

STILL STANDING

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**ACT I — THE WEIGHT (DEEPENED BACKSTORIES)**

**INT. HUSBAND'S CHILDHOOD HOME — NIGHT (FLASHBACK)**

Dark. A cramped room.

YOUNG HUSBAND (8) sits on the floor, back against the wall. He clutches a toy truck with one missing wheel.

Off-screen — a MAN'S VOICE. Drunk. Mean.

**MAN (O.S.)** You don't listen. You never listen.

A shadow crosses the doorway.

A BELT snaps through the air.

We don't see the impact.

We hear the sound.

YOUNG HUSBAND closes his eyes.

**VOICEOVER (HUSBAND)** If I stayed quiet, it ended faster.

**INT. PRESENT DAY — GARAGE — NIGHT**

HUSBAND jerks awake from the memory.

Sweat on his face.

He reaches for a beer. Stops. Hands shaking.

**VOICEOVER (HUSBAND)** Nobody ever taught me how to be calm.

He drinks anyway.

**INT. YOU'S CHILDHOOD BEDROOM — DAY (FLASHBACK)**

YOU (13) sits on her bed. A phone pressed to her ear.

A MAN'S VOICE on the other end. Older. Smooth.

**MAN (V.O.)** You're mature for your age.

She smiles — flattered, not alarmed.

**VOICEOVER (YOU)** Older men noticed me first.

She looks toward the doorway.

Empty.

**VOICEOVER (YOU)**

**EXT. SCHOOL PICKUP — DAY (FLASHBACK)**

Other kids run into their FATHERS' arms.

YOU stands alone.

**VOICEOVER (YOU)** My dad wasn't around.

A CAR pulls up. An OLDER MAN waves.

She hesitates — then gets in.

**VOICEOVER (YOU)** This is the part of my life where everything costs something. Not just money — energy, sleep, peace. I didn't notice when it started. I just know it never stopped.

FADE IN:

**FLASHBACK — INT. OLD APARTMENT — DAY (YEARS AGO)**

Sunlight through bare windows.

A SMALL APARTMENT — modest, a little cluttered but livable.

A few stacked boxes against the wall. Old magazines on a chair. Tools in a corner.

Nothing blocks the exits.

YOU (mid-20s) and HUSBAND (early 40s) move through the space easily.

She laughs as she steps over a box.

YOU You and these boxes.

He smiles — charming, relaxed.

**HUSBAND** I just like keeping things. Never know when you'll need them.

He taps a box with his foot. No tension. No fear.

They sit on the floor eating takeout, backs against the couch.

Open space around them.

She leans into him.

**VOICEOVER (YOU)** Back then it wasn't heavy. It didn't feel like danger.

He reaches for her hand.

**HUSBAND** We'll get a bigger place someday.

She nods — believing him.

A box shifts slightly.

She steadies it without thinking.

They kiss.

**QUICK FLASH — FUTURE IMAGES (SILENT)**

— A toy added to a shelf — A baby blanket folded on a box — Another box stacked —

A hallway narrowing

HARD CUT TO PRESENT:

INT. KITCHEN - PRE-DAWN

5:12 AM. Bills stacked. Coffee cold.

YOU sits at the table. Bills. Calculator. A pen that barely works.

She writes numbers. Erases. Writes again.

A child COUGHS down the hall.

She freezes — listens — then exhales when it stops.

**VOICEOVER (YOU)** I used to think being strong meant not needing anything.

She folds the bills. Neat. Precise. Like this is something you can manage if you line it up just right.

You stand. Pour coffee. It's cheap coffee. The sound of it filling the cup is loud in the quiet house.

You take a sip. You don't smile.

But you don't sit back down either.

She's just standing there alone, exhausted.

**VOICEOVER (YOU):**

*I used to think life would feel different than this. Louder maybe. Bigger. I didn't expect it to feel this small... and this heavy.*

You grab your keys from the counter.

Pause.

You look down the hallway toward the kids' rooms. You don't go in. You just look.

