

MARJORIE: One time, your father and I went to the city before Christmas. It was a business trip and I came along. We must've left you with the Burnsides. And we must have seen a show, and stayed at a nice hotel, and looked at the department stores with the Christmas lights. But all I remember is sitting on a park bench, just sitting and watching these big orange flags in the park. These orange sorts of flags everywhere. [...] Or more, what's the color, the spice—the Spanish—Very expensive? Saffron. And it didn't matter that it was cold because it was so pretty just to watch all the saffron next to the blue white snow. Rows and rows, like Buddhist monks marching into the trees. And I just remember sitting on top of those benches with your father and not wanting to get up. Because if we got up, that would mean we had to start the rest of our lives.

TESS: Doesn't it sound awful? Think of Mom at eighty-six. A hundred and ten—what would be left? Halfway through our lives—that's exactly it. There's the half where you live and the half where you live through other people. And your memory of when you were young. And by the end you're not even capable of having a single new moment. You can't go for a walk. You can't open a window. Any new experience you have, someone is experiencing *for* you, to be kind. "Look Mom, it's nice outside." "Look, I made corned beef for St. Patrick's Day. You love corned beef." "Micah got a promotion. You remember Micah." I don't know why we have to keep each other alive for so long.

JON: I'm going to tell you some things and then it'll be like you've always known them. People think you're quiet, but you're not. You like confrontation more than most people. You're good at it. You've read everything. you know the Latin names for things. You're suspicious of technology. You're suspicious of—this. (*Makes a gesture for the space between them.*) You want to be better with your kids than your mom was with you. You worry about not succeeding. You worry a lot. Then you worry that your worrying is wearing me down, but it's not—It's like the white noise of our life together.

WALTER PRIME: Now this young couple was a bit lonely because they didn't have any children yet. So one day they decided that it was time to get a dog.

So they rode the bus down to the city pound and there was a little black dog there, asleep, its tummy going up and down, like a little sleeping shadow. And they named this dog Toni. Toni with an "i." [...] Which was short for Antoinette. She had a French name because she was a French poodle. But not the fussy kind that look like hedges. No, this was a poodle for fetching sticks and running on the beach. So they took her home with them on the bus—she behaved so well—and they loved her, and she loved them back for a long time. And then, like everything else, she died. Do you want me to keep going? [...] Soon after, this couple had a child. When Tess was three years old, they went down to the pound, the same pound. And the amazing thing was, Tess picked the poodle, the little black poodle like a sleeping shadow. That was the one she liked the best. Toni Two.

And of course it wasn't Toni exactly. But the longer they had her, the less it mattered which Toni had run along the beach, or which Toni had dug up the garden.

The more time passed, the more she became the same dog in their memories.