

MARTIN

Bullshit! The kid's had three strikes against him since he was eight. And you people have been circling the building ever since --

This is a macho display, as he takes a step forward.

CLEA

Sir, I'm just following protocol based on the recommendation of the facility where your son's been --

MARTIN

Facility?! He'd have been safer if I'd left him in a cardboard box in Times Square every day! And if you think I'm going to just let you walk in here now and take my--

CLEA

(surprisingly tough)

I'm here to do my job, Mr. Bohm! I told you, I've come to evaluate your home situation and report my findings!

(then)

Now, either you let me in to do that, or you leave me no choice but to file a hostile encounter report. Trust me, you don't want that.

A Mexican standoff. A long beat, then Martin acquiesces, and swings the door open. As she steps through, she hands him a folded NEWSPAPER.

CLEA (CONT'D)

Your paper.

He takes the NEWSPAPER and lets her in.

INT. LOFT - DAY

Clea sits on the sofa staring at the notebook. Martin paces in front of her, completely lit up by this.

CLEA

...There are strange coincidences around us all the time. And autistic children often have a heightened--

MARTIN

(snaps, impatient)

-- Ability for numbers! You think I don't know that?!

CLEA

I'm sorry. Of course you do.
(then, confessing)
This is only my third solo case and
I'm still working on my interpersonal
skills.

MARTIN

Great, I get the one with the training
wheels.

CLEA

Mr. Bohm, your son has a diagnosis
of Childhood Disintegrative Disorder,
the most severe form of autism.
There is no positive outcome for
this...

(off Martin's silence)

It's not uncommon for the guardian
to feel a lack of human connection
to these children...

MARTIN

Unless that's exactly what he's trying
to do. Connect!

Martin starts to pace.

CLEA

Mr. Bohm... Please.

(then)

The truth is, the State believes
that it is time for Jacob to be
institutionalized to keep him from
harming himself or others.

MARTIN

But if he's finally communicating...!

She looks at him, frustrated that she's not getting through.

MARTIN (CONT'D)

Jake climbed that tower three times.
And each time the security camera's
caught him at exactly 3:18.

CLEA

I don't see what any of this has to
do with--

MARTIN

For two weeks now he's set every
clock in the house to *this* time.

Martin crosses to a nearby dresser, turns a clock around. Sure enough it reads, "3:18".

MARTIN (CONT'D)

And then there's this.

He yanks open a drawer, pulls out another NOTEBOOK, just like the one that we've seen Jake using. Hands it to Clea. She opens it and leafs through the pages.

Every page is scrawled from top to bottom with the same three digits over and over - "**318, 318, 318, 318, 318, 318....**" Page after page after page. Clea looks up, intrigued.

MARTIN (CONT'D)

He's trying to say something. And I didn't even realize it.

Clea stares at him for a long beat, then --

CLEA

What you're talking about is just wish fulfillment. I know you love your son, but--

MARTIN

You're saying I'm making it all up.

CLEA

I'm saying that human connection is a powerful need. It can drive us to see meaning where there isn't any.

MARTIN

Three cases into a career and you've got it all figured out, don't you? You know it all.

CLEA

I know enough to recognize someone who's underwater, who's given up too much. A career, a wife...

MARTIN

My wife and I had an appointment to see a divorce lawyer on September 12th, 2001. Don't try to make me a cliché.

CLEA

(undaunted)

Either way, your life is now dominated by a child that you can no longer control.

(MORE)

CLEA (CONT'D)

Have you ever truly communicated with him? Does he even know who you are?!

That stops him in his tracks with no clever comeback.

CLEA (CONT'D)

That's not your fault. No one is judging you for that.

He looks at her and we see tears starting to well in his eyes.

CLEA (CONT'D)

There's a board and care facility fifteen blocks from here. The best in the city. At the end of his two week evaluation period you will be given a chance to make your case for custody. It will be based on your ability to control, care for, and communicate with him.

Martin slumps down onto the arm of the sofa.

CLEA (CONT'D)

Once he's out of the house, I think you'll see that you'll both be better off with this arrangement.

Martin lowers his eyes as he listens to this.

CLEA (CONT'D)

Sometimes you just have to get out of a bad situation to finally see what's best for everyone.

And she says this with a kind of understanding that tells us she's speaking from experience. Off Martin looking at her, tears in his eyes --