

STEVE

You were always there for me -- you and Joe and the others -- you were such good friends -- always willing to talk me down the mountain ---

BECKY

We just wanted to help, Steve.

STEVE

--- but then it changed. Like you turned the page in your calendar one day and said: "Okay, time's up. Steve should be over it."

BECKY

No, that's not ---

STEVE

"We gave him X-number of months to mourn good ol' Rita, we took him out for beers and listened to him tell the story of her fall for the two-hundredth time ---"

BECKY

(trying to make a joke)
Three-hundredth ---

STEVE

THAT IS NOT FUNNY.

(pause)

You don't know, Becky ... you and Joe, you're set, you're *locked in*, you'll have each other forever ... but some of the rest of us ---

BECKY

I know ... I'm sorry ...

STEVE

(overlapping)

--- I want to get past this stuff. I really do. I'm sick of talking about it, and you must be really sick of hearing it ---

Becky's DESK PHONE RINGS, but ---

STEVE lifts and hangs up the receiver, in one motion, and never stops talking ---

STEVE (cont'd)

--- but it's like yesterday I'm getting a coffee, and this little boy and his mom are in line behind me, and they have this puppy, and I'm standing there minding my own business, and I hear the mom say to her son: "Why don't you go show the puppy to that sad man over there --

(MORE)



STEVE (cont'd)

maybe the puppy will cheer him up!" -- and I am really trying to ignore this, but now the puppy is sniffing at my boots and the little kid is saying: "Hi Mister, you look sad -- do you want to pet my puppy?"

And what I THOUGHT -- what I didn't SAY, even though I wanted to -- what I THOUGHT was:

"You bet I do, sonny boy -- I want to pet your little puppy -- and then I want to take him for a nice walk, a little hike in the mountains with you right by his side -- and as we approach the rugged vista which is our destination, I want to let go of his leash for just a *second*, just an *instant*, right when the path beneath his little paws starts to give way -- and I want you to watch your puppy's desperate eyes as he tries to grab at that ground -- but his little paws touch nothing but *air*, nothing to hold onto, nothing but you and your screams and you might as well *scream your heart out*, sonny boy, because THERE IS NOTHING YOU CAN DO for that puppy of yours who is falling DOWN DOWN DOWN into a dark abyss that will NEVER EVER GIVE HIM BACK."

Pause.

BECKY

At least you only thought it.

STEVE

I only thought I thought it. Turns out I *said it*.

BECKY

Oh my god ...

STEVE

It was ugly. The kid cried till he threw up. His mom poured a Frappuccino on me.

STEVE sits down.

BECKY is looking at a driving map printout.

BECKY

You ever driven out to Cedar Cove?

STEVE

You don't drive to Cedar Cove, Becky -- you *achieve* Cedar Cove. Or marry into it.

BECKY

Looks like it's an hour to the ferry ---