

BLISS

Written by

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OVER BLACK:

A clock TICKS.

FADE IN:

INT. CABIN - MAIN ROOM - DAY

The small room serves as kitchen, dining room and living room. There's a woman's touch. Flowers. Frilly decorations.

Family photos dot the walls, reflecting happy times: Husband, wife, daughter.

ABELE, 45, Italian, hollow and sad, sits in the shadows, his eyes closed. The clock, out of place on the table before him, TICKS LOUDLY.

INT. GARAGE - DAY

Complete darkness until...A door opens, casting light across the garage interior.

It's a workman's space. Tools, equipment everywhere. A set of oars hangs on one wall.

Abele trudges in, turns on a light.

He slowly unspools a strand of rope.

ABELE (V.O.)
How do you stay so strong?

He tosses the rope over a rafter.

EMILY (V.O.)
You've always been strong, dad.

Her voice is young, but weak and stilted.

ABELE (V.O.)
Not strong enough.

Abele pulls a chair under the rafter, looks up. The rope hangs above him.

EMILY (V.O.)
Maybe we could talk about something happier? Like--Mom--when did you know that she was the one?

Abele climbs onto the chair.

ABELE (V.O.)
People always say things like, "I
can't imagine living without you."
But, do they really mean it?

Abele grabs the rope.

ABELE (V.O.)
I guess you don't really know until
you've experienced it yourself.

Taking the end of the rope, Abele feeds it through the handle
of a frying pan. Finished, he pulls the pan toward the
ceiling and ties it off.

ABELE (V.O.)
Then you came along and I felt it
all over again.

Abele strings another rope across the garage's side doorway
and ties it off. In the background, two large work lights
loom, facing the door.

EMILY (V.O.)
(Chuckling)
You're too much.

Wires lead from a homemade switch to the lights. Abele ties a
piece of string to the rope, connecting it to the switch.

INT. CABIN - MAIN ROOM - NIGHT

A large pot of water sits atop a stove. A match is lit,
igniting the flame beneath the pot.

Two freshly rinsed potatoes are placed on a wooden counter.
Abele sets to peeling them.

ABELE
Funny that the first meal she made
me is your favorite.

He drops the potatoes in the now boiling water.

ABELE
I met her heading home from work
one day. Almost ran her over.

He laughs to himself.

ABELE

She was standing in the middle of the road, mesmerized by a bird in a tree. Me? I was mesmerized by her-- this beautiful, quirky little woman, smiling at a bird.

He looks back, smiles at EMILY, 22.

ABELE

She could get so much joy from the simplest of things.

EXT. LAKE - DAY

Abele, stiff in his movement, in a trance, rows a small boat.

ABELE (V.O.)

You know how I like to row out and watch the sunset?

Near the middle of the lake, he stops.

ABELE (V.O.)

I decided to share it with her.

Abele pulls a gold WEDDING BAND off his finger, he looks at it for a moment.

ABELE (V.O.)

I gave her the sunset and a place full of simple joys. She made me the best gnocchi I'd ever had. Your mother always touted the importance of a home cooked meal. You'd never find a can of soup in her house.

He drops the ring in the lake. It sinks.

ABELE (V.O.)

That first date was everything. It felt like, as long as we were together nothing bad could ever happen.

LATER

Abele pulls the boat onto the shore.

ABELE (V.O.)

We live in our fantasies as long as we believe they're true.

INT. GARAGE - DAY

The side door swings open as Abele, oars in hand and still in the trance, pushes in, his paces stiff and calculated.

ABELE (V.O.)
Which works. Until it doesn't.

The door pushes against the rope, releasing a pin in the rafters. The frying pan arcs past Abele's head, clanging with a loud BANG against the garage's metal siding.

At the same time, the attached string pulls the switch and the work lights snap on with a blinding glare.

The combined sound and light rock Abele back.

He shakes off the confusion--and the trance. His movement loosens up.

Abele looks at the oars in his hand--almost as if it's the first time he's seen them.

INT. CABIN - MAIN ROOM - NIGHT

Abele continues to prepare the meal.

He opens a drawer, pulls out a ladle. A small piece of paper sticks to the handle--a note.

Confusion and curiosity sweep across his face.

He pulls the note off, reads: "If you can't find your ring, it worked." Confused, he looks down to his hand. No ring.

He glances at a second pot on the stove.

Abele mutters as he stirs the contents of the pot.

ABELE
Guess I'll be forgetting the
gnocchi, too.

EMILY
What?

Abele turns, ignores the question.

ABELE
To see you going through the same
thing...

EMILY, 25, sits, wheelchair bound. Holding back tears, they both stare, until...

ABELE

Sorry.

Abele spins back to the stove, bucks himself up.

ABELE

Okay, then. Gnocchi for two.

He hesitates, staring at the two bowls of bare gnocchi in front of him. Contemplating.

He eyes the two pots of sauce. His hand shakes as he sources from one pot for his, one pot for hers.

EMILY

No spinach, right?

ABELE

(Cold)

Never.

She smiles. He serves them both.

ABELE

You or me?

EMILY

You. Please.

ABELE

Alrighty, then.

They bow their heads.

ABELE

Father, thank you for this food.
For family and fellowship. Please
continue to work in our lives. In
you, all things are possible.
Deliver our girl from this evil
illness and deliver us peace. Amen.

LATER

The two eat in silence.

Emily coughs.

Seconds pass, she coughs again.

Abele pushes from the table.

ABELE
I need a little fresh air.

EMILY
But, your--

ABELE
--It'll be fine.

He swings behind her, kisses her on the top of her head, lingers for just a moment.

EXT. CABIN - NIGHT

Abele slides from the cabin, leans against the wall outside. Agony washes over his face at the muffled sound of Emily's COUGHS inside the cabin.

INT. GARAGE - DAY

Abele lifts the frying pan to the ceiling, resets the light switch and the rope.

INT. CABIN - MAIN ROOM - DAY

A clock TICKS.

Abele shifts uncomfortably in a chair as he stares at the clock on the table.

He takes a deep breath, fights to relax.

Abele closes his eyes.

EXT. LAKE - DAY

Abele stands inside the small boat, frozen.

Stiff and methodical, he lifts something over the side: a body, wrapped in a blanket, tied in a neat bundle.

The body splashes into the water.

INT. CABIN - MAIN ROOM - DAY

Abele mechanically works through the cabin, gathering items: family photos, decorations--anything personal, anything feminine. He tosses them into a pile.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. CABIN - NIGHT

Flames glow inside a fireplace. The remnants of a couple photos burn away into a growing pile of ash.

Finally, he takes the note from his pocket. Reads it again: "If you can't find your ring, it worked." He tosses the note into the fire.

INT. GARAGE - LATER

Abele, carrying the boat oars, pushes into the garage. The door pushes the rope, the pan swings down and hits the metal siding. White hot lights flash in his face.

Abele reels, quickly shakes off the effects, looks around, confused. The trance is gone.

INT. CABIN - MAIN ROOM - NIGHT

Abele works a can opener, slowly opening a red can.

LATER

Abele sits at the dining room table. The cabin is sparse. Colder. Just an empty cottage, really.

He dips a spoon into his bowl, lifts a bit of broth to his lips as he stares into the distance, past the empty seat on the other side of the table. A different kind of trance.

FADE OUT.