

BETTER TO HAVE LOVED...

by

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FADE IN:

EXT. ROGERS' HOME - GARDEN - DAY

A rose garden filled with blooms of every color. BEES and BUTTERFLIES fly freely from one blossom to another.

NOELLE (V.O.)

Love... like a rose, blooms. It begins as a delicate bud, but with the right amount of nurturing, time and patience, grows into a thing of beauty.

A FEMALE HAND with slender fingers grabs hold of the stem of a pure white rose.

A pair of clippers cuts it.

The rose is placed into a basket along with numerous other roses of varied color.

The same HAND moves toward the stem of a red rose. A THORN pricks a finger. A droplet of BLOOD forms almost instantly.

The FINGER moves to a pair of PINK LIPS.

TYLER (O.S.)

Noelle!

A pair of BARE FEET race out of the garden.

INT. ROGERS' HOME - KITCHEN - DAY

TYLER ROGERS (36), a tall man with broad shoulders and dark brooding eyes, peers out the back door, visually sweeping the grounds.

TYLER

Noelle!

The worried crease in his forehead smooths when he sees --

NOELLE ROGERS (22), a petite woman in a floral sundress and bare feet, scampers out of the rose garden and across the perfectly manicured lawn.

Tyler speaks with a strong Southern drawl --

TYLER

There you are. Didn't you hear me callin'?

Noelle's golden brown hair shimmers down her back in the warm morning sunlight. She arrives at the back porch, motioning into her basket full of roses.

NOELLE

No, I'm sorry. I was in the rose garden gathering some --

Tyler takes a firm hold of her upper arm and literally drags her into the house.

TYLER

You said you were gonna pick flowers, not go walkin' to the next county.

NOELLE

I'm sorry.

They turn to find FRAN WEBER (60s) entering the kitchen. She walks with a cane and an obvious limp.

Tyler instantaneously releases his grip of Noelle's arm.

Noelle hurries to Fran's side and helps her into a chair at the table.

FRAN

I'm fine. Don't fuss.

Noelle gets a vase out of a cabinet and fills it with water. About to arrange the freshly cut roses inside of it when --

TYLER

I'm sure your mother'd like to come before the flowers.

FRAN

I'm fine. Really.

Tyler takes a seat at the table across from Fran.

TYLER

Then I'll just speak for myself. I'm starvin'.

Noelle smiles politely, then pushes the flowers aside and takes out a frying pan.

He pulls out a newspaper and snaps it open.

TYLER

And make it fast or I'm gonna be late for work.

INT. ROGERS' HOME - FOYER - DAY

Noelle helps Tyler into his suit jacket. He waits impatiently as she straightens his tie and smooths out any wrinkles on his jacket.

She hands him his briefcase and then opens the door.

He doesn't make a move to leave.

TYLER

No kiss?

She clears her throat, nodding towards the living room where Fran sits on the sofa watching a morning talk show.

TYLER

She's gonna be stayin' with us for a while so you best be gettin' over your shyness.

He cups her buttocks and pulls her against him, kissing her deeply.

On his way out the door --

TYLER

Oh and we'll be havin' another guest, so make up the spare room.

She moves into the doorway.

NOELLE

What guest?

TYLER

My brother.

NOELLE

Your... you don't have a brother.

Halfway down the front porch, Tyler turns to address her, visibly irritated.

TYLER

I don't have a brother that I openly discuss over dinner or at parties. Doesn't mean I don't have a brother.

NOELLE

But your mom... she...

He sighs loudly, frustrated to have to explain it.

TYLER

She won't have him in her house. Which is why he's stayin' with us. For a while. He's gettin' back from Iraq and he's got no where to go.

The look on Noelle's face morphs from upset to disgust.

NOELLE

Your dad cheated on her?

Tyler steps back up the stairs, takes her by the shoulders, angry. Then calms down before speaking.

TYLER

Sometimes I forget how young and naive you are. A woman doesn't give a man a son and he's forced to find alternate means of carryin' on his lineage.

His hands move from her shoulders to her face, pressing firmly into her cheeks.

TYLER

You'd be wise to keep that in mind or I might just have to get rid o' you one day.

Shocked and speechless, Noelle stands numbly as Tyler slaps on on the rear and jogs down the stairs.

INT. ROGERS' HOME - GUEST ROOM - DAY

Noelle spreads a clean sheet over the top of a full sized bed. Smooths out the wrinkles until it is perfect. Places a comforter on top and arranges it just so.

A SHUFFLING causes her to look into the hallway. She sees Fran go by.

NOELLE

Mom. What do you need?

She rushes into the hallway to find Fran wobbling away.

NOELLE

I told you to stay put and I would bring whatever you needed.

FRAN

I know. But you're so busy.

Fran stumbles, leans heavily on the hallway wall for stability.

Noelle takes her by the arm and leads her into

FRAN'S BEDROOM

where she helps her onto the bed.

NOELLE

I'm never too busy for you.

FRAN

Okay, then, be a dear and fetch me my pain pills.

NOELLE

Of course.

She goes into the adjoining bathroom and takes a bottle of prescription pain medicine off the counter. Fills a glass with water.

FRAN (O.S.)

I'm not one to interfere...

Noelle walks back into the room and hands her mother the pills and water.

FRAN

... but you really should learn to hold your tongue with your husband.

Noelle watches silently as Fran swallows her pills with a drink of water.

FRAN

He's a fine man and you're lucky to have him. You haven't had to work a day in your life. He's a wonderful provider. I shudder to
(MORE)

FRAN (cont'd)
 think what would become of you if
 he... Your father is gone and I'm
 getting old.

Fran hands the glass and pill bottle back to Noelle.

Noelle dutifully walks back into the

BATHROOM

and sets them on the counter. Looks at her reflection in the mirror. Despite her lack of makeup, she has a natural beauty that shines through the dark circles under her eyes and deep frown lines.

FRAN (O.S.)
 Don't give him any reason to be
 displeased with you. That's all.

EXT. MARINE CORP BASE - AIRFIELD - NIGHT

Happy reunions take place between MARINES and their anxious families out on the tarmac. Long-missed fathers and husbands embrace children and wives.

Noelle and Tyler stand among them, looking out of place.

Noelle nervously smooths out the fabric of the flowing white dress that she wears.

TYLER
 Here he comes.

She looks up to find a soldier approaching.

Dressed in fatigues and a beret, KELLEY ROGERS (25) walks toward them, duffel bag dangling from his shoulder. He stops in front of Tyler and awkwardly stands at attention.

TYLER
 Kelley.

KELLEY
 Tyler.

Tyler offers his hand and Kelley hesitates before shaking.

The handshake is brief and Tyler soon motions toward Noelle.

TYLER
 This is my wife... Noelle.

Kelley turns to her as if just noticing her presence. He removes his beret, revealing his high and tight haircut. Offers his hand.

KELLEY

Ma'am.

NOELLE

Hi.

Noelle reaches her hand out but before it can make contact, Tyler wraps his arm around her and leads her away.

Kelley adjusts the duffel strap and follows.

INT. STRIP BAR - NIGHT

HOOT and HOLLERS come from the drunken MALE CUSTOMERS as they wave money in front of the half-naked STRIPPERS on stage under harsh red strobe lights.

TYLER (O.S.)

Which one you want?

Tyler, Kelley and an extremely uncomfortable Noelle sit at their own table right in the thick of things.

Both men have a beer in front of them. Noelle has no beverage at all.

She does her best to keep her eyes trained on Tyler, although she takes occasional peeks at Kelley to find him looking just as uneasy.

Over the loud music --

KELLEY

'Scuse me?

TYLER

(louder)

Which one you want? I'll get 'er for you.

KELLEY

I'm good.

TYLER

Good? You've been in the freakin' desert for two years. You need to get laid more'n any o' these losers in here.

Noelle can't help but steal a glance in Kelley's direction to gauge his reaction.

He makes eye contact briefly with Noelle, then quickly looks back to Tyler.

KELLEY

Actually, I'm starving. Why don't we get out of here and go get something to eat. My treat.

Tyler raises a hand in the air and motions over two women in their underwear, STRIPPER #1 and STRIPPER #2.

The women saunter over to the table, positioning themselves behind the two men, rubbing their shoulders.

Tyler appears to be enjoying it, much to Noelle's chagrin.

STRIPPER #1

What can we do for ya, darlin'?

TYLER

My brother here is a war hero. Just back from Iraq. I trust you ladies can show 'im a good time.

He holds up a stack of hundred dollar bills, fanning it out.

Stripper #1 snatches it from him, shoves it into her bra.

STRIPPER #1

You bet.

Stripper #2 pulls Kelley to his feet and Stripper #1 helps lead him away.

Noelle watches in silence as they part a black curtain and enter a previously concealed door.

TYLER

Now, which one you want?

Noelle blushes uncontrollably but tries to play it cool.

NOELLE

I'll pass.

TYLER

Aww, c'mon.

He puts his hand on her knee and slowly guides it up her thigh.

TYLER

Do it for me.

She cringes as his hand moves between her legs, resists the urge to slap it away.

NOELLE

I'll pass.

INT. STRIP CLUB - LAPDANCE ROOM - NIGHT

Stripper #1 and #2 are all over Kelley, who sits in an armchair, back straight and stiff, on edge. He carefully peels their fingers off of him.

KELLEY

Can you... stop... I'm not really... into this...

The strippers exchange a look.

Stripper #1 suddenly loses the accent.

STRIPPER #1

Look here, Army boy...

KELLEY

I'm a Marine.

STRIPPER #1

I don't care if you're the president of the United freaking States... I'm not losing out on that money.

KELLEY

Keep the money. Just... back off.

The strippers step back, staring at him as if he's insane.

STRIPPER #1

I've never been paid to NOT touch someone. Have you?

STRIPPER #2

Not that I know of.

KELLEY

Nothing personal. I'm sure you're good at what you do.

STRIPPER #1

I get it. We'll let your brother
think you're straight.

Kelley shakes his head as the strippers hurry away through a
back door.

He walks over to the curtain and peers out.

KELLEY'S POV

Tyler guzzles the rest of his beer, then is all over Noelle.

INT. TYLER'S CAR (MOVING) - NIGHT

Kelley drives the car while Noelle sits beside him in the
passenger seat. Tyler is passed out across the backseat.

Kelley looks at her and back to the road several times
before getting up the nerve to speak.

KELLEY

You guys do this a lot?

NOELLE

Pick up strays?

KELLEY

Frequent strip bars together?

NOELLE

Right at the next light.

KELLEY

I'm sorry. That was rude of me...
ma'am.

NOELLE

Please don't call me ma'am. I'm
probably younger than you. It's
just... weird...

KELLEY

Noelle, right? Like the Christmas
song?

She smiles politely, then turns to look out her window as a
distraction.

NOELLE

Speaking of names, Kelley is --

KELLEY

A hard enough name to get through
grade school and high school with,
let alone the Marine Corp.

She chuckles despite her best effort to resist the urge.

NOELLE

You must've gotten an ass-kicking
on a -- oops.

She covers her mouth, embarrassed.

KELLEY

No, it's okay.

NOELLE

Tyler says a proper Southern lady
doesn't use profanity.

KELLEY

You don't sound Southern to me.

NOELLE

Not now.

She points the way for Kelley.

He carefully negotiates the turn.

KELLEY

You don't drive?

NOELLE

No.

KELLEY

Any particular reason?

NOELLE

I don't really have anywhere to
go. I'm too busy with housework to
go gallivanting around.

KELLEY

Gallivanting? Now there's a word
I haven't heard since my
great-grandma was alive.

She looks at him to see a teasing smile on his face. Holds
his gaze for a moment, then looks away. Points again.

NOELLE

Right over here. We're on the
left.

EXT. ROGERS' HOME - DRIVEWAY - NIGHT

A mid-sized SUV HYBRID pulls up in the driveway. The headlights momentarily illuminate a rusted old PICK-UP TRUCK in the driveway before they go out.

