

South of Main Street

by

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FADE IN:

EXT. HENRY'S HOUSE - ROOFTOP -- MORNING

Henry Wolff (50s) climbs out of a bedroom window, balancing his body on the slanted roof. He looks around slyly as if he were sneaking out of the house and didn't want to be noticed.

He walks the slanted roof like a plank. One careless maneuver and he'd fall into the shrubs. He stops, briefly, gazing out at the predawn glow of the horizon. The sun nudges up and the stars vanish with the arrival of the orange glow.

He chants an 'Ohmmm' exercise and continues half-stepping across the roof until he reaches an overhanging branch of a maple tree. He uses it to pull himself along the edge of the roof to a rope which is draped over the gutter.

He takes the rope, yanks vigorously testing whether the knots will hold, then slips his foot into the looped end and jumps into an exhilarating swing. For a brief moment he is Tarzan sweeping past a smaller tree and his objective, the mailbox.

On his way back his foot slips through the loop, and his body slams into the lawn while the rope holds his foot high in the air. He wiggles and jiggles like a fish out of water.

Exhausted Henry remains motionless for a moment, as if he's indulging himself with a few seconds of self-pity. All the while the tree holds him up as if it were posing for the camera with its trophy - the prize catch of the day.

He struggles to free himself. Finally the tree releases its grip. Henry stands, brushes himself off, and casually looks around to see if anyone had been watching. He notices Mrs. Aldrich, (50s) across the street. She has seen everything.

EXT. MRS. ALDRICH'S PORCH - CONTINUOUS

She slouches as she sweeps, appearing older than her years.

MRS. ALDRICH

Can't you stop being a child for
one day?

BACK TO HENRY

HENRY

(Bad DeNiro impression!)
Mizzz Aldrich, you talkin' to me?
(shivers)
The Wicked Witch of West. No. No.
She was much prettier.

Henry opens the mailbox and removes the morning paper then walks over to the dangling rope, picks it up and tosses it into the maple tree until the looped end catches on the branch near where his circus adventure had started.

INT. PSYCHOLOGIST'S OFFICE -- DAY - CONTINUOUS

DR. ZEKE TUCKER, an unassuming man with a beard, stoically sits in a chair while ROBIN WOLFF, (30's), with long dark hair, sits opposite him and appears stressed.

ROBIN

My father gave us nicknames when we were younger. Sharon's was 'Flower'. Mine was 'Trigger'.

DR. TUCKER

Oh! I see.

ROBIN

Yeah. He calls my sister this nice feminine word, and he calls me a name you give a horse, or a dog.

A silent moment passes. Dr. Tucker looks at her as if to suggest he wants to hear what's really on her mind.

ROBIN

You've heard this before. I'd just be repeating myself.

DR. TUCKER

Humor me.

ROBIN

When we were kids, he'd open an imaginary door and describe Narnia as if he were really seeing it. 'I want to go there, Daddy', Sharon would say in her shrieky voice. And he'd say, 'It's in la-la land.' Everything was 'la-la land' to him. Jack climbed the beanstalk and went to 'la-la land.'

(nostalgic pause)

I don't know. Sharon has worked at the Collection Agency for so long, I think she has become her job. She likes squeezing people who have things she doesn't have. She's ...

DR. TUCKER

Self-centered?

ROBIN

Yes! Self-centered. She said she gets caught up in the 'squeeze' frenzy because of this yearly prize they give for the best, what would they call them, agents, I guess. Well, the agent who squeezes the most money from people gets the 'big kahuna' bonus. She's worked on people's misfortunes for so long, she likes to expose the weaknesses. Like a dentist. She drills them until there's no more defense.

DR. TUCKER

Wow! That's a little more than being self-centered, Robin.

ROBIN

Yeah, well. I've had too much coffee today. Or maybe I'm still pissed over the other thing. I mean, he's our father, for crying out loud. He may be slow upstairs, or however you want to classify him, but he can handle his own affairs.

DR. TUCKER

Sharon doesn't think so. Your mother had to take care of him.

ROBIN

Yeah, but for a year he took care of her when she was bedridden? He's done his own food shopping. Occasionally, I've had to pay the bills for him. So what, right?

DR. TUCKER

What about the printout your sister showed you? He's taking liberties with the bank account. So, might your sister have a point?

ROBIN

The point is, our mother is lying in the hospital, dying, and our father is doing just fine on his own. What kind of daughter would do this?

A buzzing SOUND interrupts her. She pulls out her cell phone to see who it is, then silences it.

ROBIN

What the hell does he want? It's Pastor McMillan.

DR. TUCKER

Well, maybe that's a sign we should call it a day. Same time next week?

INT. CHURCH -- MOMENTS LATER

PASTOR MCMILLAN struts while sitting down in the front pew next to HENRY WOLFF. It's hard to tell who is older.

PASTOR MCMILLAN

But you already have been baptized, Henry. Several times.

HENRY

He who is baptized will be saved. It says so in the bible. It's for the forgiveness of sins.

PASTOR MCMILLAN

We did it last year, and the year before that. It's an abuse of its intent. Besides, what sins have you recently committed, Henry? Impure thoughts? I have impure thoughts. I'd have to be rebaptized every time I see a girl in a swimsuit. Don't tell anyone I said that.

The church door swings open. Robin enters and Pastor McMillan excuses himself and rushes up to meet her. As they walk to the front, he whispers --

PASTOR MCMILLAN

Henry wants to be baptized again. I'm afraid your father is a little unnerved as your mother gets worse. By the way, how is Mary doing?

ROBIN

Not good. It's nice to know you care.

They arrive at the front pew. Henry smiles and,

HENRY

I don't mind dying. Trouble is you feel so damn stiff the next day.

ROBIN

Very funny, Dad.
(to the Pastor)
Newspaper. Joke of the day.
(to Henry)
Let's go see Mom.

INT. CAR -- MOMENTS LATER

Robin drives while Henry sits in the passenger side. They both remain silent as Robin drives.

INT. HOSPITAL - ONCOLOGY WARD -- MOMENTS LATER

The elevator door opens. Robin and Henry exit and walk down the hall. As they pass by a MAINTENANCE MAN mopping the floor, Henry holds out his hand and they high-five each other.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM 410 - CONTINUOUS

MARY lies in bed, sickly. A nebulae and other tubes invade her body. A nearby EKG machine monitors her heart.

SHARON, a blonde, two years Robin's junior, sits beside.

SHARON

Glad you guys could make it.

Henry goes over and gives Sharon a peck on the cheek then sits down on the opposite side of the bed.

HENRY

I hate hospitals.

Henry looks for a response. Neither daughter give one.

HENRY

You know, old watchmakers never die, they just run out of time.

(no response)

Old yachtsmen never die, they just keel over.

SHARON

That's it. I'm going outside to have a cigarette.

EXT. SMOKING AREA -- MOMENTS LATER

Robin and Sharon enter together. They sit at a nearby bench.

SHARON

I can't take him today.

Sharon retrieves an opened pack of cigarettes from her pocketbook. She lights up and takes a hefty drag.

Sharon holds out the pack for Robin to take one.

ROBIN

I don't smoke. You know that.

SHARON

You do when you're stressed.

(pause)

Ever wonder how things would've been different if our grandfather didn't invest in RCA. What's the trust worth now, six million?.

(Responding to the nod)

Mom always lived below her means. She never liked people knowing she was rich even though everyone knew anyway. I mean, what's the point of in having money?

ROBIN

And what's your point, Sharon?

SHARON

Point is, although our grandfather set up the trust for Mom, it was supposed to be a family inheritance. Why didn't she change her will to say that? I think she didn't do it because she wanted to encourage Dad to live more independently. Hmmm. He's never been able to take care of himself as long as I've lived. And that's why I filed for guardianship. So, stop giving me an attitude.

ROBIN

We could've worked it out, Sharon. You didn't have to go to court. Now we're under the microscope.

(pause)

Judge Brady has elected me temporary guardian until this thing you've started is settled.

SHARON

I know. I got the notice. And let me tell you something, the hundred and forty dollars a week in spending money you're allowed to give him, that's not going to be enough for Dad. You wait and see.

Sharon puts her cigarette out in the dispenser.

ROBIN

Fine Sharon. We'll wait and see. By the way, Judge Brady called me yesterday and asked us to see him on Wednesday. I told him we would.

SHARON

The hearing's in a couple of weeks.
Why does he want to see us now?

ROBIN

He's known us all our lives. He just
wants to understand why you think
Dad's incapacitated. Off the record.

SHARON

Tell him to read the petition.

Sharon lights up another cigarette. Robin takes it from her,
puffs on it one time, and hands it back.

ROBIN

I know. We can put Dad in an
institution. This way we can get
the whole enchilada, And he won't
be in our face every day.

SHARON

You know I don't want that.

ROBIN

Then, if you just want a piece of
the pie, take ten thousand a year.
A gift from the estate. No tax.

The door bursts open and the nurse's face conveys an urgency.

INT. HOSPITAL - ROOM 410 -- CONTINUOUS

Henry fluffs up Mary's pillow and strokes her hair. He looks
at her for a moment and surveys the various wires connected
to her body. The machines indicate she is lifeless, so Henry
starts to remove the wires from her body.

SHARON

Dad! What are you doing?

Robin and Sharon rush to the bedside, edging Henry away.

As they pay attention to their mother, Henry slides over to
the door. He takes a couple of deep breaths, as if he's
having an anxiety attack, and disappears down the hall. Robin
runs to the doorway. He is halfway down the hall already.

ROBIN

Dad. Where are you going?

HENRY

I'm gonna get a banana split. Your
mom always got a banana split when
things got too ... crazy.

INT. HENRY'S KITCHEN -- LATER

Henry walks in, slaps the Coalsville Gazette down on the kitchen table, snatches a journal from the top of the refrigerator and sits down at the table and begins writing.

He scribbles a few words, then stops and looks at the pictures of Mary stuck on the refrigerator door with magnets.

HENRY

Why did you leave me, Mary? I'm alone and I don't know how to do a darn thing except to swing from a tree and fall on my butt. Who's gonna complain about my rotten Henry Fonda impressions now?

He lets out a hefty sigh, gets up from the table, leans over the sink and looks out the window.

EXT. HENRY'S BACKYARD GARDEN - CONTINUOUS

Rocks jut out of the ground. Patches of weeds dominate the terrain. The garden needs tilling.

BACK TO THE KITCHEN

Tears stream down Henry's face, dripping into the sink. He quickly wipes his face and sits back down. He looks up and--

HENRY

You're the only woman I ever loved.
How dare you die on me.
(pounds the table. Sighs!)

You said you didn't want me to be angry or sad. Well, okay then. This is the last time you'll see me sad. From now on, I'll only think about the good things. I'll be brave. You wait and see. I'll be brave.

Henry writes again, one sentence after another, then pounds a bold dot onto the page, and raises the pen into the air, like a maestro finishing a symphony.

HENRY

Good-bye, my love.

He closes the journal, throws it in the garbage and goes to the sink. While he washes the dishes he hears a man YELLING. A boy's voice counters but is no match for the elder.

BOY'S VOICE (O.S.)

If Mom was here ...

MAN'S VOICE (O.S.)

Well, she's not here, is she? And those damn letters she wrote does not mean she's coming back, either. So, don't get your hopes up.

EXT. NEXT DOOR NEIGHBOR'S HOUSE - BACKYARD - CONTINUOUS

The neck of an empty whisky bottle is imbedded in the ground, as if it had been chucked there from the porch.

We hear SOUNDS of a skirmish inside the house, then a SLAM-BAM of the patio door, which has DANNY, 12, coming out of the house dragging his school books in a backpack with him.

He stops by the fence that separates the two properties and buries his head in his arms on top of the fence.

HENRY (O.S.)

Ohmm ... ohmm!

Danny looks up and wipes the tears away.

HENRY

Warm front arrived last night. It'll be sixty degrees today. Hey, you know what the average life span of a major league baseball is?

DANNY

Not now, Mr. Wolff. Okay?

Henry rakes his way over to the fence.

HENRY

Would you believe seven pitches?

Danny shrugs, and looks the other way.

DANNY

My father wasn't this way when my mom lived with us.

Henry sees CHARLES OSWALD, Danny's dad, peering out of the kitchen window of his neighbor's house, like a sentinel.

DANNY

He blames me for Mom leaving.

There is a sad quiet for a brief moment.

DANNY

Dad thinks I'm stupid. I'm failing in school. And my mom hates me.

HENRY

All moms love their children. Your Mom's no different.

DANNY

If she loves me then why did she leave with that ... whoever he was? Why did she stop writing me?

HENRY

Don't know. Maybe your Dad's lost and maybe she's lost, too.

DANNY

Adults should not get lost. If they do, they shouldn't be allowed to have children.

Henry offers no rebuttal mainly because he doesn't have one.

DANNY

And I'm mad at Brian. He makes fun of his mom cause she doesn't know who LL Cool J is. She nags him about math and wearing his pants too low. He doesn't know how lucky he's got it just for having a mom.

HENRY

Hmm. I see.

DANNY

You see squat.

HENRY

What a beautiful day. I feel it.

The bus pulls up and honks. Danny picks up his books and--

DANNY

The last thing I wanna hear you say is what a wonderful day it is when it's a perfectly horrible, stinkin' day. Life sucks, Mr. Wolff, and it's gonna take more than a weather report to make it any better.

Henry offers a smile, but there's no one there to notice, except for Mr. Oswald who is still peering out the window.

INT. HENRY'S KITCHEN -- NEXT DAY -- LATE MORNING

The dishes done, Henry dries his hands and walks over to the calendar and sees words 'Duffy's Funeral Home - 11 AM' boldly written on the December 2nd box.

HENRY

My God. How could I have forgotten?
The kids are going to kill me.

A doorbell rings and Henry rushes into --

DINING ROOM/FOYER - CONTINUOUS

A mahogany table crowds the room and three bronze booties sit on the mantle. The clock on the wall says the time is 11:10. A coffee table and a couch with puffy cushions finishes the room design except for a coin collection that sits on the coffee table. It is conspicuously missing a 1913 coin.

Henry walks through the dining room - the foyer - and finally reaches the door just as the bell rings again. He peeks out the window and sees Mrs. Aldrich from the first scene.

Henry opens the door and looks down on Mrs. Aldrich's slumped back. She talks slowly, as if talking to a child.

MRS. ALDRICH

Henry. It's time to go to the wake.
I promised your daughter, Robin, I
would look after you.

HENRY

Oh, my. I'm late. I'm late, for a
very important date.

MRS. ALDRICH

You dear man. What will happen to
you now, hmmm? I can take you to
Duffy's, but you can't go looking
like that. Go change into something
more proper, right now. You look
like you're going out for a jog.

Henry slams the door in her face.

EXT. HENRY'S PORCH - CONTINUOUS

Mrs. Aldrich looks heavenward.

MRS. ALDRICH

Mary, I Hope you made arrangements
for him.

As Mrs. Aldrich knocks, she doesn't see Henry sneak out from the side of the house and skipping down to the street.

EXT. STREET BY HENRY'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Henry swings his arms in exaggerated motions as he walks.

HENRY

Nothing like a brisk, morning walk.

EXT. MAIN STREET - LATE MORNING - CONTINUOUS

DIXIE SWANSON, thirty-ish, grabs her CD player and rises from a bench. A headset drapes around her neck.

A sign post at an intersection reads MAIN STREET and HARPER ROAD. She walks down Harper and approaches an old stone bridge. She looks down the street.

She glances under the bridge in the dried-up riverbed and sees WHEEZY and JOE, 60s, perhaps. Dixie slides down to them.

BY THE RIVERBED

Joe, shoeless, wears socks with holes, and a tattered, dirty overcoat. Wheezy sports a dressy hat with a worn overcoat and long johns covering her legs. By appearances, they are homeless people who have taken root under the bridge.

Joe tries to get comfortable on a weather-beaten mattress while Wheezy arranges aluminum cans in bags. She wheezes as she breathes. The deeper the breath, the louder she wheezes.

Dixie sits on a long cushion and makes herself comfortable while Flies buzz around a half-eaten fruit core.

Wheezy gives Dixie 'the eye', then finds a spray can and sprays the area. The flies vanish.

DIXIE

Don't give me that 'you don't belong here' look.

WHEEZY

This is my home. You're not welcome.

Joe rolls over, moans. Nods off.

DIXIE

Just make believe I'm a general, and I'm temporarily taking over this place for strategic reasons.

Dixie inspects Joe and Wheezy, then the surroundings. She takes her time with the audit.

DIXIE

How come I never hear Joe speak? He just grunts or waves his hands.

WHEEZY

Had depression. Was in a half-way house. Treated with electricity.
 (with finger to her head)
 Zzzzt. Zapped him. Came here ten years ago. Talks to no one but me.

DIXIE

Yeah? I thought he was an escaped mental patient. Schizophrenic, maybe. Thrown into the streets by budget cuts, or something.

JOE

Shhhh!

DIXIE

Poor thing. If he died tomorrow, no one would even miss him. Except you, Wheezy.

(Pause - pointing)

You know, I saw you last week over there. I was up there.

Dixie head nods, then points to a tree with exposed roots running along the shoulder of the road.

DIXIE

I sat there an hour watching you.

WHEEZY

That's an invasion of privacy.

DIXIE

I saw you bring food to Joe. And what was that fancy bottle you were drinking from? Wine?

Wheezy nods, then shrugs, as if she likes the idea Dixie is envious of her late night cuisine with fancy wine.

DIXIE

You helped Joe down the stream. I followed. And I saw you giving him a bath. He howled like a dog.

WHEEZY

The water was cold. It was his time ... of the month ... for his bath.

DIXIE

Sounded like you were beating him.

Wheezy finishes arranging the bags, then tries to settle herself by the support beam.

Dixie scrunches her face, indicating she smells a stench.

DIXIE
I think maybe you need a bath.

WHEEZY
Don't fart in the cushions, sister.
... That's where I sleep.

Dixie looks around and sees a lot of empty wine bottles.

DIXIE
Who's the alcoholic, I wonder?

WHEEZY
You think you're better than us?

As Dixie starts to climb up the embankment--

DIXIE
Damn right I do. I ain't staying.
Don't worry. I'm waiting for Mr.
Wolff. He's on his way. I see him.

Wheezy continues bagging the cans. As Dixie slides back down, she spots a piece of coal and picks it up. Wheezy eyes her while Dixie seems lost in thought, then looks around.

WHEEZY
Coal. It's all over the place.

DIXIE
Duh! The town's name is Coalsville.
How do you think it got it's name?

WHEEZY
I'm just sayin'.

DIXIE
Yeah, well, my grandfather told me a lot of stories about this place. People died from breathing this crap. That's all the town was back in his day. Coal miners. Either you were a manager of the Sakawanna Coal Company, or you were a miner. If you were a manager you lived on the north side, where Henry lives. The miners lived on the south side. In the projects where I live.

Dixie tosses the coal aside.

DIXIE
Maybe that's what you got. Black Lung. The way you wheeze, I mean.

Wheezy wheezes and swats at nothing in particular, and Dixie takes a sweeping look at the squalor and dirt. There's a dozen plastic bags, some partially filled with aluminum cans, some with clothes. And some are folded neatly as bed sheets.

WHEEZY

Don't need your sympathy.
(looks around)
Make plenty of money. Nickel a can.

DIXIE

I've seen you down Main Street
begging. How much you make begging?

WHEEZY

Plenty. I need it. Medicine.
(pointing to Joe)
For him. He'll be fine. But you?
Beware. We are the conscience of
this town. You're not far ... from
all this.

DIXIE

What are you talking about?

WHEEZY

I'm a reminder ... of how things
could be ... for the rest of you.

A reflective moment is interrupted by a distant singing.

HENRY (O.S.)

Zipadee do dah, zipadee yea, my oh
my, what a wonderful day ...

We hear Henry's voice singing, so we know he's not far away.

Dixie moves real close to Wheezy. Nose-to-nose almost.

DIXIE

Now, listen to me, you patch of
manure. When Mr. Wolff crosses this
bridge, you stay put.

Dixie picks up rotting food from the ground and shoves it an
inch from Wheezy's nose.

DIXIE

I'll stuff this down your throat if
you cause any trouble.

Joe grunts loudly and flicks his finger.

