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Bash



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for emma, chet, and billie

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bash premiered in new york city
at the douglas fairbanks theater
on june 24, 1999.
the cast was as follows:

iphigenia in orem
young manron eldard

a gaggle of saints
johnpaul rudd
suecalista flockhart

medea redux
womancalista flockhart

produced by eric krebs and stephen pevner
directed by joe mantello
scenic design by scott pask
costume design by lynette meyer
lighting design by james vermuelen
sound design by red ramona

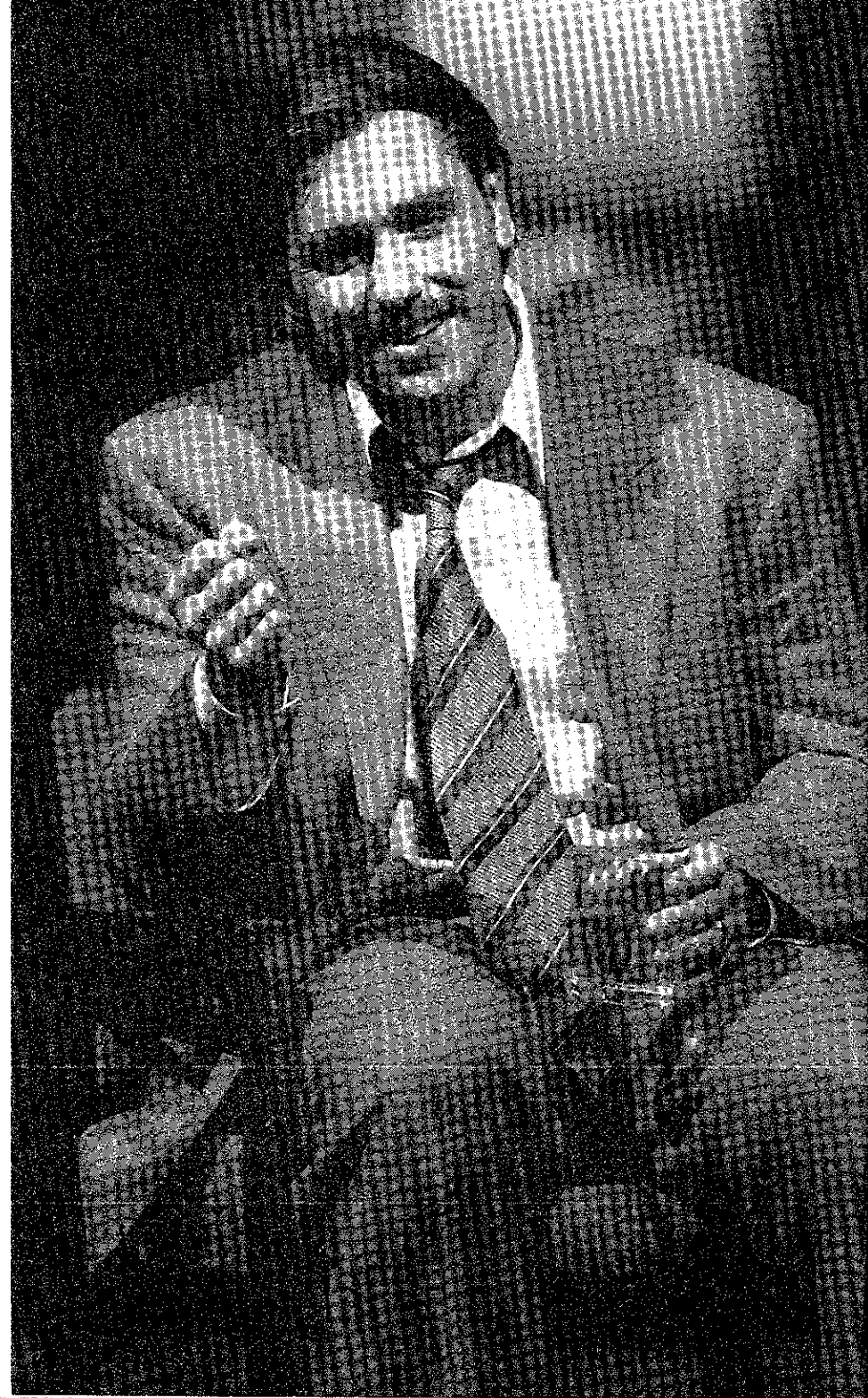
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iphigenia in orem



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silence. darkness.

lights up slowly to reveal
a young man, early 30s,
dressed in a plain suit.
he is seated on the edge of
a hotel chair and nurses a
water glass in one hand.

