

A Rough Patch

By

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ACT I

SCENE 1

SETTING: A small house in Truckee, California. Modern day.

AT RISE: A man named DON, 29, is packing materials from a desk into a cardboard box. The room is small, and furnished with a couch and coffee table. A few windows line the wall. Papers, documents, other meaningless articles are strewn about. A cell phone is sitting nearby.

DON

(to himself, mumbling)

You've always been working yourself hard. These assholes, they don't deserve you.

(beat)

Ha--fuckin' interviews. Like they're searching for an excuse to bear the brunt of the guilt. Put the blame on the gun, not the finger on the trigger.

(beat)

Ah, you'll be fine, Don. You're gonna be fine.

CYNTHIA

(o.s.)

Don?

(CYNTHIA, 26, enters. She seems to be giving off an attitude while at the same time concerned.)

CYNTHIA

What are you doing?

(Don quickly puts down the box, trying to hide his task from her.)

DON

(motioning to cell phone)

Oh, uh, recording my voice. Jebediah said I'm constantly talking to myself, so... I don't know.

CYNTHIA

Jebediah says you talk to yourself? What the hell does Jebediah know?

DON

Well I'm around him pretty often, and you just walked in on me doing it.

CYNTHIA

So you'll record yourself at the whim of a comment from Jebediah, but you won't fill your prescription from your *doctor*?

(CONTINUED)

DON

Aw, jesus, what do you want me to do?

CYNTHIA

Maybe you wouldn't be talking to yourself so much if you just took the damn pills.

DON

Oh, come on, don't hound me.

(Cynthia is done with the subject. She continues her cold assault.)

CYNTHIA

What are those papers?

DON

Old work stuff.

(trying to lighten the conversation)

Out with the old, in with the new, huh?

(Silence. Cynthia ignores the comment and thumbs through the papers.)

DON

It's useless stuff. Busywork. No idea what the hell I was doing there anyways, it was just some bland, white collar mafia. You know, they didn't have casual Fridays--they had casual Mondays. I tell you this before?

CYNTHIA

Once or twice.

DON

Oh, well all the same. But hey--it'll be fine. There's plenty of people looking for work out there.

(beat)

Looking for workers, I mean. You know what I mean.

CYNTHIA

Mm-hmm.

DON

What is that?

CYNTHIA

What?

DON

Are you being sarcastic or something?

(CONTINUED)

CYNTHIA

I don't know what you're talking about.

DON

Okay, well I just want to relay to you that this doesn't mean anything. We don't need to worry. I'll send out resumes when the weekend's over.

CYNTHIA

Well, no hurry. Take all the time you need.

(Cynthia begins to exit.)

DON

Yeah, yeah...

(noticing Cynthia)

Hey, hey--come here!

(Don grabs Cynthia and pulls her in to him.)

DON

Remember when we would go out to the docks together and dance?

(Don begins swaying an unenthusiastic Cynthia.)

CYNTHIA

Yeah, I remember.

DON

Of course, there wasn't any music to dance to. But all the same...

(Pause. Cynthia is quietly taking in the moment.)

DON

Hey, how about we go out there again? Sometime tomorrow or something, maybe. It feels like it's been forever.

(Cynthia breaks free of Don's grasp.)

CYNTHIA

Don--

DON

Oh, don't worry. A one day break isn't going to put us in financial ruin. It'll be fun!

(Cynthia is silent, deliberating how to approach the subject.)

DON
Hey, listen--

CYNTHIA
I think I might be pregnant.

(Pause.)

DON
Huh?

(Beat.)

CYNTHIA
Or I mean, I'm late. I don't know.

DON
You, uh, ha--!

CYNTHIA
It's probably nothing. Just stress, I'm sure.

DON
"I might be pregnant ... It's probably nothing."

CYNTHIA
I said I don't know.

DON
Well, I mean, you--I'm just saying I'd choose a better combination of words.

CYNTHIA
Well sorry that I'm not the best linguist.

DON
Hey, I didn't mean it like that. It's just that normally, "It's probably nothing" comes *before* the punch to the gut.