WHEEZY

Go. Leave. He doesn't like you.

DIXIE
The feeling's mutual, I'm sure.

HENRY (O.S.)
Zipadee do dah, zipadee yea ...

EXT. HARPER ROAD -- CONTINUOUS

Henry saunters down the road, swinging his arms and singing like he doesn't have a care in the world. Dixie pops up from the riverbed like a ghost. Henry clutches his chest.

DIXIE
Sorry about that, Mr. Wolff. I
didn't mean to scare ya.

Dixie and Henry look down and see Wheezy trying to climb up the embankment, but she's unable to get a firm footing.

DIXIE
Come on, I'll walk you to wherever
you're going.

Dixie takes Henry by the arm and turns him around, then kicks some rubble from the shoulder of the road at Wheezy.

HENRY
I'm going to Duffy's.

DIXIE
Of course. Mrs. Wolff. Mary. Your
wife. I'm so sorry. I should've
given you my condolences yesterday.
(pause)
She was such a nice woman. I knew
her a little bit. She made me hot
chocolate one time when I was in
high school. I went to school with
your daughters, you know.

Henry nods, but doesn't really remember.

DIXIE
When I used to play up there with
friends, your daughters told me I
shouldn't be hanging out up there
because I lived in the projects.
Mrs. Wolff didn't seem to care,
though. She was always nice to me. I
remember the hot chocolate.

HENRY
Well, you must come up again. Yes.
You do that. I think I have some
hot chocolate in the cupboard.

DIXIE
 (Chuckling)
 Cupboard. I haven't heard that word
 since my grandfather died.

Wheezing SOUNDS distract Henry. He walks back to the bridge, looks down the embankment and sees Wheezy struggling to climb the slope. She grapples and scoops and claws at the dirt.

Henry watches as Wheezy finally makes it to the top wheezing so hard that Henry holds his breath. Finally,

WHEEZY
 Can you ... spare some ... do-re-me, Mr. Wolff?

HENRY
 Sure.

Henry reaches into his pocket, but Dixie grabs his arm and -

DIXIE
 Don't you dare. You're just an easy score to her. Besides, she'll just buy some fancy wine with it.

WHEEZY
 Come on, Mista ...

HENRY
 Henry. You guys can call me, Henry.

WHEEZY
 Come on, Henry. I gotta take care of ol' Joe down there. We're just ... two unfortunates needin' ...

DIXIE
 Leave us alone, you pest.

Wheezy scowls, swings her arm and just misses Dixie.

WHEEZY
 Come on, Mista. You done it before. You live ... fancy house ... up there. You can spare some do-re-me.

Henry reaches into his pocket again and takes out a five-dollar bill. With the speed of a frog's tongue, Wheezy flicks her wrist and the money disappears into her hand.

A stone under Wheezy's foot slides. She's about to tumble but Dixie grabs her shoulders and turns her around and forces her to sit. Dixie bends down and whispers into her ear--

DIXIE

I told you not to cause any trouble. You don't listen very good, do you?

Dixie forces Wheezy to the ground, grabs the 5-dollar bill out of her hand, and then pushes her down the embankment.

DIXIE

Adios, amigos.

Henry watches Wheezy's effortless descent to the bottom. He glances under the bridge and sees Joe's motionless feet wearing faded socks with as many holes as he has toes.

ON WHEEZY

As her body comes to rest at the bottom of the embankment -

WHEEZY

(To Joe)

Don't have another climb in me.

She stands and inspects her body now covered with a layer of loose dirt and coal dust. She uses the palm of her hand like a washcloth which causes dust to fly off her. She smells herself, then sniffs her clothes and --

WHEEZY

We bathe tonight, Joseph.

BACK TO SCENE WITH DIXIE AND HENRY

Henry and Dixie turn and head toward Main Street. Dixie hands Henry the five dollars.

DIXIE

She doesn't need your money. She makes more money begging in a week than most people make in a month.

She laughs, but sees Henry isn't laughing.

DIXIE

She'll get over it.

Henry stops and turns back towards the bridge, but Dixie grabs his arm and pulls him forward.

DIXIE

She's okay. She's a survivor.

They walk for a while on Harper Road without saying a word. Dixie spots Duffy's Funeral Home on Main Street.

EXT. DUFFY'S FUNERAL HOME - CONTINUOUS

Sharon and Robin walk out onto the porch. Sharon bangs a pack of cigarettes against the rail, unravels the wrap and offers Robin one. Robin holds out her hand like a traffic cop.

BACK TO DIXIE AND HENRY

Dixie sees Robin and Sharon on the porch and stops.

DIXIE

Listen, I know you gave me money
yesterday for that loan I told you
about, but you think you can give
me something today for food.

Her face muscles twitch, so she rubs her cheeks, then twists and grinds the heel of her hand on her eye.

Mrs. Aldrich's car bursts into view. She HONKS her horn several times and Dixie jumps out of the way.

INT. DUFFY'S FUNERAL HOME - CONTINUOUS

The SOUND of the horn honking catches Sharon's attention. She points in her father's direction.

SHARON

See ... see.

Mrs. Aldrich stops the car and Henry waves Mrs. Aldrich on.

ROBIN

You can't control who Dad talks to.

SHARON

Yeah, well, if I could, what's-her-
name would be on top of my list.

ROBIN

Her name is Dixie.

Sharon lights up a cigarette.

SHARON

Look at him. Doesn't have a care in
the world. Talks with anyone who'll
listen. Thieves. Prostitutes.

ROBIN

Ah, give me a damn cigarette.

SHARON

I knew I could break you down.

Sharon quickly hands one to Robin along with a light.

ROBIN
You know, I can't remember speaking
a civil word to Dixie. I feel
guilty about that.

SHARON
Don't. She's a druggie and a loser.

ROBIN
Mom didn't think so.

SHARON
Mom ministered to everyone's needs
except ... mine.

ROBIN
Oh, please. Mom was just tough when
she had to be. Like with Pastor
McMillan. Do you remember that.
(responding to the shake
of the head)
I remember one Sunday after church
Mom told him his homilies gave us
nightmares so she was going to stop
coming. When the contributions
stopped as well the Pastor came
over in hopes to get her to come
back. I heard them from the
bedroom. Different from his Sunday,
sermonizing voice. Her words were
pointed like daggers and she jammed
her finger into his shoulder like
this and said...

Robin points her finger into Sharon's shoulder as she speaks.

ROBIN
"Do you realize what you are doing
to my children with all that hell
and damnation talk'? I was at the
top of the stairs, listening. She
backed him up into the wall and
promised that we all would go back
to church and she would resume the
contributions if he would start
preaching peace and love. It was a
great thing to watch.

SHARON
I see. Money talks, even to God.

As Robin watches her father talk to Dixie down the road--

ROBIN

I can't believe you would do such a thing to your own father.

SHARON

Give it a rest, Robin. Did you know he withdrew \$500 the day Mom died? Where's that money going to? How long do you think the money is going to last?

Just then MR. and MRS. JENKINS walk up the steps of the funeral home and approach the sisters.

MRS. JENKINS

Oh, I'm so sorry ...

Mrs. Jenkins hugs Robin, then Sharon. Her husband steps in and half-hugs the Wolff sisters as if he's afraid to make contact. The Jenkins hurry into the parlor leaving Robin and Sharon to resume their conversation.

ROBIN

Dad showed responsibility in taking care of Mom this past year. You're angry with him because he told his 'baby-head' joke every time your friends came over to the house? How many fathers would play Chutes And Ladders every night because his two little girls fell obsessively in love with the stupid game? How many daughters had a father who watched SNOW WHITE with them ten thousand times and recite lines like ROCKY HORROR cult-heads?

Sharon lights up another cigarette, then moves in closer so they are almost nose-to-nose.

SHARON

How many daughters had a father who thought farting-on-demand was a talent to put on a resume.

ROBIN

Nobody forced you to quit school and marry Mr. Potato Head. And no one is forcing you to work at a collection agency, although your personality fits quite well there. Squeezing money from people who can't afford their mortgage ... You love what money does. The power of it.

Sharon flicks her cigarette on the lawn, then turns to leave.

SHARON

Dad won't be able to survive on twenty dollars a day because he treats money like a child does. Without Mom to supervise him, how long do you think it'll be before the estate is gone? Listen, I'm not the demon here. I love Dad. But I'm also a realist. And I think it's irresponsible of you not to care what Dad does with Mom's estate.

Sharon enters the parlor while Robin turns, faces the street and watches Henry give money to Dixie.

INT. DUFFY'S FUNERAL HOME -- CONTINUOUS

Sharon sits in the front row of the Visitation Room. Mary lies peacefully in a coffin a few feet away. Robin enters and sits next to her just Mr. Aldrich appears and sits.

MRS. ALDRICH

How are you two holding up?
 (responding to the moans)
 Well, your father is a bad boy.
 He's dressed in a sweat suit. I
 told him to change.

While they talk Sharon kneels beside Mary's casket.

ON THE CASKET AND SHARON

Sharon leans in and whispers to her deceased mother-

SHARON

I'm tired of resenting Robin, Mom. She's always been my benchmark for success. Honor roll at Harvard Law School. Now how can a community college dropout compete with that?

Sharon reaches in and adjusts the flower in Mary's hand.

SHARON

You never liked where I worked, did you Mom?. Well, they appreciate me there and my powers of persuasion. I must've inherited that from you.

(pause)

What was I to do? I was caught in this dilemma. I really didn't want a child, and God knows you didn't want me to marry John Stone. Mr. Potato Head, as Robin calls him.

(chuckles)

(MORE)

SHARON (CONT'D)

I figured I'd marry John, get pregnant, and live off the trust. I planned it all with John. Boy, was I wrong. I was sure you'd set up a trust for me if I got pregnant. Isn't that what happened to you when you got pregnant with Robin?

(gets real serious)

I told John we'd divorce right after I paid him five grand from the trust. He'd get his share and move on. Don't blame him. He was an opportunist, just like me. I was the one who got the abortion - not him.

Sharon looks around to see if anyone's listening. Mrs. Aldrich and Robin are still huddled together.

SHARON

Did you tell me that I'd receive money from a trust fund just so I'd visit you during your end days?

(Listens)

Can you hear Mrs. Aldrich behind me complain about Dad's relationship with Dixie? That's the man you left all your money to, the man who never paid a bill in his life.

(laughs)

How ironic it would be if I had to put the squeeze on Dad for not paying his bills.

(laughs again)

Aagh, what's the use of talking to you? You never listened to me when you were alive. Why would I think you'll listen to me now?

(leans in and whispers)

You couldn't forgive me because I got an abortion without talking to you first. Well, here's something you didn't know. It was the boy you never got to raise.

Sharon reaches into the casket again, and with a quick jerk she breaks the flower off the stem. She gets up and sits back down in the first row where Sharon and Robin's eyes meet.

BACK TO THE FRONT ROW

Robin rolls her eyes, as if to suggest Mrs. Aldrich doesn't stop talking. Sharon makes a puppet mouth with her hand and flaps it. Blah! Blah! Blah!

Sharon takes several quick breaths, holds her chest and,

SHARON
 (to herself)
 It's only anxiety. Relax.

She looks around and sees the funeral parlor filled with people. She spots Henry who is shaking hands with people like he giving a motivational seminar. She waves him over.

MRS. ALDRICH
 Oh, dear. Here comes Henry. You two
 hang in there.

Mrs. Aldrich exits just as Henry appears. He hugs his daughters appearing to be grieving properly.

ROBIN
 Dad! You're wearing a jogger's
 outfit. Do you know that?

Robin motions for him to look behind him.

HENRY'S POV

The PEOPLE are all wearing dark clothes, all dressed appropriately for a wake.

BACK TO SCENE

HENRY
 Oh! I see what you mean.

Out of nowhere, a WOMAN comes up to Sharon and grabs her hand. Then Robin's. She turns to hug Henry.

HENRY
 Life's hell, then you die.

The woman takes a quick inhale. Henry points to the casket.

HENRY
 Go pay your respects like everybody
 else.

The woman kneels by the casket and Henry and his two daughters sit down in the front row.

Henry shakes his head then glances around the room and sees how somber people are. He mimics what he sees and sits forward with furrowed eyebrows, a bent head, frowning.

The woman rises from the casket, starts walking towards the sisters but Henry gives her the Groucho high-brow, so she turns and heads in the opposite direction.

Sharon picks up her pocketbook and Henry gets up with her.

HENRY

You're not staying?

SHARON

I'll see you tonight. Robin and I have it all worked out. One of us is here at all times.

Sharon kisses him on the cheek, then leaves.

Henry sits next to Robin. He waits a beat and then gets up, walks over to the casket and kneels down. He looks to the ceiling, closes his eyes and whispers -

HENRY

Dear God, You made the animals, and a million species of bugs, and us. You're much smarter than people give you credit for.

(pause; looks at Mary)

When you see God, and Johnny, ask them if they forgave me yet. I'll be up there before you know it.

Henry appears to be listening to someone. He gets up and faces those who gathered in the room.

HENRY

Mary thanks you all for coming and wishes you a merry Christmas. She should've used the word 'holidays' but she was never politically correct about those things. She wants you to know that you too will die. She says don't be afraid, even though death might be painful, because it's only a temporary pain. Like a prick of a needle before the morphine kicks in.

Robin rushes to Henry's side. She takes him by the arm and, while escorting him outside, notices the whispering, the nudging, and the subtle shakes of the head.

ROBIN

(to herself)

Some things never change.

EXT. DUFFY'S FUNERAL HOME - CONTINUOUS

Robin and Henry exit the home and stand on the top stoop.

HENRY

Did I say anything wrong, Sweetie?

ROBIN

Dad. I don't think people like hearing they're going to die any time soon. Life is hard enough to live on its own terms. They don't want to be thinking about death!

HENRY

How can you NOT think about dying when you're in a funeral home?

ROBIN

Point well taken. Here comes Mrs. Cunningham. Let's be civil, okay?

MRS. CUNNINGHAM walks up the steps and hugs Robin and Henry.

MRS.CUNNINGHAM

I'm so sorry. Mary was a good person.

ROBIN

Thank you for coming, Mrs. Cunningham. Your husband is inside.

They both wait in silence for Mrs. Cunningham to walk inside.

HENRY

She looks so unhappy.

ROBIN

Dad, I think she's feeling sad because Mom died.

HENRY

Oh! Okay. That makes sense then.

As they walk to Robin's car.

ROBIN

Dad, did you get a chance to read the letter from County Court?
(responding to his nod)
It says that I'm to govern your finances temporarily until the Judge rules on Sharon's petition. I'm suppose to manage your bills and allowance, temporarily. I'm to give you \$20 dollars a day, okay?

HENRY

Oh, I thought I won the lottery for twenty dollars. Or Keno, maybe.

ROBIN

No. It's from the estate and we have to see Judge Brady Wednesday.

HENRY
Judge Brady? Why?

ROBIN
Because he wants to see if you
understand what's going on. Okay?

He nods and pulls out a dollar bill from his pants pocket.

ROBIN
Is that all you have?
(responding to his nod)
Well, starting tomorrow, you have
to go through me. I pay the bills.
(pause)
What happened to the money you took
out of the bank?
(no response)
You gave it to Dixie, didn't you?

HENRY
I didn't want to give it to her.
But she needed it. Seemed like the
right thing to do at the time.

ROBIN
Remember our talk about enabling
people? If she uses that money to
get food, then maybe it would be
different. But she could die from
taking drugs. You don't want that.

HENRY
I gave money to Wheezy, too.

Henry gives a gesture the conversation was over. As they
reach Robin's car.

HENRY
I'll walk home.

INT. CCA OFFICE -- SAME DAY

Sharon walks down an aisle of CCA, the Clarion Collection
Agency. With coffee in her hand, she dons a smile and doles
out a few 'good mornings' on her way.

Before reaching her own work space, she passes by one cubicle
that has a sign: "MISSION STATEMENT: DON'T GET CAUGHT".

She sits and takes a sip of her coffee.

FRED
What are you doing here?

Sharon swivels around and sees FRED CLARION, JR.

SHARON

My sister and I are doing shifts at the funeral parlor. I can only take so much of that somber crap. I'll do a few folders and then I'll probably go. Besides, aren't you handing out bonus checks today?

He hands her a folder.

FRED

Yes. As long as you're up to it, see what you can do with this one.

Fred puts one fist on top of the other and twists them as if he were wringing out a wet rag. He then leaves.

Sharon opens the folder as DERICK peeks over the partition. He has a headset over his head.

DERICK

He doesn't like to stay in one place for too long, does he?

SHARON

Might hear something he doesn't want to hear. This way he avoids perjury in case we're sued for breaking the CPA laws.

DERICK

WHAT! Violate the CPA? No! Not me.

(pause)

I'm on hold. This deadbeat keeps on leaving me hanging. I'm on a third 'please hold, I'll be right back'. How are you? You don't look so good. Ooops.

Points to his headset and disappears behind the cubicle.

DERICK (O.S.)

Everyone can get money if they have to. Mrs. Robinson ... Mrs. Robinson please let me talk. I didn't say you are a bad person. Your credit rating stinks, that's all ... Well, I can say that because it says that right here in your folder.

Fred appears in the center of the room waving envelopes.

FRED (O.S.)

I want to thank each of you for another fine year. This month was the fifty-sixth consecutive month we met our clients' expectations.

As Fred AD-LIBS his speech,

DERICK (O.S.)

It says here you bounced a check to Christ The King Bookstore. That tells me you're a Bible thumper, of sorts. So you must know what it means to give to Caesar what belongs to Caesar? Of course you do. Make believe we are Caesar. You pay us twenty dollars a month and I won't give your name to the credit bureaus for the umpteenth time. And I'm sure God will smile upon you. Excuse me, Mrs. Robinson, but I have to go. Chomp on that for a while, and I'll call you tomorrow.

Derick hangs up and scoots over so he can see Sharon.

SHARON

You probably won again this year since you got 'the big kahuna' last year and became the 'go to' guy for the easy squeezes this year.

DERICKP

It's like the horse racing business. The best jockeys are given the best horses to ride.

SHARON

Exactly.

DERICK

I got two congressmen this month.

SHARON

They're the worst, actually.

Fred throws a bundle on a desk and holds up a single envelope in his hand, as if he's a priest serving Holy Communion.

FRED

Todd will distribute the checks in a moment, but first, here's the winner of this year's top prize. It was real close this year between Sharon and Derick. But once again .. Derick Orr, came on up.

Fred holds out the check and Derick goes to accept the prize but we stay on Sharon as a celebration goes on behind her.

SHARON

Oh, man. What am I doing?

She examines the first page in the folder just given to her by Fred and enters the name of MARGARET BAZE. She waits for information to appear on the screen. She scans the screen, picks up the phone, and dials. After a few rings -

MARGARET BAZE (V.O.)

Hello. Margaret Baze here.

SHARON

Mrs. Baze, my name is Janice from the Clarion Collection Agency.

Sharon turns and watches Derick in celebration.

MARGARET BAZE (V.O.)

The car was purchased by my ex-husband. He totaled it, not me.

SHARON

You should've used the insurance money to pay off the loan, then.

MARGARET BAZE (V.O.)

He took the money and spent it on other things.

SHARON

But the loan was in your name, Mrs. Baze. If Confucius were here, he'd say life stinks, sometimes. Zen would want to know the sound of life stinking, and if your ex-husband were a Quaker, he'd say, 'Be silent and wait for life to stink.' But you're not any of those people, Mrs. Baze. You're just responsible for the loan.

Sharon reads the screen while she waits for a response.

MARGARET BAZE (V.O.)

Listen, I just got divorced, and I'm right in the middle of a custody battle. If I don't pay my lawyers first, I may lose my son.

SHARON

Oh, my sympathies. I do see your problem. Yes, well, that does make a difference, doesn't it?

MARGARET BAZE (V.O.)

Yes. Yes. It does.

SHARON

Ever get stung by a bee, Mrs. Baze?

MARGARET BAZE (V.O.)

When I was younger.

SHARON

Do you know that 99% percent of all bee stings are caused because we do something wrong and we don't know it? Maybe we pushed a lawn mower too close to a hive, or maybe ...

MARGARET BAZE (V.O.)

What's your point ... Janice. If that's your real name? I heard you people use code names.

