

Winter

by

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INT. BEDROOM - DAY

A bedroom clearly in the midst of being packed up. Large cardboard boxes are scattered around the floor and on the bed. A full garbage bag leans precariously against a bedside table. The corner of a box pokes out--brightly colored, an obvious baby toy.

VERA, 35, pulls clothes out of the dresser and places them in a cardboard box. She stops to refold a few messily folded shirts. She has bandages on the tops of her hands and her stomach shows, indicating a recent pregnancy.

She pulls out a stack of shirts, looks at them, and throws them in the direction of the garbage bag.

Her husband TOM, 32, stops his dismantling of the dresser to pick up the pile of shirts. He unfolds one. It is clearly a maternity shirt.

TOM
(gently)
Are you sure?

Vera looks at him. Her jaw twitches, then she looks down at the next pile of shirts.

Tom's gaze lingers on her for a second longer before he tucks the pile of shirts into the garbage bag. He hoists the bag to resettle its contents.

TOM
I think I'll load this one into the
car. Vera-

Vera throws a pile of shirts and pants into the cardboard box. She doesn't bother to keep them neatly folded.

A baby onesie is now laid out on the bed. Tom grabs it. One last thing to toss in the bag. Vera drops her load of jeans and reaches for it.

VERA
Don't!-

She falters and puts her hands down hard on the bed, supporting her weight. Tom rushes to the side of the bed and puts his arm around her.

TOM
We don't have to do this now. We
have time. You should rest.

Vera's eyes flash as she lets Tom guide her to sit on the bed.

VERA
(muttering)
We don't have any time.

Just then, sunlight streams through the window and washes over them both.

TOM
Hey... why don't you go out to the yard? The sun's out and the air might do you good.

Vera snorts, about to snap back at him, but then she sees the concerned look on his face. Her expression softens.

VERA
But...

TOM
I'll take care of this. You just take care of yourself, okay?

EXT. YARD - DAY

Vera shuffles her way through the yard toward a blooming garden. She walks hesitantly, careful to rest her still-bandaged hands on chairs and trees as she passes them.

Wincing, she sits at the edge of a garden filled with a variety of growing and blooming plants. She absently picks a few dead leaves off a bush.

She stops when she hears a bird peeping near where she's sitting. She looks around, trying to discern where the sound is coming from.

The bird peeps again and this time she's able to tell where it is. She shifts from her sitting position and gets on her hands and knees. She crawls carefully through the plants, peering through leaves and scouring the ground.

She reaches out a hand to a nearby tree branch, about to help herself to her feet when she hears the bird again, much louder. She stops and refocuses her attention to a spot underneath a bush.

She slowly crouches down to see a young pigeon, mostly fully feathered with a few down feathers sticking out. The pigeon peeps insistently at her. She sits down and stares at it.

VERA

What?

Vera watches the bird as it struggles to move around, peeping occasionally. She sighs and looks at her hands.

VERA

Well, I hope you're getting fed.

Vera places her hand close to the pigeon. It ruffles its feathers and moves slightly backwards, peeping angrily. Vera pulls her hand back.

The pigeon peeps at her again and shifts on its feet. Vera smiles wryly. She stands up and makes her way out of the garden.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

Vera is standing by the window, leaning on the sill, phone to ear. Cardboard boxes are arranged around the living room and the empty space in front of the couch indicates a coffee table that has been removed.

Tom is sitting on the carpet, pulling books from a nearby bookshelf and placing them in piles.

VERA

(on the phone)

What about, like, cats or owls or something?... You're right. Okay. Thank you so much.

Vera hangs up the phone and looks down at her husband. She frowns.

VERA

They said to leave him be. He probably has parents nearby feeding him.

Tom doesn't look up. He flips through the pages of a book and sets it in a box.

TOM

It seems like there's nothing we can do, then.

Vera moves to the couch and plops down, tapping at her phone screen.

VERA

Don't you have to go to the bank?

Tom jumps up.

TOM

Shit.

He leaves the room then comes back, pocketing his keys. He bends down to Vera at the couch to kiss her.

TOM

You need anything?

Vera shakes her head, still looking at her phone. Tom leaves the room again and we hear the front door close.

As soon as the door closes, Vera sets her phone down and lies her head back on the couch. On her phone is a page titled "Natural Predators of Pigeons".

After a few seconds, she gets up and heads to the pantry.

EXT. YARD - DAY

Vera sits in the garden, staring at the young pigeon and absently picking at the bandages on her hands. She is far enough away that the pigeon doesn't seem bothered by her.

A bag of sunflower seeds rests in her lap. She takes one out of the bag and cracks it in her mouth. She pulls out the shell and chews the seed thoughtfully.

She sets the shell down in the dirt next to her and takes another seed out of the bag. She brings it to her mouth and then stops, looking at the pigeon. She pulls the seed away and considers it before placing it back into the bag.

TOM (O.S)

Vera!

Tom's voice comes from the kitchen window. Vera looks back at him and raises her hand in a slight wave. She stands up and walks back to the house, glancing back at the pigeon as it peeps at her.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

Vera and Tom sit at opposite ends of the kitchen table. They are both picking at their takeout containers. Tom stirs his soup with his spoon. Vera stabs a piece of orange chicken with her chopstick, picks it up and examines it.

Tom sets his spoon down.

TOM

They want me to start June first.

Vera drops her chopstick-speared chicken back into the takeout container.

VERA

But that's a whole week earlier!

TOM

I know.

VERA

And who's supposed to unpack then?
Me?

