

South of Main Street

by

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FADE IN:

INT. PSYCHOLOGIST'S OFFICE -- DAY

DR. ZEKE TUCKER (40s) strokes his well-groomed beard and sits in a cushioned chair while listening to -

ROBIN WOLFF (30s), a bit stressed. She sits opposite him wearing a button-down shirt and mid-length skirt.

ROBIN

My father gave us nicknames when we were kids. 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.

Robin fakes a laugh. Dr. Tucker waits for more.

ROBIN

My dad used to open an imaginary door and describe Narnia as if he were really seeing it. 'Where is it? I can't see it', Sharon would say in her shrieky, irritating voice. 'It's in la-la land', he'd say. Everything was 'la-la land' to him. The three little pigs were in 'la-la land'.

(change of tone)

Sharon has worked at the Collection Agency too long. Squeezing people who have things she doesn't is what she lives for. She's so ... so ...

DR. TUCKER

Self-centered?

ROBIN

Yes! Self-centered. They give a prize at the end of the year to the best ... squeezer?

DR. TUCKER

They probably call them agents.

ROBIN

Well, the agent who squeezes the most money from people gets a bonus. She's worked on people's fears and misfortunes for so long ... she's like a dentist, you know. She drills them until there's no more defense. She's become a monster.

DR. TUCKER

That's a little more than being self-centered, Robin. What's wrong?

ROBIN

Ugh, I'm still angry over the other thing. I mean, he's our father, for crying out loud. He may be dim-witted but he can handle his own affairs.

DR. TUCKER

Sharon doesn't think so.

ROBIN

He's taken care of Mom since she's been sick. So he's taking liberties with the bank account? So what! Mom's in the hospital, dying, and our father is doing just fine on his own. What daughter would ...

A buzzing SOUND interrupts her. Robin sighs, pulls out her cell phone and silences it. She stares at it for a moment.

ROBIN

What does Pastor McMillan want?

INT. CHURCH -- DAY

PASTOR MCMILLAN, white-collared and wearing black, struts while sitting down in the front pew next to -

HENRY WOLFF (60s) who appears contented with his two-day-old beard, plaid shirt with patches and checkered cuffed-pants.

PASTOR MCMILLAN

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

HENRY

Let's do it again.

PASTOR MCMILLAN

Why? What sins have you committed
in the last year, Henry?

HENRY

Impure thoughts. Terrible.

PASTOR MCMILLAN

I get impure thoughts every time I
see a girl in a swimsuit, Henry.
Don't tell anyone I said that.

The church door swings open. Robin enters and Pastor McMillan
rushes toward her. He takes her by the arm and whispers -

PASTOR MCMILLAN

Henry wants to be baptized again.

ROBIN

I'm afraid my father is a little...
unnerved as my mother gets worse.

PASTOR MCMILLAN

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'm dying.

ROBIN

Yeah. We're all dying, Dad.

HENRY

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

ROBIN

(to the Pastor)
Newspaper. Joke of the day. Dad,
come on. Let's go see Mom.

INT. HOSPITAL - ONCOLOGY ROOM 410 -- DAY

MARY (60s) lies in bed unconscious while an EKG machine
monitors her heart. Sitting next to her is -

SHARON (30s), with short blonde hair, open shirt and tight skirt. She becomes alert when Henry and Robin enter.

SHARON

Glad you guys could make it.

Henry kisses Sharon on the cheek then sits bedside.

HENRY

I was doing just fine with mom at home. Why can't she stay at home with me?

SHARON

Because she's dying, Dad.

ROBIN

Sharon, shut up.

Henry pats Mary's hand. Sharon rolls her eyes, sighs.

HENRY

You know, old watchmakers never die. They just run out of time. And old yachtsmen never die ...

SHARON

They just keel over. We heard them all before, Dad. Robin, I'm going outside to smoke. You coming?

EXT. SMOKING AREA -- CONTINUOUS

Sharon and Robin enter the area from a back door of the hospital. Sharon immediately offers a cigarette but Robin waves her off.

SHARON

You smoke when you're stressed.

ROBIN

I'm not stressed.

Sharon lights up and takes a puff.

SHARON

You know, we lived a pretty average life, living on the North side of town, I mean.

ROBIN

And what's your point, Sharon?

SHARON

We can take care of Dad the same way Mom did. I don't know why she never changed her will to reflect that.

ROBIN

Maybe it was something very simple like to keep the estate out of your hands.

SHARON

He's never been self-sufficient, Robin. That's why I filed for guardianship, so he doesn't piss it away.

ROBIN

We could've worked it out. Now we're all under the microscope.

SHARON

You're temporary guardian. I'm sure you can keep things under control. And let me tell you something; the 140 a week you're allowed to give him as pocket money? Not enough for Dad. You just wait and see.

ROBIN

Fine, Sharon. We'll wait and see. And by the way, Judge Brady asked us to see him on Wednesday.

SHARON

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

ROBIN

He wants to talk off the record to understand why you think Dad's incapacitated.

SHARON

All he has to do is read the petition.

Sharon puts out her cigarette and lights up another one.

ROBIN

Hey, I got an idea. Let's put Dad away in some institution. We can get the whole enchilada then.

SHARON

You know I don't want that.

ROBIN

Then, just take twelve thousand a year. A gift from the estate.

The door bursts open. It's the nurse. There's a problem.

INT. HOSPITAL - ROOM 410 - CONTINUOUS

Henry fluffs up Mary's pillow and strokes her hair.

HENRY

Her heart just ... stopped.

A doctor barges in and Henry eases his way to the doorway watching the commotion over Mary's body. He takes choppy breaths, then slowly disappears into the hallway.

ROBIN

Dad. Where are you going?

HENRY (O.S.)

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

EXT. HENRY'S HOUSE - ROOFTOP -- DAY

The second floor bedroom window opens and Henry climbs out. His jogging suit hugs his body. He half-steps across the roof to a large maple tree that dominates the front lawn.

A ROPE lays on the roof. He picks it up and slips his foot into the looped end. He yanks vigorously testing the other end which is firmly tied to a strong branch of the maple tree. He jumps off the roof and swings past a mailbox. He arrives at the apex of the swing and swoops back down.

He tries grabbing the mailbox but misses. He slips and swings upside down until he clutches a branch of a sapling nearby. While trying to shake free, the branch breaks.

His shoulders slam into the lawn while the rope holds his foot high in the air. He wiggles and flops like a fish out of water, like a prize trophy of the tree stoically posing for a picture.

Henry lunges for the loop. After a brief struggle he frees his foot and quickly stands. With an air of dignity, he casually looks around as if nothing happened.

EXT. THE ALDRICH HOUSE, PORCH - CONTINUOUS

Across the street, MAUREEN ALDRICH (50s), short with hunched shoulders, sweeps the porch while watching Henry.

MRS. ALDRICH

Can't stop being a child for one day.

BACK TO HENRY

He notices Mrs. Aldrich and waves, then removes the morning paper from the mailbox. He takes the rope and tosses the looped end up onto the roof where his Tarzan adventure began.

INT. HENRY'S KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Henry slaps the Coalsville Gazette down on the kitchen table.

He snatches a journal from the top of the refrigerator, sits down and begins writing. He scribbles a few words, then stops. He gets up from the table, leans over the sink and looks out the window at weed-and-rock-ridden garden in the back yard.

HENRY

Why did you leave me, Mary! The garden's a mess. I can't cook. Who's gonna complain about my terrible Henry Fonda impressions?

He quickly wipes tears away and sits back down.

HENRY

I'm digging up your garden. Then maybe I can stop thinking about you every time I look out the window.

(a deep sigh)

You said you didn't want me to be angry or sad. Well, okay then. This is the last time. I'll only think about happy things from now on.

Henry writes again then pounds a dot onto the page. Finished.

HENRY

To the only one I ever loved. There
will be no others. Good-bye dear.

He closes the journal, throws it in the garbage and starts washing the dishes. He hears a man YELLING. A boy's voice counters - no match for the elder. Henry squeezes his index fingers and thumbs together and hums.

HENRY

Ohmmmmmm. Ohmmmmmm.

Muffled yelling from next door interrupts Henry's mantra. A man's voice rises above the boy's.

MAN'S VOICE (O.S.)

Well, your mother's not here and
those damn letters she wrote
doesn't mean she's coming back.

EXT. NEXT DOOR - BACKYARD - CONTINUOUS

Empty beer bottles are scattered on the porch. The neck of an empty whisky bottle lay in the center of the lawn.

SOUNDS from next door: a kitchen chair SCRAPING on the floor; a SLAP; the PATTERN of someone running.

EXT. HENRY'S HOUSE - BACKYARD - CONTINUOUS

Henry rushes out of the house, picks up a rake from the porch and saunters down the steps and into the yard.

EXT. NEXT DOOR NEIGHBOR'S PORCH - CONTINUOUS

DANNY, (12), pants lower than his hips, storms out of the house dragging his school books in a backpack. He holds his jaw as if he has a toothache, and bolts to the chain link fence, throws his books down and buries his head in his folded arms on top of the fence. He looks up and sees Henry.

HENRY

Warm front arrived last night.
It'll be sixty degrees today.

Danny puts his head back down on his folded arms.

HENRY

Do you know what the average life span of a major league baseball is?

DANNY

Seven pitches. Not now, Mr. Wolff.

As Henry rakes his way over to the fence he sees CHARLES PETZINGER (40s), with a lazy-man's beard, peering out the kitchen window, like a sentinel.

DANNY

My dad wasn't this way when mom lived with us. He blames me for Mom leaving. He thinks I'm stupid.

HENRY

He's just a little lost. We're all lost in some way, don't you think?

DANNY

I'm failing math. My mom hates me.

HENRY

Nah. All moms love their children.

DANNY

If she loves me, why did she leave?

HENRY

Don't know. Maybe she's lost, too.

DANNY

Well, adults shouldn't get lost. If they do, they shouldn't be allowed to have children. And I'm pissed at Brian. He keeps dissin' his parents because of silly crap like they nag him for wearing his pants too low.

HENRY

Silly crap? Is that like silly putty?

DANNY

He should be happy he has a mother. He doesn't know how lucky he is.

Henry looks up and scouts the sky.

HENRY

A magnificent day. Can you feel it?

DANNY

I feel squat. And stop tellin' me it's a wonderful day because it's a horrible, stinkin' day. Life sucks and it'll take more than a weather report to make it any better.

The bus arrives, honks. As Danny picks up his books and leaves, Henry notices Charles still peering out the window.

INT. HENRY'S KITCHEN -- LATE MORNING

While Henry dries his hands from doing the dishes, he notices a big X marked on today's DECEMBER date on the calendar and the words 'WAKE - all day' are boldly written above it.

HENRY

My God. How could I have forgotten?

The doorbell rings.

LIVING ROOM/FOYER

Henry rushes into the room. A solitary family portrait serves as a wall centerpiece. A mantle clock reads 11:10. A couch with puffy cushions and a coffee table occupy most of the room. A coin collection, with a 1913 coin conspicuously missing, sits on the coffee table.

Henry finally reaches the door just as the bell rings again. He opens it and looks down on Mrs. Aldrich's slumped back. She talks slowly, as if talking to a child.

MRS. ALDRICH

Henry, I'm so sorry about Mary passing on. But you do know it's time to go to the wake, right? I promised your daughter I'd look after you.

Henry throws his fist across his chest.

HENRY

I'm late. I'm late. For a very important date.

MRS. ALDRICH

Yes, well ... my dear man. What's going to happen to you now? Hmmm?

She examines Henry's jogging suit: summons a stern demeanor.

MRS. ALDRICH

I can take you to Duffy's, but you can't go looking like that. Go change, right this minute.

EXT. HENRY'S FRONT LAWN - CONTINUOUS

Henry slams the door in her face. She knocks and waits.

Henry comes baring down from the side of the house and peeks around the corner at Mrs. Aldrich. He sees an opening and scoots down the driveway unnoticed. He lopes down the street swinging his arms in exaggerated motions as he walks.

HENRY

Nothing like a brisk walk in the morning.

EXT. MAIN STREET - CONTINUOUS

DIXIE SWANSON (30s), grabs her CD player and rises from a bench. A headset drapes around her neck. She walks down the road to an old stone bridge, glances down and sees some movement. She then slides down the embankment.

BY THE RIVERBED

JOE, (60) shoeless, wears socks with more holes than toes and a dirty undersized overcoat. He tries to get comfortable on a weather-beaten mattress, but it's difficult.

WHEEZY (50s) sports a dressy hat with a worn overcoat and long-johns from the depression era. While arranging aluminum cans in bags, Wheezy wheezes as she breathes. The deeper the breath, the louder the raspy sound. By all appearances, they both have taken refuge under the bridge for some time.

Dixie makes herself comfortable on a long cushion. Flies BUZZ around a half-eaten fruit core. She swats wildly and hits one, sending it sputtering away. Wheezy squints at Dixie then measures her words between the wheezing.

WHEEZY

Go ... away.

Joe rolls over, grunts for silence. 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. Pointing at Joe -

DIXIE

How come I never hear him speak?

WHEEZY

He lived in ... half-way houses most
of his ... life. Had depression ...
Zapped him ... with electricity.
Zzzzt. Came here ten years ago ...
Talks to no one but me now.

DIXIE

I heard he was a mental patient and
thrown into the streets by budget
cuts. I think if he died tomorrow,
no one would miss him, except you.
(pause)

Saw you last week, you know. I was
up there by the tree. Sat there for
an hour watching you two eating.

WHEEZY

That's ... invasion ... of privacy.

DIXIE

What was that bottle you were
guzzling? Fancy wine, or something?

Wheezy holds her head high, as if she likes the idea Dixie is envious of her late night cuisine. Then her real thoughts -

WHEEZY

You got ... nuttin better to do ...
than watch us?

DIXIE

Saw you bathing him. He howled like
a dog. Like you were beating him.

WHEEZY

Water was cold. Needed a bath.

Dixie scrunches her face indicating she smells something.

DIXIE

I think YOU need a bath.

WHEEZY

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

DIXIE

Don't worry. I'm just waiting for--

Dixie bolts up the embankment, peeks down the street and sees Henry coming. She grabs a piece of coal on the way back down. She tosses it at Wheezy.

DIXIE

This is how Coalsville got it's
name, you know.

WHEEZY

Duh!

DIXIE

Gramps told me stories about this
place. Managers lived on the north
side where Henry lives. Miners lived
in the projects where I live. Most
men died breathing this crap. Maybe
that's what you got. Black Lung.

Dixie takes a sweeping look at the organized chaos around her. Bags filled with cans and clothes litter the river bed.

DIXIE

You know, I want to be sympathetic
to your condition here, but ...

WHEEZY

Don't need your ... sympathy. Make
plenty of money ... Nickel a can.

DIXIE

I've seen you down Main Street
begging. You must make a decent
wage. What do you spend it on?

Wheezy thumbs a finger at Joe a couple of times.

WHEEZY
Medicine.

