FOXES APPEARED

A drama in one act
by
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SYNOPSIS

Two strangers at their breaking points meet on a dark bridge late at night. Connected only by a shoe box of mysterious letters left behind by a mother who once stood in their shoes, they are forced to confront the pain that brought them both to the edge. Together, they discover an unexpected reason to keep going.

CHARACTERS

(1M, 2F)

TOM.....Depressed teacher, male, 50s
BECKY.....Aimless cashier, female, 20s
MEREDITH.....Becky’s mother, female, 40s

SETTING

A pedestrian bridge; late at night.

RUNNING TIME

30 minutes.

(AT RISE: A warm pool of light illuminates MEREDITH, standing upstage, looking out into the distance. Downstage, BECKY sits along the edge of a concrete bridge, her back against the railing. A cardboard shoe box sits open beside her. She holds a handwritten letter. When she looks down to read it, MEREDITH speaks.)

MEREDITH

"The doctor called it a *progressive disease*, Becky-bear. Which is a nice way of saying my legs were going to quit working before the rest of me. I told him he could have given me some warning, but he didn't. They just stopped. Everything gets quiet right before it freezes."

(BECKY gently folds the letter and places it back in the box. MEREDITH'S light dims slightly. BECKY stands up, approaches the railing, and grips the cold steel. She stares down into the darkness below. Footsteps echo from offstage. TOM enters. He wears a heavy coat, his hands shoved deep into the pockets. He moves slowly, in a state of overwhelming grief. He stops dead in his tracks when he sees BECKY. He didn't expect anyone to be here.)

TOM

Cold night for a walk.

BECKY

I'm not walking. I'm measuring.

TOM

Measuring what?

BECKY

The drop. How far down do you think it is to the creek?

TOM

Eighty feet. Maybe eighty-five.

BECKY

How many seconds do you think that takes? To hit the bottom?

TOM

About three.

BECKY
You say that like you know.

TOM
I’m a theatre guy. I’ve spent my whole life staging things. Pacing, timing. It all counts. Three seconds is an eternity on stage.

BECKY
Three seconds doesn’t sound like much. You can’t even finish a thought.

TOM
You’d be surprised what you can think about when you’re falling. A whole life can fit into a blink.

(He looks at her, truly seeing her sadness.)

You’re too young to be counting seconds on a bridge.

BECKY
I’m just trying to figure out if I’m even in the right place. I’ve been driving around all night. My mom left a description of a bridge, but all these highway overpasses look exactly the same when you’re staring into the dark.

TOM
What kind of spot are you looking for?

BECKY
A place she came to once, when she wanted everything to stop.

TOM
Well, you’re on a bridge. That’s a start. But one of us should probably stay up here.

BECKY
What’s that supposed to mean?

TOM
(Clears his throat)
Just means it’s a high bridge, that’s all. And this railing seems wobbly.

BECKY
You don’t look like a guy who normally wanders around at night, checking on railings.

TOM
I don’t? What *do* I look like?

BECKY
Like an aging drama teacher who got lost on the way to rehearsal.

TOM
(Laughs unexpectedly)
Ouch. Is it the coat or the permanent look of disappointment?

BECKY
Both. Plus you’re acting like you want to fix me. Only people who spend their lives trying to fix other people talk like that.

TOM
Yeah. Well. I used to be pretty good at fixing people. But you spend all your time fixing everyone else, you forget to check your own walls.

BECKY
(Quietly)
What happened to your walls?

(TOM looks out over the edge and practically strangles the railing with his knuckles.)

TOM
The world got loud. And mean. It used to be that if you were kind, it mattered. Now, it feels like you drop kindness into the world and it vanishes. Like throwing a rock into that creek down there. No splash. Just gone.

BECKY
People are jerks. That’s not news.

TOM
It is when you spent so many years believing they weren’t. Then you wake up one day and realize you were wrong.

(He stops himself, shaking his head.)

Listen to me. Complaining to a stranger. I’m sorry. What’s in the box?

BECKY
Letters. From my mom.

TOM
She write to you often?

BECKY
She does now. She died two weeks ago. ALS.

TOM
Oh, god. I’m so sorry. That’s a brutal disease.

