

mysteries and perhaps, in the beholding, even deeper truths are revealed to us.

CASSIDY: Whatever ...

RIVER: Like this house. We call it a house but what is it? It's made of wood someone harvested from the land—dead trees and stone and metal we took from the ground, things which were themselves long before we got here, long before someone put them and started calling them “a house.” And who's to say those things don't have their own feelings about that, memories they're holding on to—energies? Who knows what's happening right now that we can't even see ... or hear, because we don't know how to see or hear it? Listen. What if this house is trying to say something to us right now, Cassidy?

(There is a scratching and banging on the door, which startles Cassidy and River. Then the sound of keys being dropped is heard.)

TONI *(From off)*: Shit.

CASSIDY: Aunt Toni?

(The door opens.)

RIVER: Toni! You scared us.

TONI: Good. *(Referring to the order)* What has happened here?

RIVER: Oh! Rachael and I got everything together for the sale tomorrow! You really set us up for success. With everyone pitching in, it only took a few hours.

TONI: Great ...

RIVER: The only room we still have left to clear out is your father's bedroom. Rhys said he wasn't feeling well so we left him alone in there to rest—

(Toni notices Cassidy with the photo album and snatches it away.)

TONI: Cassidy, *what* are you doing with this?!

RIVER *(Confused)*: / Uhhhh—

TONI: You know you are not supposed to be looking at these!

(Beat.)

CASSIDY: PLEASE DON'T TELL MY PARENTS!

RIVER *(Realizing Cassidy lied)*: I'm sorry, I was down here looking at them and she walked in and she told me she'd seen them—

TONI: And what are you doing with them?

RIVER: I was asked to throw them away but it didn't feel right—

CASSIDY: Don't be mad at Aunt River! It's my fault—I just didn't think it was fair that Rhys got to see them and not me! I'm almost an adult—

RIVER: Cassidy actually was being very mature—asking all the right questions. She was using the internet. She even figured out that they might be worth a little money.

(Beat.)

TONI *(Suspicious, handing the photos to Cassidy)*: Cassidy, go put these in my car ...

CASSIDY: Why?

TONI *(Not taking her eyes off River)*: Because your “aunties” need to talk. You're lucky I think you're smarter than your parents do but these are not appropriate for a thirteen year old—I don't care how adult you think you are! Now put these in my car and stay away and then

Begins

(Toni begins to give herself a tour of Rachael's handiwork, walking from room to room. River begins to trail her.)

TONI: All right, River, what's your real name?

RIVER: I'm sorry?

TONI: Frank just came back here calling himself something stupid and it seems like he's getting most of his ideas from you and I just have a feeling your lawyer parents did not name you River, so what is your name?

(Beat.)

RIVER: My given name is Trisha but I changed it after I-

TONI: Okay, Trisha—so, since you're the brains behind this setup maybe you can clear up some confusion for me. Because I keep being told you all didn't come here for money, but here you still are, long after that little apology stunt from earlier, helping out with the sale, price checking our trash, figuring out what might or might not be worth "a little money"—and I wonder why that is?

RIVER: Toni, if anything, I'm just trying to be helpful.

TONI: Helpful to whom?

RIVER: You can't possibly think we drove all the way down here to make a fuss over some old junk? We don't need anybody's money. And all Franz wants is what he's told you he's here for, which is to reconnect—to heal—and I'm just here to support him. You haven't seen it, but your brother is in real pain. Since he found out his father died, he hasn't slept through a single night—and that's not sustainable, Toni. Everyone deserves rest. And this was your father, too, so you must know how powerful grief is. But he didn't get the closure of a funeral like you all did. He is stuck in his pain—and, sometimes, the only way to move forward in the absence of the traditional ways is to cobble together a little ritual of our own. Seeing the house go is one part of that. Making amends is another. And whether or not you choose to forgive him is on you—but he's made the effort and the effort is sincere. And that's what counts.

TONI: What do you actually know about Frank? Do you even know what he did here?

RIVER: I do, Toni. And I don't care. I was a young girl once. I remember what the attentions of an older man could feel like then. I remember

what it was to want to feel grown up. Look at your niece. And I'm not excusing what he did, but I do think that there are gray areas. And I also believe that people make mistakes and deserve to be forgiven, when they ask for it. Why don't you?