YOUNG MAN

...i'll tell it once. one time because it deserves to be
told, and then never again. fair enough? well,
doesn't really matter what you think. i mean, i
care, i do, i want you to listen to this, hear me out,
but it's not really important how you feel about it
all in the end...it's happened now. and i don't
know you from adam...or eve, for that matter.
(LAUGHS) sorry, i'm just trying to keep this...
yeah, anyway. your drink okay? there's plenty over
on the counter there, so feel free...the looser the
better on this one, i figure, so bottoms up, or
whatever they say at the bar these days. i wouldn't
know. really, feel free...comes with the room.

(BEAT) i'm not a drinker...you probably guessed that, though, right? yeah...nothing but water here. (HOLDS UP GLASS) never was, but when i saw you down in the lounge i could tell right away that you enjoyed the stuff. what is that you've got there? some kind of red, what, wine, is it? looks like it. wine. do, really, feel at home, all that's just gonna go to waste if you don't...well, the next person'll drink it maybe, but you know what i mean. myself, i hate to waste things... (BEAT) so anyway, when i spotted you, alone like you were and going through that bottle, i figured you'd be a great listener. that you wouldn't mind if i told you all this... and if i'm lucky, by tomorrow, you won't even remember it. i'm kidding, but you're okay, comfortable? good. (BEAT) so...where should i...let me see. alright. i never used to travel. pretty much stayed in our branch office, did things over the phone, handled it all that way. you know? never cared much for driving all the time, meeting clients, that end of things...i mean, i did it when i first started, low man on the pole and whatever, but once i got the old m.b.a., foot in the door and all...i stuck to the desk as much as i could. i like it. that office...i don't know..."feel." the atmosphere. faxes coming in, people zipping around, emergency strategy sessions, all that. it's like being a kid again, playing at "war" or that type of thing. i don't mean exactly like that, but you know what i'm saying. it's a whole different thing out there, i

have to tell you. the world of business. it is. all that "dog eat dog," "jungle out there" stuff has become pretty cliché now, but it's true. i mean, you can see what guys love about it. and i don't mean just guys either, because there's plenty of women in the field, too, obviously, but i mean "guys" like in... well, "guys." you know, how it's used these days. all encompassing. it's very high stakes, lots of cash floating around you, and the pressure's a real... well, just hot. day in and out. seriously. it is. we may play it like a game sometimes, but believe me, a day doesn't go by in business that you're not out for somebody's blood...

pause.

but, hey, you know what i'm talking about...you're in what, sales? yeah, i thought so. you look like... well, no, i mean it in a complimentary...you just look like you could sell. things. if you wanted to...

pause.

i guess the point i'm making is that it's a stress-filled situation i'm in, but i'm paid for it, not complaining, i just wanted to, i don't know, lead in the right way on this. i'm not making excuses. i'm not... (BEAT) okay, so, once i got the degree, i went to the "y" for it, they've got a pretty decent program and it's important, i think anyhow, to get your schooling from different places and since we lived in salt lake i'd gone to the "u" for my undergraduate... 'cause the whole b.y.u. thing sounded a little intense for me when i was eighteen...not that

i was, i don't know, like a rebel or anything, far from it, but i'd decided in high school not to go the mission route until after i had finished college. maybe when i was married or something...i wanted to get right out there in the job market as quick as i could. looks like i'm losing you. i'm l.d.s., you know, "mormon?" yeah. see, a "mission" is where you go...oh, okay, so you know what i'm talking about. good. i figured you did, i mean, las vegas isn't that far from...must be getting late. i'll try and be...brief—things took a bit of a turn for us last year. well, i guess about a year and a half ago, now. my wife and me, the family, you know...we lost a child. newborn. well, five months old...just like that. just happened. (BEAT) i was off that day, a friday, i think, and deborah, that's my wife, deb, she was out—her mother was staying with us, and they were over at safeway getting some milk—deb put the baby down, "emma" we'd named her, she put emma in our bed because that's where she'd been sleeping the first few months...we always thought that was a good bonding thing, i'd read it somewhere, or she heard it at relief society or something like that...anyway, so that's what she did. she tucks her in, and out they went. and see, i was gonna lie down with her, i really was, but i just went back into the living room for a second, watch a little *wheel of fortune* or some thing, you know, five minutes a week to myself. and i fell. fell off to sleep right there, there on the loveseat by the win-

