

LOGLINE for *South of Main Streets*, screenplay (and novel) by Robert Gately

The mother dies and the youngest of two daughters sues the emotionally challenged Dad for financial control of the estate sending him on a quest to prove he is normal - not an easy thing to do when you are not.

SYNOPSIS for *South of Main Street*, screenplay (and novel) by Robert Gately

The mother dies, the dad's emotionally challenged, and one of the two daughters is suing her father for financial control of the multi-million dollar estate. That's the setup of *South of Main Street*, a heartwarming story named for the dividing line that exists between the 'haves' and the 'have-nots' in a fictitious town of Coalsville, Pennsylvania.

The story centers on Henry who most believe is a simpleton by nature, or suffers from Post-Traumatic Stress from a war long forgotten. Sharon, the younger of his two daughters, thinks Henry is irresponsible and sues for control of the multi-million-dollar estate left by her mother. The eldest daughter, Robin, wants Henry to handle his own affairs. The two daughters do battle but Sharon has the edge when she learns Henry hands out money to Dixie, the local 'floozy', a label given to her by the gossipy-types who live on the north side of Main Street.

Besides giving money to 'whomever', Henry ties a rope to a tree and swings like Tarzan from his roof to retrieve the mail, and provides questionable direction to a young boy who copes with an absent mother and an alcoholic father - all questionable behavior Sharon tells the Judge. But if Sharon's not careful the family secret might emerge and no one in the Wolff family wants that. Still, Henry's love for children is misunderstood by everyone, especially when seen through the eyes of a mother whose son insists that he can fly because 'Henry said I could'. The boy jumps out the barn hayloft and breaks his arm and lies unconscious in the hospital, and all seems lost for our 'dim-witted' hero who now must convince the Judge that he is not a public menace.

At first the testimonies portray Henry as a threat to society and the family's secret leaks out while the sisters do battle in court, exposing Henry's true vulnerability and why he is the way he is. But it's the children who help the Judge realize there's more to Henry than meets the eye. For example, Danny tells the Judge his version of what happened in Henry's garden where Danny was helping the elder neighbor clear the yard of rocks. Yes, Henry kept putting heavy boulders into Danny's backpack while they talked about Danny's problems. And, yes, eventually Danny slammed his satchel to the ground and called Henry a moron for not using his own backpack. But what the Judge didn't hear in the earlier testimony was on that day when they cleaned the garden Henry knelt down to explain to Danny that he didn't have to carry the world on his shoulders. All Danny had to do was throw his emotional issues to the ground, just like he did with the heavy backpack.

As it turns out, the hearing proved Henry is not crazy after all. In fact, he has an off-the-wall kind of wisdom he likes to share with people. His journey was one of forgiveness which he gave freely. He also wanted it for himself for a mistake he made a long time ago. And in his search for that understanding no one could have predicted what effect Henry would have on everyone. As Dixie explains at her AA meeting at the end of the story, a boy or a girl may grow up and become president and will tell stories to historians about where they came from. One might say 'I'm a native son or daughter born on the *South Side of Main Street* in an obscure town in Pennsylvania'. And no one will ever know that embedded in this statement is a story of how one person made a difference to so many; of how his goodness spread far and wide like the ubiquitous wind; and how life for so many improved immeasurably, not because this good Samaritan had money, status or political influence, but because he saw life as if through the eyes of a child.