**VOICEOVER (YOU):**

*But this is also the part where I don't quit. Where I get up anyway. Because someone is counting on me — even if they don't know it yet.*

You turn off the light.

The kitchen goes dark.

**CUT TO BLACK.**

**TITLE : STILL STANDING**

INT. LIVING ROOM – MORNING

HUSBAND snores lightly. An empty beer bottle on the nightstand.

YOU quietly removes it. Hides it in her bag.

She looks at him — searching for the man she married.

He shifts. Mumbles.

She freezes.

He settles.

She exhales.

**INT. LIVING ROOM — MORNING**

The front door closes behind you.

The house exhales — cluttered, crowded, heavy.

Stacks of boxes. Old bags. Things that were meant to be thrown away but never were.

Narrow paths carved through clutter.

She steps carefully — already knowing where not to step.

A framed photo of her **MOTHER** leans against a box.

You stop. You kneel and pick it up. Wipes dust from the glass with her sleeve. Your mother, smiling. Younger. Alive.

**VOICEOVER (YOU)** My mom's been gone five years. Some days it feels like I just missed her call. Other days it feels like she's been gone my whole life.

Behind you, a door opens.

Your **HUSBAND**

Her **HUSBAND** stands nearby, holding something broken. He doesn't throw it away. He just holds it.

The distance between you is small — but it feels enormous.

**VOICEOVER (YOU)** My husband is quite older than me. I thought age meant stability. I didn't know it could also mean weight. *History. Things people never learned how to let go of.*

You stand.

She places the photo on an already crowded shelf with things that don't belong together. There is no room — but you make room anyway.



**VOICEOVER (YOU):**

*We never had a honeymoon. No trip. No pause. Life just kept moving forward, and we ran behind it, carrying everything.*

From another room — a CHILD calls. Then another. The sound of life needing you — immediately.

You move instinctively. You always do.

In the hallway, a small open box: condolence cards. Her **FATHER'S NAME** printed.

She freezes.

**VOICEOVER (YOU)** My dad died a month ago. Time doesn't heal first. It stacks.

You pick up one card. Your hands shake — just a little.

Your husband watches you. He wants to say something. He doesn't.

Instead, he places the broken item on top of a pile.

Another thing added.

Another thing kept.

**VOICEOVER (YOU):**

This house is full of things we're afraid to lose. And somehow, it's still full of loss.

She closes the box. Gently. Like if you're careful enough, it won't be real.

You take a breath that doesn't go all the way in.

Then — footsteps.

The kids appear — loud, alive.

She straightens. Smiles.

VOICEOVER (YOU):

I don't have the luxury of falling apart. Not today. Not ever. I have three kids watching how I survive this.

You step forward, navigating the narrow path through the clutter.

You lead them through.

**CUT TO:**

**INT. HALLWAY — CONTINUOUS**

The camera lingers behind.

On the piles.

On the unopened boxes.

On the photo of your mother.

On the closed box with your father's name.

The house holds everything.

**CUT TO BLACK.**

INT. LIVING ROOM – NIGHT

Bills. Arguments. Silence.

The kids are asleep.

The house should feel calmer — but it doesn't.

The clutter looks bigger at night. Shadows stretch across piles of things. The air feels thick.

Bills on the table. Calculator tapping.

Her husband sorts through a box.

**YOU** We're short.

He doesn't look up.

She stares at him.

**HUSBAND** I'll figure it out.

She stands.

That sentence hits you harder than yelling would.

YOU:

You always say that.

He looks up now.

HUSBAND:

Because I do.

You gesture around the room.

YOU:

No. You delay. You stack things. You say "later" until later turns into never.

**YOU** We don't have room to breathe.

He bristles.

HUSBAND:

That's not fair.

You stand.

YOU:

Isn't it? Look at this place. We can't even sit down without moving something first. We don't have room to breathe.

He grabs a box.

**HUSBAND** These are important.

She gestures around.