dow. (BEAT) deb's mom...emma's grandma... found her. maybe a half hour later. she'd smothered herself under the covers, i don't know, beneath the weight of the comforter or whatever it was. this big old maroon and gold thing we'd gotten as a wedding gift, huge—and she'd, well, she'd suffocated. that's about as plain as you can tell it, right? the little thing...died in our bed, tangling herself in the blankets. (BEAT) the police had to come, they do for any kind of infant death, that's what the officer said; i'd gotten a hold of myself by that time, still crying, but deb...deb was just kind of sitting there next to me, staring off, and this guy—this person—a detective, i suppose, was asking us questions. standing there and firing off this series of questions. "standard procedure," he assured us, but still...

pause.

what bothered him...no, "puzzled" him, he said, never came right out and said it bothered him but you could see by the way he...he didn't understand how the baby could get so far down. (BEAT) now i am losing you, right? okay, yeah, i'm getting ahead of myself...it seemed to him that the baby, a baby that young and small, she was such a small little thing...was too far down toward the foot of the bed, and turned. something about that seemed to be eating at him. i didn't understand what he was getting at, the way he kept going back and forth over the events and times and all that, "where were you standing?" and "approximately how long were

you...?" blah, blah, blah. i mean, my god, we're sitting there on the edge of the sofa, the bed my daughter has just died in i can see through an open door back down the hallway, and this man is pacing around, sucking on the chewed cap of a ballpoint pen and...asking me quietly, "did you check on her?" (BEAT) what's he getting at, anyway? i mean, that's a no-win, isn't it? think about it...if i didn't check on her, i'm not a good father, not anything he can say about it, but i carry around the guilt, you know...maybe i could've prevented it. right? and if i did go in there, if i had've done what i was supposed to do, had planned on doing, the nap...then maybe she'd be alive. maybe. (BEAT) and for just a second, just the briefest of moments...i catch deb looking over at me. as if this is the first time the thought's come to her as well. this possibility. the whole incident hangs there—probably only two or three seconds all together—but it just lays there in the air over us all. this shadow of a doubt...there's another cliché for you...it hangs there until i say, very matter-of-factly, "umm, no, i didn't. i meant to, but..." and off he goes. says "fine," stops me cold, and off he goes. onto another tangent... (BEAT) she took my hand in hers, deb did, just after that. scooped it up into her tiny fingers and held it there...all the rest of that afternoon. even after the police were gone, as we sat there into the evening with her mother, our two other children, home from school and having

heard it all...none of us talking, just sitting and watching the darkness crowd into the room...she held onto my hand. and somehow, because of that, i felt at peace... (BEAT) anyway, the detective said that he was nearly done, just one or two more items, when deborah grabbed hold of my hand like she did. when she did that...

pause.

all during this i can see guys passing—oops, i mean "people"—i can see these people passing in front of the doorway. i could, deb was just off to the side enough to miss it, thank heavens... tweezers all out, picking up scraps of whatever, the snap! of flashbulbs, some muffled talk about an upcoming jazz game...i'm starting to feel queasy. the heat of the room, maybe, and the sitting there as this almost unbearable thing unfolds in front of us...we'd hardly had a moment to hold each other, deborah and myself, to cry and, you know, just... and this happens. this *dragnet* episode takes place right in our living room...and i start to feel sick. i did. i hide it pretty well, but i felt it all the same...

pause.

