

1 EXT. DENSE FOREST - DAY

1

SUBTITLE: SOMEWHERE IN CENTRAL AFRICA

High above... As rain pours down upon the lush green foliage.

A DROP OF PRECIPITATION plummets through the sky. A rapid seemingly endless descent until finally it finds...

A MICROSCOPIC PATCH of what we can assume is HUMAN SKIN.

The rain assaults the tributaries of cracked epidermis, when suddenly an insect BUZZES PAST, two or three times, then finally lands on the flesh.

A TSETSE FLY. It twitches from left to right to left again, then suddenly sinks its long proboscis into the skin.

BLOOD IS DRAWN, instantly mingling with the droplets of rain water covering the skin...

And as the Tsetse drinks it's fill, we're suddenly...

CLOSE ON an eyelid as it flips open, startled. The pupil quickly dilates...

...and we're back with the tsetse fly as a hand, enormous against the miniscule insect, attempts to swat it...

INSTANTLY, WE PULL OUT as the tsetse nimbly escapes and suddenly we're, once again...

ABOVE THE FOREST as the rainfall turns into a torrent until suddenly...

BLUE SKIES... And we're high above, looking down on somewhere else:

2 EXT. MIDDLE CLASS NEIGHBORHOOD - DAY

2

This could be Anywhere, U.S.A., but it isn't...

SUBTITLE: DOWNEY, CALIFORNIA

Amid this typical suburban neighborhood sits a typical SUBURBAN HOUSE surrounded by others that look the same.

This one, however, finds distinction by the FOR SALE sign posted on the front lawn.

It's a nice place, but it would be even nicer with a paint job to cover the current faded, splotchy gray.

3 INT. SUBURBAN HOME/LIVING ROOM - DAY

3

HENRY POOLE stands in the center of the empty room. Although a little dishevelled at the moment, it's obvious there's a handsome man underneath the stubble and wrinkled clothing.

Elsewhere in this modest three bedroom, MEG WYATT, real estate agent, wanders deliberately through the house, extolling its virtues.

MEG (O.S.)

You can see the massive closet space, walk-ins in every room. And the bathroom has been completely redone. New tile, brand new sink and if you come back here with me...

Meg emerges from the hallway, heading toward the back door. Henry stays planted in the living room, stoic.

MEG (CONT'D)

...to the backyard, I'll show you what the previous owners did to the landscaping. It's really quite...

HENRY

And the other one? The house down the street?

MEG

Oh... Right... Well, I made the offer like you asked, but they didn't want to sell. The house isn't on the market.

HENRY

You told them I'd pay whatever they wanted?

MEG

I did, Mr. Poole. They've lived there for a long time. They like it. It's their home.

A subtle air of disappointment comes down on Henry as Meg heads toward the back door.

MEG (CONT'D)

But back to this place --

HENRY

How much?

Meg stops in her tracks, turns back, steps to his left side.

(CONTINUED)

MEG

Um... Well, they're asking 325.

Henry looks right at her.

HENRY

(pointing to his right ear)

Can you talk into this other ear. I can't really hear very well out of the other one.

MEG

Oh... I'm sorry...

She steps around to Henry's right side.

MEG (CONT'D)

Well, what I was saying was that they're asking 325.

HENRY

OK, I'll take it.

MEG

Mr. Poole, I'm pretty sure I can get them to knock off 25 or 30. I mean, this place is nice, but it definitely needs to be restuccoed and--

HENRY

It's OK. I'll take it for what they're asking.

MEG

But you saw the outside. The back, the north side of the house is practically crumbling.

HENRY

I'll take it for what they want. No negotiating, no repairs.

MEG

But Mr. Poole...

HENRY

You really should let this go, Mrs. Wyatt.

MEG

(seeing his point)

OK, then... Well, how much are you looking at for a down payment.

(CONTINUED)

3 CONTINUED: (2)

3

HENRY

Nothing. I'll pay cash. Let me know where the sellers want the money transferred and start the paperwork. I'd like to move in as soon as possible.

Meg is stunned, but there's no doubt Henry's serious. Before she can reply, he turns and walks out.

4 EXT. SUBURBAN HOME - DAY

4

Henry strides across the front lawn and climbs into his Mercedes. As he pulls away we see the back window of the car has been completely shattered and COVERED WITH PLASTIC BAGS AND DUCT TAPE.

5 EXT. MIDDLE CLASS NEIGHBORHOOD - DAY

5

With Henry inside, the Mercedes pulls around the corner onto the quiet street. The car comes to a stop in front of a CORNER HOUSE with a MAN standing in front, watering the lawn.

For a moment the man is oblivious to Henry's stare, but quickly realizes he's being ogled. As his own uncomfortable gaze settles on the Mercedes, Henry just drives away.

*

6 EXT. MOTEL - NIGHT

6

One of those thirty-five dollar a night places. Henry's Mercedes sits in the parking lot.

*

*

7 INT. SUPERMARKET - DAY

7

Henry stands at the checkout counter in front of PATIENCE, a young female clerk, glasses, lenses as thick as they come. She rings up bottle after bottle of booze, mostly champagne, a couple of bottles of vodka and four boxes of donuts.

*

Henry fixates on her NAME TAG for a moment, unaware as Patience eyeballs him, a little smirk on her face.

8 EXT. SUBURBAN HOME - DAY

8

The Mercedes pulls up and Henry steps out, two plastic grocery bags in tow, the bottles of champagne protruding.

MOVERS unload a FURNITURE TRUCK parked in his driveway.

As he walks to the front door, he pauses noticing the NEW STUCCO JOB ON THE HOUSE, now a vibrant forest green.

- 9 INT. HENRY'S HOME/KITCHEN - DAY 9
Henry plugs in a new refrigerator. Then fills it with the bottles of champagne, vodka and the boxes of donuts. *
- 10 INT. HENRY'S HOME/LIVING ROOM - DAY 10
Filled with brand new furniture and the latest stereo equipment. Empty boxes scattered around.
Henry stands in the middle of the room gazing out the front picture window, popping a large strip of BUBBLE WRAP.
AN HOUR LATER --
Henry on the couch, a Twinkie box open on the coffee table, empty wrappers everywhere. He takes the last swig from a bottle of champagne, his gaze fixed on the wall before him.
-- CLOSE ON THE TEXTURE OF THE WALL.
- 11 INT. HIGH-RISE CONDO/DALLAS - DAY (FLASHBACK) 11
A lush palace in the sky, its decor opulent and grandiose.
LYDIA, a stunning, high heeled blonde, clicks her way down the HALLWAY and turns into...
- 12 THE BEDROOM. 12
Sprawled on the bed in a tangle of sheets, lies Henry, on his side, eyes open, face lost in the pillow.
LYDIA
You feeling OK? You've really been sleeping quite a bit lately.
HENRY
I'm OK. Just been really tired.
As Lydia turns away and steps over to the dresser, SHE ROLLS HER EYES at his last comment, her true self shining through. A second later she's rummaging through her jewelry box. She finds a pair of earrings and steps out of the room.
LYDIA
Don't forget you have to pick up the wedding invitations today and my wedding dress from the seamstress.
Henry sits up, still groggy, his right cheek creased with the wrinkles from his pillow.

HENRY

What? I don't want to see the dress
before the wedding.

LYDIA (O.S.)

And when you get to work, make sure your
mother gives you her guest list.

She pops back into the room.

LYDIA (CONT'D)

(gently sincere)

And don't let her push you around. OK?
This is my wedding.

HENRY

Maybe you should talk to her.

LYDIA

You want me to talk to your mother? She
hates me, Henry.

HENRY

No, she doesn't.

Lydia halts, peering at Henry.

HENRY (CONT'D)

This would be a lot easier if you two
just worked it out yourselves.

Lydia walks to Henry, bends down, gives him a little kiss on
the forehead, then in a whisper, right by his ear:

LYDIA

It would be easier if you took a little
control, made a decision once in a while.

She marches out of the room, oblivious to his response.

HENRY

What are you talking about? I make
decisions all the time. Pretty much
everyday. I just decided to get up.

Rubbing his cheek, it's hard to tell if Henry's trying to
convince himself or her.

HENRY (CONT'D)

(quietly)

I love you too.

Henry's gaze fixes blankly on the wall.

(CONTINUED)

12 CONTINUED: (2) 12

13 -- CLOSE ON THE TEXTURE OF THE WALL. 13

13 INT. HENRY'S HOME/LIVING ROOM - DAY 13

Henry, still on the couch. A new bottle of champagne in his hand. HE POPS THE CORK, nailing the wall as a spurt of champagne pours onto the floor.

14 AN HOUR LATER - DUSK 14

The STEREO BLARES as Henry -- sprawled out on the couch, his pants undone -- deals with his food coma. He looks like he's about to throw up when the DOORBELL RINGS. At first he ignores it, but whoever's pushing the button persists. More ringing... Heavy knocking... Finally Henry staggers to the door, turning down the stereo on the way.

Opening the door he finds ESPERANZA MARTINEZ, a stocky, older woman, all smiles and speaking with a thin Spanish accent. In her hands, a plate of tamales.

ESPERANZA

Hi.

Henry responds with a blank, groggy stare.

ESPERANZA (CONT'D)

I'm your neighbor from next door, Esperanza. I just wanted to come by and welcome you to the neighborhood. Homemade tamales.

She hands him the plate of tamales.

HENRY

Thanks.

ESPERANZA

I used to be good friends with the man who lived here. I was actually the one who found him.

HENRY

Found him where?

ESPERANZA

There, in your kitchen. He died of a heart attack.

(making the sign of the cross)

It was terrible. He'd been laying there for ten hours, they think. We were good friends.

Henry stares blankly.

ESPERANZA (CONT'D)

So, where are you from?

HENRY

Not here. Out of town.

ESPERANZA

Oh...

An awkward silence as Henry wipes the sleep from his eyes.

This goes on until they both notice the neighbor from the other side of Henry's home emerging from her house.

DAWN STUPEK -- dressed in sweatpants, running shoes and a winter parka -- stretches for a moment on her porch, then heads off for a morning jog, running past Esperanza's home.

Esperanza turns her back to Henry as they watch Dawn jog by.

ESPERANZA (CONT'D)

That's Dawn Stupek. She's training for a race in the desert or something like that... I'm not really sure. Terrible thing happened to her and her girl... The man, her husband, just left one day, just like that. And now the little girl won't speak.

They watch Dawn turn the corner, then as Esperanza turns back around to face Henry, all she finds is an empty doorway.

15 EXT. HENRY'S HOME/BACKYARD - DAY

15

Henry -- asleep on a lounge chair, striped to his boxers, no shirt is suddenly covered by a human shadow.

*

MEG (O.S.)

You look like you're burning.

Henry's eyes flutter open as he raises his head, squinting at the silhouette of Meg, standing over him.

MEG (CONT'D)

Are you wearing any sunscreen?

Henry drops his head back down, clearly not interested in anything she has to say.

MEG (CONT'D)

I would have called before I stopped by,
but you still don't have a phone.

(waits for a response, gets
nothing)

And I rang the -- Anyway, I just wanted
to make sure you were OK, and that the
move went well. Did you notice we had the
house re-stuccoed and painted?

HENRY

(sitting up)

Yeah, I noticed. Didn't I tell you not to
do any of that?

MEG

Well... I just thought...

HENRY

I'm not going to live here that long,
Mrs. Wyatt. So it was just a waste of
time.

MEG

What do you mean you're not going to live
here that long?

Henry looks away, examining the house.

HENRY

And for the record, they did a lousy job.

(points to the back wall)

It's all discolored right there.

Meg takes a long look at the wall, which does in fact have a
large splotch of discoloration.

MEG

Well, we can have that fixed.

HENRY

No, leave it alone. It doesn't matter.

With that, Henry throws himself back into the lounge chair
and closes his eyes, leaving Meg to show herself out.

A moment passes before Henry, once again, opens his eyes at
the sound of some rustling coming from over the fence.
Curious, he gets up to check it out. Sliding a cinder block
next to the fence, he steps up and peers over.

THE YARD is seemingly empty and silent until he hears --

(CONTINUED)

A RECORDING OF THE CONVERSATION HE JUST HAD WITH MEG.

Henry freezes, a bit dumbfounded, then looks down directly below him on the other side of the fence to find...

...MILLIE STUPEK, Dawn's 8 year old daughter, crouched down, back against the fence. She holds a small tape recorder in her hand.

Henry watches her for a moment, listening to the recording.

HENRY (CONT'D)

Hey!

Millie jumps out of her skin and bolts away into her house. Although a bit irked, Henry cracks a smile.

16 INT. STRIP JOINT - NIGHT 16

18 Henry sits at the rail, a beer and a wad of twenty dollar bills on the counter before him. He watches intently as a STRIPPER on stage dances just inches from his face. Somehow he seems unaffected, even as he slips two twenty dollar bills into her G-string. 18

17 INT. HENRY'S HOME/BEDROOM - NIGHT 17

The two strippers lay on the bed, clad in lingerie, waiting. A light rain begins tapping on the window.

18 INT. HENRY'S HOME/BATHROOM - NIGHT 18

Henry stands in his boxers before the mirror, a strip of condoms in his hand and a bottle of vodka on the counter. He stares at himself as a subtle look of disgust creeps onto his face.

19 THE BEDROOM. 19

STRIPPER #1 stands by the dresser, her back to the door, while STRIPPER #2 remains sprawled out on the bed.

Henry walks in, bottle in hand, startling Stripper #1. She whips around.

STRIPPER #1

Oh... Hi... We were wondering where you were?

Henry eyeballs her. He knows she was up to no good.

HENRY

I always thought it would be harder to
get a stripper to come home with me.

STRIPPER #1

Yeah, I used to think that too. You ready
to have some fun?

Henry takes a moment, glumly considering it, then:

HENRY

I don't think so. You better go.

She rises from the bed and slinks over to Henry, draping
herself around him.

STRIPPER #1

Are you sure you want us to go?

Henry fights his male impulses, remaining ridged.

HENRY

Yeah... I'm sure.

He peels the girl off of himself as the RAIN BEGINS TO POUR.

HENRY (CONT'D)

You can keep the money you took from my
wallet. Just leave the credit cards.

20 A FEW MINUTES LATER...

20

The torrent of rain continues as Henry stands over the
dresser and grabs his picked over wallet. Flipping through the
contents, making sure his credit cards are still there, he
stops and removes --

A SMALL WALLET SIZED PHOTO. Stares at it.

21 A FEW MINUTES LATER...

21

Henry stands at the foot of his bed, taping the photo to the
wall. A tiny speck amid the barren plaster.

*

22 INT. HENRY'S HOME/BEDROOM - DAY

22

Morning. Henry, sprawled out on the bed and a half empty
bottle of vodka still gripped in his hand, fails to notice...

...THROUGH THE WINDOW, ESPERANZA STANDING OUTSIDE IN THE
BACKYARD, SEEMINGLY STARING INTO THE HOUSE.

22 CONTINUED:

22

A quizzical look on Esperanza's face slowly grows into one of awe as Henry wakes. He really couldn't be more hung over.

Esperanza suddenly makes the sign of the cross as Henry's sleepy gaze finally falls OUT THE WINDOW. He freezes at the sight of her as she genuflects, making the sign of the cross again.

23 EXT. HENRY'S HOME/BACKYARD - DAY

23

Henry walks out. The yard is empty, no sign of Esperanza. Henry makes his way over to the spot where she was standing and turns to face the house.

He scrutinizes the whole wall, taking a step back to get a better perspective and finds... Nothing.

24 EXT. ESPERANZA'S HOUSE- DAY

24

Henry, still in his underwear, stands at the front door, annoyed. It opens to reveal Esperanza poised in the doorway, phone pressed to her ear.

As he begins to speak, she holds up a finger, silencing him.

Esperanza continues talking on the phone as Henry turns to see Dawn Stupek jogging by in her winter attire. For a moment they lock eyes.

ESPERANZA

(into phone)

Yes... Exactly... I don't know anything for sure, I just... OK... OK... Thank you.

She hangs up as Henry turns back to face her.

ESPERANZA (CONT'D)

Mr. Poole, I'm so glad you are here. Something very wonderful has happened.

HENRY

Why were you in my yard just now?

ESPERANZA

Did you not look?

HENRY

Were you looking in my window?

ESPERANZA

Of course not! Did you not see?

(CONTINUED)

HENRY

See what?

She rushes past him. Henry follows.

25 EXT. HENRY'S HOME/BACKYARD - DAY

25

Henry and Esperanza stand before the back wall, quiet until:

ESPERANZA

You don't see it?

HENRY

See what? All I see is a water stain from a crappy stucco job.

ESPERANZA

You're not looking

Henry glares at her. Frustrated, Esperanza steps to the wall, blessing herself again. Reaching up, she traces the outer edges of the stain with her finger.

Henry watches, annoyed, yet intent.

HENRY (CONT'D)

I don't see anything.

