

AU NATURALE

On a fine Christmas morning, in an affluent suburban neighborhood in the scenic Pacific coast town of Valera, USA, an attractive young woman, five months pregnant, vanishes while walking her dog. Her husband claims to be fishing at the time of her disappearance. Only his mother believes him.

The distinctly non-linear narrative of AU NATURALE begins after the disappearance of *Merrill Beach*, with the return of her estranged husband *Weber* who, while working as a retail fertilizer salesman in the neighboring township of Rioja, engages in an explosive love affair with *Reba*, his location's branch manager. A corporate refugee turned organic farmer, *Reba* has transplanted herself from urban hell to rural splendor in a vain attempt to find some sort of paradise on earth. Sparks fly between the two almost immediately and a shared inability to resist physical temptation is what ultimately destroys both the real family *Weber* has left behind, and the fantasy world that *Reba* has constructed.

Moving from the past to the present and back again, AU NATURALE snakes in and out of *Merrill's* paranoid dreamscape, fueled by her most terrifying fears of isolation and abandonment; *Reba's* greenhouse, a modern Eden where she and *Weber* spend countless hours playing Adam and Eve; and *Weber's* childhood home, where his ailing mother *Florence* has her hands full tending to the needs of a scrappy, slightly incompetent Detective named *Bullock*. Bumbling as he may be, it is in *Bullock's* attempts to break *Weber* down, "to collect all the pieces of the puzzle, come to some rational conclusion about what happened and then go away," that he discovers the truly ugly secret buried deep beneath the manicured lawns of this picturesque American landscape.

AU NATURALE is a play about soil and water, love and betrayal, sex and disease, family and faith. It is a play that pits the dead against the living in a quest for truth, never losing hope that it might someday be unearthed.

ACT I

SCENE IV:

Lights up on REBA'S GREENHOUSE. REBA wears a pair of short-shorts and smokes a joint. Through the greenhouse windows, we see the ocean, a house.)

REBA

There is just something about watching shit grow that has always turned me the fuck on. Even living in that God forsaken project, I knew exactly what I was missing. Concrete. I mean CONCRETE, man! (cackles) When I was running around on that pavement, Weber, I used to dream about the land. Tilling the land, working the land, being one with the land. And the sun. And the sand and the water. The earth, man, I'm talking about the fucking EARTH. I used to skate around the park listening to the Beach Boys on my walkman, watching all the fags butt-fuck each other behind the trees and think, "YEAH! That's how you do it! Find a little bit of nature, just a little tiny bit of nature in this horrible cement pit hell-on-Earth urban nightmare and fuck it. Stick your dick in a hole in the ground and just fuck FUCK FUCK!" (beat) I always knew I'd wind up with a little garden. Growing my own food. Totally self-sufficient. See, life in the city it spoils you. Makes you soft, Weber. Weak. And you have to be able to fend for yourself. Because when the bottom finally drops out from under us, and it WILL, the weak are gonna be the first to fall. I, however, I'll be just fine.

(WEBER enters with a beer in hand.)

WEBER

Because you're a strong woman.

REBA

I'm a strong person.

(She hands him the joint. He shakes his head.)

REBA

Oh come on.

WEBER

No thanks.

REBA

What's wrong? You never smoked before?

WEBER

I've smoked before.

REBA

So?

WEBER

Merrill's anti.

REBA

I thought you two were separated?

WEBER

Estranged.

REBA

Is there a difference?

WEBER

Yes.

REBA

Does she still call herself Mrs.Weber Beach?

WEBER

Of course she does. We're still married.

REBA

It's a great name. Beach. BEACH. Be-ATCH. HA!

WEBER

Yeah yeah.

REBA

And you grew up by the ocean. It all makes sense. See, it's like you're really one with your environment. I'm so jealous.

WEBER

My dad used to say we invented it.

REBA

Why's that?

WEBER

He was a surfer back when surfing was still about the

beach.

REBA

Was he any good?