and finally they were gone. i looked around, and the front door slammed shut and it was empty. the house. they'd taken emma out with them, the coroner, maybe a half hour before, wrapped in a little zip-up bag, something like what i carry my pressed shirts in when i travel. i mean, i know i said i don't like to go out on the road, i didn't

used to, anyway, but...well, just let me finish. emma was gone, and we ate dinner...we may have even ordered out that night; that probably sounds horrible, but deborah just couldn't stand over the stove right then, so it seems like we had a pizza... yeah, one from sbarro's, over at the mall. we had pizza, deb holding my hand under the table the whole time, all through the silence...and we went to bed right after. (BEAT) the phone woke me about 11:30. i almost had to pry deborah's fingers off of mine to get it, but i was on by about the third, maybe the fourth ring. it was him. the police detective and very apologetic about calling so late, and the whole process and the usual stuff that you'd see on any of those cop programs on tv. we don't watch them much—maybe the kids do, when we're not around, but they're not supposed to—but you know the kind i mean. he was like that... (BEAT) it'd all come out fine, he said, ruled "natural causes" after a few tests'd been run and he just wanted to let us know and if there was anything he could do he'd be glad to...i hung up without him finishing. he'd put us through enough that day. on a day like that, a day no parent should ever have to face, and to have those...people do that...so i hung up. i hung up the receiver and rolled back over to deborah. i just held her at first... putting my hand back in place and squeezing her fingers a bit. but it woke her. she woke up and we whispered to each other...talking under the sheets

like two schoolchildren, about things we hadn't mentioned in years! we were under the sheets, just them, because from that night on, deb and i could never sleep with blankets on that bed again...that's probably odd, isn't it? maybe not...but we couldn't. middle of winter, kids'll all be off at ski trips up at aspen grove or sundance and deborah and me just huddle together under the sheets. to this day... (BEAT) anyhow, the talking must've gone on for hours, a few at least and then the kissing and finally ...well, you're not that drunk. you don't need to hear it all. we did what you'd imagine you might do on a night like that, a moment when your entire universe has been changed forever. (BEAT) i don't know, but that may have even been the night that joe was...that's our youngest, "joseph," yes, named after our prophet, and i have a brother of the same name, so...but joe came almost exactly nine months later. he's a great boy, he really is. and over time, and with the new child...life goes on. it does, and it's strange to say that, you know, because i'd never believe it from hearing some other person say it, i mean, like at fast and testimony. if i heard that i'd just never buy it, because of the loss, and you know, i'd feel everybody was just smiling and pretending to be all understanding, but they really think that you're like some chinese family getting rid of the daughter to get a son and just crazy things'd run through my head... but then it happens to you, and it's true. (BEAT)

you just go on. you do. you thank your heavenly father for giving you strength to stand up to his trials and figure there must be a plan behind it all, a reason for so much pain and you just...go on.

pause.

and that's what we did. we went on...and more than that. a lot more... (BEAT) lemme fill your glass there or you're not gonna...well, okay. if you're fine, then you're fine. umm... (BEAT) so...so, so, so.

pause.

i've gotten off the path here...somehow. (CHECKS WATCH) umm, look at the...you're sure you've got the time for this? (BEAT) well, there's not much left to tell, anyhow, so finish off that drink and i'll be done...i promise.

pause.

alright. umm...there was a problem. that's what had started all this, i mean, originally. started it all in motion...a problem at work. we'd been taken over recently, i mean, no big deal in theory, happened all the time during the 80s, somebody else takes over, you lose a few of the stragglers, guys who couldn't keep up...and i do mean "guys" as in everybody, all people here, because it was usually women at that point. not always, but a lot of the time...takeovers were an excellent way to get things back in order. and that's not just me talking, you know...there's definitely an order to things in business, and the old boys at the top, the

guys you never even see, just their pictures in the hallway...they like things the way they've always been. so that's when a bunch of these women with their m.b.a.s and affirmative action nonsense would get the boot. nothing personal about it, at least i never felt there was...just getting everything spinning back the way it was supposed to be. (BEAT) but not this time. no, this time it was gonna happen, and nobody could tell which way things would end up. everybody at my level, that mid-management level of things...was pretty vulnerable and it came down that we could count on four of us from the salt lake office—that's where i worked, commuted in from orem every day because of the standard of living that area afforded us—and it'd just be up to fate as to who got the axe. another cliché, right? yeah, well, i'm full of 'em. or it, full of it, one of the two...can't be sure anymore. (BEAT) so, that was the story, four of us were going to go, three of which i and everyone else had a pretty good idea of, three that should've gone a long time ago, but that last spot...that was the one. the tough call. there was me, who'd been steady and strong and average, you know, just average or slightly above, someone that they could count on, good sense of humor and everything for the past seven years. well liked and i liked everyone. or, most everyone. there was this woman, a few years younger than me and had come in during a wave of new hires about four years back...just

