

BATCHES OF BILL

by

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FADE IN:

EXT. PLEDGER FUNERAL HOME - DAY

A lovely old New England neighborhood. An emerald green expanse of lawn leads up to Pledgers Funeral Home. Roses on arbors. It's almost too pretty to store dead bodies.

EXT./INT. NORA'S CADILLAC - DAY

A luxury Cadillac idles under a casket-shaped sign for PLEDGERS FUNERAL HOME. The license plate reads: "Buff Bill."

NORA WINSTON, 38, every hair in place, grips the rosewood steering wheel. Her ginormous diamond wedding band reflects rainbows of sunlight across her face. She closes her eyes and takes deep breaths in and out.

A SCREAM explodes from somewhere inside the car. Nora doesn't flinch.

The SCREAM sounds again. Nora yanks her cellphone out of her couture pantsuit. The caller ID reads: MOTHER.

When she looks up, the Funeral Home seems to have moved closer to the car. She nervously clicks on the windshield wipers. Then off. On. Off.

NORA

Ladies do not cry. Ladies do not
sniffle.

Nora aggressively holds her breath. A massive hiccupping SOB bursts out of her mouth.

NORA (CONT'D)

Ladies suck.

She retouches her makeup and hair. Her cellphone rings Sister Sledge's "We Are Family." She checks her manicure as she opens the phone.

NORA (CONT'D)

Hello, Karen. - No, I'm fine. - No.
Tell her you couldn't...Hello,
Mother. - I'm at the grocery store.
- I'm sorry, you're so sad, Mother.
- Yes. You were Bill's favorite
mother-in-law. - No, Mother, I
didn't mean it like that. - I'll
call you later.

Nora disconnects and considers leaving the phone behind. She reluctantly puts in her purse. Before getting out of the car, she straightens the mirror and wipes a smudge from the steering wheel.

INT. FUNERAL HOME - DAY

Shelves and shelves of assorted urns. Tasteful and elegant. Gaudy and cartoonish.

Nora stands staring at a replica of Fenway's Green Monster. MR. PLEDGER, 40's, shockingly handsome, steps up quietly behind Nora.

MR. PLEDGER

We set Mr. Hanratty's cremains in that particular model. A lifetime fan of the Red Sox. Never missed a home game.

NORA

That kind of dedication...it's lovely.

MARGUERITE

And tacky.

Nora dabs at her eyes and faces her sister-in-law MARGUERITE, 50, who's invested big bucks to look younger than a toddler. Marguerite is flanked by her twin brothers, 51, slender SIM and corpulent LANCE.

NORA

Hello, Marguerite. Sim and Lance, I didn't expect you to be here. I'm touched.

Nora's expression makes it clear she's lying through her teeth.

MARGUERITE

We're not here for you, Nora. He was our brother. My oldest brother. I'm devastated. You have no idea.

Nora focuses on Mr. Pledger who stands straighter and smiles benevolently.

NORA

Exactly why am I here?

MARGUERITE

Good Lord.

MR. PLEDGER

I believe she means this particular room. Is that what you're asking, Mrs. Winston?

NORA

Yes, of course. I brought Bill's Marine Corps ring.

With a steady hand, Nora sets the heavy ring into Mr. Pledger's palm. His fingers close over hers briefly. Nora blushes and pulls away.

NORA (CONT'D)

He always wears it.

MR. PLEDGER

I'll get him. Will you be alright for a few minutes?

Nora nods. Marguerite waves him out impatiently. Lance and Sim peek inside the urns.

LANCE

I think this one's recycled. There's residue.

Sim looks over his brother's head into the urn.

SIM

That's dust. Try Curious George.

Lance wobbles over to an urn shaped like a grinning monkey and opens the lid.

NORA

How are your girls, Marguerite?

MARGUERITE

Fine. Fine. They'll all be here for the service. He was their favorite uncle, of course.

Sim and Lance exchange suffering glances. They're used to Marguerite's slights.

Nora nods but she doesn't get these people at all. Mr. Pledger returns and places a sealed gray urn in Nora's hands.

Puzzled, Nora stares at it. Suddenly, a horrifying realization flashes across her face.

Her cell phone SCREAMS. Everyone in the room jumps.

NORA

I don't want that. I want Bill.

MR. PLEDGER

I apologize, Mrs. Winston. I thought you knew. I thought you wanted this.

MARGUERITE

The family wanted it this way. Nora is part of the family. Extended family.

NORA

What did you do to him?

UNCLE SIM

It's a simple process of applying searing heat to human remains where any residual moisture leaves the tissue until only ashes remain.

UNCLE LANCE

And some bone.

UNCLE SIM

Teeth, too.

UNCLE LANCE

Often referred to as incineration.

UNCLE SIM

Quite inaccurately.

The two uncles share a snigger but sober up on Nora's shock.

NORA

You didn't. Not my Bill. I need to touch him. I need to kiss him goodbye.

MR. PLEDGER

Mrs. Winston, had I known...

NORA

You canned him like...peaches.

MARGUERITE

Stop this, Nora. Mr. Pledger has performed a service for this family and we owe him our gratitude.

UNCLE SIM

And eleven thousand dollars. And
forty-three cents.

UNCLE LANCE

We brought a check.

Mr. Pledger holds Nora steady in one hand and the urn in the other. She cannot look at him or it.

NORA

I hate that. I hate it. It's not my
Bill. Where's the rest of him? It's
too small. And he was so, so...

UNCLE LANCE

He was a big man.

SIM

Please, he'd fit into one of your
pantlegs.

MARGUERITE

Boys, behave.

NORA

Bill! There's no air in there!

Nora attempts to remove the lid. Marguerite slaps Nora. Mr. Pledger pulls Marguerite back.

MARGUERITE

She's hysterical. Call the doctor.

NORA

You have to fix this.

MR. PLEDGER

How I wish that I could, Mrs.
Winston. I would set it all right.

MARGUERITE

I'm calling the doctor.

Marguerite bristles under Mr. Pledger's fierce glare. She pulls Lance and Sim out of the room.

NORA

Please, he's all I have.

MR. PLEDGER

Your husband will always be a part
of you, but you also have...mm...

Mr. Pledger swallows and gently pushes Nora away. He gives a quick, almost unseen glance toward Nora's ample bosom.

MR. PLEDGER (CONT'D)
...many things.

NORA
I just want the part of me that is
Bill.

Nora cradles the urn to her chest. Her expression is breaking Mr. Pledger's heart.

NORA (CONT'D)
What do I do now?

EXT. BREAD AND BUTTER LAKE - DAY

Nora's Cadillac follows a picturesque road along the edge of the lake. The summer sun casts a golden glow on the water and the small cottages along the shore.

INT. NORA'S CADILLAC - DAY

Bill's urn is seat-belted into the passenger seat. She changes the radio station to a love song.

NORA
Bill, our song. Remember? That
reminds me. I have to send your
tuxedo to the cleaners. The Apple
Blossom Ball is next month. You're
right. That's why you have me.

She caresses the urn and nearly misses the turn-off. She jerks the wheel hard. The urn bumps against the door.

NORA (CONT'D)
I'm sorry, sweetheart. You should
have driven.

EXT. BILL'S CABIN - EVENING

Nora's Cadillac bumps up a long dirt drive deeper and deeper into the dim woods. It stops in front of a small log cabin. Could be the scene of any teen-slasher movie.

An unidentifiable creature zips past the headlights.

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