CYNTHIA
"The punch to the gut?"

DON
Well, it's--I mean--it's kind of startling. You know? You're not supposed to look at it *that way*...

(Both of them are silent, unsure of what to say. Neither want to confront the issue.)

CYNTHIA
Well it's probably nothing, so don't worry about it.

DON

Then why tell me at all?!

(Cynthia heads towards the exit.)

CYNTHIA

I'm hungry. I want dinner.

(Beat.)

DON

Wait, you're hungry. Is that--?

CYNTHIA

Jesus, Don! Just forget about it. Do you want me to get you anything?

DON

Well now I'm all paranoid!

CYNTHIA

I don't know why I brought it up. Do you want dinner or not?

(Beat. Don is worked up, hopeless and afraid.)

DON

You drop a bomb like that and then you just leave?

CYNTHIA

(sighing)

I guess so.

(beat)

I'll be back in a little bit, okay?

(pause)

Okay?

(Don refuses to respond. A defense mechanism.)

CYNTHIA

Okay. Well, bye, I guess.

(Cynthia exits reluctantly, hoping to elicit a response. None comes.)

(After a few moments, Don, anxious, rushes to the window.)

DON

I love you!

(Beat. Don heads back to the desk.)

DON

... Pregnant, Don... The hell are you gonna do? What the hell are we supposed to do?

(beat)

It'll be fine, it'll be fine. She's not pregnant, it's just a scare. You're just being paranoid.

(Don notices the cell phone on the desk, still recording. He shuts it off. Blackout.)

SCENE 2

SETTING: A lonely bar. Night.

AT RISE: Don sits facing the audience at the center of a long bar with his friend, JEBEDIAH, to stage left. Don is drinking coke and rum; Jebediah, beer. At stage right, an OLD MAN sits with a glass of scotch, chatting inaudibly with the BARTENDER, who seems to be enjoying the conversation. To stage left is a bathroom apart from the bar. Soft music of no particular importance is playing over the scene.

(Don has just finished playing the recording from the phone to Jebediah.)

JEBEDIAH

(laughing)

"I love you!" My, aren't you a sweetheart?

DON

I don't think she heard me.

JEBEDIAH

Probably didn't want to, the way you were yammering like an idiot.

DON

How am I supposed to react to something like that?

JEBEDIAH

Sure as hell not the way you did.

(Don groans in bitter acknowledgment. Jebediah takes a drink.)

DON

I just don't understand why she would even bring it up.

JEBEDIAH

Women, eh?

(Don looks at him coldly.)

(CONTINUED)

JEBEDIAH

That was a joke! Laugh!

(Don puts his head in his hands.)

JEBEDIAH

Alright, alright, listen: she's probably just as worried as you are. Give her a break.

DON

So what was I supposed to tell her?

JEBEDIAH

Hell if I know. Reassure her, I guess. Pat on the back.

(Jebediah gulps down the rest of his drink. He motions for the bartender to refill it.)

JEBEDIAH

I don't know what goes on in their heads.

(The bartender arrives, takes the glass.)

JEBEDIAH

You: got any advice for my friend here?

DON

No, don't--

BARTENDER

Advice?

JEBEDIAH

Pregnancy scare.

BARTENDER

Ah. We get a lot of those here.

JEBEDIAH

Ha! You hear that?

DON

(to himself)

How are we supposed to support a kid?

BARTENDER

You got a good job?

JEBEDIAH

Asshole just lost it.

(CONTINUED)

DON

Shut the hell up.

(The old man at the end of the bar pipes up.)

OLD MAN

You quit or get laid off?

DON

Is it anyone's business?

JEBEDIAH

Laid off.

(to bartender, motioning to drink)

Could I get another one of these?

BARTENDER

How long you been outta work?

OLD MAN

I was outta work for a few years in the 90's. Life's hard sometimes.

DON

(to bartender)

Just a few days. Jebediah--

JEBEDIAH

(aside, to bartender)

He suffers from anxiety, too. Don't mention that to him, though.

DON

I can hear you, you know.