DIXIE
He needs more than medicine.

WHEEZY
He's ... fine.

A distant singing interrupts the reflective moment.

DIXIE
Now, listen to me you piglet. When
Mr. Wolff comes, you stay put or--

Dixie picks up a rotten apple core from the ground and shoves it an inch from Wheezy's nose.

DIXIE
I'll ram this chunk of crap down
your throat. Ya hear me?

Joe grunts loudly and flicks his finger.

WHEEZY
Go! Leave! Joe doesn't like you.

DIXIE
Yeah? Well, the feeling's mutual,
I'm sure.

EXT. TOP OF THE RIVERBED - CONTINUOUS

Henry approaches the bridge singing and Dixie pops up from the riverbed like a ghost. Henry clutches his chest.

DIXIE
I'm sorry. I didn't mean to scare,
Mr. Wolff.

Dixie looks down and sees Wheezy awkwardly trying to climb up. Dixie starts to lead Henry away. She stops abruptly at the sight of Duffy's Funeral Home at the end of the road.

DIXIE
Oh! Your wife. I forgot she died. I'm
so sorry. She was a very nice woman.
(MORE)

DIXIE (CONT'D)

She made me hot chocolate one time
when I was in junior high. I went to
school with your daughters, you know.

Henry nods-- hard to tell if he really remembers.

DIXIE

When I was at your place, people told
me I shouldn't be hangin' there
'cause I lived in the projects. Mary
didn't seem to care. She was nice. I
don't think your daughters liked me.
Mary made great hot chocolate.

HENRY

Well, you must come up again for
hot chocolate. Yes. You do that.

Wheezing SOUNDS has Dixie and Henry looking down the
embankment where Wheezy claws at the dirt, furiously trying
to climb the slope. Wheezy finally makes it to the top,
huffing and wheezing so hard Henry holds his breath.

WHEEZY

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

Henry reaches into his pocket, but Dixie grabs his arm.

DIXIE

Don't give her any money. She'll
just buy some fancy wine with it.

WHEEZY

Come on, Henry. Ol' Joe down there.
We're just ... two unfortunates ...

DIXIE

Leave us alone, you pest. And his
name is Mr. Wolff.

Wheezy scowls, swings her fist and just misses Dixie.

WHEEZY

Come on. You done it before-- You
live in the fancy house-- Up on the
hill. You can spare some-- Do-re-me.

Henry retrieves a five-dollar bill from his pocket. Wheezy
flicks her wrist and the money disappears into her hand.

A stone under her foot slides, and as she's about to tumble, Dixie grabs her shoulders, turns her around and forces her to sit. Dixie bends down and whispers into her ear.

DIXIE
 You don't listen very good, do you?
 Adios, amigos.

Dixie grabs the five-dollar bill out of her hand, and then pushes Wheezy down the embankment.

BY THE RIVERBED

Wheezy's effortless descent to the bottom of the embankment has her landing by Joe's feet. She stands and the rubble collected under her coat slides into her pants. She disrobes and uses her hands as a washcloth. Dust flies everywhere. She smells herself, then her pants.

DIXIE (O.S.)
 Hard to tell which is worse, aye.

Wheezy flicks her fingers off her chin, then faces Joe.

WHEEZY
 We bathe tonight, Joseph.

BACK TO DIXIE AND HENRY

Dixie pulls Henry away and they start walking towards Main Street. She hands him back the five dollars.

DIXIE
 She makes more money begging in a week than most people make in a month. Come on. She'll survive.

While walking she spots Robin and Sharon coming out of the funeral home onto the porch. Dixie stops abruptly.

DIXIE
 I don't want to go any further.
 Listen, Henry, I know you gave me money yesterday, for that loan I told you about but-- You think you can give me something today?

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

INT. DUFFY'S FUNERAL HOME PORCH - CONTINUOUS

The car HONKING catches Sharon and Robin's attention.

They watch Mrs. Aldrich stop the car and yell something at Henry before proceeding on. As Sharon smokes--

SHARON

Look at him. Hangs out with addicts. Aldrich should've hit her. Why didn't you pick him up?

ROBIN

He wanted to come here on his own.

SHARON

And so he has. Maybe he'll bring the town floozy with him.

ROBIN

Ah, give me a damn cigarette.

Sharon quickly hands one to Robin along with a light.

SHARON

I knew I could break you down.

ROBIN

Her name is Dixie, Sharon.

Sharon flicks her hand to her head making an 'L'.

SHARON

Ok. Dixie, the loser.

ROBIN

Mom didn't think so.

SHARON

Mom was easy on everyone except me.

ROBIN

She was tough on the Pastor. I remember when she told him we weren't coming to church again unless he stopped his fear-mongering sermons. She stopped going and the money flow stopped as well. That made the Pastor pay a visit. Remember that night?

(MORE)

ROBIN (CONT'D)

We hid in the hallway and listened to the Pastor cowering like a mouse. His voice was not his Sunday voice, which scared the hell out of us. But she promised we'd come back to church if he would preach peace and love. He agreed.

SHARON

You see. Money talks, even to God.

The girls put their cigarettes out just as MRS. MOYER (60s) walks up the steps. Her hair has the Einstein look. They hug.

MRS. MOYER

I'm so sorry about your mother. It was the old ticker, wasn't it?

SHARON

Breast cancer, Mrs. Moyer.

MRS. MOYER

Oh, dear. That's right. I'm thinking of Sherwood Pentagast.

Mrs. Moyer holds her chest and walks inside. Once alone, Sharon points to Henry and Dixie down the road and--

SHARON

He's giving his money away to people like her. You got money for your future. I got squat, Robin. He's pissing our inheritance away.

ROBIN

Nobody forced you to quit school and marry Mr. Potatohead. No one forced you to work at a collection agency, either. Then again squeezing money from people who can't afford their mortgage fits your personality well.

SHARON

I'm going inside, you twit.

ROBIN

You forget the nights dad played Parcheesi with us because we fell obsessively in love with the stupid game?

(MORE)

ROBIN (CONT'D)

How many Dads would watch SNOW
WHITE a million times, recite
lines, act out cartoons with his
kids like a ROCKY HORROR cultheads?

SHARON

We grew up. He didn't. He treats
money like a child just like
everything else in life. Mom had to
supervise him. We should too. Case
closed.

As she turns to enter the funeral home -

SHARON

I'm not a demon, Robin. I love Dad.
But I'm also a realist. I think it
is irresponsible of you not to care
what Dad does with Mom's estate.

INT. DUFFY'S FUNERAL HOME - MOMENTS LATER

Sharon sits alone in the front row of the Visitation Room
where Mary lies in a coffin a few feet away. Robin enters and
sits next to her. Mrs. Aldrich enters and sits next to Robin.

MRS. ALDRICH

I told him to change his sweat
suit! And he's hanging with that
south-side girl. What's her name?

ROBIN

You mean, Dixie?

MRS. ALDRICH

Yes. Yes. That's the one.

While they talk Sharon gets up and kneels beside Mary's
casket. She casually leans in and whispers -

SHARON

I'm tired, Mom. Tired of resenting
Robin, my benchmark for excellence.
How can a college dropout compete
with a class A student from Harvard.

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

SHARON

You got you pretty riled up when I married John Stone, Mr. Potatohead, as Robin calls him. Didn't you?

(chuckles)

I told John I'd pay him good money from the trust if we got married. He'd divorce me and move on. He was an opportunist, like me. I was sure you'd set up a trust for me if I got pregnant, like your father did when Dad knocked you up with Miss Wonderful sitting behind me?

Sharon looks around her. She sees Henry enter. He starts talking to people and shaking their hands, as if he's running for office. Sharon sighs and--.

SHARON

I thought you'd change your will when you got ill. You didn't. What was that all about, Mom? To get me to visit you during your last days?

(pause)

Can you hear what's going on behind me? They're talking about Dad and his unusual behavior. And he's over there talking to people like this is a convention or something.

(laughs)

Dad never paid a bill in his life and I just had a thought how ironic it'd be if I had to put the squeeze on him for not paying his bills.

(fakes a laugh)

Oh, come on. Where's your sense of humor? Ah, you never listened to me when you were alive. What makes me think you'll listen to me now?

(whispering)

You couldn't forgive me because I got an abortion. Well, here's something you didn't know. It was the boy you never got to raise.

Sharon reaches into the casket, and with a quick jerk breaks the flower off the stem. She gets up and sits back down.

Robin rolls her eyes to Sharon, suggesting Mrs. Aldrich talks too much. Sharon makes a puppet mouth with her hand. Blah! Blah! Blah! Sharon takes a quick breath, holds her chest and -

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

Mrs. Aldrich finally runs out of steam. She stands and sees Henry coming. She waves her good-byes and exits the other way.

Henry appears with open arms. The three clutch each other, as if they all are grieving properly.

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

Out of nowhere, a WOMAN comes up and starts hugging them.

WOMAN
I'm so sorry.

Several seconds of silence go by. Then,

HENRY
Yeah, life's a bitch, then you die.

The woman takes a quick inhale, as if she had taken a blow in the solar plexus. Henry points to the casket.

HENRY
Go pay your respects. Don't forget the church ceremony tomorrow.

The woman seems horrified. Stunned. She pays her respects as Henry takes a seat by his daughters.

SHARON
Tomorrow is the funeral service, Dad. It's not called a ceremony.

HENRY
Ah, yes. And this is a wake. Should be called a snooze. Everyone here is so somber.

The Woman rises from the casket and starts walking to the Wolff family. She sees Henry giving a Groucho high-brow, so she turns and heads in the opposite direction.

SERIES OF JUMP CUTS

People offer condolences to the Wolff family. Henry greets well-wishers with a robust hand shake, as if the mourners just entered a Tony Robins' motivational seminar.

JUMP OUT

MRS. COHEN approaches, purposely avoids shaking Henry's hand.

HENRY

Greetings, Mrs. Cohen. I haven't seen you since Mr. Spector's funeral.

She leaves. After Mrs. Cohen is out of hearing range -

HENRY

I think the only time she comes out of the house is when someone dies. A strange coot, wouldn't you say?

Sharon picks up her pocketbook and rises.

SHARON

Strange? You think SHE is strange? Listen, Dad, I gotta go to work. Robin and I have it all worked out. I'll see you tonight.

Sharon kisses him on the head, then leaves. After a beat, Henry gets up, walks to the casket, kneels down and whispers--

HENRY

Dear God, you are much smarter than anyone I ever met. You made the animals, and a million species of bugs, and us. Quite an achievement.

(to Mary)

When you see God and Johnny, ask them to forgive me. That's it. I'll be up there before you know it.

Henry lays his hands on the casket and bows his head.

HENRY

I love you, too, honey. I always have, and I always will.

Henry gets up and faces those who gathered in the room.

HENRY

Mary thanks you for coming and wishes you all happy holidays. She says someday soon you too will die, but don't be afraid, 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.

EXT. DUFFY'S FUNERAL HOME

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

HENRY

Did I say anything wrong, Sweetie?

ROBIN

I don't think people like hearing they're going to die any time soon. Life's hard enough, Dad. 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

Got a point. I'm staying. Why don't you go home. Crap. Here comes Mrs. Cunningham. Let's be civil, okay?

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

MRS.CUNNINGHAM

So sorry. Mary was a good person.

Henry just smiles, nods and lets Mrs. Cunningham continue on her way. As Henry and Robin walk down the steps.

ROBIN

Listen, Dad, the court letter the other day says I'm temporarily managing your bills and allowance, until the Judge rules on Sharon's petition, OK? And Judge Brady wants to see us because he wants to see if you understand what's going on.

HENRY

I understand what's going on.

ROBIN

I know. He just wants to make sure.
Now, I have something else to ask
you. You're taking a lot money of
the bank lately? Why?

Henry shrugs like a child who has done something wrong.

ROBIN

Remember our discussion about
enabling. Dixie is an addict. Why
did you give money to her?

Henry takes a long time answering.

HENRY

I guess I'm looking for forgiveness
for ... you know.

ROBIN

What does that have to do with
anything? Besides, that happened a
long time ago, dad.

HENRY

Not long enough. I guess I should
not have given money to Wheezy,
either. Okay, I'm going home now.

Henry picks up the pace and leaves Robin behind. She just
watches him as he walks briskly away.

INT. CLARION COLLECTION AGENCY OFFICE -- LATER

Sharon enters, a cup of coffee in hand, and doles out a few
'good mornings' as she flies past cubicles.

One cubicle has a sign that reads: "MISSION STATEMENT: DON'T
GET CAUGHT".

She reaches her cubicle and falls in her chair, spent.

SHARON

Working for a living sucks.

FRED (O.S.)

Yeah, but somebody's got to do it.

Sharon swivels around and sees FRED CLARION, JR. (late 20s), loose tie, sleeves rolled up, with a file in one hand and squeezing a rubber ball in the other.

FRED

I thought you were at the wake?

SHARON

Gees, Fred. What do you have springs in your shoes. My sister and I are doing shifts. I can only take so much of that somber crap. I'll do a few folders, then leave. Aren't you handing out bonus checks today?

FRED

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

Fred hands her a folder and tucks the ball in his pocket. He puts one fist on top of the other and twists them as if he were wringing out a wet rag (The Squeeze). He leaves.

Sharon opens the folder as DERICK, (20s) dungarees and Henley shirt, headset covering one ear, peeks over the partition.

DERICK

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

SHARON

Might hear something compromising. Can't perjure himself, in case we're sued for breaking the law.

DERICK

What? Violate the CPA? Not me. This deadbeat's leavin' me hanging. I'm on a third 'please hold, I'll be right back'. How are you? Ooops.

He points to his headset and disappears behind the cubicle.

DERICK (O.S.)

What do you mean you don't have the money? Mrs. Cox ... Mrs. Cox please let me talk. I didn't say you're a bad person. Your credit rating stinks, that's all ...

(MORE)

DERICK (O.S.) (CONT'D)

Well, I can say that because it says it right here in your folder. Bounced checks, missed payments. You even had the IRS after you.

Fred appears in the center of the room waving envelopes.

DERICK (O.S.)

Excuse me, Mrs. Cox, but I have to go. I'll call you tomorrow.

Derick comes over and joins Sharon in the wait.

DERICK

Love this job! Who do you think won?

SHARON

Shut up, you creep.

FRED

Okay folks, listen up. Bonus-time. 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 continues his speech MOS--

DERICK

I got two congressmen this month.

SHARON

They're the worst.

DERICK

Still ... they're easy. They don't like the bad press.

SHARON

Tell me about it. You always get the easy ones. Do you pay Fred a kick-back, or something?

Fred throws the stack of checks on a desk and holds up a single envelope, as if he's serving Holy Communion.

FRED

Todd will distribute the checks in a moment, but first, here's the winner of this year's top prize.
(MORE)

FRED (CONT'D)

It was real close this year between Sharon and Derick. But once again .. Derick Orr, come on up.

DERICK

I love this job.

