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Remains Unknown

Cast: One female actress aged 60's

Staging: Camping table, a folding camp chair.

Props: Journal, finished booties, knitting in bag.

Screen: 1. Landscape image of Lake Tennyson

2. Flowers by the river

3. Baby wearing booties.

4. Mountains around Tennyson

Music: Opening 11 secs of Dire Straits 'Money for Nothing'.

Screen: 1 Landscape image of Lake Tennyson

*Seated, completes hand-sewing, places the booties on a table
"Here, make a baby in New Zealand".*

*Now standing, tentatively picks up the booties
"Oh..um...oh. We've lost.....we've, we've just had a
miscarriage".*

Great sense of dread/embarrassment shown

Moves across stage

You see, we were camped at Lake Tennyson.
You know, right smack in the middle of the South Island.
Through Hamner Springs, up over Jacks Pass, onto St James
station and up to the magnificent alpine lake.
Surrounded by soaring mountains, stoic with a monumental
strength that had seen thousands of seasons pass.

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The day had been spent relaxing, blasting Dire Straits, soaking in the scenery, observing the many day trippers and recording the comings and goings in my journal.

Picks up journal and reads.

Met an old guy, a deer culler from years gone by, sharing memories with his family, 4 generations present.

“Used to have to be careful when you got up in the morning. Had to wait for light to saddle your horse, or you could have put it on a deer by mistake.”

Or the chap driving the 1938 Ford that he had kept since he was a teenager. Over 50 years, original upholstery and paintjob.

Then there were the two lesbians riding unicycles, 18 km on a rough gravel road. They dismounted at the lake edge, stripped off their packs and clothes, dove into the frigid lake and emerged locked in a passionate embrace.

Closes journal

I tell you, there were some sights to see that day!

Move position, back to standing behind the camp chair, almost offering a seat. Then sits herself.

We befriended a delightful young American couple and were impressed by their love of nature and fishing. As evening settled in, we shared a meal and relaxed drink together.

This is when I made my ‘faux pa’. You know, that moment from before, where I wanted to earth to open up and swallow me.

Move position - Argument with self

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“Make a baby in New Zealand”

What did you say that for?

Honestly, think before you speak.”

How was I to know, I was just trying to share, be kind.

Well, like I said...think before you speak”.

Walking

After a restless night tossing and turning, I broached the subject in the light of day.

Stops to explain

“I am so sorry, that was insensitive of me.

I know there is nothing that can be done but..... I was wondering.....if you wanted.....that I could.... that we could, spend some time together and say goodbye to your baby.

I’m a funeral celebrant.

We could have a memorial, a ceremony. I think it may be helpful for you both.”

Agreement reached, time set for later that day, before we were all to pack up and head away.

Walking

I wandered across the tussock plain and gathered some wild flowers. Tied them together with twine, ready for the afternoons ‘service’.

Change position

You see many years ago someone gave me a single rose, just before I was to walk up a hill on a sun-drenched island and hold a long awaited memorial for my stillborn son. And I

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knew the value of the symbol. A rose that, when I placed on the summit and had to leave, broke me. To leave it there and walk back down the hill with empty arms.

Pause –walking

There had been no ceremony or service for him.

No dignity for him or me.

No counsel for an 18 year old shotgun bride

No explanation given for his in-utero death.

An intrusive and painful induction

Pause

No pain relief offered. No breath taken, no cry uttered.

Pause

No opportunity to hold him

Pause

He was hustled away from the dimly lit room, in a bedpan.

A sound will be a lasting memory.

Pause

Go home, you're young. You can get on with your life.

Change position

No relief for aching swollen breasts dripping full of milk.

No baby in the gaily decorated bassinet.

I was left to creep through the brown fog of depression that matched my well-worn dressing gown.

Change position

Ten years and three healthy children later, there was still the ache in my heart.

Where is he, his body, what did they do with it, where did he go?

Remains unknown.

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Change position

Screen of posy of flowers by rivers edge.

We gathered where the lake flowed into the river.

Me, my husband and the couple.

And holding the posy of wildflowers, she wept.

Assume 'celebrant pose'

"We acknowledge this child.

Its conception had marked a new era.

Dreams of a future filled with life and adventure.

Full with hope of creating their own family."

Move position, walks a full circle – now observing the service

I felt the weight of those dashed dreams,

The first born – but not born.

the incredible sadness

the loss

emptiness.

And I spoke of their child with love, and marked the place it

held in their family.

Stepping forward.

The young woman waded into the river. She stood still as the

clear water washed over her feet. Reluctantly, gently,

lovingly placed the flowers in the river flow and said

"Goodbye".

And the flowers drifted away. Carried by the flow, they

bobbed from side to side. In silence we watched.

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Something tangible has gone, leaving in its place the intangible grief that then broke and swept over us. We all remembered and wept.

Move Position

On shore, my husband enveloped the grieving couple.
With strong arms, protective like the mountains around us.
Arms that had worked unceasingly,
That had held me in loving embrace
that had supported me in my dark times
Arms that had raised our children up.
Hands that had tenderly held our newborn babies to his chest too.
He prayed.
His words were crystal clear like the water flowing before us.
“Lord, heal these heavy hearts.
Restore this couple.
May this womb be filled with life.
Bring them comfort and hope.
Amen.”

Change position, back to seated.

Two years on, an email arrived, just before Christmas.

Read from paper

“We miss NZ and all the thoughtful, lovely people we have met during our journey there.
It's been quite some time since meeting you at Lake Tennyson. We finished our adventures in NZ and returned to

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the US to spend the holidays with family. Soon after, we received a New Year blessing- we were pregnant. Oakley Patrick was born on October 4th, 2016. He is a super healthy and happy baby boy.

Standing - No longer read, just spoken...

“We wanted to thank you for taking the time and putting forth the love during those beautiful summer days. To help us recover from our miscarriage and give us hope for our next baby.

The memorial was a heartfelt gesture and helped us to heal. Please know the impact of your kindness. We held onto the adorable booties you knitted for us and manifested our healthy pregnancy and baby.

We couldn't wait to put those little booties on him and share our blessing with you.

Screen 3: Image of baby wearing the booties, zooms into his feet.

Return email to table, resume knitting

With life, we cast on. Adding row upon row, upon row. The yarn of life is looped and pulled. Woven together.

Creating something practical and beautiful too.

Stitches are dropped.

Mistakes are made.

We have to stop, unpick a few rows.

Pick up a dropped stitch and start over again.

Pause

At times we can feel like everything is unravelling.

But we can make good.

[Type here]

With patience and care we can complete something beautiful.

As the new colours, new people and situations are introduced, it all contributes to a vibrant garment being created.

Stops knitting, remains seated.

Two women met and cleaved together over a shared experience, we each walked a path, separately but together.

A path that many other women had travelled.

We both had hearts that had been torn, rent.

And we were shaped by what had happened, by our loss.

But from this, we grew, empathy developed.

We found peace within the loss and,

Yes.

We healed.

Pause – look to audience

I am healed.

Seated and knitting

Screen: Image of the mountains with text:

In Memory of Nathan.

Final 10 seconds of Dire Straits music

Lights down on me knitting



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