

FRAN        What's going on?

PIP         Can't I visit and sit for a minute in the yard where I grew up.

FRAN        Is that what you call it now, when you come? A visit? A visit is something a relative you don't know very well does once a year. Something you've just got to get through. This is different. This is you, coming home, which you do three or four times a week. The thing is when you come you don't sit. You come. You do what needs to be done and then you go. That's the way it is. So now I find you sitting and I'm pretty sure something is wrong.

Bob emerges from the house tying his bathrobe.

BOB         What's going on?

FRAN        Pip is visiting.

BOB         What's wrong?

FRAN        There you go.... Why don't you make some coffee, Bob?

BOB         Well, I would if I knew how to work that machine.

FRAN        Rosie will show you.

BOB         You want cream, Pip?

PIP         Black thanks, Dad.

BOB         Visiting!

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START       Bob goes back inside.

FRAN        Is this about Steve?

PIP         I'm leaving him.

FRAN        Does he know yet?

PIP He will soon.

FRAN You better drop the kids off. Give yourselves some room to talk.

PIP You're not surprised?

FRAN No. I could see this coming. The writing's been on the wall for some time.

PIP What did it say, Mom? This writing.

FRAN It said "I'm not happy". In big black letters.

PIP Don't.

FRAN What?

PIP Make out like you know more about my life than I do.

FRAN I'm just saying.

PIP Let me be the expert on that at least.

FRAN Somebody got up on the wrong side of bed this morning.

PIP This was a bad idea.

She rises to go.

FRAN Don't you walk away from this... You're not twelve years old anymore.

PIP What will you do, Mom? Pull my hair? Slap my face?

~~Rosie has come out of the house with the quilt. She has caught the last of the exchange. She wraps the quilt around Pip's shoulders. Pip takes it in, and is grateful for its comfort.~~

~~ROSIE Dad messed up the coffee so we're having tea.~~

~~Pip removes the quilt, knowing that comfort is that what she needs right now. She has something she needs to do.~~

PIP                      Mom,                      Rosie  
                          Rosie, do you remember when you fell off the ladder?

~~ROSIE                      Not really, I was only seven wasn't I?~~

~~FRAN                      Eighteen months. If that.~~

PIP                      You                      her. You were  
                          Mom asked me to watch you. She was busy inside.

FRAN                      I was cleaning the house.

PIP                      But I didn't really want to. I was trying to get a tan. I was lying in the sun in my bikini and Mom kept saying I would burn.

FRAN                      You didn't have the skin for it. You still don't.

PIP                      But I was determined that I'd have a tan that summer.

FRAN                      You've got your father's skin.

PIP                      I only closed my eyes for a moment. Dad had left the ladder up against the shed.

FRAN                      He never did that again.

PIP                      And I didn't know you could climb. Babies can't climb ladders.

FRAN                      She could.

PIP                      I can still hear the crack of your skull hitting the walkway there.

FRAN                      I heard it from the kitchen.

PIP                      I screamed. Mom ran out of the house and saw what happened. She looked at me and I swear I went cold. She could do that with just a look.

FRAN I still can.

PIP But particularly to me, Mom. You do that to me

Beat

PIP I ran into the house and hid under the bed. And she came after me.

FRAN Here we go.

PIP You came after me and pulled me out from under the bed by my hair.

FRAN Well, you wouldn't come out.

PIP By my hair.

FRAN I couldn't reach anything else.

PIP You tore the hair from my head.

FRAN It was just a few strands.

PIP It was a clump with skin. And then you slapped my face.

FRAN I was in shock. I was angry. I was tired. I had four kids and one day a week to clean the house. And I asked you to do one thing. To watch over your sister. But you were too selfish. And too vain to do it.

PIP Vain?

FRAN Lying in the sun with your sunglasses on like you were Jackie Kennedy instead of watching your sister.

~~ROSIE Dad. How's the tea coming?~~

PIP I wasn't vain. I was just trying to fit in. To be like all the other girls.

~~ROSIE I'll see how he's doing.~~

PIP ~~Stay... Rosie. Would you?~~... I was a mouse. A mouse, Mom. The only thing I thought was pretty about me was my hair. Which is what you tore out of my head. Funny that.

FRAN It was a moment. A moment of anger.

PIP I had a bald patch for a whole semester. It still doesn't grow very well there.

FRAN It was one time. And now what? You're unhappy because I pulled your hair when you were twelve years old.

END PIP I was fourteen.

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Bob enters.

FRAN Are you going to tell him or should I?

PIP Go right ahead.

FRAN She's leaving Steve.

BOB Steve?

FRAN Well, who else would she be leaving, Bob?

BOB Why?

FRAN Because I pulled her hair when she was fourteen years old and she's been unhappy ever since.

ROSIE Mom!

PIP It hasn't been good for a while, Dad.

BOB Well, I know there's been a rough patch. But that's true for most marriages.

PIP I've tried.