Derick goes to accept the prize and Sharon sits down as a celebration goes on behind her. A deep sigh.

SHARON

Oh, man. What am I doing?

She examines the first page in the folder and enters the name of MARGARET BAZE into the computer. After reading the screen, she makes a phone call. After a few rings, someone answers.

SHARON

Hello. Is this Margaret Baze?

MARGARET BAZE (V.O.)

Yes. This is she.

SHARON

My name is Janice from the Clarion Collection Agency, and I'm ...

MARGARET BAZE (V.O.)

I told you guys already, my ex-husband totaled the car last year.

SHARON

The loan was in your name, Mrs. Baze, and you should've used the insurance money to pay the debt.

MARGARET BAZE (V.O.)

He took the money and spent it.

SHARON

Mrs. Baze, if Confucius were here he'd say, 'Life stinks'. Zen would say, 'What is the sound of life stinking?'. A Quaker would say, 'Be silent and wait for life to stink'. And this call is me saying life sucks when you marry the wrong guy. Be more careful who you marry next time. Meantime, you owe us money.

Sharon reads the screen while Mrs. Baze responds.

MARGARET BAZE (V.O.)

Listen, I'm having a difficult time right now. I'm right in the middle of a custody battle. If I don't pay my lawyers first, I may lose my son.

SHARON

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

MARGARET BAZE (V.O.)

What's your point ... Janice. If that's your real name.

SHARON

Point is, don't get stung when you can avoid it easily. I see here you work at MCA Corp - good company. Your credit report is clean except for this car loan. I'd think a child custody judge would look favorably on your financial record as it is today. But if the judge sees you're being garnished, well, you do see my bee-sting analogy now, don't you, Mrs. Baze? You can totally avoid ...

MARGARET BAZE (V.O.)

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

SHARON

Hundred a month should do it. And mail the check to 17 North ...

MARGARET BAZE (V.O.)

I have your address in front of me. Do you have children, Janice.

SHARON

We're finished here, Mrs. Baze.

Sharon hangs up and swivels her chair, visibly shaken by Mrs. Baze's last words. She is oblivious to the room's ambiance: the clatter of the keyboards;

the distant voices on the phone; a 'yes' yelled by someone as if he has just hit a jackpot on a slot machine.

TODD comes by, tosses an envelope on her lap and gives her a thumbs up sign for the good work. She still appears shaken.

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

A voice YELLING and a creaking SOUND of a screen door opening and shutting is followed by Danny running out of the house.

He plops down by the fence just as Dixie comes into view with her ever-present CD player, singing. She waves at Danny, then SCREAMS as Henry bursts past them swinging on a rope. Danny jumps up as Henry breezes by.

Henry's leg finds a limb on the small sapling that guards the mailbox. He lets the rope go and hangs upside down near the mailbox. Dixie walks up to Danny and they both gawk at Henry.

DANNY

I think something's wrong with him.

Henry slips out of the rope. His body free-falls. Thud!

DIXIE

Are you okay, Henry?

Henry lays motionless with his eyes closed. Danny kicks him.

DANNY

Do you think he's dead?

DIXIE

Dunno. Hold his nose and see if his head explodes.

Henry jumps to his feet and moves one muscle at a time.

DANNY

Are you all right?

HENRY

I couldn't feel any better.

CHARLES (O.S.)

Danny! Get in the house. NOW!

DANNY

Gotta go.

ON CHARLES

As Danny walks into the house, Charles smacks him.

CHARLES

He's out there playing around on his wife's funeral day. That's not right, plain and simple. Get ready. We're going to his wife's funeral.

BACK TO HENRY AND DIXIE

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

DIXIE

Is Mr. Petzinger always like that?

HENRY

He's got his issues.

DIXIE

Don't we all. Hey, you said come up for some hot chocolate, but if you got a funeral to go, or something...

HENRY

We have time for hot chocolate. I already have hot water on the stove.

Henry hears a swishing noise from Dixie's headset. He puts it on and listens. As they enter the house -

DIXIE

That's Talent Pool, my all-time favorite group. Ever!

INT. HENRY'S LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Dixie walks into the room and sits on the couch. She inspects the coin collection as Henry vanishes into the kitchen.

DIXIE

You know, there's rumors about you.

HENRY (O.S.)

Yeah. What kind of rumors?

DIXIE

I don't know. Like you're not firing on all cylinders.

Dixie squinches, embarrassed she said that. Henry comes out with hot chocolate. She points to the blank slot marked '1913' in coin collection folder.

DIXIE

You're missing one.

HENRY

That's a sore subject. An ice cream man has it. Mary was very upset with me. Here. I put an ice cube in it.

Henry hands the cup to Dixie and she lays the coin collection folder on the couch and takes a sip.

DIXIE

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

HENRY

That's not a lady-like thing to say.

DIXIE

Sorry. How much is this worth if you had the missing quarter?

HENRY

I don't know. A thousand, maybe.

Dixie follows Henry gaze out the window and sees Robin getting out of her car. Henry points towards the kitchen.

HENRY

Okay, you need to go now. She doesn't exactly understand things the way I do. Sorry. Today is not a day to bump heads with my daughter.

Dixie quickly grabs her CD player and bolts into the kitchen while Henry hides in the house someplace.

Robin enters and sees Dixie through the window running from the side of the house to the street. Robin notices the cup on the coffee table and the coin collection on the couch. She immediately opens it and appears relieved.

She places it on the coffee table and then heads for the hall closet, slowly reaching for the knob. She jerks it open. No one is there.

ROBIN

DAA-AD! No hide-and-peek today,
please. We haven't got time for
this. We have to talk before we go.

KITCHEN

Robin enters, sits down at the table, grabs the wicker basket, takes seven envelopes marked by the days of the week from her pocketbook, yanks several twenty-dollar bills from her wallet and begins inserting them into the envelopes.

Henry jumps from nowhere and yelps. Robin clutches her chest.

ROBIN

STOP IT!

HENRY

(east-Indian accent)
I scared bricks of cement out of you.

ROBIN

That was so retarded.

HENRY

I'm retarded? You mean stupid?

Henry appears to withdraw into his 'zone' - a blank stare to nowhere in particular. But Robin slams her hand on the table.

ROBIN

Please don't go there today, dad.
You're not retarded. It was a figure
of speech. Now listen to me. We need
to talk before you get ready for the
funeral. The hearing is on the 23rd.
The money's being frozen until then.
But Judge Brady wants to see us this
week, probably to talk some sense
into Sharon. See these envelopes?
There's \$20 in each one. One a day.
This is all the spending money
you'll have. I'll pay the bills, do
the food shopping for you. Okay?

Henry nods. Robin gets up and leads him to the stairs.

HENRY

Sharon was always a hurting child.
It was in her eyes. As she grew
older I saw the fear in them. And I
couldn't do anything about it.

ROBIN

Okay. We can't talk about this now.

HENRY

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

ROBIN

You don't need a lawyer. But I'll
be there next to you. Don't worry.

HENRY

I don't want the secret to come out.

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. I'll be your lawyer. The
black suit is hanging on the door.

HENRY

You look so much like Mom, Pumpkin.
You act like her, you know. Bossy.

INT. CHURCH -- LATER

Henry sits between Robin and Sharon in the first pew while
Pastor McMillan finishes his eulogy.

PASTOR MCMILLAN

Okay. Now, Henry Wolff has asked to
say a few words. Henry?

Henry reacts like he was selected as a game show contestant.
Both Sharon and Robin react with surprise. They had no idea.

ON HENRY AND THE AUDIENCE

The Pastor, smug, takes a seat as Henry saunters up to the podium. He takes in the entire congregation in one glance.

HENRY

Mary's funeral reminds me of Neill Murphy who passed away a couple of years ago. I remember Marge's story about the morning Neill died. She was making his favorite cookies. Chocolate chip, wasn't it, Marge?

ON MARGE

(50) scarf, just shakes her head.

ON HENRY

He sees Dixie sneaking in the back. He waits for her to sit.

HENRY

Neill was ready to go to the Lord but the smell of Marge's baking kept him hanging on a bit. He loved those cookies. Everyone in town loves Marge's chocolate chip cookies.

Henry waits for the 'Amens' to subside before continuing.

HENRY

He was so sick he couldn't walk. But he could smell. The cookies beckoned him and he slipped out of his bed. Slid across the floor on his belly all the way into the kitchen. He barely could lift his head. Would've died right there but the aroma of the heavenly baked cookies allowed him to crawl a little further. Another foot. An inch more. Finally, he made it to the kitchen table. He pulled himself up on the chair and reached for one of the famous Murphy cookies. Then, Marge, seeing what her dying husband was up to, smacked the back of Neill's hand with the spatula as he was reaching and said, 'Neill, you leave those cookies alone. They're for the funeral.'

Robin stoically takes in the mixture of groans, a handful of "Oh-my-Gods" and, mostly, the unending roar of laughter.

Danny takes in the chaos with a chuckle. Charles sedates him with a smack on the head. As the laughter subsides Danny's eyes meet Henry's. All is well with them. Henry rocks.

Dixie looks on, smiling and with a renewed spirit of respect.

HENRY

I loved my wife dearly. She was a terrific cook. These are the things that Mary has taught me about life.

Henry opens a piece of paper and begins reading.

HENRY

She taught me to let our kids make their own mistakes and forgive and love them when they do. It's okay to stretch the truth a little 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. 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. Keep glancing in your rear view mirror when you drive. Have respect for animals. Work hard. You can never have too many Dunkin Donuts. Education doesn't 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. Love like you've never been hurt. Dance like nobody's watching. Sing like nobody's listening. Live like it's Heaven on Earth. And probably the most important line of all. Be thankful you were born in the USA.

A series of AD-LIB 'Amens' emanate from all over the room. Robin sees his anguish and gets up and walks on the stage to fetch him. While walking off the stage, he whispers--

HENRY

She's not coming back, is she?

ROBIN

No, Dad. She's not coming back.

A few sniffing sounds steal the silence from the room.

HENRY

Get a mammogram. And make sure Sharon gets one too. Promise?

ROBIN

I promise.

EXT. MAIN STREET -- DAY

Henry sits on a bench by the pharmacy watching people shop. Dixie plops herself down next to Henry with her CD player.

DIXIE

Beautiful day.

HENRY

Yes, it is. Christmas time is a great time to watch people.

They both listen to the music on her CD 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 project myself before with the proper respects. I didn't give it the proper importance.

Henry laughs.

DIXIE

Why are you laughing? What's so funny?

HENRY

Why are you talking funny?

DIXIE

I'm sorry about your wife, man.

HENRY

Okay. That sounds more like you.

(a beat)

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

Hell, man, you do everything like nobody's looking, like you don't give-a-crap about anything.

HENRY

That's no way for a lady to talk?

Dixie lets out a puff of air, a start of a laugh, then she spots JASON SPECTOR (20s) across the street. He walks with an air of importance, bling all over. Henry follows her gaze.

HENRY

Who is he?

DIXIE

I owed money to him. That's what I wanted to tell you the other day. I wanted a loan to pay him off.

HENRY

I only have twenty dollars today.

DIXIE

Now you're pissing me off. I'm not asking for money. I'm trying to be honest here. I owed the turd money for drugs. Okay. There. I said it.

HENRY

Why are you telling me this?

DIXIE

Because I'm trying to get my act together and be honest.

(pause)

Don't you want to say anything?

HENRY

Okay. Don't do drugs anymore. And what does a 'turd' mean, anyway. I get an image of a very dirty person.

DIXIE

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

HENRY

Unbecoming, especially from a woman.

Jason spots Dixie. Her facial twitch says volumes as Jason rushes across the street. A closer look reveals an unshaven character. Loose clothing. The bling glistens.

HENRY

Okay, 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.

JASON

I got something you want.

DIXIE

You got nothing I want.

JASON

I'll stake ya. You always been one to pay me back, one way or another.

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; his hard demeanor melts a bit.

JASON

I can get a deal on a good wheelchair if you want to take this old buzzard for a walk.

HENRY

She has.

Jason looks confused.

HENRY

You asked what changed since last week. SHE has changed.

JASON

What are you, a wise guy?

DIXIE

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

Jason grabs Dixie by the hair and in a serious, acid tone -

JASON

Don't ever diss me like that.

Jason twists and she howls in pain. Henry grabs Jason's wrist gently and Jason releases Dixie's hair which allows her to fall to her knees. She holds 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 20 dollar bill. Jason snatches it. A police car comes into Jason's view, so he backs off and pats Dixie on the head. As Jason leaves -

JASON

Now it all makes sense. He's your Sugar Daddy. I can deal with that. 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.

DIXIE

Well, look at you. Aren't you a 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.

As they walk -

DIXIE

My friggin' head hurts!

HENRY

Is friggin' a word? Don't think so.

DIXIE

Henry! Why do you have to be that way? I'm angry. Can't you see that? And no way is friggin' a curse word. It's a boat, or something like that.

They stop by a diner. Dixie pulls back; appears anxious.

INT. DINER - CONTINUOUS

They sit at a booth. Dixie's foot taps uncontrollably. Henry summons facial expressions that make no sense at all.

DIXIE

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

He feigns a hurt expression, but sobers quickly because MRS. SWANSON (50s) stands in front of them, a big-breasted woman, broad across the beam and almost as hefty around her waist.

DIXIE

Hello, Mom.

With pad and pencil in hand, Mrs. Swanson just nods and stares at Henry with the countenance of an inquiring mother.

MRS. SWANSON

Hello, Mr. Wolff.

HENRY

Hello, Mrs. Swanson.

DIXIE

Mom. Got something you wanna say?

MRS. SWANSON

Just wondering what you're doing with him. Are you living with him?

DIXIE

That's a disgusting thought.

MRS. SWANSON

Where are you staying then?

DIXIE

I don't want to get into this with you right now. Why can't I just come in here and have something to eat? You always gotta start this crap.

Henry snaps his fingers; points to his mouth. Dixie rolls her eyes. Mrs. Swanson opens her pad, then eyes Henry.

MRS. SWANSON

What's ya interest with my daughter?

DIXIE

See what you started, Henry? You had to come here. What are you, stupid? Hell, Mom. Can we just order?

Henry responds to the word 'stupid' by retreating to a safe place in his mind. His gaze to nowhere seems frozen.

MRS. SWANSON

I'm not talking to you. I'm just curious why he wants to hang with you. Hmm, Mr. Wolff? What do you want with my daughter?

DIXIE

Mom, I think that's enough. Henry, what do you want?

HENRY'S POV

From this SPFX moment, the VOICES are garbled. Henry 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 he sees Dixie. Her voice, jumbled and hollow.

BACK TO SCENE

Mrs. Swanson looks closely at Henry's frozen, paralyzed face.

MRS. SWANSON

He looks so ... sad. Okay. Gotta work here. What do you want?

(No response; louder)

Mr. Wolff, what do you want?

Henry's stare to nowhere remains fixed. Mrs. Swanson, confused, bends down and looks into his eyes again.