ESPERANZA

(stepping back next to him)

You're not looking. La cara de Dios...
Mira la... The face of God... The face of
Christ...

Henry peers at the wall and for the first time we see the WATER STAIN IN ITS ENTIRETY... Although vague at best, the stain does in fact hold the semblance of a face.

Henry rolls his eyes at her ridiculous claim, turns and walks away. Esperanza follows.

HENRY

OK.

ESPERANZA

Mr. Poole... You see it, don't you? It's a miracle, right there on your house. It is a sign from God.

HENRY

The only sign I see is that you are a nut bag.

(CONTINUED)

ESPERANZA

I know it's hard to believe, but the proof is right there.

HENRY

Right...

ESPERANZA

You're just going to ignore it?

HENRY

No, I'm going to ignore you.

Henry steps inside and slams the door. Esperanza stands dumbfounded at his reaction until a moment later when the door whips open and Henry pops out once again.

HENRY (CONT'D)

Wait a second... Who were you talking to?

ESPERANZA

(confused)

To you.

HENRY

No, no... I mean at your house, on the phone.

Esperanza just stares, afraid to answer until the sound of the FRONT DOORBELL RINGS THROUGH THE HOUSE.

Henry leers at Esperanza, quite sure she is behind this unexpected visitor.

26 EXT. HENRY'S HOME/FRONT PORCH - DAY

26

FATHER VINCENT SALAZAR, a young cleric, waits on the porch until the front door cracks open.

Henry stands behind the door, peeking around.

HENRY

Yes?

FATHER SALAZAR

Hi... I'm looking for Esperanza Martinez. She said she would be here. I'm Father Vincent Salazar from Saint Raymond's Catholic Church. She called and said to meet her here regarding...

(CONTINUED)

Suddenly the door is pulled back as Esperanza muscles her way in front of Henry. With Henry still in his underwear, the sight makes Father Salazar a bit uncomfortable.

ESPERANZA

Thank God you are here.

She takes hold of Fr. Salazar's arm, dragging him into the house. Henry looks on, dismayed.

ESPERANZA (CONT'D)

It's in the backyard. I'll show you.

27 EXT. HENRY'S HOME/BACKYARD - DAY

27

Henry bursts through the back door, pull on a pair of pants and finds Esperanza and Father Salazar stand before the wall.

HENRY

OK... Enough! I did not say you could come in here. I want you both to leave right now.

ESPERANZA

(to Father Salazar)

You see?

FATHER SALAZAR

Well... I do see something...

(to Henry)

I'm very sorry about the intrusion, Mr...

HENRY

Poole.

FATHER SALAZAR

Mr. Poole. I apologize.

ESPERANZA

So, you do see it?

FATHER SALAZAR

Well, I can see that it could be interpreted as a face... That's quite clear. But the face of Christ, Esperanza? I'm not sure we can make that leap.

HENRY

Thank you... You see? Now please, will both of you just leave.

Esperanza steps to the wall, excitedly pointing at the features of the supposed face.

(CONTINUED)

ESPERANZA

No, no, no... Look, look... You can see the eyes here, and the beard here, and look on top, the thorns, the crown of thorns, from the crucifixion.

FATHER SALAZAR

Well, I can see how it could be that... These types of things shouldn't be easily discounted. But we do have to take these things at face value. No pun intended.

HENRY

Well, the face value of this, is that it is a water stain from a shitty stucco job.

FATHER SALAZAR

You're probably right, Mr. Poole and by no means does the church condone any kind of frivolous claims of this nature, but--

HENRY

But nothing. This little game is over. That is not the face of Christ. Now, please leave me alone.

Father Salazar can see there is no point going on.

FATHER SALAZAR

You're right, Mr. Poole, we've imposed enough... Esperanza please... Let's go.

Father Salazar grabs Esperanza by the arm, dragging her toward the gate. As they pass through, Esperanza turns back toward Henry.

ESPERANZA

Mr. Poole, you can't ignore this. Mr. Poole... Don't you believe in God?

As they exit the yard, A FLY BUZZES IN HENRY'S FACE, adding to his annoyance. He swats it away, a little too aggressively.

Towering over Hope Street, the skyscraper is branded POOLE COMMERCIAL REAL ESTATE by the building signage.

29 INT. POOLE COMMERCIAL REAL ESTATE/KITCHENETTE - DAY 29

Henry, clad in a shirt and tie, stands in front of the cabinet, indecisively surveying a shelf full of VARIOUS COFFEE MUGS, each one emblazoned with the Poole Commercial Real Estate logo and various motivational sayings:

DON'T DESPAIR, SAY A PRAYER; MY SELFHOOD IS MY GIFT; PICK MORE DAISIES; LIVE LIFE TO THE FULLEST.

30 INT. POOLE COMMERCIAL REAL ESTATE - DAY 30

Henry walks past his ASSISTANT'S desk and into his office as she answers the RINGING PHONE. He carries a PAPER COFFEE CUP.

ASSISTANT

Henry Poole's offi-- Yes, Ms. Poole.

(hangs up)

You're mother wants to see you.

31 INT. POOLE COMMERCIAL REAL ESTATE/MELINDA'S OFFICE - DAY 31

Henry slouches in a guest chair, flipping through a small stack of papers. He looks exhausted, almost sick.

HENRY

I don't know, mom. It just seems like too many people. I don't even know half of them. It's kind of ridiculous.

Behind an oversized mahogany desk reigns MELINDA POOLE, Henry's mother, a distinguished lady, at the moment, genuinely concerned.

MELINDA

They're clients, Henry. People who have gotten us exactly where we are today. You really need to take more of an interest in this business.

Henry sighs, he's heard all this before.

MELINDA (CONT'D)

You just come here, dilly-dally all day long and then pick up your paycheck at the end of the week. Commercial real estate is about relationships, son.

HENRY

I know that. It's just too many people. Lydia and I--

MELINDA

Well, I'm paying for the wedding, right?

HENRY

Not all of it...

MELINDA

Shouldn't I have a say in who comes?

HENRY

A say, yes, but--

MELINDA

Henry, people will be offended if they don't get invited. People who could potentially bring a countless amount of business to this company. And to your future... When I'm gone.

Henry vigorously rubs his temples, seemingly exhausted from the conversation.

MELINDA (CONT'D)

Your wedding is going to be perfect and all you have to do is show up. It will be just like coming to work. What's wrong?

HENRY

Nothing. Just another headache.

MELINDA

I really wish you would just go see a doctor. I'm so tired of telling you this. The pain's not going to go away by itself, honey.

Henry takes a long, penetrating look at his mother.

32 EXT. MIDDLE CLASS NEIGHBORHOOD - DAY

32

Henry walks along the sidewalk. Reaching the END OF THE BLOCK, he stops, facing...

33 THE CORNER HOUSE.

33

He stands there, staring.

After a long moment, the Homeowner, dragged by his WIFE, appears in the FRONT WINDOW. They are both irked at the sight of this stranger standing at the edge of their lawn.

The Homeowner crosses to the front door, then steps out onto the PORCH.

(CONTINUED)

HOMEOWNER

Can I help you?

HENRY

(cupping his right ear)

Sorry...

HOMEOWNER

I said, can I help you?

HENRY

No... I'm just looking at your house.

HOMEOWNER

Well, can you stop? You're creeping us out.

HENRY

I--

(stops himself)

Sorry.

And with that he walks away.

34 INT. HENRY'S HOME/BEDROOM - DAY

34

Henry walks into the room, a tall vodka on the rocks in hand. Two steps in and he comes to a sudden stop.

THROUGH THE WINDOW he catches sight of little Millie Stupek standing in his BACKYARD, staring at the wall, her tape recorder gripped in her hand.

35 EXT. HENRY'S HOME/BACKYARD - DAY

35

Millie stands in the center of the yard peering at the wall almost in a trance-like state. Henry peeks around the corner of the house, spying.

But it isn't long before Millie senses his presence. She turns to look just as Henry snaps his head out of sight. He shrinks back, not sure if he's been seen, then musters the courage to peek around the corner again.

As he inches his head forward he is suddenly BULLDOZED BY MILLIE, running full force, trying to get around him.

She buries her shoulder into his groin, taking Henry down in an instant, then quickly runs away, ignoring the fact that she's dropped her tape recorder.

Henry writhes in pain on the ground, hands cupping his crotch.

36 A FEW MINUTES LATER...

36

Henry sits on his lounge chair, recovering, tape recorder in hand.

He hits the play button and hears HIS CONVERSATION WITH FATHER SALAZAR AND ESPERANZA.

He rewinds, hits play again. This time it's the SOUND OF A WOMAN CRYING.

He listens closely, moved at the genuine sorrow. It almost looks like he's about to cry too until suddenly...

...the sounds of the tape recorder are overtaken by HEAVY POUNDING coming from Dawn Stupek's backyard.

Shaking it off, Henry creeps over to the fence, peers over and catches sight of Dawn on her patio, wrapped in a parka, scarf and wool cap, running on a treadmill in front of her washer and dryer.

The exhaust hose from the dryer strapped to the front of the treadmill, blowing hot air in her face.

As he watches, taking a good long look at Dawn, the sobs on the tape dissipate until finally he hears:

DAWN
(through the tape recorder)
You're OK... You're OK...

He sinks back down behind the fence, thoroughly perplexed.

37 INT. DAWN STUPEK'S HOUSE - DAY

37

Dawn opens the front door to discover Henry standing on her porch with the tape recorder.

DAWN
Yes?

Henry is taken aback for a moment at the sight of Dawn, dressed normally, without her winter running attire. She is quite striking, attractive in an innocent way, and yet her eyes have an unmistakable sadness.

HENRY
Um... Hi... I'm Henry. I live next door.

DAWN
I know. I've seen you. I'm Dawn.

(CONTINUED)

HENRY

Right, right... Anyway, your daughter, I guess, dropped this in my backyard.

Henry notices the curtain on the front window inch back as Millie peers through and for a moment he locks eyes with the little girl.

DAWN

You're kidding... I'm so sorry. I didn't know she was back there. I've told her a million times not to play in other people's yards.

HENRY

It's no problem. She was just walking around.

He hands Dawn the tape recorder.

DAWN

Did she tape you?

HENRY

Um... I don't know.

DAWN

She does that. Tapes people.

HENRY

Why does she do that?

A slightly pained smile creeps onto Dawn's lips.

DAWN

I don't know.

Dawn suddenly shuts down, a bit flustered.

DAWN (CONT'D)

I'm sorry... I have to go. Thank you for bringing this back to Millie. I'll make sure she stays out of your yard.

Before Henry can utter a word, she recedes back into the house, shutting the door and leaving him a bit crestfallen.

Then, somewhat impulsively, he goes to ring the doorbell again, his finger stopping an inch away from the button, then clenching into a fist as he reconsiders.

38 INT. SUPERMARKET - DAY

38

Henry stands at the checkout counter, Patience ringing him up once again. It's the usual: booze, cigarettes, donuts. *

She stops for a moment, removes her glasses and cleans them off with her apron. Scrunching her face she squints at Henry.

PATIENCE

You having another party?

HENRY

Sorry.

PATIENCE

I've seen you in here a couple of times, buying the same stuff. That'll be \$68.42. I figured you were throwing some parties.

HENRY

No... No parties.

PATIENCE

Well, that doesn't look like a very healthy diet.

HENRY

It's just a phase.

39 EXT. HENRY'S HOME - DAY

39

Esperanza stands at the edge of the house, near the walkway leading to the backyard. She scans the street... A moment later THREE ELDERLY LADIES scurry out from the backyard.

ESPERANZA

Hurry... He'll be back any minute.

Esperanza follows the women across Henry's lawn back to her own house.

40 HENRY'S CAR...

40

...rounds the corner giving him a perfect view of the four ladies traipsing across his front yard. He screeches to a halt in front of his house and pops out of the car.

HENRY

Hey!

Esperanza looks back, but continues into her house.

(CONTINUED)

HENRY (CONT'D)

I saw you! Stay out of my backyard!

41 EXT. HENRY'S HOME/BACKYARD - DAY

41

Henry marches into the backyard, grocery bags in hand.

The sight of FOUR TALL GLASS VOTIVE CANDLES placed at the base of the stained wall brings him to a sudden halt.

Indignant, he steps to the wall, drops his bags, crouches down and begins to gather up the candles. As he rises, something on the wall catches Henry's attention:

At the corner of each eye A LITTLE TRICKLE OF A DARK RED SYRUP-LIKE SUBSTANCE DRIPS SLOWLY, like tears.

Henry leans in, only inches from the leakage, curious and concerned. He sets down the candles, picks up a twig, dabs it onto the leaking substance and takes a close look.

42 EXT. ESPERANZA'S HOUSE - DAY

42

Esperanza makes her way down the porch, escorting her three friends to their car, when suddenly Henry comes rushing toward her from his yard, the four votive candles cradled in his arms. He's not happy.

HENRY

Hey! Stop right there!

The women freeze as Henry marches up.

HENRY (CONT'D)

Are these yours?!

Esperanza and the women stare sheepishly at Henry, nervous as he drops the candles, shattering the glass votives.

HENRY (CONT'D)

Does that look like a church back there?
That is my house, my property. You can't just walk in and start doing whatever these candles do. And you put paint on my wall. That's vandalism, damn it!

ESPERANZA

Mr. Poole, we did not paint your wall.

HENRY

Oh yeah? Then what's this?

Henry shoves the twig inches from Esperanza's face. She stares at the tip covered in what looks like blood.

Esperanza grabs the twig, studies it, then touches the tip with her own finger.

ESPERANZA

That's not paint, Mr. Poole. And we did not put it there.

HENRY

Well then, what is it?

Esperanza peers at him, a severe look creeping onto her face.

ESPERANZA

Mr. Poole, it is blood.

Henry realizes what Esperanza is implying just as she and her three friends begin to make the sign of the cross. Rolling his eyes, he turns and marches back to his house.

HENRY

(under his breath)

OK psycho...

(then audibly)

Just, please -- for the last time -- leave me alone.

43 EXT. HENRY'S HOME/BACKYARD - DAY

43

CLOSE ON THE STAIN -- as a blast of water washes over, clearing the "blood" away.

Henry stands a few feet away, holding the hose as if it were a .357 Magnum.

Satisfied with the job, he tosses the hose to the ground and steps up for a closer look. The blood is gone.

44 MINUTES LATER...

44

...Henry comes out the back door, two big garbage bags in tow. He makes his way to the side of the house, dumps the bags into a trash can then marches back toward the back door.

Suddenly Henry plants himself, staring in disbelief at the Stain and the oozing blood, which has inexplicably returned.

45 INT./EXT. HENRY'S CAR - DAY

45

Henry rounds the corner from his street onto the main boulevard.

(CONTINUED)

45 CONTINUED:

45

As he merges with the traffic he catches sight of Dawn jogging along the boulevard, clad in her usual winter attire. Passing her, Henry fixes his gaze, noticing DAWN SOBBING as she continues her run.

46 INT. SUPERMARKET - DAY

46

A long line of CUSTOMERS at the only open register and Henry is at the end of it, still frustrated.

From behind an end display of soda pop, Patience peeks her head out, spying on Henry. A little smile creeps onto her face.

She takes off her glasses, cleaning them off again.

PATIENCE'S POV -- is drastically blurred, nondescript splotches, slightly more focused around the periphery and surrounded by varying degrees of light.

Replacing her glasses, Patience marches out, taps him on the shoulder and motions for him to follow her. She leads him to her register. Henry unloads his basket onto the counter, an assortment of cleaning fluids, bottles of bleach and scrub brushes.

PATIENCE

(re: the bleach)

I hope you're not using that as a mixer.

Henry stares at her blankly.

PATIENCE (CONT'D)

Cause you're not getting vodka.

HENRY

Oh... No. I'm just cleaning up a mess.

She nods, then after an awkward pause:

PATIENCE

Did you know that in 1985 Gorbachev, right after he became the Party's General Secretary, tried to eradicate vodka in Russia?

Blank stare from Henry.

PATIENCE (CONT'D)

The people wouldn't have it though. Isn't that weird?

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

PATIENCE (CONT'D)

I mean, something like 30,000 Russians die a year from alcohol poisoning, but the people, they want what they want.

Patience looks him over curiously as she rings up his items.

PATIENCE (CONT'D)

What's wrong with you?

Although her tone is as sincere as it could possibly be, Henry is visibly taken aback by the question.

HENRY

Sorry?

PATIENCE

Well, I don't mean to be rude, it's just... Something is clearly wrong with you. I don't know if you're sad or angry or both, but you're not normal. I thought maybe you might want to talk about it.

HENRY

You want me to tell you why I'm sad and angry while you ring up my bottles of bleach?

PATIENCE

So, it is both. Sad and angry.

HENRY

I didn't say that.

PATIENCE

Yes, you did.

HENRY

I was indulging you. Being polite.

PATIENCE

OK... Indulge me some more. Tell me what's wrong.