TOM

I know. I haven't agreed to it yet.

VERA

I'm not moving across the country
and unpacking for you.

TOM

I know! I tried to get them to
change their minds but they're
really pushing back.

VERA

Why don't you tell them you have a
fucking dead baby then?

Vera stands up, sways. Tom rises halfway out of his seat but is stayed by Vera's hand.

VERA

Never mind. I'll unpack the damn
house.

EXT. YARD - NIGHT

Vera, wrapped in a blanket, sits at the edge of the garden. Dried tear tracks snake down her face. An unlit flashlight lays next to her.

She rests her head in her chin, half asleep.

A CLATTER sounds and her eyes snap open. She grabs for the flashlight, turns it on, and aims it at the pigeon. The bird, previously asleep, wakes up noisily.

VERA
 (whispering)
 Are you okay?

She moves the flashlight around without getting up from her position, shining it into bushes and dark corners. It illuminates a bunny, frozen in fear, munching on a hosta plant.

Vera sighs and turns the flashlight off. She tucks her chin into her chest and lets her eyelids fall.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Tom's phone sits on the table, hold music playing over the speaker. He taps his finger on a pile of bank documents.

Vera across the table from him, staring at nothing and blinking heavily. Her head droops.

TOM
 You look like those videos of
 puppies falling asleep.

He chuckles awkwardly, the sound catching in his throat. Vera looks up at him and nods slowly.

VERA
 It was hard to sleep. I just
 couldn't-

Just then, a voice comes on the phone.

BANK REP (V.O.)
 Thank you for waiting, my name is
 Maria, how can I assist you today?

Tom grimaces and picks up the phone, switching it off speaker.

TOM
 Hi, uh, yes, I have some questions
 about opening a bank account?...
 Yes... No, we're moving... I have
 some papers here, hold on...

Tom shuffles through the papers in front of him. Vera sighs and waves her hand at him.

VERA
 (mouthing)
 Do you need me?

Tom shrugs at her. Vera stands and walks out the door. Tom moves to the window and watches as she walks to the edge of the garden and sits down, peering into the bushes.

TOM
 (on the phone)
 Oh, it'll be a joint account... No,
 I've closed mine already... Umm,
 okay, hold on a sec.

Tom goes to the window and opens it. He holds his phone away from his face and calls to Vera.

TOM
 Vera! Honey! I need your social
 security number.

Vera doesn't move or acknowledge Tom.

TOM
 Vera?

She still doesn't move. Tom walks to the door and steps outside.

EXT. YARD - DAY

Tom walks towards Vera with his phone to his ear.

TOM
 (on the phone)
 Yes, I'm still here. Give me a
 second.

He reaches Vera and touches her on the shoulder. She turns her head and looks up at him, eyes wide.

VERA
 Don't, you'll scare him!

She nods in the direction of the pigeon. Tom looks at the pigeon, then back at her.

TOM
 They said to leave him alone,
 right? Could you come back inside
 and help me figure out this bank
 account stuff?

VERA
 But... If I...

She looks at the pigeon, who peeps right at that moment. Tom exhales.

TOM
Vera? I'm on the phone with them
right now.

Tom offers his free hand to help Vera up. She hesitates for a moment before grabbing it and pulling herself up.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Vera lies in bed on her back, eyes open and staring at the ceiling. Tom lies facing away from her, breathing steadily. Vera turns to the side to check the clock on the bedside table. It reads 1:15 AM. She stares at it. It ticks over to 1:16 AM.

She exhales and slowly sits up, lifting the covers from her legs. Her feet search for her slippers next to the bed. She starts to stand.

Tom turns to face her and opens his eyes. He reaches out a hand for her. She sits down and looks at him. He raises his eyebrows.

Vera lets her slippers fall off her feet and gets back under the covers. Tom turns away from her as she stares at the clock.

EXT. YARD - DAY

Vera walks toward the garden, carrying her bag of sunflower seeds. She inhales and closes her eyes as the sun hits her. When she reaches the garden, she stops and cocks her head, listening. Not hearing the pigeon, she gets down on her hands and knees, still holding the sunflower seed bag.

She makes her way through the garden, trailing seeds as she goes. She stops right before the bush the pigeon is under.

She blinks and leans in closer.

The pigeon is lying motionless in a ray of sun.

Vera crawls closer to it and reaches out.

She touches it gently with one finger, then she carefully turns it over. The bird is dead with no apparent wounds.

Vera gasps, a choking sound. She uses the tree to pull herself up, then hits the side of it hard with her fist.

She looks down and sees a bright purple morning glory flower growing up the side of the tree trunk. She rips it off and throws it on the ground.

She hesitates, then she crouches back down and reaches for the flower again. She places it gently on the pigeon's body.

EXT. FRONT OF HOUSE - DAY

Vera carries a large box out of the front door and brings it over to a moving truck on the street. She's lost a little bit of her post-pregnancy stomach and her bandages are gone.

Tom, at the truck, takes the box and climbs in to pack it among other boxes and furniture.

Just then, Vera hears a familiar-sounding peep come from above her head. She looks around, trying to find the source. She spots a nest situated on the porch overhang.

She walks closer, staring at the nest, waiting. Another peep.

A small head pops up over the edge of the nest. A baby pigeon peeps at Vera and ruffles its feathers. She catches her breath.

Tom steps out from the truck and closes the back. He stops, looking at Vera. She smiles, gazing at the nest for a moment.

Then she turns around climbs into the truck.

END