

**HENRY POOLE IS HERE**

By

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October 12, 2006



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EXT. DENSE FOREST - DAY

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:

EXT. MIDDLE CLASS NEIGHBORHOOD - DAY

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.

INT. SUBURBAN HOME/LIVING ROOM - DAY

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 turns back.

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... Like I was saying, the landscaping is quite amazing and...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HENRY

How much?

Meg stops in her tracks, turns back.

MEG

I'm sorry?

HENRY

How much?

Meg steps to Henry's left side.

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.

MEG

OK, what?

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.

(CONTINUED)



CONTINUED: (2)

MEG

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

HENRY

You're exaggerating now, Mrs. Wyatt. 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. The higher the price, the more your commission, so...

MEG

(seeing his point)  
OK, then... Well, how much are you looking at for a down payment.

HENRY

Nothing.

MEG

Excuse me?

HENRY

I'll pay cash. Let me know where the sellers want the money transferred and start the paperwork. I'd like to be in here in two weeks.

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

EXT. SUBURBAN HOME - DAY

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.

EXT. MIDDLE CLASS NEIGHBORHOOD - DAY

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.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

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.

EXT. SUBURBAN HOME - DAY

The Mercedes pulls up and Henry steps out, the stubble on his face grown to a beard. He carries two plastic grocery bags, one with four bottles of champagne protruding.

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

INT. HENRY'S HOME/LIVING ROOM - DAY

Henry stands in the middle of the room, the front picture window to his right. He stares straight ahead at the blank white wall in a daze, a bottle of Cristal in hand.

CLOSE ON THE TEXTURE OF THE WALL.

INT. HIGH-RISE CONDO - DAY

SUBTITLE: DOWNTOWN CHICAGO

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...

THE BEDROOM.

Sprawled on the bed in a tangle of sheets, lies Henry, his belly bulging out from under his T-shirt.

He lays on his side, eyes open, half his 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. Maybe too much work or something.

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.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LYDIA

Well, I'm sure that's it. You're just working too hard.

She finds a pair of earrings and steps out of the room.

Henry sits up, still groggy, his right cheek creased with the wrinkles from his pillow.

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

Don't forget you have to pick up the wedding invitations today and my wedding dress from the seamstress.

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. She's just like you.

Lydia halts, peering at Henry, irked at the comparison.

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.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

HENRY

What are you talking about? I make decisions all the time.

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 at the wall.

CLOSE ON THE TEXTURE OF THE WALL.

INT. HENRY'S HOME/LIVING ROOM - DAY

Henry stands right where we left him, still peering at the wall, champagne bottle gripped in his hand.

THROUGH THE PICTURE WINDOW we see a FURNITURE STORE TRUCK pull up in front of the house.

THE CHAMPAGNE CORK POPS, nails the wall, followed by a spurt of Cristal pouring onto the floor.

INT. HENRY'S HOME/BATHROOM - DAY

With the plastic bag discarded on the counter, Henry shaves as the MOVERS fill his home with new furniture.

INT. HENRY'S HOME/LIVING ROOM - DAY

Filled with brand new furniture now and the latest in stereo and television equipment. Empty boxes scattered around.

Henry once again stands in the middle of the room, a large strip of BUBBLE WRAP in his hands as he pops away.

INT. SUPERMARKET - DAY

Henry stands at the checkout counter in front of PATIENCE, a young female clerk, wearing glasses with lenses as thick as they come.

She rings up bottle after bottle of booze, mostly wine, a couple of bottles of vodka and three boxes of Twinkies.

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

INT. HENRY'S HOME/LIVING ROOM - DAY

Henry sits on the couch, the coffee table overflowing with all his junk food. He indulges like we all wish we could, washing it down with swigs from a bottle of wine.

AN HOUR LATER...

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.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

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.

As Esperanza turns back around to face Henry, all she finds is an empty doorway.

Henry, deep into his house now, shuffles away through the kitchen, out the back door and into...

THE BACKYARD.

He pulls off his T-shirt, strips to his boxers, then drags an old patio lounge chair out of the shade, into the sun and plops himself down.

A FEW HOURS LATER --

Henry -- asleep on the lounge chair, his skin a little pink now -- 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?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

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.

(she waits for a response, but 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? I got that thrown in free of charge. Well, to you anyway.

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, so it was 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.

Now please, is there anything else?

Meg is thrown by Henry's curtness.

MEG

No, Mr. Poole, there is nothing else.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

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 AT DAWN STUPEK'S HOUSE.

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...

A RECORDING OF THE CONVERSATION HE JUST HAD WITH MEG.

Henry freezes, a bit freaked out, 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

Hey!

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

INT. STRIP JOINT - NIGHT

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.

INT. STRIP JOINT/VIP LOUNGE - NIGHT

TWO STRIPPERS straddle Henry, one on each knee, in a tandem lap dance.

INT. HENRY'S HOME/BEDROOM - NIGHT

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



INT. HENRY'S HOME/BATHROOM - NIGHT

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.

THE BEDROOM.

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 #2

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

Henry takes a moment, glumly considering it, then:

HENRY

You know, I don't think so. You better go. Both of you.

STRIPPER #2

Getting cold feet, buddy?

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

STRIPPER #2 (CONT'D)

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.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HENRY (CONT'D)

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

A FEW MINUTES LATER...

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 suddenly stops, finding something unexpected...

A SMALL WALLET SIZED PHOTO. He peers at it fondly, a sweet memory there.

A FEW MINUTES LATER...