OLD MAN

That's around the time *my* ex-wife got pregnant. 'Course we decided to get rid of it.

BARTENDER

Yeah, how about that, uhh, what is it? Pro-choice or something? It's legal here, right?

JEBEDIAH

(jeering)

She's not very Christian, is she?

DON

Oh, fuck you, Jebediah.

(Don dejectedly rises from his chair and heads into the bathroom. Lights raise.)

(CONTINUED)

OLD MAN

It's not easy being a provider!

BARTENDER

What have you ever provided for?

JEBEDIAH

(laughing)

Hey, Don, come on! We're just tryin' to help!

OLD MAN

I provide for myself. That's what's important!

JEBEDIAH

(to old man)

I'll drink to that!

(Don pulls out his cell phone and begins recording.)

DON

(to himself)

Don't listen to them. Forget about it. They don't care, they just wanna make a joke out of the whole thing.

JEBEDIAH

Don, hey! The hell are you doing?

(The bartender and old man begin to go off on a tangent.)

BARTENDER

Hey, you hear about that news the other day?

OLD MAN

That woman in that avalanche?

DON

(to himself)

She ate her children. I read it.

BARTENDER

Yeah, that's the one!

JEBEDIAH

What's this?

OLD MAN

Poor woman and her kids got trapped in an avalanche.

(CONTINUED)

BARTENDER

The kids died early on, so the woman ended up eatin' them to survive.

DON

(to himself)

I saw a mother duck kill a straggler that caught up to them a few minutes late. Just took it by the neck and started throwing it against the rocks. You hear stories like that all the time.

JEBEDIAH

Jesus christ!

OLD MAN

Awful to hear.

BARTENDER

You imagine havin' to do that?

DON

(to himself)

But why does this have to happen to me? What could I do if this isn't a scare? We couldn't raise a kid.

JEBEDIAH

Well, thank god I don't ski.

BARTENDER

Imagine the husband's reaction, huh? How the hell do you live with somethin' like that?

DON

(to himself)

I'm not a provider. How could I raise a kid if I can't even support myself?

(Jebediah rises and heads towards the restroom.)

JEBEDIAH

Don, come on! I'm sorry, I was just joking.

DON

(to himself)

I guess all I can do is try and forget about it.

(Jebediah enters the restroom. Don puts his cell phone away.)

JEBEDIAH

Will you stop being so pissy and relax? Everything's gonna be fine.

(CONTINUED)

DON

Yeah, we'll see.

(Beat.)

JEBEDIAH

Come on, drink with me.

DON

Fine. But I wanna take a detour before we head home.

(They head back towards the bar.)

JEBEDIAH

Anything you say.

(Blackout.)

SCENE 3

SETTING: Docks by the lake. Nighttime.

AT RISE: Cynthia is sitting at the edge of a dock. An empty fast food bag and drink sits next to her. She is on a cell phone.

CYNTHIA

(to phone)

I'm not sure what we'll do. I mean, I don't know how long it'll be until he finds a job.

(beat)

Yeah, but we barely made enough for the two of us. A child would be something else entirely.

(There is a quiet disturbance heard off stage.)

CYNTHIA

(beat)

Well, I don't know. I'm trying my best to figure things out just in case.

DON

(o.s.)

Over here!

JEBEDIAH

(o.s.)

What?

DON

(o.s.)

Idiot, over here!

(CONTINUED)

CYNTHIA

Oh, no.

(Don stumbles in, followed by Jebediah. They are both visibly drunk.)

DON

What do you know!

CYNTHIA

(to phone)

It's getting late. I'll talk to you tomorrow, okay? Yeah, Don just got here, apparently.

(beat)

Okay, bye bye.

JEBEDIAH

(overlapping)

Cynthia! Hi!

(to Don)

What the hell is she doing here?

CYNTHIA

(cross)

Hello, Jebediah.

DON

Who were you talking to?

CYNTHIA

My sister. Are you two drunk?

DON

Your *sister*? The hell does she want?

CYNTHIA

I called her, Don. Did you two drive here?

JEBEDIAH

No need to worry; I'm a professional.

