

ABIDE

DE Number: DE16

Writer Number: DE16-51

As a man faces the reality of his wife's dementia,
he must decide whether to hold on to his guilt
or let her go.

FADE IN:

INT. BECK'S ROOM - MORNING

What was once a study has been transformed with a hospital bed, walker, and other equipment. Its inhabitant, BECK, in her sixties, is a bit young to be using any of them. She rolls about in bed, growing increasingly agitated.

BECK

Harry? . . . Harry!

Her husband HARRY enters, with juice and a cup of pills.

HARRY

It's all right. I'm right here.

BECK

Why did you leave me?

HARRY

It's OK. I'm here now. Come on, you need to take your pills.

BECK

No.

She rolls away from him.

HARRY

Beck, you know you need them. Come on.

She ignores him.

HARRY (CONT'D)

You know it'll be easier on both of us if you take them now.

BECK

I won't!

She knocks the cup out of his hand. Pills scatter on the floor. He is about to say something but bites it back. He kneels down to pick up the pills, wincing. Getting up and down is not as easy as it used to be.

HARRY

Jeremy's coming over later.

BECK

What?

(beat)

(MORE)

BECK (CONT'D)
I don't want to see him. I don't
want to see anybody. Get out.

Harry sighs and pulls himself to his feet.

HARRY
Are you sure you don't--?

BECK
Get out!

He walks slowly toward the door, still a little stiff. Just
as he gets there...

BECK (CONT'D)
Where are you going?

HARRY
I thought I'd start breakfast. Do
you need something?

BECK
I have to take my . . . I need to
pee. I want up!

He returns to the bed and helps her into the walker.

INT. KITCHEN - A LITTLE LATER

Beck sits at the table. Harry sets in front of her glasses of
juice and water, a plate of breakfast, and fresh pills laid
out on a napkin. He sits across from her. Without tasting the
food, she tosses the pills in her mouth and takes a drink of
water.

BECK
This tastes like crap. I can't eat
this.

HARRY
Try it with some juice.

BECK
Don't tell me what to do in my
kitchen!

Harry has an answer to this but again holds it back.

HARRY
Maybe it'd be better with a little
red wine.

BECK

(beat)

You know I don't keep wine in my house! You stupid old man.

This stings. But at least now she's eating.

BECK (CONT'D)

What time is it?

HARRY

Seven.

BECK

How long till "The Price Is Right"?

HARRY

Four hours.

INT. KITCHEN - A LITTLE LATER

Harry washes dishes. Beck takes a few clean plates, dries them, and adds them to a stack on the counter. She picks up the stack, carries it around Harry, and sets it in the sink full of dishwater.

INT. KITCHEN - LATER

Harry places the last of the dishes in the cabinet.

BECK (O.S.)

Harry!

INT. LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Beck points a controller at the TV with no result.

BECK (CONT'D)

What did you do to the remote?

EXT. HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

The garage door opens, then starts to close.

INT. LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Harry enters and hands Beck the correct remote.

BECK

Oh. How long till "The Price Is Right"?

HARRY

Three hours and forty minutes.

INT. STUDY - LATER

Harry's desk is neat and sparse, with a computer and a single stack of paper. He types away at the computer, headphones in.

INT. LIVING ROOM

Beck sits engrossed in a crossword puzzle.

INT. STUDY

Harry stops typing, sighs, and rubs his eyes. He removes the headphones and listens.

INT. LIVING ROOM

Beck lies asleep in her chair, the newspaper against her chest. Harry picks it up and eyes the crossword. Some of the clues have answers in shaky handwriting. A few are gibberish.

Harry takes a blanket and lays it across her. As he tucks it in around her, she takes his hand and caresses it, still unconscious. For a moment, he can't move. She smiles softly in her sleep.

EXT. HOUSE

An expensive-looking car pulls into the driveway.

INT. ENTRYWAY

Harry opens the door for JEREMY, their son, a man in his thirties who wears a business suit like he was born in it.

HARRY

Hi there, stranger.

JEREMY

Hey, Dad.

They hug, if a little stiffly.

HARRY
Glad you could make it.

JEREMY
How is she today?

INT. LIVING ROOM

Beck sees Jeremy enter, and her eyes light up. He manages a smile in return.

BECK
Jeremy!

JEREMY
How are you feeling?

BECK
I've seen better days. Is Jessica with you?

JEREMY
(beat)
She's busy today. How's Dad treating you?

BECK
Oh . . . I had to cook him breakfast, so I made him wash dishes.

She reaches for a cup of water by her chair.

JEREMY
What do you want? Water?

He retrieves the cup for her, but instead of taking it, she bends the straw toward her and sips while he holds it. Jeremy watches her movements carefully.

BECK
The old fool can't navigate a kitchen to save his life.

JEREMY
Mom. I know he cooks for you.

BECK
Maybe. Do you want to watch this with me?

JEREMY
Maybe in a bit.

INT. KITCHEN

Harry sets two mugs of tea on the table. Jeremy pulls out a set of brochures.

JEREMY

OK. I've narrowed it down to three places. Most want you to be retirement age, but all these make exceptions for medical conditions.

HARRY

What do you know about these places?

JEREMY

I called and checked their rates, looked at some reviews online. I made notes in the back of each one.

Harry flips through each of the brochures and sets them down in turn. He picks up his mug again.

HARRY

All right. There. I said I'd look at them.

JEREMY

Dad, come on. I'm thinking of you. You've got to give yourself a break.

HARRY

Like you? This is what a husband's supposed to do.

JEREMY

You did what a husband's supposed to do for forty years.

HARRY

No, I didn't. I stumbled through that door drunk so many nights. Burned through money that should've been for you. It's no wonder what happened between you and your wife.