**YOU** Important to who? Because it's not important to the kids tripping over it. It's not important to me waking up suffocating in my own house.

His voice rises.

**HUSBAND** You don't understand loss.

She locks eyes with him.

**YOU** My mom is dead.

My dad is dead.

Don't tell me I don't understand loss.

Silence slams into the room.

He looks away.

You soften for half a second — then harden again.

**YOU:**

I lost people. You're holding onto stuff.

He grips the box tighter.

**HUSBAND:**

You want me to just throw my life away?

Silence.

**YOU (CONT'D)** I want a house. Not a storage unit. You step closer. Your voice lowers  
— dangerous calm.

**YOU:**

I want a living room.

I want a table where we can eat.

I want a house that doesn't feel like it's collapsing inward.

He scoffs.

**HUSBAND:**

You're always unhappy.

That lands.

You swallow.

**YOU:**

I'm tired. There's a difference.

You look around.

**YOU (CONT'D):**

We never go anywhere. Not once. No honeymoon. No trips. No weekends. Just work, bills, clutter, sleep. Over and over.

He shrugs.

HUSBAND:

That's life.

Something in you breaks.

YOU:

No. That's survival. And I'm allowed to want more than that.

He steps back, defensive again.

HUSBAND:

Then maybe you should've married someone younger. Someone with less baggage.

The words sting — but also clarify.



You nod slowly.

**YOU:**

Maybe.

Or maybe I married someone who never learned how to make space — for himself or anyone else.

The room is quiet except for the hum of something electrical. Always on. Always draining.

You move to a pile near the door and pick up something small. Broken. Useless.

You hold it out.

**YOU (CONT'D)** Tell me why this stays.

He can't. He opens his mouth.

Nothing comes out.

You set it down — gently.

YOU (CONT'D):

I'm not asking for perfection. I'm asking for room. Room to breathe. Room to live. Room to grieve.

Your voice cracks on the last word.

He finally looks at you — really looks.

You wait.

He doesn't answer.

You turn away.

**YOU:**

I can't keep carrying everything. Something has to go.

You walk down the narrow hallway.

He stays behind.

Surrounded by things.

**CUT TO BLACK.**

INT. KIDS' ROOM – NIGHT

Children listening, absorbing.

**SCENE 4: "THEY KNOW"**

**INT. HALLWAY / KIDS' ROOM — NIGHT**

The house is still.

Too still.

You move down the hallway, careful not to bump anything. Your shoulders are tense, like you're bracing for impact that already happened.

You stop outside the kids' room.

The door is cracked.

Inside, the room is dim. A nightlight glows soft blue. Your **OLDEST** sits up in bed. Not asleep. Waiting.

You freeze when you see their eyes on you.

**YOU:**

Hey... why are you still up?

Your child shrugs. Too mature for the question.

**OLDEST:**

You and Dad were fighting.

You open your mouth to deny it.

You don't.

You step inside.

**YOU:**

We weren't fighting.

A beat.

**YOU (CONT'D):**

We were talking loudly.

Your child nods — polite, unconvinced.

From the other bed, your **MIDDLE CHILD** turns over.

**MIDDLE CHILD:**

Are we in trouble?

Your chest tightens.

You sit on the edge of the bed.

**YOU:**

No. No, baby. Not at all.

Your **YOUNGEST** shifts in their sleep, murmurs something unintelligible, then settles again.

The room smells like laundry detergent and crayons and childhood — a different world than the one outside this door.

Your oldest watches you closely.

**OLDEST:**

Is it because of money?

The question lands too accurately.

You hesitate just a second too long.

They notice.

**OLDEST (CONT'D):**

I heard you say “bills.”

You swallow.

YOU:

Money is just... something adults have to figure out.

OLDEST:

Like when Grandma got sick?

That name — Grandma — almost knocks the breath out of you.

You nod.

**YOU:**

Yeah. Like that.

Your child processes this quietly.

Then:

**OLDEST:**

Is Grandpa coming back?

Your heart breaks — clean down the middle.

