

GOODBYES

Written by

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Based on true events

INT. HOSPITAL ICU - NIGHT

Linoleum-lined hallways echo with the distant sound of ventilators, heart monitors, and the padded footsteps of nurses quietly doing their rounds.

A bleary-eyed JONATHAN (late 30s) pushes open the heavy doors to the reception area, blinking at the fluorescent lights. He's got a heavy five o'clock shadow and bags under his eyes that belie a string of sleepless nights and bad decisions.

His hands are shoved deep into the pockets of a heavy brown jacket, mottled by the rain that's hammering away outside the windows. His boots trail the rotting remains of the leaves knocked to the gutter by the incessant autumnal winds.

Jonathan quietly makes his way to the reception desk, where the busy NURSE (50s) doesn't even look up to acknowledge him.

TAP TAP TAP. She feverishly types on the keyboard in front of her. She slides a sign in sheet to Jonathan.

NURSE

Sign in.

Jonathan scribbles down his name and, checking the wall-mounted clock, the time he arrived. 11:45pm.

NURSE (CONT'D)

Patient name?

Jonathan clears his throat.

JONATHAN

Um. Mary. Mary Campbell.

In that instant, the typing stops. The Nurse looks up at Jonathan. Her thin, pitying smile says everything.

NURSE

Relationship to the patient?

JONATHAN

Oh. Ummm...son, I guess.

She nods.

NURSE

Room 1412. Down the hall on your left. Just so you know, there's a four person limit in the room. It's full right now.

JONATHAN

Oh. Ok. Should I...leave? Or should
I wait 'til someone comes out?

The nurse looks both ways, checking to make sure no one is in earshot.

NURSE

Just go ahead. It's OK.

Jonathan peers down the hallway. It seems to stretch on forever.

NURSE (CONT'D)

On the left. The curtains are
drawn.

He nods and tentatively makes his way down the hall. As he passes each ICU room, he glances at the people inside.

In one room, a Mexican family hugs each other as they look down at their dying grandfather in the hospital bed.

In the next room, a young HUSBAND (40s) and WIFE (40s) squabble as their TEENAGE SON (16) lies unconscious, a bandage over half his face.

In the next, an ELDERLY MAN (80s) sits beside the bed of his WIFE (80s). He holds her hand tenderly and stares off into the middle distance.

Jonathan looks away. It's too much.

Finally, he reaches room 1412.

The BEEPING of the EKG machines becomes increasingly louder as his hand reaches for the door. The rain peppers the windows.

He pulls his hand back from the door handle. It's shaking. He balls it into a fist, and shakes his head.

JONATHAN

(under his breath)
I can't do this.

His hand drops to his side, still shaking with anxiety. He's about to leave when the door CREAKS OPEN.

Standing before him is ANNIE (early 30s), clothes rumpled and cheeks streaked with tears. Her sibling resemblance to Jonathan is undeniable.

She GASPS the moment she sees him. He can only muster a weak smile.

JONATHAN (CONT'D)
Hey, sis.

ANNIE
Johnny?

She closes the door behind her. For a moment it looks like she's about to slap him. Suddenly, she embraces him.

He's taken aback, words failing him. Not knowing what else to do, his body relaxes and he returns her hug.

After a long time, he lets her go.

ANNIE (CONT'D)
You're soaking wet.

JONATHAN
What happened?

ANNIE
(nervous)
God. It's been so long. Where are you living? You look -

JONATHAN
Annie. What. Happened?

She gets quiet and averts her eyes.

ANNIE
It's a respiratory infection. She was having trouble breathing and it isn't getting better.

JONATHAN
They couldn't do anything for her at Aegis? The nurses there are trained for stuff like this.

Annie narrows her eyes, suddenly suspicious.

ANNIE
How did you know she was at an assisted living place?

Steel faced, Jonathan doesn't reply. Annie presses further.

ANNIE (CONT'D)
(trying to piece things together)
(MORE)

ANNIE (CONT'D)
Wait. How did you know she was in
the hospital? None of us have
talked to you since...

JONATHAN
(matter of fact)
Since I punched a hole in the wall
at her house at Thanksgiving nine
years ago. Yeah.