TONI: Oh my goodness—

RIVER: We can't go back and change the past—we can't unhurt the people we've hurt, we can't unfeel feelings—but we ease the pain of the present by enacting the eternal rites. And apologizing is one of the oldest rituals we have.

(While both women are distracted, Cassidy is seen sneaking back into the room with the photo album. She hides, eavesdropping.)

Did you know the root of "sorry" is actually "sore"? When you're saying, "I'm sorry," you're literally saying, "I am sore." "I hurt." "I suffer for you." It's almost like a little spell. With just two words, we acknowledge the reality of the other's suffering and take it into ourselves. Through the ritual, we bind our pain to other's and, in doing so, acknowledge the universality of suffering. We give our pain up to the collective and that's how we move on. Isn't that beautiful?

TONI: So you've got a mother, Trisha?

RIVER: I do ...

TONI: Oh good, because, when I was your age, mine was dead and it was a very ugly and slow and painful death that I was forced to watch very closely. And then I was forced to watch my father and his two little boys mourn her, which is a different kind of pain. In fact, I watched my father mourn her for the rest of his life. And then I, of course, watched him die. So I don't need you to come in here with your "old soul," giving me your notes from your hippy dippy anthropology seminar on grief and suffering and mourning because I know all those girls personally and it takes more than a little ritual to send them away. It takes time, which you—fortunately or unfortunately—know next to nothing about.

RIVER: You're right, Toni. (*Loaded*) I'm sorry .. I had no idea about any of that until today ... Franz had told me a bit about what happened here but you were the one who had to deal with so much of it, huh? You were something of a mother to him, weren't you? Now I understand how hard this is for you. My own mother had a very difficult time when I came home to make amends ... Family can be so hard on us women. But you know what I think you need? (*Touching her*) A sister. I have three and you wouldn't imagine the difference it makes—

TONI: You know what I need? For you to back the hell up. (*Beat*) I think I just figured you out. You're one of those "Sweet Girls," aren't you? Do people ever call you that? "Sweet"? "Aww, Trisha, you're so sweet." I haven't seen one of you in a long time. In fact, I wonder now if I used to be one of you. I think I remember running around being "sweet" and twenty-three, thinking I knew everything and was gonna save everybody by "loving" them into submission. God. But you know what happens to "Sweet Girls"? Life gobbles you up—faster than the others because we run around making ourselves so tasty, sprinkling our sugar all over everyone else's shit. But let me tell you now what no one ever told me: you don't get an unlimited supply. That sugar is gonna run out and that's when they'll start calling you bitter. So don't be in such a hurry to waste it— and certainly not on Frank. You're not going to fix him. I tried—this whole family's tried—but Frank is going to be who he is, which is a grown man and a hot dog mess. You have a long road ahead. So take my advice: save some of this sweetness for yourself—save some of you for you.

RIVER: No offense, Toni, but you and I are not the same person and Franz has got sweetness in him, too—

TONI: No, honey, Frank has got a sweet tooth—

RIVER: And what we have is love—real love—and that is not something that runs out—

TONI (*Getting up to go*): Okay, honey—

RIVER: And we're going to be a family—

TONI: All right, see you at the wedding.

RIVER: No, Toni. I don't think you get it. I'm having his baby. I'm pregnant.

(*Toni freezes.*)

TONI: What?

RIVER (*Relieved*): You're the first person I've told. I haven't even told Franz. I found out last weekend and I'm going to tell him here. It's actually the end of this whole ritual I've planned. Tomorrow, after everything is over—once he's seen this house go—we're going to camp out somewhere around here in these woods—pitch a tent under all those stars out there, build a fire, meditate, sing some songs, and reconnect with this old Earth—and, right at the end, right before we go to bed, that's when I'm going to tell him. He's going to fall asleep feeling how his life is really going to change. And I'd like for you to be a part of this child's life. I'd like for everyone here to be a part of its life. But I can't make you. Though you and Bo are both parents. You know what it takes to be one. Franz doesn't. He's going to need help. Don't you think this child could use a father who knows what the love of family is?

Ends

TONI: I found a friend. Once apparently I don't have any more needs.

BO: Who?

TONI: Juanita.

BO: You went out and got drunk with our father's nurse?