

THE PRICE SHE PAID

Written by

One For The Road

FADE IN.

EXT. SUBURBAN NEIGHBORHOOD - DAY

A quiet street lined with stylish homes and well-manicured lawns that screams upper middle class. CLOSE on a late model SUV in a driveway. DAVE GILL (60s) closes the passenger door and gives it a gentle pat, takes a breath, then skirts around the vehicle and gets into the driver's side.

DAVE  
Let's get this show on the road,  
shall we?

He looks to his passenger with a hesitant, almost questioning smile. RITA GILL (60s) with a face that still holds beauty even with fine lines and wisps of gray hair falling across her forehead, smiles back at him.

RITA  
So when are you going to let me in  
on the secret of where we're going?

Dave smiles, clicks the audio on, which begins playing classic JONI MITCHELL. Rita eyes him suspiciously.

RITA (CONT'D)  
That's my playlist. You've always  
hated my music.

DAVE  
This trip is all for you. Music  
included.

Rita remains suspicious.

RITA  
Are you going to tell me where  
we're going or not?

DAVE  
Where is your all time favorite  
place?

RITA  
I don't know, Williams-Sonoma?

Dave smiles and rolls his eyes.

DAVE  
I said your FAVORITE place, not  
where you've spent the most money.

Rita ponders this but then her eyes go wide. She hesitates.

RITA  
(softly)  
Do you mean Crystal Beach?

Dave hears the hesitation.

DAVE  
Wait, Crystal Beach was always your  
favorite wasn't it?

RITA  
Always. Every time we went, I said  
I never wanted to leave it. It felt  
like I belonged there.

Dave exhales, reassured that he's made the right choice.

DAVE  
Okay then. We're off...to Crystal  
Beach.

Rita peers longingly out the SUV window at their home as they  
drive away.

EXT. SUV - DAY - DRIVING

INT. SUV - DAY

RITA  
Did you set the GPS?

DAVE  
Nah, I know how to get there.

RITA  
That's what you said last time. And  
then I had to pull up a map after  
we got lost.

Dave smiles, remembering.

RITA (CONT'D)  
And did you pack sandwiches? I mean  
I always make sure we have snacks,  
but this was...I wasn't  
prepared...so...

DAVE  
We don't need snacks. We'll be  
fine.

Rita shrugs her shoulders, sighs and displays a dreamy look.

RITA  
Remember all the road trips with  
the kids?

Dave glances in the rearview mirror to a...

FLASHBACK

Two children, DAVE JR (12) and MILLIE (8), squabble in the  
back seat - normal sibling banter.

BACK TO PRESENT

DAVE  
Yeah, I remember. They were the  
best kids.

He looks to Rita.

DAVE (CONT'D)  
Remember the trip to Charleston?  
That awful hotel with the damp  
carpet?

Rita nods, remembering.

RITA  
Yeah, the kids didn't want to sleep  
there because they said it smelled  
moldy.

DAVE  
And you said the smell wasn't mold,  
it was...what did you call it?

RITA  
  
Regret and broken dreams. But they  
were still too young to understand  
that.

They both chuckle at the memory.

A beat as Dave sobers.

DAVE  
I'm sorry that you raised them so  
much on your own.

RITA  
You were building your law  
practice. I did what I had to do.  
(MORE)

RITA (CONT'D)

Being the Mom was my job and I  
couldn't have loved it more.

Dave nods solemnly.

DAVE

I know we've been through a lot,  
especially lately. There are so  
many things I regret and I just  
wanted you to know, I'm sorry...for  
all of it.

Rita is silent. Listening.

DAVE (CONT'D)

I know it's too late for us...God  
how I wish it wasn't. It's like I  
knew you were suffering, through  
all the late nights, me not being  
there for you..

RITA

The point when we stopped talking.

DAVE

Only because I thought you quit  
listening.

RITA

You had an affair, Dave.

Dave swallows, blinks back tears.

DAVE

My behavior was unforgiveable.  
But it didn't mean I didn't love  
you. Actually, I don't even know  
what it meant other than I didn't  
deserve you or the life we've had.  
I just don't know how to tell you  
how truly and deeply sorry I am for  
that. I hoped we had moved past  
it.

Rita remains silent. Taking it all in. Then looks directly to  
Dave.

RITA

We've been married for nearly forty  
years. We made beautiful children,  
a beautiful home and a beautiful  
life. I had some of the dearest  
friends and family I could ever  
hope for because of that life.

(MORE)

RITA (CONT'D)

For all those reasons I chose to look away from the bad, from the pain, because all the good things brought me the life I had always dreamed of. When I look back now, I feel like any pain was the price I paid for the good times, for all the joy. I will always treasure the memories of that life with you.

DAVE

And was it worth the price?

RITA

Knowing what I know now? Yes, I would do all of it over again.

Dave smiles sadly.

RITA (CONT'D)

But that doesn't change what comes now.

Dave nods, still fighting the tears.

RITA (CONT'D)

I'm still leaving you.

DAVE

I know. I know. But I was hoping we could have one last talk. One last trip together to our favorite place...that I could ask for your forgiveness one more time.

RITA

And now you've had your catharsis and I do forgive you, just as I had to forgive myself. I couldn't leave and have any peace at all without that.

Dave looks lovingly to her, smiles, then looks back to the road ahead.

RITA (CONT'D)

You know you're lost again. You should have turned right back there where you turned left.

Dave smiles faintly.

DAVE  
What will I do without you to  
navigate for me?

RITA  
You'll use the GPS.

Dave shakes his head. Rita smiles.

EXT. BEACHSIDE - DAY

A SIGN: *"CRYSTAL BEACH"*

The SUV pulls to a stop.

INT. SUV - DAY

DAVE  
Well, here we are.

He smiles longingly and looks to Rita. She smiles back.  
Reaches out and touches his hand.

RITA  
Here we are.

Dave exits the vehicle, walks to the passenger side and opens the door. He extends his hand, Rita smiles up at him and places her hand in his. HOLD until her hand, then her entire form transmutes into a MIST and is consumed into a FUNERAL URN...like a genie returning to a bottle.

DAVE  
I brought you to your favorite  
place, my love. Now you can stay  
forever...just like you always  
wanted.

He cradles the urn in his arms and begins to walk toward the beach and the setting sun, as we...

FADE OUT.