Piece of trash."

SGT. BLAKEMORE. Stay right there. I'll get the cookies.
(Duke starts barking.)

NATALIE. I don't want cookies. *(Natalie closes her eyes and tries to catch her breath. Sgt. Blakemore returns with a tin of cookies.)*

SGT. BLAKEMORE. Here you go. It's a variety pack.

JACKSON IS GONE

NATALIE. Sgt. Blakemore, I was very, I was extremely nervous about coming here...

SGT. BLAKEMORE. Robert. Call me Robert...

NATALIE. Fine. Robert. I don't want...

SGT. BLAKEMORE. Robert Barker Blakemore. The Price is Right? The guy who loves animals with a capital heart?

NATALIE. You told us that already at the police station.

SGT. BLAKEMORE. Oh, well excuse me for boring you.

NATALIE. Listen, I don't mind talking about it. I don't. I'm not ashamed. But Jackson being taken, It reminds me of the fragility of each moment of life...I have memories of the terrors of captivity. I want, I need him back. So much. So very...much. I came to see you. It was difficult, don't you realize? You're a cop. I walk in here, and I've given something over to you. The minute I cross that threshold, I am diminished. And then it appears that you're more interested in learning about me than in finding Jackson....

SGT. BLAKEMORE. No, no, no, no, no! No! No! NO!

Absolutely not..... *(Brief silence)* Yes, yes, YES! You are correct. This is awful. I'm awful. *(He begins shoving cookies into his mouth.)*

NATALIE. Robert, don't do that! You're pre-diabetic. Please! *(Natalie takes a cookie from Blakemore's hand. Blakemore opens his palm.)*

SGT. BLAKEMORE. Stroke my palm. Won't you?

NATALIE. What? *(Natalie jumps up from her chair. Duke begins to bark. Natalie puts on her backpack and heads for the door.)*

SGT. BLAKEMORE. I'm sorry! I'm sorry! Mrs. Grayson, I didn't mean it. It's the sugar. Please don't go! I've done it now. First I tell you my name twice. Then I'm boring you to death. Then I ask you to...why did I say that? Please, please, one more minute. Mrs. Grayson. Jackson. I want to talk about Jackson. I want to help you so badly. Oh, man, I'm the straw that rode the camel's back.

NATALIE. You're what?

SGT. BLAKEMORE. The straw that rode the camel's back.

NATALIE. You mean the straw that broke the camel's back.

JACKSON IS GONE

SGT. BLAKEMORE. Why would I want to do that? I love animals.

NATALIE. Robert, you're a strange man, but I do believe you want to help us. Let's both keep calm and try to work together as...as friends. Get to know each other a bit.

SGT. BLAKEMORE. That's exactly what I want Mrs. Grayson. To get to know who you are. You're the only person I've ever met who really used to be somebody else.

NATALIE. That's true. I was a different person. I don't think even Sam realizes that.

SGT. BLAKEMORE. I want to be somebody else. I'd love to be in Wikipedia. I'd love to have my mother remember me 37 years from now, even if she thought I was a criminal.

NATALIE. I can do this. I want to do this. I need to not be afraid of...what you represent. The thing in you that scares me.

SGT. BLAKEMORE. OK. (*Brief pause.*) But, just one more question? What did you think about in there?

NATALIE. Why?

SGT. BLAKEMORE. Because you're not dead inside.

NATALIE. No, I'm not. Thank you. I don't think I can answer that right now. Robert. (*Brief pause.*) Robert, I have a question for you. Years ago there was a park, a big, old park about a mile down the street. Birdwing Park. A lovely name. I didn't see it on my way over here.

SGT. BLAKEMORE. It's still there. It's a lot smaller. They took some of the park and built an apartment complex on it. Luxury condos. The park is private now. You need a key.

NATALIE. One of the things I thought about in prison was Birdwing Park. Now it's gone. For us. It was a very special place.

SGT. BLAKEMORE. You used to walk there. I understand now. You don't drive because every time you got behind the wheel of a car, you saw a face in the mirror. A gun shoved up against your skull.

NATALIE. It was a long, long time ago. (*Duke starts barking*)

SGT. BLAKEMORE. Tell me the story.

JACKSON IS GONE

NATALIE. No, not that part. Never that part. Did you lock Duke in the bedroom again? Let him out. Please Robert.

SGT. BLAKEMORE. A man and a woman, hidden in the back seat. Didn't they have their own car?