INT. ROGERS' HOME - UPSTAIRS - NIGHT

Noelle and Kelley walk down the narrow hallway with Tyler sandwiched between them. He mumbles incoherently the whole way.

KELLEY

Can you get the door?

Noelle unwraps Tyler's arm from around her neck, then opens a bedroom door. They enter

MASTER BEDROOM

and Kelley dumps Tyler onto the king sized bed none too delicately.

Tyler grumbles in his drunken stupor and rolls over.

Kelley and Noelle's eyes lock for a fleeting moment.

KELLEY

I'll leave you two alone...

NOELLE

I'll show you the way.

They walk back into the

HALLWAY

and Noelle opens the very next door. Leads Kelley into the

GUEST ROOM

and dutifully turns down the bed.

Kelley watches her from the doorway as if awaiting permission to come any closer.

KELLEY

You don't have to do that.

NOELLE

I don't mind.

She finishes, turns to him.

NOELLE

There's a bathroom at the end of the hall. You'll find clean towels in the linen closet. Just leave your clothes in the basket and I'll throw them in the wash tomorrow morning.

KELLEY

No, ma'am... Noelle. I'll be doing my own laundry. And anything else I can to earn my keep.

NOELLE

That's really not necessary.

KELLEY

It is to me.

She smiles politely, then inches toward the door.

NOELLE

I better get back... to Tyler.

He steps aside allowing her to exit the room.

INT. ROGERS' HOME - MASTER BEDROOM - NIGHT

Tyler begins to come to as Noelle removes his shoes and sets them neatly beside the bed. She unbuttons his shirt only to have him sit up and pull her to him for a kiss.

She pushes him away but continues undressing him.

Again he makes a move and is shut down.

NOELLE

Stop.

TYLER

Babies don't get made on their own.

Noelle gives up on undressing him and settles for climbing under the covers on her side of the bed. Turns her back to him.

He gets in next to her, kissing her shoulder and neck.

NOELLE

(stern)

I said stop.

TYLER

What's wrong with you?

He makes more advances which Noelle tries unsuccessfully to fend off.

NOELLE

You're drunk, for once thing. And your brother is right next door, for another.

TYLER

I'm not drunk... much. And I don't care if Jesus Christ himself is next door. I'm gonna have sex with my wife.

He tries to pull off her nightgown, but Noelle pushes his hands away.

NOELLE

Another night.

TYLER

No, damn it. Tonight might be THE night and I'm not gonna waste it because you're uptight.

NOELLE

I'm not uptight. I'm embarrassed.

TYLER

You wanna know what's embarrassing? Having a defective wife.

She stares at him, dismayed and deeply hurt.

TYLER

Luckily for you I'm a patient man.

He turns away from her and faces the wall that separates them from Kelley.

At the top of his lungs --

TYLER

I'm gonna have sex with my wife
now.

INT. ROGERS' HOME - GUEST ROOM - NIGHT

Kelley lies in bed, still in his fatigues, staring at the ceiling when --

A rhythmic SQUEAKING comes from the next room. A painting begins to sway to and fro as the wall vibrates.

A low male MOANING starts up in the b.g.

Kelley responds by going into his duffel bag and removing an MP3 player. He sticks the ear-buds into his ears and jacks up the volume until the MUSIC drowns everything else out.

INT. ROGERS' HOME - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Tyler enters and heads straight for the refrigerator. Takes out a beer and pops the top. Guzzles half the can.

He catches some movement outside the back window. Parts the curtains to see --

Kelley, still in his fatigues, sitting on the stairs smoking a cigarette.

EXT. ROGERS' HOME - BACK PORCH - NIGHT

Tyler exits through the back door, stops a few paces from Kelley. Leans against the porch railing.

Kelley looks up, sees him standing there.

TYLER

I didn't know you smoked.

KELLEY

Picked it up over there. Not much else to do.

Kelley picks up on his disapproving look.

KELLEY

I won't do it in the house.

TYLER

I'd appreciate it if you didn't do it in front o' my wife either. I don't need her gettin' any ideas.

Kelley takes a long drag of his cigarette while Tyler takes a swig of his beer.

KELLEY

You're robbing the cradle with her, aren't you? Is she even old enough to get into that strip club?

TYLER

She's 22.

KELLEY

Doesn't look it.

Tyler pitches his beer bottle into the backyard, shattering it on contact.

Kelley flinches.

TYLER

Why don't you let me worry 'bout my wife and you concentrate on gettin' your life in order.

Kelley remains silent, staring out into the dark night.

TYLER

What're your plans?

KELLEY

I won't stay long. I just need to find --

TYLER

You're my brother. Stay as long as you want.

Kelley nods, but again doesn't respond. He finishes off his cigarette and flicks off the fire. Pockets the butt.

TYLER

I hear they're hirin' over by the ol' --

KELLEY

I can find my own job.

TYLER

Okay.

Kelley hears the sound of a DOOR CLOSING and when he turns around, Tyler is gone.

KELLEY

G'night.

INT. ROGERS' HOME - KITCHEN - DAY

Noelle stands at the stove preparing breakfast. Bacon SIZZLES in a frying pan while scrambled eggs cook in another. Toast POPS out of a toaster, the perfect shade of light brown.

Tyler sits at the table, sipping his morning coffee, newspaper in hand.

Kelley stands awkwardly off to one side.

TYLER

Fran comin' down?

Noelle focuses on dishing out the food while replying.

NOELLE

No.

TYLER

Awfully rude o' her not to come
welcome our guest.

KELLEY

It's okay. Really.

NOELLE

Her doctor wants her in bed. That
hip will never heal unless she
rests.

Kelley watches Noelle struggle with two overflowing plates of food. Steps up to help.

KELLEY

Can I help you with that?

NOELLE

Have a seat. It's ready.

Kelley waits until Noelle places the plates on the table before sitting.

KELLEY

Looks great, Noelle. Thank you.

She smiles politely, then goes back to the stove.

Kelley begins eating while Tyler inspects the food on his plate. He picks up a slice of toast, looks it over and tosses it back down, disgusted.

TYLER

Shit, Noelle, what'd I tell you
'bout burnin' my toast?

NOELLE

It's not...

She pauses, no doubt replaying her mother's words.

NOELLE

I'm sorry. I'll fix it.

She puts two more slices of bread into the toaster, then takes the "burnt" toast off Tyler's plate. Takes a bite.

KELLEY

Are you joining us?

TYLER

She can't eat this stuff. She's
on a special diet.

Kelley sizes us her tiny frame.

Noelle walks back to the toaster, carefully peering inside.

TYLER

Hand me the ketchup, baby.

The bottle of ketchup sits on the counter, within arms reach of Tyler.

Before Noelle can make a move, Kelley reaches for it and hands it to him.

Tyler squirts some ketchup on his eggs.

Kelley steals a peek over his shoulder at Noelle who quickly looks away.

The toast POPS up and Noelle looks it over before delivering it to Tyler. Looks like she's holding her breath.

TYLER

Better.

He takes it from her without so much as a thank you. Bites into it, sets the rest on his plate. Doesn't even look up or acknowledge Noelle as she waits patiently beside him.

NOELLE

Can I get you anything else before I take my mother her breakfast?

TYLER

No, I'm good.

NOELLE

(to Kelley)

What about you?

KELLEY

Good. Thank you.

She picks up a breakfast tray on the counter and hurries out of the room with it.

LATER

Noelle washes the dishes by hand while Tyler has what appears to be an angry conversation over his cell phone.

TYLER

No, I can't be in any sooner than noon... I told you my wife has a doctor's appointment... you'll just have to figure it out...

Tyler slams the phone down on the table. Folds up his newspaper noisily.

NOELLE

I can call and cancel.

TYLER

You will NOT cancel. We need to figure out what the hell is wrong with you.

NOELLE

I can take the bus.

TYLER

Absolutely not.

KELLEY

Does that truck in the garage run?

Tyler gives Kelley a look that distinctly says "mind your own business".

TYLER

She doesn't drive.

KELLEY

I'll take her.

TYLER

That's not necessary. Besides, you're supposed to be lookin' for a job.

KELLEY

I could put in a few applications while we're out.

Tyler thinks it over while Kelley and Noelle look on.

TYLER

Fine. I'll get ready for work.

EXT. FERTILITY CLINIC - DAY

The rusted old PICK-UP TRUCK (from Tyler's garage) pulls into a front parking. The large block lettering on the small building identifies it as the: "Rhonda K. Phelps Fertility Clinic".

INT. FERTILITY CLINIC - WAITING ROOM - DAY

The cramped room is filled to capacity with anxious looking WOMEN.

Kelley is the only man in the room. He sits beside Noelle who turns in her seat to see --

A BULLETIN BOARD behind their heads completely covered with baby and toddler pictures. A tacky hand-written note above the pictures reads: "You can do it, too!"

KELLEY

So... what're you here for?

Noelle looks at him, obviously uncomfortable with the question.

KELLEY

No, I mean... or is it personal?

A WOMAN IN CLINIC sitting beside Kelley speaks up.

WOMAN IN CLINIC

Sweetie, everything they do to you
back there is personal.

Noelle leans in to keep their conversation more private.

NOELLE

I'm having a test called an HSG.

KELLEY

What's it for?

Before Noelle can form a reply, the same woman interrupts.

WOMAN IN CLINIC

I had one o' those last month.
It's where they inject dye into --

NOELLE

He doesn't need the details.
Thanks.

A NURSE comes around the corner with a clipboard. Scans the
waiting area.

NURSE

Mrs. Rogers...

Noelle gets to her feet. Kelley follows suit.

NOELLE

Just wait here.

Noelle follows the nurse into the back.

Kelley remains standing until they are out of sight, then
slides back down into his seat.

WOMAN IN CLINIC

How long you two been tryin' to
get pregnant?

INT. FERTILITY CLINIC - EXAM ROOM - DAY

Noelle, dressed in a hospital gown, lies on an exam table
with her feet in stirrups.

A female FERTILITY DOCTOR sits on a stool between her legs working with unseen equipment.

FERTILITY DOCTOR
Okay now, just relax. As I inject the dye, you may feel a little discomfort, but there shouldn't be any pain. If it hurts, let me know.

Noelle nods and leans her head back, staring up at --

An 8 by 10 photo of a peaceful beach scene taped to the ceiling.

INT. DINER - DAY

Noelle and Kelley sit opposite each other in a booth by the window.

Kelley has a greasy burger and fries on his plate while Noelle has a tossed salad with no dressing.

KELLEY
So that means you're good, right?
It'll happen eventually.

NOELLE
There are a million reasons why a woman can't fall pregnant. We've only begun to scratch the surface.

He takes a huge bite of his burger and shoves in some fries.

KELLEY
(mouth full)
Did Tyler have one of those...
sperm tests?

She looks around at the adjacent tables to assure no one has overheard. Clears her throat.

NOELLE
We shouldn't be discussing this.

KELLEY
Oh, I'm sorry.

NOELLE
It's not really appropriate lunch conversation.

KELLEY

How's about over dinner then?

She can't help but smile.

A friendly, 30-something WAITRESS wearing bright red lipstick, stops at their table, order tablet and pen at the ready.

WAITRESS

Can I getcha anythin' else, hon?

NOELLE

No, thanks. We're good.

WAITRESS

Tyler workin' today?

Noelle nods, picking at her salad as a distraction.

The waitress eyes Kelley.

WAITRESS

And who's this?

KELLEY

Kelley.

Waitress smiles, pleased as punch. Points to her name tag which reads: "Kelly".

WAITRESS

Well, lookie there.

KELLEY

Mine has two e's.

WAITRESS

It's a great name anyhow.

NOELLE

This is Tyler's brother. He's staying with us for a while. Just got back from Iraq.

The gleam in the waitress' eyes burns brighter as she slides into the booth next to Kelley.

WAITRESS

Ya don't say! What was it like? Was it all sandy and hot like it is on TV and in them movies?

