

Ordinary People - Beth

BETH

Do you do that deliberately or is it just a reflex?

CALVIN

Well, you said "vacation", so I just assumed you meant him too.

BETH

I'm surprised you haven't felt the need to call him since we've been here.

CALVIN

I was gonna call him tonight.

BETH (to Ward and Audrey)

Hey, could we have a little drink before we head back?

WARD

Drink, yes. Little, no. (to Calvin) What'd you get? Cal, what'd you get?

CALVIN

(to Ward) Six. (to Beth) Let's finish this.

BETH

What?

CALVIN

What you started.

BETH

What I started?

CALVIN

What you started.

BETH

Ha! There's no point discussing it.

CALVIN

I think there is a point.

BETH

He controls you even when you are two thousand miles away.

CALVIN

He isn't the problem.

BETH

Isn't he?

CALVIN

No, he isn't. Let's talk about what's really bothering you.

BETH

No, no. Let's talk about what's bothering you. Cos' that's what you want, isn't it?

CALVIN

Jesus, what have I done to make you so angry with me?

BETH

It's not what you've done, it's what you think I've done. You blame me for the whole thing.

CALVIN

Can't you see anything except in terms of how it affects you?

BETH

No! I can't! And neither can you, and neither can anybody else! Only maybe I'm just a little more honest about it!

CALVIN

Well, stop being so godamn honest, and start being a little generous! And start thinking about him for a while!

BETH

I don't know what he expects from me. I never have known.

CALVIN

Well, I'll tell you what he expects!

BETH

What? He wants me to throw my arms around him everytime he passes an exam? Well, I can't do it! I cannot respond when someone says: "Here, I just did this great thing. Love me.". I can't!

CALVIN

All he wants... All he wants is to know you don't hate him. That's it.

BETH

Hate him? My God! How could I hate him? Mothers don't hate their sons! Is that what he told you? Do you see how you accept what he says with no questions, and you can't do the same thing to me, can you?

CALVIN

I just try to keep this family together...

BETH (she shouts) I don't know what everyone wants from me anymore!

AUDREY

Beth, nobody wants anything from you.

WARD

Beth, listen. We all just want... Cal, Con, everybody, we just want you to be happy.

BETH

Happy?

WARD

Yes.

BETH

Ward, you tell me the definition of happy, uh? But first, you better make sure that your kids are good and safe, that no one's fallen off a horse, or been hit by a car, or drowned in that swimming pool you're so proud of! And then you come to me and tell me how to be happy!

She leaves. Calvin follows. Ward and his wife just stand there.

Analysis: Beth and Calvin are enjoying a golf date until Calvin brings up their son Conrad. Beth feels that Cal blames her for Conrad's suicide attempt and tries to goad him into admitting it. If he admits that then that means they are damaged and he no longer loves her.

Beth: wounded perfect wife and mother polishing the surface to cover up the rot and fear inside