

IF ONLY

Shannon, 33, has been in a coma since she and her ten-year-old son were in a head-on collision with an SUV the evening before last. Rob, 35, her husband, has been at their hospital bedsides ever since they arrived. He has had to deal with the questions and needs of doctors, police, friends, and reporters. There is a bit of controversy about the accident, even though it occurred on a foggy night, because Shannon had been drinking at a party. Earlier today, Shannon began to come out of the coma. And now Rob, who has just come to her bedside, has the painful task of explaining to her the extent of her own injuries and those of her son.

ROB: Oh God! *(He hugs her.)* Thank you God! *(Looks at her.)*

I love you so much!

SHANNON: I love you too.

ROB: Oh my God. You're awake. God. Don't do that to me. You scared me to death.

SHANNON: Now you're scaring me to death.

ROB: No, no, I'm just so happy.

SHANNON: *(He hugs her hard.)* Oh God. Do I look that bad?

ROB: *(He shakes his head no.)* No. No. You look beautiful.

SHANNON: You're hugging me so hard like I died or something. *(Pause. Looking at him.)* What? What is it?

ROB: *(Beat.)* You were in a coma.

SHANNON: Come on. Are you kidding me? *(Beat.)* A coma? For real?

ROB: Yes. You don't know—I'm just so happy to hold you. *(Beat.)* You okay?

SHANNON: I don't know. I feel pretty rotten. But I don't know how people who wake up from comas are supposed to feel. And anyway that nurse has drugged me up pretty good, so

I don't know how I feel really. She put me on some sort of sedative.

ROB: I know. She wants you to sleep—to get some rest.

SHANNON: Geez, how much rest do I need? I was just in a coma since God knows when.

ROB: Sleep is different I guess.

SHANNON: I guess. She thought I was getting too upset, you know? I want to know how he is.

ROB: I know. I called the nurse's station on my way here. I just went home quickly to shower this morning. Otherwise I've been here the whole time.

SHANNON: I didn't know where I was. I woke up with these two strange women sticking a needle in me. I started my nice steady stream of obscenities and got a little hysterical I guess. I was freaked out, Rob!

ROB: I know. I'm sorry. I can't believe you woke up the one hour I wasn't here.

SHANNON: I can't believe this. This is my worst nightmare. It's like the last thing we need, huh? Life was already givin' us a hell of a time. And how will we ever afford all this—

ROB: We'll be fine. We have insurance. That's the least of our worries.

SHANNON: And what's the worst?

ROB: *(Covering.)* Nothing. There's nothing to worry about except getting better.

SHANNON: I'm not worried about me. It's Michael I'm concerned about.

ROB: *(He nods.)* Well he's here. And he's okay.

SHANNON: It was so stupid! I feel so damn stupid! Like all this . . . “if you only did this or you only did that” keeps going through my brain.

ROB: Well stop that.

SHANNON: That's easy to say. You'd feel the same way. I've driven a million times in rainstorms, Rob. I didn't know it was . . . that the visibility would be—How is he? Honestly?

ROB: He's okay.

SHANNON: That means not good. I know you.
ROB: They haven't told me much either.
SHANNON: They had to practically push me back into my bed. I wanted to go see him. So please, please tell me what I've done exactly?
ROB: I am. He's under several doctors' care right now. His main doctor is Dr. Blanch. He seems on top of things. They're running several tests.
SHANNON: God, you make it sound like we've been here for a long time.
ROB: Two days.
SHANNON: Two? Wow. But that's not as bad as I was starting to think.
ROB: *(He nods.)* Well, it's been the longest two days of my life.
SHANNON: I'm sorry. *(He nods.)* So why don't you start with what he does know?
ROB: I don't want to upset you.
SHANNON: Okay, well, now I'm really getting upset so . . .
ROB: He's got a few broken ribs and a broken arm. His face is a little bruised up but that'll heal. *(She nods and gestures for him to proceed.)* They had to do what they call a tracheotomy. He couldn't breathe through his nose or mouth. They had to make a little incision through the throat so that he could—
SHANNON: Oh God! He's only a ten-year-old. Do they know that? *(Beat.)* How is he? Is he in pain?
ROB: I don't think so. But uh . . .
SHANNON: What, what?
ROB: He's suffered a head injury.
SHANNON: But he was belted in.
ROB: The seat belt worked enough so he wasn't thrown out of the car—but he hit the windshield.
SHANNON: Jesus! *(Beat.)* So what does this mean exactly?
ROB: There's some brain damage.
SHANNON: *(Beat.)* How bad? *(Beat.)* How bad, Rob? Does this mean he won't stand a chance of being a genius some