BECKY
Yeah. It took her apart, piece by piece. But she left these letters. One a day after she was diagnosed. I’m supposed to read them in order, but I’m looking for something specific tonight. A place she talked about.

(She opens a new letter. MEREDITH’S light brightens.)

MEREDITH
“The truth is, the body is boring when it decides to quit. But the mind stays sharp. Don’t look for me in the quiet places, Becky-bear. Look for me where the air is thin and the choices are hard.”

(Her light dims. BECKY shivers slightly, though she doesn’t turn around.)

TOM
Did she find what she was looking for?

BECKY
I don’t know yet. I’m still trying to figure out where she sent me.

TOM
Like on a scavenger hunt?

BECKY
(Shrugs)
Maybe. My mom was weird like that. She was always trying to turn everything into a moment. She wrote this entire journal of poems when she got sick. They’re completely terrible, full of words like “yearning” and “abyss.” And to make it worse, she wrote them all in cursive. My school stopped teaching cursive in the second grade, so to me, her deepest inner thoughts just look like a bunch of squiggles.

TOM
Hey, don’t knock bad poetry. It’s better than no poetry at all.

BECKY
Easy for you to say. You're the theatre guy. You probably have a whole filing cabinet full of big ideas. I don't have a creative bone in my body.

TOM
Everyone's creative, Becky.

BECKY
My name is Becky, yeah. How did you know that?

TOM
Your mom's voice. She called you "Becky-bear" just a minute ago.

BECKY
(Confused)
She didn't say anything out loud. I was reading it.

TOM
Oh. I thought for sure I heard it. Sorry. I guess I'm used to hearing things that aren't there. When you spend a lifetime directing plays, you get used to seeing the whole picture.

BECKY
Is that what you do? Direct?

TOM
(Nods)
High school theatre. I used to love taking kids who thought they were invisible and put them under a spotlight. The look on their faces when they realized people were listening was everything to me. I built a whole life out of that. I thought, if I could make enough people feel seen, the world would be a better place.

(His face suddenly lights up.)

God, it used to be so easy. I'd walk into a room and just *know* how to spark people. It was a well that never ran dry. I could find beauty in a broken prop or a forgotten line. For years, joy was my default setting and living was effortless. So when the world started turning ugly, I didn't stop. I worked harder. I spent every spare second chasing that feeling. Hunting for that spark in books, in poetry, in Shakespeare. I thought I could keep the well full.

BECKY
(Quietly)
But you couldn't.

(The joy completely drains from TOM’S face.)

TOM
No. The world doesn’t stop breaking because you’re putting on a show. It just keeps happening. Every time you turn on a screen, you watch people get crushed, or left behind, or killed. Over and over and over again. At first, it tears you apart. You scream, you fight, you try to fix it. But the sheer volume of it, the endless rerun of human cruelty, it eventually overflows. So your brain does the only thing it can do to protect itself.

BECKY
It shuts down.

TOM
It goes completely numb. And it’s not a sudden blowout. It’s a slow, agonizing drip. You spend your life giving every ounce of your soul to people, believing human beings are inherently good, and then the world keeps proving you wrong.

BECKY
I can’t argue that.

TOM
(Quietly)
Last month, I saw something online that I can’t stop seeing. An innocent kid, just standing there, minding his own business, shot dead, in broad daylight. By the people who were supposed to protect him. And nobody did anything. That wasn’t a drip. That was the bottom of the well disappearing.

(His hands shake. His whole body shakes.)

I went to rehearsal that night, and I couldn’t look at the stage. The lights felt fake. The words felt stupid. I realized I’d been play acting my whole life while the real world was out there bleeding. I haven’t been back to the theatre since. I started drinking more. A glass at night to stop the shaking, but that became two, then three. It turns out, when you stop trying to fix the world, you have a lot of free time on your hands.

BECKY
My mom didn’t have free time. She had a deadline.

TOM
What did she do? For work?

BECKY
Nothing glamorous. She worked at a dry cleaners, smelling starch and steam all day. But she made up these elaborate stories for every person who brought in a coat. She'd say, "See that coffee stain on Mr. Taylor's lapel? That's not coffee. That's the exact moment he realized he married the wrong woman."