NOELLE

Excuse me.

The waitress barely notices as Noelle walks away, but Kelley follows her with his eyes.

She goes up to the register and pays for the meal, then quietly slips out the front door.

EXT. DINER - DAY

Kelley exits the diner, wiping red lipstick off his cheek. Sees Noelle standing next to the car trying her best to stifle a giggle.

KELLEY

Thanks for ditching me back there.
I really appreciate it.

NOELLE

Looks like you had it under
control.

Kelley continues to wipe lipstick off of himself as he and Noelle walk to the truck.

He goes around to the passenger side and unlocks the door. Holds it open for her to get in.

NOELLE

You missed a spot.

Noelle gingerly smudges off a spot of lipstick on his cheek. Her hands linger on his face a little longer than necessary.

INT. PICK-UP TRUCK (MOVING) - DAY

Noelle and Kelley ride in silence, not even as much as the radio on.

He glances over at her several times, but she is focused out her window. Doesn't appear in the mood for conversation.

Kelley reaches over and turns the radio on. Scans through the stations before deciding on one.

NOELLE

Do you think you could stop me at
the post office for a minute? It's
right up this road on the right.

KELLEY

Sure.

NOELLE

Thanks.

KELLEY

So... you and Tyler... you're about as different as day and night.

NOELLE

We're not all that different.

KELLEY

How'd you meet?

NOELLE

It's a long story... and we're already here.

Kelley pulls into the post office parking lot, navigates into a parking and kills the engine. Unbuckles.

NOELLE

I'll be right back.

She hurries out of the car before he can follow.

Kelley occupies himself by channel surfing on the radio. Finds a song he likes and sings along.

LATER

The passenger door opens and Noelle climbs back into the truck.

He looks her over.

KELLEY

No packages? No envelopes?

NOELLE

Stamps.

Kelley stares at her a moment longer before starting the truck and pulling out of the post office.

NOELLE

You know the little old lady who lived in a shoe... who had so many children she didn't know what to do?

KELLEY

Not personally. Why?

NOELLE

That was my mom... she and my dad had kids until they were well into their forties. I was the youngest. By the time I was eighteen, they were in their sixties scrambling to find someone to take me off their hands.

KELLEY

And in walks Tyler.

NOELLE

They worked together. My dad all but begged Tyler to marry me... and then he didn't even stick around for the wedding.

KELLEY

I'm sorry.

NOELLE

I heard... about your mom.

Kelley suddenly has a defensive tone to his voice.

KELLEY

I don't know what you heard, but she wasn't the home-wrecker everyone made her out to be.

NOELLE

That's not... I never thought that.

He looks over at her, sees the sincerity behind her words.

NOELLE

I'm sorry.

KELLEY

No, I'm sorry. I just feel like I spent my whole life defending her. She didn't know he was married.

INT. ROGERS' HOME - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Fran, Tyler, Kelley and Noelle sit around the table eating dinner.

As usual, Noelle has a completely different meal than everyone else.

TYLER
(to Noelle)
How did your test go?

NOELLE
Fine.

TYLER
Did they find any blockages?

Noelle glances at Fran and Kelley, uncomfortable.

KELLEY
This isn't really dinner
conversation.

Tyler shoots him a fiery look, then focuses on his dinner, missing the --

half smile on Kelley's and Noelle's faces.

Fran picks up on the strange vibe between them.

INT. ROGERS' HOME - FRAN'S BATHROOM - NIGHT

Noelle draws a bath for her mother.

Fran sits on the seat of the toilet waiting patiently.

FRAN
You seem to be getting along well
with your brother-in-law.

Noelle nods, checking the temperature of the water before closing the drain.

The tub begins to fill.

FRAN
He seems nice.

NOELLE
He is.

FRAN
A lot younger than Tyler.

NOELLE

Uh huh.

FRAN

Different, too.

Frustrated, Noelle finally turns to face her mother.

NOELLE

What are you getting at, mother?
Just say it and stop throwing
hints already.

FRAN

I was a young bride, too. Don't
think I don't know what you're
sacrificing. But it'll all be
worth it one day when you look
into the eyes of your children.

Noelle shuts off the water and heads for the door.

FRAN

If you know what's best for you,
you'll stay far away from him.

Noelle pauses in the doorway, then hurries out, shutting it
after her.

She travels down the narrow hallway and ducks into the

LAUNDRY ROOM

With the SWOOSHING and SPINNING of the appliances as
camouflage, Noelle releases the sobs that had been building
up. After only a few seconds, she pulls herself together.

She looks over her shoulder, then opens a supply cabinet and
reaches behind some laundry detergent for --

A SMALL POSTAL PACKAGE

which she carefully opens to reveal --

A PACK OF BIRTH CONTROL PILLS.

She removes the first pill and pops it into her mouth.

KELLEY (O.S.)

Secret stash?

Startled, Noelle whirls around, dropping the birth control
pills in the process.

She and Kelley both bend over for them, but it is Kelley that gets to it first.

He stares at the label, then at Noelle, trying to make sense of it.

She rips it out of his hand and stuffs it back into the linen closet and out of sight.

KELLEY

What else you hiding in there?

She turns toward the dryer, facing her back to him. Getting the clothing out and folding it.

KELLEY

I'm not gonna say anything.

NOELLE

Thank you.

Long, awkward beat.

KELLEY

Can I just ask --

Noelle drapes a couple of Tyler's shirts over her arm and brushes past Kelley.

NOELLE

I better hang these before they wrinkle.

He steps into the hallway, watching her disappear into the master bedroom.

MONTAGE - KELLEY SETTling IN

A) Kelley unpacks.

B) He makes his bed.

C) He gets in the pick-up and waves to Noelle in the window. Embarrassed to have been caught looking, she quickly draws the curtains.

D) He sits at the kitchen table circling job ads in the paper. Noelle reaches over his shoulder and points out a specific ad. He smiles his thanks and circles it.

E) He follows a FOREMAN around a construction site, wearing a hard hat. He smiles, pleased with the conversation.

Offers a hand for a shake. The foreman places a tool belt in his open hand.

INT. ROGERS' HOME - UPSTAIRS - NIGHT

Noelle carries a basket of folded clothes from the laundry room. About to enter the master bedroom when she hears -- Tyler's voice inside.

She stops to listen in.

TYLER (O.S.)

Now is not a good time. My wife and I are... yes, I understand but... no, of course not...

She peers in through the small crack of the unclosed door. Sees Tyler on his cell phone. He looks pissed.

TYLER

Yes sir, I'll leave first thing in the mornin'.

Noelle enters the room as Tyler ends his phone call.

She heads straight into the

BATHROOM

and fills the linen closet with folded towels.

TYLER (O.S.)

I gotta go on a trip.

NOELLE

Oh?

TYLER (O.S.)

Just for a few days. Week, tops.

His voice sounds louder.

Noelle turns to find him in the doorway.

NOELLE

I'll get your bag packed.

She brushes past him with the empty basket

BEDROOM

and sets it down beside the bed. Goes into the closet for a suitcase and unzips it.

TYLER

I'm gonna ask Kelley to clear out.

Noelle tries to keep her face from displaying her shock, but fails. Luckily Tyler has his back to her.

NOELLE

What for?

TYLER

I'll be gone. I don't think it's appropriate --

NOELLE

He just started a new job. He can't afford to move right now.

TYLER

I just thought you'd be more comfortable... nevermind. Make sure you pack my new gray suit.

INT. ROGERS' HOME - LIVING ROOM - DAY

A HAND parts the curtains to peer out the window into the driveway.

WINDOW POV

Noelle kisses Tyler goodbye just before he gets into a TAXI. She waves emotionlessly as the taxi reverses out of the driveway and disappears down the street.

She turns to head back into the house. Finds that she's being watched.

FRAN (O.S.)

Gonna be late for work, aren't you?

Kelley starts, then turns to find Fran staring at him looking none too pleased. He quickly moves away from the window.

KELLEY

Ma'am?

Fran glances at the antique clock on the wall.

FRAN

It's going on eight.

The front door opens and Noelle enters. Immediately picks up on the tension between Kelley and Fran.

NOELLE

What's... ?

FRAN

I was just telling your brother-in-law here that he's gonna be late for work.

NOELLE

I have your lunch ready.

Noelle heads for the kitchen.

KELLEY

And I was just about to tell your mother that I have the day off.

Noelle halts her retreat. Turns back to them.

FRAN

Just as well. The lawn could use a mowing.

NOELLE

I'll see to it.

KELLEY

I've got it.

Kelley glances at Noelle briefly before heading into the kitchen.

The back door shuts in the b.g.

Fran flashes her daughter a warning look.

EXT. ROGERS' HOME - ROSE GARDEN - DAY

Noelle waters her roses with a garden hose.

Sound of a LAWNMOWER in the b.g.

She steals a peek to see --

A shirtless Kelley pushing a lawnmower. Sweat glistens off his muscular arms and shoulders, accentuating his tattoos.

She tries to keep her focus on the task at hand, but finds herself slipping up quite often.

Finally, the lawnmower comes to a stop.

Kelley picks up his discarded shirt and wipes his face with it.

NOELLE (O.S.)

You look hot.

He turns in her direction, walks over.

KELLEY

Thanks. So do you.

NOELLE

That's not... I didn't...

He stops mere inches away from her. Takes the hose from her nearly trembling hands and thoroughly douses himself.

Noelle can do little more than watch and hope her mouth isn't hung open.

When he's done, he shakes off like a dog after a bath. With her guard down, he turns the hose on her.

Noelle squeals, shielding her face from the onslaught. She races away, but he follows relentlessly. Finally catches up, grabs hold of her arm and pulls her flush against him.

NOELLE

She's watching, you know.

KELLEY

Then maybe we should give her something to watch.

He pulls her closer against him, almost impossibly close. Eyes locked, lips nearly touching...

KELLEY

What would she do if I kissed you?

NOELLE

What could she do?

His lips move closer, brushing against hers for the briefest of seconds, then --

Kelley walks away, leaving Noelle standing there alone.

INT. ROGERS' HOME - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Noelle and Kelley prepare dinner together, doing equal shares of the work.

Kelley takes a beer out of the fridge and takes a drink. Offers one to Noelle.

NOELLE

I'm not supposed to.

KELLEY

Why? It's not like you're pregnant.

Noelle averts her eyes across the room to where Fran sits quietly in the breakfast nook crocheting.

KELLEY

Speaking of sex, do you think I could borrow some of Tyler's... y'know... movies. I haven't met anyone yet and I'm getting pretty lonely, if you know what I mean.

Fran clears her throat loudly, then picks up her crocheting and migrates out of the room.

KELLEY

(calling after her)

Bye, Fran. Nice scarf.

Noelle giggles to herself as Fran quickens her pace.

When she's gone, Kelley turns to Noelle, serious.

KELLEY

How can you stand that?

NOELLE

She's old and set in her ways.

KELLEY

She's a spy. Double-oh-seventy.

NOELLE

She is not seventy.

KELLEY

Well, she looks it. The years have not been kind to that woman.
(out loud)
Yeah, Fran, I'm talking about you.

Noelle slaps him playfully.

NOELLE

Stop it. That's my mother you're talking about.

KELLEY

Are you sure she didn't just steal you from your mother?

Noelle can do little more than giggle and check over her shoulder to make sure Fran isn't within hearing distance.

NOELLE

Quit. She'll hear you.

KELLEY

What'll she do, make me mow the lawn again? Take out the trash? Scrub the toilets?

NOELLE

She might.

Kelley takes in the image and sound of Noelle's laughter. Savors it.

KELLEY

It's good to see you laugh. For a while there I wasn't sure you knew how.

LATER

Noelle, Kelley and Fran sit in stark silence as they consume their meal.

Finally Noelle can't take it any more and she jumps to her feet and clears the table.

Kelley follows her lead a second later, but doesn't get far.

FRAN

I'll help Noelle with the dishes. Go on up to bed.