WEBER

The best. Surfed Adelaide, the Australian Bight, Cape Town. Hit every wave in Hawaii.

REBA

I always thought I was more of a solid ground kinda girl but now I don't know. Water is equally as alluring.

WEBER

As alluring as manure?

REBA

Moreso.

WEBER

You're talking crazy.

(She holds the joint up for them to inspect.)

REBA

Hydroponics. Proves that soil isn't required for plant growth but that the elements, minerals and nutrients contained in soil are. The *shit* simply holds the nutrients together. It's a place where the plant roots live and is a base of support for the plant itself. Soil, Weber, will some day be just as obsolete as the human womb and we will cultivate all of our flora under water.

WEBER

And I'll be out of a job.

REBA

You'll be out of a job long before they start growing people in glass tanks, baby.

WEBER

Is that so?

(Pause. She smiles. Walks away from him. He follows close behind.)

REBA

Don't you want to know what you planted?

WEBER

Sure.

REBA

Perpetual spinach.

WEBER

That means like, what? Forever?

REBA

Sort of. It's a spinach-chard cross breed. Grows year round. This, Mr. *Beach*, is your vegetable patch. If you paid any attention to that stupid video then in four months you and I will feast on perpetual spinach.

WEBER

And if I didn't.

REBA

Then I will have to fire you.

WEBER

You wouldn't dare.

REBA

Wouldn't I?

WEBER

I'm the best salesman you got.

REBA

You do seem to enjoy the challenge.

WEBER

You don't go into a fertilizer store to browse, Reba. There is no challenge.

REBA

Selling is selling. There's always going to be someone who wants something that you didn't initially offer to them.

WEBER

Give the customer what they want.

REBA

But not at the expense of the corporation.

WEBER

I thought you were some kind of hippie.

REBA

I am.

WEBER

Then what's with all the corporate concern?

REBA

I'm a hippie with an MBA. And that's SOME kinda hippie, all right. (giggles/beat) So sue me. I don't do banks. I don't do offices. Doctors, lawyers, investment consultants... anything beige. I do nature.

WEBER

Hey, no judgments.

REBA

Life doesn't always turn out the way we'd planned, *Weber*.

WEBER

I know, *Reba*, but come on, kind of wasting your degree aren't you?

(He drinks. Finishes the beer, fishes another out of the cooler. Opens it.)

REBA

And what, pray tell, did you study in school, smart ass?

WEBER

(beat/he thinks)

Huh...Communications? (beat) But I played football so...

REBA

Those who live in glass houses...

WEBER

Yeah but I made a choice.

REBA

Not to go pro?

WEBER

No. To party as well as I played. I didn't have any delusions. Always knew how I was gonna turn out in the end.

REBA

And how's that?

WEBER

Married. Football was out so me and Merrill got together.

REBA

Merrill and I.

WEBER

What the hell did you have to do with it?

REBA

(beat/smokes)

Right out of college?

WEBER

Pretty much.

REBA

That's sweet. Was she your first?

WEBER

Did you hear me? I said I played football.

REBA

Bevy of beautiful babes.

WEBER

Always.

REBA

Consummate ladies man.

WEBER

Look at me.

REBA

You *are* cute.

WEBER

What can I say?

REBA

"Thanks" to woman who made you?

WEBER

And the man. He contributed.

REBA

I suppose. (beat) I'll bet you were her's.

What?
WEBER

First. Her first.
REBA

And last.
WEBER

Confidence. Very sexy.
REBA

Why shouldn't I be confident?
WEBER

You are estranged.
REBA

You don't know Merrill.
WEBER

Nor do I claim to but you live hundreds of miles apart.
REBA

No we don't.
WEBER

She lives in Rioja, right?
REBA

We have a house in Rioja.
WEBER

But you don't live there.
REBA

Yes I do.
WEBER

It's a three and a half hour drive from Rioja to Valera.
REBA

Yeah? So?
WEBER

And you work in Valera.
REBA

WEBER

I know.

REBA

Are you telling me you commute seven hours every day to a job that you don't even find challenging?