MRS. SWANSON

Dixie, what's the matter with him?

DIXIE

Your foul attitude did this. Why can't we just come in and eat?

MRS. SWANSON

He got that way after you called him stupid. Besides, how do you want me to be? You pop into my life when you're three days clean and you expect me to open my arms. Been there, done that - too many times.

DIXIE

That doesn't give you the right ...

MRS. SWANSON

You stole money, my jewelry. My dignity. I'm tired of being fooled. What do you want from me, Dixie?

DIXIE

I don't want anything from you today except some lunch.

MRS. SWANSON

You suddenly have lunch money?

DIXIE

No. He does.

Mrs. Swanson looks at Henry who's still in a trance.

MRS. SWANSON

His wife just died. Don't you have any decency? Self-respect?

Dixie takes her CD player, gets up and leaves.

MRS. SWANSON

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

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

MRS. SWANSON

Dear, God. Please help me.

Mrs. Swanson inspects Henry when, all of a sudden, he blinks a couple of times and then looks around. Henry's face transitions from confusion to realization.

HENRY

Where's Dixie?

MRS. SWANSON

You gotta be kidding me. What's the matter with you?

HENRY

(like a gangster--)

Nuttin. Wuts da madder with you?

MRS. SWANSON

Okay, Henry. 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. What's her story, Mrs. Swanson?"

Mrs. Swanson starts to say something, but stops. Finally--

MRS. SWANSON

My dad wanted Dixie to go to college, but he died when she was young and she didn't have the drive to follow his dream. He was the only positive male influence in her life. I won't sugar coat it. Fact is I had a lot of men come and go in my life. I forged a man's name on her birth certificate because I didn't know which one was her father. She has no good male role model in her life. So, if you have any goodness in you, give it to her. But know this, Dixie hasn't been able to stay clean. She gets clean, she feels good for a week or two, then 'bam'! She's back doing her thing. She's stolen from me, shoplifted, lost her license, 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, Henry, I love my daughter. But I've lost hope - the very thing she needs now and I can't give her. Too much anger inside and no stomach left for the fight. Maybe you can help her. Do you want anything to eat?

HENRY

Just coffee.

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

INT. CHARLES'S KITCHEN -- DAY

Charles Petzinger peers through his kitchen window and sees Henry walking around in his backyard making gestures, as if he's talking to stones that lay on the ground.

CHARLES

What a moron!

Charles takes an empty whisky bottle on the counter and pours the last few drops into the mug. He tosses the bottle into the garbage then stands on a chair and reaches behind the molding and searches. A pint of whiskey appears.

EXT. HENRY'S BACKYARD - DAY

Henry starts pulling weeds, whistling.

FRONT LAWN

Dixie dances up Henry's driveway to the music from her head set. She knocks on the front door and it creeps open by itself. The coin collection catches her interest. She picks it up, runs her fingers across the coins.

ROBIN

What are you doing here, Dixie?

Dixie clutches the coins to her chest. Gasps!

DIXIE

You scared the hell out of me. I'm here to talk with Henry. He told me to come over whenever I wanted.

Dixie puts the coin collection back down on the coffee table.

ROBIN

Well, you're not welcome. Will you please leave?

Dixie stomps off. Before leaving, she turns to Robin.

DIXIE

What do you have against me?

ROBIN

I just don't trust you, Dixie. I never did. Even in high school.

DIXIE

What I remember about school was the ninth grade dance and Sharon asking me, 'where did you get that dress?' and laughed. It was my grandmother's old dress. That was the first day I became ashamed of living on the south side of Main Street. The first time I was ashamed of who I was.

EXT. HENRY'S BACK YARD

Henry spots Robin's car in the street. He gets up from pulling weeds and rushes to the shed.

INSIDE THE SHED

A wooden mannequin, missing one leg and fingers of one hand, rests against the wall. He hears Robin stomping down the porch, so he quickly removes the good hand from the mannequin's arm and pulls it up his sleeve creating the illusion the mannequin's hand is his.

Scraps of wood and garden tools clutter the shed. He grabs a piece of wood and the electric saw. He holds the electric saw in his good hand. The mannequin's hand holds down the block of wood. He waits.

Robin enters, his cue to start sawing. The blade cuts the wooden hand off the stump and it falls to the floor. Thump! He yells and carries on as if he cut off his real hand.

ROBIN

Will you knock that crap off? Have you forgotten Judge Brady today? You need to change your clothes.

Henry removes the stub from his sleeve and tosses it.

HENRY

I'm running out of props.

ROBIN

Good!

INT. KITCHEN

As Robin follows him into the house -

ROBIN

It's these kinds of antics that will be talked about today, Dad. What's Judge Brady going to think?

HENRY

I've seen Judge Brady do some pretty stupid things.

ROBIN

I didn't say what you do is stupid.

HENRY

I was at a stop sign by his house. He was changing his oil in his car. When he poured the third quart into the crankcase we both noticed oil streaming down his driveway. He forgot to put the screw back on the oil pan on the car. We looked at each other and laughed. Ha, ha. We both thought it was funny. Not stupid.

ROBIN

Dad, I did laugh the first time you did it, twenty years ago.

INT. JUDGE BRADY'S CHAMBERS -- AFTERNOON

JUDGE BRADY taps his desk with a pencil. Robin sits next to Henry, twiddling her fingers, waiting.

JUDGE BRADY

I'm so sorry about Mary, Henry. We lost a good friend. A good citizen.

Robin just smiles and nods.

HENRY

I liked her too. You can throw in she was a good wife. And mother.

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

This meeting is for me, really. I want to separate the personal from the legal issues. If there's no legal concern, I'm canceling the hearing. So, we'll just let Sharon say what she needs to say. OK?

Sharon walks in just as the Judge finishes.

SHARON

Sorry I'm late. Traffic. Christmas shoppers all over the damn place.

Sharon sits. Everyone exchanges greetings and nods.

JUDGE BRADY

I've known the Wolff family too many years to worry about formalities. And you've been through a great ordeal with Mary's illness. So, let's cut to the chase. Sharon here thinks you can't handle your own finances, Henry. How do you feel about that?

HENRY

Well, maybe she's right ...

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

JUDGE BRADY

An honest answer, Henry. But I'm not sure it's the correct answer. Sharon, is there something going on? A family argument, perhaps.

SHARON

No. Nothing's going on.

The Judge sits back then he slaps both hands on his desk.

JUDGE BRADY

Okay, Sharon. Tell me why you filed this petition? Got nothing to do for two hours, so take your time.

SHARON

Ok. Here's the skinny. Growing up with Dad wasn't easy. Like the time Mom decided it'd be nice if Dad took us to the movies, just him and us, only Mom didn't know Dad would give his money away to a homeless person on the way to the theatre. When we got there, he stood in front of the glass, and turned his pockets inside out. 'No money,' he said, as if he expected the guy to let us in for free. You know how embarrassing that was? He's always been that way. And that's why Mom gave him a weekly allowance. That's the way it had to be. That's the way it should be now.

JUDGE BRADY

Well, I don't see ...

SHARON

And then, Judge, there was that time Dad took us to lunch at Benny's. We finished eating and Ginger went to the girls' room. Mistake! When she came out she couldn't find us in the diner or the parking lot. Dad hid the car behind a dumpster.

ROBIN

You were right there laughing with the rest of us. And I don't remember Ginger being that upset.

SHARON

She was hysterical. She thought my father left her stranded. Maybe I did laugh but I was eleven. What did I know? And that was the last time Ginger's mother allowed her to play with us. Oh, then there was the time with Judy Pickett. Remember, Dad? She was in the bathroom. You banged on the door, poked your head in and said 'Charming'. You opened the freakin' door and while she's sliding all over the toilet seat having a heart attack, you didn't say 'Oh, I'm sorry. I didn't know anyone was in here.' No. 'Charming' is what you said. Another friend falls off the radar.

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

SHARON

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

Henry, somber, sits with his head hung low.

JUDGE BRADY

Let me tell you my favorite Henry story. One day some Asians came on a sightseeing trip to the coal mine. One of the men asked your dad to take a photo as memorabilia of the trip. The man handed your father a camera, then ran back and stood next to his family. While they all posed by the sign, your dad, instead of snapping the picture, tucked the camera under his arm and ran off with it, like a thief.

(Laughs loudly.)

Funniest thing I ever saw. I can still see their faces ...

SHARON

JUDGE! This is not funny.

JUDGE BRADY

No, Sharon. This is not. Listen, I was hoping you all would come in here today and get some things off your chest and then let everything be. You have some gripes, sure, and your dad is a little eccentric. He might have issues for a shrink, 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

I haven't told you what he does with his money yet, Judge. He gives money away like bubble gum. Gave five hundred to that druggie girl, the cartoon character who walks the streets, what's her name ... Dixie.

JUDGE BRADY

(sighs)

Why did you give it to her, Henry?

HENRY

She owed money to this guy who was going to hurt her if she didn't pay.

SHARON

A drug dealer, that's who.

The Judge lets out with a hefty groan, as if he were given a fatal blow. He leans back in his chair.

JUDGE BRADY

OK, If you have anything else, save it for the 23rd. Sorry. I thought we could settle this today. But I'll tell you, Sharon, you'll need more than what you've told me here. I'll need proof Henry can't handle money responsibly. An instance or two 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 hear the petition within twenty days of its filing. Now, if Sharon wants to withdraw and refile ...

SHARON

No. That's not going to happen.

JUDGE BRADY

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

The Judge gets up and leaves. After a long pause -

SHARON

I don't know what to say. I told the truth and I have to go to work.

She gives Henry a peck on the cheek, then leaves.

HENRY

Sharon hates me, doesn't she?

ROBIN

No, Dad. She's just holding on to a lot of garbage, and won't let go. It's something for her to work out with her shrink, if she ever goes. Maybe it's time for you to see someone. Maybe it's time to talk about the secret, Dad.

HENRY

NO!

INT. PSYCHOLOGIST'S OFFICE -- DAY

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

ROBIN

A serious relationship? I don't think I ever had one. Of course, there was Asa, but that wasn't...

DR. TUCKER

Asa? The owner of Alder pharmacy?

ROBIN

Yes. He was a guy I liked in grammar school. He had a great knuckle ball.

Dr. Tucker gets comfortable. He's got time to listen to this.

ROBIN

We were twelve. I was a tomboy. And a good baseball player for a girl. Asa was a pitcher. A damn good one. He had a thing for me. I used to make him Sweetie-pie. I played shortstop and instead of yelling "no batter, no batter" I'd say 'strike him out, Sweetie-pie. He couldn't concentrate with me out there. One game, we snuck behind the bleachers. He had a great knuckle ball.

Dr. Tucker waits. He knows there's more.

ROBIN

Anyway, I liked him. But somewhere along the line, I lost interest in baseball. And he lost interest in me. Actually, we both became more academic. Asa dedicates all his time to his business these days. He should be married, though.

DR. TUCKER

Why is that?

ROBIN

I met him at the diner a while back. He thinks people get married too young. That's why most marriages end in divorces, he thinks. He's getting up there in age now. He said he hasn't found right person yet.

DR. TUCKER

How do you feel about him?

ROBIN

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

DR. TUCKER
And the bleachers.

ROBIN
Yes. And the bleachers.

DR. TUCKER
Why not call him? Ask him out?

ROBIN
I've fantasized about that. About sitting in a candlelit booth. Sipping wine and talking about ERAs and RBIs. Nah. It would probably be boring. I've changed. He's changed.

DR. TUCKER
What's more important than what makes you happy?

ROBIN
Right now, my father has problems. I have to pay attention to that.

DR. TUCKER
Problems? You said he's doing fine.

ROBIN
Yes, he is. But I feel my mother's death has affected him somehow. He's more ... he's just different.

EXT. ADLER PHARMACY -- CONTINUOUS

While Robin TALKS to Doctor Zucker, Henry looks in the pharmacy window at the 'Help Wanted' sign. He goes in and walks around the store looking at items on the shelves.

ASA ADLER, (30s) the man Robin just talked about, handsome, white coat, spots Henry and waves. Henry waves back. While Robin and Dr. Tucker talk we stay on Henry.

ROBIN (V.O.)
We couldn't call him 'stupid', even though he did stupid things, else he'd go into a trance. Shut down. Most of the time he did childish things. Like ... we went caroling one time. He'd sing Jingle bells, Batman smells.
(MORE)

ROBIN (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Sometimes he'd wear his pants backwards. We'd meet strangers in a store and he'd stick out his hand and say, 'Hi, I haven't seen you in so long' or he'd ask for people's autograph or ask them what gender they were. Stuff like that.

Henry bumps into a PATRON who he knows. They exchange a normal greeting (MOS), far from his past antics as being explained currently by Robin.

ROBIN (V.O.)

He'd burp in public and say, 'hmmm, tasty.' On a supermarket line he'd blow his nose and show the contents in his Kleenex to people. At a department store he would stare at people. Look at them up and down.

Henry sees a CUSTOMER and looks at her up and down.

ROBIN (V.O.)

And when one person got indignant and asked him what he was looking at, my father said, in a real demonic voice, that he was looking for a more suitable host body.

Henry just nods to the customer, waves to Asa and leaves.

BACK TO ROBIN AND DR. TUCKER

DR. TUCKER

That's a new one.

ROBIN

I just remembered it. We watched the Exorcist the night before and I guess he was just acting out.

DR. TUCKER

So, where are we going with this?

ROBIN

I'm afraid, Doctor. Coalsville is such a small town. People talk.

DR. TUCKER

Hmm. The secret.

ROBIN

Yes. Even though my father's behavior is bazaar, I always felt safe the secret was tucked away in a vault. But I'm not so sure now. I'm afraid it might come out and it won't just affect my father.

INT. HENRY'S BACK YARD -- DAY

Snowflakes the size of deer ticks blow in the wind. Henry appears at the door like a caricature from a Brothers Grimm story wearing a knitted hat, gloves, a down jacket and a backpack strapped to his shoulders. He hears muffled yelling.

A door SLAMS, and Danny storms into view, mumbling obscenities. Finally, he settles by the fence and kicks it. He watches Henry stomp across the lawn and into the shed. After a second, two rakes come flying out and 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. Gotta pick up these rocks before the snow covers them.

Danny hops the fence and Henry tosses him the backpack.

HENRY

Maybe I'll take up Mary's passion for gardening. You can learn a lot about life through gardening.

DANNY

You've got more weeds than anything else. That's like life. Depressing.

As Danny puts on his backpack, he sees his father peering out the window, a silhouetted figure in the kitchen window.

DANNY

You sure got the church people riled up the other day.

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.

DANNY

You ever think why God made you?

HENRY

Plenty of times.

DANNY

He made a mistake when He made me.

HENRY

Why's that, Danny?

DANNY

Well, 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

Oh, we're sensitive men, Danny.

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

HENRY

Some 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. Maybe. Sort of.