Noelle and Kelley exchange a look. She takes the dishes from him and dumps them rather noisily into the sink.

KELLEY

I don't mind.

FRAN

Neither do we. A woman's place is
in the kitchen.

Noelle rolls her eyes with her back to Fran. Starts
scrubbing the dishes.

KELLEY

Okay, then. Thank you for dinner.

He puts his hand on Noelle's shoulder, then quickly slides
it down her arm, to her hand. Lingers for a second and then
makes his way out.

KELLEY

Night, Fran.

FRAN

Night.

With her back still turned to Fran, Noelle looks down into
her palm and sees a folded piece of paper. Unfolds it
quickly and reads the note.

INSERT - NOTE

What time does the guard dog go to bed?

BACK TO SCENE

A smile forms on her face as she slips the note into her
pocket.

INT. ROGERS' HOME - UPSTAIRS - NIGHT

Noelle slowly backs out of Fran's room, silently closing the
door behind her. She creeps down the hall, cringing at
every creaky floorboard.

KELLEY (O.S.)

48... 49... 50... 51... 52...

She tries to slip by Kelley's open door unnoticed, but
instead peeks inside to see --

Kelley doing push-ups, bare-chested.

KELLEY

53... 54... 55... 56...

She tries to slink away but doesn't get very far before --

KELLEY (O.S.)
Wanna keep count?

She stops in her tracks, makes an "uh oh" face, backs up.

NOELLE
I wasn't... watching you...

KELLEY
Of course not... 59... 60...

He jumps up to his feet in one swift movement. Runs the back of his hand across his sweaty brow.

NOELLE
Only 60?

KELLEY
That was my third set of 60.

He takes a drink out of a bottle of water. Breathing heavy.

KELLEY
Is it safe for me to be talking to you?

NOELLE
Nine. That's the answer to your question. Nine o'clock.

KELLEY
You drug her?

NOELLE
No, I did not drug her. She's an early to bed early to rise kind of person.

KELLEY
What are you?

NOELLE
With Tyler gone... whatever I want to be.

KELLEY
In that case, come in. Close the door.

Noelle takes a deep, shaky breath before entering

KELLEY'S BEDROOM

Kelley gets back down on the floor, doing sit-ups this time. She takes a seat on the edge of his bed.

KELLEY
Count 'em off for me?

NOELLE
1... 2... 3... 4... 5... 6...

He performs the sit-ups with ease despite the outward signs of fatigue.

KELLEY
You're not supposed to eat, drink or stay up late. What else is strictly forbidden?

NOELLE
You're going to make me lose count... 11... 12... 13... 14...

KELLEY
How does Tyler feel about tattoos?

NOELLE
I don't know who would disown me faster, Tyler or my mother.

KELLEY
You can't disown something you never owned to begin with.

This causes Noelle to fall silent.

Kelley sees what his words have done to her and stays upright on his next sit-up.

KELLEY
I'm sorry.

NOELLE
I should go.

He grabs her hand but she slips out of his grip.

KELLEY
Don't run away.

NOELLE
I shouldn't be in here. If someone were to see me...

KELLEY

You mean like a neighbor with
binoculars?

He gets to his feet, intercepts before she reaches the door.

KELLEY

Why do you care so much what
people think? Why do you think
you need to be the world's best
wife? Tyler isn't exactly
husband-of-the-year.

Ignoring his words and avoiding his stare, Noelle attempts
to turn the doorknob.

NOELLE

He's your brother...

KELLEY

I don't know him. But I'm
starting to know you and I don't
think there's anything wrong with
that. I won't apologize for it...
to your mother or anyone else.

Again she tries to leave and again Kelley thwarts her
effort, this time by stroking her cheek with his hand.

She puts her hand atop his, to push it away, but ends up
holding it in place, reciprocating the gesture.

KELLEY

What're you afraid of?

She looks him in the eye, almost whispering --

NOELLE

Being alone with you.

After a long beat, Kelley opens the door and watches Noelle
go scurrying out, like a frightened animal fleeing toward
safety.

INT. ROGERS' HOME - KITCHEN - DAY

Fran and Noelle eat their breakfast in silence. Fran has a
bowl of oatmeal in front of her. Noelle has an uneaten bran
muffin and a couple strips of bacon.

Fran looks up at Noelle several times, but her daughter
refuses to make eye contact.

FRAN

I thought you weren't supposed to eat that.

NOELLE

It's just bacon.

FRAN

Tyler said --

Noelle finally looks up, her eyes burning with resentment.

NOELLE

Do you actually think consuming bacon is going to prevent me from conceiving a child?

FRAN

Tyler seems to think --

NOELLE

I don't care what Tyler read on the internet. I'm tired of bending over backwards to make him and you and everyone else happy.

They stare at each other for a moment, neither backing off.

The phone RINGS.

NOELLE

Excuse me.

Noelle picks up the phone.

NOELLE

Hello?

INTERCUT - ROGERS' KITCHEN / CONSTRUCTION SITE

Kelley plugs one of his ears to hear over the loud CONSTRUCTION NOISE.

KELLEY

I was hoping it would be you.

A broad smile spreads across Noelle's face. Her mother takes it in.

NOELLE

Tyler... hi...

KELLEY

I've been called a lot of things,
but that has to be the worst.

NOELLE

How are you? How was your flight?

KELLEY

Is that like code or something?
Green bear to silver fox... what's
your 20?

Noelle turns her back to Fran to hide the huge smirk that simultaneously appears.

NOELLE

Of course I've missed you.

As the CONSTRUCTION NOISE behind Kelley increases in volume, he moves a few yards away.

KELLEY

The feeling is mutual. Listen,
the boss man is having a birthday
party for his daughter tonight. Do
you think... would you... do you
want to... ?

She glances over her shoulder at Fran who listens intently.

NOELLE

I don't know if I should leave my
mom alone...

KELLEY

Is that a no or are you trying to
come up with an excuse to get out
of the house?

NOELLE

Exactly.

KELLEY

Just put some Ambien in her tea
and wait 'til she passes out.

NOELLE

That's not helpful.

Kelley takes a few seconds to think it over.

KELLEY

Okay, I got it. Repeat after me.
I don't feel up to it.

NOELLE

I don't know if I feel up to it.

Fran listens carefully, eyebrows raised.

KELLEY

Don't improvise. Now say: Are you
sure there's no way to get out of
it?

NOELLE

Are you sure there's no way to get
out of it?

KELLEY

No, of course I wouldn't want to
make you look bad.

NOELLE

No, of course I wouldn't want to
make you look bad.

KELLEY

Now sigh really loudly and agree
in that passive-aggressive way you
do around Tyler.

Noelle sighs as instructed, quite convincingly.

NOELLE

Okay. I'll go.

KELLEY

Beautiful. I'll pick you up at
the bus stop at six.

NOELLE

Okay. Wait, what should I wear?

KELLEY

Whatever you want. You can't go
wrong. Bye.

Noelle hangs up the phone. Disguises her smile with the
most pained expression she can muster. Turns to Fran.

NOELLE

Tyler wants me to make an
appearance at some party we were
supposed to attend together. I

(MORE)

NOELLE (cont'd)
can't believe this.

Fran stares at her speculatively. Doesn't look convinced.

FRAN
Sending you to a party... alone.
Doesn't sound like Tyler.

NOELLE
Mind your own business, mother.

Fran pauses for a long beat.

Noelle's face registers regret.

FRAN
I'm a little tired. I think I'll
take a nap.

Fran hobbles out of the kitchen with Noelle looking on.

EXT. ROSE NURSERY - DAY

A sea of rose bushes spread as far as the eye can see. Small roses, big roses, tree roses -- every color imaginable.

Kelley ambles through the nursery, carefully browsing the selection. He stops to consider several plants. His rough, hard working hands a stark contrast to the smooth delicate petals.

A female NURSERY WORKER comes up behind him. Watches silently for a moment before speaking up --

NURSERY WORKER
She must be pretty special.

Kelley looks over at her, smiles politely.

KELLEY
Extremely.

NURSERY WORKER
Tell me about her and I'll help
you find the perfect one.

KELLEY
Well, that's the hard part.
She's... there are no words. She
makes the nicest compliment
seem... bland...

The woman smiles knowingly.

NURSERY WORKER

Go on.

INT. ROGERS' HOME - MASTER BEDROOM - DAY

Noelle flips through the clothes in her closet, shaking her head at everything in sight.

KELLEY (V.O.)

She's tough as nails, but delicate, too.

She pulls out a light blue chiffon dress from the back of her closet. Holds it up for inspection.

BATHROOM

She inserts a tiny dangle earring into her left earlobe, then moves on to the other. Accidently drops the second earring down the drain.

KELLEY (V.O.)

Smart, funny, resourceful...

She skillfully inserts a straightened out metal clothes hanger down the drain and, after a bit of digging, retrieves her lost earring.

LATER

She squeezes a dab of lip gloss on her finger and spreads it across her lips.

KELLEY (V.O.)

Sensitive, sweet and low-maintenance.

She grabs a sweater and heads out of the room.

NURSERY WORKER (V.O.)

I have just the thing.

EXT. BUS STOP - NIGHT

Noelle sits on the bus stop bench wearing her halter chiffon dress with her hair cascading down her bare upper back. Just a touch of make-up.

The pick-up pulls up and Kelley gets out, checking Noelle

out. Appears to be struggling for the right words.

Noelle takes in his attire as well.

He wears a white long-sleeved shirt and khaki slacks. His hair, which has outgrown the high and tight haircut, is combed back.

NOELLE

You look...

KELLEY

...beautiful.

NOELLE

Actually, I was going for handsome, but that works, too.

Kelley smiles, a combination of embarrassment and adoration.

Noelle straightens his collar, then motions toward the rose.

NOELLE

Most people just bring a bouquet of roses.

KELLEY

I got her a gift card. That's for you.

NOELLE

It's not even my birthday.

KELLEY

I got paid today. I wanted to do something nice.

NOELLE

Well, you did. Thank you.

KELLEY

It reminded me of you.

NOELLE

The rose?

Kelley points to one of the white buds.

KELLEY

Simple on the outside...

He picks up a full bloom. The inside of the rose is a beautiful pinkish orange color.

KELLEY

But its true beauty lies inside.

No words will come. Noelle just smiles demurely.

KELLEY

We better get going before all the
good food is gone.

Kelley opens the door and offers her a hand up, then looks down and realizes she's wearing flats.

She climbs up into the cab of the truck with ease.

EXT. SUBURBIA - PARTY HOUSE - NIGHT

The pick-up truck comes to a stop on a narrow street loaded with parked cars. It slips in between two compact cars.

The doors open and Kelley and Noelle step out. He quickly comes around to her side and inspects the overwhelmed look on her face.

NOELLE

There's a lot of people in there.
What if -- ?

KELLEY

My brother and I don't run with
the same crowd.

He offers his hand and she takes it, then grabs his arm with her other hand, holding on tightly.

He smiles sweetly, then leads her in.

INT. PARTY HOUSE - NIGHT

Kelley walks Noelle through the full house, occasionally stopping to introduce her to someone. She stays glued to his side the entire time.

LATER

Kelley and Noelle eat off the same plate. She uses her own fork but he occasionally feeds her from his fork.

LATER

An older guy, BOSS MAN, leads a young woman, BIRTHDAY GIRL (21) up in front of everyone. Birthday girl wears an overly

poufy pink dress and has a indulgent fur boa and "birthday girl" tiara on.

At the same time, a WOMAN passes out champagne glasses to all the guests.

She offers one to Noelle but she politely declines.

WOMAN

Yes! This is a party. Let your hair down.

The woman takes Noelle's hand and puts the champagne flute into it.

BOSS MAN

I'd like to make a toast. Does everyone have a glass?

He surveys the PARTYGOERS and sees a glass in all their hands. Finally, the woman hands one to he and his daughter, leaving one for herself.