TOM
(Smiles)
She sounds like a director.

BECKY
She was exhausting. I'm the opposite. I work retail. I fold shirts and I scan barcodes. When a customer complains that their coupon is expired, I don't think about their tragic backstory. I think, *You're a jerk, and I want to go home.* I like things that are exactly what they are. A barcode doesn't have feelings. It just beeps.

TOM
There's comfort in predictability.

BECKY
But then she dies, and leaves me this box of mysteries. She wrote about a bridge. A bridge she came to on the day she got her diagnosis. It says she wanted to see how high it was.

TOM
Did she tell you why?

BECKY
She didn't have to. I know why. She wanted to know if three seconds was fast enough to outrun the disease.

TOM
It is. It's faster than what the disease does.

BECKY
(Sharply)
Don't say that.

TOM
You said you like things that are exactly what they are. That's the math of it. Three seconds of gravity versus three years of your own lungs forgetting how to breathe. It's a logical choice.

BECKY
It’s not logical. It’s terrifying! I spent the last two weeks looking for the exact spot where she stood. And wondering if she was scared when she was looking down.

TOM
She was probably peaceful.

BECKY
(Angry)
How do you know? You didn’t know her! You’re just some guy who showed up in the middle of the night to give me a lecture on theatre!

TOM
Because I’m peaceful right now.

(BECKY freezes. The realization hits her like punch in the gut. She looks at his white knuckles on the railing, his heavy coat, the exhaustion in his face.)

BECKY
(Whispers)
Oh.

TOM
Yeah.

BECKY
You didn’t come here for a walk.

TOM
No. I didn’t.

BECKY
And you weren’t measuring the drop for me.

TOM
I already knew the numbers before I got here.

BECKY
(Panics slightly)
Okay, look. I’m not good at this. I fold shirts. I scan barcodes. I don’t do, whatever this is. You need to call someone. A therapist. A friend. Anyone!

TOM
My friends are angry with me.

BECKY
Why would they be angry with you for being sad?

TOM
Because when the guy who always fixes things suddenly stops, people don’t ask if he’s okay. They just get mad that their stuff is still broken. They think I’m being selfish. Or they choose not to believe it. I’m playing the part of “okay” so well that nobody sees the rope fraying.

BECKY
Well, I see it.

TOM
You only see it because you’re looking for your mother’s ghost. We’re hunting the same thing tonight.

(MEREDITH’S light brightens.)

MEREDITH
“But the thing about a high place is that it gives you too much time to think before you step off. You look down and you see the dark. But if you look a little bit to the left, where the brush meets the water, you realize you aren’t alone.”

(Her light dims. BECKY slowly reaches into the shoe box and pulls out another letter, her hands trembling.)

BECKY
My mom didn’t jump.

TOM
(Softly)
I know. You said she died two weeks ago.

BECKY
But she came to a bridge, just like you. Then changed her mind.

TOM
Why?

(BECKY looks at the sealed envelope in her hand, her voice cracking.)

BECKY
I don’t know. There’s so many I haven’t opened yet.

TOM
Then keep opening.

BECKY
I can’t. What if she tells me she wished she did? What if this one says she regretted sticking around to watch her body fall apart?

TOM
She wouldn’t have written you a letter every day if she regretted being alive to write them.

BECKY
You don’t know that. You’re trying to fix me again. Stop doing that.

TOM
I’m not trying to fix you. I’m asking for myself. I want to know what kept her on the bridge. Because right now, I could use a reason.

(BECKY slowly opens the envelope. She pulls out a folded piece of paper. As she unfolds it, MEREDITH’S light brightens.)

MEREDITH
“October 14th. The day the world changed, though nobody else noticed. I was standing on the bridge over the creek. The water looked so cold, and my legs felt so heavy, and I thought, *This is it. I’ll slip over the edge and it will be over before I even have time to feel it.*”

(BECKY’S breath catches. She inhales deeply to catch it back, and keeps reading.)

“I had my hands on the railing. I closed my eyes. And then I heard a sound. A sharp crunch in the gravel at the edge of the woods. I opened my eyes and looked down into the brush. And right there, at the foot of the bridge, a fox appeared.”