plain vicious. i mean, talk about clichés and all that, she was a walking one...the business suit and blunt cut hair thing going, can't remember ever even seeing her smile, you know what i'm saying... but she knew her stuff. i knew it, we all did, and so did she and she reveled in it. the sales, the numbers, the whole game. we'd gotten off badly ...actually, i'd made a mistake once, a board meeting where i'd grouped her in with a "you guys oughta..." meaning that side of the table and she called me out on it...first meeting, or maybe the second, she'd been to and she nails me out loud about my attitude, my limited "chauvinist lexicon" and all this other, just, crap that she fired off. walked out of the room in silence and me and some of the other guys laughed it off over lunch, but i caught one or two of the other women smiling to themselves as the meeting broke up. just this slight thing, but i caught it...anyway, i always felt one step behind her after that, like she made it her job to one up me from that moment on... (BEAT) but she was one. me, and her, because of the short time she'd been there, and a couple other folks that had about the same seniority that i did...and that's what hung over our heads, each of us, day after day as we'd go into work. it was coming, we knew that, it was going to happen and all we could do was look at each other as we sat there waiting...

pause.

i got the call just before deb had gone to safeway. took it in the den because it was coming from chicago...a friend of mine, at the home office, a guy from school actually, with a tip. a tip he'd heard that day and wanted to call me with it...it was me. i was the one that would make up the four, and he was so sorry and all that—he's a really good guy, i see him whenever i'm in chicago, we were these really big jokers when we were at the "u," in the dorms together and so he was just doing what any guy would do, he said, letting me hear it from a friendly voice, and giving me a jump, the weekend, anyway. before he hung up he said again it was just what was going around, but he thought i should know... (BEAT) i couldn't even look at deb as she was going out to the van. she called out to me, told me to crawl in and get a little snooze before the kids got home and they'd be right back...but i just waved to her. couldn't look, you know, not right then, just waved my hand, i was too busy looking around the house, at our things. i mean, all the things we'd gathered in ten years together, and at the house itself and, well, just all of it...what was i gonna do? how could i possibly keep it all going, the lifestyle we'd made for ourselves, without my seniority, the benefit package...jobs all over being tight like they are? it just wouldn't be possible... (BEAT) it was like the moment in that film *kramer vs. kramer*, you know, where he decides he's got to get a job that day,

right? i felt like that...i keep bringing up movies and tv and i don't mean to, because we really don't watch all that much, but there is some good programming out there, and that was an especially moving one, i thought, the way he fought that battle with his wife over the child and...but i'm standing there, just taking in the vcr, and our big screen tv and one of the kid's bikes, i can see through the front window, the pathfinder, *wheel of fortune's* blasting on the t v. in the family room...all these thoughts are swirling around in my head. and i hear it. (BEAT) i wasn't asleep...i couldn't of been, i mean, i've tried to believe it, make myself believe it, too, but i wasn't, or i never would've heard her. the baby, emma, in the other room. as i was standing there i heard her cry out from inside the bedroom. i did... (BEAT) when i got to the doorway she was already under the blankets, she was, i swear, under them and fighting to get out. it's just reflexes, i guess, because she wasn't big enough to do anything about it, i mean, she'd just started to crawl a few weeks before that, and she was tiny for her age, the doctors said that...but she'd managed to get herself down under that comforter. i rushed in there, to the edge of the carpet at the bedroom door and then, i don't know, something stopped me. just stopped me like some invisible force had reached out and took hold of the back of my shirt and yanked me to a halt...i looked in at her again, this little yelp kind of coming up from her as she