Danny picks up another rock and puts it into his backpack. Henry puts another rock in Danny's backpack as well and--

HENRY

You know rubber bands last longer when you store them in the frig?

DANNY

I don't want to play that game, and will you stop putting rocks in my backpack? Put them in your own.

HENRY

You should be having fun, Danny. Life shouldn't stink at your age.

DANNY

Fun? Ha. Like what?

HENRY

Like mooning a funeral procession.
That has magical properties. See?
The thought of it makes you smile.

DANNY

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

Henry uses his rake as a divining rod to find a rock.

DANNY

What's wrong with you? Some people
say you belong in a loony bin.

Henry finds one, picks it up and plunks it in Danny's pack.

DANNY

Hey, you got a backpack. You see?
When you do crazy things like that,
it makes people think you're weird.

HENRY

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

Henry holds his rake across his chest as if it were a sword.
He swipes at the snow which is coming down heavily now.

HENRY

I am a conquistador. A lover. A
poet. Wutevah! We better hurry up.

Danny redistributes the weight of the stones across his back.

DANNY

You're rich, aren't you?

HENRY

Oh, yes. Very rich. But I only get
to spend twenty bucks a day. And
that doesn't even buy you a video
game, does it? You see a rich
person is not measured by how much
money he has. He's someone who
needs it the least.

DANNY

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

HENRY

How about if you don't have a lot
of desires then you don't need much
money. How 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, please. My backpack's heavy.
Put it in your own damn pack.

FROM THE STREET - DIXIE'S POV

Dixie walks into view with her headset on and sees Henry put
a rock in Danny's backpack. Danny reacts by taking his
backpack off, throwing it to the ground, and kicking it.

Dixie spots Petzinger sneaking out back to Henry's shed while
Henry goes to one knee to talk to Danny. It's hard to see now
since the snow is coming down harder and in larger flakes,
but she sees Petzinger crouch like a tiger ready to pounce.

Dixie bolts to Henry's mailbox, opens it, and stuffs her CD
player and headset inside. As she runs to the backyard she
catches a glimpse of Petzinger scurrying back into his house.

BACK TO DANNY AND HENRY

Danny wipes tears from his face when he spots Dixie. In a
huff, she points next door at Charles peering out the window.
She goes to say something, but can't find the words.

Henry looks up as the flakes teem down on him like legions of
white locust. The flakes dissolve against his warm, moist
skin. Magic. Surreal. Dixie and Danny do the same.

HENRY

Come on. Let's go to the park.

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

EXT. STREET - CONTINUOUS

As they prance down the street Henry opens an imaginary door.

HENRY

Here's a secret door and soon we'll vanish into a magic land where real-life conundrums don't exit.

DIXIE

What the hell ya talking about?

DANNY

We're on a holy pilgrimage. Maybe we'll find a magic ring.

HENRY

Exactly, my fellow voyagers. We're on a grand journey to a la-la land. Unknown adventures lie ahead on this expedition. Who knows what we will find when we get there. But on the way we will most assuredly have to do battle with a sizeable evil force. There's unknown dangers to be faced, damsels to be rescued.

DIXIE

Oh, good grief. Why can't we just build a snowman?

EXT. SOMEWHERE NEAR THE PARK - CONTINUOUS

Three swashbuckling figures shuffle their way out of the thick, poltergeist mist. Danny swipes at the huge flakes.

HENRY

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

DANNY

No trivia. I can't stand it. I'm going to die. No more trivia!

DIXIE

I love trivia. Like knowing the city of Portland, Oregon, was named after a coin toss in 1844. Heads for Portland and tails for Boston.

HENRY

Did you know that all of the clocks in Pulp Fiction are stuck on 4:20.

DANNY

I can't take it. Dixie, help me!

Danny jumps on Henry's back and Dixie grabs Henry's legs. Henry falls like a tree.

HENRY

T-I-M-B-E-R

A snowball fight quickly ensues where allegiances change as quickly as they can pack a new snowball. First, it's Danny against Henry and Dixie. Then, Henry and Dixie against Danny.

LATER

The snowball fights continue as they approach the bridge where Henry has to stop to rest. They peek down and see Wheezy and Joe trying to get warm. This sobers them and the entourage moves on. Pensive.

THE CENTER OF THE PARK

Henry scurries down the hill and into the park with Dixie and Danny in hot pursuit until Henry runs out of steam. He grabs his chest, mocking a heart attack. Dixie and Danny brush off the snow on a bench and help Henry to sit. They rest and watch CHILDREN play in an open space.

A MOTHER escorts a BOY to the group then marches to the swings where other MOTHERS huddle. She slishes her way to them and doesn't see the older children pummel her son with snowballs.

HENRY

Who's that boy getting bombarded?

DANNY

He's that new boy. Tommy Maltin.

They cringe at the sight of Tommy getting hit in the head.

HENRY

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

A call-to-arms had been issued. In an instant, they are in the middle of a battle. Henry stands before a tearful Tommy.

HENRY

Tommy, 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 mingles with MRS. HODGES, a woman with bulging eyes, and other mothers, gossip-types.

BACK TO THE WAR

Henry quickly directs his comrades to stack snowballs into a pyramid of cannonballs. Henry picks up a few, then marches forward to an imaginary front line of a battle zone.

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

BACK TO THE WOMEN

MRS. HODGES

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

The other women appear to be star-struck.

MRS. MALTIN

Sad to say, I've written nothing in 13 years. The city, terrible crime, you know. I moved here so Tommy would have a safer place to live. And I was hoping to start writing again. Inspiration hasn't come yet.

Mrs. Maltin spots Henry engaging the children.

MRS. MALTIN

Is that the man whose wife just died?

The women nod, leer and lament in unison.

MRS. MALTIN

I heard that he's not all there. I mean, look at him. It's hard to tell who's the adult. What exactly is the matter with him, anyway?

They watch Henry get hit with a snowball. He zooms in between the children like an airplane.

MRS. HODGES

Supposedly, PTS from the war. Must be a tortured soul. A little loony, but harmless. There were rumors that he made a daring motorcycle escape while he was a prisoner of war. But Mary told me Henry started that rumor. The sad thing is ...

(leans in -- whispers)

... what happened to their infant son. Crib death! That was too much. The war syndrome, the kid's death. He just snapped. Acts like a kid now. Been that way for decades.

MRS. MALTIN

But are you sure he can be trusted?

MRS. HODGES

He's fine. I'd be worried more about that floozy he hangs with. Bad breed. She lives on the south side of Main Street, if you know what I mean. Druggie. Now, I don't want to be accused of gossip. But...

MRS. MALTIN

Please. Say what needs to be said.

All the mothers nod and seem to be equally interested in what Mrs. Hodges has to say. They huddle as we transition to--

THE BATTLEFIELD

HENRY

We're the forces of good fighting
the forces of evil. Ready! CHARGE!

With a loud cheer, they charge forward and the forces of evil retreat further north where they are no longer a threat. The center of the park is suddenly a demilitarized zone. Henry and his 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?

TOMMY

Yes, yes. I believe you can fly.

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

DANNY

Why do they keep on looking at us?

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

Then, Miss America you are.

(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.

DIXIE

Henry, maybe you shouldn't ...

HENRY

Do you believe I can fly?

TOMMY

Yes, I believe. Fly ... fly ...

Dixie's face conveys hope as Henry leaps into the air, and for a briefest moment, he defies gravity and a miracle happens - he flies. But then gravity hold and he lands like a pancake. He gets up and marches over to the bench again.

DIXIE

Hey, Starship Commander. That was a
great belly-flop.

HENRY

Aside, you wench.

Tommy covers his mouth, then 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.

In a SERIES OF JUMP CUTS, Henry jumps off the bench until Tommy jumps on the bench and spreads his arms ... his wings.

HENRY

That's it, Tommy. Now think you're an angel, and fly. JUMP!

Tommy closes his eyes and repeats--

TOMMY

I can fly, I can fly, I can fly...

Tommy jumps. A belly-flop in the snow.

TOMMY

You can't fly, can you, Henry?

HENRY

Well, not really. But at least I tried. And that's all that matters.

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

HENRY

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

BACK TO THE MOTHERS

Mrs. Maltin sees Henry grabbing Tommy's shoulders and then kneeling next to her son.

MRS. MALTIN

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

Mrs. Maltin's sloshing NOISE become marching SOUNDS. When the sounds end, she stands over Tommy, taking him by the collar like a prisoner.

She faces Henry whose friendly face leaves her speechless. The marching SOUNDS begin again.

FROM HENRY'S POV

Mrs. Maltin tosses Dixie a smug face as she passes by - someone who has assembled the facts, weighed the hearsay evidence, and has come to a verdict. He whispers--

HENRY

Game's over.

EXT. MAIN STREET -- LATER

The storm has passed and left behind an eerie, white landscape, an absence of color as far as the eye can see. Danny, Dixie and Henry slish their way onto Main Street.

DIXIE

See the way the bitch looked at me?

HENRY

Dixie! Please! Watch your mouth.

DANNY

Yeah, watch your mouth.

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

DIXIE

Smart move, turd-for-brains.

HENRY

How is the rest of the world going to understand you if every time you're angry you say bitch or ...

DANNY

She called me a turd-for-brains.

HENRY

I can handle this, Danny. What are you trying to say, Dixie?

DIXIE

OK. How about jerk? Is jerk OK?

HENRY

I guess that word is alright.

DIXIE

Good. Then Danny is a jerk and Mrs.
Maltin is a ... butt-head.

Henry shakes his head as if he's lost hope. Groans.

HENRY

I'm tired. And hungry. Let's eat.

Henry pulls a dime from his pocket. Danny, a quarter.

DIXIE

My funds are low at the moment.

Henry pulls out a twenty. With renewed spirits, they briskly
head for the diner.

INT. DINER - LATE MORNING

The three hover over their menus like scavengers. After a
couple of seconds, Dixie's mother stands over them.

MRS. SWANSON

See you picked up another stray dog.

HENRY

Yeah, but he's a smart mutt.

Dixie notices Danny's fixation on her mother's breasts. He
giggles, covers his mouth. Dixie kicks him under the table.

DANNY

Ooow! What's your problem?

HENRY

Hey, hey. Stop it. Pony up, guys.

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

HENRY

We can't spend more than this.

MRS. SWANSON

Well, aren't we the big spenders.

(to Danny)

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

DANNY

No poison. Pancakes. A lot of butter.

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

DANNY

And I'll take some sausage and
bacon. And those stringy potatoes.

MRS. SWANSON

That's number three. Comes with
coffee and juice.

DANNY

No coffee. But I'll take 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.

MRS. SWANSON

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

Danny nods, then Mrs. Swanson turns to Dixie and waits.

DIXIE

With the two cents 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

Fourteen dollars give or take.

HENRY

Just give me a bowl of Cheerios.
Got to have enough for a tip.

Mrs. Swanson buries the pencil in her hair and disappears. Henry strums his fingers on the table. Danny does the same.

HENRY

Well. Whuddya want to talk about?

DANNY

The waitress. Her Godzilla boobs.

HENRY

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

DANNY

Ooops. She's your mother? How come you don't have boobs like her?

DIXIE

You eat an extra bowl of stupid this morning? You're getting a noogie if you don't shut your hole.

In a MONTAGE, Henry lectures about proper language again. His voice warbles while Danny's and Dixie's reaction convey boredom. We jump out of the montage, sensing Henry's homily was a long one since Mrs. Swanson appears with the food.

MRS. SWANSON

Number three with two sides. And a number two with extra bacon. And pancakes and sausage. All out of Cherrios, Henry. You got number two for the same price as the cereal.

Mrs. Swanson puts the plates down accordingly and leaves. Dixie attacks her food; seems to be no stranger to hunger. A snowdrift falls from the canopy in front of the window and scatters in the wind. Henry looks out as we transition to--

EXT. RIVERBED - CONTINUOUS

Wheezy and Joe nestle next to each other with several blankets on them. We transition back to the diner.

EXT. MAIN STREET - OUTSIDE THE DINER - EARLY AFTERNOON

Henry saunters out of the diner and joins Dixie and Danny in a walk down Main Street. The three pony-up to the pharmacy window. The 'Help Wanted' sign blocks their view.

HENRY

I'm going to apply for that job.

DIXIE

Why? You don't need money.

HENRY

That's not true. I do.

DANNY

I have to go home. It's getting late and my father ... you know.

Danny doesn't complete the sentence and no one makes him. He leaves and Dixie and Henry collapse on the bench closeby.

HENRY

You know, sometimes I lose track of where I am. I go into this tunnel like I'm dreaming. I'm told that's an anxiety attack. It happened the other day with your mother.

DIXIE

That was very strange, Henry. Not normal. You should see someone.

HENRY

It lasts for hours sometimes. I'm a nutcase. That's why Sharon filed an injunction. Incapacitation. Sounds like a medical term, doesn't it? I get twenty dollars a day to spend. So, you see? I need a job. I need it for Christmas presents. But I don't think Asa will hire me.

DIXIE

You know I got an idea. Listen up...

INT. ALDER'S PHARMACY - PRESCRIPTION COUNTER

Asa Adler works prescriptions at the counter. Henry saunters in eventually showing up in front of him.

ASA

Hello, Henry. What are you up to?

HENRY

Some storm, huh, Asa?

A CUSTOMER appears and Asa leans in and rings a bell.

PETE KRUCHUK, bushy eyebrows, looks crotchety without trying, comes out from the back and tends to the customers.

ASA

I'm sorry about your wife, Henry.

HENRY

Yeah. So am I, Asa.

ASA

So, what can I do for you?

HENRY

I got an important question to ask you about the help wanted sign.

ASA

Yeah, we need a stock boy.

HENRY

Well, I'm your boy. I need a job.

Asa stops filling prescriptions and--

ASA

This is hardly a place for you to fulfill personal goals, Henry.

Dixie appears from nowhere.

DIXIE

I have a problem. Every time I eat Mexican, I get the farts. I looked around but I can't find anything.

HENRY

Take beano. Next to the Vitamin section. Aisle three. Right side.

DIXIE

Oh, thank you, good sir.

Dixie vanishes and Henry returns to Asa.

HENRY

I need a job, Asa.

Kruchuk slams the register closed, and shoots a look of disgust at Asa before heading into the back office.

ASA

Henry, I don't remember you ever needing a job.

HENRY

Christmas is here 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

There is no tax on that stuff.

(to Asa)

It's a long story. I'm a much more mature person than I was years ago.

DIXIE (O.S.)

There's two prices marked on this.

HENRY

It's the lower price.

ASA

Henry! I know what you two are up to. So please! Stop the charade.

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. The Foot Products, in aisle two ...

ASA

Okay, Henry. Okay. Be here tomorrow. Eight-thirty sharp.

HENRY

Thank you. I'll be here.

After Henry leaves -

KRUCHUK

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

ASA

He had Post Traumatic Stress a long time ago. He's in control now.

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

ASA

He's a little slow, perhaps. But not stupid. I hired him and that's that.