HENRY

(annoyed)

You know what? Just ring up my shit please. I appreciate your concern, but I just want to get out of here.

PATIENCE

OK... Sorry I asked.

HENRY

Don't be.

(CONTINUED)

An awkward moment of silence looms as Patience continues to ring up Henry's items.

PATIENCE

It's OK to be sad, you know. I mean, I've been really sad before... Sometimes you have to feel sad to remind yourself that you're alive. It's better than feeling nothing, right? That'll be \$34.89.

Henry ponders her comment with a curious, unsettled stare, then hands her a couple of twenty dollar bills. She makes change, hands it back and Henry rushes out.

PATIENCE (CONT'D)

Have a nice day.

47 INT./EXT. HENRY'S CAR - DAY 47 *

Henry drives, pensive, mind elsewhere... *

48 INT. DOCTOR'S OFFICE/EXAMINATION ROOM - DAY (FLASHBACK) 48 *

CLOSE ON a full urine specimen cup, the lid being replaced... a digital scale, the numbers flickering... a needle plunging into an arm... a vile filling with blood... a hand wrapped in a surgical glove, the fingers dipping into a jar of Vaseline.

Finally we find Henry sitting on the edge of an exam table, a hospital gown draped around him. He seems to have been waiting for quite a long time. He shifts uncomfortably, slides off the table, paces a bit, then impatiently whips open the door and steps into...

49 THE HALLWAY. 49

No one around in either direction. Suddenly a disembodied female voice floats down the hall:

NURSE (O.S.)

Mr. Poole, please stay inside your exam room. We'll be with you shortly.

HENRY

It's just that it's been--

NURSE (O.S.)

We'll be with you shortly, Mr. Poole.

Resigned to his sentence, Henry turns back to enter his exam room and unexpectedly COLLIDES WITH ANOTHER PATIENT, also in a hospital gown, MR. LAWRENCE.

(CONTINUED)

HENRY

Jesus... I'm so sorry.

MR. LAWRENCE

My fault. I wasn't paying attention.

NURSE (O.S.)

Mr. Lawrence...

MR. LAWRENCE

(confused)

You hear that?

NURSE (O.S.)

Mr. Lawrence, please stay inside your exam room.

Both men shuffle into their respective rooms, closing their doors behind them.

50 INT. EXAM ROOM - LATER

50

Henry, once again sits on the edge of the exam table, staring at DOCTOR RONALD FANCHER, a file in hand, who has just delivered his diagnosis.

HENRY

So there's nothing wrong with me?

DR. FANCHER

Not from what I've seen so far, Henry.

(flipping open the file)

Mild fevers here and there. Occasional headaches and just a general lethargy. Right?

HENRY

Yeah. Like a flu, I guess.

DR. FANCHER

Any loss of concentration or general coordination?

HENRY

A little.

DR. FANCHER

Are you sleeping more than usual?

HENRY

Well, I want to... But yeah, a little more than usual. I just... I don't know... I just don't feel like myself.

(CONTINUED)

DR. FANCHER

What do you mean?

Henry ponders the question, trying to find the words to articulate, until finally Dr. Fancher offers some help --

DR. FANCHER (CONT'D)

How did you feel before you started feeling how you feel now?

Henry thinks for another moment, not quite sure, then slowly, the glum realization hits him --

HENRY

I don't remember not feeling like this.

Fancher eyes Henry, then jots something into the file.

DR. FANCHER

It sounds like you're a little fatigued. Stressed. But that's it. We'll keep an eye on the fevers and you should probably get a little more exercise. Less coffee. Eat better. Lose a little weight even. Does wonders for the self-esteem.

Dr. Fancher steps to the door, opens it.

DR. FANCHER (CONT'D)

I'll call you next week when your blood and urine come back. In the meantime stop worrying so much. Like I said, there's nothing wrong with you.

Henry nods, accepting the doctor's words, maybe even a little relieved as the doctor steps out.

DR. FANCHER (CONT'D)

Say hello to your mother for me.

And suddenly the PIERCING SOUND OF TIRES SCREECHING bring us back to:

51 INT./EXT. HENRY'S CAR - DAY

51

...as Henry snaps out of his memory, grinding to a sudden halt at a crosswalk, after just HITTING A PEDESTRIAN.

The person rolls off the hood and disappears in front of the car.

HENRY

Oh shit! Oh my God! Oh my God!

(CONTINUED)

51 CONTINUED:

51

Henry darts out of the car into...

52 THE STREET

52

...racing around to the front to discover Dawn sprawled out on the asphalt, wearing her winter gear.

DAWN

You god-damn, stupid, douche-bag! There's a stop sign right there!

*

Apparently, she's not hurt.

HENRY

Oh my God, I'm so sorry... Are you OK? I was stopped. I just didn't see you crossing. I'm so sorry!

DAWN

What the hell are you doing? You could have killed me.

Dawn and Henry simultaneously realize they know each other.

HENRY

Dawn?

DAWN

Henry? What the hell?

HENRY

I'm so sorry, Dawn. I wasn't paying attention. Are you OK?

As Dawn starts to get up, Henry helps, grabbing her by the arm.

DAWN

Yeah, just completely freaked out.

HENRY

Maybe we should go to the hospital, make sure there's nothing broken.

DAWN

No, no... I'm OK... Just shaken up.

HENRY

Can I at least drive you home?

Dawn considers the offer, taking a deep breath, still regaining her bearing.

(CONTINUED)

HENRY (CONT'D)

Please...

DAWN

Sure, sure... That's probably best.

53 INT./EXT. HENRY'S CAR - DAY

53

Henry drives with Dawn in the passenger seat as she peels off her parka.

HENRY

I'm really sorry.

DAWN

It's OK. You can stop saying that. I'm not hurt. No harm done.

HENRY

I don't know what happened. I guess I was just... I don't know... Daydreaming.

DAWN

Yeah, well... You should maybe save the dreaming for when you're asleep.

An awkward pause.

HENRY

Can I ask you something? I saw you earlier, running in the neighborhood... and I was wondering, why you were--

Henry stops himself, changing course...

HENRY (CONT'D)

Why do you dress like that when you run? It seems kind of dangerous. Heatstroke or something.

DAWN

I'm training for a race in the desert.

HENRY

In the desert?

DAWN

Yeah, it's called the Badwater Ultramarathon. 135 miles through Death Valley.

HENRY

You're kidding. Over how many days?

(CONTINUED)

DAWN

A little over two. The winners usually finish in like fifty-something hours.

HENRY

Have you done this before?

DAWN

Nah, first time.

HENRY

Why would you do something like that?

Dawn looks as if she's just heard the most ridiculous question in her life, then ponders for a moment.

DAWN

Well... Because...

Henry looks over, waiting for more as Dawn squirms under his stare.

DAWN (CONT'D)

You should keep your eyes on the road.

Getting the hint, Henry lays off.

54 INT. HENRY'S HOME/BACKYARD - DAY

54

Henry stands inches from the wall, a pair of goggles covering his eyes as he raises two bottles of bleach above his head then showers the stain.

ESPERANZA (V.O.)

And what about Veronica's Veil? Veronica wiping the blood and sweat from the face of Christ as He carried the cross to His own death?

With the bottles empty, he grabs a scrub brush and begins to vigorously scour the wall.

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

Only to later find his perfect likeness burned in blood onto the garment.

55 INT. RECTORY - DAY

55

Father Salazar sits behind his desk with Esperanza in the guest chair before him, holding A TATTERED OLD SCRAP BOOK, FILLED WITH NEWSPAPER CLIPPINGS.

FATHER SALAZAR

Well... Yes, but... That story dates back to the twelfth century, Esperanza. And there were churches all over Europe claiming to have the one and only Veronica's Veil, so...

Esperanza, undeterred, flips through her scrap book, finding a specific clipping and placing it onto the desk.

ESPERANZA

OK... But what of all the others, old and new. The baby Jesus on the rose petal. Or the tree in West Virginia with the face. Or the underpass in Chicago with the Virgin Mary.

Esperanza continues laying out clipping after clipping before Fr. Salazar

ESPERANZA (CONT'D)

And what about Our Lady of Guadalupe?

Fr. Salazar does everything to quell his impatience with Esperanza.

FATHER SALAZAR

Esperanza, please. Stop. And besides, those last few are different.

ESPERANZA

Different how?

FATHER SALAZAR

Well, for one thing, they're not Jesus. Those were all images of the Virgin Mother. And as for Guadalupe, the cloak with her image on it is still on display inside the basilica in Villa Madero. Intact. Perfectly preserved.

ESPERANZA

Why can't the face be the same?

FATHER SALAZAR

The cloak is hundreds of years old... and it's been tested, with no evidence of what exactly keeps it from deteriorating.

Esperanza goes to speak, but before she can get a word out Father Salazar holds up his hand to stop her.

(CONTINUED)

FATHER SALAZAR (CONT'D)

And don't even mention the Shroud of Turin. The controversy around that thing has gone on for centuries.

Esperanza seems offended at Father Salazar's terminology.

ESPERANZA

That thing?

FATHER SALAZAR

Esperanza, please...

Father Salazar stands, makes his way around the desk and sits in the guest chair next to Esperanza.

FATHER SALAZAR (CONT'D)

Look... You can't go running around claiming miracles are happening without some sort of ecclesiastical investigation. Plus, technically, no miracle has occurred. And the church can't follow up on every claim from someone who thinks they see Christ in a potato chip. These things happen all the time.

ESPERANZA

This is no potato chip... It's bleeding.

FATHER SALAZAR

(surprised)

Excuse me?

ESPERANZA

It started the other day. From the eyes, like tears.

FATHER SALAZAR

How can you be sure it's blood and not something else?

ESPERANZA

I've bled before, Father.

Father Salazar's face softens compassionately, knowing what she's referring to...

FATHER SALAZAR

Yes, I know... OK... I can request that the diocese look into this, but we can't go in there and test without Mr. Poole's permission. And we can't force him. Understand?

Esperanza gazes beyond Father Salazar, forming a plan.

FATHER SALAZAR (CONT'D)

(a warning)

Esperanza...

ESPERANZA

(snapping out of it)

Of course. I understand. Thank you, Father. Thank you so much.

She stands, heads toward the door, stopping and turning to face him for a brief moment.

ESPERANZA (CONT'D)

Father, this is a miracle... This is for me... And you know why. This miracle is for me.

Henry stands before the wall, empty bleach bottles discarded at his feet, the scrub brush, it's bristles now frayed and worn, still gripped in his hand. The paint around the stain, scrubbed away, has left the face now even more distinct.

Henry's shoulders droop, exhausted, as he realizes his efforts have been futile...

DAWN (O.S.)

It's not coming off. Is it?

Henry turns to find Dawn peering over her backyard fence. Gives her a weak smile. A little embarrassed.

HENRY

No... No it's not. Any suggestions? *

Henry begins to step closer to the fence. *

DAWN

Not really... But if it's what Esperanza says it is, it's going to take a lot more than a bottle bleach. *

He stops. *

HENRY
 (chuckles)
 Yeah, well... She's wrong...

DAWN
 So young and so much doubt.

HENRY
 You can't possibly think that thing is
 the face of God.

DAWN
 I don't know... To be honest, from this
 angle, it looks a little like you.

Henry glances at the wall. Scratches his scruffy face.

DAWN (CONT'D)
 An abstract version.

HENRY
 I think it's just a stain.

DAWN
 Well, if you can't get it off it'll be
 something to remember you by.

HENRY
 (a little surprised)
 What?

DAWN
 You're not going to live here that long,
 right? Esperanza's like the neighborhood
 newsletter around here. I think she
 cornered the real estate agent after you
 moved in. Got the low down on you.

HENRY
 Oh...

DAWN
 So what are you doing? Buying the house,
 flipping it, making a profit?

HENRY
 (eyes averted)
 Yeah... Something like that.

DAWN
 Don't sell it to any weirdos. OK?

HENRY

I won't.

DAWN

And good luck with the face... Or
whatever it is. Let me know if you need
anything while you're here.

Dawn smiles as Henry watches her step away from the fence.
She peeks over her shoulder at him as she walks into her
house.

HENRY

Thanks. I will. You too.

57 INT. HENRY'S HOME/KITCHEN - DAY

57

Henry at the refrigerator, grabs a bottle of beer and stops
at the sight of Esperanza's tamale's.

Henry at the sink, stuffs the tamales into the garbage
disposal. As he turns on the faucet and flips on the
disposal, a horrible grinding sound fills the room. Quickly
turning it off, he watches as the water bubbles over,
clogging.

His frustration is distracted by the sound of SOMETHING BEING
DRAGGED OUTSIDE, ALONG THE SIDE OF THE HOUSE.

58 EXT. HENRY'S HOME/BACKYARD - DAY

58

Following the sound, Henry makes his way to the side of the
house, where he finds Esperanza, surrounded by bags of his
garbage. She struggles with a trash can, overflowing with
pizza boxes, dragging it toward the front of the house.

HENRY

(baffled)

What are you doing?

ESPERANZA

I'm taking out your trash.

HENRY

You shouldn't be doing that. Just leave
it.

Esperanza keeps hauling the can away.

ESPERANZA

No, no, no... There's garbage everywhere.
Very dirty. Unhealthy.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

58 CONTINUED:

58

ESPERANZA (CONT'D)

And look at all these pizza boxes. You can't live on that alone, Mr. Poole.

HENRY

You'd be surprised. Here... Let me help.

He reaches for the other side of the trash can as Esperanza yanks it from his grip.

ESPERANZA

It's OK... I got it... I'm just trying to be a good neighbor. The trash truck is coming in about an hour.

Henry, defeated, eyes her with a suspicious glare.

ESPERANZA (CONT'D)

It's really no problem.

Esperanza scoots away around the corner, can in tow.

59 INT. KITCHEN - DAY

59

CLOSE ON -- The drain, still clogged as the gears grind on the garbage disposal. The foul water gurgles. Stagnate. The disposal stops.

Exasperated, he begrudgingly crawls under the sink, prepared to take care of the problem himself.

As he clears some space, he comes across an old CIGAR BOX.

Curious, he pulls it out, settles himself onto the floor and opens the box. Inside he finds a collection of old photos.

Flipping through the pile, almost all the photos have the same MAN - of varying ages - in the shot.

One photo in particular catches his eye: The Man, older, standing with Esperanza, holding hands. Henry ponders the picture.

60 EXT. HENRY'S HOME - DAY

60

Esperanza kneels on the grass, a pair of pruning shears in her hand as she weeds the edges of Henry's lawn. Next to her, stands one of her older friends, JOSIE, who came to see the face earlier.

JOSIE

You're wasting your time.

(CONTINUED)

ESPERANZA

The only waste of time would be not to try.

JOSIE

He won't allow it, the man is clearly an atheist. And not very nice. The two go hand in hand.

ESPERANZA

The faithless sometimes need something to help them believe. Either way, it's not about what he believes or doesn't believe.

Henry emerges from his home, marching over to Esperanza and Josie.

HENRY

Please stop.

ESPERANZA

Your lawn is so sloppy.

HENRY

OK... This is ridiculous. People don't just start doing things for one another for no reason. What are you up to?

ESPERANZA

I'm not up to anything.

JOSIE

Yes you are.

ESPERANZA

No I'm not... Don't listen to her. She's senile. She doesn't know what she's saying. I'm just being a good neighbor and I like to garden.

JOSIE

Just ask him.

HENRY

Ask me what?

ESPERANZA

Josie, you need to mind your own business.

JOSIE

She wants to bring the church in to test the face in your backyard, to see if it's a miracle.

HENRY

You've got to be kidding me.

JOSIE

Nope... She's crafty like that.

Henry sighs, gathering his patience. Then calmly gets down on one knee beside Esperanza, leans in close to her ear and quietly explains --

HENRY

(takes the pruning shears from her)

Listen to me... You could build me a goddamn gazebo back there and I'm still not going to let your crazy church people into my house.

Josie leans in, casually trying to hear.

HENRY (CONT'D)

That face or whatever it is, it's nothing. It's a stupid water stain, not a miracle.

Esperanza struggles to her feet, wounded at his retort.

ESPERANZA

But how can you say that?

HENRY

I don't want to talk about this. I just came out here to give you this.

Henry hands Esperanza the picture of her with the old man. She peers at it, then suddenly begins to weep.

JOSIE

(rolling her eyes)

Oh God... Why did you go and do that?

HENRY

What? Why is she crying?

JOSIE

That's Leo... He was her boyfriend before he died. He lived in your house.

(CONTINUED)

ESPERANZA

He was such a good man.

JOSIE

He was an asshole.

ESPERANZA

Don't say that. He was not. You just didn't understand him.

A pained nostalgia washes over Esperanza as she eyes the photo.

ESPERANZA (CONT'D)

He always wanted to be a better man.

JOSIE

(to Henry)

Seriously, he was an asshole.

ESPERANZA

He was difficult sometimes, but not to me. He just didn't like most people.

JOSIE

Most?