blundered around in there...it almost looked like when your puppy, as a kid, or the family cat, you know, would get put under the blankets for a laugh, it was like that. almost. this little...mound... wandering around in there. it was nearly absurd, to walk in on something like this, i mean, you just could never be ready for a thing like that, and because of that, that specific part of it, the unreality...i was able to make the decision. in that moment, standing there watching my daughter fight for her life, i made my decision. this is very hard to...anyway, remember i said i hated to waste things? well, when i looked at it, i mean, rationally, for even half-a-second there in the hallway, i realized that's what this was. an opportunity. and i wasn't going to waste it... (BEAT) so i—i'm just gonna say this, because it's a little...so. i went into the room and stood there by the bed, i stood there and pulled up the comforter by one corner and i saw her then. her little fine sandy hair and her...i just kind of coaxed her down a bit. down a bit further with the edge of my foot, turned her a touch and down and then i dropped the covers back and walked out...there was one last little sound emma made, you could barely hear it. but i just kept walking, back out to the loveseat, there in the family room, and layed down and made myself go to sleep. put a pillow over my head so i couldn't hear...and drifted off. (BEAT) the point i wanna make, though, see, is that it didn't have to happen that

way. i took the risk, this calculated risk for my family that this whole episode would play out in our favor, give me that little edge at work and maybe things'd be okay, or they'd change their minds because of, you know...but it didn't have to be like that. if deb had just hurried a bit, if she hadn't stop to look through *people* magazine or her mother hadn't gone next door to fill a prescription, then who knows? maybe they would've got back in time and emma would still be...that sounds strange, doesn't it, that way of thinking? but all i'm saying is, it was fate that took her, just the whimsy of a lingering red light or a prolonged chat with one of our neighbors in the produce aisle or if i hadn't heard her cry out in the first place. i mean, i could've gotten into bed there beside her, i was planning to, i might've fallen asleep and never even heard her. then...who knows? it probably would've happened anyway. and it did happen, and so you go on. like i said before, you just go on...

pause.

i kept my job. i did. and guess who was the one, i mean, after all that, guess who got it right between the eyes? another cliché, i know, but boy oh boy, what a great one it was... (BEAT) i even walked her to the elevator the day she left, her and the other three, this was several months after all the other...i was right behind them with a "so long" and "we'll miss you" and right then, it came to me, it came to me with my friends standing around

and that little...well, she wasn't looking so strong anymore, there in the open car, this box of stuff in her hands. as the doors were closing i said to them all, but staring straight at her, i said, "you guys take care now!" just like that, and then they slid shut. huh...just like in *kramer* at the end. the doors did...(GESTURES) isn't that funny? i never thought of that before...i said that and we laughed all through lunch about it, the guys and me.

pause.

i was at a seminar, big yearly thing the company put on. this one was in boston, six months back. my friend from chicago flew in for it. okay, so... after the morning session, just in passing as we were both in the restroom at one point, he said something to me, my friend, i guess trying to lighten things up a little, he mentioned work. and about the layoffs, and how glad i must've finally been to have gotten rid of you know who. and then he said, "boy, i really had you going that friday, didn't i?" i turned to him, standing there at the urinal, my fly still open and i turned to him and the whole picture was clear to me. right then, it was as clear as a look into the future...what he'd done. what we always used to do to each other. see, he'd heard the real truth about what was coming and just couldn't let it go without a little razzing and so he'd given me the call, let me stew about it over that weekend...he was going to buzz me back monday morning with the truth. but by then...

(BEAT) yeah, he'd gotten me, alright. he got me good, just like the old days.

pause.

so i travel now, same pay and everything, a little better actually, but i consult for our regional branches, even nationally sometimes...and it keeps me going. deb and i are fine. joe's getting huge, he really is, i'd show you a picture but i don't have any on me...but i find i really like the driving these days, you know? gives me a lot of time to just... well, drive. just drive and think. i usually don't even get a room; i got this place (GESTURES) because i'm here a few days but normally, i'd have everything in the trunk and just do it that way ...it's funny how things end up, isn't it? (BEAT) i can't tell deb, it'd kill her. kill us, as a family, i mean, that's obvious, right? can't tell anyone in the church, or the police, of course...so i chose you. i saw you, tonight as i was walking through the lobby, and i just chose you. so there it is...i'm finished.

pause.

you probably need to...yeah, it's late. take care of yourself, and thanks again, seriously. you've been very...you have any kids? no? well, when you do, you be good to them, okay? there's nothing like 'em in the world...believe me. (BEAT) why don't you go ahead and shut the light off there on your way out, if you would...i'm just gonna sit here a

bit. i'll be fine. you go ahead, really, it's almost time for the last call, so you should...i'll be...fine, i will. (AFTER A MOMENT) goodnight...

he smiles weakly once and takes a last sip from his glass as the lights snap off.

silence. darkness.