day or something much worse—something I don't want to think about? What are we talking about here?
ROB: We don't know yet.
SHANNON: Well, why don't they know that?! How many doctors does it take to figure this out? He's been here for two days!
ROB: Relax. You're supposed to relax, Shannon.
SHANNON: How can I relax with what you're telling me? My son is . . . and it was my fault. I'm so stupid!
ROB: It was an accident.
SHANNON: That SUV—that son of a—*(That SUV was coming so fast. He came right over the center line. The last thing I remember—a couple of headlights coming straight for me. Michael was screaming like crazy.)* that SUV was coming so fast. He came right over the center line. The last thing I remember—a couple of headlights coming straight for me. Michael was screaming like crazy.
ROB: It's okay. It's okay.
SHANNON: I want to see him.
ROB: Well you can't right now. Not in your condition.
SHANNON: Screw my condition! He's my son. I want to see him!
ROB: He's in critical care right now, Shannon. They won't let you. Besides, they don't want you to move right now either.
SHANNON: Why not? I can get in a wheelchair. *(Rob shakes his head.)* I can do it. Why not? *(Beat.)* What's really going on here? I have a right to know. It's my body.
ROB: I don't know enough to tell you anything.
SHANNON: Great. Anyway, it would serve me right if I couldn't walk, wouldn't it? For what I've done to Michael.
ROB: They don't know anything for sure. And you don't deserve to be punished for anything.
SHANNON: *(Pause.)* What happened to the other driver? And please, God, don't make it bad news.
ROB: He's okay. A couple of broken bones.
SHANNON: That's all? Honestly? *(He nods.)* Thank God, even though it was his fault. Is his insurance company going to pay? I mean, we need to get Michael to a specialist immediately.

ROB: Why are we talking about all this? The important thing is that you're awake and safe.

SHANNON: Yeah, well what about Michael? Is he awake and safe? We can't wait on these things, Rob. He needs to be seen by the best doctors.

ROB: Can we *not* go into panic mode? Can we *not* go into I'm going to fix-this-right-now-in-an-organized-fashion-and-demand-everything-from-everybody?! I just want to talk to you. I want to be here with you and take you in.

SHANNON: I know, but I feel helpless here. I feel like I have to take charge because I'm responsible. I mean I have to do something. I have to help somehow.

ROB: This time the best way you can help is to rest. Talk to me for awhile. I've been here around the clock since it happened. Your mother and father want to see you right away too.

SHANNON: I can't see them now.

ROB: Why?!

SHANNON: Because I feel like Mom will blame me.

ROB: Are you kidding?

SHANNON: She always manages to do that somehow even when she doesn't mean to.

ROB: Don't you realize that they thought you were dead?! They've been here all night!

SHANNON: Okay, okay, I want to see them, I do, but I need to know what happened first. *(Beat.)* Did you call Fred?

ROB: Your mother did.

SHANNON: Of course.

ROB: He'll take the case. But I'm afraid it's not so . . .

SHANNON: What?

ROB: Not so clear-cut. There's a witness who said it may have been your fault.

SHANNON: What? Well, she's wrong! You don't believe that!

ROB: *(Beat.)* You had a couple of beers at Sarah's party, Shannon.

SHANNON: That was in the afternoon. I ate afterwards. I

didn't leave until five. What are you implying? That I was drunk?

ROB: No.

SHANNON: You think I was drunk? That I put our son in danger? Is that what you're telling me? You're blaming me for this?