ESPERANZA

OK... Almost everyone. But he liked me. We took care of each other.

HENRY

Well, there's a cigar box full of pictures in the house. I found them under the sink. You should come get them.

61 INT. HENRY'S HOME/KITCHEN - DAY

61

Esperanza, sitting at the kitchen table, slowly flips through the stack of photos, while Henry attacks the clogged sink with a plunger.

ESPERANZA

He was so handsome... And such a good lover.

Still focused on the plunging, Henry cringes at the thought.

ESPERANZA (CONT'D)

I never thought I'd find someone like him. I was ready to just be old alone. I'd never been married.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

ESPERANZA (CONT'D)

Never found anyone, and then one day,
five years ago or so, Leo moved in and
that was it. Years of being alone and one
man manages to take it all away. A
lifetime of sadness and suddenly I
couldn't even remember what it was like
to be sad.

(pause)

And then he died... And I remembered.

Henry turns to face her.

ESPERANZA (CONT'D)

And I prayed to God to help me stop
feeling the pain. And to let me know that
he was OK. And now the face appears, the
face of God.

HENRY

You think that stain out there is the
answer to your prayers?

She finally looks at him. No need to answer. Henry sighs.

HENRY (CONT'D)

What is it that you want the church to
do?

Esperanza suddenly perks up.

ESPERANZA

Just to come in and test the wall, test
the blood, to see what it is. If its
nothing, then its nothing, and I won't
bother you again. No one will.

Henry peers at Esperanza, his gaze drifting down to the pile
of photos in her hand as he contemplates her request.

HENRY

Alright... Just one day.

Esperanza rises, darting to Henry, giving him a hug.

He stiffens at her touch, uncomfortable at first, but then
slowly and ever so subtly, giving in to something... For him,
the elusive human embrace.

ESPERANZA

Of course... Thank you Mr. Poole. Thank
you. You'll see... You'll see...
Everything happens for a reason.

(pause)

You should try bleach. For the clog.

(CONTINUED)

61 CONTINUED: (2)

61

Esperanza finally releases Henry, leaving him drained.

62 INT. HENRY'S HOME/KITCHEN - A FEW MINUTES LATER

62

With Esperanza gone, Henry stands over the sink, pouring a bottle of bleach down the drain and watching as the clog gurgles away.

He shakes his head, mildly impressed, then looks to the kitchen table where he notices Esperanza's pruning shears.

63 EXT. ESPERANZA'S HOUSE/PORCH - DAY

63

Henry steps up with the pruning shears in his hand to discover the front door wide open.

As he goes to knock on the door jamb, he hears a quiet sobbing coming from inside.

Considering his options for moment, his curiosity gets the best of him and he silently leans in THROUGH THE DOORWAY, peering into...

64 ESPERANZA'S LIVING ROOM...

64

...where he discovers Esperanza kneeling in the corner of the room, her back to the door. Before her sits a little table adorned with multiple candles and few flowers, all surrounding a FRAMED PHOTO OF LEO.

As she goes to place the picture Henry found on the shrine, she stops, sensing his presence. She turns around, a wounded look in her eyes.

HENRY

(holding up the shears)

You forgot these.

They're both a little embarrassed at having to share this private moment. Then almost as if confessing something:

ESPERANZA

He was a good man, my Leo. I don't want to forget him.

Henry nods, then sets the pruning shears down on a chair and as he turns to leave...

ESPERANZA (CONT'D)

Mr. Poole, why did you come here?

(CONTINUED)

HENRY
(pointing to the shears)
For the thing... You left them...

ESPERANZA
No, no... I mean next door, the house.

HENRY
Oh... I... I grew up here. In this
neighborhood.

ESPERANZA
In that house?

HENRY
No, down the street. They wouldn't sell.

ESPERANZA
Oh... So why did you come back?

HENRY
(ponders the question, then)
I don't know...

65 INT. RESTAURANT/DOWNTOWN DALLAS - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

65 *

Amid the bustling eatery, Henry, his mother Melinda and his
fiancee Lydia sit a table. Wine glasses all around.

MELINDA (V.O.)
So all the doctor said is that you're
tired?

*
*
*

HENRY
He said fatigue. Probably from work and
all the wedding stuff.

MELINDA
Don't take this the wrong way, son. But I
don't see how you could possibly be doing
any less at work.

HENRY
What exactly would be the right way to
take that?

MELINDA
You know what? This is my fault. I've
been too easy on you. You've never had to
work for anything.

LYDIA
You mean just like you?

*
*

(CONTINUED)

MELINDA

I got some money from the divorce, but everything I have is because I worked for it.

(to Henry)

And everything you have is because I gave it to you.

*
*

HENRY

I know that.

*

Henry peers at his mother, uncomfortable, trying to stifle his disdain.

*
*

And as Melinda takes a gulp of wine, she peers at Henry over the rim of her glass... Her eyes narrowing, judging... Vitriolic...

MELINDA

You look just like your father right now.

*
*

Overtaken by a quiet disillusionment, Henry's eyes drift from his mother to Lydia, both sipping their blood red wine -- oddly in the same manner -- both eying him with a subtle distaste.

*

66 INT. HENRY'S HOME/BEDROOM - DAY

66

Henry lays in bed, flat on his back, perfectly still, staring at the ceiling. After a moment, he sits up, almost like a vampire rising from his coffin. His gaze settles on the little wallet-sized photo taped to the wall before him.

67 INT. SUPERMARKET - DAY

67

Henry emerges from an aisle, approaching the check out counters. His basket holds the usual assortment of booze and junk food.

His gaze lands on Patience, at the far end of the store, working the 10 items or less line. She faces away, not noticing Henry.

In front of him, the only other open check-out harbors a WOMAN SHOPPER towing two carts over-flowing with groceries.

She places each item on the check-out counter with maddening precision, almost as if piecing a puzzle together.

Henry ponders his choices... And picks the eternal wait behind the Woman Shopper.

(CONTINUED)

PATIENCE (O.S.)
(over the P.A.)
Mr. Poole, I can help you over here.

Mortified, Henry turns to see Patience waving him over.

WOMAN SHOPPER
I'd go if I were you.

HENRY
I'm fine right here, thanks.

He declines Patience's offer with a wave of his hand.

PATIENCE
(over the P.A.)
Suit yourself, Mr. Poole. You're just
going to get sadder and angrier while you
wait.

The Woman Shopper gives him a long judgemental look as Henry notices Dawn emerging from an aisle, pushing a shopping car with Millie inside. She look at Henry, embarrassed for him as he sinks further in his skin.

68 INT. HENRY'S HOME/BACKYARD - DAY

68

A CAMERA FLASHES as Henry whips open the back door. A PHOTOGRAPHER snaps shot after shot of the stain.

Henry steps out as Esperanza and Father Salazar round the corner into the yard. They are followed by a MEDICAL LAB WORKER, carrying a stainless steel case.

ESPERANZA
Over here... There, there's the blood.

As the Medical Lab Worker steps to the wall with Esperanza, Father Salazar walks over to Henry.

FATHER SALAZAR
Mr. Poole, good morning. How are you?

HENRY
Fine.

FATHER SALAZAR
Thank you for letting us do this.
Esperanza is a good woman, very devout
and when she gets something in her
head...

HENRY

Yeah, well I think this is a big waste of time. But you're right, she seems like a good woman, so...

FATHER SALAZAR

You're a very skeptical man, Mr. Poole.

HENRY

You think this is real?

FATHER SALAZAR

No, I didn't say that. But I do think that anything is possible. With faith or hope.

HENRY

That sounds remarkably...
(searching for the word)
Naïve.

Henry's comment catches Father Salazar off guard.

HENRY (CONT'D)

No, really... Anything is possible? So if I have faith or whatever, I can fly, I should just go jump off a building and start flapping my arms? Or, or... Even better I could just--

Seemingly on the verge of revealing something, Henry stops himself as Father Salazar smiles compassionately.

FATHER SALAZAR

No offence, Mr. Poole, but you sound like a little boy. You're talking about fantasy. I'm talking about choosing to believe in something... Anything.

The impact of Father Salazar's words dissipates for Henry as he becomes distracted by the Medical Lab Worker as he removes a vile and a stainless steel scraper from his case. He proceeds to take a "blood" sample from the wall. Esperanza looks on, bemused.

FATHER SALAZAR (CONT'D)

So turns out I have to write a report.

HENRY

What do you mean, a report?

(CONTINUED)

FATHER SALAZAR

As part of the investigation. So the arch diocese will pay for all this. And I have to interview you.

Henry's shoulders droop. This is getting more annoying by the second.

69 INT. HENRY'S HOME/LIVING ROOM - DAY

69

Henry and Father Salazar, notebook in hand, scribbling away, sit opposite one another. Henry faces away from the kitchen.

Henry looks over his shoulder as a CONSTRUCTION WORKER, carrying an electric jigsaw, steps in through the back door and makes his way into the bedroom.

HENRY

(turning back)

Who's that guy?

FATHER SALAZAR

He needs open up the wall and look at what's behind the stain. To be sure its not man made. We'll repair the it. It will look as good as new. Don't worry.

HENRY

Don't repair it. It's OK.

FATHER SALAZAR

Don't be silly. We're not going to leave a hole in the wall.

HENRY

It doesn't matter. I won't be here that long...

Father Salazar peers at Henry, quizzical as the SOUND OF A JIGSAW buzzes through the house. Henry doesn't react. Just stares.

FATHER SALAZAR

(raising his voice)

Mr. Poole, maybe we should step outside.

70 EXT. HENRY'S HOME - DAY

70

Henry and Father Salazar step out onto the porch.

HENRY

Look Father, the house was restuccoed right before I moved in and that's it.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

HENRY (CONT'D)

There's nothing else really to talk about.

FATHER SALAZAR

Maybe not about the house.

Henry slumps, shaking his head. He knows what he's getting at and does not want to go there.

FATHER SALAZAR (CONT'D)

Why did you say you were not going to be here long?

HENRY

I don't want to talk about this.

FATHER SALAZAR

Yes you do.

HENRY

Oh... I do?

FATHER SALAZAR

Otherwise you wouldn't have mentioned it.

HENRY

(almost offended)

What makes you think you know me that well?

FATHER SALAZAR

I don't think that. But anyone with two eyes can see that something is wrong with you. Like you're...

HENRY

Sad and angry.

FATHER SALAZAR

Yeah. Something like that... Mr. Poole, I'm a good listener when you're ready. It can't be that bad.

Henry watches as Father Salazar steps off the porch, heading into the backyard.

A FLY SUDDENLY BUZZES around Henry's face. He flails his arms wildly, trying to swat the pest.

Henry settles down as the sound of a RECORDING OF HIS CONVERSATION WITH FR. SALAZAR rises from the bushes to the side of the porch.

FATHER SALAZAR (CONT'D)
(recorded)
But anyone with two eyes can see that
something is wrong with you. Like
you're...

HENRY
(recorded)
Sad and angry.

Rewind.

FATHER SALAZAR (CONT'D)
(recorded)
...with two eyes can see that something
is wrong with you. Like you're...

HENRY
(recorded)
Sad and angry.

Henry follows the voice to the bushes, discovering Millie
crouched between the foliage, tape recorded in hand.

HENRY (CONT'D)
Stop that.

Rewind.

HENRY (CONT'D)
(recorded)
Sad and angry.

HENRY (CONT'D)
What are you doing in there?

A blank stare from Millie.

HENRY (CONT'D)
You know there are bugs in there.

Once again, nothing. She's unfazed.

HENRY (CONT'D)
Big bugs.

Henry crouches down, eyeing Millie with an almost softhearted
curiosity.

HENRY (CONT'D)
Why won't you talk, Millie?

70 CONTINUED: (3)

70

She looks at him, innocent... Then suddenly darts out of the bushes, runs back to her house.

71 INT. HENRY'S HOME/BEDROOM - DAY

71

Henry steps in, irked at the sight before him: The Photographer, standing on his bed, taking photos of the 3X3 foot hole in the wall above his headrest.

72 INT. HENRY'S HOME/HALLWAY - DUSK

72

With the door to the BATHROOM wide open, Henry takes a leak. He finishes and as he steps out of the bathroom --

He walks right into Esperanza, waiting for him just beyond the doorway.

HENRY

Jesus Christ!

ESPERANZA

I'm sorry... I did not mean to scare you. I wanted to tell you that everyone is gone. We're done.

HENRY

Good.

ESPERANZA

And I have something for you.

HENRY

I don't want anything, Esperanza. We're even. OK?

ESPERANZA

You'll want this.

73 EXT. MIDDLE CLASS NEIGHBORHOOD/CORNER HOUSE - DUSK

73

Henry and Esperanza stand before the house.

HENRY

How did you know it was this one?

ESPERANZA

I know everything about this neighborhood. You should know that by now.

74 INT. CORNER HOUSE/HALLWAY - DUSK 74

Henry stands at the end of the long hallway, peering into one of the BEDROOMS... Surveying... Seemingly searching...

Esperanza looms behind, watching him, waiting for some sort of reaction until he finally steps into the --

75 BEDROOM -- 75

A child's room. Esperanza waits by the door, curious, as Henry steps to the closet, opens it and stares at the hanging clothes for a moment, before whisking the clothing aside.

With a clear view of the closet's back wall, Henry crouches down, eying a specific spot, his finger tips passing over it.

ESPERANZA

Mr. Poole... Are you OK?

HENRY

They painted the inside of the closets.
Very thorough.

He stands, turning to face Esperanza.

HENRY (CONT'D)

This house is the last place I remember being happy. And even so, the memory is just barely there.

Esperanza scoots out of the way as he steps back into the --

76 HALLWAY -- 76

-- and moves to the next room, peering inside as well. She follows.

HENRY

My life before my folks split up, seemed so simple. Easy. My mother was so different then. Warm. Loving.

A dark sadness comes over him as he moves to the next doorway.

HENRY (CONT'D)

Then the divorce happened and it sucked the life out of her. And she's been trying to suck it out of me ever since.

(turns to face Esperanza)

And the strangest thing about standing here again...

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

76 CONTINUED:

76

HENRY (CONT'D)

It's doing absolutely nothing for me. I mean, I've never been a sentimental person, but -- I don't know... I was hoping for... Something.

They reach the end of the hallway, turning into the --

77 LIVING ROOM --

77

The Home Owner and his Wife stand near the front, waiting patiently for this to be over...

HOME OWNER

Did you find what you were looking for?

Henry considers the personal depths of the simple question.

HENRY

Not really... Thank you, though.

And with that he's out the door.

78 EXT. MIDDLE CLASS NEIGHBORHOOD - DUSK

78

Henry walks away from the corner house. Esperanza beside him.

ESPERANZA

Mr. Poole... I'm sorry it wasn't what you thought it would be.

HENRY

Don't be. It never is. Thanks. This was very generous.

ESPERANZA

At least now you know.

HENRY

Know what?

ESPERANZA

Know what it would be like to go back. To the place where you grew up.

HENRY

Yeah, now I know. It's like nothing.
(quietly, to himself)
There's nowhere to hide.

ESPERANZA

What did you expect? You can't go to the past to fix the present.

(CONTINUED)

HENRY
(bemused)
You sound like a fortune cookie.

ESPERANZA
Cookies don't talk.

Rolling his eyes, Henry crosses the street toward his home.

ESPERANZA (CONT'D)
What were you looking for in the closet?

No answer. Just keeps walking.

79 INT. DAWN STUPEK'S HOUSE/BEDROOM - NIGHT 79

2 AM. Dawn rolls out of bed and staggers into...

80 THE HALLWAY. 80

After passing MILLIE'S ROOM, she stops dead in her tracks, steps back and peers in the doorway.

Millie's bed, sheets pulled back, is empty.

DAWN
Millie?

Dawn flicks on the light as she enters...

81 MILLIE'S ROOM... 81

and begins her search: Under the bed, in the closet, etc...

DAWN
Millie come out here now. It's too late
to be playing games.

She rushes out of the room, back out into...

82 THE HALLWAY... 82

...a subtle panic coming over her.

DAWN
Millie, knock it off. Where are you?

Dawn pops into the KITCHEN, then darts across the hallway into the LIVING ROOM.

DAWN (CONT'D)
Millie! Jesus, Millie!

83 EXT. DAWN STUPEK'S HOUSE/BACKYARD - NIGHT

83

Dawn bursts through the back door, panicked.

DAWN
Millie!

She races around the yard, looking in every possible hiding place. Finally, she peers over the fence into HENRY'S BACKYARD, discovering...

...Millie, standing a few feet away from the stained wall.

DAWN (CONT'D)
Millie... What are you doing?

Millie looks over for a brief moment, revealing a tear streaked face.

DAWN (CONT'D)
What's wrong, baby?

No answer. She just turns back toward the stain. Dawn dashes away, heading toward the front of the house.

84 EXT. HENRY'S HOME/BACKYARD - NIGHT

84

As Dawn comes through the gate, Millie, sobbing, slowly reaches out to the wall, pressing her palm onto the stain.