BOSS MAN

Wasn't it just yesterday that you were running around in your soggy diaper asking for piggy back rides?

The birthday girl turns twelve different shades of red.

BIRTHDAY GIRL

Daddy!

The woman takes her place on the other side of the girl, obviously the proud mother.

BOSS MAN

And now look at you, practically a woman --

BIRTHDAY GIRL

I AM a woman.

BOSS MAN

Not to me, you'll always be my little girl.

Boss man gets all choked up. Raises his glass.

BOSS MAN

To my little girl.

The guests follow suit, drinking their champagne.

Noelle and Kelley exchange a look before she drinks hers.

Boss man grabs his daughter and wife and pulls them into a big bear hug.

Noelle watches them, the smile slowly fading off her face.

BOSS MAN
And now for your listening
pleasure...

A MUSICIAN comes to the front of the room and perches on a stool, acoustic guitar in hand.

He plays a long guitar intro, then joins in with the most beautiful, soulful lyrics.

Boss man dances with birthday girl. Other guests couple off and join in.

Kelley takes Noelle's glass and sets it on an end table with his own. Slides an arm around to the small of her back and pulls her against him. He wraps his other arm around and they dance.

INT. PICK-UP TRUCK (MOVING) - NIGHT

Noelle and Kelley are on their way home, Kelley focused on the road and Noelle deep in thought.

PREVIOUS SONG continues in the b.g.

He looks over, studies her serious expression.

EXT. DESERTED BACK ROAD - NIGHT

The pick-up truck pulls over into the shadows.

Not another set of headlights as far as the eye can see.

INT. PICK-UP TRUCK (STOPPED) - NIGHT

Noelle slides her wedding and engagement rings off and tosses them into the glove box.

Kelley is already moving toward her.

And then they are in each others' arms, kissing

passionately. Removing clothing. Caressing bare flesh.
Laying across the bench seat.

EXT. DESERTED BACK ROAD - NIGHT

A FIRE TRUCK speeds down the road, SIRENS blaring. It passes the parked pick-up truck, momentarily illuminating it with its headlights.

INT. PICK-UP TRUCK (STOPPED) - NIGHT

Noelle struggles to tie the halter on her dress, hands trembling.

Kelley takes the straps from her, ties them.

KELLEY

I made a mess of things, didn't I?

She looks at him but doesn't reply.

KELLEY

I just had sex with my brother's wife on the side of the road like you were some wh...

(beat)

He's never gonna let you go.

NOELLE

I know.

He starts the car, checks his mirrors and pulls onto the road. Concentrating intensely.

After a long beat --

KELLEY

I was thinking of going on a road trip. There's so much I haven't seen yet...

NOELLE

You should. You're young. You shouldn't be tied down to one --

KELLEY

Come with me.

NOELLE

He would kill you. Maybe me too.

KELLEY

He'd have to find us first.

While Kelley is focused on her, waiting for a response

Noelle stares at the road ahead --

NOELLE'S POV

An AMBULANCE, FIRE TRUCK and POLICE CRUISER surround her house, LIGHTS flashing.

NOELLE

My mom...

KELLEY

We can take her with us.

She points at the house, causing Kelley to turn back to the road.

EXT. ROGERS' HOME - NIGHT

Noelle leaps from the pick-up truck before it has made a complete stop. She races for the ambulance where --

Two PARAMEDICS load Fran into the back on a stretcher.

Fran lies completely still with her eyes closed.

NOELLE

Mom!

PARAMEDIC #1 follows the stretcher in to secure the patient while PARAMEDIC #2 stays outside to deal with Noelle.

She tries to force her way past him while he blocks her as best he can.

PARAMEDIC #2

Ma'am...

NOELLE

She's my mother. Let me through.

PARAMEDIC #2

I'm sorry, but you can't --

NOELLE

What's wrong with her? What happened?

PARAMEDIC #2

She had a heart attack.

Kelley comes up behind her, tries to pull her back.

She forcefully brushes his hands away.

NOELLE

Is she okay? Why can't I ride
with her?

Paramedic #1 sticks his head out long enough to give Kelley
a look which Noelle doesn't see.

PARAMEDIC #1

Let's move.

Paramedic #2 helps him close the double doors on the back of
the ambulance.

NOELLE

Can I ride in the front?

KELLEY

I'll take you, okay? We'll meet
them there.

He puts his arms around her and this time she doesn't
protest. He leads her back to his truck and puts her inside
the cab. Climbs in just enough to buckle her while she
stares ahead in shock.

INT. EMERGENCY ROOM - OUTSIDE WAITING ROOM - NIGHT

Through the glass window of the waiting room, we watch a
DOCTOR talking soundlessly to Kelley and Noelle.

Her eyes stare in shock, knees buckle.

Kelley takes hold of her, guides her down into a seat.

INT. HOSPITAL - WAITING ROOM - DAY

Noelle sits with her head against Kelley's chest, eyes
tearless but tortured.

KELLEY

Let me take you home.

NOELLE

Do you know what the last thing I said to her was?... Mind your business... because she knew it wasn't Tyler on the phone... she knew where I was going and who I was going with and I didn't care... nothing mattered but being with you... and now --

Kelley takes her face between his hands, ending her speech.

KELLEY

Stop it. I won't let you blame yourself. If anything --

The door opens and Tyler rushes in looking confused and panicked.

Kelley and Noelle separate like two teenagers caught in the act by their parents.

Without paying much attention to their positioning or attire, Tyler falls to his knees in front of Noelle and pulls her into his arms. Gawks at Kelley over her shoulder.

TYLER

I'm so sorry. I came as soon as I heard.

KELLEY

How did you hear?

Noelle straightens up, removing herself from Tyler's arms.

TYLER

Hospital called. I'm her emergency contact.

NOELLE

I told them you were away on business, not to bother you.

TYLER

Noelle, your mother died. It's not a bother.

Tyler seems to take note of their attire for the first time. Kelley's untucked dress shirt and slacks. Noelle's wrinkled cocktail dress.

TYLER

Why was Fran alone?

NOELLE

We --

KELLEY

My boss was having a party for his daughter and I didn't want to go alone, so I asked Noelle. She really didn't want to, but --

Tyler pulls Noelle up and walks her to the door without waiting for Kelley to finish.

TYLER

Lets get you home.

Noelle glances over her shoulder at Kelley as they round the corner.

EXT. CEMETERY - DAY

A large crowd of black-clad MOURNERS surround a closed casket, ready to be lowered into the ground.

Noelle pulls away from Tyler's protective hold and drops a white, long-stemmed rose onto the casket.

EXT. ROGERS' HOME - ROSE GARDEN - DAY

Noelle enlarges a two foot wide hole a few more inches with a shovel.

She removes a rose plant from its pot and carefully lowers it into the hole.

She holds the rose in the center of the hole while filling in the remaining space with loose dirt.

She packs the dirt in tight with her hands.

Reaches for a watering can and sprinkles a little water on the newly transplanted rose.

INT. ROGERS' HOME - KITCHEN - DAY

Tyler watches Noelle closely from the kitchen window.

Kelley stands beside him looking equally, if not exceedingly, worried.

TYLER

All she does is tend to those
freakin' roses.

KELLEY

She'll come around.

TYLER

It's been a month. How much
longer is she gonna punish herself
for Fran's death?

KELLEY

I imagine she has a lot on her
mind.

TYLER

Don't we all?

Tyler stalks off.

Kelley replaces him in front of the window and watches
Noelle a moment longer.

EXT. ROGERS' HOME - ROSE GARDEN - DAY

Noelle snips a slightly yellowing leaf off her new rose
plant, oblivious to Kelley standing beside her.

He kneels down, brushing some stray hair off her face.

KELLEY

Tell me what you want me to do.

Long, uncomfortable silence.

He removes the clippers from her hand, forcing her to give
him her attention.

KELLEY

I just got back from war. This is
supposed to be the easy part.

TYLER (O.S.)

Kelley... phone.

Tyler stands on the back porch holding out a cordless phone.

Kelley walks over to answer the phone while Noelle stays in
place, watching.

From this distance she can't hear the conversation.

Tyler waits on the porch for a report.

Kelley hangs up the phone. Glances over at Noelle, then back to Tyler.

KELLEY

They're sending me back.

INT. ROGERS' HOME - MASTER BEDROOM - NIGHT

Tyler sleeps soundly, his back to --

Noelle who lies in bed wide awake, weeping.

INT. ROGERS' HOME - GUEST ROOM - NIGHT

Kelley stuffs clothes into his military-issued duffel bag. When no more will fit, he forces the rest in.

Noelle stands in the doorway, watching silently.

Kelley becomes increasingly violent. Looks more like he's pummeling a punching bag than packing.

She steps up to him, gingerly touches his shoulder.

He hits the bag even harder.

She tries to stop him but he continues. It takes some persistence before she is able to pry his hands away.

She kisses him desperately, clinging to him like her life depends on it.

He tears his lips away from hers, although it looks like it pains him to do so. Presses his forehead against hers, stares into her eyes.

EXT. MARINE CORPS BASE - AIRFIELD - DAY

Tyler, Noelle and Kelley walk side by side down the tarmac to an awaiting aircraft.

Kelley is dressed in his fatigues, just like the first time we met him. He stops suddenly, causing Tyler and Noelle to follow suit.

KELLEY

This is as close as they'll let
you get.

Tyler puts his hand out for a handshake.

TYLER

Stay safe, lil brother.

Kelley shakes Tyler's hand.

KELLEY

I will.

Kelley does his best not to make eye contact with Noelle as
he gives her the briefest of hugs. Before they separate he
whispers in her ear --

KELLEY

I love you.

And with that, he hurries off toward the plane without
looking back.

INT. TYLER'S CAR (MOVING) - DAY

On the drive back home, Tyler chats on his cell phone while
driving.

Noelle's stares out her window, her thoughts a million miles
away.

TYLER

Uh, about thirty thousand miles...
yeah, I know, but it's got a lot
of life left in it... well, I'll
be home in a few minutes... come
on by and take a look at it...
okay, see you then.

He ends the call, tossing his cell on the dashboard. Looks
over at Noelle to find her still staring out her window.
Rubs her knee.

TYLER

You okay?

She nods when no words will come.

Long silence followed by --

NOELLE
Selling the truck?

TYLER
It's just takin' up space. Might
as well get some extra cash.

LATER

The instant Tyler pulls up in the driveway, Noelle leaps out of the car and disappears into the house.

SERIES OF SHOTS - CLEANING THE TRUCK

- A) Tyler vacuums the floorboards and upholstery.
- B) He sprays window cleaner on the interior windows and scrubs them to a shine.
- C) He applies leather cleaner to the dashboard and steering wheel and polishes them.
- D) He empties out the glove box, coming upon all kinds of miscellaneous items, including Noelle's wedding rings.
- E) His fist CRASHES through a window.

INT. ROGERS' HOME - MASTER BEDROOM - DAY

Tyler enters to find Noelle curled up in bed, seemingly asleep. He pauses in the doorway.

HIS RIGHT HAND hangs limply at his side, dripping blood.

He walks up to her and places her rings back on her finger.

Noelle sits up alertly, startled by the sight of him.

His facial expression looks oddly calm, but his eyes are crazed.

NOELLE
What happened to your hand?

TYLER
Do you love me?

She reaches for his hand but he moves it away.

TYLER
Do you love me?

NOELLE

Yes.

Her look of concern slowly morphs into fear as he strokes her cheek with his injured hand, leaving streaks of blood.

TYLER

Say it. Tell me you love me.

On the verge of tears --

NOELLE

I love you.

He runs his hands through her hair now, leaving a bloody mess behind.

TYLER

I don't know what I'd do without you. You're my whole life. I love you so much.

He pulls her to him, kissing her lips savagely. His hands all over her, leaving blood stains everywhere.

TYLER

I would rather die than live without you. You know that don't you?

Speechless and terrified, she can do little more than nod.