You shake your head slowly.

**YOU:**

No, sweetheart.

Silence.

Your middle child sits up now too.

**MIDDLE CHILD:**

Dad's been sad a lot.

You glance toward the hallway.

Toward the rest of the house.

**YOU:**

Yes. He has.

**MIDDLE CHILD:**

So have you.

That's it. That's the line.

You press your lips together, trying to stay steady.

**YOU:**

Sometimes grown-ups don't know how to be sad without making it loud.

Your oldest studies you.

**OLDEST:**

Are we going to move?

You shake your head immediately.

**YOU:**

No. You're safe. We're okay.

You pull the blanket up around them, tucking it in.

Your hands linger — like you're grounding yourself through them.

**OLDEST:**

You always say that.

Not accusing. Just observing.

You meet their eyes.

**YOU:**

Because it's true. Even when things are hard... I'm here. I'm not going anywhere.



A long beat.

Your oldest nods. Trusting you. Again.

You stand.

**MIDDLE CHILD:**

Mom?

You turn.

**MIDDLE CHILD (CONT'D):**

Can we clean the house tomorrow?

You pause.

The question isn't about cleaning.

It's about space. Control. Breathing.

You smile — small, real.

**YOU:**

Yeah. We can do that.

They lie back down.

As you reach the door, your oldest speaks softly.

**OLDEST:**

Mom?

**YOU:**

Yeah?

**OLDEST:**

You can cry if you need to.

You nod. You can't speak.

You turn off the light.

INT. HALLWAY — CONTINUOUS

You stand alone.

The quiet is different now.

Heavier.

But clearer.

You lean against the wall, finally letting one tear fall.

Just one.

You straighten.

Because they're watching.

**CUT TO BLACK.**

ULTIMATUM.

**SCENE 5: "ENOUGH"**

**INT. KITCHEN — NIGHT**

The house is quiet again.

Too familiar.

A single overhead light hums. The table is half-cleared — an effort that didn't finish.

You sit with your phone in your hand. The screen is dark now, but the words still echo.

Your **SISTER'S VOICE** (V.O., overlapping memory):

*This isn't you.*

Your **BROTHER'S VOICE** (V.O.):

*You deserve better than this. Your kids do too.* You stare at the table. At your hands.

Older than they used to be.

**VOICEOVER (YOU):**

*They remember who I was before I learned how to disappear.*

Footsteps.

Your husband enters, carrying something unnecessary. He stops when he sees you.

**HUSBAND:**

What's wrong now?

You look up.

Something in your face makes him pause.

You set the phone down.

**YOU:**

I talked to my sister. And my brother.

He sighs — already defensive.

**HUSBAND:**

Let me guess. They think I'm the problem.

You don't answer right away.

**YOU:**

They think I'm drowning.

That lands differently.

He scoffs.

**HUSBAND:**

They don't live here.

You stand.

Slow. Steady.

**YOU:**

Exactly.

You gesture around the room.

**YOU (CONT'D):**

This isn't living. This is surviving inside someone else's fear of letting go.

His jaw tightens.

**HUSBAND:**

So now you're ganging up on me?

Your voice sharpens — not loud, but unmovable.

**YOU:**

No. I'm choosing myself. And our kids.

Silence.

He laughs — nervous, dismissive.

**HUSBAND:**

You think you're better than this now?

That word — *this* — hangs in the air.

You step closer.

**YOU:**

I think I used to laugh more.

I think I used to dream.

I think I used to recognize myself in the mirror.

He opens his mouth.

You hold up a hand.

**YOU (CONT'D):**

I have buried my mother.

I have buried my father.

I will not bury myself in this house.

That stops him cold.

You breathe. Deep. For the first time all day.

**YOU (CONT'D):**

My sister says she doesn't recognize me anymore.

My brother says my kids are growing up thinking this is normal.

Your voice cracks — but you don't stop.

**YOU (CONT'D):**

Boxes everywhere. Bills piling up. No space. No trips. No memories that don't smell like stress.

