

One True Thing

Scrapbook Scene

ELLEN

(On the phone with her dad)

Yeah. I'm sure you will, dad.

MOM

Who was that?

ELLEN

It was your husband. Said he's working late again.

MOM

Well, it's a tough job, running that whole department.

ELLEN

Not that tough.

MOM

Whatever you're doing, stop it and come here. Right now!

ELLEN

Yea.

MOM

What has happened between you and your father.

ELLEN

What do you mean?

MOM

You've been so angry at him ever since you came home.

ELLEN

I don't know. I mean there's some stuff that.... Well, I mean it doesn't have anything to do with you.

MOM

Pretty soon he's all you'll have, you

know.

ELLEN

Please, mom. Stop. I don't...

MOM

You stop. He's gonna need you. You're gonna need each other. My God, you used to be so close. What? You two are so alike.

ELLEN

Please don't say that.

MOM

Why? Because he's not perfect? Because he's not the man you thought he was?
(She coughs)

ELLEN

No, I...no, I can't. I can't talk about this. I really can't...
(She turns to leave)

MOM

Come back here. I want you to sit down here. I want to talk to you. Sit there....

(Ellen returns to the room, sits)

MOM (CONT'D)

Now you listen to me because I'm only going to say this once and I probably shouldn't say it at all. There's nothing that you know about your father that I don't know. Nothing. And understand better. OK? You make concessions when you're married a long time that you don't believe you'll make when you're beginning. When you're young. You say, "Oh, I'll never tolerate this or that or the other thing." But time goes by, darlin', and when you've slept together a thousand nights and you've smelled like spit up from the babies when they're sick and you've seen your body droop and get soft and some nights you just think "Oh, God,

I'm not going to put up with it another minute," But you wake up the next morning and the kitchen smells like coffee and the kids have their hair brushed all by themselves and you look at your husband and know he's not the person you thought he was. But he's your life. And the kids and the house and everything that you do is built around him. And that's your life, that's your history too, and if you take him out, it's like cutting his face out of all the pictures. It just makes a big hole, and it ruins everything. You can be hard, Ellen. And you can be very judgmental. And with those two things alone you're going to make such a mess out of your life you wouldn't believe and I want to be able to tell you these things in ten years and when I think how most of what you've learned so far came from your dad, it just, it hurts my heart to think how little I have gotten through.

(They argue)

ELLEN

No. No, mom. Shhh. I don't want to talk about that. Can we not talk about that?

MOM

Yea. Yea. Let me speak. I want to talk. Let me talk. Now let me talk. Your dad won't let me talk because he says I'll upset myself. And you won't let me talk, "Oh mom, please don't talk." Brian's the only one who lets me talk. He's never here. I want to talk before I die. I do. I want to be able to say the things. I want to say the deep thoughts.

ELLEN

(Whispering)

OK. OK.

MOM

Without you shushing me, because what I say hurts you.

ELLEN

Oh.

MOM

I'm tired of being shushed.

ELLEN

What do you want to say?

MOM

I already said everything I want to say...except I'm sad...

ELLEN

What?

MOM

I'm sad that I won't be able to plan your wedding. So promise me that you won't have a ring bearer or a flower girl because those kids always misbehave and they distract from the bride. And don't invite too many people.

ELLEN

Well, you know, I might not even get married, so....

MOM

Whatever. If I knew that you would be happy, I would close my eyes now, I would. It's so much easier to be happy, my love, so much easier to choose to love the things that you have, and you have so much, instead of always yearning for what you're missing, or what it is you're imagining you're missing. (It would be) so much more peaceful.