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

INT. HENRY'S HOME/LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Henry, a bit groggy, sits on the couch, the vodka bottle in one hand and the VCR remote in the other. He hits play. And turns up the volume.

The TV comes to life and we see VARIOUS MICROSCOPIC VIEWS OF A TSETSE FLY accompanied by the elegant voice of a BRITISH NARRATOR.

BRITISH NARRATOR (V.O.)

With twenty three known species, the tsetse fly derives its name from the very sound the insect makes when airborne. The name "tsetse" itself quite literally means "fly" in Tswana, the language of the territory formerly known as Bechuanaland and currently identified as Botswana.

As the documentary continues, Henry, in his drunken stupor fades in and out of consciousness.

INT. HENRY'S HOME/BEDROOM - DAY

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.

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

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

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.

EXT. HENRY'S HOME/BACKYARD - DAY

ON THE BACK DOOR as 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.

EXT. ESPERANZA'S HOUSE- DAY

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)

CONTINUED:

HENRY

See what?

She rushes past him. Henry follows.

EXT. HENRY'S HOME/BACKYARD - DAY

Henry and Esperanza stand before the back wall, staring for a long moment.

ESPERANZA

You don't see it?

HENRY

See what? I see a bad stucco job.

ESPERANZA

You're not looking.

Henry glares at her.

HENRY

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

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.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

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.

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 reaches the back-door, 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.

EXT. HENRY'S HOME/FRONT PORCH - DAY

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?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

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...

Suddenly the door is pulled back as Esperanza muscled 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 through...

HENRY'S HOUSE.

ESPERANZA

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

HENRY

What are you doing?! Stop!

Henry trails behind, quickly darting into his bedroom and  
emerging seconds later as he threads his legs through a pair  
of pants. He rushes into...

THE BACKYARD

Esperanza and Father Salazar stand before the wall as Henry  
approaches.

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.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

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 quite 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.

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 that 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.

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.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

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.

EXT. LOS ANGELES HIGH-RISE - DAY

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

SUBTITLE: DOWNTOWN CHICAGO

INT. POOLE COMMERCIAL REAL ESTATE/KITCHENETTE - DAY

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 A DIFFERENT MOTIVATIONAL SAYING:

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

INT. POOLE COMMERCIAL REAL ESTATE - DAY

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.

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

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.

(CONTINUED)



CONTINUED:

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.

Melinda comes around the desk and plants a kiss on Henry's forehead, oddly reminiscent of Lydia's earlier kiss.

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.

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

MELINDA (CONT'D)

What's wrong?

HENRY

Nothing. Just another headache.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

MELINDA

I really wish you would just go see a doctor. The pain's not going to go away by itself, honey.

Henry takes a long, penetrating look at his mother.

EXT. MIDDLE CLASS NEIGHBORHOOD - DAY

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

THE CORNER HOUSE.

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.

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--

Henry stops himself.

HENRY (CONT'D)

Sorry.

And with that he walks away.

INT. HENRY'S HOME/BEDROOM - DAY

Henry walks into the room, a tall vodka on the rocks in hand and a cigarette dangling from his lips. 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.

EXT. HENRY'S HOME/BACKYARD - DAY

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.

Henry 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.

A FEW MINUTES LATER...

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...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

...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.

INT. DAWN STUPEK'S HOUSE - DAY

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 live next door.

DAWN  
I know. I've seen you.

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.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

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, the door is slammed in his face, leaving him slightly disappointed.

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.

INT. SUPERMARKET - DAY

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

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.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PATIENCE

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

HENRY

It's just a phase.

EXT. HENRY'S HOME - DAY

Esperanza stands at the edge of the house, near the walkway leading to the backyard. She scans the street, on the lookout.

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.

HENRY'S CAR...

...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.

HENRY (CONT'D)

I saw you! Stay out of my backyard!

EXT. HENRY'S HOME/BACKYARD - DAY

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.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

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.

EXT. ESPERANZA'S HOUSE - DAY

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.

Henry 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.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Henry realizes what Esperanza is implying just as she and her three friends begin to make the sign of the cross.

Rolling his eyes, Henry turns and marches back to his house.

HENRY  
 (under his breath)  
 OK psycho...  
 (then audibly)  
 Just, please, stay out of my yard.

EXT. HENRY'S HOME/BACKYARD - DAY

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.

MINUTES LATER...

...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.

INT./EXT. HENRY'S CAR - DAY

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

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.

He stares at her, perplexed, then turns back to the road ahead and gasps as he is forced to SLAM ON THE BRAKES, avoiding a rear end collision with the stopped car in front of him.

INT. SUPERMARKET - DAY

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

(CONTINUED)



CONTINUED:

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.

Our view of Henry through...

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? 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.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

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.

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

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

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.

INT./EXT. HENRY'S CAR - DAY

Henry drives, still perturbed.

He stares at the odometer, watching as the numbers turn from 2999 TO 3000.

INT. DOCTOR'S OFFICE/EXAMINATION ROOM - DAY

SUBTITLE: DOWNTOWN CHICAGO

CLOSE ON a full urine specimen cup, the lid being replaced.

CLOSE ON a digital scale, the numbers flickering...

CLOSE ON a needle plunging into an arm.

CLOSE ON a vile filling with blood.

CLOSE ON 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...

THE HALLWAY.

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.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

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.

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.

INT. EXAM ROOM - LATER

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?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

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.

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.

INT. ELEVATOR - DAY

The doors slide open and Henry steps into the empty elevator, a thin, uncertain smile on his lips.