SHARON

Yes. True. Janice is my code name.

MARGARET BAZE (V.O.)

You have something to hide, Janice. Is that why you use a phony name?

SHARON

No, Mrs. Baze. It's just that some people might misdirect their anger. You know, they might want to look me up. Do me some harm. Not you, but some people are quite deranged.

MARGARET BAZE (V.O.)

Well, Janice, what's your point with the bee sting thing?

SHARON

My point is this: don't get stung because you did something wrong.

MARGARET BAZE (V.O.)

I still don't understand.

SHARON

You're a working lady. Your credit report is clean except for this car loan you have neglected. I'd think while fighting for custody of your child a Judge would look favorably on your financial record as it stands today.

(MORE)

SHARON (CONT'D)

However, if the judge notices your pay's being garnished, well you do see my bee sting analogy now, don't you, Mrs. Baze?

Sharon waits patiently. Finally,

MARGARET BAZE (V.O.)

I got your point, Janice. How much do I have to pay to keep me out of the computer?

SHARON

A hundred a month and ...

MARGARET BAZE (V.O.)

All right. Done.

SHARON

Good. You can mail the check to ...

MARGARET BAZE (V.O.)

I have your notice in front of me. I have the address.

SHARON

Alrighty, then. We're finished here.

MARGARET BAZE (V.O.)

How can you look at yourself in the mirror at the end of the day?

Mrs. Baze's whisper comes through the phone like a puff of smoke and startles Sharon.

SHARON

We're done here.

Sharon hangs up and swivels her chair around, visibly shaken from the conversation. Derick has returned to his cubicle, and everything seems to be back to the daily routine.

The clatter of the keyboards ... the distant voices on the phone ... a 'yes' being yelled out as if someone has just hit a jackpot on a slot machine, entrance Sharon at her desk.

Todd tosses an envelope on her desk and breaks the trance.

TODD

Well deserved, Sharon.

EXT. HENRY'S HOUSE - FRONT LAWN -- MORNING

There is a garbled YELLING and a creaking SOUND of a screen door opening and the 'SLAM-BAM' of it shutting.

Danny appears, plops himself down next to the fence which separates the Oswald house from Henry's.

He hears singing, turns and sees Dixie dancing up the street with a CD player hanging over her shoulder and a set of headphones clasped on her ears. She smiles at him, then SCREAMS.

Henry bursts onto the scene swinging on a rope. He breezes past Danny giving a Tarzan YELL, then swings back.

Danny jumps to his feet and watches as Henry's legs find a limb on the small sapling that guards the mailbox. Henry lets go of the rope and hangs upside down. His legs wrap around the limb and his head dangles near his mailbox.

Dixie walks up to Danny and they both gawk at Henry.

DIXIE

I don't think I've ever seen an adult act that way before.

DANNY

You haven't seen the worst of it. I think something's wrong with him.

Danny points to his head and swirls his finger around his temple, as they hustle to help Henry untangle himself. Henry slips out of the rope. His body falls to the ground.

DIXIE

Are you okay, Mr. Wolff?

Henry lays still with his eyes closed. They hover over him.

DANNY

Do you think he's dead?

DIXIE

I don't know. Touch him and see if he moves.

Danny kicks him to see if he's alive.

HENRY

(opens his eyes)

Henry. You guys may call me Henry.

Henry jumps to his feet and tests his body.

DIXIE

You are one weird dude, Henry.

CHARLES (O.S.)

Danny! Get in the house. NOW!

DANNY

You are weird, Henry. Gotta go.

ON CHARLES

Charles smacks Danny in the head as he walks into the house.

CHARLES

You stay away from him. Now go get ready. We're going to his wife's funeral. If it were his funeral, I wouldn't go, but I always liked her even though she married...

(loudly-meant for Henry)

... An idiot. Look at him. On his wife's funeral day, no less.

BACK TO HENRY AND DIXIE

As they walk to Henry's house, Henry tosses the loop-end of the rope over the branch that hangs over the roof.

They reach the porch and stop.

DIXIE

You said to come over for a cup of hot chocolate, but if you gotta go to the funeral, or something ...

HENRY

We have time for hot chocolate.

Henry hears a swishing noise from Dixie's headset. He puts the headset to his ears and listens.

DIXIE

That's my favorite CD.

Henry takes the CD jacket from Dixie's hand and examines it, then hands it back.

INT. HENRY'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

They enter the house, and Dixie stops in the foyer.

HENRY

Come. I'll make some hot chocolate.

Henry points to the couch and Dixie steps into the living room and sits on the couch. She eyes the coin collection, then picks it up. Henry vanishes into the kitchen.

DIXIE

You know, there's rumors about you.

HENRY (O.S.)
Yeah. What kind of rumors?

DIXIE
I dunno. Like you're not all there.

There is no response and Dixie makes a face as if to say she shouldn't have said that. And while fiddling with the coin collection, she eyes the wall photo and the knick-knacks on the shelves. She eyes the mahogany dining room table.

DIXIE
That's a nice table there. I saw one just like it when I went to the White House on a class trip.

Still no response. She grimaces. She notices the blank slot marked '1913' in the coin collection.

DIXIE
You're missing a quarter from your coin collection. What happened?

Henry comes out with a cup of hot chocolate.

HENRY
A sore subject. A few years ago the ice cream man came and Sharon and Robin wanted ice cream. Mary was shopping, or something, and I didn't have enough money. I needed twenty more cents, so I used the quarter to buy the ice cream. Mary was very upset with me, let me tell you. Here. I put an ice cube in it.

DIXIE
Man. If I were your wife, I'd cut your nuts off.

She takes a sip and Henry puts a coaster where her cup was.

HENRY
That's not a nice thing to say.

DIXIE
Sorry. Is the coin rare?

HENRY
Not really. I probably could find one in the city for the price of a cheap dinner, maybe.

Dixie puts the coin collection down and takes another sip.

DIXIE

How much is the collection worth if
you had the missing quarter?

Henry looks out the living room window.

HENRY

Oh, I don't know. A thousand,
maybe. Okay. You need to hurry now.

Dixie follows Henry gaze and looks out the window.

EXT. IN FRONT OF HENRY'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Robin gets out of the car and starts walking to the house.

INT. HENRY'S LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Dixie takes a quick gulp, then gets up.

DIXIE

She doesn't exactly like me, you
know. I'll go out the back.

As she leaves, she spots the booties on the mantle.

DIXIE

What are those? They are cute.

HENRY

The large one was Sharon's. Robin's
the oldest but had the smallest
baby feet. The other one was ...

Henry has a hard time saying it.

DIXIE

The one who died of crib death?

Henry just stares at the mantle. Dixie sees Robin through the
window walking up the porch. Dixie tucks her CD player under
her arm and bolts to the kitchen and out of the house.

EXT. HENRY'S FRONT PORCH - CONTINUOUS

As Robin opens the door, Dixie scoots past the porch in a
fast trot and, when she reaches the street, she settles into
rhythmic stride as she listens to music through her headset.
Robin notices her as she goes into the house.

INT. HENRY'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Robin picks up the coin collection on the couch and places it
on the coffee table.

She stands in front of the hall closet, slowly reaching for the knob. She jerks the door open. No one is there. She walks to the stairs.

ROBIN

DA-AD! Haven't got time for this. I have to talk to you before we go.

KITCHEN

Robin walks in, sits down at the table and grabs the wicker basket. She takes seven envelopes from her purse. Each one is marked with a day of the week. She yanks several 20-dollar

ROBIN

DA-AD. I'm not in the mood ...

Henry pops out of nowhere and,

HENRY

BOO!

As Robin clutches her chest, Henry sits down next to her.

ROBIN

You ... STOP IT! I almost fell off the chair. That was not funny.

HENRY

(east-Indian accent)

Yes, it was. I scared bricks of cement out of you.

Robin bites her lip to hold in the laugh.

ROBIN

That was so retar ...

HENRY

Oh. So, now I'm retarded?

Henry withdraws and appears not to be listening.

ROBIN

Stop. I didn't say that. Figure of speech. You were actually funny.

Robin slams her hand on the table.

ROBIN

Don't go there today, Dad. We have to go to the funeral.

HENRY

You think I'm stupid, don't you?

Robin finishes putting the money into the envelopes, then pats Henry's hand and waits a couple of seconds.

ROBIN

I love you.

HENRY

Manure sandwich. You're going to tell me some good stuff and stick something bad in the middle. Like I love you. You're stupid. You look very handsome today.

ROBIN

You have a limited guardianship hearing on the twenty third. Your money's being frozen temporarily, but Judge Brady wants to see us this Wednesday. Maybe he can talk Sharon out of all this. In the meantime, you have twenty dollars in each envelope. One for each day of the week. Now don't give this away because this is all the spending money you have. I'll pay the bills and do your food shopping. Do you understand?

Henry nods. Robin gets up and leads him to the dinning room.

HENRY

Sharon was always a hurting child.

(Pause as Robin stops.)

I could see it in her eyes when she was little. As she grew older that fear turned into ... sadness. I couldn't do anything about it.

Robin throws her hand to her mouth,

ROBIN

Okay. We can't talk about this now. We have to go to the funeral.

HENRY

I want you to be my lawyer when we see Judge Brady.

ROBIN

You don't need a lawyer. It's not that kind of thing. But I'll be there. Don't worry.

HENRY

I don't want the secret to come out.

Robin stops in her tracks.

ROBIN
Secret? Dad, you've never talked
about ... the secret. Why now?

HENRY
Your mom never forgave me. She said
she did but I knew she didn't. Be
my lawyer so the secret stays with
us. People won't understand.

ROBIN
Okay, Dad. I'll be your lawyer. Now
go upstairs and change.

Henry walks up the stairs, then stops and turns.

HENRY
You look so much like Mom, Pumpkin.

ROBIN
Thank you, Dad. Go.

HENRY
You act like her, too. Bossy.

ROBIN
Manure sandwich. Now go!

INT. CHURCH -- LATER

Henry sits between Robin and Sharon in the first pew. He
looks around. The Church is packed with PEOPLE.

Pastor McMillan ends his eulogy (improvises). From his POV we
see the people in the congregation, some we've seen already
and some people we will see, like JUDGE BRADY and ASA ADLER.

PASTOR MCMILLAN (V.O.)
Now, Henry Wolff has asked to say a
few words. Henry?

Henry step over Sharon, DHE looks to a wide-eyed Robin who
shrugs her shoulders as if to say, 'I had no idea.

Henry saunters up to the podium and begins--

HENRY
Today, I mourn someone who is very
dear to me. This whole thing
actually reminds me of Neill Murphy
who passed away a few years ago.

Henry takes notice of MRS. MURPHY who sits in the third pew.

HENRY

I remember Marge's story about what happened the morning Neill died. She was making his favorite cookies. Chocolate chip, wasn't it, Marge?

ON MARGE

She nods but looks confused. She doesn't remember.

BACK TO HENRY

HENRY

Neill confided to her that he was ready to go to the Lord. She didn't know that the smell of her famous chocolate chip cookies that morning kept him hanging on. He loved those cookies. Everyone in town loves Marge's chocolate chip cookies.

Henry waits for a few AD-LIB 'amens' to subside.

HENRY

He was so sick he couldn't walk. But he could crawl ... The smell of Marge's baking seduced him out of his bed. He crawled on his elbows, marine style, all the way down the stairs. He slid on his belly into the hallway and finally into the kitchen. God knows he was only hanging on by a thread.

Henry looks at Robin. She smiles. Nods. Surrenders.

HENRY

He should've died then and there, only the aroma of those cookies kept him alive. Finally, he saw the trays of freshly baked cookies, and with every ounce of strength he had left, he crawled a little further on his elbows, until, finally, he reached the kitchen table. He pulled himself up on the chair, reached for one of those famous Murphy cookies. Then, Marge, seeing what her dying husband was up to, smacked the back of his hand with the spatula and said, 'Neill, you leave those cookies alone. They're for the funeral.'

A roar of laughter fills the church. Sharon buries her head in her hands and Robin stoically takes in the mixture of groans, snickers and a handful of "Oh-my-Gods".

ON DANNY AND CHARLES -- Danny looks around at the pandemonium. He spots Mrs. Murphy who covers her eyes with her hand and shakes her head.

Danny chuckles, but Charles is not liking what he sees. Dixie, sits in the back of the church, laughing.

BACK TO HENRY

Henry sees Robin glaring at the Pastor who appears to be enjoying the disharmony.

HENRY

I just want to say I loved my wife dearly. She took care of me, you know. She was a terrific cook. She taught me some important things.

Henry raises piece of paper to the congregation.

HENRY

These are the things that Mary has taught me about life.

Henry looks out to the congregation occasionally as he reads.

HENRY

She taught me to let my children make their own mistakes, and when they do, forgive and love them anyway. It's okay to stretch the truth a little bit if it makes the story more interesting. Crying does not mean you're weak. This next one was very important to Mary. BE ON TIME. Love your spouse, even when he or she frustrates you. When Mary said he, she really meant me.

(pauses for laughs)

If you don't have a Halloween costume, put a raisin in your belly button and go as a cookie. Be loyal to your friends. Have respect for animals. Work hard. You can never have too many Dunkin Donuts. Education doesn't necessarily mean intelligence. Keep your promises.

Henry looks past the congregation to Dixie.

HENRY

Here's a piece she quoted a lot.
Work like you don't need money.
Dance like nobody's watching. Love
like you've never been hurt. Sing
like nobody's listening. Live like
it's Heaven on Earth. And this last
 suggestion is probably the most
 important one of all. Be thankful
 you were born in the USA.

A series of AD-LIB 'Amens' emanate from all over the room. Henry looks out to Robin for help. She instantly rises and walks up to the podium. Henry whispers to Robin.

HENRY

She's not coming back, is she?

ROBIN

No, Dad. She's not coming back.

Henry looks out at the congregation one more time. A few sniffing sounds steal the silence from the room.

HENRY

Get a mammogram. You don't want the
 same thing happening to you.

ROBIN

Okay. I will.

HENRY

One more thing. Make sure Sharon
 gets one, too. Can't be too sure
 about these things.

ROBIN

Yes, Dad.

An older lady pulls out a tissue from her pocketbook and wipes her eyes.

OLDER LADY

God Bless Mary Wolff.

ON DIXIE -- she throws a kiss to Henry and quietly leaves.

EXT. MAIN STREET -- NEXT DAY

Henry sits on a curb-side bench by Adler's Pharmacy watching the people shop. Dixie plops herself down next to Henry. She turns up the volume on her CD player a bit and they take a few seconds to watch the window shoppers.

HENRY

Christmas time is always a great
time to watch people.

They watch as people swagger, stumble and bump into each
other, and listen while the people across the street seem to
be marching in tune with the music.

DIXIE

Listen Henry, I want to express my
darkest feelings about your loss. I
mean, about your old lady. I feel I
didn't describe myself before with
the proper respects. I didn't give
it the proper importance. What's so
funny?

HENRY

You're talking funny.

DIXIE

I'm sorry about your wife, man.

HENRY

Okay. That sounds more like you.

Henry stares at Dixie for a moment.

HENRY

I like you.

DIXIE

You do? How come?

HENRY

Because you dance like nobody's
watching. You don't seem to care
what people think of you.

DIXIE

You should talk. You're the
weirdest ... I mean, not weird but
... It's a charming weird.

(thinks)

I like you, too.

HENRY

Why?

DIXIE

Because you do everything like
nobody's looking. Like you don't
give-a-crap about anything.

HENRY

Stop with the mouth, already. You got my attention. Talk like a lady, else I'm gonna hafta kill ya.

Dixie puffs out a breath, a start of a laugh. Suddenly, she spots JASON SPECTOR across the street. Henry notices this.

DIXIE

That's the turd I owed money to. The guy I told you about the other day. For drugs. There. I said it.
(long pause)
Well, say something?

HENRY

Fine. Don't do drugs anymore.

Dixie makes a face, as if to say 'duh'.

HENRY

Okay, what does a 'turd' mean. I get an image of very dirty person.

DIXIE

He's an idiot. What's with you and bad words, anyway?

HENRY

Unbecoming, specially from a lady.

Jason spots Dixie. Dixie grunts as she sees him.

HENRY

Is he a mean guy?

Dixie's nod is a big one.

HENRY

Would he hurt you?

Her silence replaces the nod. Her facial twitch says more.

Jason rushes across the street. As he approaches, his unkept look is more apparent. He's unshaven. Bling all over.

HENRY

Ok. Now I have an image of a turd.

She stands as Jason flounces his way over to her and Henry.

JASON

Well, if it's not my little girl.

DIXIE

I'm not your little girl, Jason.
Listen, I don't want any trouble.

JASON

Hey, can't a guy say hello?
(puffs on a cigarette)
Got something you want. I'll stake
ya. You've always been one to pay
me back, one way or another.

He cackles as Dixie sits back down with Henry.

DIXIE

No. I don't do that anymore.

JASON

What's changed since last week?

Jason clenches his fist, tightens his jaw. Henry stands and Jason takes a long look, and his hard demeanor melts a bit.

JASON

Hey, I don't want to intrude on you
two. I can get a good wheelchair if
you want to take this old buzzard
for a walk.

Jason lets out with a short, hearty chuckle, then stands nose-to-nose with him.

Dixie jumps up and,

DIXIE

Leave him alone, Jason. He's got
nothing to do with you and me.

A police car slowly passes them, and the Sergeant eyes Jason, as if they have a history.

With the police car's disappearance, Jason grabs Dixie by the hair and in a serious, acid tone -

JASON

Don't diss me in front of anyone.

Jason twists and she howls in pain. Henry grabs Jason's wrist gently and Jason releases Dixie's hair. She falls to her knees holding her head with both hands.

DIXIE

Leave him alone, Jason. He didn't do
anything. Henry, get lost. Leave.

A hideous cackle rises from an empty place within Jason.

Henry dips into his pocket, pulls out a twenty-dollar bill.

HENRY

Will you go if I give you money?

DIXIE

No, Henry. That's all you have.

Jason snatches the money from Henry and sticks it into his pocket all in one move.

The police car comes back into Jason's view, so he backs off. As Jason leaves, he points at Dixie and --

JASON

You and I will square things later.

Jason leaves and Dixie flops down on the bench, holding her head. Henry sits next to her. He pulls out a second \$20 bill.

HENRY

Look. I have more money.

DIXIE

Well, look at you. Big deceiver!
Why did you give him money?

HENRY

He needed something to save face.
Money usually does the trick. Let's
get something to eat. I'm hungry.

He puts the money back in his pocket. She picks up her CD player and they get up and begin walking down the street.

Two WOMEN walk towards them whispering.. Dixie turns to them and gives them a fist. The women gasp and pick up their pace.

DIXIE

(yelling)
You better keep on walking you
friggin' ...

HENRY

Is friggin' a word?

Dixie stops abruptly.

DIXIE

Henry! Really? Why do you have to
be that way? I'm angry. Can't you
see that? I didn't say anything
bad. No way friggin's a curse word.

They resume walking and stop in front of a diner. Henry nods to go in. Dixie pulls back.

DIXIE

No. My mother works in there.

HENRY

Good. Let's go in. I'm hungry.

INT. DINDER - DAY

They find an empty booth and sit. Henry strums his fingers and summons a host of facial expressions that make no sense.

DIXIE

What's the matter with you? Do you enjoy being an idiot?

He feigns a hurt expression, but sobers quickly with the entrance of the WAITRISS. She's broad-shouldered and almost as hefty around her waist. She's ready to take their order.

DIXIE

Hello, Mom.

Mrs. Swanson just nods and stares at Henry with the countenance of an inquiring mother.

MRS. SWANSON

Hello, Henry.

HENRY

Hello, Mrs. Swanson.

Her eyes don't leave Henry.

DIXIE

Mom. Got something you wanna say?

MRS. SWANSON

Actually, I do. Henry, what's ya interest with my daughter?

DIXIE

Jesus, Mom. Can't I just come in here and have something to eat? You always gotta start this crap.

Henry snaps his fingers.

HENRY

Watch your mouth.

Dixie rolls his eyes, and Henry's comments don't go unnoticed by Mrs. Swanson. She eyes him.

MRS. SWANSON

What's ya interest with my daughter?

DIXIE

See what you did, Henry? You had to come in here. What are you, stupid?