Dawn approaches cautiously.

DAWN
What's wrong, baby? Why are you crying?

At that moment, Henry comes through the back door, clad in underwear. He sees Dawn.

HENRY
What's going on?

DAWN
(ignoring Henry)
Millie baby?

Henry notices Millie, her palm still pressed to the wall.

HENRY
Millie... What are you doing?

Millie, startled, looks to Henry then, pulling her hand off the wall, turns back to her mother and quite deliberately utters:

(CONTINUED)

MILLIE

Mama...

Dawn freezes, bewildered at the sound of her daughter's voice. Millie runs into her arms.

85 INT. DAWN STUPEK'S HOUSE/MILLIE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

85

Dawn steps away from Millie's bed, having just tucked her in. Millie is sound asleep as Dawn takes a long look at her, then exits, moving into...

86 THE LIVING ROOM...

86

...where Henry waits, sitting on the couch.

HENRY

Is she OK?

DAWN

Yeah. She's asleep.

HENRY

Good.

Dawn plops down onto the couch, on Henry's left. Henry stands, moving to Dawn's other side and sitting.

HENRY (CONT'D)

Sorry, my ear. I'm--

DAWN

Right, sorry. Esperanza told me about that. How did that happen?

Henry shifts uncomfortably, hesitating.

HENRY

It's kind of a long story. I'll tell you another day.

She gives him a long penetrating look.

DAWN

What happened out there?

HENRY

You tell me.

DAWN

She hasn't spoken a word in over a year, since her father walked out. She loves her daddy so much... The prick.

(CONTINUED)

Henry peers at her, an awkward smile, wishing he could offer some consolation.

DAWN (CONT'D)

(off his look)

Sorry... It's just.... It's been so unfair for her... She was so much worse when it all started... I couldn't even get her out of bed... She kind of just turned inside herself... And couldn't find her way out. I was so scared... We've been to every possible doctor on the planet. Therapists, psychologists, psychiatrists and nothing. They ran down the list. Depression. Post traumatic whatever... Abandonment... And then, after a while, she got a little better. Responsive, at least. But she just wouldn't talk.

HENRY

Maybe she didn't have anything to say. She just wasn't ready until now.

DAWN

Maybe. But she touched the--

HENRY

(interrupting)

You can't possibly be thinking that stain made her talk again.

DAWN

I didn't say that, but that is what happened. She touched it, she talked.

(eyes misting)

I just hope it stays that way.

HENRY

Dawn, I'm happy your daughter spoke, but it was a completely random event. Things like that don't happen in real life. If they did I wouldn't be--

Stops himself.

DAWN

You wouldn't be what?

Henry hesitates, then:

HENRY

Do you ever feel like things just happen?
Like you're just kind of along for some
ride and there's nothing you can do to
steer whatever the hell it is you're
riding... Or whatever it is that's
happening to you.

DAWN

(nods)

When my husband left us it was like this
devastation. It felt like...

(searching)

An earthquake... Like the ground was
going to fall out from under me... Under
us. And you're just praying for it to
stop before you're.... Crushed... And
then it does.. And your nerves are all
sort of shot for a while.

HENRY

And the life you knew before is over. I
feel that way all the time.

She meets his gaze.

DAWN

Like you don't know if you're ever going
to be safe again.

He looks at her like no one's ever understood him this way.

Then, with great hesitation, he takes hold of Dawn's hand.
She smiles sadly.

DAWN (CONT'D)

I'm sorry I called you a douche-bag the
other day.

HENRY

It's OK.

(pause)

I suddenly feel like I have to tell you
something. Just so I'm not the only one
who knows.

Dawn looks on, concerned.

DAWN

What is it? What do you want to tell me?

HENRY

The truth.

87 EXT. DAWN STUPEK'S HOUSE - NIGHT 87

THROUGH THE WINDOW we see Henry telling his story.

FADE TO BLACK.

The dark silence is broken by the chirp of the telephone. It rings twice, then stops, then:

ASSISTANT (O.S.)

Henry?

HENRY (O.S.)

Still no calls please.

88 INT. DALLAS HIGH RISE/HENRY'S OFFICE- DAY (FLASHBACK) 88

The office seems empty until we find Henry laying on the floor, flat on his back. He stares up at the bland tiled ceiling.

ASSISTANT (O.S.)

It's Doctor Fancher.

Henry gets to his feet and heads for the desk. He reaches for the phone, but stops. Reaches again... Stops again... Takes a deep breath, then finally picks it up. *

HENRY

Hello...

(pause)

Why do I have to come in?

89 INT. DOCTOR'S OFFICE/EXAMINATION ROOM - DAY 89

Henry sits on the exam table, quietly devastated from something he's just been told by Dr. Fancher who stands before him.

DR. FANCHER

And you haven't been to Africa lately?

HENRY

No. I... I don't go anywhere. Ever.

(pause)

Are you saying this is terminal?

** ALTERNATE DIALOGUE ** *

HENRY (CONT'D) *

A year ago. On this stupid safari my mother made me go on. *

(MORE) *

(CONTINUED)

89 CONTINUED:

89

HENRY (CONT'D)

(pause)

Are you saying this is terminal?

*
*

Dr. Fancher hesitates, but the look on his face says it all.

DR. FANCHER

Henry... This is so unheard of here in the States. I mean, it happens... It's happened before with other viruses finding their way... But this disease... Well... It steam rolls through the system. Stopping it at this point...

(runs out of words)

I'm so sorry, Henry.

90 INT. ELEVATOR - DAY

90

Going down. Henry steps in, moves to the corner, breath labored, a darkness coming over him as the --

ELEVATOR CLOSES AND HE SEES HIS REFLECTION IN THE STAINLESS STEEL DOOR.

91 EXT. DOWNTOWN STREET - DAY.

91

Henry walks slowly amid the bustling throng of pedestrians, his face stoic, eyes vacant... Lost.

He reaches an intersection, crossing with the other people.

Upon reaching the middle of the crosswalk, Henry suddenly stops, a quiet devastation coming over him. He looks as if he might cry.

The traffic light changes and Henry is left alone in the crosswalk. Cars accelerate through the crosswalk, passing Henry on either side. HORNS BLARE as he stands there frozen in time.

92 EXT. JOSEPH'S PAWN SHOP - DAY

92

A rundown part of town, mostly deserted with boarded up store fronts. Henry shuffles along. He's been walking for quite a while when he passes the pawn shop and suddenly stops. He takes a moment, then walks inside...

93 INT./EXT. HENRY'S MERCEDES/FREEWAY - DUSK

93

Henry behind the wheel, alone, driving nowhere, numb.

All of a sudden he recklessly cuts across three lanes of the freeway and amid the screeching tires and blaring horns of other cars, comes to screeching halt on the shoulder under a FREEWAY OVERPASS.

(CONTINUED)

93 CONTINUED:

93

He sits there, feeling everything and nothing all at once, an anxiety brewing.

94 INT./EXT. HENRY MERCEDES/FREEWAY - NIGHT

94

Henry sits staring at the passing traffic. Anonymous. Unseen by anyone. On the passenger seat next to him lays a REVOLVER, sitting atop a brown paper bag, JOSEPH'S PAWN SHOP STENCILED ACROSS IT.

He reaches for the gun, then stops himself, afraid to touch it. A long painful moment, then in one swift motion...

...HENRY GRABS THE GUN, and trembling, points it at his temple.

HE FIRES... but misses completely.

The bullet SHATTERS THE REAR WINDOW OF THE CAR as Henry falls over, clutching his ear.

The DEAFENING RING OF TINNITUS OVERTAKES EVERYTHING as Henry fights back anguished tears, a trickle of blood dripping from his ear.

OUTSIDE, the traffic moves on. No one notices a thing.

And slowly the TINNITUS RING BECOMES INTERMITTENT, BLENDING WITH THE RING OF A PHONE --

95 INT. POOLE COMMERCIAL REAL ESTATE/MELINDA'S OFFICE - NIGHT

95

Late night. The phone on Melinda's desk rings as a Janitor, obliviously dumps a waste paper basket into his trash bin.

VOICE

(over the phone)

You have reached the office of Melinda Poole. Please leave a message and we will get back to you as soon as possible.

The voice mail beeps and long silence follows...

96 EXT. FREEWAY - NIGHT

96

Henry stands on the shoulder, leaning against the trunk of his car, the shattered rear window behind him. In the distance he can see the DOWNTOWN SKYLINE.

A streak of dried blood, trails down his cheek staining his face. He holds a cell phone to his good ear. A long pause as he struggles against his overwhelming anguish...

(CONTINUED)

HENRY

(every word labored)

Um... It's me... I'm just calling to let you know I'm... Fine. Um... And I think I'm... going away for a bit.. And you shouldn't worry or... Look for me... Just tell Lydia... tell her I... Well. You know... Just tell her whatever you want. And I'm sorry. I love you, but... I'm sorry.

Henry flips the cell phone closed then suddenly tosses it out onto the freeway. A PASSING CAR SPEEDS OVER IT, SMASHING IT TO BITS.

97 INT. HENRY'S HOME/LIVING ROOM - DAY

97

Daytime darkness. All the curtains closed. Henry lays on the couch, a cold compress covering his eyes as he rubs his right ear, snaps his fingers right next to it... Still nothing.

ESPERANZA (O.S.)

Mr. Poole! Hello?

He heard that... Henry sits up. Freezes. Quietly moves to the door, slowly locking the dead-bolt. Back pressed to the door as heavy pounding echoes through the house.

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

Mr. Poole, are you home?

More knocking, followed by the doorbell. After a moment of incessant ringing stops followed by footsteps fading away.

Henry takes a deep breath, eyes closed.

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

Mr. Poole, are you OK?

Henry gasps, finding Esperanza planted in the kitchen doorway. He sighs, exasperated.

HENRY

What?

ESPERANZA

The back door. It was open.

HENRY

That doesn't mean you can just walk through it.

(CONTINUED)

ESPERANZA

I need to talk to you.

HENRY

No. No, you don't. I know exactly what you want to say.

ESPERANZA

You don't know exactly.

Henry starts walking the perimeter of the room, pulling open all the curtains and opening the windows. She follows him.

HENRY

I'm sure you know what happened last night. And now you think that little girl spoke because she touched the wall. And now we're all supposed to believe that the second coming is happening in my backyard. And next thing you know, this whole Goddamn street -- sorry -- this whole street turns into some kind of carnival with every holy roller freak within a hundred mile radius lining up around my house to touch or catch a glimpse of my shitty stucco job that has somehow managed to seep it's shittiness into every crevice of my shitty life. No way is that happening, and no way did Millie touching that wall have anything to do with her finally opening her yapper. And God only knows - and I use the phrase loosely - what it was that made her get out of bed at three in the morning and start palming that wall like her life depended on it.

Esperanza, a bit stunned, just sighs.

ESPERANZA

It was me.

HENRY

What was you?

ESPERANZA

I told her the wall would take away her suffering, that it would make her feel better if she just had faith.

He approaches her.

HENRY

Why would you do that?

ESPERANZA

It worked. No?

HENRY

No, it didn't work. She worked. Maybe your little insane pep talk set her on her way, but she got there on her own.

ESPERANZA

Why is it so hard for you to believe, that something like this could happen?

HENRY

Why is it so important to you that I believe something like this could happen?

Esperanza ponders the question, stifled.

ESPERANZA

Because--

HENRY

Because I'll tell you why... Because if you convince me, then somehow suddenly your beliefs become more real. And the more people you get to jump on board your little train, the more your mission is made. So until you get me to swallow your world and believe exactly what you believe, you'll never have the kind of faith you want to have. You'll always have doubt. You'll never be sure that you're right. And you'll always be staring at those pictures in your shrine or whatever it is, hoping for that man to come waltzing back in from the dead.

Hurt and disheartened, Esperanza looks away, tears welling in her eyes as Henry immediately begins to regret his words.

She stands, walks to the front door...

HENRY (CONT'D)

Wait... Esperanza... I'm sorry...

*

But she doesn't wait.

*

98 EXT. HENRY'S HOME/BACKYARD - DUSK

98

Henry stands before the wall, staring at the stain, watching the blood as it slowly trickles down. It's almost as if he's gathering his resolve for something, when:

DAWN (O.S.)

Henry?

Henry whips around, stepping away from the wall as he discovers Dawn standing at the entrance to his yard, a plate of cookies in her hand.

HENRY

Hey.

DAWN

I knocked out front but-- What are you doing?

HENRY

Nothing. Just getting some air.

DAWN

Oh... I just wanted to thank you for helping me with Millie the other night. I made you some cookies.

HENRY

Thanks. You didn't have to.

DAWN

It was nothing. I was making some for Millie, so...

HENRY

How is she doing?

DAWN

She's good. Really good. I'm just praying it stays that way.

(pause)

You want to take a walk?

HENRY

Yeah... I would.

99 EXT. MIDDLE CLASS NEIGHBORHOOD - DUSK

99

Henry and Dawn walk along the sidewalk.

DAWN

So, what are you going to do?

(CONTINUED)

HENRY

What do you mean?

DAWN

Well... About your sickness.

Henry chuckles, trying to make light.

HENRY

Good question... I don't know. I guess I'm going to die.

An uncomfortable silence.

HENRY (CONT'D)

It's funny... Well, not really funny, but... Knowing you're going to die, everything kind of leaves you. Hope. Faith... Christ, I don't even want to brush my teeth anymore.

DAWN

So that's why you came here.

HENRY

(nodding)
Sort of... Yeah.

DAWN

You just left your life behind.

Henry peers at Dawn. Hearing it that way somehow makes it a little more real.

DAWN (CONT'D)

And no one from that life knows you're here? Why didn't you tell anyone?

Henry ponders the question, then with a subtle feigned certainty.

HENRY

To spare them.

Dawn's gaze penetrates, a tiny smirk surfaces... The look when someone knows you better than you do yourself.

DAWN

To spare them or to spare yourself?

His eyes meet hers. She may have him on that one.

(CONTINUED)

DAWN (CONT'D)
How could you do that?

HENRY
It's easier than you think.

DAWN
Do you have a mother, Henry?

He nods.

DAWN (CONT'D)
You may not be a child anymore, but...
She'll always be a mother. She's probably
worried to death about you. You know?

Her logic catches him off guard as a hint of guilt surfaces
in his gaze.

HENRY
Maybe... But trust me, staying would have
been worse.

DAWN
How?

HENRY
My mother... She wouldn't have accepted
this thing happening to me. She'd want to
control it... Like everything.

They stop.

DAWN
And why do you? Accept it?

Henry shrugs, not sure how to answer. Almost as if he's never
even considered an alternative.

HENRY
If I didn't... Would it make it less
true? Less real?
(pause)
It really wouldn't matter.

DAWN
So what does matter, Henry? Anything?

Henry hesitates, a delicate longing in his gaze.

HENRY
I don't know. Maybe. I don't want it to.
Not now, with this--

(CONTINUED)

DAWN

Your doctor? There's nothing--

HENRY

No.

DAWN

I wish I could tell you that everything
is going to be OK.

HENRY

But it's not, so you can't.

Dawn leans in, giving Henry a delicate kiss on the cheek. He
smiles, shy.

HENRY (CONT'D)

Now what?

DAWN

Now...

(thinking)

I go home and then... I'll wish I didn't.

She steps away, he watches as she walks into her house.

100 INT. HENRY'S HOME/BEDROOM - NIGHT

100

Henry lays in bed, eating one of Dawn's cookies. Picks a
crumb off his chest. Eats that too... A simple pleasure.

101 INT. HENRY'S HOME/BEDROOM - MORNING

101

Henry lays in bed asleep, the cookie plate, empty on the
night stand.

The silence is over taken by a SHRILL SCREAM coming from the
backyard. Startled, Henry rushes out.

102 EXT. HENRY'S HOME/BACKYARD - MORNING

102

Henry bursts through the back door to discover...

...Patience, on her knees, wailing, hands rubbing her eyes.
Her glasses lay on the grass beside her.

PATIENCE

Oh my God! Oh my God! Dear God!

Henry rushes to her, falling to his knees, holding her as
Dawn suddenly peers over her backyard fence.

(CONTINUED)

DAWN

Henry --

Henry looks at Dawn, befuddled... No idea what's going on.

HENRY

Patience? What happened? What's wrong?
What are you doing here? Are you OK?
What's wrong?

PATIENCE

Nothing's wrong? Everything's right!

She pulls away, breathless, crying, locking her gaze on his.

PATIENCE (CONT'D)

I can see.

Henry's speechless at first. Looks at Dawn again.

HENRY

You can see? How did you even hear about
this... Thing?

Suddenly Esperanza appears, peeking over the fence of her
backyard.

ESPERANZA

Mr. Poole! What is it?

He glances at Esperanza... Of course that's how.

PATIENCE

I can see. Perfectly. Just like that.

Esperanza, awed, makes the sign of the cross.