Pressing the lobby button, he waits for the doors to close. An inordinate amount of time passes, giving way for a pensiveness to surface on his face...

And finally as the doors begin to slide shut, Henry's smile fades --

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

INT./EXT. HENRY'S CAR - DAY

...as Henry snaps out of his daydream, 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!

Henry darts out of the car into...

THE STREET

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

DAWN

You god-damn, stupid, mother fucking, dick face! 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?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

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.

HENRY (CONT'D)  
Please...

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

INT./EXT. HENRY'S CAR - DAY

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.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

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?

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)

(curt)

You should keep your eyes on the road.

Getting the hint, Henry lays off.



INT. HENRY'S HOME/BACKYARD - DAY

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.

INT. RECTORY - DAY

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. And none were ever able to prove theirs was the real thing, so...

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

EXT. HENRY'S HOME/BACKYARD - DAY

Henry, still standing before the bleach drenched wall, scrubbing furiously.

ESPERANZA (V.O.)

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 weeping Madonna statue in Australia. Or the one in Italy. Or the underpass in Chicago with the Virgin Mary.

INT. RECTORY/ FATHER SALAZAR'S OFFICE - DAY

Esperanza continues laying out clipping after clipping before Fr. Salazar

ESPERANZA

Or the window with the condensation in Boston. 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, that phenomenon's real. 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

First of all, its only been a week. And the cloak with the image of the Virgin Mother is hundreds of years old... 1531, I think. And of course its been scientifically tested with no conclusive 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.

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?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

FATHER SALAZAR

Esperanza, please... I didn't mean any disrespect. You know that. I'm just saying that even if the Shroud is real, Jesus was not the only guy with long hair and a beard back then.

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

The face is bleeding. It started the other day.

FATHER SALAZAR

You saw it? You saw blood coming out of the wall?

ESPERANZA

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...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

FATHER SALAZAR

Yes, I know... OK... I can request that the diocese look into this, but we can't go in there without Mr. Poole's permission. We can't test to see if this is an unexplained phenomenon without him letting us onto his property. 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, so I know he's OK.

EXT. HENRY'S HOME/BACKYARD - DAY

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.

INT. HENRY'S HOME - DAY

Henry swings the front door open to discover Esperanza standing there with a giant platter of freshly made TAMALES.

ESPERANZA

Hola.

HENRY

(cautiously)

Hi.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ESPERANZA

I made these for you.

Henry is hesitant to accept, but is forced as she hands him the platter.

HENRY

That's really not necessary. Besides, you already gave me some of these.

ESPERANZA

I know.... But I see the pizza boy here almost every day. You can't live on that alone.

HENRY

You'd be surprised.

Esperanza fidgets awkwardly in silence, mustering up a question. As she goes to speak, Henry interrupts.

HENRY (CONT'D)

Well, thanks again.

And with that, Henry closes the door and Esperanza is left mouth agape.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Henry sits at the kitchen table surrounded by at least six discarded corn husks.

Henry grabs them, glancing at the overflowing trash can in the corner, then steps to the sink and shoves the husks 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.

EXT. HENRY'S HOME/BACKYARD - DAY

Following the sound, Henry makes his way to the side of the house, where he finds Esperanza, surrounded by bags of his garbage, struggling with an overflowing trash can as she drags it toward the front of the house.

Henry is baffled.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HENRY  
What are you doing?

ESPERANZA  
I'm taking out your trash.

HENRY  
I can see that. Why?

Esperanza keeps hauling the can away.

ESPERANZA  
Well... Look at this. There's garbage everywhere. Very dirty. Unhealthy. I thought I'd help you. You know, just trying to be a good neighbor. The trash truck is coming in about an hour.

HENRY  
(suspicious)  
Right... You don't have to do that. I'll do it later.

ESPERANZA  
It's really no problem.

Esperanza scoots away around the corner, can in tow as Henry looks on, dumbfounded.

EXT. HENRY'S HOME - ONE HOUR LATER

A GARBAGE TRUCK drives away.

A moment later Esperanza emerges from her home, scurries across Henry's lawn and proceeds to bring in Henry's empty trash cans.

Henry watches from the front window, shaking his head.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Henry stands in front of the sink, still clogged with foul-looking water, pouring in a bottle of Drano.

THIRTY MINUTES LATER...

...the clog remains the same. 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.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

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.

EXT. HENRY'S HOME - DAY

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.

ESPERANZA

The only waste of time would be not to try.

JOSIE

He won't allow it, the man is clearly an atheist.

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

Now what are you doing?

ESPERANZA

Weeding. You're 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.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JOSIE

Yes you are.

ESPERANZA

No I'm not.

JOSIE

Yes you are.

ESPERANZA

Don't listen to her. She 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.

HENRY

Ask me what?

Esperanza hesitates...

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 pretty crafty.

HENRY

Well, it's not going to happen. You could build me a goddamn gazebo back there and I'm still not going to let your crazy church people into my house. That face or whatever it is, is 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?

(CONTINUED)



CONTINUED: (2)

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.

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.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

HENRY

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

INT. HENRY'S HOME/KITCHEN - DAY

Esperanza, sitting at the kitchen table, her back to Henry, 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. 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.

(pause)

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 turns to face 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.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

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

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.

Esperanza finally releases Henry, leaving him drained.

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

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

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

EXT. ESPERANZA'S HOUSE/PORCH - DAY

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...

ESPERANZA'S LIVING ROOM...

...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.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

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?

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.