WEBER

No. I keep an apartment here. During the week I live in the apartment, on the weekends I go home to Rioja and spend time with Merrill.

REBA

But not this weekend. This weekend you're here with me.

WEBER

Yes.

REBA

Why?

WEBER

Because you invited me.

REBA

Oh is that why?

WEBER

I certainly wouldn't invite myself. That would be rude.

REBA

There are plenty of married men who turn down invitations from women who *aren't* their wives.

WEBER

I'm not one of them.

REBA

Apparently. Why are you so different?

WEBER

I suppose it has something to do with my desire to have sex with you.

REBA

(grandiose)

Finally! The truth.

WEBER

I don't recall having lied.

REBA

You've been flirting with me since the first day you walked into that store.

WEBER

Openly and without shame. You obviously picked up on it.

REBA

Sure I did, I'm not stupid.

WEBER

And so you invited me here.

REBA

Sure.

WEBER

Under what pretense?

REBA

Pretense?

WEBER

It means "deception"--

REBA

I know what "pretense" means.

WEBER

When you think about it, *I* have actually been honest with you from the get-go. You're the one inviting me into your home for a little "off-site training."

(beat)

Come on, don't give me that look.

REBA

(beat/defeated and embarrassed)

What look?

WEBER

That look of defeat and embarrassment. I don't care that you lied. It doesn't change the fact that I am attracted to you and came over here today because I thought we might fuck.

REBA

I wish you wouldn't try to make it sound so matter of fact.

WEBER

But it is matter-of-fact. It's a very simple concept.

REBA

(oozing sarcasm)

Simple! *Right*. Progressive too. Merrill must be a very open-minded woman.

WEBER

Stop fucking around.

REBA

She does *know* doesn't she?

WEBER

She might. She might not.

REBA

But you've never said anything?

WEBER

No way.

REBA

Don't you think you should?

WEBER

Is that the kinda thing you'd want to hear coming out of your husbands mouth?

REBA

I don't know, Weber, I've never been married. And I'll tell you, if this is the kind of behavior I can expect--

WEBER

--Stop trying to turn this around on me. I'm not a scumbag. I have a wife. She has a place in my world. I see other women. They have a completely different place--

REBA

--in a completely different world.

WEBER

Uh uh. Same world. Different women. Same world.

REBA

Doesn't that worry you?

WEBER

No.

REBA

But everything is connected! We're all in the same place. Coming from and going to. She's bound to realize.

WEBER

It's quite possible.

REBA

And you're fine with that?

WEBER

Yes! She knows who she is to me. She knows what she means. Where she fits.

REBA

So I--

WEBER

--fit somewhere too. Yes. You have a place. If you want it.

REBA

It's that simple to you?

WEBER

It is *that* simple.

(Pause. She thinks about it.)

REBA

I don't think I can, Weber.

WEBER

Yeah. But. You could though. (beat) Couldn't you?

(She turns away from him, a little nervous. She relights the joint and puffs.)

WEBER

Just let me kiss you.

REBA

I don't know.

WEBER

Come on.

(He goes to her, kisses the back of her neck.)

REBA

Weber. Really. She's pregnant. I can't...Weber, your hand is on my back.

WEBER

Just let me kiss you, Reba. Just a kiss.

REBA

It's not just a kiss though. Your hand is on my ass, Weber.

WEBER

It can be just a kiss if you want it to be. Come on. Ladies choice.

(He moves around her, runs his lips over her cheek, to her earlobe. His hand is moving up the outside of her thigh, to the inside.)

REBA

Your hand, Weber, is very close to my...

(She pushes him away, but she wants him. She REALLY, REALLY wants him. Pause. He takes the joint. Puffs on it. Hands it back to her. Kisses her full on the lips. They stop kissing. He exhales. Starts to laugh. She follows suit.)

REBA

You mother fucker.

WEBER

Let's go inside.

REBA

No.

WEBER

Why no?

REBA

Not inside. If we're going to do it, we're going to do it in the dirt.