INT. ROGERS' HOME - KITCHEN - DAY

Noelle arranges some roses in a vase.

A strange look comes over her. She drops the roses and runs out of the room with a hand over her mouth.

INT. ROGERS' HOME - MASTER BEDROOM - DAY

Tyler walks in, all dressed for work. Looks in the unmade bed for Noelle but finds it empty.

TYLER

Noelle, baby, I'm leavin' for work.

He looks around the room, then heads back out until he hears VOMITING coming from the adjoining bathroom. Stops at the bathroom door, KNOCKS.

TYLER

Noelle?

LATER

Tyler paces in front of the bathroom door with his cell phone pressed to his ear.

TYLER

She's been... depressed since her mom died... I don't know, she doesn't eat much... not that I know of... hold on...

(to door)

Noelle, the doctor wants to know when your last menstrual period was.

INT. DOCTOR'S OFFICE - DAY

Tyler sits beside Noelle on an exam table.

Noelle wears an unflattering hospital gown.

An OBSTETRICIAN sits on a stool at the foot of the bed.

TYLER

I know when it was. It had to be the night Kelley came to stay with us. Remember that? Aren't you glad I talked you into it?

Tyler rubs Noelle's back to try to get her into it, but she's significantly less enthused than he is.

OBSTETRICIAN

We need to start her on some prenatal vitamins and make sure to schedule an ultrasound to date the pregnancy and just make sure he or she is growing well.

TYLER

It's a he. I can feel it.

He rubs her flat belly lovingly.

TYLER

My son.

EXT. ROGERS' HOME - FRONT YARD - DAY

Noelle pushes a noisy LAWNMOWER through the plush lawn.

After a moment she stops and KILLS the ENGINE, then rubs her slightly rounded belly.

A HONK startles her.

She looks up to find a female MAILCARRIER heading her way, her MAIL TRUCK parked on the curb.

MAIL CARRIER

Sugar, you sure you should be mowin' in your condition?

NOELLE

My doctor says I should keep active.

MAIL CARRIER

I'm quite certain that ain't what she had in mind.

NOELLE

Actually, it's a he.

MAIL CARRIER

That 'splains a lot. Men have no idea what we women go through when we're carryin' a baby. Had six o' my own. I should know. Here ya are.

She hands Noelle a stack of mail. The envelope on top immediately attracts her attention. It's from Kelley.

MAIL CARRIER

Get yourself inside, ya hear. Let your husband finish this lawn.

Noelle finally looks back up.

NOELLE

Thank you so much.

As the Mailcarrier heads back for her truck,

Noelle ambles into the house.

INT. ROGERS' HOME - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Noelle sinks onto the sofa and tears into Kelley's letter.

KELLEY (V.O.)

I know I'm taking a huge risk sending this letter, but I didn't want to leave things the way we left them. I love you. I've loved you from the moment I saw you. You were wearing that white dress and I thought for sure you were an angel...

Kelley's voice fades out and Noelle's fades in, overlapping, then replacing.

NOELLE (V.O.)

I don't care about the risk. Please don't stop writing me...

INT. IRAQ - KELLEY'S TENT - NIGHT

In a darkened tent, four MARINES sleep soundly, some SNORING.

Kelley lies in his cot, holding up a tiny book light, reading his letter from Noelle.

NOELLE (V.O.)

...the thought of finding one of your letters in my mailbox is the only reason I have to get out of bed in the morning. Tyler's been... strange. I don't know if he realizes it, but he knows... subconsciously, at least. When he's not working, he won't let me out of his sight. When he is working he calls constantly. I feel like I'm going crazy...

Noelle's voice fades out and Kelley's fades in, overlapping, then replacing.

KELLEY (V.O.)

When it gets hard here. When I think I can't make it another day...

EXT. ROGERS' HOME - ROSE GARDEN - DAY

Noelle sits among her roses, holding her letter in one hand and rubbing her more noticeably pregnant stomach with the other.

KELLEY (V.O.)

...I think of you and remember what I'm coming home to if I can just hold on a little longer. I don't care how long it takes... six months... a year... two years... I will come home to you. There isn't a force in this universe that can keep me from coming home to you. And when I do, I'm gonna take you away... far away... where no one will ever --

Kelley's voice comes to an abrupt halt as Noelle drops the note to clutch her stomach with both hands. She tries to get to her feet, but the pain takes her back down to the ground.

She grimaces as she crawls a few paces.

NOELLE

(screaming)

Tyler!

She drags herself along the ground a few more paces. Looks down to find her white dress stained with blood.

The discarded letter is caught by a breeze and blown away.

INT. EMERGENCY ROOM - OUTSIDE EXAM ROOM - DAY

We watch Noelle inside the exam room through the large glass observation window. Her face is tear-stained and she looks distraught.

Tyler and the Obstetrician chat in the hallway.

OBSTETRICIAN

She's suffered a placental abruption. Sometimes a portion of the placental can peel away from the inner wall of the uterus. Now, it can be very --

TYLER

Just tell me my wife and baby are gonna be okay.

OBSTETRICIAN

Luckily we caught it early and we were able to get the bleeding under control. With the proper care, your wife and son should be just fine.

A broad smile spreads across Tyler's face.

TYLER

My son. You said my son.

OBSTETRICIAN

Yes, Mr. Rogers. Your son.

He turns toward the glass, stares in lovingly at Noelle.

TYLER

(to himself)

My son.

INT. HOSPITAL - MATERNITY WARD - NOELLE'S ROOM - NIGHT

Noelle wakes up, started to find herself in a hospital bed, hooked up to various devices -- A fetal monitor on her stomach, an IV in her left arm, blood pressure cuff on her right arm.

An O.B. NURSE stands at her bedside, reading a long paper printout from the fetal monitor. She records her findings in a chart, then turns to Noelle.

O.B. NURSE

You're awake. How do you feel?

Noelle continues to search the room, confused and disoriented. Suddenly she reaches for her stomach.

NOELLE

My baby.

O.B. NURSE

Your baby is fine, sweetheart.
Don't worry about a thing.

Noelle relaxes a bit, but not much.

NOELLE

Where's my husband?

O.B. NURSE

We sent him home to get some rest.
He'll be back first thing in the
morning.

NOELLE

I need to talk to him. Can you
get me a phone?

O.B. NURSE

I'm sorry, darlin' but I have
specific rules from your husband
and doctor. They want you to
rest. You and your baby will be
fine, but only if you stay calm.

NOELLE

I can't stay here. I have to go
home.

Noelle pulls the fetal monitor off her stomach and tears off the blood pressure cuff before the O.B. Nurse can stop her.

O.B. Nurse takes her by her wrists and restrains her as best she can.

O.B. NURSE

You need to calm down, sweetie.

As Noelle continues to struggle with her, the nurse grows increasingly concerned.

O.B. NURSE

I need some help in here!

INT. ROGERS' HOME - MASTER BEDROOM - NIGHT

SERIES OF SHOTS - PROOF

A) Tyler packs clothing from his and Noelle's drawers into a suitcase lying open on the bed.

B) He goes into the bathroom to pack toiletries and finds an overflowing hamper of dirty clothes.

C) He enters the laundry room and finds more dirty clothes littering the floor.

D) He dumps some clothes haphazardly into the washing

machine and reaches for the bottle of liquid detergent, only to tip it over and find it empty.

E) He searches through cabinets looking for more laundry soap.

F) He finds Noelle's secret stash of letters and birth control pills simultaneously. The latter demands his attention.

G) He investigates the birth control pills. Sees that a few of the pills are missing.

H) He tears into one letter after another, quickly scanning the contents.

Tyler walks into the room looking relatively calm considering what he just found. He tosses the pills and letters on the bed.

And then he erupts.

He picks up a vase of wilted roses off the dresser and throws it into the mirror, SHATTERING it into a million pieces.

He proceeds to destroy the entire room in a fit of rage, smashing anything and everything in site.

EXT. ROGERS' HOME - ROSE GARDEN - NIGHT

In the dark and pouring rain, Tyler uses a shovel to dig up the rose garden.

Delicate buds as well as full sized blooms get trampled in his furious attempt to destroy every last trace of the rose garden.

He is possessed with anger and determination as he drops the shovel and picks up a hoe, digging deep into the soil. Shredding through dirt and roots.

When the garden is destroyed to his liking, he throws down the hoe and collapses to the ground. Head buried in his hands, he bawls.

INT. ROGERS' HOME - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Beside the glow of a blazing fire in the fireplace --

Tyler tosses a stack of letters into the fire.

Watches them burn, his eyes filled with an almost inhuman hatred.

The phone RINGS off the hook in the b.g.

Finally, the machine picks up.

O.B. NURSE

Mr. Rogers', it's Robyn, from maternity callin' again about your wife. I really think it's best if you come back and talk with her. She's very distraught and I think you might be able to talk some sense into her. Please call me back at...

Her voice ends abruptly as Tyler picks up the answering machine and throws it across the room. CRASH!

INT. ROGERS' HOME - MASTER BEDROOM - NIGHT

Armed with a trash bag, Tyler cleans up the mess he made.

INT. HOSPITAL - MATERNITY WARD - NOELLE'S ROOM - DAY

Tyler sits at Noelle's beside, kissing the top of her hand.

Noelle looks as though she is in a deep sleep.

An extravagant bouquet of colorful flowers (not roses) sits on a table near the bed.

TYLER

Noelle? Baby?

He shakes her gently but she doesn't even stir. He pulls her blanket back and goes to stroke her rounded stomach, then pulls his hand back.

The O.B. Nurse enters the room, attracting Tyler's attention.

TYLER

How long she been asleep?

O.B. NURSE

Since last night. I'm afraid we had to sedate her. I tried callin'... left quite a few messages...

TYLER

Yeah, I got them this mornin'. I was so tired, I was practically asleep the minute I got in.

O.B. NURSE

Good news is she'll probably be goin' home today. There hasn't been any more bleedin' and Dr. Evans thinks some bedrest and lots o' TLC'll do the trick.

Tyler doesn't seem enthused by the news and the nurse quickly picks up on it.

O.B. NURSE

Somethin' wrong?

TYLER

No, no. I'm glad. Thank you.

EXT. ROGERS' HOME - DRIVEWAY - DAY

Tyler's car pulls up in the driveway.

Tyler rushes out and goes around the car to open Noelle's door. He gingerly helps her out of the car, picks up her suitcase and flowers and leads her into the house.

INT. ROGERS' HOME - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Tyler attempts to lead Noelle directly upstairs but she stops in the foyer and starts for the kitchen.

TYLER

Let's get you in bed and then I'll get you somethin' to eat.

NOELLE

I'm not hungry, I just need to water my --

He drops the suitcase and flowers and tries to get to her in time, but --

Noelle is already in the kitchen, standing in front of the back door, gawking at the barren spot where her rose garden used to be.

He comes up behind her just in time to steady her as her knees grow weak.

NOELLE

What'd you do?

TYLER

Dr. Evan's said you need to stay in bed.

He tries to lead her away but she holds her ground, dumbfounded.

NOELLE

(whispering)

How could you?

TYLER

You're sick. You won't be able to take care o' it like you used to and I'll be busy takin' care o' you...

She breaks free of his arms and scurries back into the living room.

NOELLE

I can take care of myself.

He watches motionlessly from the kitchen as she picks up the suitcase and starts up the stairs.

INT. IRAQ - MESS HALL - DAY

Kelley sits at a table with a tray of uneaten food in front of him.

MARINE #1, #2 and #3 sits at his table shooting the breeze while Kelley is melancholy and sits in silent reverie.

MARINE #1

My baby girl just turned two, ya'll. Cutest thing you've ever seen.

MARINE #2

But you're not biased or anything.

MARINE #1
So what if I am.

MARINE #3
You got a picture?

Marine #1 quickly produces a picture of an adorable blond haired child.

The picture makes its rounds.

When it comes to Kelley, he passes it on without as much as a glance.

MARINE #1
What's bitin' your ass? Your girl
stop writin'?