ESPERANZA  
In that house?

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

ESPERANZA  
But why did you come back?

HENRY  
I just needed to... To disappear.

Esperanza stares, waiting for more as Henry just turns and walks out.

INT. RESTAURANT/DOWNTOWN CHICAGO - NIGHT

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

MELINDA  
So all the doctor said is that you're tired?

Henry fidgets a bit, clearly not comfortable lying about his current state.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

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?

Melinda leers at Lydia as she backpedals...

LYDIA (CONT'D)

That came out wrong.

MELINDA

I got my money from the divorce, but I kept it because of my hard work. And you're no one to talk.

LYDIA

What's that supposed to mean?

HENRY

OK, that's--

MELINDA

I'm a terrible mother. Thank God I only had one child--

HENRY

That's enough--

MELINDA

(pouring herself more wine)  
Of course you turned out like this. Everything you have is because I gave it to you. You've never had to earn anything, make any choices.

Amused by all this, Lydia tries to stifle a little grin.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

Henry peers at his mother, a slight shake of the head as a sour contemptuous smile spreads across his face.

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

MELINDA (CONT'D)

You smile just like your father.

Henry's smile fades, overtaken by a quiet disillusionment. His 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.

THE SOUND OF STATIC slowly builds over the restaurant ambience as we CUT TO:

INT. HENRY'S HOME/LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

CLOSE ON a static filled TV screen as the VOLUME IS RAISED.

SUDDENLY ON THE SCREEN we see the microscopic image of a tsetse fly sinking its proboscis into what appears to be a patch of human flesh. An infinitesimal speck of blood spills as the insect satiates itself...

Henry slumps on the couch, the remote control in his hand.

BRITISH NARRATOR (V.O.)

Feeding on the blood of animals and humans, the tsetse fly delivers the trypanosome parasite into the blood stream, putting the victim on course for a slow, agonizing death.

THE IMAGE OF A PATIENT in a large common room, strapped to a bed, his body emaciated, shivering terribly.

BRITISH NARRATOR (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Once introduced to a host, the parasite begins its subtle attack, initially causing headaches and joint pain.

ON THE SCREEN Blood is drawn from the debilitated patient.

Henry, troubled and slumped even further, continues to watch.

BRITISH NARRATOR (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Hemorrhagic fevers, much like those that accompany ebola, follow shortly after.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ANOTHER PATIENT flails uncontrollably, fighting the ties that bind him to the bed. He wretches painfully as the parasite takes hold of his body.

BRITISH NARRATOR (V.O.) (CONT'D)

By the time the infection reaches the central nervous system, the victim becomes susceptible to sudden mood changes, escalating to uncontrollable fits of aggression. In the end, the afflicted fall into deep coma and die.

STATIC ONCE AGAIN TAKES HOLD OF THE SCREEN as we discover...

...Henry laying down now, curled in the fetal position, a subdued suffering washing over him.

INT. SUPERMARKET - DAY

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.

A moment later he sees Esperanza across the store entering Patience's empty line. Patience and Esperanza greet each other, enthusiastically chatting away.

Esperanza suddenly notices Henry. She points him out to Patience as if she had just been talking about him.

ESPERANZA

(waving)

Mr. Poole! Mr. Poole!

As he gives a feeble wave, Patience turns to face him. She picks up the phone/intercom and is suddenly speaking through the P.A.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

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

Mortified, Henry declines the offer with a wave of his hand.  
 The woman shopper turns to face him.

WOMAN SHOPPER  
 I'd go if I were you.

HENRY  
 I'm fine right here, thanks.

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  
 sinks further in his skin.

INT. HENRY'S HOME/BACKYARD - DAY

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  
 You know, I want to thank you for this,  
 for letting us do this. Esperanza is a  
 good woman, very devout and when she gets  
 something in her head...

(CONTINUED)



CONTINUED:

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)

CONTINUED: (2)

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.

INT. HENRY'S HOME/LIVING ROOM - DAY

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.

FATHER SALAZAR

(looking up from his notes)

So, a month?

HENRY

(turning back)

Who's that guy?

FATHER SALAZAR

Oh... Um... He needs to... open up the wall, where the stain is...

HENRY

What? Why?

FATHER SALAZAR

They need to look at what's behind the stain as well. To be sure its not man made. We'll repair the wall, 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. What were you saying? Where were we?

FATHER SALAZAR

You won't?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Henry bristles.

HENRY

Father, can we just get on with this?

Father Salazar's questioning is thwarted by the SOUND OF A JIGSAW buzzing through the house. Henry doesn't react. He just stares, waiting for the next question.

They both raise their voices.

FATHER SALAZAR

OK, so... How long after you moved in did the stain appear?

HENRY

A few days, maybe a week. Esperanza actually noticed it first.

Father Salazar takes notes.

FATHER SALAZAR

And has there been any work done to the house prior to this?

HENRY

(struggling to hear)  
What?

FATHER SALAZAR

I said, had there been any work done prior to the stain appearing?

HENRY

Yes. The house was restuccoed.

FATHER SALAZAR

(struggling to hear)  
I'm sorry?

HENRY

I said--

FATHER SALAZAR

Mr. Poole, maybe we should step outside.

EXT. HENRY'S HOME - DAY

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)

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. 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.

Henry considers his observation, suppressing his annoyance.

FATHER SALAZAR (CONT'D)

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 RECORDED VOICE OF FATHER SALAZAR rises from the bushes to the side of the porch.