INT. CHARLES PETZINGER'S KITCHEN -- NEXT DAY

Charles scrubs a pan with broad strokes. Bottles of wine and whiskey hover by the sink. AA pamphlets litter the counter.

Danny walks in, opens the pantry door and takes out a box of cereal. He retrieves a bowl from the dishwasher, sits at the kitchen table and serves himself a bowl of dry cereal. Charles slaps a quart of milk 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 don't contradict everything ...

Charles pounds on the table knocking cereal out of the bowl. Danny picks up his books to leave, but Charles traps him by the door. Charles raises his arm showing his son the back of his hand. Slowly, Charles brings his hand down and moves away. Danny leaves as if nothing had happened.

DANNY (O.S.)

I'm trying out for the school play today. So, I'll home late.

Charles rushes to the refrigerator, takes out a used wine bottle and slugs down the little that's left in the bottle.

INT. HENRY'S BEDROOM - MORNING

In a button-down shirt, Henry inspects himself in the mirror.

He tries to tie a knot. The thin end of the tie is either too long or short. Eventually, he gets it right.

EXT. ALDER'S PHARMACY -- MORNING

Henry, successfully dressed, peeks in the window. The clock on the wall says 8:20. He sees Asa and taps on the pane.

SERIES OF SCENES - all MOS

-- Asa shows Henry the inventory room, then takes him down the aisles and points to the empty places on the shelves.

-- Henry stocking shelves from the inventory room - JUMP CUTS show a shelf go from half stocked to fully stocked.

-- Henry directs a CUSTOMER down an aisle for a product.

-- Henry plays with a baby; the mother smiles.

-- Henry talks with a customer while Kruchuk looks on. Icy.

END THE SERIES AND TRANSITION TO--

THE PHARMACY COUNTER

Asa spots Robin through the window getting out of her car. He gulps the air as the door flings open. He steals a Zen moment to calm himself, as if its the bottom of the ninth with bases loaded. Suddenly, Robin is in front of him.

ROBIN

Why did you give my father a job?

She quickly leaves before he can respond. She finds Henry, then walks back to Asa - throws a finger at him like a dart.

ROBIN

You should've called me first.

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

ROBIN

Dad! What are you doing?

HENRY

I need Christmas money. I don't want loans from you or the estate.

Robin takes Henry by the hand.

ROBIN

Dad! Remember your last job? You got fired after a week because you set all the alarm clocks in housewares to go off at 5-minute intervals and then you--

Her demeanor transitions to a more caring one as Henry kneels to work on the bottom shelf. Robin joins him.

ROBIN

Remember you said you wanted Mom to forgive you? Is that what this is all about? You need absolution?

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

HENRY

I've changed, Robin.

ROBIN

Have it your way, Dad.

She leaves as Henry continues working.

ROBIN (O.S.)

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

As Henry watches Robin's car leave, he notices Dixie coming from a dark alley with a headset on. She dances with a tribal elegance, bumps into a woman, swirls, and continues walking.

A shadow appears in the alley. Henry tries to focus. Too far away. Too dark. A flint sparks, a flame ignites illuminating a face Henry now recognizes. Jason lights his cigarette.

INT. ALDER'S PHARMACY -- EVENING

Henry hands Asa a piece of paper and, as he leaves--

HENRY

That's a list of products you're low on. The shelves are full.

ASA

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

INT. HENRY'S BEDROOM -- NIGHT

Henry flops down on the pillow, exhausted.

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

A much older Derick leans back in a chair with a cigar in his mouth, his feet on the desk and the phone to his ear. Blood drips from his boots. The wall calendar reads June, 2040.

DERICK

If you accept this offer you will have a good day. Reject it, a very bad day. You want to have a good day, don't you, Mrs. Cox?

MRS. COX (V.O.)

Yes. Indeed I do.

DERICK

You're in the Book of Shame. Bottom rung of life's ladder. A social misfit. I offer you a chance for a new life in a world of cornucopia. I offer an indulgence. All you have to do is make monthly payments and your soul will be wiped clean. You know what an indulgence is, Mrs. Cox?

MRS. COX (V.O.)

Yes. I'm catholic. In fact, in the tenth century our family purchased indulgences at a discount. Let me tell you, Derick, this deal you're talking about sounds real good. What do I have to do to take advantage of such an opportunity?

DERICK

Write a check for \$10,000 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.

He cackles!

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

Derick's cackle integrates with the SOUND of a disc jockey's laugh - Sharon's clock-radio alarm. She covers her ears with her pillow, then rolls over and turns off the alarm.

INT. CLARION COLLECTION AGENCY -- AFTERNOON

Sharon talks into a headset while stretching in her cubicle.

SHARON

I've got copies of credit and loan applications here, Mrs. Shuler.

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

SHARON

Yes. I know the debts were in Mr. Shuler's name. These applications were signed by him just before he died, and you spent thousands of dollars while he was sick, Mrs. Shuler.

Sharon spots something in the folder. She whispers--

SHARON

Well, you sly old hen ...

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

SHARON

I finally put it together, Mrs. Shuler. Your signature on a letter in front of me matches your husband's signature on the loan application. You forged his name!

Sharon stands up and sees Robin walking into the office.

SHARON

That's jail time, you bad girl. I'll report you unless you can get creative on how you're going to pay for these bills. Have a nice day, Mrs. Shuler. I'll be in touch.

Sharon hangs up as Robin approaches. She stretches cracking one of her vertebrae, preparing for another kind of battle.

SHARON

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

ROBIN

Let's go to lunch.

SHARON

It's that bad, huh?

ROBIN

Dad got a job at Adler's Pharmacy.

SHARON

Wow! Really? Why did he do that?

ROBIN

Money for Christmas shopping and he won't accept any from the estate or me. I think he's acting out. So, let's do lunch, shall we?

SHARON

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

ROBIN

You know, you've worked here for so long, your arrogance defines you, Sharon. Let's go. I promise I want talk about the injunction.

Robin leaves the cubicle in a huff. Sharon grabs her purse and hurries to catch her sister. She grabs Robin's arm.

SHARON

You have potential. But you emptied all the cylinders at once. Always save some spit for another round. Your adversary may have a rebuttal. Smile. I have to keep up an image.

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

INT. BAR-RESTAURANT SOMEWHERE -- DAY

Robin sits across from Sharon, both having a glass of wine.

SHARON

On the surface we look like we're best of friends, you know that?

ROBIN

We used to be friends, Sharon. I remember when winning at hopscotch was as competitive as we ever got.

SHARON

Oh, boy. And away we go ...

ROBIN

I remember when Flower was a name that fit you. It was before you fell in love with 'the car mechanic'.

SHARON

Why don't you just shut up?

A nerve has been struck.

ROBIN

Come on. If Mom didn't intervene, you'd be married to a greasy nobody without a high school education.

SHARON

He was a good man. He would've stayed in Coalsville if Mom didn't scare him away and call him a loser.

ROBIN

Then came the congressman's son, Mr. Potatohead. Excuse me, John Stone. That was a great plan. Get pregnant. Suck Mom in. You knew she'd want you to have the baby and marry him. You thought she was going to change the estate because the little bambino was on its way. You got trumped again.

The waiter comes over and serves them their lunch.

LATER

The waiter slips the check on the table, then leaves. Just as Robin looks at the check, Sharon snatches it out of her hand.

SHARON

No. You've always had the upper hand with money. Not today.

ROBIN

Don't do this, Sharon.

SHARON

Do what? Pay the bill?

ROBIN

The injunction!

SHARON

Ah! Bravo, Robin! You kept to your word. You didn't say anything about the hearing during our lunch.

She takes out her wallet and as she prepares to pay -

SHARON

Tell me something. What do you say when someone asks how I'm doing? Do you say 'Oh, Sharon is being ... Sharon' and they all politely nod, because they know I am, always will be, the wayward sister. The baby-killer who'll never amount to anything. Sharon, the unsuccessful sibling of Robin Wolff. How did Mom always put it 'The Defender of the wrongly accused'. Well, Mom's dead, and I've had enough.

Sharon gets up, flings money down as a tip, and leaves.

INT. ALDER'S PHARMACY -- EVENING

Henry grabs his coat. He waves to Asa from across the store. Asa gives a thumbs up sign as Henry exits the store.

EXT. MAIN STREET -- EVENING

Henry quivers from a chill in the air. As he walks up Main Street, he hears groans in an alleyway. He turns into it and spots Dixie sitting with her chin on her chest. She looks up. Her head plops back down. Wasted.

DIXIE

Go away. I don't ... want ... you
to see me ... this way.

Henry steps in. A shadow moves closeby. A lighter flicks. A flame. And then a face. Henry ignores Jason, steps forward and kneels beside Dixie.

HENRY

Let's go to the police.

JASON

If they see her like this, it's the
third offense. She'll spend five
years in the slammer.

Henry stands and faces Jason.

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 sees something that should not be explored. Henry then looks down at Dixie who now seems sound asleep.

HENRY

Don't lose hope, Sweetie.

JASON

What's hope going to do for her?

Henry leaves, but he stops before exiting the alleyway.

HENRY

If it were not for hope, the heart
would break.

INT. DINER -- MORNING

Henry sits in a booth peering out the window to Main Street. Mrs. Swanson sits across from him, in mid-conversation.

MRS. SWANSON

For a while there she was healthy.
The facial tics even went away.
Hate that when your hope gets you
up then you come tumbling down.
She's going to hell, Henry. The
devil's got her. God is mean.

Henry shakes his head in disagreement.

HENRY

Think of it this way, Mrs. Swanson. Imagine you taped a World Series baseball game because you had to go to work and couldn't watch it live. And at work, despite your best efforts not to learn the outcome, you found out that your team won.

MRS. SWANSON

Okay, Henry. I'll play along.

HENRY

So you go home and watch the game you just taped. Your team's losing, but you don't get excited. Why?

MRS. SWANSON

Because I already know they won.

HENRY

Exactly. That's how it is with God. He knows the outcome. Doesn't get excited. He's patient.

MRS. SWANSON

But what if God knows Dixie's going to overdose and die and go to hell.

Henry lets out with a good laugh.

MRS. SWANSON

What's so funny.

HENRY

Dixie is a precious being. I don't need to tell you that. She was even more precious when she was born. God wouldn't've created her if He knew she was going to hell. God doesn't put innocent infants in harm's way like that. That's immoral. No Dixie's not going to hell, Mrs. Swanson.

They continue talking as we transition to -

EXT. AT THE BRIDGE -- MORNING

Joe sleeps as his toes stick out of torn socks. Henry walks by and takes a pair of wool socks from his pocket with the initials HW boldly embroidered on them and tosses them down the embankment. They come to rest by Joe's leg.

EXT. PHARMACY - CONTINUOUS

Dixie, dirty-looking, sits on a bench by the pharmacy. Henry suddenly shows up. He moves her CD set and sits next to her.

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 vigorously like a terrible Richard Nixon impression.

HENRY

You won't have me to kick around
anymore.

Dixie offers a half a smile. Too much pain to do much more.

DIXIE

Henry, I'm in trouble, and it's not
with the cops.

She moans and holds her stomach. Her grief is real.

HENRY

You don't look so good.

DIXIE

What gave it away, dear Watson.
Even Wheezy looks better than me.

She tries to speak, but the pain is too much. She bends over, moans, then rises.

DIXIE

I owe Jason two hundred dollars,
and he has threatened to hurt me if
I don't give him the money.

HENRY

I have to go to work.

DIXIE

Oh! Mr. Big shot has a job now. Too important for his old friends.

Dixie grunts, as if she instantly regretted saying this.

DIXIE

I'll pay you back. Honest.

HENRY

Life is hard, Dixie ...

DIXIE

Life is hard? Oh, you're not going to do this to me now, are you?

Dixie walks in circles with her hands twirling in the air. With her back to Henry -

DIXIE

You gonna 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 and moans in pain.

DIXIE

You retard. No ... no. I didn't mean that. This is not me ...

She rises and turns in time to see Henry disappear into the darkness of the pharmacy. She dispels a behemoth growl, snatches the headset, puts it on, listens for a brief moment, then rips off the headset. The music doesn't help anymore.

INT. ALDER'S PHARMACY -- AFTERNOON

Asa is in the middle of instructing Henry on the charge card machine when MRS. BELTRAN (40s), with a terrible-looking knotted hairstyle, steps up to the counter.

ASA

I'm behind on the prescriptions. I think you got the hang of it now.

Asa pats Henry on the back and leaves. While Henry scans Mrs. Beltran's items, he notices her checking each price against the scanner window on top of the register.

AT THE PRESCRIPTION COUNTER

Mr. Kruchuk and Asa both work on a prescription. Mr. Kruchuk hisses with his teeth, like a goat. He's making a statement.

ASA

You know, Pete? I'm getting awfully tired of your objections. When your brother worked here he did half the work Henry does. So, back off.

BACK TO HENRY AT THE REGISTER

While Henry scans items, he glances through the window and sees Dixie and Jason across the street. Jason pulls her into the alleyway and they disappear into the darkness.

MRS. BELTRAN

Henry, don't check out any more items. I only have a twenty.

Henry scrolls the paper receipt spindle and begins adding.

HENRY

Well, you are very close to that amount now, Mrs. Beltran.

While she struggles to make a decision over the remaining two items, Henry tries to catch a glimpse through the window again, but Jason and Dixie are still hidden in the alleyway.

MRS. BELTRAN

I need this ice pack for Lawrence. His back is very bad these days.

She nudges the ice pack forward and removes the hair spray.

HENRY

I know the importance of hair spray, Mrs. Beltran. When my daughters were younger, it was east of Krakatoa if you touched their hair. Sharon had that Spanish Moss look. You know, like a Ferris Wheel. I think she was just making a fashion statement.

Mrs. Beltran's wide-eyed expression is between a laugh and a nod. Henry scans the last item, then scans the hair spray and hits the total key.

HENRY

That's twenty-six seventy.

Mrs. Beltran appears very upset. Henry takes the twenty, and then Henry scribbles on a pad.

HENRY

I'll just keep a tab here of how much you owe. You can pay me later.

MRS. BELTRAN

Oh, what a dear you are.

He rushes to the exit door and opens it for Mrs. Beltran who nods good-bye. Henry spots Dixie and Jason across the street.

ON JASON AND DIXIE

Jason grabs Dixie's CD player, removes the CD from the 'play' chamber, and snaps it in two. He throws the pieces at her.

DIXIE

Hey, that's my favorite CD.

JASON

That's going to be your legs if you don't get me my money by Monday.

Sobbing, Dixie saunters along in slow, stiff strides and casually drops the broken CD pieces in a nearby wastebasket.

EXT./INT. MAIN STREET PAWNSHOP STOREFRONT -- EARLY EVENING

Dixie wipes her tears, walks in and is met by cigar smoke right away. 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

Get outta here unless you got money.

DIXIE

It's like Fort Knox in here. You got everything locked behind glass counters.

OWNER

Thieves have ways.

She looks around and finally spots something.