PATIENCE (CONT'D)

I touched the face. I just put my hand on
it. And my body got all warm everywhere.
And then, and then... I, I... my eyes...
I saw white everywhere. And I closed my
eyes and the white was still there. And I
opened them... And I could --

Her sobs overtake words as she falls into Henry's arms.

Stunned, Henry looks to Dawn, a pleading in his eyes..."Help
me."

103 INT. HENRY'S HOME/LIVING ROOM - MORNING

103

Henry, sitting in a chair, watches Patience across from him on the couch. Esperanza sits next to her. And Dawn stands by the door.

Patience holds a vodka bottle as far from her face as her outstretched hand allows. Her glasses lay on the coffee table.

PATIENCE

Look at that. I can see the words perfectly. Wow. Even the small print.

HENRY

What were you saying before?

PATIENCE

Oh... Well... Stargardt's Disease. That's what it's called. It hits people in their twenties. It's a progressive loss of central vision. I'm still not sure why I got it. Genetics I think.

Esperanza stands, steps away.

DAWN

How long have you had it?

PATIENCE

It started, like, over a year ago. Came on pretty quick. And there's no treatment. Except for those stupid things.

She points at her glasses.

PATIENCE (CONT'D)

Guess that doesn't really matter anymore.

She laughs, then starts covering each eye, one at a time, testing her vision. Henry remains baffled.

PATIENCE (CONT'D)

This is amazing. This is a mir--

HENRY

Don't say it.

PATIENCE

What? Miracle? Come on, Henry. What else could this be?

(CONTINUED)

Henry ponders an answer, shaking his head, then notices Esperanza across the room, phone in hand and dialing. He bolts across the room.

HENRY
(takes the phone from her)
Whoa! What are you doing?

HENRY (CONT'D)
You're not calling anyone. You're not telling anyone about this. This doesn't leave this room.

PATIENCE
It kinda does.

HENRY
What?

PATIENCE
Well, when I walk out of here, it's not like I'm not going to tell anyone. I'll probably mention it to everyone I see - and I do mean see. Something miraculous happened to me. Something impossible. Something unbelievable. Something that wasn't supposed to happen.

ESPERANZA
Going blind wasn't supposed to happen... Seeing was.

Patience smiles sweetly, pleased at the notion.

104 INT. HENRY'S HOME/KITCHEN - DAY

104

Henry stands at the sink, rinsing the cookie dish. The quiet is suddenly broken by DAWN'S VOICE calling from somewhere outside.

DAWN (O.S.)
Henry.

Henry follows her voice. It's coming from the backyard.

DAWN (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Henry... You home?

105 EXT. HENRY'S HOME/BACKYARD - DAY

105

Henry emerges from his home to find Dawn peering over the fence from her yard.

DAWN

Oh good. You're home... What are you doing right now?

He shrugs, a little perplexed.

HENRY

Nothing.

DAWN

Perfect. Because Millie asked me to see if you could come play with her.

Henry peers at Dawn, awkward, uncomfortable.

HENRY

Really? I don't think that's such a good idea. You know, I--

DAWN

Are you actually even considering saying no to an eight year old little girl, who just suddenly breached an epic bout of being mute? And now she's asking for you... With actual words, coming out of her mouth.

Henry slumps. Just a bit. How do you say no to that logic?

106 EXT. DAWN STUPEK'S HOUSE/BACKYARD - DAY

106

Henry stands glumly near the back gate surveying the seemingly empty yard. He takes a couple of steps farther into the yard as he scans the perimeter.

HENRY

Millie?

No answer.

HENRY (CONT'D)

(calling into the house)

I don't think she's out here.

And as the words leave his mouth... HENRY IS BEANED IN THE HEAD WITH A WATER BALLOON.

He stands there, stunned and dripping wet as the sound of Millie's chuckling suddenly fills the yard.

(CONTINUED)

As he wipes the water from his face, Millie emerges from behind a bush, two more water balloons in her hands and in the throes of a giggle fit. She laughs with abandon, the way only young children can.

Dawn steps out through the back door, a bucket of water balloons in her grasp as Henry numbly struggles to allow himself to surrender to the moment.

And as Dawn tries to hand him a balloon, Henry turns away, heading out of the yard. His words shamefully creak out...

HENRY (CONT'D)

I can't...
 (to Millie)
 I'm sorry.

Millie's laughter dissipates as she and Dawn watch him leave, when all of a sudden...

...Henry snags a nearby hose from the ground and in one swift motion SPRAYS MILLIE WITH A STEADY BLAST OF WATER.

HENRY (CONT'D)

First rule of battle... Never trust the enemy!!

Millie erupts with laughter as she runs from the spray.

A moment later, Dawn unleashes her own attack, launching one water balloon after the other at Henry...

And just like that, they're in the midst of GRAND WATER BALLOON FIGHT.

Henry succumbs to the joy of the moment and allows himself to laugh, and for one brief moment, to forget his reality... And just PLAY.

107 INT. HENRY'S HOME/BEDROOM - DAY

107

The quiet stillness is broken by the SOUND OF THE FRONT DOOR OPENING. A moment later Henry enters the room, still soaking wet from the water balloon fight.

Sitting on the edge of his bed, it's clear a subtle levity has come over him. The remnants of his unexpected playtime.

Staring at the bedroom wall, his gaze falls on the TINY PHOTO he pinned to the wall earlier. A moment passes... And he stands, a calm reverie taking over as he leaves the room and we finally see the photo in detail:

(CONTINUED)

107 CONTINUED: 107

Henry's Young Mother, his Father and Henry, 9 years old.
Everyone smiling. A HAPPY FAMILY.

108 EXT. MIDDLE CLASS NEIGHBORHOOD - DAY 108

Henry wanders down the block away from his home, his clothes still damp. As he comes upon the CORNER HOUSE, his childhood home, his gaze lingers as he passes... A hint of longing.

109 EXT. MAIN BOULEVARD - DAY 109

Henry continues walking, seemingly aimless... Until something catches his eye...

A BUS, thundering by and pulling up to a BUS STOP. Henry breaks into a jog, rushing aboard the bus.

110 INT./EXT. BUS - DAY 110

The BUS DRIVER oddly eyeballs this new passenger's current damp state as Henry digs out a couple of soggy dollars and hands them over.

As the bus pulls away, Henry makes his way down the aisle, collecting more peculiar looks from the PASSENGERS until finally he finds a seat. Settles in and rests his head on the window. *

111 EXT. CITY BRIDGE - DAY 111

The bus pulls away leaving Henry standing in the middle of the desolate bridge where it becomes clear he is standing over a portion of the VAST CONCRETE L.A. RIVER.

Henry makes his way to the end of the bridge, finding a way into onto the river bed through a rusty gate.

112 EXT. L.A. RIVERBED - DAY 112

Henry makes his way along the river bank, walking under the bridge where he begins examining the huge concrete support pylons... It takes a moment, but he finally finds what he was looking for...

Scrawled among he the thick layers of graffiti, in small faded letters... Four words... HENRY POOLE WAS HERE.

He eyes the words, nostalgia seeping in as he gently passes his fingers over the concrete.

113 A FEW MOMENTS LATER... 113

Henry stands serenely down in the middle of the dry riverbed, his feet planted on the edge of the narrow runoff canal.

He watches the strange sight of a LITTLE DUCK floating along with the current of the murky water. He looks to the endless right, miles and miles of pale white concrete... And then to the endless left... More of the same.

It's hard not to notice how small he looks in this vast space.

*

114 INT. DAWN STUPEK'S HOUSE - NIGHT 114

Dawn lays curled up on the couch reading. THE SOUND OF A SNEEZE coming from outside brings her to her feet. She moves TO THE WINDOW where she spies Henry stepping up his walkway.

Perhaps sensing her stare, Henry stops for a moment and looks toward Dawn's window as she shrinks back behind her curtains. Seeing nothing, he walks into his house.

115 INT. HENRY'S HOME/BEDROOM - NIGHT 115

Henry stands in the open closet, a marker in his hand. Gets down on his knees and begins writing on the wall. The words: HENRY POOLE WAS HERE.

*

*

116 INT. HENRY'S HOME/LIVING ROOM - MORNING 116

Henry lays on the couch. All of a sudden, he hears the sound of Millie and Dawn coming from outside: Their voices. Their front door closing.

He bolts up and rushes into the kitchen and comes back out clutching Dawn's cookie plate and heads outside.

117 EXT. HENRY'S HOME - DAY 117

Plate in hand, Henry catches up with Dawn and Millie as they reach Dawn's car and open the passenger side door.

HENRY

Hey.

DAWN

Hello again...

MILLIE

Hi, Mr. Poole.

(CONTINUED)

HENRY

Hey there, Millie... That's nice dress
you got there. You look very pretty.

Millie throws him a shy smile, then:

MILLIE

You look scared, Mr. Poole.

HENRY

(a little embarrassed)
Do I? Hmm... I'm just tired. You wore me
out yesterday. Where are you two headed?

MILLIE

Birthday party. No boys allowed, though.

Millie climbs into the car, closes the door and drapes
herself through the open window.

HENRY

(handing Dawn the plate)
Anyway...um... I just wanted to return
your dish. They were really good.

DAWN

I'm glad you liked them, but you
shouldn't eat so many at once. It's not
good for you.

HENRY

Well, you know, it really doesn't mat--
(stops himself)
You're right, I shouldn't.

An awkward silence.

HENRY (CONT'D)

Well...um...listen... I was wondering...
and I know it's totally unfair in a way,
because you know. Well, my situation...
thing. Anyway... Would you, if you're not
doing anything and you can get a baby
sitter or something, would you want to--

DAWN

(interrupting)
Yes.

HENRY

Really? Well, that's-- Wait.

DAWN

What?

HENRY

Wait, wait... Can I ask you?

DAWN

You just did.

HENRY

No, no... I mean really ask you. I need to ask you, to finish. I need to do this, to finish asking you.

Dawn gives him a coy smile.

DAWN

OK.

HENRY

(quickly)

Will you have dinner with me?

DAWN

I can't. I'm busy.

HENRY

Oh...

DAWN

(laughing)

Kidding, Henry. Of course.

HENRY

Great, great.

Dawn steps around the car to the driver's side.

DAWN

How's tomorrow night?

HENRY

Perfect.

DAWN

Oh... And by the way, it's not unfair to ask. It would be worse if you didn't.

She climbs in, starts the car and drives away. As Henry watches, A CAR approaches, slowing down as it reaches Henry's home.

(CONTINUED)

INSIDE, TWO MIDDLE AGED WOMEN peer out, fixating on Henry's house. The car slows to a crawl as Henry, walking back home, notices.

As the Two Women catch sight of him, the car picks up speed and drives away. Henry looks on quizzically.

Henry cruises down an aisle, basket in hand and a little bounce to his step. He tosses in a pack of razors and shaving cream to go with the deodorant, floss and shampoo already inside the basket.

At the end of the aisle Patience stands, leaning on an end display, happily watching Henry do his shopping. She's looking vibrant, with a new hair-do.

PATIENCE

Hey, Mr. Poole.
(smirking)
Good to see you.

She walks toward him.

HENRY

Funny... Good to see you too. Everything still OK?

PATIENCE

Pretty much.

HENRY

(reaching into his pocket)
Oh... You forgot these.

He hands Patience her glasses.

PATIENCE

Thanks. Don't really need them, though. I guess they'll be a good souvenir.
(looking into his basket)
What are you doing?

HENRY

Cleaning myself up a bit.

PATIENCE

That's good, I guess.

HENRY

Yeah, it is...
(pause)

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

HENRY (CONT'D)

So, have you seen your doctor, your eye doctor?

PATIENCE

Not yet. Ninety bucks so he can tell me I'm cured. I already know that.

HENRY

(sarcastic)

Yeah, but think of all the write ups in the medical journals.

PATIENCE

You're still having a pretty hard time buying into this, aren't you?

HENRY

Well, you gotta admit...

PATIENCE

No, not really... I'm the one with the 20/20.

HENRY

True, but still...

PATIENCE

Do you know who Noam Chomsky is?

HENRY

The political writer, critic?

PATIENCE

Yeah. He's a linguist too. But once, in an interview, he said, when questions of decision, reason, or choice of action arise, human science is at a loss.

HENRY

Guys must be tripping all over themselves to get to you.

PATIENCE

Well, now that the package is a bit better, the phone's been ringing a bit more. And it's only been a couple of days. No offense, but your kind are deep like a puddle sometimes.

HENRY

No argument here. I'll see you.

Henry steps away, heading down the aisle.

PATIENCE

Hey.

He turns back.

PATIENCE (CONT'D)

He meant everything doesn't need an explanation. Sometimes things just happen because we choose for them to. I chose to believe.

Henry gives her a long, contemplative look. He's captivated.

119 EXT. ESPERANZA'S HOUSE/PORCH - MORNING

119

Henry and Esperanza stand by the open doorway in the midst of her giving him an awkwardly long embrace.

HENRY

Just this once. OK?

ESPERANZA

I promise. Whatever you say, Mr. Poole. Thank you.

120 EXT. HENRY'S HOME/DINING AREA - MORNING

120

Henry and Esperanza stand before the open sliding glass door watching her friends...

...Josie, the other two older women and an ELDERLY GENTLEMAN, lined up reverently before the stain. Each one carries a votive candle or flowers.

And Millie, happily scurrying to and from the wall, collecting the offerings from each person and placing them reverently beneath the stain.

ESPERANZA

I meant to tell you earlier... I just want you to know, I heard what you said the other day.

He looks at her, confused.

ESPERANZA (CONT'D)

When you were yelling at me.

HENRY

Oh right... Listen, I'm sorry about--

ESPERANZA

Don't apologize. I heard you. That's all.

(CONTINUED)

Esperanza quietly accepts the apology as they watch Josie step up to the wall, then solemnly place the palm of her hand on the stain. She genuflects and makes the sign of the cross.

HENRY

What's wrong with her?

ESPERANZA

Bursitis.

The next little old lady steps up.

HENRY

What about her?

ESPERANZA

Acid reflux.

HENRY

And the one behind her?

ESPERANZA

There's nothing wrong with her.

HENRY

So... Preventative.

Esperanza shrugs and nods.

ESPERANZA

It can't hurt, no...

(pause)

What about you? Have you touched the wall yet, Mr. Poole?

Henry takes a moment, contemplating the question as his gaze falls on Millie. He smiles, a hint of awe at her simple joy as she looks back him, returning the smile.

HENRY

Not yet...

She looks at him with an affirmative gaze.

ESPERANZA

But you will.

Henry remains quiet... Just then they both notice another LITTLE OLD MAN cautiously entering his backyard, a small portrait of Jesus in his hands.

ESPERANZA (CONT'D)

Don't worry. It's just this once... Like I promised. They'll all be gone before your big date.

As Esperanza steps away to greet the Old Man, she peers over her shoulder at Henry.

ESPERANZA (CONT'D)

Don't forget, a lady likes flowers on the first date.

121 INT. HENRY'S HOME/BATHROOM - DAY 121

Fresh out of the shower, Henry shaves, a bit of a twinkle in his eye as he allows himself this happy moment.

122 INT. HENRY'S HOME/BEDROOM - DAY 122

Henry buttons and tucks in his shirt, then slips on his sports coat. He's looking quite dapper.

123 EXT. FLOWER KIOSK/MINI MALL - DAY 123

Henry hands the CLERK some cash for the small bouquet of flowers in his hand. As he walks back to his car...

...HE CATCHES HIS REFLECTION IN THE DOOR WINDOW and abruptly stops.

Slowly surveying himself -- cleaned up, well dressed. He's not quite sure if he recognizes the man he sees.

124 EXT. DAWN STUPEK'S HOUSE/PORCH - NIGHT 124

Henry stands before the front door, flowers in hand and clearly a little nervous. Taking a deep breath, he goes to ring the doorbell, when to his surprise, the front door is opened by Esperanza.

HENRY

What are you doing here?

ESPERANZA

I'm the baby sitter.

HENRY

Of course you are.

Dawn suddenly appears behind Esperanza.

DAWN

Henry. Hi. Sorry I'm running a little late. I was putting Millie to sleep.

MILLIE (O.S.)

Hi, Mr. Poole.

Millie peeks out from the hallway wearing her pajamas.

HENRY

Hey Millie.

MILLIE

That's a pretty outfit you have on.

He smiles, a little embarrassed.

HENRY

Thank you.

DAWN

Millie, sweetie... Get back to bed please. I told you no goofing around tonight.

(to Henry)

I'm sorry. Just one more second.

As Dawn starts toward Millie, Esperanza stops her.

ESPERANZA

It's OK. I'll take care of her.

MILLIE

(giggling, talking a mile a minute)

You still look scared, Mr. Poole. Well, not really scared... Something else... Kinda like when mommy was putting her make up on. She said she was nervous... Maybe that's it. Are you nervous, Mr. Poole?

HENRY

(to Dawn)

This talking thing's really working out, huh?

Esperanza scoots Millie back toward her room.