(She kneels in front of him.)

WEBER

Oh, you want it dirty?

(She pulls him down to her.)

REBA

I want to do it with the worms.

(They kiss.)

WEBER

Reba, we don't have any--

REBA

--Fuck rubbers. We're Adam and Eve, baby. And we're gonna do it *au naturale*.

(They begin to kiss again, rolling around in the wet grass. The sound of sprinklers going full blast. Black out.)

ACT II

SCENE I:

Dim lights rise on the kitchen. MERRILL sits at the table, pregnant, holding a mug. FLORENCE enters in bathrobe and slippers.)

FLORENCE

Well good evening.

MERRILL

Hi.

FLORENCE

Baby up?

MERRILL

He's quiet. I didn't wake you did I?

FLORENCE

No. It's that damned lawnmower again.

MERRILL

You should report him.

(Florence walks to the stove and turns the heat on under a kettle.)

FLORENCE

I can't do that.

MERRILL

Why not?

FLORENCE

Because he's old and old people do strange things sometimes. Young people learn to put up with them until they're old enough to get away with doing the same strange things and then they do them with abandon. It's the way of the world, cycle of life and all that mumbo-jumbo. Mr. O'Brien is only ten years older than I am so if I report him now I'll be setting a precedent. In ten years time, when I decide that mowing *my* lawn at midnight is the only way to be happy, some cop will come along and tell me I can't. Then there will be nothing left for me and I'll have to slit my wrists. But I'll be nearly 70. And that's a long enough life, I suppose.

(Florence walks to the table and sits.)

FLORENCE

So? What's eating you?

MERRILL

Candy Fleisch is dead.

(Pause. Quiet. Crickets chirping. The mower.)

FLORENCE

Well we knew that didn't we?

MERRILL

No I mean they found her body. She's really, legitimately dead.

(beat)

Ricky Murdoch just called. You remember Ricky. He played with Web at U of D.

FLORENCE

The tight-end, sure.

MERRILL

Mrs.Fleisch called him and he thought...he thought Weber would want to know so he...called here. He apologized for calling so late but, well you understand he just thought that...Weber would...I haven't spoken to Ricky Murdoch in...God, it's been close to ten years. They found her...or what was left of...in a cardboard box, buried in the state park down by Bollero. Some kid out walking his dog...he found her. Ten years. How do you...how do you know it's somebody after ten years, she wasn't even in one piece.

FLORENCE

Dental records? I dunno.

MERRILL

What kind of...evidence is there after so long? I mean, is it possible, do you think they'll be able to find her murderer?

FLORENCE

Oh, honey, absolutely. The things they can do these days with just a piece of skin or a broken nail, it's amazing. They can track anybody down.

MERRILL

I hope they find him.

FLORENCE

I'm sure they will.

MERRILL

I hope they find him and they try him and convict him and then I hope they sentence him to death by electrocution and I hope they let the public in to watch him fry because, I'm telling you Flo, I'd be right there.

FLORENCE

Oh Honey, you don't mean that.

MERRILL

I do. I know it's horrible, isn't it? God forgive me, but some people just deserve to die.

FLORENCE

Merrill, you're getting yourself very worked up--

MERRILL

--Weber dated Candy right before me.

FLORENCE

I remember.

MERRILL

We were friends. Ran in the same circles, went to the same parties, took all the same classes.

(The kettle whistles. Florence gets up and turns the heat off.)

FLORENCE

Do you want more hot water?

(Merrill shakes her head no. Runs her fingers through her hair. Florence fixes herself a cup of tea and walks back to the table. She sits.)

MERRILL

I just remember...watching her mother on TV. She would hold these press conferences every week. Out of her living room and she would just plead, you know, beg for anyone who knew anything about where Candy was, to come forward. She would stand there and say, "Please, all we want is for Candy to come home, please send Candy home so she can be with her

family who loves her." And we'd laugh, like, is this woman nuts? She doesn't actually *believe* that Candy is still alive? Is she just delusional? I mean, the girl is DEAD. Adult women don't just disappear. They don't run away. They can't be hidden. Candy's dead. She's been murdered.

