

MID ACT II, SCENE 1:

STANLEY

So. She went looking for you.

ROBERT

No. She didn't. We bumped into each other.

STANLEY

Just...*bumped* into each other. I know this town is small, but it's not that small!

ROBERT

We were at Beth's grave, Stanley.

STANLEY

(to himself)

But I looked there!

(to ROBERT)

Is she okay?

ROBERT

I don't know. I guess so.

STANLEY

(starting to raise his voice)

Is she hurt? Was she bleeding? Can't you even tell that? What are you made of, stone?

ROBERT

No, she's fine.

STANLEY

You...you were at Beth's grave.

ROBERT

Yes.

STANLEY

(long beat)

How did you know Beth died?

ROBERT

Bernadette called me.

STANLEY

Bernadette...Bernadette Simon?

ROBERT

Well, she's married now. Her name is Bernadette Walker, but yeah. Tracy and Stuart called her.

STANLEY

Right. Of course.

ROBERT

I guess Bernadette didn't know about you.

STANLEY

I guess not. I didn't even know that anyone from college still knew where you were.

(beat)

I can't believe Bernadette still wants to talk to you after all those papers you had her edit.

ROBERT

She volunteered. Not everyone can be Mr. Grammar.

STANLEY

I wasn't Mr. Grammar. I just knew how to open a dictionary. And that's not why Bernadette was working on your papers and you know it.

(beat. Sudden thought)

My God! Was she happy that Beth died?

ROBERT

Of course not.

(beat)

I swear I didn't know it was so bad. If I'd known, I would have called Beth back.

STANLEY

She left you about ten messages. It's not like you didn't care about her! I know you did!

ROBERT

And apparently you took careful notes and lessons on it.

(Beat)

So when was the big day supposed to be?

STANLEY

(uncomfortable)

We never set a date.

ROBERT

So you proposed to her in the hospital? How romantic.

STANLEY

It was romantic! And it wasn't in the hospital! I proposed to her a long time ago!

ROBERT

(beat)

A long time ago? She didn't accept?

STANLEY

She accepted. Look, I don't want to...

ROBERT

I know that look. You're not telling me something. You always looked away like that when you didn't want to tell me something. You still do it!

STANLEY

We're not friends anymore, Robert! Maybe I'm not telling you things because I don't have to tell you things anymore! We're not friends, okay?

ROBERT

(beat)

So I guess we both messed up with her.

STANLEY

Messed up? I didn't mess up!

ROBERT

(quickly)

Then why didn't you marry her?

STANLEY

(just as quickly)

Because she...

(stops short. Frustrated)

Stop doing that! You can't do that to me anymore. We're not twenty one!

ROBERT

I'm not doing anything!

STANLEY

You are! Just stop it!

ROBERT

(beat)

I talked to Penny, you know.

STANLEY

It's about time.

ROBERT

You're treating my kids like crap!

STANLEY

I'm doing what??!!

ROBERT

Penny told me you didn't wake Cara up for Beth's funeral...

STANLEY

Because of you, you jerk! I knew you were going to be there!

ROBERT

You knew that I was going to...

STANLEY

I was trying to protect her! I screwed up! I didn't do it right. I take responsibility for that. That's more than I can say for you. But I'm not treating your kids like crap! Don't think you can come in here and start criticizing my parenting skills because I made one mistake!

ROBERT

Cara's not your daughter!! She's mine! And how did you know I was going to be there?

STANLEY

There's one hotel in this town, Robert! You think Beth's relatives didn't call me when they saw you?

ROBERT

Oh.

STANLEY

You know, even though I made mistakes with Cara, the only real mistake I made with Beth was not telling her to go ahead with the paperwork without you!

ROBERT

What paperwork?

STANLEY

About Penny's custody!

(HE lowers his voice)

She was changing her will. When the doctors told her how long...she...she wanted to tell you that she was going to switch over custody from Cara to me.

ROBERT

You? YOU? You're going to get custody of Penny?

STANLEY

(moving away from PENNY's door)

Cara's not a good guardian for Penny. She's got a very full life and doesn't stay in one place for very long. She just hasn't found her niche in life yet. We had all the paperwork to change the will but Beth wouldn't complete it until she had contacted you. Now that she's gone...I have the papers in the other room. I'll show you.

(STANLEY starts to exit to the hall)

ROBERT

But why would Beth call to tell me that? She always had custody of the kids.

STANLEY

Because I was going to have custody of Penny and it meant that she would have to tell you about our relationship. She wanted to tell you herself. Until the custody issue, it never mattered. Now it does.

ROBERT

But she never wanted me to know anything about the girls. Why now?

STANLEY

I think she always hoped you would do right by them some day.

ROBERT

So that's it. You get my life. You get Beth, you get my kids...you get what I should have!

STANLEY

Hey, you left. It's hardly like you've acknowledged your kids even now, Robert.

ROBERT

Cara hates me.

STANLEY

Well, you work hard at getting people to hate you, Robert. Penny was ready to love you when you walked in and all you've done is turn your back on her.

ROBERT

No, things are different now. We talked. At the grave. I'm trying to... Never mind, you wouldn't understand.

STANLEY

I understand just fine. Now, look, let me go get the papers for you. Because Beth didn't do it, you or Cara needs to sign off on them.

ROBERT

I see. So that's really what's going on. You need me because Cara won't do it.

STANLEY

I haven't even discussed it with Cara yet. Beth wanted to tell you. She didn't get a chance to do it. Legally speaking, your signature or Cara's signature will carry out her wishes.

ROBERT

You know, Penny said the will reading is tomorrow morning. Maybe I should go to make sure all of this is legitimate.

STANLEY

She didn't leave you any money, Robert.

ROBERT

Penny wants to come live with me, Stanley.

STANLEY

So what? I thought you could barely support the kids you already have.

(beat)

You didn't tell her she could go, did you?