(TOM turns his head slowly, listening intently.)

“He was small. Rust coloured. He had this scruffy, ridiculous coat, and one of his ears was torn. He looked like he’d been through a hell of a fight. But he wasn’t crying about it. He was just looking up at

me. He looked so wild, and so completely alive, and so entirely stubborn. He didn't care about my diagnosis. He didn't care about the dark. He was just being a fox. Brimming with life."

(MEREDITH pauses and a genuine smile appears on her face.)

"We stared at each other. For a long time. And I thought, *If that little scrapper can keep running around in the cold with a torn ear, then maybe I can stick around to see what happens next."*

(Her light dims. BECKY slowly lowers the letter and looks at TOM.)

BECKY
(Quietly)
A fox. That's why she stayed.

TOM
A fox.

BECKY
(Nods)
A fox.

TOM
I haven't seen a fox in years.

BECKY
Maybe you're looking in the wrong place.

TOM
Oh, I've looked. Trust me. I've looked everywhere.

BECKY
Where?

TOM
In the theatre. I thought if I could find the right play, the right set, the right kid, I'd see it. That wild, stubborn thing your mom saw. I looked for it in the audience, watching their faces when the curtain went up. For a long time, I thought I found it there.

BECKY
And then?

TOM
The house lights came up and everyone went back to their real lives. Back to being angry, back to being scared, back to ignoring each other on the street.

BECKY
So you stopped looking there?

TOM
I tried looking in the bottle. That just made everything blurry. You watch a kid get murdered for no reason and you realize, there are no foxes out there. Just wolves. And they're winning.

BECKY
My mom's fox had a torn ear. It wasn't winning. It was surviving. There's a difference.

TOM
Surviving is exhausting when you're doing it alone.

BECKY
Who says you're alone?

TOM
Look around us. It's two o'clock in the morning on a deserted bridge.

BECKY
Yeah, and there are two of us here. Which means you're lousy at being alone.

TOM
(Laughs)
You're a piece of work, you know that?

BECKY
I told you, I deal with difficult customers all day. You're not the first guy who's stood in front of me, refusing to see what's right in front of his face.

TOM
And what's right in front of my face?

(BECKY steps up to the railing and stands beside him, shoulder to shoulder.)

BECKY
Me. Holding a box of my dead mother's letters, trying to figure out

how to live in a world without her. I don’t know how to make people feel seen, and I definitely don’t know how to fix things. But I’m here.

(MEREDITH’S light brightens.)

MEREDITH
“And the funniest thing about a fox is that they don’t show up when you invite them. They show up when the trash is knocked over, or when the air is freezing, or when you’ve completely given up on looking for anything beautiful at all.”

(Her light dims.)

TOM
Why are you doing this? You don’t even know me.

BECKY
Because I spent my whole life being invisible. That’s what makes me tick, okay? In high school, I was the girl who sat in the back and never raised her hand. At work, I’m the uniform that hands you a receipt. People look right through me. And honestly? I liked it that way. It was safe. If nobody sees you, nobody can ask anything of you.

TOM
It’s a lonely way to live.

BECKY
When mom got sick, I had to watch her lose everything. And the hardest part wasn’t the cooking or the cleaning or the driving to appointments. It was that she refused to let me be invisible anymore. Every day she’d look at me and say, “What are you going to do with your life, Becky-bear? Don’t fade into the background.”

(She wipes a stray tear from her cheek, angry at herself for crying.)

And I hated it. I hated her for unloading that on me! I wanted to fold my shirts and scan my barcodes and be left alone. But then she died. And now I realize that if I stand here and watch you jump, then I’m exactly what she always feared I was. Nothing. Just a ghost standing on a bridge.

TOM
Becky --

BECKY
(Turns to him fiercely)
No, listen to me! You said you spent a lifetime making people feel seen. Well, I'm standing right here. See me! And see yourself. You're pissed off because the world is mean? Welcome to the club. It's always been mean. But my mom found a reason to stay because of a scruffy animal with a torn ear. Find a reason. Even if it's a stupid one. Even if it's just to see what happens on the next page.