Henry's glaze to nowhere seems to be frozen.

MRS. SWANSON

What do you say, Mr. Wolff? What do you want with my daughter?

DIXIE

Henry, Let's just order

HENRY'S POV

The VOICES become garbled. He peers down a white-hazy, tunnel-like funnel. Everything disappears into a whiteness except for a small area in the center of his vision where we see Dixie. Her voice is garbled and hollow.

BACK TO SCENE

Mrs. Swanson looks closely at Henry's face, which is still paralyzed. She looks closer into his glazed eyes.

MRS. SWANSON

He looks so ... sad.
(sighs; opens her pad)
What do you want, Henry?

Henry's stare to nowhere remains fixed. He does not speak.

MRS. SWANSON

What's the matter with him?

DIXIE

I've never seen him like this.

Dixie searches Henry's face, waves her hand in front of him, but there are no signs of life.

Dixie straps the CD player around her shoulders and promptly gets up.

MRS. SWANSON

That's right. Take the path of least resistance, like always.

Dixie leaves and Mrs. Swanson sits across from Henry. With a thunderous exertion, she sighs, as if taking her last breath.

MRS. SWANSON

(whispers to herself)
When is she ever going to get the help she needs?

Mrs. Swanson inspects Henry when, all of a sudden, Henry blinks a couple of times and then looks around.

HENRY
Where's Dixie?

MRS. SWANSON
You gotta be kidding me.

Henry's face transitions from confusion to realization.

MRS. SWANSON
What's the matter with you?

HENRY
Nuttin. Wuts dah madder wut you?

MRS. SWANSON
Okay, Henry. You don't have a hidden agenda. I'm sorry for coming on strong. But what's your interest with my daughter? You're twice her age.

HENRY
She's not a bad kid. She just needs a little encouragement, that's all.

MRS. SWANSON
I wish it was that simple. And what makes you think you can change her?

HENRY
Nothing. Just encourage her. She needs to change herself, but she can't do it alone. She needs help.

Mrs. Swanson starts to say something, but stops. She does this a couple of times then, finally, she speaks.

MRS. SWANSON
I forged a man's name on her birth certificate because I didn't know who the father was. Eventually, I told her that her dad died in a car accident. Fact is, she has no good male role models in her life now, except maybe you. If you have any decency in you, give some to her. She needs it.

HENRY
I'm sure she's honest when she says she'll stop doing drugs.

MRS. SWANSON

Yeah, she'll stop, feels better for a week or two then 'bam'.

(slams the table)

Don't know whether to look for her at the police station or morgue. She's stolen from me, lost her license, shoplifted, in and out of jail, sleeps all day, Yada, yada.

She sees her BOSS at the counter, so she gets up.

MRS. SWANSON

I gotta get back to work. Listen, God knows I love my daughter. But I've lost hope, the very thing she needs now. Maybe you can help her. Do you want anything to eat?

HENRY

No. Just coffee.

She leaves and Henry stares out the window and watches PEOPLE pass by on Main Street. Elaborate holiday decorations are wooing the shoppers at the store windows.

INT. CHARLES'S KITCHEN -- DAY

Charles Oswald peers through his kitchen window and sees Henry walking around in his backyard making gestures, as if talking to a rock in his lawn.

Charles pours the last few drops of a whisky bottle into a mug, throws the empty bottle in the garbage, then hikes himself up and pulls pint of whiskey from behind the molding.

EXT. HENRY'S BACKYARD - CONTINUOUS

Henry walks around his back yard and points at the various rocks that had overtaken his lawn.

FRONT LAWN

Dixie dances up Henry's driveway to the music on her ever-present CD player. She turns the music off and then knocks on the front door. No one answers. She jiggles the knob and the door creeps open by itself. She shouts -

DIXIE

Henry.

Responding to silence, she slowly enters the house and spots the coin collection on the couch. She picks it up, and hugs it, savoring it as if it were hers.

ROBIN
What are you doing?

Dixie jumps, startled.

DIXIE
God! You scared the hell out of me.

ROBIN
What are you doing here, Dixie?

Dixie embraces the coin collection, then puts it back down on the coffee table. Before she leaves--

DIXIE
I in ninth grade at a dance, Sharon asking me, 'where did you get that dress?' I told her that it was my grandmother's dress. That was the first day I became ashamed of living on the South side of Main Street. That was the first time I was ashamed of who I was. Sharon's dress was magnificent.

EXT. HENRY'S BACK YARD - CONTINUOUS

Henry spots Robin's car in the street. He puts down the rake and rushes to the shed.

INSIDE THE SHED

A work bench stands in the middle of the shed along a mannequin. To the side is an electric hand saw. Henry removes the hand from the mannequin's arm and grabs his electric saw and places both items on the workbench

He plugs the saw into the socket and finds a foot-long piece of scrap wood and places it next to the saw. He takes the stub of the mannequin's hand and pulls it up his left sleeve creating the illusion the mannequin's hand is his.

ROBIN (O.S.)
Da-aad.

Henry holds up the saw with his real hand and pulls the trigger a couple of times, creating a buzzing SOUND that Robin is bound to hear.

INT./EXT. HENRY'S SHED - CONTINUOUS

Robin stomps down the porch and bolts across the yard to the shed. She looks over to the Oswald house and sees Charles watching from the window. Always watching.

Henry holds a piece of wood down with the mannequin's hand while holding the electric saw in the other. Robin enters.

HENRY

Oh, hello, Sweetie.

He cuts the wood and doesn't stop sawing until the blade cuts his wooden hand clear off the stump. The mannequin's hand rolls off the work bench to the floor. Henry screams and carries on as if he cut off his real hand.

HENRY

Oh, my God. Ouch. It hurts.

Robin just gives Henry a deadpan stare.

ROBIN

Will you knock that crap off? Have you forgotten? We are supposed to see Judge Brady today. You need to change into different clothes.

Henry removes the stub from his sleeve and tosses it. He bends down and picks up the mannequin's hand off the floor and puts it on the workbench. As Henry walks past Robin,

HENRY

I'm running out of props.

As Robin follows him to the house,

ROBIN

It's these kinds of antics that will be talked about today, Dad.

INT. HENRY'S KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

As they walk into the kitchen--

HENRY

I saw the Judge pour three quarts of oil into the car before he noticed the oil streaming down his driveway. He forgot to screw the nut back into the oil pan after draining it. Now was that stupid, or just a mistake? I was parked at the stop sign by his house. That's how I saw it. We looked at each other and laughed. Ha, ha, ha. We thought it was funny. Not stupid. Life is full of these funny things.

As they pick up a head of steam to the stairs--

ROBIN

Ah. I should've laughed, right?
Well, Dad, I did laugh the first
time you did it, twenty years ago.

INT. JUDGE BRADY'S CHAMBERS -- SAME DAY - AFTERNOON

Judge Brady looks at Henry and smiles. Henry smiles back.
Robin sits next to her father, twiddling her fingers.

ROBIN

She didn't forget.

JUDGE BRADY

I'm so sorry about Mary, Henry. I
liked her. The community has lost a
good friend. A good citizen.

HENRY

I liked her also, Judge. You can
throw in she was a good wife, too.

JUDGE BRADY

Yes. Well, maybe we can chat a
little until Sharon arrives. Why do
you think you are here, Henry?

HENRY

Something to do with Mary's money.

JUDGE BRADY

Yes, but we are also here because
of you, aren't we, Henry?

Henry rubs his hands together as if he is washing them.

JUDGE BRADY

This meeting is for me, really. I
want to know why Sharon feels a need
to do this. I'll let her speak
freely and we'll separate the legal
issues from the personal. If there's
no legal concern, then I'm canceling
the hearing on the 23rd. We'll
exercise a little patience and let
Sharon say what she needs to say.

The Judge looks in Henry's eyes, then into Robin's. They both
nod. We hear a rustling noise and then Sharon walks in.

SHARON

Sorry I'm late. Traffic. Christmas
shoppers all over the damn place. I
must've got 900 points coming here.
Just kidding. Just kidding.

Sharon sits, and everyone AD-LIBs their greetings.

JUDGE BRADY

Look, I've known all of you for over twenty-five years. And I know all of you have been through quite an ordeal with Mary's illness.

The Judge stops, rubs his chin, then slides his hand up and down on the side of his face

JUDGE BRADY

Henry, the nuts and bolts of it is this: Sharon here thinks you can't handle your own financial affairs. How do you feel about that?

HENRY

Well, maybe she's right ...

Robin goes to object, but the Judge raises his hand.

JUDGE BRADY

That's an honest answer, Henry. But I'm just not sure it's the correct answer. Is there something going on I need to know about? Family argument, perhaps.
(Responding to silence)
Ok then. Tell me why you filed this petition, Sharon? I got nothing to do for another two hours.

SHARON

Well, Judge. Here's the skinny. When I was a freshman in High School, my father lost his driver's license because he was drag racing with a high school student. My father could've ended up in jail but the student was drunk, so ...

As Sharon talks, Robin notices the Judge throwing a wink at Henry. The Judge sinks in his chair then sneaks a peek at Henry, queries him with a quick high-eyebrow move.

SHARON

Growing up with my dad wasn't easy. At parties, at the movie theater, nowhere was safe. He would curl his tongue and talk like a retard. "Myeeee naaaame isth Heeenry, and Immaa Shaaaaron's faaaaatha'.

Robin covers her mouth, holding a laugh.

SHARON

I liked Dennis Benning a lot. He would never give me a second look because of Dad.

ROBIN

Oh, yeah, right. I'm sure Dad put the kibosh on that. It couldn't've been that you were so far up his butt that he was afraid of you.

JUDGE BRADY

All right. Stop. Robin, let's just allow Sharon to get it all out. Ok?

He motions for Sharon to continue.

SHARON

He took us to fast food places a lot, and God forbid if you had to go to the bathroom ...

(Res. to Robin's laugh)

Funny? Really. Remember Benny's? We were at Benny's, Judge, and when we finished eating, Jill had to go to the girls' room. Mistake! When she came out she couldn't find us in the restaurant or the parking lot. She couldn't find the car because it was hidden behind a truck. She panicked and broke down and hysterically cried. She cried all the way home.

ROBIN

You were right there behind the truck, laughing with the rest of us. And I don't remember Jill all that upset. You're exaggerating.

SHARON

I'm not exaggerating. Maybe I did laugh but I was eleven years old, for chrissakes. What did I know?

(to the Judge)

And that was the last time Jill's mother allowed her to play with us.

Henry appears stunned. He goes to say something but stops.

SHARON

Then there was the time with Judy Pickett, when we were twelve. She went to the bathroom.

(MORE)

SHARON (CONT'D)

My father banged on the door really loud and he scared the hell out of her, then he pokes his head into the bathroom and what does he say? Do you remember what you said, Dad?

HENRY

I ... I ... I forget, Sweetie.

Sharon leans in to the Judge.

SHARON

He says, 'Charming'. He doesn't say 'Oh, I'm sorry. I didn't know anyone was in here.' No. 'Charming,' is what he says.

Sharon draws a big X in the air with her index finger.

SHARON

Another friend falls off the radar.

Sharon turns to Henry who has that far-away look.

SHARON

Sorry, Dad. That's the way it was.

JUDGE BRADY

Now, let me tell you a Henry story, Sharon. I remember the day when a dozen or so Asians came to town, a sightseeing trip at the old Sakawanna coal mine. One of the Chinese men asked Henry to take a picture - a little family portrait as memorabilia of the trip. The guy handed your father a camera and then ran over to his family and took a position next to his wife. While they all posed in front of the sign, your dad, instead of snapping the picture, tucked the camera under his arm and ran off with it like he was stealing it. Funniest thing I ever saw.

(laughs out loud)

I can still see their faces ...

SHARON

JUDGE! This is not funny.

JUDGE BRADY

No, Sharon. It's not. Listen, I was hoping you all would come in here today and get some things off your chest and then let everything be.

(MORE)

JUDGE BRADY (CONT'D)

I've known your family too long. Yes, you have some gripes, but every family has them. Your dad might be a little ... eccentric. Might have issues for a psychologist, but not the courts. I suggest you try and work these things out. What you told me has nothing to do with your father's ability to handle money.

Sharon knocks on the table top several times.

SHARON

Well, I haven't gotten to the part about his fiscal irresponsibility yet, Judge. He gives money away indiscriminately. He gave five hundred dollars away the day our mother died to that ... what's her name ... Dixie ...

Henry knocks on the table to get everyone's attention.

HENRY

She's right. I gave Dixie money because ... because ... she owed money to a guy who would hurt her very bad if she didn't pay.

The Judge lets out with the largest of sighs, as if he were given a fatal blow. He leans back in his chair.

SHARON

This shouldn't be surprising. We went to the movies one time and he gave his money away to the first homeless person we saw and when we got to the AMC theatres he stood in front of the glass and expected the guy to let us in for free. You know how embarrassing that was, Judge? He has always been that way, and that's why Mom gave him a weekly allowance. When he spent it, he would have to wait for the next week's allowance. That's the way it had to be and should be now.

JUDGE BRADY

Enough. You've proved your point. I've heard enough. I'll see you all on December twenty-third.

(to Robin and Henry)

I'm sorry if I caused any trouble. I thought we could settle this informally, off the record.

(MORE)

JUDGE BRADY (CONT'D)

(to Sharon)

But you'll need more than what you've told me today. I'll need proof your father doesn't have the ability to handle money. A few times of giving money to destitute people doesn't do it for me.

ROBIN

Can we do this after the holidays?

JUDGE BRADY

I'm required by law to have the hearing within twenty days of the petition. Now, if you want to withdraw the petition and wait until after the new year ...

(responding to silence)

JUDGE BRADY

Then I'll see you all on the 23rd.

EXT. COURTHOUSE -- MOMENTS LATER - AFTERNOON

The beleaguered Wolff family stop at the bottom steps of the court house, each looking in different directions.

SHARON

I have to go to work.

Sharon leaves and when she is out of hearing range--

ROBIN

Change of subject. What was that winking with the Judge about?

HENRY

Oh, that. I drag-raced him one time down JFK Parkway. The cops stopped both of us. It was early on a Sunday morning. No traffic. The Judge, being who he is, talked the officer out of the tickets. He had a sixty-four Mustang. No match for my Buick, though. Beat him soundly.

Robin gets into her car and they AD-LIB their good-byes.

INT. PSYCHOLOGIST'S OFFICE -- LATER IN THE DAY

Robin is in the middle of a session with Dr. Tucker.

ROBIN

My sister never had a serious relationship with a man.

DR. TUCKER

Have you ever had one?

ROBIN

I guess I haven't. Of course there was Asa. He was a guy I liked in High School for awhile. That's all.

Dr. Tucker gets comfortable, as if to suggest he has all the time in the world to listen to this story.

ROBIN

Ok. I loved baseball back then and was pretty good at it. Asa was a pitcher. A good one too. He had a thing for me. I played short-stop and yelled things like 'no batter, no batter', and then I'd say in a sexier voice, 'strike him out, Sweetie'. He found it hard to concentrate with me out there.

(beat)

He had a great knuckle ball that got him a scholarship to college. We were District Champions one year. we talked a lot, and he kissed me under the bleachers. Eventually, I lost interest in baseball and we went our separate ways. Became more academic. We had less time for a social life. He became obsessed with his business. Should be married by now, I mean, I met him at the diner a while back and asked him why he wasn't married and he said people married early in their life to erase those feelings of inadequacy. He said most marriages ended up in divorces anyway, so he was doing just fine putting his priorities where they were. He said he'd continue to wait until he found the right person.

DR. TUCKER

How do you feel about him?

ROBIN

Nostalgic, mostly. I shouldn't've even mentioned him. But I remember the baseball ... And the bleachers.

DR. TUCKER

How do you feel about him now?

ROBIN

I don't know. Back then I was touched by his carefree attitude. When someone got a hit, he'd wink at me. I'd wink back. We did a lot of winking, I remember.

DR. TUCKER

Go out with him, then. Reminisce.

ROBIN

I've fantasized about sipping wine and talking about ERAs and RBIs with him. We've changed but he's a good-looking man. I said that already, didn't I. Hey, listen, I got too much going on right now to think about that.

DR. TUCKER

What's more important than what makes you happy?

ROBIN

Right now, the issues with Sharon are causing my father to be more responsible. He was never responsible. For example, he used to do off-color things like going up to strangers in a store and shaking their hands and say, 'I haven't seen you in a long time' or he'd ask them for their autograph, or stare at them up and down until they'd ask him what he was looking at, and my father would say, in a real demonic voice, "I'm looking for a more suitable host body."

DR. TUCKER

That's a new one. Funny.

ROBIN

I just remembered that one. We watched the Exorcist just prior to that. That's why he said it.

(responding to the quiet)

But Coalsville's a small town. People talk. Maybe a little too much. And even though Dad's behavior was bazaar, I always felt safe that our secret was tucked away in a mental vault But I'm not sure now. I'm afraid it might come out and it won't just affect my father.

They sit there. Both silent. Both thinking.

INT. HENRY'S KITCHEN -- ANOTHER DAY

Henry gazes at the overcast sky from the back door. Tiny flakes blow in the wind. He rushes to the pantry and throws out a pair of boots, a scarf. Gloves.

EXT. HENRY'S BACK YARD - CONTINUOUS

Henry bursts open the back door and appears like a caricature from a Brothers Grimm story - oversized gloves, a knitted hat, a down jacket, like a dough-boy with snow boots.

He hears muffled yelling next door. A door SLAMS, and Danny storms into view, meandering around, mumbling obscenities.

Finally, he settles by the fence and kicks it.

Henry shifts the backpack which is strapped around his shoulders, looks up and lets the flakes fall on his face. Danny watches him stomp across the lawn and into the shed.

After a second, two rakes come flying out of the shed. Henry strolls onto the lawn with another backpack in his hand.

HENRY

(John Wayne accent)

Gotta pick up those rocks before
the snow covers the ground, cowboy.

(normal voice)

Hey, help me.

Henry loosens a rock and puts it into his backpack. Danny hops the fence and comes over. Henry tosses him the backpack.

HENRY

I might put a pumpkin patch over
there. Green beans over there. Can
learn a lot about life doing that.

DANNY

Got more weeds than anything else.
That's like life. Depressing.

HENRY

I was thinking more like eating right.

As Danny puts on the backpack, he spots his father peering out at him through the window with dark, commanding eyes.

Henry picks up a rock and puts it into Danny's pack. Danny picks up a rock and puts it into his pack as well.

HENRY

How are you doing, Danny?

DANNY

I don't know. Not so good, I guess.
God committed an error making me.

Henry picks up a rock and puts it into Danny's pack again.

DANNY

Because I'm not like other kids.
You're like that, too, aren't you
Henry? You don't exactly fit in,
either. Sort of the same, isn't it?

Henry picks up another rock and puts it in Danny's pack.

HENRY

Sometimes I feel like these rocks
are struggling to find a place in
the world. Or some people think
real men don't cry over a good
movie or a good book. If we do,
then something's wrong with us. Is
that what you're talking about?

DANNY

Yeah. Sort of. I don't know.

Henry scoops up a rock, and puts it into Danny's backpack.

DANNY

Will you stop putting rocks in my
backpack? Put them in your own.

HENRY

Life shouldn't suck at your age.
You should be having fun.

DANNY

Like what?

HENRY

Like mooning a funeral procession.
That has magical properties.

Danny hesitates, but then laughs loudly.

DANNY

Yeah, but how's that gonna help me
with guys who pick on me at school?

HENRY

If you do that, you'll be the hit
of your class, you kidding me?

(MORE)

HENRY (CONT'D)

People love it when you moon a funeral procession.

Henry deposits another rock in Danny's backpack.

DANNY

See? When you do crazy things like that, it makes people think you're weird. Use your own backpack.

FROM THE STREET

Dixie walks into view, sees Henry and Danny, and sits curbside for a better view. She watches while listening to her CD player.

BACK TO HENRY AND DANNY

HENRY

Look at those clouds over there. I see a bull fighter with his cape.

He swipes at the snow which is coming down heavily now.

HENRY

I'm a conquistador. I am whatever I want to be.

(rakes quickly)

We better hurry up here before all the boulders get buried.

Danny redistributes the weight of the stones across his back.