KELLEY
No, man. She wouldn't just stop.

Marine #2 shovels a heaping forkful of food into his mouth.

MARINE #2
(mouth full)
Maybe she's busy.

MARINE #3
Yeah, and I bet I know what she's
busy doing...

Marine #3 stands up long enough to direct a series of pelvic thrusts in Kelley's direction.

MARINE #3
(high-pitched)
Jody! Oh, Jody!

Kelley is on his feet, fist in Marine #3's face before he can finish delivering his performance.

Kelley has Marine #3 pinned to the ground, punching him over and over.

MARINE #4 rushes over and peels Kelley off of Marine #3.

Kelley struggles with Marine #4, trying to break away and get another shot at Marine #3.

KELLEY
Don't talk about her! Don't you
fucking talk about her like that!

Marine #3 gets back to his feet, wiping the blood from his face.

MARINE #3

It was a joke, man. Get some fucking help.

He spits out some blood in Kelley's direction and walks off.

INT. IRAQ - SOLDIER QUARTERS - NIGHT

Kelley sits on his cot, re-reading a letter from Noelle, head resting in his hand. He is surrounded by numerous other letters, all addressed from Noelle.

Marine #1 KNOCKS lightly, then walks in when he is ignored.

Takes a seat on the empty cot across from Kelley's.

MARINE #1

I'm no shrink or nothin' but if you wanna talk... I'll listen.

Kelley folds the letter back up and shoves it into an envelope. Gathers all the letters and stuffs them in a duffel bag.

KELLEY

Nothing to talk about.

Kelley gets his pistol out, pulls back the slide to load the chamber.

Marine #1 leaps out of his way, hands up.

MARINE #1

Whoa, what the fuck?

KELLEY

What would you do if you thought your wife or daughter was in trouble?

MARINE #1

Not a whole fuckin' lot you can do from here...

(beat)

... so I would make damn sure I was on the next flight home.

INT. ROGERS' HOME - MASTER BEDROOM - DAY

The room looks much different than the last time we saw it. The broken mirror has been replaced. All the scattered items picked up. The only thing missing is the vase of roses from atop the dresser.

Noelle lies flat on her back in bed, her feet elevated. She has a TV remote control in her hand which she uses to scratch an itch on her foot.

A CAR HORN sounds, muffled.

Curiously, Noelle gets out of bed and walks over to the window overlooking the front yard.

NOELLE'S POV

The mailcarrier hands Tyler a box and waits while he signs the delivery confirmation slip.

Tyler hands the slip back.

Mailcarrier hands him a tall stack of mail to accompany the box he's already holding.

Mailcarrier waves and gets back in her truck, driving away.

Tyler turns back toward the house, then pauses to shuffle through the mail. He removes one particular envelope and stuffs it into his pocket.

INT. ROGERS' HOME - KITCHEN - DAY

Noelle and Tyler sit at the kitchen table eating a meal.

Noelle has her feet propped up with four pillows stacked on an adjacent chair.

NOELLE

Soup's good.

Tyler keeps his eyes trained on his bowl.

TYLER

Not as good as yours.

NOELLE

I can cook again... if you want.
I've almost made it to my due
date. If I went into labor now...

He finally looks up at her, anger now replacing the previously calm surface of his eyes and face.

TYLER

You could bleed to death.

The phone RINGS.

He goes back to eating, ignoring it.

NOELLE

You gonna get that?

TYLER

They'll leave a message if it's important.

Noelle gets out of her seat noisily, heads for the phone.

TYLER

I said leave it.

Noelle picks up the phone and glances at the small LCD screen.

INSERT - CALLER ID

It reads: "US GOVERNMENT"

BACK TO SCENE

She freezes, barely holding the phone, hand trembling.

Tyler comes up behind her, glances at the screen. Takes the phone and answers the call.

TYLER

Rogers' residence... yes, this is he... yes, he's my brother...

The room swirls around Noelle nauseatingly fast. She grips the table to steady herself. Her knees buckle, threatening to give out.

TYLER

How bad is it?... I know where that is... I'm leaving right now.

Noelle slowly lowers herself back into her chair. Seems to be holding her breath. Face a mask of suppressed panic.

Tyler SLAMS down the phone, heads toward the living room.

TYLER

My klutz of a brother went and got himself shot.

She tries to rise to her feet but falls back into her chair. Sucks in a noisy breath.

NOELLE

How bad?

LIVING ROOM

Tyler slips into his jacket, grabs his car keys off a rack by the front door. Peers back into the kitchen at Noelle.

TYLER

That's what I'm fixin' to find out. Wouldn't say much over the phone. He's alive is all I gathered.

She is finally able to get to her feet and makes her way into the

LIVING ROOM

Tyler is on his way to the door.

TYLER

Do you need help up to bed before I go?

NOELLE

I'll manage.

She grips the stairway banister tightly and just as much pulls herself up the stairs as she does walk.

He watches her from the doorway, awaiting her reaction on --

TYLER

I'll probably just bring 'im on home if it's not too serious.

She stops in her tracks, turns to him, on the verge of tears.

NOELLE

No.

TYLER

Whatta ya mean, no?

NOELLE

I don't... want him here. We've done our part. Let someone else take him in.

TYLER

Noelle, he's my brother. I'm not gonna put 'im out on the street. Now, whatever... issues... we're just gonna have to work through 'em.

And with that, he walks out the door.

Noelle ascends the stairs as fast as she can and heads straight for the

LAUNDRY ROOM

where she tears into the linen cabinet to find the letters and pills missing. A look of horror comes over her face as a hand shoots up to cover her mouth.

INT. VA HOSPITAL - KELLEY'S ROOM - DAY

A small room with pale blue walls and crisp white sheets on the two hospital beds, one occupied by Kelley and the other empty.

Kelley's right hand is completely mummified and in a sling. He has a far-off, almost psychotic look in his eyes.

INT. VA HOSPITAL CORRIDOR - DAY

Tyler and a VA DOCTOR walk slowly down the narrow corridor, passing numerous patient rooms and MEDICAL STAFF.

VA DOCTOR

He's lost two fingers on his right hand for certain. It's unknown at this time if he will regain the use of the remaining fingers or even his hand. Further surgeries will be required followed by intense physical therapy.

TYLER

I'll see that he gets what he needs.

The VA Doctor pulls Tyler to a stop, speaking in a significantly lower voice.

VA DOCTOR

It wouldn't hurt if you got him some psychiatric help as well. It's not uncommon for soldiers returning from war to experience post-traumatic stress disorder, especially having been wounded.

TYLER

I understand.

VA DOCTOR

Most likely he'll be granted an honorable discharge from the Marine Corp. With his benefits intact, all his medical bills should be covered.

TYLER

Thank you.

Tyler offers his hand and the doctor shakes it.

VA DOCTOR

It's right this way.

He motions for Tyler to go ahead.

INT. VA HOSPITAL - KELLEY'S ROOM - DAY

VA Doctor walks in ahead of Tyler.

Kelley doesn't acknowledge their presence.

VA DOCTOR

Rogers, you have a visitor.

Tyler walks up to the bed, taps Kelley on the foot.

TYLER

I thought I told you to stay safe.

Kelley finally looks up at him, but his expression doesn't change from the emotionless curtain it was previously.

His eyes avert to VA Doctor who stands on the other side of the bed.

KELLEY

I told you not to call anyone.

VA DOCTOR

This isn't something you can do on your own. You'll need the support of your family and friends.

KELLEY

I've imposed enough on my brother and his wife.

TYLER

You're blood. There's no such thing as imposin' family member. You're stayin' with me.

Kelley raises a suspicious eyebrow.

KELLEY

With you?

TYLER

And Noelle, of course. I bet she's dyin' to see you.

INT. ROGERS' HOME - MASTER BEDROOM - NIGHT

Noelle sits up in bed holding a blue fleece baby blanket, crushing the fabric between her fingers.

An open mailing box lies on the bed beside her.

CAR DOORS in the b.g.

She gets out of bed and goes to the window.

NOELLE'S POV

Tyler leads the way to the front door while --

Kelley hangs back, glancing up at her window. He sees her. No facial reaction.

Noelle puts a hand up against the glass.

She watches him continue on toward the front door until he's out of view.

The front door CLOSES loudly in the b.g.

Tyler's muffled voice travels up the stairs --

TYLER (O.S.)
Noelle? Baby? Come down here for
a minute.

She closes her eyes and sighs slightly. Rubs her pregnant stomach.

INT. ROGERS' HOME - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Tyler stands at the bottom of the stairs holding Kelley's duffel bag.

Kelley stands beside him, edgy.

KELLEY
Don't bother her. I'm just gonna
go upstairs and --

Before Kelley can head up the stairs, he looks up and sees Noelle making her way down with slow, calculated steps.

Try as she may to hide her stomach, it is instantly apparent to Kelley.

He watches silently as she descends to the bottom.

Tyler puts a hand out and she takes it, stopping at his side. He pulls her against him, rubs her stomach affectionately.

He kisses her on the cheek, then turns to Kelley, expectant.

TYLER
Aren't you gonna congratulate us?

Kelley struggles to get the words out.

NOELLE
He just got back from Iraq... and
he's hurt. Give him a --

KELLEY
No, congratulations. I'm just...
I thought you couldn't...

TYLER
It was a miracle, right, baby?

Tyler smiles down at her and she does her best to return it.

Kelley stands idly by, like an uninvited guest intruding on a private moment.

TYLER

You haven't heard the best part.
 (to Noelle)
 Wanna do the honors, or should I?

He pauses to give Noelle the chance to speak up, but continues when she doesn't.

TYLER

It's a boy. Tyler Rogers the third.

Now everyone is speechless. We get the feeling that is news to Noelle, too.

Tyler looks from one somber face to another.

TYLER

But we can talk 'bout that later.
 You must be tired and, well, I'd like nothin' more than some alone time with my wife.

Kelley steals another glance in Noelle's direction, then starts up the stairs.

NOELLE

What happened to your hand?

KELLEY

Oh, it's nothing.

TYLER

Kelley had a lil mishap durin' a routine trainin' exercise.
 (beat)
 Blew off two o' his fingers.
 Woulda taken his damn head off if a buddy o' his hadn't thrown 'im to the ground.

Tyler and Kelley exchange a look that Noelle doesn't appear to understand.

Kelley goes upstairs.

A door SLAMS in the b.g.

NOELLE

Is he alright?

Tyler lowers his voice significantly. Pulls Noelle away from the stairs. Glances up to make sure Kelley isn't listening.

TYLER

Between you 'n me... his shrink thinks he was tryin' to kill himself.

NOELLE

He wouldn't...

TYLER

Maybe you don't know 'im as well as you think.

NOELLE

If you believe that, you don't know him at all.

Tyler grabs her firmly by the arm and attempts to lead her upstairs.

TYLER

Let's go upstairs.

She rips her arm away.

NOELLE

I'm fine here.

TYLER

I can't have my pregnant wife sleepin' on the couch.

NOELLE

I'm not tired.

TYLER

I'm countin' on it.

She looks him in the eye, blinking back tears.

NOELLE

Tyler, please...

TYLER

I'm goin' upstairs and I expect you'll be right behind me.

He takes several steps up the stairs. Stops, turns to her.

TYLER

Don't make me come lookin' for
you.

She waits until she hears a door CLOSE upstairs before going
into the

KITCHEN

and searching frantically through the drawers.

INT. ROGERS' HOME - GUEST ROOM - NIGHT

Kelley pushes the heavy metal frame of the bed aside and
claws at the floorboards with his one usable hand.

INT. ROGERS' HOME - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Noelle picks up the phone, but slams it down in frustration
when she doesn't get a dial tone.

She rummages through the kitchen drawers, tossing silverware
out of the way. Can't find anything to use as a weapon.

INT. ROGERS' HOME - GUEST ROOM - NIGHT

Kelley finally locates the right floorboard and pries it
away to reveal a large ball of newspaper. He unravels it to
reveal nothing inside.