(TOM grips the railing, his knuckles turning white again. He looks down at the water, then back at BECKY. He takes a long, shuddering breath.)

TOM
The next page.

BECKY
Yeah.

TOM
I don't even have a script.

(BECKY holds out the box of letters.)

BECKY
I have a whole box of them. We can start with these.

(MEREDITH'S light brightens into a steady glow.)

MEREDITH
"Because the wild things don't give up, Becky-bear. They just keep running."

TOM
It's like a paralysis.

BECKY
What is?

TOM
What happened to your mom. And what happened to me. I know it sounds crazy. She was fighting for her life, and I'm just some guy who got sad. But it feels the same.

BECKY

How so?

TOM

With ALS, it’s the fingers first, right? Then the knees. Then the throat. With me, it’s the things that make you *you* that get taken away. First, you lose your enthusiasm. You wake up one day and the thing you loved doing starts feeling like a chore. Then you lose your patience. Then your kindness. You start hiding from the people who love you because you don’t have the strength to hold yourself up, let alone them.

BECKY

My mom used to get so frustrated when she couldn’t button her own shirt. She’d sit there, fumbling, and curse at her hands for betraying her.

TOM

That’s exactly it. I look in the mirror, and I see this guy who drinks too much, who doesn’t answer his phone, who wants to step off a bridge, and I don’t know who he is. Those muscles simply stopped working.

(BECKY gently places her hand on his arm.)

BECKY

But my mom didn’t stop being my mom because her hands quit. She found a different way to move. She used her mind. She used these letters.

TOM

I don’t know how to direct myself out of this corner.

BECKY

You don’t have to direct a masterpiece tonight. You just have to not jump. That’s step one.

MEREDITH

“The doctors told me to prepare for the end. But they didn’t understand. The end isn’t a single moment where everything goes black. It’s a choice you make every morning to keep breathing. You don’t need perfect legs to outrun the dark.”

(TOM looks at BECKY, his breathing finally starting to slow down.)

TOM

Your mom was a lot smarter than the kids I usually direct.

BECKY
She was a pain in the ass. But she was usually right. And she wasn't always this profound. Trust me, some of these letters are completely ridiculous.

TOM
Yeah?

(BECKY digs through the envelopes, shuffling them around.)

BECKY
Oh, yeah. There's one. Where is it? She wrote it right after her hands started shaking really bad. It was supposed to be this serious talk about life insurance, but she got distracted. Hold on, let me find it.

(She rifles through the box, getting frustrated.)

Damn it. I can't find it. The dates are all messed up.

TOM
It's okay. Just tell me.

(BECKY gives up on the box and leans back against the rail.)

BECKY
Well, if I remember right, she spent four pages complaining about this one nurse, Miss Burns. She said Miss Burns had to be at least eighty and had a hairstyle that looked exactly like a Cornish game hen. Then she described how she tried to steal a motorized scooter from the lobby because she wanted to drag-race the pharmacist. She almost made it to the elevator before the battery died.

(MEREDITH breaks her stillness. She looks at BECKY and laughs.)

MEREDITH
It wasn't a Cornish game hen. It was a Beef Wellington. And I didn't steal the scooter, the orderly *gave* me a ride because he felt sorry for me.

TOM
(Laughs unexpectedly)
Your mom tried to grand-theft-auto a mobility scooter?

BECKY
Yes! That’s how I remember it anyway. She claimed she hit fifteen miles an hour and took out a cart full of chocolate pudding cups.

MEREDITH
Two pudding cups. It was only two. And they were vanilla.

TOM
You know, it’s funny how we do that.

BECKY
Do what?

TOM
Change the story. Your version is definitely more theatrical.

BECKY
(Shrugs)
Maybe I got it wrong. Maybe she wrote something else and my brain filled in the blanks to make it funnier. When someone’s dying, you kind of need them to be a bad-ass scooter thief instead of a lady who can’t feed herself.

TOM
That’s not getting it wrong. That’s what we do to survive. We make the shadows a little wider, or the jokes a little louder, because the truth is too much to handle.

BECKY
Is that what you do with your plays?

