

ANATOMY OF GRIEF

INT. LIVING ROOM - AFTERNOON

TRACKING SHOT through the empty living room: couches, throw pillows, modern glass lamps, side tables, a fireplace adorned with green garland and a wreath, and a lit Christmas tree.

CLOSE UP of the mantle, focusing on pictures of the same couple, following them through years together. STELLA is pregnant in the photos.

The sound of glass breaking.

CUT TO: WIDE SHOT of ornaments shattered on the floor.

STELLA
Shit, shit!

The sound of the door opening. MARSHA walks in.

MARSHA
Hey, love.

STELLA
(stuffed up voice, picking up glass)
Be careful, there's glass.
I'm getting it.

MARSHA
Oh babe-

Marsha leaves her bag on the ground and crouches next to Stella, attempting to hold her hands away from the glass.

MARSHA
-not with your bare hands, come on.

Stella rips her hands away from Marsha.

STELLA
I've got it!
(teary, quietly)
I'll pick up the fucking ornaments.

K. Tobias

Marsha puts her hand on Stella's shoulder.

MARSHA

I'll get it later.

Stella gives an irritated sigh, stands up and walks away, leaving Marsha crouched on the floor.

CUT TO: TRACKING SHOT of STELLA walking through a carpeted hallway, also adorned with pictures. She stops in front of a DOOR. She stares at it for a moment, then walks away.

CUT TO: CLOSE UP of Stella's face on a pillow. Her eyes are red.

CUT TO: BIRDS EYE SHOT of Stella in a large bed, curled on her side.

MONTAGE of BIRDS EYE SHOTS of Marsha attempting to get Stella out of bed, the sunlight fading and brightening as days pass. Marsha stops coming in.

Stella gets out of bed.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - AFTERNOON

Stella lies on a bed, holding a baby. Marsha is standing next to her, looking lovingly down on them.

STELLA

She's- God, she's perfect.

MARSHA

(teary eyed)

Yeah, she is.

STELLA

Look, her hair.

MARSHA

(laughs wetly)

Yeah. Mine. And her eyes.

All yours.

Stella nods, smiling.

INT. HALLWAY

Stella stands in front of the door again. She puts her hand on the knob, turns it, but doesn't open the door. She walks out of frame. The camera is still on the door. A few moments later, Marsha walks in frame, and touches her hand to the door, slowly pushing it open.

FADE TO BLACK.

INT. LIVING ROOM

CUT TO: Marsha in the living room, on the phone.

MARSHA

(quietly, into receiver)
No, she hasn't been out in days.
We can't keep going like this.
I just- I cleaned up today. It'll
never be the right time so I
just... did it.

(pauses, covers eyes with hands)

Fucking horrible.

(another pause)

No, mom it's- No, don't-

Stella walks in the room.

MARSHA

I'll call you back. Yeah, love
you too.

Stella sits down on the couch opposite Marsha, turns on the TV to the cooking channel.

MARSHA

Hey, do you want to go get some
food? Maybe Indian?

Stella doesn't respond. They sit in silence for a moment. Marsha rises and walks out of the room.

INT. BEDROOM

Marsha sits on the edge of bed, staring at herself in the large mirror across from her. One hand carefully tugs at her hair.

CLOSE UP of a photo in Marsha's other hand, of her and Stella in the hospital with the baby.

Marsha grabs a pillow and presses it to her face. She screams, muffled.

FADE TO BLACK.

FADE IN TO DINING ROOM. Marsha and Stella are eating as music plays softly in the background.

STELLA

(clears throat)

How's your mother?

MARSHA

You know her- her knee hurts
and her back, and, and, and...

(forced chuckle)

She's actually thinking of
coming over this weekend.

STELLA

Ah.

MARSHA

What? Is that okay?

STELLA

Yeah, of course it is. It'll...
be good. I need to... clean up
around the house anyway.

MARSHA

(puts down cutlery)

Have you thought about seeing the
grief counselor again?

STELLA

I don't want to do this right now.

MARSHA

K. Tobias

(getting irritated)
I know, Stella, but you don't
really want to do anything at
any time, so I really think you
should do this!

The sound of metal clanging as STELLA drops her cutlery onto her
plate.

STELLA
Because you think I'm going crazy?
Well I'm not. I'm not fucking crazy,
I'm grieving.

MARSHA
Believe it or not, you're not the
only one! I'm sick of this -
you need to get things together,
because laying in bed all day isn't
doing anything for you.
(voice cracks)
Please, please. I need you to.

Stella takes measured breaths.

STELLA
(quietly)
I'm sorry. I know that I've been...
difficult lately. I just need a
little more time. I'm working on
it, I promise.

Marsha gives a watery smile, Stella stares at her own plate.

CUT TO Stella walking down the hallway. Music from dinner still plays
in the background. She stops in front of the door, then opens it.

CLOSE UP of Stella's face. She scrunches her eyes shut and puts her
hand over her mouth.

The background music fades out, and it is now totally silent.

Stella stalks down the hallway into a bedroom.
She rummages roughly through drawers, throwing clothes on the ground.
She moves to a closet, and spots a small box, which she opens and
pulls out a small paper. It is a photo of a baby, resembling Stella.

K. Tobias

CUT TO: WIDE SHOT of Marsha in the kitchen washing dishes, humming.
Stella walks in, out of breath, clutching a small photo.

MARSHA

(wiping her hands on a tea towel)
Hey.

(smile)

I was just about to-
(gestures upward with hands)
call you down for a movie.

STELLA

(angry, teary)
Did you even think of me?

MARSHA

What?

STELLA

Her room.

MARSHA

(closed eyes)
I thought it would help.

STELLA

(shouting)
Bullshit, you thought it would
help!

MARSHA

Stella, I really-

STELLA

(quietly)
Don't.

MARSHA

(reaching out to Stella)
Stella, I know we can't just go
back to the way it was. I know that.
But... please.

Stella jerks out of Marsha's reach.

STELLA

(sobbing)

Please what? Please forget that you threw away her things? That her room is empty? That there's just one single picture of her in this house? That you didn't love her like I loved her?

(shows the picture of the baby)
That we bonded the way you were just too busy to?

MARSHA

(shocked)

How can you say that? How dare you say that?

(crying)

She was my daughter too. I may not have carried her, but I loved her. And you were the one that wanted to take down the pictures!

STELLA

I didn't mean everything! I didn't mean the nursery.

MARSHA

Well maybe I did it for myself! Maybe I couldn't stand watching you just stare at her door, or waste away in bed. Did you ever think of me?

STELLA

If you loved her so much, why weren't you ever home? Why didn't you spend more time with her? With me? Why weren't you ever there?

(angrily wiping away tears)
I can't believe you.

MARSHA

Fuck you! I've been trying to keep everything together and you won't even get the fuck up! You won't even talk to me!

K. Tobias

Stella turns away.

STELLA

I'm sorry. I love you. And I can't...

MARSHA

Don't run away. Not from me. Not
from us. I can't do this by myself.

Stella leaves the room.

CUT TO: BIRDS EYE SHOT of Stella curled in bed. Marsha climbs in next to her, curled up. They face each other like matching parentheses.

CUT TO: CLOSE UP of Stella's face. Her eyes are closed.

CUT TO: CLOSE UP of Marsha's face. Her eyes are wide open, searching Stella's face. Marsha's shuddering breath is the only sound.

CUT TO: CLOSE UP of Marsha shifting her hand to the space in between them, rustling the sheets. A moment. Stella shifts her hand so her pinkie touches Marsha's.

FADE TO BLACK.

END.