DIXIE

How much is the 1913 quarter?

OWNER

Fifteen dollars.

DIXIE

What if I want the whole folder?

The owner shrugs, indicating a lot of money.

DIXIE

I know someone who has a collection only he's missing this one coin.

OWNER

Tell him I'll make him a deal.
Twenty-five dollars.

DIXIE

I thought you said fifteen?

OWNER

Just went up. Inflation.

INT. ALDER'S PHARMACY -- CONTINUOUS

Henry checks an item for MRS. CURTIS, shabby clothes, 30s.
She plops all her items on the counter, leans in and whispers-

CUSTOMER

Mrs. Beltran says you might
consider putting this on a tab.

HENRY

You live on Pelham Street, right,
Mrs. Curtis? The Projects?

MRS. CURTIS

Yes. I need baby formula, and I
don't have enough money. I was told
you might be able to help me.

Henry inspects the items Mrs. Curtis has on the counter.

HENRY

Do you really need pipe tobacco ...

MRS. CURTIS

If James doesn't have his tobacco
he's one swift pain in the ass.

HENRY

You have to give a little here,
Mrs. Curtis. Even I know baby
formula is more important than pipe
tobacco.

It's a hard decision, but she pushes the pipe tobacco aside.

Henry checks out the few items and the total comes to \$15.30.
Mrs. Curtis hands Henry some money, which is not enough.

HENRY

Don't worry. I'll cover it. I'll put
you on a tab. Pay me later, okay?

Henry scribbles on a pad while she thanks Henry and leaves.
After Mrs. Curtis exits, Asa and Kruchuk come out of the back
room. Asa walks to the exit door and locks it.

ASA

Henry, we saw you on the monitor
ringing up items for Mrs. Curtis.
She didn't pay for some of them.

HENRY

She didn't have enough money. I've
been keeping a record over here.

Henry hands Asa the list.

HENRY

I was going pay them when I got
paid. If you want me to pay now ...

Henry reaches in his pocket, but Asa stops him.

ASA

Henry, I can't keep you here any
longer. I can't run a successful
business if you give items away.
Where's the profit in that?

Henry takes off his apron, slowly folds it, and places it
down on the counter. He walks around Kruchuk for his coat.

HENRY

I understand?

He puts on his coat and walks towards the exit door.

ASA

If you understand, then why did you
do it, Henry?

Henry thinks for a few seconds before he answers.

HENRY

Because it was the right thing to do.

EXT. MAIN STREET - DAY

Henry walks across the street and starts window shopping.

LATER

He exits a store with several shopping bags, walks past a couple of windows, then stops in front of a music store. He checks his wallet and sighs.

Across the street he spots Mr. Kruchuk closing the pharmacy just as Sharon approaches him. After a few words, he opens the door and they go in.

INT. HENRY'S KITCHEN -- LATE MORNING

Henry throws the packages onto the table and takes several envelopes from a wicker basket. They are all empty.

BEDROOM

He checks a dresser drawer and dumps out several dollars from a sock. He checks the hamper - more money in a pants pocket.

EXT. MAIN STREET -- AFTERNOON

Henry walks out of the music store and spots Robin driving down Main Street. She stops at the light.

INT./EXT. ROBIN'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

Henry jumps in on the passenger side. Robin pulls over.

HENRY

Hi, Sweetie. I did all my Christmas shopping in one day.

ROBIN

That's nice, Dad. I just got back from talking with Asa.

Henry notices Dixie across the street carrying shopping bags. A couple of storefronts away he spots Sharon walking towards her. They meet.

ON DIXIE AND SHARON

SHARON

How are you, Dixie?

DIXIE

(with trepidation)

Fine.

SHARON

I understand you need money. Who doesn't, right? I have an interesting proposition for you.

DIXIE

What kind of proposition?

Sharon waves two one hundred-dollar bills in front of Dixie.

SHARON

I need information. Shall we walk?

BACK TO ROBIN AND HENRY IN THE CAR

ROBIN

He told me you gave Mrs. Curtis baby formula and you were going to pay for it. He said it was a noble thing to do and he's not angry.

HENRY

I'm not angry with him, either.

ROBIN

Good. Now let's forget about Asa for a moment. I need to talk to you about the hearing on Monday.

HENRY

I wonder why they call it 'the hearing'. Maybe they should call it 'the saying' since everyone has a lot to say to the Judge. Or 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?

Robin strums her fingers on the steering wheel. She waits while Henry looks out the window. No Dixie or Sharon.

HENRY

What do you want to tell me?

ROBIN

One reason I didn't want you to work was because I didn't want anything like this to happen. Now Sharon and I will be bumping heads over this.

Robin pulls back out into the street. While she drives -

HENRY

I wish I would've paid attention to the little things better. I might have made a difference, you know? Hey, do remember when you and Sharon were toddlers you both would sit on my feet? I'd walk around like Frankenstein. Remember?

Henry rocks his shoulders back and forth. Robin remembers.

HENRY

We used to laugh a lot back then. You used to think I was funny.

ROBIN

Sometimes you still are funny, Dad.

HENRY

It's not you I'm worried about. You can still laugh.

(MORE)

HENRY (CONT'D)

That's what I mean when I say I wish I paid attention to the little things better like 'Why isn't Sharon laughing today?' If I was more aware back then, maybe I could've done something.

ROBIN

Oh, Dad. What could you have done?

HENRY

Push harder to get your mother to accept that car mechanic who Sharon loved so much. I've done a lot of thinking. When he left town that's when Sharon stopped laughing.

Robin sides with her compassion and bites her lip.

ROBIN

You're still coming over to my place on Christmas Eve, right?

HENRY

Yes. Hey. You want to give me a nice Christmas present? This won't cost much. I promise.

Robin is all ears.

HENRY

Can Dixie and her mom come over on Christmas Eve?

Robin tries to don a smile but can't quite manage it.

INT. BAR-RESTAURANT ON MAIN STREET - EARLY EVENING

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. I'm really committed to being clean.

SHARON

But this is a special dinner. Tell me more about Danny and Wheezy.

DIXIE

I feel like I'm snitching on him.

SHARON

I'm his daughter, for chrissakes.
Believe me, this is helping him.

The waiter comes over with another glass of wine and leaves.

Through a SERIES OF SHOTS (MOS) Dixie's motions depict the backpack incident with Danny, and Henry swinging on a rope; more wine is served and Dixie's tongue loosens further about the: park, the snowball fights and, finally, Dixie extends her arms, flying off the bench. Then we jump out to -

DIXIE

Henry is the father I never had.
Danny is the brother I never had.

SHARON

Okay, don't get too oozy on me.
Don't want you to be advertising
I'm the sister you never had.

Sharon motions to the waiter for the check, then taps Dixie's wine glass and puts a coaster on her own. Sharon pulls out a paperback and the two hundred dollar bills from her purse.

SHARON

You come to court Monday and tell a
couple of these stories to the
Judge and then I'll give you this.

Sharon slips the bills in between the pages of the book, then pulls the money back out again. She hands the book to Dixie.

SHARON

When you come up to talk to the
Judge on Monday, leave this book on
my desk. After you tell these
harmless tales I'll sneak the money
in the book. When you go back to
your seat just take the book back.
Simple? If I see the book on my
desk, then I know we have a deal.
I'm so glad we had this chat. Keep
up the good work getting sober.

The waiter comes with the check and a glass of wine. Sharon pushes the glass to Dixie, takes the check and leaves.

INT. MRS. MALTIN'S KITCHEN -- DAY

Mrs. Maltin watches Tommy play outside while doing the dishes. He zooms around with a cape on, and then ducks into the barn.

INT. MALTIN'S BARN - CONTINUOUS

Tommy pretends to be beating back imaginary foes with a wooden stick, wielding it like a sword.

TOMMY

It's just Batman and Robin fighting
for truth and justice.

Tommy fights unseen evil-doers up a ladder to the loft's door. He flings open the door and drives all the invisible bad guys out of the barn and into the wind.

BACK IN THE KITCHEN

Mrs. Maltin sees Tommy at the edge of the loft door, then he disappears into the darkness. Without warning, and with cape extended, he bursts out of the loft door and falls twelve feet to the ground. A cracking SOUND. Bones breaking.

INT. HOSPITAL -- NURSES' STATION -- NIGHT

Henry politely waits for the nurse to look up. When she does,

HENRY

Tommy Maltin?

OUTSIDE ROOM 101

Henry approaches the room, opens the door and peeks in. Tommy lies unconscious with his anxious RELATIVES by Tommy's bed.

MRS. MALTIN

That's him. That's Henry Wolff.

Henry backs up against the wall, frightened. The door swings open and a MAN, (20s), burly, grabs Henry by his jacket. Mrs. Maltin comes out and touches the man on the shoulder. He puts his fist down but keeps it clenched.

MAN

Why the hell were you playing with
kids, anyway? Wuddya, a pervert?

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. The phone rings and she disconnects the answering machine.

LIVING ROOM

Robin enters from the kitchen. The coin collection catches her attention. She opens up the folder just as Henry prances down the stairs in a suit and tie. The folder is empty.

ROBIN

The media's going crazy. Some news idiot reported Tommy's in a coma because you taught him he could fly. But I called the hospital. He's got a broken arm and he wasn't in a coma. He has a concussion.

HENRY

The important thing is, he's alive.

ROBIN

Yes. Of course.
(waves the folder)
Dixie stole these, didn't she?

HENRY

No, she would never ...

ROBIN

Don't try to protect her. Never mind. We need to stay focused. Stay focused ... stay focused ...

She tosses the folder on the table next to a wrapped Christmas GIFT. As they leave, Henry grabs the gift.

INT. ROBIN'S CAR -- CONTINUOUS

Robin and Henry watch the ambulance lights flash as they slowly pass by the bridge. They see Wheezy who sits by the bridge watching a gurney being hoisted from the riverbed. A white sheet covers a body except for a foot covered with a dirty sock that has the HW insignia on it.

INT. ROBIN'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

Robin turns the corner and approaches the courthouse. She spots a TV van and newspaper REPORTERS and makes an immediate turn, out of media view.

ROBIN

This is exactly what I didn't want.
Now all these jerks in the media
want to know why Tommy jumped from
his barn. Why? Because sixty-year-
old Henry Wolff told him he could
fly, that's why.

INT. BACK ENTRANCE TO THE COURTHOUSE

A few moments later Robin drags Henry through the back entrance. They sneak around the corner to the courtroom.

ROBIN

You don't say anything to anyone.
You let me do the talking.

A few reporters see them. Henry holds onto Robin's arm as they push their way through the chaos and into the courtroom.

INSIDE THE COURT

As they enter Henry summons his best Quasimodo impersonation.

HENRY

Sanctuary. Sanctuary.

Several 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 already sitting at the table to the right.

SHARON

This circus is not my fault.

Judge Brady storms out of his chambers.

JUDGE BRADY

Clear the courtroom except for the Wolff family. There's no story here. Now go. All of you. Scram.

The reporters grumble, but they leave.

JUDGE BRADY

This Tommy thing has put a new spin on this. The Maltin's are talking law suit and the DA wants me to make sure Henry's not a public problem.

ROBIN

Are you saying you might levy a criminal judgement today?

JUDGE BRADY

No. No. Emotions were running high yesterday. Tommy's doing well today. This is just an informal hearing.

ROBIN

See what you started, Sharon?

SHARON

Dad shouldn't've told Tommy he could fly. He made his own bed.

The Judge bangs the gavel a couple of times and notices Henry is staring straight ahead at nothing in particular.

JUDGE BRADY

Okay, Sharon, what do you have?

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

I object.

JUDGE BRADY

I'll be the only one who objects today, Robin. If you want to speak, then raise your hand.

Sharon returns to her seat. The Judge studies the printout.

JUDGE BRADY

Henry, can you tell me more about this? It says that you took out hundreds of dollars in a two week spell. No pressure. Take your time.

The Judge folds his hands, waits for his response. Finally -

HENRY

Some money was for Wheezy and Joe. Friends who live under the bridge.

JUDGE BRADY

Oh, yes. I know Wheezy. She's been before me a couple times for vagrancy.

HENRY

She said Joe didn't have enough to eat and needed medicine. So, I got the money for her. Joe died today.

JUDGE BRADY

I am sorry. But are you saying you withdrew all this money for them?

HENRY

No. I took money out a few times because Dixie owed money to a very bad person in town.

The Judge notices Dixie peeking through the rear door window.

JUDGE BRADY

Is that Dixie I see back there?

SHARON

Yes, Judge. I asked her to come here as well as Mr. Kruchuk, the co-owner of the Main Street pharmacy. They both have important testimony.

JUDGE BRADY

Is there anyone else?

SHARON

No, Judge.

JUDGE BRADY

All right. All right. Go get them.

Sharon leaves. After a few seconds she returns with Dixie and Mr. Kruchuk who both take a seat behind the bar.

Dixie puts a small box wrapped in brown paper on the top of the book and places it on the seat next to her. She smiles at Henry who reaches into his pocket, retrieves the wrapped Christmas gift, waves it and points to her. She acknowledges this and picks up her gift, waves it and points at him.

JUDGE BRADY

Who should I talk to first, Sharon?

SHARON

Mr. Kruchuk. He's going to shed some light on my father's behavior while working at the pharmacy.

Robin goes to object, but the Judge throws his hand up like a traffic cop. She reclines.

JUDGE BRADY

Mr. Kruchuk, come up here and sit next to me. Keep me company.

Mr. Kruchuk does as he is told.

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

While Kruchuk talks his voice becomes garbled. We hear Robin object, but little else as 'la la land' becomes a peaceful place for Henry. After several seconds, Henry snaps out of it and Kruchuk's voice becomes clear and normal.

BACK TO THE SCENE

KRUCHUK

Once you establish credit for one person you have do it for everyone. That's the law.

(MORE)

KRUCHUK (CONT'D)

We wouldn't last as a business if we had a credit policy, especially with the people from the South of Main Street. They're unreliable.

JUDGE BRADY

Okay. Anything else. No. Good. Go back to work if you want. Don't talk to the press, you hear?

Mr. Kruchuk nods, steps down and leaves.

ROBIN

Judge, I would like hear Mr. Adler's side of the story.

JUDGE BRADY

We can do that, but for now ...

He looks to Dixie and pats the chair next to him.

She gets up with the book and a present. She lays the book on the table close to Sharon then takes a seat by the Judge. She fiddles with the Christmas gift. The Judge eyes the present.

DIXIE

It's for Henry.

Dixie and Henry trade smiles again.

JUDGE BRADY

Well, it's good to see you when you are not breaking the law. Now, I've been told Henry gave you money. If that's true, please tell me why?

DIXIE

To be honest, your Honor, I owed money for drugs. This guy waves some really good stuff in front of me and says I can pay later. It's hard to walk away from that. So, I create this situation where I owe money to this guy. He can hurt me real bad, Judge, so I can't tell you his name.