TOM
Every time. You take the brutality of life and you shape it. You give it a punchline, or a beautiful lighting cue. Not to lie about it, but to give people something they can grab on to. If we only looked at things exactly as they are, nobody would ever get out of bed.

BECKY
So you’re saying it’s okay if I remember her a little wrong?

TOM
I think your mom is up there right now, completely thrilled that she knocked over a whole cart of pudding in your head.

MEREDITH
(Smiles)
Every single cup, Becky-bear. Every last one.

TOM
I wish I could remember things wrong.

(He abruptly turns away. His hands start to shake violently, suddenly overcome with grief.)

BECKY
You talk about the world like it’s miles away, but you’re shivering. And you’re sweating. What’s the matter?

TOM
It’s not miles away.

BECKY
What’s wrong?

TOM
The kid. The one I told you about. I didn’t see it online.

BECKY
Where did you see it?

TOM
A couple blocks from here. Twenty minutes ago. Down by the old warehouse lot.

BECKY
(Stunned)
Oh my god.

TOM
I was out walking, trying to clear my head. And there was a siren. Just one. This blue and red light pulsing against the brick walls. And there was a boy. He couldn’t have been more than fifteen. He was running, and then he stopped, and he put his hands up. He did exactly what he was supposed to do. He did exactly what *they told him do to*. He wasn’t a threat. He was just a kid, completely terrified, trapped in the headlights.

(He chokes up, gripping the railing to steady himself. The memory is happening right behind his eyes.)

TOM
(Continued)
And they didn't ask questions. The people who are supposed to keep the peace, they opened fire. Two shots. It was so loud. It didn't sound like it does in the movies. It sounded like something tearing open. He hit the concrete. The lights kept spinning over him. Red, blue, red, blue. No one helped him. They just stood over him with their radios buzzing.

BECKY
(Horrified)
Did you call the police? Did you --

TOM
They *were* the police! That's the point. I stood in the shadows and I watched them put a sheet over him. And I realized, all that kindness I've been handing out my whole life? It's a joke. It's a drop of water in an ocean of gasoline. So I ran. I ran as fast as I could because I can't go back to a world where things like that happen while everyone else is asleep.

BECKY
And you came straight here.

TOM
I had to outrun the sound of those shots. I thought if I could just get high enough, if I could just count to three, the sound would stop.

(MEREDITH steps closer to the edge of her light, looking directly at TOM.)

MEREDITH
"Because sometimes the world cracks open right in front of you. It's a sudden, violent snap. And in that second, you realize the rules you've been playing by don't exist."

TOM
The sound is still there. Every time I close my eyes, I see that kid's hands in the air.

BECKY
Don't close your eyes then. Look at me. Look at the bridge. Look at anything else!

(TOM opens his eyes, forcing himself to look away from the memory and down toward the creek. He blinks, squinting through the shadows.)

TOM
Look over there. Across the water.

BECKY
Where?

TOM
(Points downward)
That iron structure. The one with the rusted gears. It’s an old timber flume, isn’t it? From the logging days.

BECKY
(Leans over the railing)
Yeah, I think so. It’s totally abandoned. It looks like a giant skeleton in the dark.

TOM
Look at the very top of it. The way the moonlight cuts through the framework. It looks exactly like a steel rib-cage.

(BECKY’S breath catches completely. She pulls out a letter, her eyes flying down the page as she searches for something.)

BECKY
Oh my god.

TOM
What?

BECKY
Look at what she wrote here. I thought she was quoting a medical textbook or something, but she wasn’t at all.

TOM
What does it say?

BECKY
“Don’t look down at the water, Becky-bear. Look across. Do you see the old timber flume? In the dark, it’s the steel rib-cage of the valley...”

MEREDITH
"...but watch the sky. If you stand there long enough, the moon passes right through the center of those steel beams. It sits perfectly inside the ribs, the white light beating. It's a heart made of steel, proving that even skeletons have a soul."

TOM
This is it. This is exactly where she stood.

BECKY
I've been driving around for days, scanning every overpass, looking for signs, and I missed it completely. It was right in front of my face, but I was looking at the concrete. I didn't see the bigger picture. But you did.

TOM
I told you. I look at the whole stage.