DON

He's been driving us two home since college.

CYNTHIA

That's just splendid to hear.

DON

(having a realization)

You came to the docks too?

(CONTINUED)

JEBEDIAH

Hey Don, why the hell are we at the docks?

CYNTHIA

I wanted to be alone and talk to my sister. What are you doing here?

DON

I missed this place.

JEBEDIAH

I just wanted to go home.

CYNTHIA

That sounds like a good idea. I'll take Don with me.

DON

I don't want to go home yet.

JEBEDIAH

Well that doesn't mean I gotta suffer at the docks with you!

CYNTHIA

Jebediah, please. Let me take care of him.

(Jebediah stumbles on his thoughts.)

JEBEDIAH

Well alright. I'd rather be sleeping anyways.

(He turns to leave.)

JEBEDIAH

Good luck with the pregnancy thing!

(Jebediah exits.)

CYNTHIA

What a wonderful note to go out on.

DON

I'm sorry.

(Don sits on the dock.)

CYNTHIA

Sorry? You're sorry? You go out and get piss drunk the night I tell you I might be pregnant, and then tell the most outright idiotic person you know all about it. What the hell is wrong with you?

DON

It's anxiety!

CYNTHIA

And I'm not anxious? I'm not scared?

DON

I don't know!

CYNTHIA

Well I am. And this sure isn't helping.

DON

I'm sorry, okay?

CYNTHIA

Dammit, Don...

(Cynthia turns from Don. She is going over frustrations in her head.)

DON

Hey.

(pause)

Hey, I love you.

(Don paws at Cynthia's crossed arms.)

CYNTHIA

Stop it.

DON

We're at the docks.

CYNTHIA

I know we're at the docks.

(Pause.)

DON

I talked to myself some more.

CYNTHIA

That's nice.

DON

I feel like an idiot, listening to the recordings.

CYNTHIA

Because Jebediah told you to.

(Beat.)

(CONTINUED)

DON

I'm sorry about earlier.

CYNTHIA

It doesn't matter.

DON

Is it just stress?

CYNTHIA

I wouldn't be surprised.

DON

What if it's not?

CYNTHIA

Then I'll be just as lost as you.

DON

Have you taken a test yet?

CYNTHIA

I have to wait a few more days before I can.

DON

Oh.

(beat)

Well I bet it's just stress.

(Cynthia sighs and sits with her back to Don.)

CYNTHIA

I just don't know why you have to do this.

DON

I'm not hurting anyone, am I?

CYNTHIA

No, you're just... stressing *me* out, for one.

DON

I'm sorry.

CYNTHIA

Have you even considered that Jebediah might not have your best intentions in mind?

DON

I know, he's an asshole. I'm sorry.

(He reaches for Cynthia. She reluctantly comes to his side. He puts his arm around her as she falls into him. She is somewhat rigid at first, but relaxes over time.)

(CONTINUED)

DON

I don't want to make things more difficult for you.

CYNTHIA

Well, you already have.

DON

I'll send out some resumes on Monday, okay?

CYNTHIA

Okay.

(Pause. They're taking in the atmosphere.)

DON

Aw, we'll be fine! It's not like we're starving, huh?

CYNTHIA

Mm-hmm.

DON

Come on, it's just like I remembered.

(Don stands and pulls Cynthia with him. They begin swaying at the end of the dock.)

DON

This is nice.

CYNTHIA

Relaxing.

DON

Well I'm not so bad at this, am I?

(They continue swaying. Pause.)

CYNTHIA

Everything will be fine, won't it?

DON

You tell me.

(Beat.)

CYNTHIA

I think we'll be okay.

(They pause for a moment, more embracing than dancing. Don wraps his hand around Cynthia's head, as the two gingerly kiss.)

CYNTHIA

But you need to stop being such an idiot all the time.

DON

I'll work on it. I promise.

CYNTHIA

I'll hold you to it.

(They look off into the lake, leaning into each other.)

DON

So... Should we go home?

CYNTHIA

Yeah, I guess so.

(The two exit as they hold each other in their arms. Blackout.)

THE END