NATALIE. I'm asking you to let Duke out. He's upset.

SGT. BLAKEMORE. You were standing next to your car..

NATALIE. I was sitting in the car.

SGT. BLAKEMORE. The newspaper said...

NATALIE. I was sitting in the car. I was thinking about Blair Atkins. I was really upset. *(Duke barks louder. He begins to scratch on the door.)* Robert, your dog wants to get out of that room.

SGT. BLAKEMORE. You didn't see them?

NATALIE. No. I'd started the car, thought about Blair Atkins and I got out of the car to go give him a piece of my mind. The car was unlocked, the engine was running. Nobody believed that part of the story, because nobody believed I'd been in Atkins store.

SGT. BLAKEMORE. And when you got back, they were already in the car.

NATALIE. I was gone for less than a minute – so engrossed in my mission, so angry. I heard nothing. I saw nothing around me.

SGT. BLAKEMORE. A chance. A fellow traveler. Little hippie chick gunning an engine. They jumped in the car.

NATALIE. I came back and started to drive away. Then, as you've so poetically noted, I felt a gun against the back of my skull, I saw a face in the rearview mirror. I don't want to talk about this anymore. 'If I don't die', I thought, 'then this is the point where my life changes forever'. I don't want to talk about this anymore! Don't ask me anymore questions! I'm going to let Duke out! Don't leave him in there like that! He's trapped, for God's sake. He's trapped! *(Natalie runs to the bedroom door and opens it. Duke comes bounding out and runs to Sgt. Blakemore.)* My backpack! Where is it?

SGT. BLAKEMORE. You have your backpack! *(Natalie runs around looking for her backpack. Sgt. Blakemore gives Duke a*

JACKSON IS GONE

hand signal. Duke sits up on his hind legs and smiles, an unnaturally large smile with his lips pulled back tautly. He is perfectly still.)

SGT. BLAKEMORE. Mrs. Grayson, look!

NATALIE. You found my backpack?

SGT. BLAKEMORE. No, look at Dukey! His smiley trick!
(Natalie turns around and screams.)

NATALIE. What is he doing? Ahh! He's in pain! His mouth! Make him stop!

SGT. BLAKEMORE. He loves it. It took two years to train him... *(Sgt. Blakemore claps his hands and Duke, still smiling, begins walking on his hind legs towards Natalie.)*

NATALIE. Oh my God! Let me out of here! *(Natalie runs to the door and tries to open it.)* It's locked. I can't get out! *(Natalie rattles the doorknob and begins to sob.)* Can't get out. Make him stop that! Good boy. Good boy. I can't breathe.

SGT. BLAKEMORE. Mrs. Grayson, the door's not locked. *(Sgt. Blakemore signals to Duke, who sits back on his hind legs and stops smiling. Sgt. Blakemore opens the door. Natalie stares at the door and then at Duke.)*

NATALIE. What was that? Did I...I imagined this whole thing. He's a dog. Duke. He's a cop. Blakemore. A friend. A friend. A damn friend. *(Natalie collapses on the floor.)*

SGT. BLAKEMORE. Mrs. Grayson? Mrs. Grayson!
(Blackout)

SCENE 6

Later the same evening. Sam and Natalie's bedroom. Natalie is lying in bed, propped up by several pillows. Sam hands her a cup of tea.

NATALIE. M-m-m chamomile. Thank you.

SAM. Slick is downstairs. He's very worried about you. Thank God it wasn't a heart attack.

JACKSON IS GONE

NATALIE. I felt like I wasted the doctor's time. He seemed so annoyed that I wasn't dead.

SAM. I don't want you to have anything more to do with Blakemore.

NATALIE. He felt bad, Sam. I think he's a very solitary guy with...he doesn't know how to relate to people. Don't give me that look.

SAM. Natalie, whatever he is, he's not harmless. You wound up in the emergency room.

NATALIE. It was a panic attack! A good part of it was my fault. I let him get to me.

SAM. Why should he be trying to "get to you?" He was supposed to be helping us find Jackson.

NATALIE. Well, that's what he wants to do. Desperately. Please don't get mad Sam, but he seems to have..

SAM. ...a crush on you. He wants to sleep with you. I told you that when we were at the police station.

NATALIE. Actually Sam, you're wrong. It's much more complicated.

SAM. With men, it's never more complicated.

NATALIE. Yes, it is. Why do men always insist on describing themselves as idiots?