DANNY

I would run away if I was rich, like you. You're rich, right?

HENRY

I'm not rich because I have money. I only get twenty bucks a day, in fact. A rich person is not someone who has a lot of money. He's someone who needs it the least.

DANNY

You mean, if you have a lot of money you have everything you want?

HENRY

Hmm. How about if you don't have a lot of desires, then you don't need much money. Does that work for you?

Danny picks up a rock and puts it in his backpack. Henry quickly shoves a rock in Danny's backpack as well.

DANNY

Henry, will you PLEASE stop that?
My backpack's getting heavy. Put it
in your own damn pack.

DIXIE'S POV

Henry picks up another rock and puts it in Danny's backpack.
Danny takes his pack off, throws it down, and kicks it.

DANNY

There! Satisfied?

Dixie sees Charles sneak toward Henry's back yard through an opening in the fence, creeping low, like a prowler. He positions himself by Henry's shed, and rolls up his sleeves, as if preparing to fight, but instead just listens.

Dixie runs to the mailbox, stuffs the CD player and her headset inside, and bolts to Henry's backyard. As she approaches, she notices Charles has disappeared. She looks around and catches a glimpse of him entering his house.

BACK TO DANNY AND HENRY

HENRY

Dixie, is that you?

Henry stands having told Danny something private.

DIXIE

I've been watching you guys from
the street. Danny's father ...
(Responding to seeing
Charles in the window)
Never mind.

Dixie looks up. The snow is coming down heavy now, like legions of white locust.

HENRY

Come on. Let's go to the park.

Henry leads them down the driveway and we see them fade into the white tempest, a glitzy wall of white and gray.

EXT. HARPER STREET - CONTINUOUS

They prance down the street like the Three Musketeers.

HENRY

We are quixotic wanderers. We're on
a grand expedition where unknown
adventures lie ahead.
(MORE)

HENRY (CONT'D)

Maybe we'll find a magic ring. Who knows, my fellow voyagers. Just brace yourselves for we're on a journey to a faraway land called 'the park'. There's unknown dangers to be faced. Damsels to be rescued.

DIXIE

Oh, good grief. Let's just go and build a snowman.

Henry challenges make-believe warriors to duels as the three figures disappear into the fog-like mist,

EXT. SOMEWHERE NEAR THE PARK - DAY - CONTINUOUS

The talk as the swashbucklers shuffle down the road.

HENRY

Do you know that donkeys kill more people than plane crashes?

DIXIE

I love trivia games. Like knowing that two-thirds of the world's eggplant is grown in New Jersey.

HENRY

Exactly. Don't you know any useless information, Danny boy?

DANNY

What good is useless stuff if it's useless? It doesn't make sense.

HENRY

Why, it's fun to learn things.

DANNY

Okay, then. I got one. All of the clocks in the movie Pulp Fiction are stuck on four-twenty.

HENRY

That counts. That's good.

Danny swings his fist at a snowflake. Dixie packs some snow and throws it at Danny. It breaks up before reaching him.

DANNY

Okay. Here's one. Ever hear someone say 'the whole 9 yards'? Well, the machine guns in a World War Two fighter plane had these ammo belts which measured exactly 27 feet.

(MORE)

DANNY (CONT'D)

(to Dixie)

That's nine yards in case you didn't know.

She pushes Danny into Henry.

DANNY

And, if a pilot fired all his ammo at once, the target got 'the whole 9 yards'. And that's where it came from. We learned that in school.

HENRY

That's the best one so far.

DIXIE

No way. Too long. It's gotta be short and quick. Like, 'A cockroach can live nine days without its head before it starves to death'.

DANNY

It takes 3,000 cows to make all the footballs for the NFL in one year.

HENRY

I got a winner. A toothbrush should be kept at least six feet away from a toilet to avoid the airborne particles resulting from the flush.

With looks of disgust of their faces, Dixie jumps on Henry's back while Danny tackles him. As Henry falls--

HENRY

T-I-M-B-E-R.

With an endless supply of snow, they scoop it up, throw it wildly and indiscriminately. It scatters in all directions.

MOMENTS LATER

Dixie and Henry approach the bridge. They peek down.

DIXIE

They're probably under a hundred blankets somewhere down there.

Their somber moment is interrupted by an onslaught of Danny's snowballs. Dixie ducks behind Henry and uses him as a shield.

The three of them change their allegiances as quickly as they can pack a new snowball. First it's Danny against Henry and Dixie. Then Henry and Danny against Dixie.

Henry scurries down the hill and into the park. Now it's Dixie and Danny in hot pursuit of Henry. However, he runs out of steam and feigns a heart attack. Dixie and Danny help him to a bench, but first they brush off the snow. They all sit.

DIXIE

Are you all right?

Henry nods, then packs a snow ball and throws it at Danny. Henry gets up and Dixie's snowball pelts him from behind. He turns around and sees Dixie waving. Henry takes another hit from Danny. The mighty battle is about to resume.

MOMENTS LATER

They approach the center of the park. A snow-covered Henry indicates he has taken the worst of the fight. He rests while watching CHILDREN play in an open space of the park.

A MOTHER escorts a BOY to the group, kisses him, then leaves him to play with the other boys. She slishes her way to the swings where other MOTHERS huddle in conversation.

Henry watches the boy as the older children nearby pummel him with snowballs.

HENRY

Who's that boy getting picked on?

DANNY

Tommy Maltin. He just moved here.
His parents are divorced, I think.

They cringe at the sight of Tommy getting hit in the head. Henry waits a few seconds, then highbrows Danny and Dixie.

HENRY

Well, don't you think Tommy-boy is
a little outnumbered?

A call-to-arms had been issued. The three of them march to Tommy's aid. In a flash, Henry stands before a tearful Tommy.

HENRY

Mr. Maltin, we received your call for
reinforcements. We have arrived.

Tommy hustles to make a snowball and throws it recklessly at the enemy. It disintegrates, becoming dust in the wind.

BY THE MOTHERS

Mrs. Maltin introduces herself to MRS. HODGES, a woman with bulging eyes, and the other women (AD-LIB).

BACK TO THE WAR

Henry quickly directs them to stack snowballs, like a pyramid of cannonballs. Henry picks up a few, then marches forward to an imaginary front line of a battle zone. He looks back.

HENRY

I'll distract them like we planned.

Henry flings several snowballs skyward and, while the enemy watches the incoming snowballs to avoid being hit, Henry's troops throw snowballs straight, which find their targets and neutralize the enemy's assault. Victory is imminent.

BACK TO THE WOMEN

MRS. MALTIN

The children's books I wrote were moderately successful a decade ago.

MRS. HODGES

How wonderful. We have a writer in our town, ladies.

MRS. MALTIN

Well, the sad truth is, it's been 13 years since I wrote anything, and I got a divorce last year. Maybe now I can.

Mrs. Maltin spots Henry who is engaging the children.

MRS. MALTIN

Is that the man whose wife just died?

MRS. HODGES

Yes. That's Henry, her husband.

MRS. MALTIN

I heard he's not all there, if you know what I mean. Is it safe? I mean, look at him. It's hard to tell who's the adult.

They watch Henry get hit with a snowball. He spins, tilts, and, with much drama, collapses to the ground. He gets up and zooms around. It's hard to tell who is the child.

MRS. HODGES

Oh, he's harmless. Your son's fine.

MRS. MALTIN

What's the matter with him, anyway?

MRS. HODGES

Mary told me he had PTSD from the war. He was a POW for about three months. Must be a tortured soul. A little loony, perhaps, but harmless. There were rumors that he made a daring escape, but Mary told me that was a rumor Henry had started. The sad thing is ...

(leans in; whispers)

... What happened to their infant son. Crib death! Some people said that was too much for Henry. The war syndrome. The kid's death.

She breaks an imaginary twig with her hands.

MRS. HODGES

Acts like a kid now. Been that way for decades. He's fine. I'd be more worried about that floozy girl he hangs with.

They stop a moment to watch Dixie tackle Danny.

MRS. HODGES

Lives on the south side of Main Street, if you know what I mean. Now, I don't want to be accused of gossip. But ...

MRS. MALTIN

Please. Say what needs to be said. She's playing with my son. I don't want him associating with a bad influence. You can understand that.

BACK TO HENRY AND THE BATTLEFIELD

The two groups have formed their camps.

HENRY

On my signal. We're the Forces-of-Good fighting the Forces-of-Evil.

(pause)

Ready? CHARGE!

The Forces-of-Evil retreat further north where they are no longer a threat. Henry's battalion run around in triumph. Henry hops on the bench with his arms extended out like airplane wings.

HENRY

Do you believe I can fly?

Henry crouches low, ready to spring off the bench, but Dixie comes from nowhere and pushes him. As he falls to the ground, Dixie notices the mothers watching her.

DIXIE
 What are those old bags looking at?
 They're not talking about happy
 stuff. I can tell.

Henry hops back on the bench. He has Dixie's attention again.

DIXIE
 Fly my ass. If you can fly, then
 I'm Miss America.

HENRY
 (hands raised; singing)
 I believe I can fly. I believe I
 can touch the sky.

HENRY AND TOMMY
 Think about it every night and day.

HENRY AND TOMMY AND DANNY
 Spread my wings and fly away.

Dixie looks at the parents again. Stern looks all around.

HENRY
 I believe I can soar.

Danny joins in on the chant. Dixie's demeanor shows she, too, is getting drawn into the belief that, just maybe, Henry can fly. She joins in on the chant.

DIXIE AND DANNY AND TOMMY
 Fly... Fly... Fly...Fly...

Henry crouches down and leaps high into the air. For the briefest moment, he conquers gravity and for a fraction of a second, a miracle happens. He flies. SPFX - from Tommy's POV.

But the moment is fleeting. Henry lands belly first in the snow. He gets up, brushes off his trousers and stretches his body as tall as he can. He marches over to the bench again.

DIXIE
 Okay, Starship Commander. That was
 a great belly flop.

Tommy yells -

TOMMY
 Aside, you wench.

Dixie gives Tommy an 'Oh, really' look, packs some snow and plunks it on Tommy's head. A lesson taught - don't mess.

HENRY

I didn't have enough speed during
take-off. Carrying too much cargo.

In a SERIES OF JUMP CUTS, Henry jumps off the bench again and again, until, finally,

DANNY

Come on, Henry. You can't fly.

Danny throws a snowball, which misses Henry and wallops Dixie in the head. Dixie chases Danny. Danny bolts just as Henry leans into Tommy and,

HENRY

There's going to be reparations if
she ever catches him.

TOMMY

What does rep...ations mean?

HENRY

Let's just say Danny's in trouble.

BACK TO THE MOTHERS

Mrs. Maltin sees Henry grabbing Tommy's shoulders while he kneels next to her son.

MRS. MALTIN

Call me a fuddy-duddy, Mrs. Hodges.
But I think it's time to rescue my
son and go home. TOMMY!

As Mrs. Maltin marches, the scraping SOUND of her corduroy pants become the marching SOUND of someone doing battle. When sounds stop, she hovers over Tommy and Henry like a general who has come to witness the capitulation of the vanquished.

MRS. MALTIN

Tommy. Home!

Mrs. Maltin pulls him up by the collar, then faces Henry. She starts to say something, but Henry's friendly face rends her speechless. She turns and the marching sounds begin again while she drags a reluctant Tommy behind her.

DIXIE AND DANNY POV

While Dixie has Danny pinned to the ground, she sees Mrs. Maltin's smug face.

She has the look of someone who has assembled the facts, weighed the hearsay evidence, and has come to an irrefutable verdict. The game is over.

EXT. MAIN STREET -- LATER THAT DAY

The storm has past and left behind an colorless landscape. Undaunted, our three heroes slosh their way onto Main Street.

DIXIE

Did you see the way she looked at me? I shudda smacked her with this.

Dixie shakes her fist in the air.

DIXIE

She's a byatch.

HENRY

Hey, watch your mouth.

DANNY

Yeah, watch your mouth.

In a kidding way, Danny punches her in the arm.

DIXIE

Ow! That hurt.

Danny goes to throw another punch, but Dixie raises her fist, and keeps a dagger-stare on him until he backs off.

DIXIE

Smart move, turd-for-brains.

Henry grabs her chin and wiggles it a bit.

HENRY

How is the rest of the world going to understand you if every time you're angry you say the word turd?

DANNY

Or Byatch. She called that woman--

HENRY

I can handle this, Danny.
(to Dixie)
What are you trying to say? That Danny's brain smells.

DIXIE

Okay. You want a better word.
(to Danny)
You're a jerk, then.
(MORE)

DIXIE (CONT'D)

(to Henry)

What? You need someone to tell you
what a jerk means?

EXT. MAIN STREET - OUTSIDE ADLER'S PHARMACY - CONTINUOUS

A 'Help Wanted' sign in the pharmacy window attracts Henry.
He peeks through the window.

HENRY

I guess Asa is closed up.

(points to the sign)

I'm looking for a job. He was at
the house a few times. That was
years ago, though.

(pause)

I'm exhausted and hungry.

Danny pulls out a quarter from his pocket.

DIXIE

I don't have much money either.

Henry then pulls out \$20 from his pocket and he guides them
into the entrance in spite of Dixie's reluctance.

INT. DINER - CONTINUOUS

They are escorted to a booth by a LADY barely taller than
Danny but twice his bulk.

DINER LADY

Your waitress will be over shortly.

The three hover over their menus like scavengers. Dixie's
mother appears casting a shadow over the whole table.

MRS. SWANSON

You picked up a stray dog, I see..

HENRY

Yeah, he's a mutt, all right.

Danny tries to keep focused on the menu, but his eyes keep on
returning to Mrs. Swanson's breasts. He giggles a little,
then sees that Dixie and Henry are looking at him. He tries
to stop laughing but can't. He covers his mouth.

Dixie throws Danny a deadpan stare, suggesting she knows what
he is thinking. She kicks him under the table.

DANNY

Oow! What's your problem?

DIXIE

I see what you were looking at.
Pervert.

HENRY

Hey, hey. Stop it. Pony up.

Henry slaps his twenty dollars on the table. Danny reaches deep in his pocket and slaps his twenty-five cents down, and Dixie donates her loose change.

MRS. SWANSON

Well, aren't we the big spenders.

HENRY

We can't spend more than this.

Henry gathers all the money into one pile. She nods.

MRS. SWANSON

(to Danny)

What's your poison, little-big-man?

DANNY

No poison for me. I want pancakes
with a lot of butter and two eggs.

MRS. SWANSON

(scribbles in her pad)

How do you want those eggs?

DANNY

I don't know. I guess all beat up.
Scrambled, right?

Mrs. Swanson nods, makes a notation in her pad, then waits.

DANNY

And I'll take some sausage and
bacon ... and I'll have some of
those stringy French fries.

MRS. SWANSON

That's number three. The 'hearty
man's breakfast' with a side order
of meat. Comes with coffee. Juice.

DANNY

Oh, I don't want any coffee. But
I'll take some juice.

MRS. SWANSON

Orange, grapefruit, or tomato?

DANNY

Orange and tomato juice.

DIXIE

Pick one, ya schmuck. Take the orange juice and stop ordering. The rest of us want to eat, too.

DANNY

Tomato juice.

MRS. SWANSON

How about a glass of milk? A young boy like you should be drinking milk.

DANNY

Okay. That sounds good.

Dixie stares at Danny with death-ray eyes. Danny slumps in his seat while it's Dixie's turn. He waits.

DIXIE

With the two dollars we have left, I'll take the number two with extra bacon and coffee and TOMATO juice.
(leering at Danny)
That's how you place an order.

Mrs. Swanson finishes scribbling in her pad, and then looks directly at Henry who has his head buried in the menu.

HENRY

Let me see. How much is that so far?

MRS. SWANSON

Sixteen dollars give or take.

HENRY

I'll take a bowl of Cheerios, then.

DANNY

Don't you want some milk with that?

HENRY

Yes. Of course. Cheerios in milk.

Mr. Swanson buries the pencil in her hair and disappears with the order. Henry strums his fingers on the table.

DANNY

Did you see her Godzilla boobs?

HENRY

You want to talk about Dixie's mother's boobs?

DANNY

No kidding. She's your mother? How come you don't have boobs like her?

There is a look of contempt in Dixie's stare, like a sister might have for a brother.

DANNY
What's the matter?

Danny meets Dixie's stare by sticking out his tongue.

DIXIE
Did you eat an extra bowl of stupid
this morning?

She rubs her knuckles across the palm her hand.

DIXIE
If you never had a noogie before,
you're about to experience one of
life's biggest tortures ever. Stop
behaving like a butthead.

As Henry lectures about using proper words to convey meaning (AD-LIB), his voice warbles (SPFX) as do the visuals. Dixie and Danny share a moment with their 'puppet' hands as if they are going blah, blah, blah to each other. Finally, the scene jumps out of the SPFX to--

HENRY
... Relationships crumble, nations
topple, the universe will
disintegrate for the want of using
suitable or relevant words.

The sense that Henry's homily was long is paramount as Mrs. Swanson appears with an armful of food interrupting him.

MRS. SWANSON
(to Danny)
Number three with a side.
(to Dixie)
A number two with extra bacon.

She plops down a plate before Henry.

MRS. SWANSON
Pancakes and sausage. All out of
Cheerios. You got a number two for
the same price as the cereal.

Dixie catches her mother giving Henry a wink, then leaves.

Dixie seems to be no stranger to hunger. She gobbles her food as she looks out the window and sees snow from a canopy fall.

DIXIE
I wonder how Wheezy and Joe are?

They wonder a bit, then they all go back to eating.

EXT. MAIN STREET - OUTSIDE THE DINER - CONTINUOUS

Dixie and Danny wait outside the diner. The sun peeks out of the clouds. As Henry walks out he squints, rubs his stomach.

HENRY

Are our tummies happy? Where's...?

DIXIE

Oh, he had to go home. He said you'd understand.

A car drives by and Jason peers out of the passenger window. Dixie is the only one who notices him. She stiffens.

As Jason points at her and pulls down his thumb, a gloomy look falls on Dixie's face, like her energy is suddenly being sucked out of her. The car passes by and the threat is gone.

As they approach the pharmacy, Henry peeks in but the 'Help Wanted' sign blocks his view.

HENRY

I'm going to see if I can get that job. I need the money.

DIXIE

I heard. Sharon is suing the estate for financial guardianship, cutting you off. Don't feel bad. We all have our skeletons.

(Thinks for a bit, then--)

By the way, what happened the other day when you kind of fogged up?

HENRY

Oh. When I went into that trance, you mean? I Sometimes do that. It's like I'm dreaming. Mary told me I'm having an anxiety attack when that happens. I thought you called me 'stupid' and I just zoned out.

Dixie puts her hand on Henry's shoulder in sympathy.

HENRY

I go into a brain tunnel for hours, at times. The kids don't trust me in public any more. Now, Sharon's filed for incapacitation. Sounds like she wants my head cut off or something, doesn't it?

(MORE)

HENRY (CONT'D)

Yeah, the court gives me twenty dollars a day, until this dispute is settled. So, you see? I need a job. I need it for Christmas presents.

DIXIE

I've got an idea. Listen up ...

INT. ALDER'S PHARMACY - CONTINUOUS

ASA ADLER, well-dressed and well-groomed, wears a white jacket and works on prescriptions as Henry walks into the shop. He walks by way of aisle three but eventually winds up at the prescription table in front of Asa.

ASA

Hello, Henry. I haven't seen you in a long time. What are you up to?

HENRY

Yeah. Long time, no see, Asa?

Asa tosses the prescription he just filled into the metal bin next to the register marked 'FILLED'. He takes a slip from the 'IN' bin and starts working on a new prescription.

PETE KRUCHUK, 40s, dark hair, crotchety-looking, comes out from the back. He tilts forward while walking, as if he's fighting a gale wind. He tends to customers.

ASA

I'm sorry about your wife, Henry.

Henry nods, then leans in and whispers something and Asa stops filling out prescriptions.

ASA

You want a job, Henry?

HENRY

Well ... yeah. A man has to occupy his time somehow, Asa.

Kruchak tends to the last CUSTOMER. Slams the register.

ASA

This is hardly a place to fulfill dreams for a man of your years.

Dixie appears from nowhere.