FATHER SALAZAR (CONT'D)

(recorded)

I'm a good listener when you're ready. It can't be that bad.

Rewind.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

FATHER SALAZAR (CONT'D)  
 (recorded)  
 ...when you're ready. It can't be that  
 bad.

Rewind.

FATHER SALAZAR (CONT'D)  
 (recorded)  
 It can't be that bad.

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

HENRY  
 Stop that.

Rewind.

FATHER SALAZAR  
 (recorded)  
 It can't be that bad.

HENRY  
 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 unphased.

HENRY (CONT'D)  
 Big bugs.

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

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

That does it - Millie darts out of the bushes, stepping on  
 Henry's bare foot as she rushes home.

HENRY (CONT'D)  
 (grabbing his foot)  
 Damn it!!

INT. HENRY'S HOME/BEDROOM - DAY

Henry limps in from the hallway, irked at the sight before  
 him:

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The Photographer, standing on his bed, taking photos of the 3X3 foot hole in the wall above his headrest. He turns toward Henry.

PHOTOGRAPHER

What? I took my shoes off.

INT. HENRY'S HOME/LIVING ROOM - LATER

Henry lays on the couch, eyes closed, but awake.

ESPERANZA (O.S.)

I have something for you.

Henry bolts up, startled to find Esperanza standing in the kitchen doorway, curiously watching him.

HENRY

Jesus Christ! What are you doing in here?

ESPERANZA

I'm sorry... I wanted to tell you that everyone is gone. We're done.

HENRY

Good.

ESPERANZA

And I have something for you.

HENRY

Please, no more tamales, Esperanza. OK? We're even. You don't have to do anything else for me.

ESPERANZA

It's not tamales. I need you to come with me. Besides, you look like you need someone to do something for you.

HENRY

I don't want anything.

ESPERANZA

You'll want this.

EXT. MIDDLE CLASS NEIGHBORHOOD/CORNER HOUSE - DAY

Henry and Esperanza stand before the house.

HENRY

How did you know it was this one?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ESPERANZA

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

INT. CORNER HOUSE/HALLWAY - DAY

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 --

BEDROOM --

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.

HENRY

They painted the inside of the closets.  
Very thorough.

He stands, turning to face Esperanza.

HENRY (CONT'D)

This house was 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 --

HALLWAY --

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

HENRY

My life with my parents, before they got rich and split up, seemed so simple.  
Easy. My mother was a different person.  
Warm. Loving.

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

HENRY (CONT'D)

And then the divorce happened and it sucked the life out of her.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HENRY (CONT'D)

And she's been trying to suck it out of me ever since, like it was my fault.

(turning to face Esperanza)

And the strangest thing about standing here again is that this is doing absolutely nothing for me. I mean, I've never been a sentimental person, but I thought - Well, I don't know... I was expecting something.

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

LIVING ROOM --

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

HOME OWNER

Did you find what you were looking for?

Henry considers the personal depths of the simple question. His sullen gaze clearly states "no."

HENRY

The layout isn't exactly what I remember. Except for that.

He points to the FIREPLACE.

HOME OWNER

We had a wall knocked down.

HENRY

(pointing to an open space)  
Right there.

HOME OWNER

Yup.

HENRY

It makes a big difference. Thank you.

And with that he's out the door.

EXT. MIDDLE CLASS NEIGHBORHOOD - DAY

Henry marches away from the corner house. Esperanza scurries after him, finally catching up.

ESPERANZA

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

(CONTINUED)



CONTINUED:

HENRY

Don't be. It was an incredibly generous gesture on your part.

ESPERANZA

At least now you know.

HENRY

Know what?

ESPERANZA

Know what it would be like to go back into your home.

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.

HENRY

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.

INT. DAWN STUPEK'S HOUSE/BEDROOM - NIGHT

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

THE HALLWAY.

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...

MILLIE'S ROOM...

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...

THE HALLWAY...

...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!

EXT. DAWN STUPEK'S HOUSE/BACKYARD - NIGHT

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.

EXT. HENRY'S HOME/BACKYARD - NIGHT

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

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

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:

MILLIE  
Mama...

Dawn freezes, bewildered at the sound of her daughter's voice.

Millie runs into her arms.

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

Dawn steps away from Millie's bed, having just tucked her in. Millie is sound asleep.

Dawn takes a long look at her daughter, then exits, moving into...

THE LIVING ROOM...

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

HENRY  
Is she OK?

DAWN  
Yeah. She's asleep.

HENRY  
Good.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

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.

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.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

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.

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 to you? 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.

DAWN

I feel like that all the time. When my ex-husband left it was like this desperation. I felt like...

(searching)

You know that feeling when you're sitting in a chair, leaning back on the back legs, and you almost fall back, but you catch yourself at the last minute and then your nerves are all sort of shot for a while?

Henry nods.

DAWN (CONT'D)

I pretty much feel that way all the time. Like I don't know if I'm ever going to feel safe again.

With great hesitation, Henry takes hold of Dawn's hand. She smiles sadly.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

DAWN (CONT'D)

I'm sorry I called you a dick face 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.

EXT. DAWN STUPEK'S HOUSE - NIGHT

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.

INT. LOS ANGELES HIGH RISE/HENRY'S OFFICE- DAY

SUBTITLE: DOWNTOWN CHICAGO

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.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HENRY

Hello...

(pause)

Why do I have to come in?

INT. DOCTOR'S OFFICE/EXAMINATION ROOM - DAY

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?

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.

INT. ELEVATOR - DAY

Going down. Henry stands in the corner, labored breath, a darkness over him, morose...