He looks around now. Really looks.

You see fear flash across his face.

**HUSBAND:**

So what — you're threatening me?

You shake your head.

**YOU:**

I'm telling you the truth.

You point to the clutter.

**YOU (CONT'D):**

This goes.

The chaos goes.

Or I do.

The words land heavy.

Final.

He stares at you.

**HUSBAND:**

You'd really leave?

Tears fill your eyes — but your voice is solid.

**YOU:**

I would really save myself.

A beat.



**YOU (CONT'D):**

I don't want to raise my kids thinking love means suffocating.

I don't want them remembering me as tired and small and quiet.

You step back.

**YOU (CONT'D):**

I want them to remember me standing up.

Silence stretches.

The hum of the light grows louder.

**HUSBAND:**

You're serious.

You nod.

**YOU:**

Dead serious.

You grab a piece of paper from the table. Write something quickly. Firm.

You slide it toward him.

**YOU (CONT'D):**

This is what needs to change.

Not someday.

Not “we’ll see.”

You turn toward the hallway.

Toward the kids’ rooms.

**YOU (CONT’D):**

I love you.

But I love them — and myself — enough to stop accepting this.

You stop at the doorway.

Without turning back:

**YOU (CONT’D):**

Choose.

You leave him standing there.

Alone.

Surrounded by everything he’s been holding onto.

**CUT TO BLACK.**

**SCENE 6: “WHAT HE KNOWS”**

**INT. LIVING ROOM — LATE NIGHT**

The house is dark.

Not asleep — dark.

Your husband stands alone where you left him. The paper you slid across the table is still there. Unread. Or read too many times.

He paces.

Stops.

Kicks a box out of the way.

It tips but doesn't fall — like everything else in this house.

He picks up the paper now. Reads it.

His jaw tightens.

He crumples it in his fist.

**HUSBAND:**

Unbelievable.

He runs a hand through his hair. Breathing hard.

You appear in the doorway. Calm. Still.

That makes him angrier.

**HUSBAND (CONT'D):**

So that's it? Your family gets in your head and suddenly I'm the enemy?

**YOU:**

I didn't say that.

**HUSBAND:**

You didn't have to.

He gestures wildly.

**HUSBAND (CONT'D):**

I've lived longer than you. I've been through more than you. I know how life works.

You don't flinch.

**YOU:**

Then why does it feel like we're barely surviving it?

That hits.

He scoffs — but it's thinner now.

**HUSBAND:**

You think you know better because you're younger? Because you read something online or talk to your sister?

He steps closer. Looming just enough to test you.

**HUSBAND (CONT'D):**

I'm not going to have my own wife tell me how to live my life.

You meet his eyes. Steady.

**YOU:**

I'm telling you how I'm dying in it.

That stops him.

He looks away.

His voice lowers — rougher.

**HUSBAND:**

You don't understand. This is how I've always done things. You don't just wake up one day and change who you are.

**YOU:**

No. You wake up afraid you're going to lose everything if you don't.

Silence.

He laughs — bitter.

**HUSBAND:**

You think throwing things away fixes everything?

**YOU:**

No. I think refusing to change is what breaks it.

He sinks into a chair — suddenly older. Smaller.

His anger flickers... and fear slips through.

**HUSBAND:**

I don't know how to do this the way you want.

You soften — but you don't back down.

**YOU:**

I'm not asking for perfection.

He looks up.

HUSBAND:

Then what are you asking for?

A beat.

YOU:

Effort.

Help.

Space.

He rubs his face.

**HUSBAND:**

You make it sound so simple.

**YOU:**

It isn't. That's why it matters.

He swallows.

His voice cracks — just once.

**HUSBAND:**

I don't want to lose my family.

That's the truth. Finally spoken.

You nod.

**YOU:**

Then stop choosing your fear over us.

He shakes his head.

**HUSBAND:**

You don't know what it feels like to wake up and realize you're not the man you used to be.

You step closer now.