JEREMY

Dad--

HARRY

I should've shown you, and I didn't.

BECK (O.S.)
Harry! Can you bring me some tea?

HARRY
Sure!

He takes another mug from the cabinet.

JEREMY
Can we not make this about Jessica?
Please?
(beat)
That wasn't your fault, anyway.
Neither was Mom's accident. You
weren't even driving.

HARRY
I should've been.

FLASHBACK - EXT. RESTAURANT PARKING LOT - NIGHT

Beck storms away from Harry. She turns back, places a set of keys in his hand, and pulls out a cell phone. He leaves her in a huff.

HARRY (V.O.)
If we hadn't--if I hadn't--

INT. KITCHEN - DAY (BACK TO PRESENT)

HARRY
Ah!

He has splashed hot water on his hand, snapping him back to the present. He steps to the sink to run cold water on the burn. Jeremy watches piteously but doesn't move.

HARRY (CONT'D)
(wincing)
I told her I didn't care if she
lived or died. I said that.

FLASHBACK - INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - NIGHT

Harry enters, still angry. He finds Beck lying asleep. A NURSE stops him, and his expression starts to change.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - A FEW DAYS LATER

Harry sits by Beck's bed, staring at her.

HARRY (V.O.)
Somehow she went and did both.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY (BACK TO PRESENT)

HARRY
Turns out I do care. If she ever
understands that, maybe it'll
surprise her too.

JEREMY
Dad. I'm worried. Look at yourself.
This isn't healthy!

HARRY
I'm fine.

Harry takes the mug out of the room, Jeremy following.

INT. LIVING ROOM

He hands the mug to Beck.

BECK
Thank you.

He leans in and kisses her on the cheek. He sits in the chair
next to hers. From the doorway, Jeremy watches them watch TV.

BECK (CONT'D)
Jeremy! When did you get here?

JEREMY
I just walked in. What're you
watching?

He hugs her again, and they watch TV together.

EXT. HOUSE - LATER

Jeremy's car pulls out of the driveway.

INT. LIVING ROOM

Beck sleeps in her chair, tossing occasionally.

INT. KITCHEN

Harry washes the mugs in the sink.

BECK (O.S.)

Harry!

INT. LIVING ROOM

Harry helps Beck out of the chair and into her walker. He puts an arm around her to help her walk, and she brushes his hand away.

The phone rings, and Harry goes to answer it.

INT. HALL

Instead of heading for the bathroom, Beck stops at the stairs and looks up them. A patch of rainbow-colored light hitting the wall catches her eye.

INT. STUDY

Still on the phone, Harry goes to the computer.

HARRY

Yeah. I can pull that up now.

INT. HALL

Beck eases herself out of the walker and leans on the stair rail.

INT. STUDY

HARRY

No. That's fine. You too. Bye.

He hangs up and eyes the computer again.

INT. HALL

Beck pulls herself up one step, then another. She is straining with each step, but something compels her forward.

INT. KITCHEN

Harry eyes one of the brochures, turning it over and checking Jeremy's notes on the back. He tosses it in the trash. He takes the second and does the same.

INT. HALL

Beck is now halfway up. She gazes at a window at the stop of the stairs. The light hits her eyes, and she raises a hand to shield them. She loses her balance.

INT. KITCHEN

Harry hears his wife falling and drops the brochure in his hands.

INT. HALL

Harry runs in, as much as a man his age can, and sees his wife on the stairs. He goes to her, skipping several steps at a time.

HARRY

Beck! Are you all right?

BECK

I can't do it.

HARRY

I thought you were in the bathroom.

BECK

I wanted to see...

HARRY

You know you can't do that kind of thing on your own. What if you'd gotten hurt?

She pushes him away.

HARRY (CONT'D)

(beat)

Do you want to go up?

Beck nods. Harry holds out a hand, and she takes it. She puts one arm around him and one on the rail. They climb the stairs together.

INT. UPSTAIRS LANDING

Beck touches the patch of light on the wall and turns to look for its source, somewhere in her old bedroom.

INT. UPSTAIRS BEDROOM

Harry enters, practically carrying Beck. On the window are a set of butterfly ornaments with jewel-like inserts that scatter the light. Beck touches them.

BECK
You gave me these.

He nods. She looks at the room around her. It is in pristine condition.

BECK (CONT'D)
It's just like it was.

They both eye the room for a moment.

BECK (CONT'D)
Take me to my bed.

Harry gently lays her in the bed, propped against the wall. Before he can move away, she wraps her arms around him and holds tight.

BECK (CONT'D)
I'm sorry. I don't think I'll ever
be better.

HARRY
It's OK.

BECK
I'm sorry...

HARRY
No. No, no, no.

BECK
Shh...

She eases back from him, gently takes his hands from around her, and gives them back to him.

BECK (CONT'D)
(softly, tenderly)
Let me go.

She gives him a smile--a serious, approving smile--and lies back against the pillows.

INT. STUDY - LATER

Harry pulls the brochures out of the trash, one at a time, eyeing each of them. He holds the last one and looks into the living room, where Beck is again asleep in her chair.

Slowly, his fingers shaking, he picks up the phone and dials the number on the brochure. As it rings, he watches his wife.

HARRY

Yes, hello. I wanted to ask you about your apartments. If you had any openings.

(beat)

Sure. I'll wait.

He glances about his study, at his headphones and the small stack of papers, at a framed photo of him and Beck. He peers into the kitchen, at Beck's medicines on the counter, at the chair where she sits for meals. Finally, he hears an answer.

HARRY (CONT'D)

That's good. I was wondering if...

He hears Beck stir and looks in at her again.

HARRY (CONT'D)

Do you have any available for two?

He listens to the answer and smiles.

HARRY (CONT'D)

Great.

FADE OUT.