DIXIE

I have a problem. Every time I eat
I get this bloated feeling. Like I
have to fart. I looked all around
but I can't find anything.

HENRY

Beano is good for that. Vitamins.
Aisle three. Right side. Top shelf.

DIXIE

Oh, thank you, good sir.

Kruchuk heads to the back office. He's not happy.

ASA

Henry, in all the years I've known
you, I don't think I remember you
ever holding down a job.

HENRY

Christmas is coming and I need the
money. Can we leave it at that?

Dixie interrupts them again waving a Beano bottle.

DIXIE

Is there tax on this?

HENRY

No. There is no tax on vitamins.

Asa leans back and eyes Henry and Dixie.

HENRY

I'm a much more mature person than
I was years ago, Asa. I can do
whatever you tell me to do.

Dixie pops into view and,

DIXIE

There's two prices marked on this.

HENRY

It's the lower price.

ASA

Okay, stop the charade, guys. I
know what you're up to.

A CUSTOMER steps up to the counter and bangs on the bell.
Mr. Kruchuk stomps out of the back room and tends to her.

HENRY

I know every item in this store. Women's makeup--aisle one. Foot products, Compound W and Doctor Scholls, aisle three next to the vitamins, Epsom Salts, aisle two...

ASA

Okay, Henry. Okay. I believe you.
(thinks for a beat)
All right, be here tomorrow. Eight-thirty sharp.

HENRY

Thanks, Asa. You won't regret it.

Henry leaves as Kruchuk finishes with a customer.

KRUCHUK

Why did you do that? He's a retard.

ASA

He had PTS at one time. He's in control now. He won't be a problem.

Asa watches Henry and Dixie through the front window giving each other the 'high five' before disappearing from his view.

ASA

Henry Wolff is a little slow, perhaps. But he is not stupid.
(To Krachuk)
I've known the family for a long time. I like him, so I hired him, and that's that.

INT. CHARLES OSWALD'S KITCHEN -- NEXT DAY

While Charles scrubs a pan with hard, sweeping strokes, he eyes empty, sentinel-like wine bottles that preside at the corners of the sink. Alcoholics Anonymous pamphlets stand behind one of the bottles.

Danny walks in, opens the pantry door, and takes out a box of cereal. He retrieves a bowl from the dishwasher.

DANNY

I'm staying after school today.

Charles tries to control his anger as Danny sits at the kitchen table and pours cereal into the bowl. He begins eating. Charles opens the refrigerator door, retrieves the milk, and slaps it down on the table.

CHARLES

Eat the cereal with milk!

DANNY

I don't want to.

CHARLES

Why do you always have to
contradict everything I say?

DANNY

I'm not. I just don't want...

Charles pounds on the table knocking some cereal out of the bowl. Danny picks up his books to leave but Charles jumps in his way, trapping his son. He raises his arm across his chest showing Danny the back of his hand. Beads of sweat spread across Charles' face like painted dots.

Slowly, Charles brings his hand down and he moves away. Danny leaves the kitchen as if nothing had happened.

DANNY (O.S.)

I'm trying out for the school play.

The front door slams. Charles rushes to the refrigerator, takes out a half-filled bottle of wine, grabs a tall glass from the sink and empties the bottle into the glass.

His hands shake so much he loses his grip on the glass. It falls and shatters in the sink. The wine streams towards the drain hole. Charles sweeps the broken glass away in an attempt to save the vanishing wine. He cuts his hand.

The palm of his hand drips with blood. He washes it and then applies pressure to the cut. He takes short breaths. His eyes become fixed on the AA pamphlets.

INT. HENRY'S BEDROOM - MORNING - CONTINUOUS

Henry watches Danny walk down the street to the bus stop.

HENRY

(to himself)

Wasn't too bad today, Danny. I've
heard worse.

Henry retrieves a tie and stands in front of the mirror and begins tying a knot. The thin end of the tie is longer than the wider end on his first try. He unties it, tries again.

EXT. ALDER'S PHARMACY -- MORNING

Henry peeks in the window. Asa sees him and comes to the door and lets Henry in.

They AD-LIB their greetings, then Henry takes off his jacket and proudly sports his shirt and tie, like a model flirting with the eye of a camera.

ASA
You look good, Henry.

Henry then follows Asa to aisle four. Asa points to a particular section where the products are sparsely stacked.

ASA
Fill up these empty spaces.

HENRY
Empty spaces make it look like you're going out of business.

ASA
Exactly, and that's not good. But I haven't the slightest idea where anything is in the back. I'm afraid I'm disorganized that way.

HENRY
I'll get things in order.

ASA
That's good, Henry. Make me a note of the products I need.

SERIES OF SCENES - To show Henry is doing a good job.

-- Henry stocking shelves - a couple of JUMP CUTS to show a shelf go from half stocked to fully stocked.

-- Henry directs a CUSTOMER down an aisle for a product. Kruchuk looks on - not at all happy.

-- Henry plays with a baby in a stroller, and the mother is very pleased at the attention.

-- Henry talks with a customer about a product. (MUTED)

-- Kruchuk scolding Henry for mixing allergy medication with cold medication. (MUTED)

-- Asa looks on as Henry sweeps the floor.

END OF SERIES

AT THE PRESCRIPTION COUNTER - Asa spots Robin through the store front window parking her car. He breathes quickly.

ASA
In ... out. In ... out.

Robin flings open the door and marches right to Asa, who reaches for a water bottle and takes a sip. Puts it down. Picks it up, takes another sip. He takes a breath, as if he's facing a batter in the bottom of the ninth with bases loaded.

All of a sudden, Robin is in front of him, looking directly at him. He nods. Smiles. Or tries to. Robin is all business.

ROBIN

Asa, I need to talk to you. Why did you give my father a job?

As Asa stammers a bit, Robin leaves and searches the store. Finally, she locates Henry down aisle two. She throws her finger at Asa as if it were a dart.

ROBIN

You should've called me first.

Robin storms down aisle two where Henry is positioning a product neatly in its proper place. He works while ...

ROBIN

Dad! What are you doing?

HENRY

Hi, Sweetie. I'm working. I need the money to buy you and Sharon Christmas presents.

ROBIN

I thought we agreed that if you needed more money I would lend it to you and you'd pay me back after the court when you get access to the estate money.

HENRY

I know how to act at work.

ROBIN

Really? You worked two weeks before you got fired from your last job. Why! Because you set all the alarm clocks in housewares to go off at five-minute intervals. What else? Oh, another time you went into a fitting room and you yelled out, very loudly, I might add: 'There is no toilet paper in here'.

HENRY

I have changed.

Henry kneels down to work on the bottom shelf, and Robin kneels down with him and whispers,

ROBIN

Remember what you told me the other day before the funeral? You said you wanted Mom to forgive you. Why are you talking about the secret now, after all these years?

He stands to work on the top shelf. Robin stands with him.

HENRY

This has nothing to do with that. Maybe all I want is a normal life.

He tosses her a half-smile as she leaves, taking the long route past Asa.

ROBIN

You should've called me, Asa. I have to hear about this through gossip.

Robin leaves before Asa can respond, and Henry follows her to the window. He watches her get into her car and drive away.

As her car disappears, Henry notices Dixie coming out of a dark alleyway with the headset covering her ears. She bumps into a pedestrian. She swirls, bounces off a shop's window and stumbles. She recovers and continues down the street.

Another figure appears in the alleyway. He strikes a flint. Henry tries to focus. Too dark. Too far away. Then a flame ignites and illuminates a face that Henry now recognizes.

EXT. MAIN STREET ALLEYWAY - CONTINUOUS

Jason moves into the sunlight and leans his shoulder against the building while observing people pass in front of him.

INT. ALDER'S PHARMACY -- EVENING

Henry grabs his jacket and hands Asa a piece of paper.

HENRY

That's a list of the items you need. All the shelves are full. The boxes in back are stacked according to which aisle they belong in.

ASA

Terrific, Henry. Now tomorrow, I'll teach you how to work the register.

Henry nods in appreciation, then leaves.

INT. HENRY'S BEDROOM -- NIGHT

Henry sits on his bed massaging his legs. He flops down on the pillow. After a few seconds, a solitary tear slides from the corner of his eye. His eyes close and he falls asleep.

INT. CLARION COLLECTION AGENCY -- BEGIN SHARON'S DREAM

A much older Derick leans back in a chair with His boots on the desk and a cigar in his mouth. Blood drips from his boots. The wall calendar reads June, 2050.

DERICK

Mrs. Cox, if you accept this offer you're going to have a good day. Reject it, a very bad day. You want to have a good day, right, Mrs. Cox?

MRS. COX (V.O.)

Yes. Indeed I do.

DERICK

Your name is in the Debtor's Book of Shame. The bottom rung of life's ladder, right now. But I offer you a way to erase your name from this book. Start a new life where people welcome you into a world of opulence. Do monthly payments and your soul will be wiped clean. It's like an indulgence. You know what an indulgence is, Mrs. Cox?

MRS. COX (V.O.)

Yes. I do. I'm Catholic. In fact, I can trace our family back to the tenth century where we purchased indulgences at a discount. And let me tell you, Derick boy, this deal you are talking about sounds real good. What do I have to do to take advantage of this opportunity?

DERICK

Just write out a check for ten thousand dollars a month.

MRS. COX (V.O.)

Okay. That sounds reasonable. How many months do I have to do this?

DERICK

For the rest of your life, Dummy.

Derick CACKLES.

INT. SHARON'S BEDROOM -- END OF SHARON'S DREAM

Derick's cackle integrates with the SOUND of a disc jockey's cacophonous roar coming from Sharon's clock-radio alarm. She turns over and hits the alarm off-button. After a few lifeless seconds, she rises from bed, moaning.

INT. CLARION COLLECTION AGENCY -- LATER

Sharon talks into a headset while exercising in her cubicle.

SHARON

I have your husband's DC right here, Mrs. Shuler, as well as his credit card and loan applications. Yes. I know the loan was in your husband's name, but can you tell me why, just before his death, credit card applications were requested.

As she does deep knee bends, she listens to Mrs. Shuler voice, unintelligible sounds from the headset.

While Mrs. Shuler RANTS, Sharon sees something in the folder.

INSERT FOLDER

We see the signatures of Mr. Geoff Shuler's loan application and a letter signed by Mrs. Shuler have the same sweeps which make them look like they were written by the same person.

BACK TO SHARON

SHARON

Well, you sly fox, Mrs. Shuler ...

Sharon stands to stretch and sees Robin through the office window parking her car. Sharon ducks back down in her seat. She hits the mute button again.

SHARON

What kind of person applies for a bank loan the day before he dies of colon cancer. I have your signature on a letter in front of me. It does not take a signature expert to see that the loan application signature matches yours. An amazing discovery here, don't you think, Mrs. Shuler? Last time I checked, forgery is a felony in this State. Chew on that for a while. I'll be in touch.

Sharon hangs up just as Robin approaches. She stretches, as if preparing to do another kind of battle.

SHARON

Must be important. You haven't come to my place of business in months.

ROBIN

Dad decided to get a job at Adler's pharmacy. Says he needs money for Christmas and refuses loans from the estate. So, let's do lunch and figure out what to do.

SHARON

Why? So you can tell me what a bad daughter I've been?

ROBIN

I won't. I promise. I just want to complain. I want to grumble. What better person to moan to than one whose developed an arrogance by listening to sob stories all day from people down on their luck.

Robin turns and leaves the cubicle.

SHARON

Wait. That worked. I liked that. You have potential.

Sharon hurries to catch her sister.

SHARON

But you emptied all the cylinders at once. Always save some spit for another round, in case your adversary has a good rebuttal.

Sharon clutches Robin's arm and won't let go.

SHARON

Smile. I have to keep up my image.

Sharon nods to some of her co-workers on their way out.

INT. BAR-RESTAURANT SOMEWHERE -- LATER

Robin sits across from Sharon, both sipping glasses of wine.

ROBIN

Used to be friends. I can remember a time when winning at hopscotch was as competitive as we ever got. When Flower was an appropriate name for you. It was before you fell in love with 'the car mechanic'.

SHARON

I loved that car-mechanic. He was a good man. Dad liked him, too.

ROBIN

Dad never had much to say about important matters. Mom made all the important decisions. Mom wanted you to have that bambino, but you trumped her on that one.

The waiter comes over and serves them their lunch. The tone of conversation is more relaxed as a result.

ROBIN

So, Dad went into 'la-la land' the other day and got lost for a couple of minutes. What was most peculiar was he talked about ... the secret.

Robin gives 'the check' over to the waiter as Sharon pulls out a printout from her purse and waves it in front of Robin.

Robin slaps her hand down on the printout.

ROBIN

That ends, starting now. The judge put a freeze on the account,

The waiter comes over and slips the check on the table. Robin grabs the check.

ROBIN

I never said you didn't have a reason to be concerned with Dad's behavior. We just don't agree on what to do about it.

Robin looks at the check. Sharon grabs it out of her hand.

ROBIN

I'll get the tip.

Sharon throws a five dollar bill down and then gets up.

SHARON

When someone asks how your sister is doing', what do you say? 'Oh, Sharon is being Sharon,' I mean, I'm the wayward sibling, right? Do I ever get positive reviews from anyone? Will I ever amount to anything? Do my opinions matter, or are my motives always questioned because I am Sharon Wolff, and we all know what that means?

INT. ALDER'S PHARMACY - CONTINUOUS

Henry grabs his coat. He waves to Asa from across the store.

EXT. MAIN STREET - CONTINUOUS

It's dark. Henry follows groan sounds into an alley and spots Dixie sitting down half conscious. Dixie looks up and her head plops back down to her chest.

DIXIE

Go away. I don't ... want ... you
to see me ... this way.

Henry steps towards her. A shadow moves from a few yards away. A lighter flicks. Then a flame. And then the face. Jason lights a cigarette and takes a drag.

JASON

You heard her, old man. Go away.

Henry ignores Jason, steps forward and kneels beside Dixie.

HENRY

Let's go to the police.

JASON

And what will happen if they catch
her like this? It's her third
offense. Five years in the slammer.

Henry gets up and backs away.

JASON

She owes me money. If you make her
loan good, I'll leave her alone.

After a few seconds of staring at each other, Jason retreats, as if he's seen something that should not be explored.

JASON

Never mind. Go away, old man.

Henry looks down at Dixie again. Now she seems more asleep than awake. As Henry leaves--

HENRY

Don't lose hope, Sweetie.

INT. DINER -- MORNING

Henry sits in a booth peering out the window to Main Street. Mrs. Swanson sits across from him, in mid-conversation.

HENRY

It's Saturday. I got my first paycheck and I don't have to be in until ten. Short day today.

A girl walks by and she looks like Dixie for a split second. Mrs. Swanson sees her and gets excited at first.

HENRY

Haven't seen her in couple of days.

MRS. SWANSON

Well, I thought you might help her. I saw a spark in her, a healthy look I haven't seen in a long time. Those little facial tics were gone. I had hope once again. Hope gets you messed up in the head, and then you lose sleep, you know? She has so much to offer, Henry. But the devil's got her now.

HENRY

Gotta have hope, or else the heart will break. I don't believe in the devil. But I believe He has a plan and it's good.

MRS. SWANSON

He can afford to be patient.

HENRY

I look at it this way. Imagine you're a Yankee fan, and you taped the 7th game of the World Series because you had to go to work, and you tell everyone at work not to blab the winner if they learn it because you want to be surprised when you watch it on TV. But a customer comes in and yells out "The Yankees won the World Series". So now you know your team won. You still watch the game on TV, but you don't get upset if your team is losing in the 7th inning because you know they're going to win. That's how I think it is with the Devine plan. He knows the outcome, so He doesn't get excited because, after all, His plan is good, and He knows the outcome. Right?

Mrs. Swanson scratches her head and thinks for a second.

MRS. SWANSON

But why do bad things happen to good people?

HENRY

I can't answer that except to say that our salvation is tied to her.

MRS. SWANSON

You mean her failure becomes our salvation? But what about her? What if she dies and goes to hell?

HENRY

Hell! God would not have made her if He knew she was going to hell.

MRS. SWANSON

Oh, I think I'm going to have to sit on that thought for a while.

Visibly shaken, she gets up and leaves.

EXT. MAIN STREET, BY THE BRIDGE -- A LITTLE LATER

Henry approaches the bridge, scans the riverbed and spots two pairs of legs side by side. One leg is missing a shoe and its toes stick out of the holes in the torn sock.

He reaches into his pocket, pulls out a pair of wool socks with the initials HW embroidered on them, and tosses them down the embankment. Wheezing sounds echo down the riverbed.

EXT. AT THE PHARMACY - DAY - CONTINUOUS

Dixie spots Henry approach and she moves her CD player so he can sit on the bench.

DIXIE

I've said I'm sorry too many times in the past and it would only sound hollow if I say it again.

There's a long silence, then Henry shakes his head back and forth vigorously with a terrible Richard Nixon impression.

HENRY

Wasuuuuup.

Dixie doesn't laugh. She's in too much pain.

DIXIE

Henry, I'm in trouble.

HENRY
 Trouble? With the police?

Dixie gets up, only to bend over in pain. Henry gets up and inspects her smudged face and sooty-looking clothes.

DIXIE
 Yeah, I know. Wheezy probably looks better than me right now.

Her facial tics seem to interfere with her concentration. She grimaces again and applies pressure to her side.

HENRY
 What, Dixie? What do you want?

DIXIE
 Just wait a second, will you?
 (bends over; moans)
 The pain.
 (rises)
 I owe Jason two hundred dollars,
 and he has threatened to hurt me if
 I don't give him the money.

She stands tall now, as if facing a firing squad.

The sounds of the pharmacy door unlocking has Asa peering out the window, then disappears into the darkness.

HENRY
 I have to go to work.

DIXIE
 Oh! So you're too good for me now,
 huh, you bastard? You have a job
 now so you can't associate with me?
 Up yours, you little ...

Dixie grunts. The pain is too much. Finally--

DIXIE
 I'll pay you back.

Henry heads for the pharmacy. He turns to face her. Dixie bends down, picks up a pebble and throws it at him.

DIXIE
 I'll stop. Please, Henry.

HENRY
 No. Money is not what you need.
 Money won't solve anything. You
 need to get a grip on your life.

A tear runs down Henry's cheek.

DIXIE

Oh, man. You're not gonna do this
to me now, are you? LIFE? Your
gonna tell me one of your Forrest
Gump, piss-ant sayings about LIFE!
As if you know what LIFE is about!

Dixie walks in circles with her hands twirling in the air.

DIXIE

What are you going to tell me that
'life is like a roll of toilet
paper. The closer it gets to the
end, the faster it goes', huh,
Gumpy boy-man?

She bends over for a few seconds, then straightens up.

DIXIE

Henry, I didn't mean it. I'm so...

She sees Henry disappear into the darkness of the store as
the pharmacy door closes. She looks up and dispels a behemoth
growl, then she picks up her headset and puts it on.

DIXIE

The music doesn't help anymore.

INT. ALDER'S PHARMACY -- LATER

Asa instructs (AD-LIB) Henry on the charge card machine. Mrs.
BELTRAN steps up to the counter. She is middle-aged, with
knotted cowlicks that have an omni-directional pattern.

ASA

I'm behind on the prescriptions. I
think you got the hang of it now.

Asa leaves.

HENRY

Hello, Mrs. Beltran

While Henry scans her products, he notices she is checking
each price tag, then waits for the amount to appear at the
scanner window on top of the register.

AT THE PRESCRIPTION COUNTER

Mr. Kruchuk takes inventory while Asa works a prescription.

MR. KRUCHUK

Big mistake, Asa.

ASA

You know, I'm getting tired of your objections, Pete. When your brother worked here, he did half the work Henry does. No more objections. Ok?

BACK TO HENRY AT THE REGISTER

As Henry scans Mrs. Beltran's items, he casually looks out the window and catches a glimpse of Dixie and Jason across the street, on the south side of Main Street. Jason pulls her into the alleyway and into the darkness.

MRS. BELTRAN

I may not have enough money. This is all I have.

She slaps down a twenty-dollar bill on the counter. Henry scrolls the paper receipt spindle and begins adding.

HENRY

Well, you are very close to that amount now, Mrs. Beltran.

She grunts and looks at the remaining two items. While she's deciding, Henry tries to catch a glimpse through the window. He sees Jason pushing Dixie into the darkness of an alleyway.