ROB: I'm not blaming anyone. I'm just telling you the truth—like you wanted.

SHANNON: This witness said I was drunk?

ROB: *(Shakes his head no.)* No. She said you came over the center line. Sarah and a couple people at the party said you had a few drinks.

SHANNON: *(Exhales.)* I see.

ROB: The police questioned them. *(Beat.)* They ran a blood test here to look at your alcohol levels.

SHANNON: And you just signed the okay with no problem I guess?

ROB: Did I have a choice?

SHANNON: But you *assume* I was drunk?

ROB: I didn't say that. The police didn't tell me the level. But then again it's not as if you've always had the best judgment.

SHANNON: That was a long time ago and you know it.

ROB: I don't know anything right now. All kinds of crazy things have been going through my mind. You don't realize. I've been going through hell the last few days.

SHANNON: Oh yeah, and this is a real picnic for me, Rob!

ROB: I know this is hard for you. I know that! But will you just think of *my* side of things for once?! I've been pacing the halls in this godforsaken place for the last two days, praying you'd be alive. I haven't eaten. I haven't slept. I just wander from room to room asking for more reports about you and Michael. More reports from doctors who just don't know anything. *I've* been furious too. I totally lost it yesterday with some doctor for not doing things fast enough. Furious with all the people asking questions—the police, the

insurance company, friends. A million forms to fill out and a million people that I don't know how to deal with. I'm holding your hand for hours while people come in and out acting as if I've already lost you. I want to throw furniture out the window. My whole life has changed in an instant. I don't know if I'm alone in the world. Do you know how that feels? I don't know if my son will ever walk or be able to live with me. I don't know whose fault it is. I should have been with you instead of working on a Saturday. And you shouldn't have driven in that damn weather when you were . . .

SHANNON: *(Beat.)* No . . . I shouldn't have.

ROB: I didn't mean . . . It's just . . . I hear the "if-onlys" in my head too. And all you can do is tell me what I haven't done. What I should have done.

SHANNON: I'm sorry. I guess you're pretty angry with me.

ROB: I don't want to be.

SHANNON: No. *(Beat.)* But you are all the same. I'd be furious at you too, if it were the other way around.

ROB: You would?

SHANNON: *(Nods.)* But the thing is, Rob, I would never put Michael's life in that kind of danger. You can think I'm stupid for driving in that weather. You can think whatever you want about my abilities, but please know that I was not drunk, not even tipsy. Because if I were, I wouldn't have gotten into that car. Not in a million years. *(Beat.)* Do you believe me? I need you to believe me.
(She looks to him for an answer.)

BURNING DOWN THE HOUSE

Tony and Marissa, 30s, have been married for some time. Marissa's quirky hypochondria and obsessive-compulsive behavior has become worse since having their baby a year ago. Lately, her behavior has become less quirky and more harmful to their relationship. In the last few weeks, Tony has received some devastating news about his health. He has Multiple Sclerosis. He cannot bring himself to share the news with Marissa, however, because he believes she will fall apart. Tonight, Tony, who is completely frustrated with Marissa, reveals everything he has been suppressing.

TONY: What are you doing? We're going to be late again.

MARISSA: So we're late. Better to be late than burn down the house. I think I might have left the stove on.

TONY: You didn't. Trust me. Besides, I'm sure Patty will notice. She's a good baby-sitter.

MARISSA: I didn't say she wasn't good. But she's upstairs with Timmy. She won't be anywhere near the kitchen for hours.

TONY: This is the third time we're meeting them late for dinner.

MARISSA: So what? They'll just get a drink. I want to check the stove is all.

TONY: *(He stands in front of the door.)* No.

MARISSA: What? *(Looks at him.)* Okay, I know what you are going to say. What's the big deal? You know I'm like this. I've always been like this.

TONY: Just don't. Okay? Don't. Start by just not doing it once. Stop the thought.

MARISSA: What do you mean, "Stop the thought"? It's no big deal. I just feel like I left the stove on.

TONY: When would you have left the stove on? You didn't cook anything today.

MARISSA: That's not true. I made lunch.