(Merrill suddenly gasps and grabs her stomach.)

FLORENCE

What is it? What's wrong?

MERRILL

Nothing. Nothing. He's awake now.

FLORENCE

All right, Merrill, now listen, this is a tragedy--

MERRILL

--It's not just--

FLORENCE

--and it has nothing to do with you. Candy Fleisch, if I recall correctly, was into some nasty business and she hung around some nasty people and well, if it hadn't happened then who knows how the poor girl would have ended up? So let's just finish your tea and then go to bed and in the morning--

MERRILL

--No I can't I can't.

FLORENCE

Can't what.

MERRILL

Sleep, I can't sleep!

FLORENCE

Sure you can, upsy daisy.

(Florence stands and starts to help Merrill up from the table. Merrill pulls away.)

MERRILL

(shrieking)

NO, I CAN'T SLEEP!

(beat)

I try to sleep I have nightmares.

FLORENCE

Hormones. When I was pregnant with--

MERRILL

It's not hormones or the baby. It's not physical. It's my mind. It's racing, all the time, with these thoughts.

FLORENCE

About what?

MERRILL

Losing my faith. Being alone!

FLORENCE

But you're not alone.

MERRILL

Yes I am.

FLORENCE

You've got plenty of people around you who love you, who support you--

FLORENCE

BUT WHERE IS MY FUCKING HUSBAND?!? HUH?!? WHERE IS HE?

(Long pause.)

FLORENCE

He's in Valera.

MERRILL

Doing what?!?

FLORENCE

Working.

MERRILL

He had a job here.

FLORENCE

He lost it.

MERRILL

He quit!

FLORENCE

He needed a change. I think anyone can appreciate that.

MERRILL

He's selling dirt!

FLORENCE

He's building a new life for you. And Little Leo.

MERRILL

I'm not moving down there!

FLORENCE

If he calls for you—

MERRILL

HE LEFT ME! He left me without leaving me!

FLORENCE

You're estranged. He didn't leave you.

MERRILL

ESTRANGED! I love how you both throw that stupid word around like it has any actual meaning. It doesn't work like that anymore. This isn't 1965 anymore! Frank disappeared on you and Weber on and off for ten years and when he finally came back, TO DIE, you pretended like he'd never left. Well, I can't lie to myself like that!

FLORENCE

Frank was an international surfing sensation.

MERRILL

Oh Florence, get a fucking grip on reality!

FLORENCE

You watch it, young lady.

MERRILL

Where did all the money go? From all the hundreds of professional competitions that he won?

FLORENCE

It was spent on the necessities of living.

MERRILL

Why didn't he ever take you guys with him?

FLORENCE

It would have been very distracting for him. He needed to be alone.

MERRILL

You never needed to be alone?!?

FLORENCE

Of course I needed to be alone sometimes.

MERRILL

Then why didn't you leave?

FLORENCE

It's different for the mother.

MERRILL

Why?

FLORENCE

You have no choice. You have to stay. The father can't stay alone with the kid. It doesn't work. The mother has to stay. The MOTHER HAS TO STICK IT OUT.

(Long pause.)

MERRILL

Florence, he abandoned you.

FLORENCE

(beat/shakes head)

No. No...No. See...Frank...he came back.

MERRILL

Well, I don't believe...I don't believe Weber intends to.

FLORENCE

(beat)

Then I think that says a little bit more about you, dear, then it does about him.

(Long pause.)

MERRILL

I stole him from her. I stole Weber from Candy.

FLORENCE

So what?

MERRILL

She LOVED him and I went behind her back, and I felt like I'd won something. Weber was perfectly happy to be treated like a trophy. Had we only known the real prize that was

waiting for us all at the finish?

(Merrill rises. Stands up very strait with her shoulders back and chest out.)