MRS. BELTRAN

I need this ice pack for Lawrence. His back is very bad these days.

She pushes the ice pack forward and pulls back the hair spray.

HENRY

Let's see what we can do here. I have two daughters.
(looks at items)
When they went through their 'hair stage' the battles were like 'east of Krakatoa'. Couldn't touch their hair, not if I wanted to keep my hand. Sharon had that Spanish Moss look. You know. She looked like a Ferris Wheel. I think she was just trying to make a fashion statement.

Mrs. Beltran's wide-eyed expression tells us she doesn't know whether to laugh or just nod. Henry takes the hair spray, scans it, and hits the total key.

HENRY

That's twenty-six seventy.

Henry takes the twenty, but Mrs. Beltran appears upset. Henry takes a pen and a pad nearby and starts scribbling.

HENRY

That's okay. I'll stake you. I'll just keep a note here of how much you owe me. You can pay me later.

MRS. BELTRAN

Oh, what a dear you are.

HENRY

No problem. Hey, I know how important hair spray is to women.

As Mrs. Beltran leaves, Henry peers out the Pharmacy window and spots Dixie and Jason across the street.

EXT. MAIN STREET -- DAY - CONTINUOUS

Jason swings Dixie around, grabs her CD player and removes the CD from the 'play' chamber. Jason snaps the CD in two and tosses it at Dixie.

JASON

That's what will happen to your leg if you don't pay me by Monday.

Sobbing, Dixie saunters along in slow, stiff strides and casually drops the broken CD pieces in a nearby wastebasket. She inspects some of the items through the window. After a moment of composing herself, she marches into the store.

INT. PAWNSHOP

Dixie walks in. Behind the register, the OWNER puffs on a large stogie; a milky haze surrounds his head. He looks up from the newspaper and lets out a short blast of smoke.

OWNER

Don't get too close to the glass.

DIXIE

What? You think I'm going to steal something?

OWNER

Thieves have ways.

Dixie spots coins under the glass.

DIXIE

How much is the 1913 quarter?

OWNER

Fifteen dollars.

DIXIE

Really? What if I had the whole set
in that folder thing?

OWNER

More money than you make in a year.

DIXIE

I know someone who has a collection
only he's missing this one coin.
How much did you say this was?

OWNER

Twenty-five dollars.

DIXIE

I thought you said fifteen?

OWNER

Just went up. Inflation.

INT. ALDER'S PHARMACY -- LATER

Henry is checking out items for MRS. CURTIS. She leans in, as
if she is telling a secret.

CUSTOMER

Mrs. Beltran says you might
consider putting this on a tab.

HENRY

You live on Pelham South, in The
Projects, right?

She nods. Henry inspects the items she has like baby formula.

HENRY

Do you really need pipe tobacco,
Mrs. Curtis?

MRS. CURTIS

You don't know James, Henry. If he
doesn't have his pipe tobacco he's
one swift pain in the ass.

Henry looks around. Asa and Kruchuk are in the back room.
Henry looks up at the overhead camera, then at Mrs. Curtis.

HENRY

I can't do it. You have to give a
little here. What's more important?
Pipe tobacco or baby formula?

MRS. CURTIS

Well, I ... I do see your point.

She pushes the pipe tobacco to the side, and Henry checks out the few items. The total comes to \$15.30. Mrs. Curtis scrambles through her pocketbook but comes up short.

Henry scribbles on the pad.

HENRY

Don't worry. I'll cover it. What's a few dollars when you measure it against your child's health?

Mrs. Curtis thanks Henry profusely (AD-LIB) and gives him the money. He takes it and puts it into the register.

As Mrs. Curtis exits, Asa and Kruchuk come out of the back room. Asa walks to the exit door and locks it. Kruchuk walks over to Henry and positions himself next to the register. Asa appears dejected as he ambles over to Henry.

ASA

Henry. We saw you on the monitor.

Mr. Kruchuk crowds Henry as he reaches for the pad.

HENRY

Some customers don't have enough money to pay, so I've been keeping a record what they owe.

Henry hands Asa the pad. Asa scans the list.

HENRY

I was going to ask you to take the money she owed from my pay check if she couldn't pay. I could pay now.

Henry reaches in his pocket, but Asa sighs, and stops him.

ASA

Henry, I have to let you go. I can't run a successful business if you give items away. Where's the profit in that? I have bills. Mr. Kruchuk has a family.

Henry takes off his apron, slowly folds it, and places it down on the counter. He walks around Kruchuk for his coat.

HENRY

I guess I should've asked for your approval. I understand.

ASA

If you understand, then why did you do it, Henry?

HENRY

Because it was the right thing to do, Asa.

They both remain silent for a moment, then Henry exits.

EXT. MAIN STREET

Henry walks across the street; joins other WINDOW-SHOPPERS.

LATER

Henry stops in front of a music store window. He places a couple of packages on the ground and checks his pockets, presumably for money. He notices Sharon comes up to Kruchuk as he is leaving the pharmacy.

INT. HENRY'S HOUSE -- LATER

Henry barges into the house and throws the packages onto the couch. He heads to the kitchen and takes several envelopes from a wicker basket. The envelopes are all empty.

BEDROOM

He checks a dresser drawer and dumps out several dollars from a sock. He checks the hamper, checks a pair of pants and pulls out a couple of dollars.

EXT. MAIN STREET -- LATER - DAY

Henry walks out of the music store and spots Robin driving down Main Street. She stops at the light and spots Henry.

INT. ROBIN'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

Henry jumps in and --

ROBIN

Dad! Asa called and told me...

Robin pulls over to the side. Parks. Henry holds up a bag.

HENRY

I've finished shopping in one day.

ROBIN

That's nice, Dad.

Henry looks out the window and sees Dixie carrying a couple of shopping bags and walking soberly from store to store. He spots Sharon who is walking towards Dixie. They meet.

ON DIXIE AND SHARON

Dixie tries to walk around Sharon, as one might show prudence when walking around a venomous snake. Sharon grabs her arm.

SHARON

I have a proposition for you.

DIXIE

What kind of proposition?

Sharon takes out two one hundred-dollar bills and waves the money in front of Dixie but keeps them out of her reach.

SHARON

I need information. Let's walk.

BACK TO ROBIN AND HENRY IN THE CAR

Robin nudges Henry and--

ROBIN

Daaad! Please pay attention to me. Asa told me you gave Mrs. Curtis baby formula and you were going to pay for it yourself. He said it was a noble thing to do and he's not angry with you.

HENRY

I'm not angry with him, either.

ROBIN

I need to talk to you about Monday. The hearing with the Judge.

HENRY

Oh, yes. The hearing. I wonder why they call it the hearing. Why don't they call it the listening or the saying? I mean, everyone has a lot to say to Judge Brady. Maybe we should call it 'the lynching'.

ROBIN

Dad! You have to pay attention.

HENRY

Are you selling attention? Is that why I have to pay for it?

Henry looks out the window. No Dixie or Sharon. He looks around, then his gaze finally settles on Robin.

HENRY

So, tell me about Judge Brady?

ROBIN

A big reason why I didn't want you to get a job was because I didn't want anything like this to happen.

HENRY

This makes me look bad, doesn't it?

ROBIN

Just be prepared is all I want. Sharon and I will be bumping heads over this. I'll take you home.

Robin starts the car. They talk while she drives.

HENRY

I remember the bigger events in life like graduation, the election of a president, or the sixties, or like when you and Sharon were toddlers and you both would sit on my feet and I'd walk around like Frankenstein with you on my left foot and Sharon on my right. Those were big events in my life.

Henry rocks his shoulders back and forth. Robin laughs.

HENRY

We used to laugh a lot back then. You continued to laugh but Sharon stopped. If I knew why I would've tried much harder to do something about it. But I don't remember the little things that count, like 'Why isn't Sharon laughing today?' I don't remember when she stopped.

Robin takes an extra long look at Henry. She bites her lip.

ROBIN

You're still coming over my place on Christmas Eve, right?

HENRY

Yes. Hey. You want to give me a nice Christmas present?

ROBIN

If it's not too expensive. What?

HENRY

This won't cost much. Can Dixie and her mom come over on Christmas Eve?

Robin works out the muscle tension in her upper neck.

INT. BAR-RESTAURANT SOMEWHERE ON MAIN STREET - SAME DAY

Dixie and Sharon are tucked away in a booth. Sharon waves for the waiter and then points to Dixie's wine glass.

DIXIE

I shouldn't be drinking.

SHARON

But we haven't talked in years. Tell me more about my father. This is actually helping him.

The waiter comes over with another glass of wine and leaves.

SHARON

Okay. Let's start with Danny.

SERIES OF SHOTS - MUTED.

This series portrays Sharon's ability to manipulate Dixie while Dixie drinks and blabbers.

-- The backpack incident -- she puts an imaginary rock in her imaginary backpack and her motions replicates Danny throwing his backpack to the ground.

-- with equal flair, she mimes Charles Oswald creeping around the yard while Danny and Henry were having their moment

-- Dixie mimes Henry flying off the roof with the rope.

-- more wine being served.

-- the snow day at the park: Dixie throws an imaginary snowball, and her head flicks backward describing someone getting hit with the snowball.

-- another snow incident: this time it's Henry teaching them they could fly off the bench;.

-- more wine.

-- Sharon reaches into her purse and..

END OF SERIES - WE JUMP OUT AND WE ARE --

BACK TO SHARON AND DIXIE AT THE RESTURANT

Sharon pulls out a paperback book and two hundred dollars.

SHARON

Well, all this is enlightening. You come to court on Monday and tell a couple of these stories to the Judge and then I'll give you this.

Sharon waves the money in plain sight and slips the bills in between the pages of the book, and then pulls them out again.

SHARON

When you come up to talk to the Judge, leave this book on my table. People will think you're just reading it and didn't want to take it up while talking to the Judge. After you tell him these harmless stories, I'll slip the money into the book. When you walk back, take the book and the money. Simple, yes?

Sharon calls the waiter over and taps Dixie's wine glass.

SHARON

One more for her. Check, please.
(to Dixie)
Do you understand?

Dixie nods several

SHARON

Good!

INT. MRS. MALTIN'S KITCHEN -- DAY

Mrs. Maltin dries dishes at the kitchen sink while watching Tommy play outside. He has a cape on and is zooming around the yard like Batman. He ducks into the barn.

INT. MALTIN'S BARN - CONTINUOUS

Tommy pretends to be beating back imaginary foes with a wooden stick. He wields it like a sword.

Tommy whacks a wooden beam and then climbs a ladder to the loft, and does battle with invisible evil-doers on the way to the loft's door. He flings open the door and drives all the imaginary bad guys out of the barn and into the wind.

BACK IN THE KITCHEN

Mrs. Maltin sees Tommy raising his arms in victory, his cape extending from both arms like he has bat wings. She gasps at the sight of her son at the edge of the loft door looking out as if he is going to jump.

She throws down the towel and runs out of the kitchen just as Tommy disappears into the darkness of the open loft.

EXT. MALTIN'S HOUSE -- DAY

Mrs. Maltin storms out of the house in time to see Tommy burst out of the loft door where he falls twelve feet.

INT. HOSPITAL -- PEDIATRICS WARD -- NIGHT

Henry walks to the nurses' station. He politely says something (MUTED) and she points. Henry walks to the door marked 101 where Tommy lies with his arm and leg in a cast. Tommy's RELATIVES are by his bed. Mrs. Maltin spots Henry.

MRS. MALTIN

That's him. That's Henry Wolff.

Henry puts his back to the wall, frightened. A man, Tommy's uncle, grabs Henry by his jacket underneath his chin.

HENRY

I ... I didn't mean to ...

TOMMY'S UNCLE

You didn't mean what? You didn't mean to tell him he could fly?

Tommy's uncle cocks his arm but Mrs. Maltin comes out and touches her brother on the shoulder. The uncle lets go.

Henry walks away, dejected.

MRS. MALTIN

You stay away from my son. Do you hear me? Or I'll have you arrested.

INT. HENRY'S KITCHEN -- MORNING

Robin reads the newspaper at the kitchen table.

INSERT HEADLINE

MAN TEACHES BOY TO FLY: BOY LIES UNCONSCIOUS IN HOSPITAL

BACK TO ROBIN

The telephone rings. Robins answers it and after a beat,

ROBIN
Leave my father alone.

She hangs up and enters to the living room.

LIVING ROOM

Robin picks up the coin collection and opens it. It's empty.

ROBIN
That son-of-a ...

Henry prances down the stairs in a suit and tie.

ROBIN
The news media are going nuts over
this Tommy Maltin thing. I called
called the hospital. He's fine.
(waves the folder)
And Dixie stole these, didn't she?

HENRY
No, she wouldn't do that.

She tosses the folder on the coffee table and Henry walks over to the coffee table and picks up the Christmas gift.

ROBIN
I know she did. Never mind.
Stay focused, Robin.
(to Henry)
You look fine. Let's go.

INT. ROBIN'S CAR -- MOMENTS LATER

On the way to court, Robin and Henry see ambulance strobe lights flashing. They see a gurney being hoisted from the river bank. Henry spots Wheezy sitting by the bridge, crying.

Henry gets a good look at the gurney. A white sheet covers a body except for the feet. One foot sticks out and Henry plainly sees a dirty sock with the insignia HW on it.

ROBIN
I called the hospital this morning.
The Maltin boy is okay. He's got
broken arm. The important thing is
he's alive and okay.

Henry just stares out the window.

EXT. BY THE COURTHOUSE - ON ROBIN'S CAR - MORNING

Robin turns the corner and spots a TV van and newspaper REPORTERS. She makes an immediate turn out of media view.

INT. BACK ENTRANCE TO THE COURTHOUSE -- MOMENTS LATER

Robin sneaks in the back entrance with Henry close behind.

ROBIN

You don't say anything to anyone.
You let me do the talking.

They sneak around the corner in route to the courtroom. They push their way through the chaos and into the courtroom.

INT. COURTROOM - DAY

Henry summons a Charles Laughton (Quasimodo) impersonation.

HENRY

Sanctuary. Sanctuary.

A couple of REPORTERS follow them inside the courtroom hammering Henry with questions. One surfaces above the rest.

REPORTER ONE

Do you really think you can fly?

ROBIN

Have a nice day ... someplace else.

Robin escorts Henry past the bar to a table to the left. Sharon is sitting at the table to the right.

Judge Brady storms out of his chambers, appearing angry.

JUDGE BRADY

Clear the courtroom except for the Wolff family. Haven't you reporters heard? The Maltin boy's okay. Now go. All of you. Scram.

(They grumble, but leave)

Robin, the DA asked me to look into the current situation a little deeper. He just wants to make sure that Henry is not a public problem.

ROBIN

Okay, Judge, but if there's going to be any judgments against my father today, then I need ...

JUDGE BRADY

Everything will be ok. The Maltins talked about filing a civil suit. But that was last night. Emotions were running high then. The DA asked them not to file in haste, and told them he would ask me to find out what I could today. And Tommy is okay this morning which should temper the Maltin's anger a bit. So, let's just find out what we need to find out.

ROBIN

(nods; to Sharon)
See what you started?

SHARON

This chaos is something that should've happened a long time ago. And it has nothing to do with me. Dad shouldn't be telling kids they can fly, anyway?

The Judge bangs the gavel a couple of times.

JUDGE BRADY

All right, Sharon, let's see what you have, please.

Sharon waves a printout and takes it up to the Judge.

SHARON

This is a bank printout showing the withdrawals my father made and the progressive nature of his spending.

Robin stands to object, but thinks better about it.

JUDGE BRADY

Now, both of you, Listen. We're not running a trial here. No objections from anyone. I'll be the only one who objects. If you want to speak, then raise your hand. Like you're in school. Understood?

The Judge motions for Sharon to go back to her seat. He looks at the printout for a few seconds.

JUDGE BRADY

Henry, can you tell me more about why you withdrew the money? It says here that you took out hundreds of dollars over a couple of weeks. No pressure, Henry. Take your time.

The Judge folds his hands, waits for his response. Finally -

HENRY

Some money was for Wheezy and Joe.
They live under the bridge.

JUDGE BRADY

Oh, yes. I know Wheezy. She's been
before me a couple times.

HENRY

She said Joe was dying because he
didn't have enough to eat, so I
went to the bank and got the money
and gave it to her. But ... but ...
Joe died anyway. He died today.

JUDGE BRADY

I am sorry to hear that.

HENRY

I took money out a few more times
because Dixie owed money to a very
bad person in town.

The Judge notices Sharon looking to the back of the
courtroom. He follows her gaze and sees Dixie who is sitting
next to Mr. Kruchuk in the back.

JUDGE BRADY

Who's that in the back?

SHARON

Your Honor, that's Dixie Swanson. I
also asked Mr. Kruchuk, the co-
owner of the Main Street pharmacy
to come here. They both have
important testimony to give.

JUDGE BRADY

Is there anyone else?

SHARON

No, Judge.

JUDGE BRADY

All right then.

ON HENRY

Henry reaches into his pocket, retrieves the wrapped
Christmas gift, waves it and points to who acknowledges this
and picks up her gift, waves it and points at him.

Henry gets up and gives Dixie her gift and she gives him his in return. Henry returns to his seat.

ON THE JUDGE

JUDGE BRADY

Who should I talk to first, Sharon?

SHARON (O.S.)

Mr. Kruchuk. He's going to shed some light on my father's behavior while working at the pharmacy.

JUDGE BRADY

Mr. Kruchuk, come up here and sit next to me. Keep me company.

Mr. Kruchuk rises and sits in the chair next to the Judge.

JUDGE BRADY

Now, tell me what's going on.

KRUCHUK

About a week-and-a-half ago, Asa hired Henry against my wishes.

ON HENRY -- POV

His gaze is distant. VOICES become garbled while Kruchuk talks and Robin objects. 'La la land' becomes a peaceful place for Henry.

Finally, after several seconds, Henry snaps out of it and Kruchuk's voice becomes clear and normal.

BACK TO THE JUDGE AND KRUCHUK

KRUCHUK

Once you establish credit for one person you have do it for everyone. That's the law. We wouldn't last as a business if we had a credit policy, especially with the people from ... South of Main Street.

JUDGE BRADY

Okay, Mr. Kruchuk. You may go back to work if you want.

Kruchuk steps down and leaves the courtroom.

ROBIN

Judge, I would like hear Mr. Adler's side of the story.

JUDGE BRADY

We can do that, but for now let's just play this out my way, okay? Dixie, you're next.

Dixie gets up with the paperback book. On her way to the chair, Dixie lays the book down on the table close to Sharon. She then takes a seat next to the Judge.

JUDGE BRADY

Well, it's good to see you, Dixie, under circumstances where you're not breaking the law.

(pause)

I've been told Henry gave you money. Do you want to tell me why?

DIXIE

I owed money for drugs, Your Honor. I bought it more than once.

JUDGE BRADY

I see. Is that why Henry took out money from the bank more than once?

DIXIE

Probably, your Honor. But I don't think you really see what's going on here. I'm trying to get clean, but it's hard, you know. This guy waves some really good stuff in front of me and tells me I can pay 'the man' later. How do you walk away from that? So, I do it and I create this situation where I owe money to a guy who's not so nice. He can hurt me real bad, Judge, so I can't tell you his name.

JUDGE BRADY

All right, Dixie. I won't push you.

DIXIE

Anyway, Henry's the only person in this town who'll give me the time of day. He's the only person I trust. He helped me take care of my bills so I wouldn't get hurt.

Sharon raises her hand. The Judge nods.

SHARON

May I ask Dixie a couple of questions?

The Judge nods and leans back in his chair.

SHARON

Dixie, some days ago it snowed.
 Would you tell the Judge what you
 saw that day. You know, Danny
 Oswald and the rocks. And if you
 wouldn't mind, tell the Judge what
 happened when Henry was teaching
 you and Danny and Tommy how to fly.

Robin bolted to her feet.

ROBIN

I'm sorry, Judge. I have to object.
 This is totally ... un-judicial.

JUDGE BRADY

You're right, Robin. But nothing's
 going to be said here that doesn't
 need to be said. Trust me on this.
 Go ahead, Dixie. Start with the
 rock incident with Danny Oswald.