The awkward silence of a shared uncomfortable memory hangs
between them.

ANNIE
You know she regrets saying those
things.

JONATHAN
Does she?

Annie fumbles over a response.

JONATHAN (CONT'D)
You and I both know the shit she's
said. I just got sick of being on
the receiving end.

Annie has no rebuttal.

ANNIE
(unconvincing)
She's not like that anymore.

Jonathan gives her a "*don't be naive*" look. He sighs.

JONATHAN
I shouldn't have come. Save
yourself the headache - don't tell
the others I was here.

He turns to leave and is halfway down the hallway when Annie
calls out after him.

ANNIE
She's on a ventilator. They put her
in a medically induced coma.

Jonathan stops cold. He winces. He knows what that means.

ANNIE (CONT'D)
(trying to keep it
together, but failing)
The transplant doctors came in this
morning.

(MORE)

ANNIE (CONT'D)

They said that her new lungs aren't pliable or whatever word they used. She's not going to get better, OK?

Slowly, he walks back to Annie. She starts to cry.

He lets her cry into his shoulder.

ANNIE (CONT'D)

(through tears)

Why did you come?

Jonathan struggles to find an answer. He takes a heavy breath before continuing.

JONATHAN

The last thing she said to me was, "You ruined my life, you little bitch." And I could tell from the look on her face that saying the words out loud surprised her. But she meant it. And she couldn't unsay it. All those years, even before dad died, I could tell that she blamed me for losing her career, having to move, and all the bad shit that happened to her. Even stuff that wasn't my fault, like the tree that fell on the house.

ANNIE

I remember that.

JONATHAN

I had to leave. I couldn't be a punching bag anymore.

Annie pushes away from him.

ANNIE

(building to anger)

Yeah, but that left me and April to pick up the pieces. Me and April had to be there while she withered away and had to be on oxygen 24 hours a day waiting for the transplant. Her skin turned *gray*, Johnny. Do you know how many sleepless nights we had, waiting for a phone call to let us know there was a donor? How many false alarms we had?

(MORE)

ANNIE (CONT'D)

And then *after*, we were the ones who had to deal with the months of recovery, and the doctor visits, and the medicines and...and...and you weren't there. I had to help her go to the bathroom. I had to be the one that took the brunt of her awful words and I was the one who was treated like shit. How was that fair?

He anger lingers for a long moment between them.

JONATHAN

(quietly)

It wasn't.

They stand in the hallway, unable to make eye contact, the heavy silence between them punctuated by hospital sounds.

JONATHAN (CONT'D)

I should go.

Annie crosses her arms. She wipes away tears of anger.

ANNIE

It was you, wasn't it?

Jonathan cocks his head as if to say "*What do you mean?*"

ANNIE (CONT'D)

The billing department. Every bill we got, there was always a line item: "Payment received". We thought it was her Medicare but...it was you, wasn't it?

Tears well in the corner of Jonathan's eyes. He struggles to find the right words.

JONATHAN

She's still my mom.

The shrug he gives is small, but speaks volumes.

ANNIE

(knowingly)

Yeah.

Again, the tension of years of unspoken family trauma hangs between them. Annie breaks it.

ANNIE (CONT'D)

I'm gonna go back in. You decide
what you want to do. Dry off,
you're going to catch a cold.

She quietly opens the door to the hospital room and goes inside to rejoin the others gathered at the bedside.

Jonathan catches a glimpse inside the dark room.

He sees the shape of the woman who used to be his mother, lying on a hospital bed, hooked up to a ventilator with her eyes shut closed.

The door closes and he's left standing alone in the hallway, wrestling with what to do - leave or stay.

He closes his eyes. The sounds of the hospital fade...

In his head, Jonathan hears the echoing voice of his mother over the decades. Every moment where she snapped at him or called him a name.

But he also hears words of encouragement. Cheering from the sidelines at a track & field meet. Gathering the siblings for holiday pictures. He hears the laughter of his sisters as they fight over the wishbone at Thanksgiving.

A mix of good moments and bad.

A tear rolls down cheek, catching on the stubble. He steadies himself before reaching for the door handle.

But - in a moment of hesitation, he pulls his hand back. We never see if he opens the door.

CUT TO BLACK.