MERRILL

You are wrong about some things sometimes, Flo. I know you think you're not. But you are. See, men...they're always somewhere else. Even when they're sitting in your living room, watching *your* television, eating the dinner *you've* just prepared...even when they're sleeping in the same bed right next to you...they're still a million miles away. And that's being alone.

(Pause. Merrill exits. Florence waits for a moment, rises and walks to the phone. She picks it up and dials. Lights fade.)

FROM ACT II

SCENE IV

Dim lights rise on the kitchen. It is late at night. BULLOCK sits at the table, eating the remainders of a large fish. Weber enters in bathrobe and slippers. He pauses. The two men acknowledge each other and Weber walks to the fridge. He removes a carton of milk and drinks from it. He puts it back in the fridge and closes the door. He stands. Waits.)

BULLOCK

That was a damned good fish. Didn't check out but it was tasty none the less. (beat) They laughed at me, the guys in the lab. Can you blame 'em, I brought them a fish?!?

(he laughs)

Still, though, it wasn't the worst idea in the world. I mean, they can piece together pretty much any crime with far less than a dead Rock Cod to go on. (beat) They didn't have to laugh. It wasn't funny.

(Weber goes to the table and sits.)

WEBER

What's wrong with you?

BULLOCK

Nothing's wrong with me.

WEBER

Come on, you're a freak.

BULLOCK

I am not.

WEBER

You are.

BULLOCK

Because I am dedicated, that makes me a mutant? My methods might be a little unorthodox but I get the job done!

WEBER

Like you're doing here?

BULLOCK

All I need is time.

WEBER

Right.

BULLOCK

I got plenty of tricks up my sleeve.

WEBER

You're a regular Chink VanLemur.

BULLOCK

Who?

WEBER

Chink VanLemur. Vegas magician. The underwater guy. You've heard of him?

BULLOCK

No.

WEBER

He's pretty good.

BULLOCK

I go to Vegas all the time.

WEBER

You should check him out.

BULLOCK

I never heard of no Chink VanLemur.

WEBER

That means he can't exist?!?

BULLOCK

All I'm saying is I spend a lot of time in Vegas.

WEBER

No it's not. You're saying I made him up.

BULLOCK

Did you?

WEBER

Yeah. Yeah, Bullock. I fabricated Chink VanLemur because I couldn't come up with another sad-sack cheap thrills

pathetic strip act to compare you to.

BULLOCK

How many times you been to Vegas?

WEBER

My share.

BULLOCK

What's your game?

WEBER

Black jack.

BULLOCK

You any good?

WEBER

I'm up.

BULLOCK

Yeah, I'll bet you are.

WEBER

You?

(Bullock doesn't answer.)

BULLOCK

Your mother thinks I'm giving you a hard time.

WEBER

I'm sure she does.

BULLOCK

What do you think?

WEBER

I think you hung me up a long time ago.

BULLOCK

See, you're wrong. I didn't. I walked in here, ready to get everybody's story, collect all the pieces of the puzzle, come to some rational conclusion about what happened and then go away. But there's nothing rational about this, Weber. You were born adored. By your mom, of course, she's still a woman, she counts. Good at football, that always wins friends in a football town, good with the ladies, perhaps too good, and good at lying. What a winning

combination?!? Give everybody what they want or what they think they want or make them think they're getting what they think they want and you can treat them as abysmally as you see fit. You could have gone a hundred years like this and no one would have been the wiser.

WEBER

What's changed?

BULLOCK

I bring a fish to a forensics team. I'm a little out there. But you're delusional if you think you haven't blown your own cover.

WEBER

Only thing I've blown in the last few months was my chance at a promotion.

BULLOCK

No. Weber. No. Why no? Because all that good stuff, all the gifts that you fooled people into giving; friendship, football, love, sex, family. Even if you didn't kill your wife, you picked that all up, tossed it into a box and buried it. Left it to rot. Well it rotted, it's gone now, baby. You're alone.

WEBER

I'll always have my mother.

BULLOCK

Until *she* dies.

WEBER

That's a horrible thing to say.

