

EXT. OUT FRONT, STARK HOME - MORNING - NEXT

Michaela -- still in the sweats and tank she woke up in -- and Jared face off, she at a loss for words.

START
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JARED

If you're thinking about denying it, think again. It's all on tape. I saw it myself.

(off her silence)

Michaela, I've got three detectives and eight uniforms waiting on my direction to find those abducted girls -- and I'm here trying to put out your fire! Help me out here. What the hell were you thinking? And Ben? Really?

Michaela considers confiding in the man she still loves, who perhaps still loves her. But she doesn't dare.

JARED (CONT'D)

So, no explanation whatsoever.
(then, gently floating it)
Does this have to do with me?

MICHAELA

(vaguely annoyed, huh?)
Excuse me? How?

JARED

I don't know. Acting out. Trying to get my attention? Get back at me?

MICHAELA

(rolls her eyes, pissed)
You are such a guy. I break open a fence and it's because you married my best friend? Lourdes is amazing! You're both amazing! And I was gone! How can I blame either of you?

The words are conciliatory, but the tone is heated, her underlying despair painfully evident.

JARED

Fine. Then what?

She shakes her head, incredulous, then ramps up, intense--

MICHAELA

"What?" Hmm. How about -- I take off in a plane, and when I land, my mother is dead?

(MORE)

MICHAELA (CONT'D)

Thank you for your condolences, by the way. How about -- I no longer have a home? Or underwear? Or any of my worldly possessions? How about I missed five years, six months, and twenty-eight-days of the world? Of life?!
(wells up)

She's now in tears. Jared can't help himself and wraps his arms around her. For a brief moment, we see who they once were -- a couple in love.

Finally, she can endure the cruel facade of being in his arms no longer and extricates herself. A beat. He responds gently.

JARED

I'm sorry about your mom, Michaela. About everything. I'm still trying to get my head around this, too. Believe me... But I still need an answer. Why'd you and your brother break open that fence?

MICHAELA

(beat)

I can't explain it. I wish I could.

Jared shakes his head.

JARED

That's not gonna cut it. Go throw some more clothes on.

MICHAELA

Why?

JARED

(seriously?)

Because you're coming with me to try make this go away and save your career. Or what's left of it.