

NAT

BECCA. *(Takes the story.)* Yeah, we should keep it. I'll just put it in the box. *(Becca puts the story inside the keep box. Nat goes back to cleaning. Becca contemplates telling her something, and finally relents. She tries to sound offhand.)* I think I'm gonna see him actually.

NAT. Who?

BECCA. Jason Willette. *(Beat.)*

NAT. Why?

BECCA. I don't know. I just ... want to.

NAT. What about Howie?

BECCA. Howie's not really into it.

NAT. Well, I thought it was weird. The way he walked in like that.

Creepy. You don't think that was creepy?

BECCA. Not really.

NAT. Well, I think it was creepy. You should ask Howie what *he* thinks.

BECCA. I don't have to ask him what he thinks. Frankly I don't care what he thinks.

NAT. I'm just saying. *(After a beat, Howie appears in the doorway. He looks around. The bed has been stripped. The walls are bare. He regrets popping in, but it's too late now.)*

BECCA. Hey.

HOWIE. How's it goin'?

BECCA. Fine.

HOWIE. Good. *(Beat.)* I thought we could put the brown bedspread in here.

BECCA. Okay.

HOWIE. And maybe hang the Ansel Adams prints that are in the basement?

BECCA. Sounds like a plan.

HOWIE. Making progress I see.

BECCA. Yup.

HOWIE. Good. Looks good. *(Pause.)* I'm gonna take Taz for a walk. You need anything while I'm out?

BECCA. I don't think so.

HOWIE. Okay. *(To Nat.)* Thanks for helping out, Nat.

NAT. Sure. *(He goes.)*

BECCA. *(Whispers.)* I hate that bedspread. I'm gonna put the blue one on. It's neutral enough. *(They work in silence. Nat suddenly smiles. She remembers something.)*

NAT. Hey, you know what I was thinking of this morning?

BECCA. What?

NAT. *(Chuckling a little already.)* Remember that gourmet basket you and Howie got me for Mother's Day last year, with the biscotti and the fancy biscuits? And I put the chocolates out when you came over for dinner, and Danny ate the entire bowl of chocolates when no one was looking?

BECCA. *(She's heard this story many times.)* Yup.

NAT. And then Howie was like, "Where'd all the chocolates go?" And I said, "Danny ate them. Leave him alone, kids like candy." And then Howie said, "But those were chocolate-covered espresso beans!" Remember?

BECCA. I do.

NAT. But Danny had eaten the whole bowl, so he was, you know, really really wired. And running in circles and climbing up the walls, and putting things on his head, and he was up until like three A.M. Remember that?

BECCA. Only too well.

NAT. I didn't know what the damn things were. I just thought they were candy. You get me these fancy baskets with all this crazy stuff in 'em — espresso beans. I tell that story to everyone. People get a kick out of it. *(Becca smiles.)*

BECCA. *(After a beat.)* Mom? *(Nat looks up at her.)* Does it go away?

NAT. What.

BECCA. This feeling. Does it ever go away? *(Beat.)*

NAT. No. I don't think it does. Not for me, it hasn't. And that's goin' on eleven years. *(Beat.)* It changes though.

BECCA. How?

NAT. I don't know. The weight of it, I guess. At some point it becomes bearable. It turns into something you can crawl out from under. And carry around — like a brick in your pocket. And you forget it every once in a while, but then you reach in for whatever reason and there it is: "Oh right. *That.*" Which can be awful. But not all the time. Sometimes it's kinda ... Not that you *like* it exactly, but it's what you have instead of your son, so you don't wanna let go of it either. So you carry it around. And it doesn't go away, which is ...

BECCA. What?

NAT. Fine ... actually. *(They're silent for a couple beats. Becca nods a little. She goes back to work. So does Nat. The lights fade.)*