BECKY
Don't you see? You did it again.

TOM
Did what?

BECKY
The thing you've done your whole life. The thing you thought was dead because of what you saw tonight. But it's not. You brought my mom back to me. She's standing in your spotlight.

TOM
(Shakes his head)
I'm not a saviour tonight. I'm a mess.

BECKY
My mom's fox had a torn ear! It was a mess too! It didn't show up in a tuxedo to give a speech. It was simply there, being alive, being stubborn enough to make her change her mind. You've been a fox your entire life. You brought life to those invisible kids. You gave them something to hold onto. And tonight, you did it for me.

MEREDITH
"Because a fox doesn't ask permission to exist. It forces you to look at the world a little differently. And sometimes, if you're lucky, one will appear when you need it the most."

(TOM looks out into the distance, his voice dropping to a whisper.)

TOM
That boy tonight, he could have been one of my students. He should have been practising lines, or complaining about his costume, or worrying about a bad grade. He shouldn’t have been on the pavement.

BECKY
(Quietly)
I know.

TOM
When I saw him drop, it wasn’t just him. It felt like every kid I ever put under a spotlight dropped with him. I kept thinking, *What was the point of all those rehearsals? What was the point of telling them they mattered if the world is going to chew them up anyway?*

BECKY
Maybe the point was that they had those two hours.

TOM
Two hours isn’t enough! It doesn’t save them from a bullet!

BECKY
No, it doesn’t. But it saves them from being invisible. That boy tonight, he didn’t have anyone looking out for him. But you were there. And you didn’t turn away. You saw him. You’re still seeing him right now.

TOM
(Shaking)
I don’t want to see it! I want to blind myself!

BECKY
(Steps closer)
In a world full of people who don’t give a damn, a guy who breaks because a stranger died? That’s not a weakness. That’s the only thing we’ve got left.

MEREDITH
“The world is always going to find a way to be brutal. But you don’t honour the dead by joining them in the dark. You honour them by carrying their light into the next room, even if your hands are shaking so bad you drop half of it on the floor.”

TOM
I don’t know if I have any light left to carry. I think my match went out.

(BECKY shakes TOM, ferociously.)

BECKY
Then steal some of mine! Or steal my mom’s! I don’t care! Just don’t leave me out here alone!

TOM
(Startled by her intensity)
Becky --

BECKY
(Tears spilling over)
I’ve spent twenty-four years wanting absolutely nothing from this life. Nothing. I wanted to be a ghost. I wanted to fold shirts, collect a paycheck, and slide through the world without making a single wave, because wanting things hurts too much. Watching my mom stop breathing on her own, it terrified me. So I chose nothing.

(She turns TOM’S face toward hers, forcing him to look at her.)

But tonight, standing on this bridge, looking at that steel rib-cage, I realize I don’t want to be invisible anymore. I want to want something. I want to know why my mom fought so hard to stay alive to write me these stupid letters. I want to figure out who I am. But I can’t do that if the first decent person I meet steps off a railing and disappears into the dark.

TOM
(Whispers)
You’re not a ghost.

BECKY
Then prove it. Stay here. Help me read these. Help me figure things out, because my mom’s not here, and I don’t know how to do it by myself. I’m asking you to be a fox for me. Just for tonight. Just long enough for us to walk off this bridge together.

MEREDITH
“Because that’s the secret, Becky-bear. The fox doesn’t appear to save themselves. They show up to show you that the wild, stubborn, beautiful fight for life is contagious.”

(TOM looks at BECKY'S hands gripping his coat, then down at the shoe box on the concrete. His instinct to comfort someone overrides his exhaustion. He covers her hands with his own.)

TOM

Okay.

BECKY

Okay?

TOM

Okay.

(He steps away from the railing.)

Let's see what's next.

(BECKY lets out a long breath. Her hands shake as she reaches into the box. She takes out an envelope. She tears it open and pulls out the pages.)

BECKY

This one doesn't have a date. Just a time. It says, "Two in the morning, when the house is too quiet."

(MEREDITH'S light slowly grows, gradually blending into the light around TOM and BECKY.)

END OF PREVIEW

For a complete script, or to apply for production rights:
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