**YOU:**

I wake up every day knowing I'm becoming someone I don't recognize. That scares me too.

He looks at you — really looks.



**HUSBAND:**

You're serious about leaving.

You don't hesitate.

**YOU:**

Yes.

That word terrifies him.

He stands abruptly.

**HUSBAND:**

I can change.

You wait.

He nods fast — like if he says it enough it'll be true.

**HUSBAND (CONT'D):**

I just need time.

You shake your head.

**YOU:**

Time is what we're out of.

He clenches his fists.

**HUSBAND:**

I'm not some project you can fix.

**YOU:**

And I'm not a girl you get to dismiss because I'm younger.

That lands hard.

He exhales. Long. Defeated — but not surrendered.

**HUSBAND:**

I want my family.

You step back.

**YOU:**

Then show me.

A beat.

He looks around the room. At the clutter. At the walls closing in.

For the first time, it looks different to him.

He reaches down and picks up the same broken object from before.

Holds it.

His hand shakes.

He sets it down — closer to the trash than the pile.

Not gone.

But moved.

He looks at you.

**HUSBAND:**

I don't know how to be someone else.

Your voice is gentle — but unyielding

**YOU:**

Then start by being someone who tries.

Silence.

The distance between you isn't gone — but it's visible now.

And visibility is change.

**CUT TO BLACK.**

TREATMENT.

**— INT. LIVING ROOM — MORNING**

Your husband stands over a pile of objects. He hesitates. Long.

He picks one up. Turns it over in his hands.

He places it in a **TRASH BAG.**

Immediately pulls it back out.

Stares at it.

Then — forces himself to put it back in.

Ties the bag.

Breathing hard.

**EXT. CURB — DAY**

You drag two heavy trash bags outside.

You stop, unsure.

Your husband joins you. Takes one bag from your hands without a word.

Sets it down next to the other.

They sit there — exposed. Vulnerable.

**— INT. KITCHEN — NIGHT**

The table is clear. Not perfect — but clear enough to eat.

The kids sit together, surprised.

One child runs their hand across the empty space.

**MIDDLE CHILD:**

Is this new?

You and your husband exchange a look.

**YOU:**

Yeah. It is.

— **INT. BEDROOM — LATE NIGHT**

Your husband lies awake. Eyes open.

The empty corner of the room feels louder than the clutter ever did.

**INT. HALLWAY — DAY**

A narrow path widens.

Light reaches the floor where it never has before.

— **INT. LIVING ROOM — AFTERNOON**

Your husband opens a box labeled “**IMPORTANT.**”

Inside: old papers, manuals, forgotten junk.

His jaw tightens.

He flips through fast — anxious.

You sit nearby, silent. Not pushing.

He throws half the contents away.

Keeps half.

Progress.

**INT. KITCHEN — EVENING**

You pay a bill online.

The balance hits zero.

You exhale — not relief, but less panic.

— **INT. LAUNDRY ROOM — NIGHT**

A box labeled “**DAD**” sits unopened.

Your husband touches it. Pulls his hand back.

Later — you open it together.

Slow. Careful.

Some items stay.

Some go.

Both of you cry.

#### **INT. FRONT DOOR — MORNING**

Your sister stands outside with coffee.

She takes in the visible floor. The open space.

She says nothing — just squeezes your hand.

#### **— INT. LIVING ROOM — DAY**

The kids play on the floor.

Actually on the floor.

Sprawled. Loud. Free.

#### **— INT. THERAPIST'S WAITING ROOM — DAY**

Your husband sits stiffly in a chair. Uncomfortable.

You sit beside him.

He doesn't bolt.

#### **INT. KITCHEN — NIGHT**

A calendar on the fridge.

One square circled: **"DAY TRIP."**

Not a honeymoon.

But something.

**— INT. BEDROOM — LATE NIGHT**

You and your husband lie side by side.

Not touching.

Not distant.

Just breathing in the same open space.

**INT. LIVING ROOM — SUNSET**

The trash is gone.