The elevator doors open and a MIDDLE AGED BLACK WOMAN steps in, eyes Henry with a polite smile, then --

BLACK WOMAN

You alright there?

HENRY

Not really... Not at all.

EXT. DOWNTOWN STREET - DAY.

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

He reaches an intersection, crossing with the other people.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

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.

EXT. JOSEPH'S PAWN SHOP - DAY

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...

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

Henry sits behind the wheel of his Mercedes, alone, driving nowhere, numb, the car stereo blaring music.

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.

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

INT./EXT. HENRY MERCEDES/FREEWAY - NIGHT

A good amount of time has passed. The music still blares. A different song...

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.

(CONTINUED)



CONTINUED:

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 --

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

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...

EXT. FREEWAY - NIGHT

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...

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... And I'm sorry. I love you, but... I'm sorry.

(pause)

There's a reason, but... You shouldn't worry-- I already said that... And if you could... Just tell Lydia... tell her I... Well. You know... Just tell her whatever you want.

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

INT. HENRY'S HOME/LIVING ROOM - DAY

Henry takes a seat at the couch, placing a plate with a Hot Pocket on the coffee table. As he stares at the pathetic piece of hot dough he suddenly notices...

...THROUGH THE FRONT WINDOW, Esperanza making her way across his lawn toward Dawn's home.

Henry darts to a SIDE WINDOW, spying as Esperanza knocks on Dawn's door.

Dawn emerges and the two women speak. Esperanza makes the sign of the cross.

Avoiding Dawn's gaze, Henry darts back behind the curtain, then peeking again, he sees Esperanza heading toward his front door.

Henry rushes to the door, locking the dead-bolt. He stands, back pressed to the door as heavy pounding echoes through the house.

ESPERANZA (O.S.)

Mr. Poole! Hello?

He cringes at the sound of her voice. More knocking, followed by the doorbell.

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

Mr. Poole, are you home?

After a moment of incessant ringing the doorbell 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.

HENRY

Jesus Christ! How did you get in here?!

ESPERANZA

Back door. It was open.

HENRY

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

(CONTINUED)

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.

HENRY

You think that little girl spoke last night 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 at the diatribe, 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?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

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 sinks in her skin, tears welling in her eyes as Henry immediately begins to regret his tirade.

The silence is over taken by a SHRILL SCREAM coming from the backyard. Startled, Henry and Esperanza rush toward the back door.

EXT. HENRY'S HOME/BACKYARD - DAY

Henry and Esperanza burst through the back door to discover...

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

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PATIENCE

Oh my God! Oh my God! Dear God!

Henry rushes to her, falling to his knees, holding her.

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

What?

PATIENCE

I can see. Perfectly. Just like that.

Esperanza drops to her knees, making the sign of the cross.

HENRY

How?

PATIENCE

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 Esperanza, still on her knees.

INT. HENRY'S HOME/LIVING ROOM - DAY

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

She holds a magazine 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. Not  
just the headlines.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

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.

HENRY

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?

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

Henry bolts across the room.

HENRY

Whoa! What are you doing?

He rips the phone from her hand.

HENRY (CONT'D)

You're not calling anyone. You're not telling anyone about this. This doesn't leave this room.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

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.

EXT. HENRY'S HOME/BACKYARD - DUSK

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.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DAWN

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

HENRY

How is she doing?

DAWN

She's good. Really good.

(pause)

Henry... What are you going to do?

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.

(CONTINUED)



CONTINUED: (2)

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.

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

HENRY  
What?

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.

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.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

DAWN

Does anything matter, Henry?

Henry hesitates, a delicate longing in his gaze.

HENRY

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

DAWN

Your doctor? There's nothing--

HENRY

No.

DAWN

You know something, I don't think you're  
right.

HENRY

What?

DAWN

I just can't-- I want to 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 hands him the plate of cookies, then walks away.

INT. HENRY'S HOME/BEDROOM - NIGHT

Henry lays in bed, wide awake, lost in thought and finishing  
the plate of cookies.

INT. HENRY'S HOME/KITCHEN - MORNING

Henry stands at the sink, rinsing the cookie dish.

The quiet is suddenly broken by DAWN'S VOICE calling from  
somewhere outside.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DAWN (O.S.)

Henry.

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

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

Henry... You home?

EXT. HENRY'S HOME/BACKYARD - DAY

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?

EXT. DAWN STUPEK'S HOUSE/BACKYARD - DAY

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.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

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.

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.

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

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:

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

## EXT. MIDDLE CLASS NEIGHBORHOOD - DAY

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.

## EXT. MAIN BOULEVARD - DAY

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.

## INT./EXT. BUS - DAY

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.

Settling in, Henry's gaze drifts from passenger to passenger. He watches their interactions... Their human contact.

-- A MOTHER feeding her INFANT, dabbing a bit of drool from the baby's mouth.

-- A YOUNG COUPLE, holding hands as the man mindlessly caresses the palm of the woman's hand, tracing the creases with his finger. A loving touch.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

-- An OLD MAN sullenly working a crossword puzzle. Sensing Henry's gaze, he stops, turning his head to look back at him. Henry holds his gaze... A little too long... Almost looking through him...

OLD MAN  
Something wrong, son?

HENRY  
(slowly sapping out of it)  
Yes... I mean... Sorry. No.

Quelling his slight embarrassment, Henry looks out the window when suddenly something catches his eye... He quickly reaches up, pulling the stop cord.