JUDGE BRADY

Okay, Dixie. I won't push you. But visit me sometime soon. There's help, if you want it.

(MORE)

JUDGE BRADY (CONT'D)

For now tell me more about Henry
and why Tommy thinks he can fly.

DIXIE

Henry, he's the only person in this
town who'll give me the time of
day. He's the only person I trust.
He's a little eccentric sometimes.
You know, like he jumps off the
roof on a rope ...

EXT. A BLOCK FROM THE COURTHOUSE - DAY

Wheezy approaches dragging a plastic bag. She staggers,
drunk. She checks out the scene in front of the courthouse. A
channel 3 TV van leaves, and the reporters start to disperse.

BACK TO THE COURTROOM

Dixie has just finished a piece of her testimony.

JUDGE BRADY

Maybe we'll talk to Danny later
about the backpack thing. For now,
let me ask, when you were at the
park that day, did you hear Henry
tell Tommy he could fly? I mean,
literally jump-off-the-roof fly?

Dixie sneaks a peek 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

Including Tommy? Are you sure?

Dixie measures her thoughts leaving an opening for -

ROBIN

Judge, may I ask some questions?

The Judge takes his time to answer. Finally, he nods.

ROBIN

Dixie, if you consider yourself a
good friend of Henry's then why did
you steal Henry's coin collection?

DIXIE

I did no such thing. That's a lie.

ROBIN

Well, the coins are gone, Dixie.
And I saw you fondling them ...

DIXIE

Henry, I didn't take your coin
collection. I didn't. Honest.

ROBIN

Honest? Really? Let's bring your
mom here and let her talk about how
you've been HONEST over the years?

JUDGE BRADY

That's enough, Robin. You've made
your point. If you have nothing
else, you can go, Dixie.

Sharon slips the money in the book. Dixie sneaks to the table
and snatches it, then walks over to Henry and hands him a
gift. Henry quickly hands his gift to her and she walks to
the back of the room and sits down.

JUDGE BRADY

Is that all you have, Sharon?

SHARON

No. I have something else, Judge.

The Judge patiently waits while Sharon measures her thoughts.

SHARON

Our mother told us she fell in love
with Dad when he was functional and
charming. Then he went to Grenada,
but he came back a changed man.
Killing people can change a person,
I guess. According to her, he
developed a drinking problem. We
had a brother, your honor. I never
knew him. He died before I was
born. Crib death, we told everyone.

ROBIN

SHARON! STOP!

The Judge slams the gavel down hard and motions her to sit.

HENRY'S POV

In a SPFX moment, a stone house protects him - his 'la-la-land' for the moment - while we HEAR what is going on.

SHARON (O.S.)

One day, he wasn't out of the Army too long, my father came home drunk. Mom was doing the laundry. My Dad went upstairs and took Johnny out of his crib and brought him to his bedroom and put him on the bed.

While Robin yells objections above the sounds of a gavel pounding, the mortar between the stones loosen and the very rocks providing Henry protection now start to shift, move.

The mortar turns to sand and the stones fall one by one until they provide no protection at all. While out in the open, a fierce storm, black and evil, pounds against Henry's body.

BACK TO SCENE

While the Judge bangs his gavel a piece of wood goes flying into the air. Sharon stands and yells back over the BANG! BANG! BANG! of the gavel and Robin's (MOS) ranting.

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!

The last 'BANG' is heard and then the courtroom turns quiet. Everyone appears bewildered, confused, shocked and exhausted.

Henry sits down, appearing the calmest of all. In the midst of the quiet, the Judge slumps in his chair. Finally--

ROBIN

Judge, I want Asa Adler here. And Danny and Mr. Petzinger as well.

JUDGE BRADY

You have one hour to get them. I'm recessing until then. Anyone who wants a drink, come in my chambers.

LATER

Dixie and Henry are the only ones in the court. Dixie gets up with gift in hand, walks over to him and sits down.

HENRY

So, what do you think of me now?

DIXIE

I love you more than anyone else in this world. You forgive so easily.

HENRY

Let's open our presents, shall we?

They both open their presents. Henry giggles a little when he sees his, and Dixie tears up when she sees hers.

DIXIE

Talent Pool. My favorite CD ...

Dixie leaves without the CD. Henry picks the CD up and starts to follow her, but Sharon comes back into the courtroom. She looks at Henry and they share a smile.

HENRY

Thank you.

SHARON

For what?

HENRY

For freeing me. For freeing us.

Visibly shaken, she quickly recovers when Robin walks in with Asa and Charles. Danny appears and sees Henry.

DANNY

Wasssuuuup?

Henry's tears quickly sedates Danny who finds his father and sits next to him. 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

Asa Adler, Judge.

Robin motions Henry to sit, but he moves towards the exit.

ROBIN

Dad! What are you doing?

Henry comes back and kisses Robin on the head, then walks over to Sharon and kisses her on the head and whispers--

HENRY

Go find that car-guy, Sweetie.

Sharon gasps. As Henry exits--

HENRY

Judge, I'm sorry. I need to find Dixie. She's losing hope.

Henry vanishes before the Judge can object.

JUDGE BRADY

What needs to be done this hour can be done without him. Asa ...

The Judge motions for Asa to come forward. He takes a seat.

JUDGE BRADY

All right. Let's cut to the chase, Asa. Why did you fire Henry?

ASA

Judge, we lose too much revenue to thieves as it is. So, when we noticed Henry giving away things I got angry, mainly because I couldn't offer a defense for him to my partner. So, I had to fire him. But when I asked Henry why he did it, he said because it was the right thing to do. That's a powerful statement, if you think about it. It made me think about this town, how it's split between the haves and have-nots.

(MORE)

ASA (CONT'D)

The people on the south side give me most of my business and, because of Henry, it occurred to me, what's the harm in have a tab for these folks, especially for critical items like baby food.

EXT. COURTHOUSE STEPS -- DAY

Henry trots down the steps of the courthouse and looks up and down Main Street. He spots Wheezy pushing a cart.

HENRY

Have you seen Dixie?

Wheezy waves two one-hundred dollar bills and--

WHEEZY

Look! She gave me two C-notes.

(pointing)

Down ... one of those alleys.

HENRY

Thanks. Sorry to hear about Joe.

WHEEZY

He wanted to thank you for the socks.

As Henry quickens his pace towards the alleyways, he yells over his shoulder to Wheezy -

HENRY

Don't make any plans for Christmas. You're spending it with my daughter and I. First, let me find Dixie and then 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 more about you and Henry picking up rocks in his back yard during that bad snow storm.

Danny looks to his dad who nods for him to answer.

DANNY

The snow was coming down hard. While we were picking up the rocks I told him private stuff like I missed my mother and how I hated school, and I wanted to run away.

JUDGE BRADY

How did Henry respond, Danny?

DANNY

He said I should moon a funeral procession.

The Judge laughs, then motions for Danny to continue.

DANNY

Well, Henry started to put the rocks he picked up in my backpack instead of his. He kept doing that until mine got so heavy I threw it down. I called him a moron. But I didn't mean it. And then he knelt down and looked at me. You know, the way he looks at you. Makes you feel things. And he praised me for throwing the pack down. He said in real life I was trying to carry the world on my shoulders, stuff I didn't own and I should throw them on the ground just like I did with the backpack. Judge, Henry's a good man. He makes me laugh and he helps me not curse ...

JUDGE BRADY

Danny, no one's going to hurt Henry. I promise.

Charles raises his hand and the Judge acknowledges him.

CHARLES

Judge, I'm not the best of fathers, but I promise I'm gonna change that. I hated Henry because Danny ran to him for assurances I should have given him. I saw what he did with the rocks, so I snuck out to his shed with all the intentions of clocking him one. But then I heard Henry say Danny's mother loves him.

(MORE)

CHARLES (CONT'D)

And he also told my son that I loved and what he was seeing in me was a reaction to the loneliness I was feeling because my wife left.

(fading)

Henry told Danny no one had his back covered like I did. Then he told my son to forgive me ...

EXT. MAIN STREET ALLEYWAY -- CONTINUOUS

Jason stands over Dixie who is bruised and moaning.

JASON

Where's my money?

Just as Jason cocks his arm to hit her, Henry grabs his wrist from behind. Jason spins around to do battle but the two men just stare at each other for a few seconds.

JASON

She's all yours. She not worth beating on an old man.

Jason abruptly leaves and Henry sits down next to Dixie.

HENRY

You okay?

DIXIE

I feel just ducky.

Henry pulls out the 1913 coin from his pocket, and then hands Dixie the CD gift she left behind.

HENRY

I thought this was your favorite CD. Why did you leave it?

DIXIE

Because I hocked my CD player and my ankle bracelet to buy that stupid coin.

HENRY

Really? Wow! And I used my coin collection to buy the CD.

They both think about it for a second, then laugh. Henry kisses the coin and puts it in his pocket.

HENRY

I'm going to start the collection
all over again.

INT. COURTROOM - CONTINUOUS

The Judge folds his hands and sighs.

JUDGE BRADY

A very enlightening day, folks. I'll
make a decision after the holidays.
Meantime, don't anyone leave town.

Before the Judge can bang the gavel, Mrs. Maltin walks in
with Tommy who's healthy except for the cast on his arm.

MRS. MALTIN

If we're not too late, I think
Tommy has something to say.

JUDGE BRADY

We were about to adjourn but ...
Tommy, come over here so I can sign
your cast.

Tommy walks over to the bench and the Judge signs the cast.

MONTAGE

-- Tommy sits next to the Judge and begins speaking (MOS).

-- Henry helps Dixie up, but she limps terribly due to a
sprained ankle

-- (MOS) As Tommy's makes motions like he's throwing
snowballs, the SOUND of a truck engine slowly builds.

-- Henry picks Dixie up and carries her. The engine sound
becomes louder. We stay on Henry carrying Dixie while we hear
the OS voices from the courthouse.

JUDGE BRADY (O.S.)

Now Tommy, did Mr. Wolff say you
could really fly?

JUMP CUTS between the truck barreling down Main Street and
Henry and Dixie. As they recite (AD-LIB) Twain's poem *Dance
Like Nobody's Watching*, the video stays on them while the
courthouse voices continue and overplays Henry and Dixie.

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 be a pilot if I put my mind to it. I knew I couldn't fly in real life.

Henry carries Dixie across the street and Henry sees the truck a little too late as it 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 MONTAGE

INT. COURTROOM

All eyes and ears are on Tommy.

JUDGE BRADY

But if you knew you couldn't fly, 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 ...

SUPER - "ONE YEAR LATER"

INT. CHURCH - SOMEWHERE ON MAIN STREET - NIGHT

A typical AA room - a large table, a podium, rows of chairs, a refrigerator, coffee pot, etc. Dixie, alone, is arranging AA literature. Charles enters and begins making coffee.

DIXIE

How's my buddy doing?

CHARLES

He's okay. He's in the school play this year. Gotta come and see him.

DIXIE

I wouldn't miss that for anything.

Robin walks in and they all AD-LIB their greetings.

DIXIE

I'm so glad you could make it.

ROBIN

You better not talk bad about me.

DIXIE

How are you and Asa doing?

ROBIN

We're taking it slow. He just bought out Kruchuk, so he's pretty busy right now with his business.

DIXIE

I heard that he started a new credit plan for his customers. How cool is that? Henry would be proud.

ROBIN

Yeah. And people from all over, north and south of Main, are shopping there for ... everything. It's quite amazing. Asa is even thinking of selling grocery items. Anyway, my dad would be very proud of you, too.

INT. CLARION COLLECTION AGENCY -- MOMENTS LATER

Sharon appears alone in the office. She has her coat on ready to leave. A "Big Kahuna" certificate hangs on her wall for the year's best ... squeezer.

A folder is open in front of her. She starts to close it, but something in the folder catches her eye. She looks at her watch, sighs and takes off her coat. She picks up the phone and dials. After a couple of rings -

MRS. FOX (V.O.)

Hello.

SHARON

Mrs. Fox. My name is Janice from the Clarion Collection Agency.

MRS. FOX (V.O.)

Oh, God. Today!? You're calling me on Christmas Eve? Shame on you.

SHARON

Well, that's just it, Mrs. Fox. I don't want shame on me. It says here you owe 5000 for a loan and you haven't made a payment in months.

MRS. FOX (V.O.)

This is outrageous ...

SHARON

I'm so sorry to bother you but ...

MRS. FOX (V.O.)

Take your sympathies and shove them where the sun don't shine. I'm hanging up ...

SHARON

No. No. Please don't hang up. I'm calling to tell you that you have an anonymous benefactor who paid your car loan. Your bill is paid in full, and 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, you know what I mean? Mrs. Fox, this is no joke.

There's soft sobbing coming through the phone.

SHARON

I'm so sorry you've run into some bad times. Maybe this will help. Have 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'. She puts the folder away, gets up, puts on her coat and leaves.

INT. CHURCH BASEMENT -- LATER

Dixie stands at the podium in mid-testimony. Familiar people are present, including her mom who sits in the front row.

Wheezy enters with Sharon.

WHEEZY

(without a wheeze)

It's Sharon's fault. She was late
in picking me up.

Dixie feigns an upset look and waits for them to sit.

DIXIE

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.

(holds for applause)

When I'm faced with hard decisions
today, I ask 'What would Henry do?'
I never really knew him growing up.
I'm told it was quite a treat. I
got that privilege after his wife
died, though. Our friendship really
started right after he heard me say
the word 'turd'. He always asked me
what I meant when I used words like
that. Got me thinking about how we
communicate with each other. Then I
started thinking where I wanted to
go with my life. Oh, I was going
places ... it was a journey no sane
person would want to take.

Dixie takes to a moment to share a smile with her mother.

DIXIE

Henry helped me find these rooms
and you people, and helped me
realize I have a forgiving, loving
mother who has taken a lot of
'crap' from me. Oops! Sorry Henry.
You see. He's still here. Anyway,
thanks for hanging in there, Mom.

Dixie's mother cries in the front row. Sharon looks around
the room and watches the people react to Dixie's message.

DIXIE

I know this is supposed to be about
me today, but I'm so grateful that
Henry was is my life.

(MORE)

DIXIE (CONT'D)

He passed away a year ago almost to the day. So, I've been thinking a lot about him today. He had a lonely heart, but I know he found what he was looking for. A bit of forgiveness. Now, I'd like to show him my gratitude. So, here it goes.

(takes a consoling breath)

No one can measure Henry's value. Me in particular. How can you measure someone's influence or inspiration or living life by good example? Impossible. But I know Coalsville is a better town because of Henry. Its citizens have real hope if they put their minds and souls into a dream they can do pretty much anything they want. They might not be able to fly, but certainly they can become sober, and maybe even be inspired to write a book. The people here believe the children who are born into this town 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 daughter born on the south side of Main Street in an obscure mid-eastern town called Coalsville.' And no one will ever know that embedded in that statement is a story of how one person made such a huge difference to so many; of how his goodness spread far and wide like the ubiquitous wind; and how life 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