ESPERANZA

Let's go, little one.

DAWN

Sorry.

HENRY

Don't be. She's very... Perceptive. You ready?

DAWN

I am.

Grabbing her purse, Dawn steps out from the house, closing the door behind her and heads toward the Henry's car.

HENRY

Um... We're not taking a car.

She turns to face him, a curious smile on her lips.

125 EXT. HENRY'S HOME/BACKYARD - NIGHT

125

Henry leads Dawn into the yard where she discovers...

...two lawn chairs and a little card table adorned with a candle, two place settings and bottle of wine, all set up in the center of the yard.

She smiles, moved by his effort.

DAWN

Well, that's just about the loveliest thing I've ever seen.

Henry realizes he's still holding the flowers.

HENRY

Oh... These are for you.

DAWN

I don't know what to say. I can't wait to see what's for dinner.

PIZZA BOY (O.S.)

You guys order a pizza?

The pizza boy stands behind them, a large with everything on it in tow.

DAWN

(sincere)
Perfect.

126 EXT. HENRY'S HOME/BACKYARD - LATER

126

With the pizza half gone, Dawn and Henry sit at the little card table. A quiet moment passes as Dawn musters a question.

DAWN

Can I ask you something? The other night... I heard you come home late and--
(stops herself)
You know what... I'm sorry. It's none of my business. I shouldn't have--

HENRY

It's OK... I was just coming back from a walk... Sort of. It's funny, when I left... I don't think I really knew where I was going... Until I got there.

DAWN

Where did you go?

HENRY

A place I used to go when I was a kid... When I realized my parents hated each other... The riverbed. It used to make me feel so small... It was so vast... I wanted the rain to come and wash me away. But I felt safe there... Hidden and safe. A refuge.

(pause)

That's why I came back here.

DAWN

To feel safe?

HENRY

To hide...

(pause)

I had two choices. I could have made a list of all the things I've never done and started booking sky diving lessons and bungee jumping trips... But those are all things you kind of want to remember. And what good are memories if you're not around to have them. So I chose the other way...

DAWN

Just like that. You disappeared.

Henry shrugs, a little embarrassed... Then taking a deep breath, working up his resolve:

(CONTINUED)

HENRY

You know... I'm sorry, but can we talk about something else? Because...
(struggling to admit it)
I'm kind of enjoying this... Enjoying you. And I didn't expect to feel this... Ever.

She smiles warmly. She feels the same.

MILLIE (O.S.)

Mommy?

Dawn immediately gets up, walking toward the source of her daughter's voice: The fence.

DAWN

Millie! What are you doing?

MILLIE (O.S.)

I can't sleep.

DAWN

Where's Esperanza?

MILLIE (O.S.)

On the couch. Snoring.

DAWN

Honey, go back inside, OK? I'll be right there.

Dawn turns back toward Henry as she starts to head out of the backyard.

DAWN (CONT'D)

I'll be right back. But do me a favor...
Keep enjoying this.

Henry watches her leave, then slowly shifts his gaze to the wall, the stain. A subtle melancholy falls over him as he recalls his plight.

He gets up, approaching the wall, his eyes fixed on the blood coming from the eye as it slowly trickles down.

127 INT. DAWN STUPEK'S HOUSE/MILLIE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

127

Dawn finishes tucking Millie back into bed and gives her a peck on the cheek as Millie rolls over, snuggling up under the covers.

(CONTINUED)

DAWN

Go to sleep, sweetie.

And as Dawn heads out of the room, Millie's eyes pop open...

128 EXT. HENRY'S HOME/BACKYARD - NIGHT

128

Henry approaches the wall now...

Only a couple of feet away, he stops. Then, somehow quelling his doubt, he reaches out, extending his arm, ready to touch the stain.

His fingers tremble, just a bit as they approach, an inch away now... A little closer... And closer... Until...

DAWN (O.S.)

Sorry about that...

Henry's arm snaps down as he turns to find Dawn entering the backyard. He stifles his embarrassment as reality comes rushing over him. What could he have been thinking?

DAWN (CONT'D)

...it's like she doesn't want to miss a thing, now that--

And suddenly Dawn realizes what Henry was about to do.

HENRY

You know... Maybe we should call it a night. This isn't--

DAWN

Henry--

She walks to him.

HENRY

I'm suddenly realizing how dangerous all this is.

DAWN

What are you talking about?

Face to face now.

HENRY

This... You and me... Everything.

DAWN

How can you think that? I can almost see
the other side because of this. Henry...
I don't care that you're going to die.

Henry looks down, unable hold her gaze as Dawn slowly reaches
for both his hands... It's almost magnetic as Henry allows
her to take hold.

DAWN (CONT'D)

We should pay attention... To right now.

He looks up again, his eyes penetrating hers...

HENRY

I am paying attention. That's the
problem.

And with that he gently pulls his hands away...

...then steps into his house, quietly closing the door behind
him and leaving Dawn just a little heart broken.

129 INT. HENRY'S HOME/BEDROOM - NIGHT

129

Henry lays in bed on his back fully clothed. He stares at the
gaping hole left in the drywall by the church's research
team. He's immobile until finally, he slowly sits up.

130 EXT. HENRY'S HOME/BACKYARD - NIGHT

130

Henry stands in the middle of the yard, his gaze fixed on the
stain... His eyes seeking something... Anything... Until
finally his eyes close...

And then, in a silent whisper, his lips quivering... He
utters his private prayer...

And it's the tears which force his eyes open... And Henry
weeps quietly for the first time... Releasing.

131 EXT. SUBURBAN NEIGHBORHOOD - DAWN

131

High above. Floating in the crisp morning light we survey the
serene neighborhood, slowly swooping over the simple track
housing and coming upon Henry's home... Over the roof and
into...

132 HENRY'S BACKYARD...

132

...where Henry lays asleep on the ground amid the votive
candles and flower offerings beneath the stain. He's been
there all night, inches from the wall...

(CONTINUED)

132 CONTINUED:

132

Still slumbering, Henry does not he hear the FAINT BUZZ OF A FLY as it LANDS ON HIS CHIN and crawls down onto his neck.

A moment later, however, he unexpectedly swats it, splattering the bug on his skin. Pulling his hand away, he stares at his palm, A TINY SPOT OF BLOOD IN THE CENTER.

133 INT. GALLATIN MEDICAL CENTER/LABORATORY - MORNING

133

White everywhere... Until a DROP OF BLOOD splatters, filling most of the screen. Another follows as we reveal...

A LAB TECHNICIAN hunched over a high-powered electronic microscope. His head pops up, a perplexed look on his face. He goes down to the eye-piece once again.

134 INT. GALLATIN MEDICAL CENTER/WAITING ROOM - MORNING

134

Esperanza sits quietly in the empty, florescently lit room. She watches the clock on the wall across from her: 8AM.

The lab door pops open followed by the Lab Tech stepping through, a bit bewildered, file in hand. Esperanza anxiously stands up.

*

135 INT. RECTORY/ FATHER SALAZAR'S OFFICE - MORNING

135

The door swings open and Esperanza marches in waving the lab file. She finds Father Salazar behind his desk.

*

ESPERANZA

Father! The blood! It's real!

(opening the file)

It says right here. It's real.

*

He looks at her, dubious as she hands him the file. He reads, slowly becoming addled.

*

FATHER SALAZAR

It says it's decomposing. The red blood cells are dying. Like its hundreds of years old.

Esperanza nods, awed.

ESPERANZA

What do we do?

Father Salazar closes the file, dumbfounded.

*

136 INT. HENRY'S HOME/BATHROOM - MORNING 136

Henry, in the midst of a shower, lets the water stream hit his face. You would almost think he was trying to drown himself.

137 INT. HENRY'S HOME/BEDROOM - DAY 137

CLOSE ON the small Poole family photo taped to the wall as Henry peels it off.

He eyes it for a moment, a stoic stare, then crumples it in his fist. A moment later, A FRANTIC KNOCKING interrupts the quiet.

138 INT. HENRY'S HOME/LIVING ROOM - MORNING 138

Henry rushes to the door and opens it to find Dawn trying desperately to contain her panic.

HENRY

What is it? What's wrong?

DAWN

It's Millie.

139 INT. DAWN STUPEK'S HOUSE/MILLIE'S BEDROOM - MORNING 139

Henry stands in the doorway, his breath labored, hesitant to go any further. Dawn stands behind him.

DAWN

She's been like that all morning.

Millie lays on the bed, curled up, her eyes open, but utterly vacant. Just a blank stare glazed on her face.

DAWN (CONT'D)

She won't talk to me... She won't look at me. Nothing. She hasn't even moved.

Henry musters the courage to step into the room. He kneels down beside her bed, his face inches from hers.

HENRY

Millie... Can you hear me? Come on now, I know you can hear me, Millie. What's wrong?

No reaction from Millie.

HENRY (CONT'D)

Look at me, honey. Remember how much fun we had the other day? Remember how we played... Don't make me drag that hose in here...

Still nothing from Millie. Just her vacant eyes. It's disarming. Henry looks away, down at the floor, where his gaze falls upon MILLIE'S LITTLE TAPE RECORDER...

140 INT. DAWN STUPEK'S HOUSE/HALLWAY - MORNING

140

Henry and Dawn stand outside Millie's bedroom as he hits the play button on the recorder... And the words from the previous night spill out...

DAWN

(on the recorder)

I can almost see the other side because of this. Henry... I don't care that you're going to die.

A quiet devastation washes over both of them as they look through the open door at Millie's immobile little face.

DAWN (CONT'D)

Will you drive us to the doctor?

Henry doesn't answer, his mind racing, trying to make sense of this... Suddenly, he looks at Dawn... An idea forming.

*
*

141 EXT. HENRY'S HOME/BACKYARD - MORNING

141

Dawn watches as Henry leads Millie by the hand toward the wall, the stain... He gets down on his knees.

*
*

HENRY

Millie... Go ahead... Touch it again... Like you did before. Remember? It's OK.

*
*
*

Millie doesn't move, just stares straight ahead... Until finally Henry gently takes her hand and places it on the stain for her.

*
*
*

HENRY (CONT'D)

Millie... Say something.

*
*

But she doesn't.

*

142 INT. PEDIATRICIAN'S OFFICE/EXAM ROOM - DAY 142

CLOSE ON -- Millie's eye as a light shines into it, her pupil contracting. Dawn and Henry stand in the corner, watching as the PEDIATRICIAN continues the exam.

PEDIATRICIAN
(a bit baffled)
Was there any kind of trauma? Anything
which could have set her back like this?

Dawn and Henry's eyes meet, a knowing suffering in each gaze.

143 INT. PEDIATRICIAN'S OFFICE/HALLWAY - DAY 143

Henry and Dawn step out. The Pediatrician follows.

PEDIATRICIAN
OK... I'm going to assume, for now, this
is not neurological. It wasn't before. So
we have that.

144 EXT. PEDIATRICIAN'S OFFICE - DAY 144

Henry emerges from the building with Millie held in his arms, his face ashen. Dawn follows close behind, tears streaking her cheeks. *

PEDIATRICIAN (V.O.)
That said, elective mutism is one thing.
But, like we talked about the last time,
if this is catatonia or something like
it, that's another. Episodes like this
are pretty uncommon in young children.
Many cases are reflective of mood
disorders. In adults they can last an
hour, a day, a week. But if she doesn't
snap out of it by tomorrow... We might
need to admit her to the hospital.

145 INT./EXT. HENRY'S CAR - DAY 145

Henry drives with Dawn in the back seat, holding her baby girl in her arms.

A long painful silence as he peers in the rearview mirror, his gaze drifting from the catatonic Millie to Dawn's helpless eyes.

At first the only sound is the wind whipping against a loosened corner of the plastic garbage bag covering the rear window shattered by Henry's suicide attempt.

(CONTINUED)

Henry's troubled eyes fix on the flapping plastic as the steady HUM OF TINNITUS TAKES OVER...

Until finally Henry speaks, oddly numb... His words directed at no one.

HENRY

It's my fault.

DAWN

What?

HENRY

I was expendable... Until this. I could have just stopped living and no one would have noticed. But now... Now I'll die and she's the one left behind... She's the one who has to remember.

Staring at the back of Henry's head, Dawn struggles to find a response... But none comes.

146 HENRY'S POV - HIS STREET

146

...as he drives, turning onto his block and discovering every parking space taken up by unfamiliar cars. He curiously scans the street, until finally his gaze falls on his own home, strange cars lining the driveway as well.

Among them a NEWS VAN with a CAMERAMAN and REPORTER preparing to shoot.

A instant later he spots Esperanza standing by the gate leading to the backyard. In her grasp a small church collection plate being filled by the line of at least FIFTEEN PEOPLE, all filtering in through the gate.

147 EXT. HENRY'S HOME/FRONT YARD - DAY

147

Esperanza spots Henry's car as it screeches to a stop in the middle of the street. Henry pops out, dismayed and angry.

HENRY

What the hell is this?

As he furiously marches toward the gate, Esperanza darts away from the line up and attempts to intercept.

ESPERANZA

Mr. Poole, please. I can explain!

HENRY

Get out of my way, Esperanza! I told you,
one time. That was it! You promised!

Esperanza back peddles, shuffling from side to side, trying
to slow him down.

ESPERANZA

God is bigger than a promise, Mr. Poole!
Please, just listen to me!

Growing desperate, she drops the collection plate and
unexpectedly plants her hands on Henry's chest. Henry is
stunned by her touch. He was not expecting her to get
physical. She grabs him by the shoulders.

ESPERANZA (CONT'D)

Mr. Poole, please... Just let me talk to
you.

BACK AT THE GATE, Father Salazar appears. His expression
drops, shocked at the brewing scene across the front yard.

FATHER SALAZAR

Esperanza! Stop that!

Father Salazar rushes over, peeling Esperanza off of Henry.

FATHER SALAZAR (CONT'D)

Let him go. I'm sorry, Mr. Poole...
Please just let us --

Ignoring Salazar, Henry bolts across the yard, through the
bottleneck of people and into...

He stands there, fuming as he surveys the yard in full and
discovers at least FORTY PEOPLE, all reverently scattered
about. Some taking snapshots, others rolling home video.

At the base of the wall he finds a massive collection of
votive candles, bouquets of flowers, hand drawn posters,
statues and small portraits of Jesus.

Esperanza and Father Salazar rush into the backyard. The News
Crew follows as well, the TV camera trained on Henry.

HENRY

Holy shit.

ESPERANZA

No holy shit... Holy something else. Mr. Poole, the test came back and--

HENRY

And what? You found there's no explanation. Big surprise.

ESPERANZA

No, Mr. Poole--

FATHER SALAZAR

(interrupting)

Yes, you're right, there is no explanation. That's exactly right.

HENRY

So, what's going on here? What are all these people doing here?

FATHER SALAZAR

They're here to see something unexplainable. They're here to find some hope.

Henry leers at Father Salazar.

HENRY

You know what? I was wrong to let this happen the first time. This is absurd. Look at them. They're praying to my wall!

One of the FEMALE WORSHIPERS steps up to Henry. She speaks into his left ear.

FEMALE WORSHIPER

Excuse me... Is this your house?

Frustrated, Henry gently grabs her shoulders and moves her to his right side. The woman stares quizzically at Henry.

*

HENRY

Yeah. This is my house.

FEMALE WORSHIPER

You know, you're a very lucky man, to have this blessing on you.

HENRY

Yeah, I should buy a lottery ticket.

FEMALE WORSHIPER

That's my son over there.

(CONTINUED)

She points to a TEENAGE BOY, 19 years old, clearly missing copious amounts of hair from under the bandana wrapped around his head. The boy stands by the wall with his FATHER, his hand firmly pressed on the stain.

FEMALE WORSHIPER (CONT'D)

Leukemia.

HENRY

(appalled)

And you brought him here?

FEMALE WORSHIPER

We heard about what the image has done so far, and we believe... It's all we have left. Just a little hope.

Henry simmers, slowly becoming more and more agitated.

HENRY

Hope? You think this going to help him?

Father Salazar lightly grabs Henry's arm, sensing the verbal deluge about to spill from his mouth.

FATHER SALAZAR

Mr. Poole, don't --

HENRY

(pulling his arm away)

No... These people... These people... They're making this kid believe his life is going to last longer than it is because there's a stain on some stranger's wall. Hope isn't going to help him.

(pointing to various people)

Or him, or him or her! Am I the only one getting this? This is wrong! Hope... Can't save you.

The Teenage Boy, confused, tired, looks at Henry as he winds down from his outburst. The boy and Henry lock eyes for a moment, until... Henry snaps out of it, bolting from the backyard. *

ESPERANZA

Mr. Poole!

Dawn pulls Millie out of Henry's car and turns to find Henry racing out of his backyard, across the lawn. He bolts down...

150 ESPERANZA'S DRIVEWAY... 150

...reaching the GARAGE and yanking the door open. Pausing a moment, he surveys the space, searching... Finally, he finds what he is looking for.