EXT. A BLOCK FROM THE COURTHOUSE - DAY

Wheezy approaches a garbage can dragging a plastic bag filled
 with aluminum cans and bottles. She staggers, appears drunk.
 She checks out the scene in front of the courthouse. A
 channel 3 TV van leaves, and other reporters are dispersing.

While dragging her plastic bag, she pulls out a bottle from
 her coat pocket and drinks.

BACK TO THE COURTROOM

Dixie sits next to the Judge waiting for him to speak.

JUDGE BRADY

Let's talk about Tommy. Did you
 hear Henry Wolff say to Tommy that
 he could fly? I mean literally,
 jump-off-the-roof kind of fly?

Dixie looks over to Sharon who is fidgeting with the
 paperback book, sliding it back and forth, teasing Dixie.

DIXIE

Yes. But we all knew he was faking
 it. Everyone knows we can't fly.

JUDGE BRADY

Are you sure Tommy knew that?

DIXIE

No. I left my ESP powers at home
 that day. Just me. I knew

Robin motions the Judge to speak. He will allow it.

ROBIN
Dixie, isn't it true you stole
Henry's coin collection?

DIXIE
I did no such thing. That's a lie.
Henry, I didn't take your coin
collection. I didn't. Honest.

ROBIN
Honest? Should we bring your mother
in here to talk about how you've
been HONEST over the years?

JUDGE BRADY
All right, Robin, that's enough.
You've made your point.

ROBIN
I'd like Asa Adler in here Mr.
Oswald and os spm as well. I want
Tommy Maltin's view on things too.

JUDGE BRADY
I don't think Tommy can come in but
I'll be taking a break soon and you
can get the others then.

ROBIN
Judge Brady, I don't think you
should take the testimony of an
addict and thief seriously.

JUDGE BRADY
It's not testimony, Robin. It's
just information. Now stop it.
You're free to go, Dixie.

Dixie sees Sharon slip the money between the pages of the
book. Dixie then saunters to the table and snatches the book.

JUDGE BRADY
Now, I have to be honest with you,
Sharon. You haven't established ...

Sharon holds up her hand and waits for silence.

SHARON
Our mother told us our father was
functional at one time. They fell
in love when they were in their
early twenties. Then my father went
to Vietnam, and something happened
to him over there.
(MORE)

SHARON (CONT'D)

I'm told my father came home a changed man. Killing people can change a person, I guess. He had that war syndrome. PTS. My Mom said he had a problem drinking too much when he came back from overseas.

ROBIN

SHARON! STOP!

The Judge slams the gavel down hard, and Robin sits. She is as tense as she's ever been.

SHARON

I never knew my brother, because he died when I was real young. Crib death, we told everyone.

HENRY'S POV

Henry sees a stone house which is protecting him (a SPFX moment). His visual is ours --

SHARON (O.S.)

One day in the afternoon, shortly after his discharge from the Army, my father came home from a drinking binge. My mom was doing the laundry and Dad took Johnny out of his bassinet and he brought him to his bedroom and put him on the bed.

While we hear Robin yell and the sounds of a gavel pounding, the mortar between the stones are loosening, and the very rocks providing Henry protection are now slipping from their assigned position.

As the yelling continues, the mortar turns to sand and the stones fall one by one until the house provides no protection at all. Henry is out in the open where a fierce storm, black and evil, is pounding against his body over and over again.

BACK TO SCENE

The Judge continues banging the gavel and a piece of wood goes flying into the air from the pounding. Sharon stands up and yells back over the BANG! BANG! BANG! of the Judge's gavel and over Robin's (AD-LIB) objections.

SHARON

My dad passed out in bed, and rolled over on top of Johnny and smothered him to death. And that's our dirty little secret, Judge.

The Judge continues banging but Henry rises and yells,

HENRY
STOP! STOP!

Within a second, the last 'BANG' is heard and then the courtroom turns quiet. Dixie appears to be in shock. Robin holds her heart. Sharon slumps in her chair, exhausted. Everything and everybody turns quiet.

JUDGE BRADY
Robin - go get go get the others.
I'm reconvening in one hour. Anyone
wants a drink? Come in my chambers.

Robin leaves and the Judge retreats into his chambers.

MOMENTS LATER

Dixie and Henry are the only ones in the court. She sits in back and Henry sits at the table staring at the wall. Dixie gets up and sits next to him.

DIXIE
Merry Christmas, Henry

HENRY
You too, Dixie.
(they hug)
What do you think of me now?

DIXIE
I think I love you more than anyone
else in this world.

He looks at the gift in her hand.

HENRY
You haven't opened your present.

DIXIE
Either have you.

Henry takes a long breath, then stares off into space and retreats to 'la la land' in the tunnel.

ONE HOUR LATER

Sharon comes back into the courtroom and sits down. She looks at Henry and they share a smile.

Robin walks in with Asa Adler, Danny and Charles Oswald following behind her. Danny stands over Dixie. Her attention is on the present she had just opened.

DANNY
Wasuuuuuup?

She looks up with tears streaming down her face. Danny looks around the room and sees somber looks. This sedates Danny. He sits next to his father looking afraid almost.

Dixie takes the book and runs out of the court just as Judge Brady comes out of his chambers.

JUDGE BRADY
Okay, Robin. Let's be quick and to the point. Who do we talk to first?

Robin stands up and motions Asa to come up.

Henry looks in the back of the room and sees Dixie gone. He also notices the gift he gave her half opened. He gets up and he kisses Robin on the head, then walks over to Sharon and kisses her on the head. Before leaving he whispers,

HENRY
Go find that car-guy, Sweetie.

Sharon gasps. Tears well-up in her eyes. She tries to talk but nothing comes out of her mouth.

JUDGE BRADY
Henry! Where are you going?

HENRY
I have to find Dixie. She's losing hope, Judge.

JUDGE BRADY
Go, Henry. What needs to be done this hour can be done without you. Find her ... help her if you can.

Before exiting, Henry picks up Dixie's gift she has left behind. Her favorite CD. Talent Pool.

The Judge taps the chair next to him and motions for Asa to step up and take the seat.

JUDGE BRADY
All right, Asa. I need you to tell me why you hired Henry. Then, tell me why you fired him.

EXT. COURTHOUSE STEPS - CONTINUOUS

Henry trots down the steps, then sits down on the bottom steps. He reaches into his pockets for his wrapped gift from Dixie. He holds it close to his chest.

BACK IN COURT

ASA

...when I asked him why he gave away stuff on credit, he said because it was the right thing to do. That made me think. This town is split between the haves and have-nots, right? The north side and the projects. Well people of the south side give me most of my business. And it occurred to me what's the harm in giving a little back to that part of town who have supported me my whole life.

Asa pauses to look at Robin. They share a moment.

EXT. COURTHOUSE STEPS - CONTINUOUS

Wheezy wheels a cart up to Henry who is sitting on the steps.

HENRY

Wheezy, have you seen Dixie?

Wheezy waves two one-hundred-dollar bills.

WHEEZY

(raspy)

Look what she gave me.

HENRY

How did she get ... Never mind. Do you know where she went?

All she can do is point down Main Street to the east.

WHEEZY

One of those alleys over there.

HENRY

I'm sorry to hear about Joe.

WHEEZY

One of the last things ... he said ... he wanted to thank you ... for everything you've given us.

HENRY

Christmas Eve. How would you like to spend it with Robin and me?

Nods. Waves two hundred dollars and--

WHEEZY

Help me shop ... for new clothes?

HENRY

Let me find Dixie and we'll all go shopping for some clothes for you.

BACK IN THE COURT

Danny is already seated next to the Judge.

JUDGE BRADY

Tell me about you and Henry picking up rocks in his back yard. Do know what I'm talking about?

Danny nods.

JUDGE BRADY

Tell us more about that day.

DANNY

Henry wanted the rocks out of the garden. The snow was piling up, so we had to hurry. He had a backpack on and so did I. We talked while picking up the rocks. I told him I missed my mother and hated my father. But I don't hate him now.

Danny looks to his father and Charles nods his approval.

DANNY

I told Mr. Wolff I hated school, and I wanted to run away. I told him ... a lot of stuff.

JUDGE BRADY

What did he tell you, Danny?

DANNY

I should moon a funeral procession at least once in my life, he said.

JUDGE BRADY

Yeah, that sounds like Henry.

DANNY

Henry started putting rocks in my backpack instead of his. And he kept on doing it until mine got so heavy I threw it on the ground.

(MORE)

DANNY (CONT'D)

And then I cursed at Henry and called him a moron and told him I hated him, along with everyone else in the world. But I didn't mean it. I was just mad. And then he knelt and looked at me. You know, the way he looks at you. Makes you feel things. And he congratulated me for throwing the pack off my back. He said in real life I was trying to carry the world on my shoulders, you know, things that didn't belong to me and I should throw them on the ground just like the backpack.
(holding back tears)

But Judge, I don't want you to do anything to hurt Henry. He is a very good person. He talks to me ... he makes me laugh and he helps me not curse and ...

JUDGE BRADY

Don't worry. I won't let anything bad happen to Henry.

Charles raises his hand and the Judge acknowledges him.

CHARLES

Let me just say that on the day in question, Danny and I had an argument and he ran out of the house and sought comfort from Henry who was picking up rocks in his back yard. Danny ran to him a lot. I hated Henry because I felt Danny loved him more than me.

Danny runs over to his father and hugs him.

CHARLES

I saw the whole backpack thing. I snuck out with all intentions of clocking Henry in the face, but then I heard him tell Danny to tell me that he wants me back to the way I was before his mom left. He told my son his mother loves him, and he shouldn't think that it was his fault she left because he was one of the most precious creatures God has ever made, and then he asked Danny to forgive me.

He stops because he can't swallow the lump in his throat.

EXT. MAIN STREET ALLEYWAY - CONTINUOUS

Dixie is sprawled on the ground, bruised and moaning, while Jason stands over her kicking her.

JASON

Where's my money?

Jason raises his arm, his fist clenched, and just as he cocks his elbow to hit her, Henry grabs his wrist from behind. Jason spins around, and they face each other to do battle.

The two men stare at each other for a few seconds. Jason has a hard time looking Henry in the eyes.

JASON

She's all yours. She's not worth beating on an old man.

Jason abruptly leaves and Henry sits down next to Dixie.

HENRY

Are you okay?

DIXIE

I feel just ducky.

Henry pulls out the CD gift and gives it to her.

HENRY

I thought this was your favorite CD. Why did you leave it behind?

She laughs.

HENRY

What's so funny?

DIXIE

Did you open your present yet?

Henry pulls out his gift and opens it. He takes a long, hard look at it. There, in the box, was the 1913 quarter he had been seeking for a very long time.

DIXIE

I hocked my CD player and my ankle bracelet to buy that.

HENRY

I used my coin collection to buy the CD.

There's a silent pause, then they both laugh real hard.

DIXIE

You see. I told you I didn't steal
your coin collection.

Henry kisses the coin and puts it in his pocket.

HENRY

I'm going to start the collection
all over again.

Dixie leans her head on his shoulder.

INSIDE THE COURTHOUSE

Judge Brady sits at his desk in mid-conversation.

JUDGE BRADY

It's been a very enlightening day.
I have to make a decision and I
will after the holidays. In the
meantime, don't anyone leave town.

The Judge has pieces of the gavel in his hand - he tries to put it back together, but can't. Just as he gets up to leave, Mrs. Maltin walks in with Tommy who appears healthy except for the cast on his right arm.

MRS. MALTIN

I heard you were going to pass
judgment on Henry Wolff, Judge. I
think Tommy has something to say
first, if we're not too late.

JUDGE BRADY

Okay, Tommy. Come over here so I
can sign your cast.

Tommy walks over to the bench and the Judge takes a pen from the bench and signs the cast.

SERIES OF SCENES

-- Tommy sits next to the Judge.

-- Henry helps Dixie up, but she limps terribly due to a sprained ankle

-- MUTED: Tommy's makes motions like he is a bird flying. We start to hear the sound of an engine.

-- Dixie's limp is so bad, Henry picks her up and carries her. The engine sound becomes louder.

-- We hear the Judge while we watch Henry carry Dixie.

JUDGE BRADY (O.S.)
 Now Tommy, did Mr. Wolff say you
 could really fly?

The truck engine is getting louder.

-- We see a truck coming down Main Street.

-- Henry continues to carry Dixie in the alleyway. He walks
 through the entrance to Main Street .

-- IN COURT:

TOMMY (O.S.)
 Mr. Wolff said I can do anything I
 wanted if I just put my mind to it.
 He pointed to a plane in the sky
 and said someday I could even be a
 pilot if I wanted.

-- OUTSIDE: The TRUCK DRIVER sees Henry and Dixie, and jams
 on the brakes. The truck skids on an ice patch and bounces
 across Main Street. Henry throws Dixie into a snow drift. She
 lets out a blood-curdling scream.

END OF SERIES

INT. COURTROOM - CONTINUOUS

All eyes and ears are on Tommy who is in mid-explanation.

TOMMY
 I knew I couldn't fly in real life.

JUDGE BRADY
 But there's one thing I don't
 understand, Tommy. Why did you jump
 out of your barn?

MRS. MALTIN
 A raccoon, Judge. We got raccoons
 in the barn. Tommy got scared and
 ran forgetting he was in a loft.

Wheezy bursts into the courtroom wheezing and crying.

WHEEZY
 There's been an accident ... Mr.
 Wolff got hit ... by a truck ...

INT. CHURCH - SOMEWHERE ON MAIN STREET - ONE YEAR LATER

In a AA room, a large table and a podium are set up in front.
 Chairs are stacked against the back wall.

Dixie enters and opens a cabinet, takes out AA literature and neatly places it on the table. Charles enters, and they AD-LIB their greetings. They talk while they set up.

DIXIE

Hey, I hear you and Mrs. Maltin are an item. How's she doing? And how's my buddy doing?

CHARLES

Well, Mrs. Maltin just finished a novel, and Danny? Well he's seeing Doctor Tucker and he's working out some issues. He's in the school play this year. You gotta see him.

Robin walks into the room and they all AD-LIB their greetings. While Robin helps with the setting up of chairs -

DIXIE

I'm so glad you could make it.

ROBIN

Your first year anniversary. I couldn't miss this, especially since you're the main speaker. You better not talk about me, ya hear?

DIXIE

There's nothing to talk about. Your life is ... BOR-ING. Although I heard something's going on with you and Asa.

ROBIN

Nothing going on really. We're taking it slow. Besides, he just bought out Kruchuk, so he's pretty busy right now.

DIXIE

Hey, I heard that he started a new credit plan for his customers. How cool is that? Henry would be proud.

ROBIN

Yeah. He'd be proud of you, too.

DIXIE

Thanks. Hey, I thought you were going to pick up Wheezy.

ROBIN

No, Sharon is. The halfway house is real close to where Sharon works.

INT. CLARION COLLECTION AGENCY -- MOMENTS LATER

Sharon cleans up her desk. No one else is in the office except her and Fred who tosses a folder on Sharon's desk.

FRED

Congratulations on winning this year. No one has been able to crack this one. She has four kids. Husband's laid off. Not a great prospect. Do it after the holidays. Hey, it's Christmas Eve day. Everyone has left. Go!

SHARON

I'll be leaving in a few.

Fred AD-LIBS his Xmas cheers and Sharon does the same. He leaves and Sharon inspects the folder. She looks at her watch. Strums her fingers, sighs, picks up the phone and dials. We hear a couple of rings, then -

MRS. CALDWELL

Hello.

SHARON

Mrs. Caldwell. My name is Janice from the Clarion Collection Agency.

MRS. CALDWELL

Oh, God. Today!? You're calling me on Christmas Eve? Don't you people have any conscience? Shame on you.

SHARON

Mrs. Caldwell. Please. Stop. I see here you owe five thousand on a car loan, and you haven't been able to make a payment in over six months. I'm calling you to tell you ...

MRS. CALDWELL

I just buried Chapman yesterday, and I'm really grieving right now.

SHARON

I'm so sorry. Who is Chapman?

MRS. CALDWELL

He's my companion, my best friend. A German Shepard.

SHARON

Oh. I'm so sorry.

MRS. CALDWELL

You can take your sympathies and
put them where the sun don't shine.

SHARON

Aren't you the spunky one. Okay.
Fair enough. I'm calling to tell
you that you have an anonymous
benefactor. Your bill is paid in
full. You don't owe us anything.

(no response)

And when the holidays are over,
I'll make sure this payment gets
registered on your credit reports.
They put your name on the report
real quick, but they sure take
their time taking your name off.

MRS. CALDWELL

Is this a joke?

SHARON

This is no joke, Mr. Caldwell. I
assure you. And listen ... I really
wish you a nice holiday.

Sharon hangs up, reaches for her purse, takes her checkbook
and writes out a check for five thousand dollars. She staples
it to a closeout form and stamps the form 'PAID IN FULL'.

SHARON

Merry Christmas, Mrs. Caldwell

She puts on her coat and leaves.

INT. CHURCH BASEMENT -- LATER

Dixie is up at the podium giving her testimony. We see a lot
of familiar faces in the crowd, as well as a few new PEOPLE.

Mrs. Swanson sits in the front row with Robin who is saving
some seats. While Dixie talks (AD-LIB), Asa walks in with
Sharon and Wheezy right behind him. Robin sees them and nods
for Asa to come over. Asa sits to her right.

Dixie fakes a vexed demeanor at the tardiness of her friends.

WHEEZY

(without a wheeze)

Sorry, Dixie. I was late getting
ready. It's not Sharon's fault.

DIXIE

That's okay. I won't zap you. My
powers can only be used for good.

Dixie looks at her mother and they share smiles.

DIXIE

Well, as I was saying. Today I'm filled with gratitude. I'll be spending tonight with my mother. The first Christmas Eve I've spent at home in ... well, a long time. I'm going to community college taking public communication.

(applause)

I wish no ill, not even my old supplier who used to beat me up. God certainly works in mysterious ways. Two months ago he enrolled in a faith-based rehab for fifteen months. Who would've thunk that?

(pause)

And today, I have new friends.

Dixie share reactions with Wheezy, Sharon and Robin.

DIXIE

When I'm faced with hard decisions, I ask myself what would Henry do? If it weren't for Henry I'd be dead today. I never really knew him growing up. I got that privilege soon after his wife died last year. Our friendship really started right after he heard me say the word 'turd'. He asked me what I meant when I used vulgarity, like 'turd' or 'crap' or worse. He got me thinking about using the right words so I could be understood when I talked, and after a while he got me thinking more of where I wanted to go with my life. Oh, I was going places, all right, but it was nowhere any sane person wanted to go. And then Henry died. And since then I thank God every day for having had him in my life and for helping me find these rooms and you people, and for helping me realize that I have a forgiving, loving mother who has taken a lot of crap.

(looks skyward)

Sorry, Henry.

(pointing to her mother)

You've experienced a lot of bad behavior from me, Mom, and I thank you for hanging in there.

Dixie's mother cries in the front row. As Dixie's voice fades into the background, Sharon looks around the room and watches the people react to Dixie's message. Some nods are praise for Dixie's honesty. Dixie's voice fades back in.

DIXIE

It's been a year since Henry died
and since I owe my sobriety to him,
I'd like to pay tribute to him
today. Show him my gratitude.

(pause)

No one can measure the value Henry brought to us. How can you measure someone's influence or inspiration or living life by good example? Impossible. But I know in my heart Coalsville is a better town because of him. People believe in themselves and have real hope if they put their whole minds and souls into a dream they can do pretty much anything they want to. They might not be able to fly, but certainly they can become sober. Maybe even be inspired to write a book, or inspire somebody else to write a book. The people of Coalsville believe they have more opportunities to prosper than other places. Over time, the people will forget Henry. A boy or a girl might grow up and become president, and will tell stories to historians about where they came from. One of them might say, 'I'm a native son or daughter born on the south side of Main Street in an obscure town in Pennsylvania called Coalsville.' And no one will ever know that embedded in that statement is a story of how one person made a difference to so many; of how his goodness spread far and wide like the ubiquitous wind; and how life for so many improved immeasurably, not because this good Samaritan had money or status or political influence, but because he saw life through the eyes of a child.

One last reaction of the audience. Hard to find a dry eye.

FADE OUT:

THE END