BULLOCK

You think she's going to live forever?

WEBER

No but...

(Weber pauses. Thinks. Realizes, probably for the first time in his life, that his mother is *not* going to live forever.)

BULLOCK

Certainly not if you keep putting her through shit like this.

WEBER

I've been a good son.

BULLOCK

Not recently.

WEBER

I know she's going through hell right now--

BULLOCK

--A hell you've created.

WEBER

I didn't do anything on purpose!

BULLOCK

That must make you feel a little better, right?!?

WEBER

FUCK YOU! You don't know shit about how I feel.

BULLOCK

Keep your voice down! She's trying to sleep!

WEBER

She's been on sedatives since Christmas.

BULLOCK

Lucky her.

WEBER

She's my mother. I came back here because I thought she was sick. I would do anything to ease her suffering.

BULLOCK

Then you can start by drinking milk out of a glass. Strait from the carton?!? You should be ashamed of yourself. You got a cold sore too!

(Weber touches his mouth. Pause. Bullock rises, walks to the fridge, throws the door open, grabs the milk and empties its contents into the sink.)

BULLOCK

Remind me to buy milk in the morning.

(Beat. Weber Chuckles. Starts to laugh.)

BULLOCK

What's so funny?

WEBER

You've been here watching us live for the passed two weeks and you still have no idea what kind of people we are. Cold sores? Happy family? HA! "No drinking out of the milk carton, Weber, USE A GLASS!" Donna REED! HA!

(He wipes his mouth with his sleeve.)

WEBER

Why don't you just leave before you make an even bigger ass of yourself.

BULLOCK

And go back to that dirty Motel? No thanks.

WEBER

You don't live here.

BULLOCK

I don't live anywhere.

WEBER

THIS is not your home.

BULLOCK

Too bad really. I'd have taken much better care of it.

WEBER

I have the rest of my life to fix up the fixer upper.

BULLOCK

Maybe. (beat) Did you kill her?

WEBER

No.

BULLOCK

But you did cheat on her?

WEBER

(beat)

Yes.

BULLOCK

How many times?

WEBER

(beat)

Have you ever *been* married, Det-

BULLOCK

--YES, NOW ANSWER THE QUESTION!

WEBER

I DON'T KNOW. SEVEN!?! Eight?

BULLOCK

Nine, ten, eleven, twelve?

WEBER

No not that much!

BULLOCK

Oh no, not *that* much. But enough. Did she know?

WEBER

Possibly. If she did, it obviously didn't bother her.

BULLOCK

That's so obvious?

WEBER

She would have left me.

BULLOCK

Maybe she did.

(Pause. Weber cracks a tiny smile.)

WEBER

That's funny.

BULLOCK

Where was she going that morning?

WEBER

What morning?

BULLOCK

Christmas. EVE. Morning.

WEBER

She wasn't *going* anywhere.

BULLOCK

But she left you a note.

WEBER

So?

BULLOCK

Why would she leave a note if she planned to stick around?

WEBER

So she was going out.

BULLOCK

Where?

WEBER

Last minute Christmas shopping or something.

BULLOCK

Please do not tell me she was buying YOU presents.

WEBER

Guess we'll never know.

BULLOCK

You've already buried her. That's nice.

WEBER

I've been nothing but optimistic for two weeks.

BULLOCK

Two weeks is all it takes to mourn your wife?

WEBER

I'm not going to delude myself.

BULLOCK

What's delusional about hope?

WEBER

Little girls disappear, Bullock. Little girls are kidnapped and held for ransom. Little girls pack their knapsacks and run away. Grown women, however, are raped and murdered and mutilated. Grown women don't just vanish.

BULLOCK

I'm not saying she vanished. I'm saying she picked up and left.

(Pause. Down the block, Old Mr. O'Brien starts up the lawnmower. Weber looks towards the window.)

BULLOCK

There he goes again. Grass doesn't even have a chance to grow, the old nutcase.

(Weber looks back to Bullock. Pause.)