SAM. Because we're terrified of you.

NATALIE. Of me?

SAM. Of...of...Nature. I guess. Of the force of Nature, of women and Nature. They're all wrapped up together. It's probably why we gave God a male face, to give us a little edge. Tell me about how complicated Sgt. Blakemore is.

NATALIE. He looked me up in Wikipedia. Apparently, he was very affected by my being in prison. How I survived. Why I was...You're laughing. I knew it. You think this is funny.

SAM. Oooh, no I don't. Don't think it's funny. Not one bit. I think he's a stalker. I think he's nuts.

NATALIE. Stop reducing everything to the lowest common denominator. I admit he's strange, but honestly, I don't think he's

JACKSON IS GONE

dangerous, and now more than ever he's determined to find Jackson. He wants to ease my pain and his guilt. It's very sweet, actually.

SAM. It's my job to ease your pain. I'm your husband. I took that job on - willingly – the day I married you. And this man isn't easing your pain, he's causing you pain. And he almost killed you.

NATALIE. Sammy, you're jealous.

SAM. Ever since that day, ever since Jackson.....why the hell did I get so angry?

NATALIE. I don't blame you.

SAM. Since that happened you've become more distant, the ghosts are with us again, Natalie, I feel you slipping away. You drift, you get this look in your eyes and I know I can't reach you...

NATALIE. Every day I was in prison I thought about the outside world, about things like walking in the woods, swimming, oh God the feel of water, of sitting under a tree and falling asleep. Every day I thought about being free. And since I've been free, I think about prison. Every day. Every day of my free life, I think about prison. Sgt. Blakemore said that my soul wasn't dead and he seemed amazed by that. It's only because I have you and Slick. Prison is like this black hole in the center of me. An eclipse of the sun of my life. But I live in the halo that surrounds the darkness. You are that halo Sam. You and Slick. Without you I would have been in prison forever. Is it enough?

SAM. I just feel I'm losing you.

NATALIE. No. No.

SAM. You'd better get some rest. Here, take an Ambien. *(Sam hands Natalie a glass of water and an Ambien. She swallows the pill and falls back onto the pillows.)*

NATALIE. This is the time of day when I miss Jackson the most. The way he used to curl up on the end of the bed.

SAM. Remember how we used to take him up to Shepherd Lake? The beautiful walk we went on?

JACKSON IS GONE

NATALIE. It was three miles. And the meadow in the middle with the wild honeysuckle that grew into the trees? Oh Sam, remember how we'd taste the wild honeysuckle?

SAM. We'd come home exhausted. But then Jackson wanted to go swimming. That dog was intrepid.

NATALIE. And happy. I think he was the happiest dog we ever had.

SAM. Because we were so happy. Shepherd Lake. Those few weeks every summer.

NATALIE. I think we conjured it, Sam. I think it appeared just for us each year. But we weren't perfectly happy either. We fought.

SAM. Yes. And I got sick.

NATALIE. The bottom of the lake was mucky. Sometimes it was cold. I suppose it was that...

SAM. What?

NATALIE. I lost it. I had it but now it's gone...the reason it was so magical.. It must be the Ambien. It's that there was...it had...I'm sorry Sam. Just too groggy to talk.

SAM. It had love.

NATALIE. Yes, you could say that.

SAM. Then say it. Love.

NATALIE. How close you're willing to come to me with that word. How brave it makes you. You wear it like a hero.

Unflinching. *(Natalie kisses Sam. The doorbell rings. Natalie looks around groggily, upset.)*

NATALIE. Who is that?

SAM. Slick will get it. Shhh. Wait. *(Sam opens the bedroom door and listens for a minute.)* It's Blakemore. *(Natalie sits up.)*

NATALIE. What's he doing here?

SAM. Get some rest. I'll get rid of him.

NATALIE. I don't want to see him in my house. I don't want the police in my house. What do they want from me?

SAM. Maybe he has some news...

NATALIE. What is he going to do?

JACKSON IS GONE

SAM. Just sleep...shhh...sleep. I'll take care of him. *(Sam kneels down and starts rummaging under the bed.)*

NATALIE. What are you doing?

SAM. Take it easy. I'm looking for my slippers.

NATALIE. For some reason I thought you were hiding a gun under there. Are you sure?

SAM. It's all right.

NATALIE. Can I sleep now? Is it dangerous? Good night.
(Fadeout)

END OF ACT ONE

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