EXT. CITY BRIDGE - DAY

The bus pulls away leaving 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.

EXT. L.A. RIVERBED - DAY

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.

A FEW MOMENTS LATER...

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. And in the distance, the DOWNTOWN LOS ANGELES SKYLINE, clearly just minutes away.

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

EXT. BUS STOP - NIGHT

A bus pulls up, the doors open and Henry emerges. He's tired, but somehow content.

INT. DAWN STUPEK'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Dawn lays curled up on the couch watching a late night talk show. 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.

INT. HENRY'S HOME/BEDROOM - NIGHT

Henry lays in bed on his back. In one hand he holds a flashlight, shining it at the open closet facing the foot of the bed. In the other hand he fiddles with a Sharpie marker.

And there on the wall inside the closet before him, scrawled in sharpie, the words HENRY POOLE WAS HERE.

INT. HENRY'S HOME/LIVING ROOM - MORNING

Henry lays on the couch, his fingers nervously tapping Dawn's empty cookie plate, sitting on his chest.

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

He bolts up, clutching the plate, and rushes to the door. He hesitates, frustrated, unsure, but mostly just nervous.

After a few more quick false starts, he finally makes it through the front door.

EXT. HENRY'S HOME - DAY

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

HENRY

Hey.

DAWN

Hello again...

MILLIE

Hi, Mr. Poole.

(CONTINUED)

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.

DAWN

You ate them all already?

HENRY

Yeah, they were 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--

(CONTINUED)



CONTINUED: (2)

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.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

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, ANOTHER CAR approaches, slowing down as it reaches Henry's home.

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.

INT. SUPERMARKET - NIGHT

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.

HENRY

Oh... Hey.

PATIENCE

(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.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

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)

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.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

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.

EXT. ESPERANZA'S HOUSE/PORCH - MORNING

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.

EXT. HENRY'S HOME/DINING AREA - MORNING

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.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

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.

Henry 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?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

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.

HENRY

What's this?

ESPERANZA

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.

INT. HENRY'S HOME/BATHROOM - DAY

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

INT. HENRY'S HOME/BEDROOM - DAY

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

EXT. FLOWER KIOSK/MINI MALL - DAY

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.

EXT. DAWN STUPEK'S HOUSE/PORCH - NIGHT

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)  
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MILLIE (CONT'D)

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.

EXT. HENRY'S HOME/BACKYARD - NIGHT

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.

(CONTINUED)



CONTINUED:

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.

EXT. HENRY'S HOME/BACKYARD - LATER

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.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HENRY (CONT'D)

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.

DAWN (CONT'D)

We all have our ways of not paying attention to our lives... The bad parts and the good.

Henry takes a deep breath, he knows she's talking about herself too. Then, working up his resolve:

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.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

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.

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

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

DAWN  
Go to sleep, sweetie.

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

EXT. HENRY'S HOME/BACKYARD - NIGHT

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--

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

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... Hope.

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.

INT. HENRY'S HOME/BEDROOM - NIGHT

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.

EXT. HENRY'S HOME/BACKYARD - NIGHT

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

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

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.

EXT. SUBURBAN NEIGHBORHOOD - DAWN

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...

HENRY'S BACKYARD...

...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...

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.

INT. GALLATIN MEDICAL CENTER/LABORATORY - MORNING

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.

INT. GALLATIN MEDICAL CENTER/WAITING ROOM - MORNING

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.

INT./EXT. ESPERANZA'S CAR/SUBURBAN STREETS - MORNING

The car screeches around a corner, with Esperanza gripping the wheel.

INT. SAINT RAYMOND'S CATHOLIC CHURCH/RECTORY - MORNING

Esperanza tears into the PARKING LOT and comes to a sloppy, screeching halt near the front door of the rectory.

INT. RECTORY/ FATHER SALAZAR'S OFFICE - MORNING

The door swings open and Esperanza marches in waving the lab file.

She finds Father Salazar behind his desk, on the phone and now perturbed at her barging in.

ESPERANZA

Father!

He holds up a finger, silencing her as he continues his phone conversation:

FATHER SALAZAR

Yes... Yes... I agree completely. Very inappropriate, I know... Well, I assure you I'll have it back within the hour...

(leering at Esperanza)

I just will, trust me. Thank you.

He hangs up.

ESPERANZA

Father--

FATHER SALAZAR

Stop. I know what you're going to say.

ESPERANZA

Why does everyone keep saying that to me?

FATHER SALAZAR

I'm saying it because I just got off the phone with the lab. Esperanza, you just can't snag files out of peoples hands and run off like you just took a cookie.

ESPERANZA

I know, I know, Father... I'm sorry. But you have to see this. You have to see this for yourself. The blood, from the wall--

FATHER SALAZAR

I know.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ESPERANZA

(opening the file)

It says right here. It's real.

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 tosses the file on the desk, shaking his head, at a loss.

INT. HENRY'S HOME/BATHROOM - MORNING

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

He reaches down to the faucets, grabbing hold of the cold water and slowly turning it off.

Steam pours over the bathroom as Henry lets the scalding water pound his chest. He winces from the pain, letting the water burn, seeing how much he can take.

INT. HENRY'S HOME/BEDROOM - DAY

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.

INT. HENRY'S HOME/LIVING ROOM - MORNING

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.

INT. DAWN STUPEK'S HOUSE/MILLIE'S BEDROOM - MORNING

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, sweetie. 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...

...peeking out from under the bed. Suddenly realizing something, Henry picks it up and peers over his shoulder at Dawn with a deep unsettled gaze.