151 EXT. HENRY'S HOME/FRONT YARD - DAY 151

Henry marches back across the lawn, an AXE firmly in his grasp.

Dawn stands at the edge of the driveway, dismayed, holding Millie close.

*
*

DAWN

Henry?

Ignoring Dawn, he darts down the SIDE OF THE HOUSE as Dawn, still clutching her daughter and keeping her distance, follows.

Esperanza sees him coming and instinctively moves toward him, trying to block his way, walking backward in stride.

ESPERANZA

Mr. Poole, what are you doing?!

152 EXT. HENRY'S HOME/BACKYARD - DAY 152

He charges in, determined and with Esperanza still trying to block his path.

ESPERANZA

You can't! Please, Mr. Poole. This is a gift from God! You can't do this!

Henry marches on, ignoring her as Dawn and Millie cautiously enter.

ESPERANZA (CONT'D)

Please, just listen to me. Please, Henry. Please. This is a gift, a miracle. Don't do this. It will be a sin!

Henry shoves her out of the way, reaches the wall and kicks the candles, statues and portraits out of the way.

Esperanza is stunned into silence by his rage.

HENRY

I don't care what it is! I didn't ask for this and I don't want it. This is my decision. This is what I want.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

HENRY (CONT'D)

I want these trinkets off my lawn. I want these people out of my yard. I want this stain off my wall! And I just want to... I want...

His eyes fall on Millie in the crowd... Her gaze already penetrating him... Henry helpless... Desperate... All the pain and suffering culminating in this moment.

*
*
*

HENRY (CONT'D)

This does not save lives.

*
*

And with that, Henry takes his first swing, PLUMMETING THE AXE INTO THE CENTER OF THE STAIN. The group of people gasp, shocked, almost horrified.

*

HENRY (CONT'D)

(another swing)

This does not heal anything!

Swing after swing, Henry continues to bury the axe ferociously into the wall, destroying his own home.

Chunks of stucco fall to the ground as he hammers the axe over and over. The hits dig into the frame of the house, splintering a number of the two by fours.

*

DAWN

(stunned)

Henry!

*

Oblivious to her calls, he continues the destruction, chopping away at the support beams. Breathless, tired, his pace slows as...

*

ALL SOUNDS FADE AWAY, REPLACED BY THE RINGING DIN OF HIS TINNITUS.

Only a small piece of the stain remains: THE RIGHT EYE, a trickle of blood still flowing.

A misstep amid the pile of rubble causes Henry to lose his balance.

He plants his hand on the remaining wall, his thumb touching the edge of the eye, steadying himself while stepping under the overhanging roof.

Without warning, the RINGING IN HIS EAR FADES AWAY. All sound returns, his hearing clear as a bell.

Jerking his hand away from the wall, Henry shakes his head, bewildered, shocked.

(CONTINUED)

He touches his right ear, snapping his fingers, testing his hearing. A long moment, then:

DAWN (CONT'D)

Henry?

He turns, focusing on Dawn and Millie amid the group of people, all glaring in disbelief at what he has done.

Esperanza suddenly steps into his line of sight --

ESPERANZA

Mr. Poole... The test came back... The blood on the wall... Is real.

Henry's face turns ashen at the revelation, a subtle dumbfounded regret creeping in.

HENRY

What?

And then all off a sudden a sharp creak from the house prefaces -- THE ROOF COLLAPSING ON TOP OF HENRY. *

DAWN

Henry!

People gasp as Henry is BURIED BY THE RUBBLE OF HIS OWN HOME.

Father Salazar bolts from the crowd toward the toppled house.

FADE TO BLACK.

An I.V. unit drips its fluid into the plastic tubing...

Henry lays in bed, his arm in a cast and a bandage on his forehead, covering up a few stitches. He slowly comes awake, disoriented, yet discovering...

...Esperanza sitting at the foot of the bed in vigil.

HENRY

(rolling his eyes)
Oh God...

ESPERANZA

Mr. Poole... You are OK! Thank God.

HENRY

What are you doing here?

ESPERANZA

Making sure you are OK.

Resigned to her presence, Henry sits up with a pained moan.

HENRY

Correct me if I'm wrong... My house fell
on top of me, right?

ESPERANZA

Yes, you're not wrong.

She hands him a newspaper carrying a set of before and after
pictures of his home with an accompanying story.

The headline reads: KNOCK, KNOCK...WHO'S THERE? JESUS!

HENRY

(shaking his head)
How did I get out?

ESPERANZA

Mostly Father Salazar. But everyone
helped.

(pause)
Eventually.

Henry grimaces at the thought as Esperanza looks him over, a
proud little smile creeping onto his face.

HENRY

What are you smiling at?

ESPERANZA

At you.

HENRY

Yeah... I can see how this is hilarious.

ESPERANZA

Why did you not tell me, Mr. Poole?

HENRY

What?

ESPERANZA

About the sickness you had? Dawn told us.

HENRY

Because... It's not really something--
Wait... What do you mean, had?

Esperanza, quietly overjoyed, takes his hand.

(CONTINUED)

ESPERANZA

It's a miracle, Mr. Poole. They did some tests. With your blood, I think. Whatever you had... You don't have anymore.

Pulling his hand away, Henry sits up further, wincing in pain and growing agitated. He's not buying a word of this.

HENRY

What are you talking about?

ESPERANZA

You should not move, Mr. Poole. You are still weak.

HENRY

I want to talk to the doctor.

Groaning, he slides his legs off the bed.

HENRY (CONT'D)

I want to talk to the doctor, right now!

ESPERANZA

Please, Mr. Poole... I'll go get him. I'll go.

Esperanza rushes out of the room, leaving Henry dismayed. He sits still for a moment, but his impatience wins out as he lurches to his feet.

Grabbing his I.V. post, and rolling along, he heads for the door, stumbling, dizzy.

154 INT. HOSPITAL CORRIDOR - DAY

154

Henry staggers out of his room.

HENRY

I want to see the doctor.

Peering down the hall, his gaze falls on Esperanza talking to a YOUNG DOCTOR. They immediately catch sight of Henry and rush toward him.

YOUNG DOCTOR

Mr. Poole, please get back into your room. You should not be walking around.

Henry struggles against the Doctor's grasp as he grows increasingly agitated.

(CONTINUED)

HENRY

Tell me what happened! I'm dying. I'm supposed to be dying.

YOUNG DOCTOR

You need to get back in your bed right now!

(to the nursing staff)

Can I get some help over here! Mr. Poole, you need to calm down and listen to me...

(noticing Henry's arm)

Look at your arm. You're bleeding.

HENRY

(breaking free from the Doctor's grasp)

What?

The doctor points to Henry's arm, where the I.V. needle has slipped out. A trickle of blood drips down his forearm, down through the palm of his hand and to the tip of his finger...

Henry, starting to lose his balance, getting woozy, locks eyes with the Young Doctor.

HENRY (CONT'D)

I'm supposed to be dying...

And now we follow the DRIP OF BLOOD as it leaves his finger tip and splatters onto the floor.

In the same instant Henry begins to collapses as...

...the screen is ENVELOPED IN RED and we flash to a SERIES OF IMAGES -- ALL PLAYING BACKWARDS:

*

- 155 HENRY IN HIS CAR, FIRING A GUN AT HIS OWN HEAD. 155
- 156 A TSETSE FLY SINKING IT'S PROBOSCIS INTO HUMAN FLESH. 156
- 157 HENRY STANDING IN THE MIDDLE OF A BUSY DOWNTOWN INTERSECTION 157
- 158 TWO TSETSE FLIES COPULATING. 158
- 159 HENRY COLLIDING WITH MR. LAWRENCE AT THE DOCTOR'S OFFICE. 159
- 160 A TSETSE FLY SINKING IT'S PROBOSCIS INTO A PATCH OF HUMAN FLESH. 160
- 161 POV OF THE TSETSE FLY AS IT APPROACHES ITS VICTIM, MR. LAWRENCE, THE PATIENT FROM THE DOCTOR FANCHER'S OFFICE. 161

Suddenly we come to a screeching halt and we're in...

162 ANOTHER HOSPITAL ROOM

162

MR. LAWRENCE, ON A GURNEY, QUITE DEAD.

Doctor Fancher and an ORDERLY stand over the gurney, baffled at the lifeless patient. Dr. Fancher looks up, a troubled realization coming over him.

DR. FANCHER

Oh shit... I have to make a phone call.

Dr. Fancher hurries out as the Orderly PULLS THE WHITE SHEET OVER THE BODY and we...FADE TO WHITE. And we're BACK TO:

163 INT. HOSPITAL CORRIDOR - SECONDS LATER

163

The ugly glow of florescent light slowly comes into focus as Henry, still on the floor, on his back, begins to awaken.

Through the haze of his semi-conscious state, it's hard to be sure, but it seems like he's hearing MILLIE'S LITTLE VOICE... Dream-like... A swirl of sound... Fading in and out...

MILLIE (V.O.)

Mr. Poole... Wake up, Mr. Poole. It's OK... It's OK... Wake up.

His eyes finally flutter open and the first thing he sees is the Young Doctor.

YOUNG DOCTOR

Don't move, Mr. Poole.

And then he notices, off to the side... Millie, looking slightly anxious, but alert and well. It's a welcome sight as he whispers her name with a sigh of relief.

HENRY

Millie?

(pause)

Did you just say something to me?

Millie's deep concern transforms into little grin as she slowly, cautiously steps to him, kneeling down...

MILLIE

Mommy said you're not sick anymore.

He smiles, relieved at the sound of her voice then realizes what she just said --

HENRY

Wait... I'm not dying?

(CONTINUED)

His reverie is broken as Henry grimaces through the pain of being lifted onto a gurney by TWO ORDERLIES.

DAWN (O.S.)

No, Henry. You're not.

It's then he finally spots Dawn standing nearby, recovering from the fright of seeing Henry go down and infused with joy at being able to give him the news.

Henry stares with a doubtful, confused smile.

HENRY

How can that be?

As they roll him back into...

Dawn, Esperanza, Millie and the Young Doctor follow.

DAWN

I told them what was wrong with you...
And they checked... And you're fine.

The Orderlies slide Henry back onto the bed as a NURSE attends to his I.V.

HENRY

You're telling me I'm cured?

Dawn exchanges a cautious glance with the Young Doctor.

DAWN

Sort of...

Henry looks on, not understanding as Dawn steps to the bed, taking his hand.

DAWN (CONT'D)

Your other doctor... He's been looking for you since you left. And when the lab inputted your information and the insurance got involved --

(stops herself; gets to the point)

Anyway... They found you.

(pause)

You were never sick, Henry.

MILLIE

They mixed up your blood with someone elses.

Henry takes a moment, his confusion melting away into quiet shock.

ESPERANZA

I'm sorry, Mr Poole... I know how much you like to be miserable.

HENRY

So I was never going to die.

ESPERANZA

We're all going to die... Just not right now... And for you that is the miracle.

Speechless, Henry tries to process the news as Millie steps closer, a grin on her face.

MILLIE

I'm glad you're better, Mr. Poole.

HENRY

I'm glad you're better too.

Henry looks peacefully at Millie. It really is a pleasure to see her smile and hear her speak. His gaze drifts up to Dawn.

HENRY (CONT'D)

You smile just like your mom.

Esperanza, once again eyes him with a big grin.

HENRY (CONT'D)

What?

ESPERANZA

You know...

(gently placing a hand on
Millie's head)

You could just start with the idea that miracles are possible.

Henry tries to remain stoic, but something in his gaze says he's considering it.

HENRY

Yeah, well... The miracle's gone now.
Just a pile of rubble.

ESPERANZA

Don't worry about that too much. It was here for as long as it was meant to be. Like everything... And everyone.

HENRY

So, the wall's work is done.

Dawn gently brushes the hair from Henry's forehead.

DAWN

That's a good way to look at it.

MILLIE

But where will all the people go, the ones who came to see?

ESPERANZA

People will always find other miracles, little one. It will take more than a crazy man with an ax to destroy hope.

DAWN

You should get some rest, Henry.

YOUNG DOCTOR

You'll be out of here in a couple of days as long as you stop roaming the halls.

Dawn leads Millie toward the door. Esperanza and the Young Doctor follow.

DAWN

We'll be out here, if you need us.

And as they step out, Esperanza quickly shuffles back to Henry's bedside, reaches into her purse and pulls out a foil wrapped tamale. She places it on the night stand.

ESPERANZA

A tamale. For later. Food is terrible here.

And as she scurries back toward the door --

HENRY

Wait.

She stops, turns to face him as Henry hesitates, struggling with a question:

HENRY (CONT'D)

Why do you care so much?

She answers as if it had never occurred to her there could be another way.

164 CONTINUED: (3)

164

ESPERANZA

Because we should.

And she walks out, leaving Henry reflecting on her insight, a little smile making its way onto his face. It's like no one has ever said anything as nice to him.

A MONTAGE. NO WORDS. JUST EVERYONE... GETTING ON WITH IT.

165 INT. OPTOMETRIST'S OFFICE - DAY.

165

Patience sits in the exam chair, rattling off the TINIEST LETTERS of the eye chart on the wall before her. The OPTOMETRIST looks on, completely baffled.

166 INT. ESPERANZA'S HOUSE/LIVING ROOM - DAY

166

Esperanza kneels in the corner of the room slowly dismantling the little shrine to Leo. She places the candles into a cardboard box and takes down the framed picture, kissing it, then placing it on a nearby end table.

167 INT. MILLIE'S CLASSROOM - DAY.

167

Millie stands by her desk in the front row talking a mile a minute as she answers a question. The TEACHER numbly looks on, exhausted as Millie just keeps on talking and talking and talking...

168 INT. DAWN STUPEK'S HOUSE/BACK PATIO - DAY

168

Dawn dismantles her training set-up, pulling the dryer exhaust hose off of her treadmill.

169 INT. SAINT RAYMOND'S CATHOLIC CHURCH - DAY

169

Father Salazar stands at the alter, in the midst of Sunday services, before a CONGREGATION OF FAMILIAR FACES, people we've seen in Henry's backyard.

Among them, the Little Boy, loving wedged between his Mother and Father.

170 INT./EXT. TAXI - DAY

170

Henry, a few cuts on his face, rides in the back seat as the cab turns onto his street and stops in front of his home. *

171 INT. HENRY'S HOME/LIVING ROOM - DAY

171

Henry enters with a slight limp, and closing the front door behind himself, leans back, tired, but clearly glad to be home. *

(CONTINUED)

171 CONTINUED:

171

A little smile creeps onto his face as his eyes fall on the coffee table where he discovers another PLATE OF TAMALES and a PLATE OF COOKIES with a little note laid on top: WELCOME HOME MR. POOLE.

172 INT./EXT. HENRY'S HOME/BEDROOM - DAY

172

Henry stands at the edge of the rubble, surveying his fractured home, the wall to the bedroom demolished and exposing the house to the BACKYARD.

He stares, a bit dismayed, until Dawn peers over the fence from her own yard.

DAWN

You're home.

HENRY

(a big smile)

What's left of it, yeah.

He walks over to the fence, stepping up onto a cinder block. They're eye to eye now.

DAWN

Are you going back? To Dallas?

HENRY

Probably...

Dawn looks away. Not exactly the answer she wanted.

HENRY (CONT'D)

For a visit... I have a little explaining to do. And I'll probably have to talk my mother out of suing our doctor.

Dawn smiles, still looking away. She knows he's staying.

Henry looks past her at the treadmill on her patio, the exhaust hose removed and laundry draped all over it.

HENRY (CONT'D)

What's going on over there?

DAWN

(looking over her shoulder)

Aside from the dryer giving out... I just sort of decided I'm done running for now.

(pause)

So, what do you make of all this?

He shrugs, not sure what to say.

(CONTINUED)

DAWN (CONT'D)
Pretty miraculous, don't you think?

HENRY
Human error. People make mistakes.

Dawn unexpectedly leans in close, her lips right beside HENRY'S ONCE BAD EAR.

DAWN
(whispering)
I don't think any of this was a mistake.

Henry pulls back, just enough to see her beautiful bright face. An awkward moment as they both realize how physically close they are to each other.

DAWN (CONT'D)
So, what now?

Henry thinks about it for a moment...

HENRY
Now... I do this...

...then leans over the fence, giving Dawn a gentle kiss on the lips.

HENRY (CONT'D)
...and I wish... I would have done it a long time ago.

She smiles, impressed, happy. He kisses her again as we CUT TO: *

THE RUBBLE and we're -- CLOSE ON on a LARGE PIECE OF THE DEMOLISHED STUCCO where...

...A TINY RED SPECK OF MOISTURE still mysteriously seeps from what was the eye of the face. *

Then gliding toward the house... Through the remains of wall and into -- *

-- where the closet door stands open. And inside... Still etched on the wall... Henry's handwriting... And we move closer and closer... Until finally the words become clear, sharp... Focused: *

HENRY POOLE IS HERE. *