

Stepmom

INT. DOCTOR'S OFFICE - AFTERNOON

CLOSE on Jackie, looking down. She seems to be staring at something in her lap...

JACKIE

(quiet anger)

I don't even know what that means.
Spread. That is very unclear.

...but there is nothing there. Her lap is empty. Except for her unnaturally still hands.

DR. SWEIKERT (O.S., gently)

I means we found some cells. In your lymph nodes. In three of them.

The hands come together. Slowly, deliberately. Stating to anyone who would watch that there is no panic here.

JACKIE

But the other time. You said you got it all. So you could be wrong again. One time, you say one thing, then...

DR. SWEIKERT (O.S.)

The other time. Was a year ago.

The air comes out of Jackie. In a thin, slow, precise stream. Everything, her very breath. Under complete control.

DR. SWEIKERT (O.S.)

That was a tiny lump in the breast. We radiated, we thought we had it all. We were hopeful. But there were no guarantees.

Silence. Jackie's eyes stay on her folded, still, hands.

JACKIE

But we can beat it.

PULL BACK to see the small, neatly kept office. DR. SWEIKERT is 50, elegant, kind. The doctor you want when you're dying. Jackie looks up to him.

JACKIE

People beat it, don't they? All the time.

DR. SWEIKERT

(straight)

Every day. More and more.

Jackie swallows. The confirmation of hope has allowed some of the fear to show.

JACKIE

So we'll...radiate some more?

DR. SWEIKERT

At first. Then, after awhile, some chemo.

A blow. Jackie absorbs this.

JACKIE

That's necessary, huh?

DR. SWEIKERT

Let's take our best shot.

Jackie nods. Staring at the man. Then, to break the spell...

JACKIE

I guess a no-hair day beats a bad-hair day.

The doctor smiles. Jackie looks at her watch...

JACKIE

I have to get dressed. My ex-husband has asked me to dinner. God knows why, he was very mysteri...

DR. SWEIKERT

Have you still not told him?

A flash of the anger flickers.

JACKIE

Why should I worry worry him? Or my children. Or anyone. It won't help the sit...

DR. SWEIKERT

(very soft)

Sooner than later. You really need to.

That brings a silence. A shading of defiance to Jackie's features.

JACKIE

You don't burden others needlessly. That's how I was raised, Doctor.

Hold the look.

MR. SWEIKERT

Soon.

Pause

Maybe at dinner tonight. Think **about it.**