INT. DAWN STUPEK'S HOUSE/HALLWAY - MORNING

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.

(CONTINUED)



CONTINUED:

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?

Speechless himself, he just nods.

INT. PEDIATRICIAN'S OFFICE/EXAM ROOM - DAY

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.

INT. PEDIATRICIAN'S OFFICE/HALLWAY - DAY

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.

EXT. PEDIATRICIAN'S OFFICE - DAY

Henry emerges from the building with Millie cradled 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.

INT./EXT. HENRY'S CAR - DAY

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.

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.

HENRY'S POV - HIS STREET

...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.

EXT. HENRY'S HOME/FRONT YARD - DAY

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...

## THE BACKYARD.

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.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

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

Don't ask. What did you say?

FEMALE WORSHIPER

Is this your house?

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.

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 --

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

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!

EXT. HENRY'S HOME - DAY

Dawn pulls Millie out of Henry's car and turns to find Henry  
 racing out of his backyard, across the lawn. He bolts down...

ESPERANZA'S DRIVEWAY...

...reaching the GARAGE and yanking the door open. Pausing a  
 moment, he surveys the space, searching... Finally, he finds  
 what he is looking for.

EXT. HENRY'S HOME/FRONT YARD - DAY

Henry marches back across the lawn, an AXE firmly in his  
 grasp.

Dawn stands at the edge of the driveway, dismayed, with  
 Millie cradled in her arms.

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.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ESPERANZA

Mr. Poole, what are you doing?!

EXT. HENRY'S HOME/BACKYARD - DAY

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! And I can do whatever I want. I didn't ask for this and I don't want it. This is my decision. This is what I want. 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...

A dark, pensive moment as his world caves in on him.

And with that, Henry takes his first swing, PLUMMETING THE AXE INTO THE CENTER OF THE STAIN.

HENRY (CONT'D)

This does not save lives!

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.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The hits dig into the frame of the house, splintering a number of the two by fours.

Dawn looks on, stunned.

DAWN

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.

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?

(CONTINUED)



CONTINUED: (2)

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.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

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!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

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.

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.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

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.

INT. HOSPITAL CORRIDOR - DAY

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.

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.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

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 collapse as...

...the screen is ENVELOPED IN RED and we flash to a SERIES OF IMAGES...

...ALL PLAYING BACKWARDS:

HENRY IN HIS CAR, FIRING A GUN AT HIS OWN HEAD.

A TSETSE FLY SINKING IT'S PROBOSCIS INTO HUMAN FLESH.

HENRY STANDING IN THE MIDDLE OF A BUSY DOWNTOWN INTERSECTION.

TWO TSETSE FLIES COPULATING.

THE ZANZIBAR MEDICAL CLINIC, AN EMACIATED PATIENT TIED TO A BED, FLAILING UNCONTROLLABLY.

HENRY FALLING ON THE STEPS OF THE MALL, SPLATTERING A DRINK ALL OVER HIMSELF.

A TSETSE FLY LAYING HER LARVAE.

HENRY BUMPING INTO A DOORJAMB.

A TSETSE FLY LARVAE HATCHING.

HENRY COLLIDING WITH MR. LAWRENCE AT THE DOCTOR'S OFFICE.

A TSETSE FLY SINKING IT'S PROBOSCIS INTO A PATCH OF HUMAN FLESH.

POV OF THE TSETSE FLY AS IT APPROACHES ITS VICTIM, MR. LAWRENCE, THE PATIENT FROM THE DOCTOR FANCHER'S OFFICE.

Suddenly we come to a screeching halt and we're in...

ANOTHER HOSPITAL ROOM

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:

INT. HOSPITAL CORRIDOR - SECONDS LATER

The ugly glow of florescent light slowly comes into focus as Henry, still on the floor, flat 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)

You're OK...

Millie's deep concern transforms into little grin as she slowly, cautiously steps to him, kneeling down...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MILLIE  
Mommy said you're not sick anymore.

HENRY  
I'm not dying?

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...

THE HOSPITAL ROOM.

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.  
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DAWN (CONT'D)

(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 for you... 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.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

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.

(CONTINUED)



CONTINUED: (3)

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.

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.

DISSOLVE TO:

A MONTAGE. NO WORDS. JUST EVERYONE... GETTING ON WITH IT.

INT. OPTOMETRIST'S OFFICE - DAY.

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.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. ESPERANZA'S HOUSE/LIVING ROOM - DAY

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.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. MILLIE'S CLASSROOM - DAY.

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...

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. DAWN STUPEK'S HOUSE/BACK PATIO - DAY

Dawn dismantles her training set-up, pulling the dryer exhaust hose off of her treadmill.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. SAINT RAYMOND'S CATHOLIC CHURCH - DAY

Father Salazar stands at the altar, 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.

INT./EXT. TAXI - DAY

Henry, arm still in a sling and his forehead bandaged, rides in the back seat as the cab turns onto his street and stops in front of his home.

INT. HENRY'S HOME/LIVING ROOM - DAY

Henry enters and closing the front door behind himself, leans back, tired, but clearly glad to be home.

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.

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

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.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DAWN  
Are you going back? To Chicago?

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.

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...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

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, as we CUT TO:

...THE RUBBLE and we're...

CLOSE ON on a LARGE PIECE OF THE DEMOLISHED STUCCO where we see...

...A TINY RED SPECK OF MOISTURE still mysteriously seeping from what was the eye of the face.

FADE OUT.