The floor is visible.

The house still isn't perfect — but it's lighter.

Your husband stands in the middle of the room.

Lost. Relieved. Afraid.

He looks at you.

You look back.

No words.

Just a shared understanding:

This is hard.

This is worth it.

RELAPSE.

**SCENE 8: “BACKSLIDE”**

**INT. LIVING ROOM — EVENING**

The house is calmer now.

Not empty — but breathable.

You move through it carrying a laundry basket. You pause, noticing the space again. Still surprised it exists.

Then you see it.

A **NEW STACK** against the far wall.

Small. Neat. Intentional.

Your stomach drops.

You set the basket down slowly.

You walk closer.

It’s subtle — bags tucked together, a box labeled in your husband’s handwriting:

**“SORT LATER.”**

That word.



Later.

You close your eyes.

Footsteps behind you.

Your husband stands in the doorway, holding another bag. He freezes when he sees you standing there.

Silence.

**YOU:**

What is this?

He doesn't answer.

He sets the bag down — carefully, like that makes it okay.

**HUSBAND:**

I just needed somewhere to put it.

You turn to face him.

Your voice is calm — too calm.

**YOU:**

Put what?

He gestures vaguely.

**HUSBAND:**

Stuff.

There it is again.

Stuff.

**YOU:**

We talked about this.

He bristles.

**HUSBAND:**

I said I was going to go through it.

**YOU:**

When?

He snaps.

**HUSBAND:**

Why does everything have to be on your timeline?

That hits the old nerve.

**YOU:**

Because your timeline buries us.

He exhales hard.

**HUSBAND:**

I had a bad day.

You nod.

**YOU:**

So did I.

A beat.

**YOU (CONT'D):**

I didn't bring home boxes.

He picks one up — defensive.

**HUSBAND:**

You don't understand. Throwing things away still feels like cutting off a limb.

You soften — just a little.

**YOU:**

And watching it come back feels like drowning.

That lands.

He looks at the pile now. Really looks.

**HUSBAND:**

I panicked.

You swallow.

**YOU:**

So did I. When I saw this.

Silence.

The room feels smaller than it has in weeks.

**HUSBAND:**

I wasn't trying to undo everything.

You step closer to the pile. Touch the box.

**YOU:**

But this is how it starts.

He doesn't argue.

That scares you more than yelling would.

**HUSBAND:**

I don't know how to live without the safety net.

You nod.

**YOU:**

I know.

Your voice cracks.

**YOU (CONT'D):**

But your safety net is my suffocation.

He looks at you — guilt flooding his face.

**HUSBAND:**

I don't want to lose you.

You gesture to the pile.

**YOU:**

Then don't rebuild the thing that almost did.

A long beat.

He slowly kneels. Opens the box.

Inside: meaningless objects. Old receipts. Broken things. Fear disguised as necessity.

His hands shake.

**HUSBAND:**

Stay.

Not a command.

A plea.

You don't answer right away.

You kneel beside him.

Not rescuing.

Witnessing.

Together, you sort.

He throws something away.

Then another.

Then stops.

Overwhelmed.

You place one item gently into the trash bag.

Then you stop.

You look at him.

**YOU:**

I can walk with you.

You pause.

**YOU (CONT'D):**

But I won't live like this again.

He nods — eyes wet.

**HUSBAND:**

I know.

They sit there on the floor — the space between them open, fragile.

The relapse didn't win.

But it reminded them what's at stake.

CUT TO BLACK.

INT. TREATMENT CENTER — DAY

HUSBAND signs papers.

YOU watches — hopeful, guarded.

**INT. THERAPY WAITING ROOM — DAY**

HUSBAND fills out paperwork.

*Father: Deceased.*

He hesitates — writes it anyway.

YOU watches from across the room.

Hope. Guarded.

FINAL SCENE:

INT. CLEANER APARTMENT— NIGHT



Homework at the table.

OLDEST

It's quiet.

YOU

That's the point.

FADE OUT.