INT. ROGERS' HOME - UPSTAIRS - NIGHT

At the top of the stairs, Noelle glances at Kelley's door,
then, with determination in her eyes, continues on. Opens
the door to the

MASTER BEDROOM

Peers in, but doesn't see Tyler in the unlit room.

It isn't until she steps in and closes the door behind her
that her eyes adjust to the darkness and she spots --

Tyler sitting in an arm chair, staring at the empty bed.

She stands awkwardly by the door, watching him like he's the
timer on a bomb with 30 seconds remaining.

TYLER

Was it here... in this bed?

NOELLE

Tyler...

She takes a cautious step toward him, then steps back when she sees a handgun rested in his lap.

TYLER

It's a simple question, Noelle.
Was this where you betrayed me
with my brother?

NOELLE

It wasn't like that.

He picks up the gun and loads the chamber. The CLICK-CLICK echoes loudly through the otherwise silent room.

TYLER

Answer the fuckin' question.

NOELLE

The truck.

TYLER

Just one time... or repeatedly?

NOELLE

Once.

TYLER

Was it good? Did you like it? I'm
gonna need more detail.

NOELLE

Why?

TYLER

Why not?

She takes a couple more steps toward him, bridging the distance.

NOELLE

Why don't you ask me if I regret
it? Because I do. I regret
everything from the moment I met
him on.

TYLER

That's a nice story. But in reality, the only thing you regret is gettin' caught.

She steps in even closer. Reaches out for him.

Tyler jerks the gun at her, not so much pointing it at her as using it to indicate direction.

TYLER

Get on the bed.

NOELLE

Tyler, please...

TYLER

You might be carryin' my brother's bastard, but you're still my wife.

NOELLE

I'm supposed to be on bedrest.

He rests the gun on the dresser and then walks toward Noelle, backing her onto the bed. He climbs on top and kisses her, so soft and romantic that he seems like a different person.

TYLER

You're all I ever wanted. You and this baby. Did I really ask that much of you? Was I really that bad? Were you really that unhappy?

NOELLE

No.

TYLER

We could've given each other everything we've always wanted.

He runs his fingers through her hair. Stares into her eyes like a man madly in love.

NOELLE

We still can. We will. We can be a family, just the three of us.

He traces her lips with his fingers, then trails them across her cheek, down her neck and finally wraps two hands firmly around her neck, choking her.

Noelle's eyes expand in shock, mouth opens, gasping for air that won't come.

TYLER

I love you, do you understand
that? I love you so much.

Tyler forces his lips to hers as a familiar CLICK-CLICK is heard behind him.

The barrel of a gun pokes out of the darkness, aimed at Tyler's head.

Kelley holds it with his left hand, a look on his face that says he's not afraid to use it. He holds his injured right hand protectively to his chest.

KELLEY

Get your hands off of her.

Tyler glances over his shoulder at Kelley.

Noelle continues to gasp for air while fighting Tyler off.

TYLER

Do you mind? We're tryin' to have
a moment, 'ere.

Kelley pistol whips Tyler, knocking him off of Noelle.

Noelle grabs at her neck, rolling away from Tyler and landing hard on the floor. Greedily sucks in air, filling her deprived lungs.

Tyler repositions himself on the bed to face Kelley, amused rather than frightened.

TYLER

Can you shoot left handed? You
look a lil unsteady there.

Sweat dots Kelley's forehead, clouds his vision. His left hand is noticeably shaky, right hand useless.

KELLEY

Noelle, get his phone. Dial
nine-one-nine.

Noelle hesitates, curled up on the floor clutching her stomach.

Kelley steals a quick peek at her then promptly looks back at Tyler.

KELLEY

Noelle?

NOELLE

Something's wrong.

She puts a hand between her legs then holds it up to find it covered in blood.

KELLEY

(to Tyler)

Throw me the phone!

TYLER

You're gonna have to come over
'ere and get it.

Kelley's eyes narrow. Finger hovers over the trigger.

KELLEY

I will shoot you.

Tyler chuckles arrogantly.

TYLER

Know what I think? If you had the
balls to kill your own flesh and
blood, you woulda done it already.

Kelley holds firm, glances at Noelle out of the corner of his eye.

KELLEY

Noelle, can you walk?

NOELLE

I don't know.

KELLEY

You need to get out of here. Get
to a neighbor's. Call for help.

NOELLE

I'm not leaving you.

TYLER

We have quite a dilemma, then,
because Kelley's not leavin'
here... unless it's over my dead
body.

KELLEY

I have the gun. I make the rules.

TYLER

You might as well give it to
Noelle. She'd have no trouble
killin' me to save you.
(beat)
Too bad you can't say the same for
her.

Noelle tries to get to her feet but cries out in pain and falls back to the floor.

Kelley takes his eye off Tyler for a split second.

Tyler leaps off the bed and onto Kelley, grabbing the gun.

KELLEY

Kelley!

Kelley and Tyler struggle for the gun.

Noelle grabs her stomach protectively, then scoots over to the dresser and reaches on top. Her hand finds a --

GLASS PAPERWEIGHT

She raises it above Tyler's head, about to bring it down when --

BLAM!

The gun goes off and a bullet hits her in her shoulder, sending her to the floor.

KELLEY

Noelle!

Noelle holds her bloody shoulder with one hand and her stomach with the other, her body convulsing with pain.

In his hurry to get to her, Kelley negligently turns his back to --

Tyler who picks up the fallen paperweight and brings it across Kelley's face.

Kelley falls backwards, dropping the gun. He instinctively reaches for it, but --

Tyler steps down hard on his injured hand.

Kelley yells out in pain as --

Tyler picks up the gun, aims it at Kelley. Smiles

triumphantly, but it quickly fades as he lays eyes on Noelle.

His face lacerated and bleeding, Kelley tries to crawl to her.

Tyler loads the chamber of the gun to remind Kelley of its presence.

TYLER
Goddamnit, Noelle. This wasn't supposed to happen.

Tyler backs against a wall, drawing his knees up to rest his arms. Easing the gun off of Kelley.

Kelley takes the opportunity to slide closer to Noelle.

Tyler trains the gun back on him.

TYLER
Stay away from her!

Noelle has lost a lot of blood. Her complexion looks pale. Eyes flutter closed.

KELLEY
She needs a doctor.

TYLER
No.

KELLEY
You're killing her!

TYLER
I'm not the one that shot 'er.
This gun isn't registered under my name.

KELLEY
Then call the cops. Tell them I shot her. Tell them I planned this whole fucking thing. Just don't let her die.

NOELLE
Tyler...

TYLER
Hold on, baby. Stay with me, okay?

Tyler fishes his cell phone out of his pocket and dials, lifts it to his ear. Eyes and gun still on Kelley.

TYLER

I need an ambulance.... my wife's
been shot... he's still in the
house... 479 Thompson Lane...
hurry...

He shuts off the phone, then throws it against a wall, SMASHING it to pieces.

TYLER

Hospital's five minutes away.
Shouldn't take long.

Tyler hangs his head into his hands, still holding the gun but it is no longer aimed at Kelley.

Kelley drags himself over to Noelle. Applies pressure to her wound.

Her eyes flutter open. She looks at Kelley for a second, then she starts to fade back out.

KELLEY

No, no, no, no, no. Stay with me,
Noelle. Look at me.

Her eyes open again, lock on his.

KELLEY

Good, now stay awake. Help is on
the way. Just look at me. Focus
on me.

Her eyes flood with tears that soon overflow.

NOELLE

I can't feel the baby anymore.

KELLEY

The baby is gonna be okay. Don't
worry about the baby.

SIRENS can be heard very faintly in the b.g.

TYLER (O.S.)

I hope they make it in time.

Kelley looks over at him as if just remembering his presence.

Tyler lifts the gun, positions it to his temple.

TYLER

You win.

Kelley lunges for him but the gun goes off.

BLAM!

BLOOD SPLATTERS on the wall.

Tyler's body slumps over. Dead.

SIRENS GROW LOUDER in the b.g.

Kelley crawls the rest of the way to Tyler and rolls him onto his back. Puts his ear to his mouth, then starts chest compressions.

KELLEY

Tyler, don't you fucking die on me. Don't you do it. Goddamn you. Tyler!

His shouts fade into the background as the sound of the ambulance SIREN drowns out and eventually replaces it.

SERIES OF SHOTS

A) Kelley pounds uselessly on Tyler's chest.

B) PARAMEDICS burst into the room, medical equipment at the ready.

C) A medic rushes to Noelle to assess her wounds.

D) Another medic pries Kelley's hands off of Tyler. Kelley collapses onto the floor beside his fallen brother.

E) Noelle is loaded onto a stretcher and carried from the bedroom.

F) A covered body is loaded into one ambulance while Noelle is loaded into another.

INT. HOSPITAL - EMERGENCY ROOM - EXAM ROOM - NIGHT

Noelle slowly comes to. Her eyes find and focus on --

Kelley who sits in a chair beside the bed, holding her hand. A smile instantly brightens his face.

KELLEY
Welcome back.

It takes Noelle a few seconds to find her voice.

NOELLE
(hoarse)
Where'd I go?

He brings her hand up to his mouth and places a kiss on it.

KELLEY
I don't know. You tell me.

NOELLE
I was dreaming... there was this sleigh crib in the middle of a beautiful white sand beach... impossibly soft blue and green bedding... and the most gorgeous baby...

She sucks in an unsteady breath, on the verge of tears. Reaches for her stomach to find it considerably smaller.

KELLEY
We lost him.

Noelle's bottom lip quivers but she somehow holds back her tears.

Kelley bends over her, presses his lips to her forehead.

NOELLE
I held him... in the dream... I held him. He was so perfect.

Kelley straightens up. Smooths her hair. Strokes her face.

KELLEY
I'm sure he was.

NOELLE
What happened to Tyler? Did they arrest him?

A HARSH KNOCK on the door prevents Kelley from responding.

The door opens and two POLICE OFFICERS step in.

Noelle looks from the officers to Kelley, trying to make sense of it.

Kelley gets to his feet.

She clings to his arm, refusing to let go.

NOELLE

No.

POLICE OFFICER #1 takes out his handcuffs.

POLICE OFFICER #1

Kelley Rogers, you're under arrest for the murder of Tyler Rogers and attempted murder of Noelle Rogers. You have the right to remain silent...

Kelley pulls away from Noelle, then puts his hands behind his back.

Police Officer #1 cuffs Kelley.

POLICE OFFICER #1

... Anything you say can and will be used against you in a court of law. You have the right to an attorney...

NOELLE

You can't do this. He didn't do those things.

POLICE OFFICER #1

... If you cannot afford an attorney, one will be provided for you. Do you understand these rights?

KELLEY

Yes.

Police Officer #1 takes hold of one of Kelley's arms while POLICE OFFICER #2 takes the other. They lead him out of the room.

POLICE OFFICER #2

Let's go.

NOELLE

Please don't do this. Please.

They exit the room without so much as a backwards glance.

Noelle continues to yell after them.

NOELLE
Kelley! Kelley!!

EXT. ROSE GARDEN - DAY

A FEMALE HAND lifts the latch of a wrought iron fence.

A WOMAN in a long flowing white dress enters a beautiful rose garden filled with big, healthy rose bushes of every color imaginable.

The HAND finds a DEAD ROSE among the lush blooms.

A pair of clippers cuts the stem, separating the dead from the living.

NOELLE (V.O.)
Like all good things, love doesn't
last forever. It grows, changes,
withers... and dies...

The hand slides over to a bud, petals tightly coiled inside of its protective green sheath.

NOELLE (V.O.)
But sometimes there are second
chances... even for love.

The woman, Noelle (although aged several years), smiles hopefully.

A PAIR OF HANDS come down on her shoulders.

She turns to find Kelley standing there, hair long and unkempt, face unshaven. Eyes alive with love and admiration.

FADE OUT.