

Confessions of a Contractor

"Pilot"

by
Richard Murphy

based on the novel
Confessions of a Contractor

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TEASER

FADE IN:

EXT. LOS ANGELES - SUNSET

Not your typical establishing shot. Yes, we can see the Hollywood sign, but only the back of it, where a steel frame provides the hidden structure. SPARKS fly from the torches of WELDERS working on the sign. Beyond this, the urban sprawl of Los Angeles, a city in a constant state of repair.

HENRY (V.O.)

In LA, everything breaks eventually, and when it does, somebody has to fix it.

EXT. SALLY STEIN'S HOUSE - SUNSET

HENRY SULLIVAN, 30's, gets out of his old, rust-colored pick-up truck in front of a classy, contemporary house in the Hollywood Hills. He's good-looking in a rugged, somewhat broken way, with the type of hands that built this country.

HENRY (V.O.)

To survive here, I've devised a set of rules to keep myself out of trouble.

He grabs a clean shirt and a suede sport coat and begins to change out of his work clothes.

HENRY (V.O.)

Never take a job just for the money. It's bad for everyone involved.

Henry, now changed, uses the blade of a pocket knife to remove dirt from beneath his fingernails.

HENRY (V.O.)

Never accept gifts of any kind. In this town, gifts are never free.

EXT. SALLY STEIN'S HOUSE - SUNSET

Henry approaches the front door with seasoned confidence.

HENRY (V.O.)

And the most important rule of all: Do not, under any circumstance, sleep with a client.

(CONTINUED)

The door opens revealing SALLY STEIN, 30's, magnificent in every way, wearing a black cocktail dress.

HENRY (V.O.)

Even if you've spent the last four months dreaming about her.

Sally's flirtatious smile leaves a wrinkle in his convictions.

SALLY

You clean up nicely for someone who changes their clothes on the street.

HENRY

I prefer intersections. But Robertson and Sunset was taken.

INT. SALLY STEIN'S LIVING ROOM - EVENING

The MUSIC of João Gilberto plays as we float through a tastefully designed room full of beautiful people. There are a few men in attendance, all impeccably dressed, but most of the guests are women. Sally leads Henry into the room.

SALLY

Everybody, this is Henry Sullivan. The man who renovated my house.

Henry smiles, at ease, business as usual. Sally turns to him.

SALLY

How about a tour?

INT. SALLY STEIN'S MASTER BEDROOM - EVENING

Sally gives her friends a tour of the house as Henry looks on.

SALLY

The master suite has all the elegant flavors of Danish Modern without the lonely aftertaste. Notice how Henry's handcrafted bedframe feels like it holds more than just the mattress.

HENRY (V.O.)

I took the job because Sally Stein was unlike anyone I'd ever met before.

INT. SALLY STEIN'S MASTER BATH - EVENING

Another room that could be on the cover of *Dwell* or *Architectural Digest*. Sally continues the tour.

(CONTINUED)

HENRY (V.O.)

She was blessed with the type of energy that made her fully capable of starting a fashion trend, freeing hostages, or doing both simultaneously at any given moment.

SALLY

The steam shower is faced with seamless glass, and it's big enough for two. Or three, depending on your mood.

Laughter. Henry smiles, appreciating her command of the room.

INT. SALLY STEIN'S NEW HOME OFFICE - EVENING

The guests all gather around an elegant, abstract desk, admiring it's feminine shape; it's masculine touch.

HENRY (V.O.)

A woman whose only flaw was that she didn't appear to have one, which led me to believe that she was, in fact, too good to be true.

SALLY

Glass, wood and steel. But Henry didn't just use these materials to build me a desk. He measured my arms, my legs, my fingers; the arc of my spine. Then he incorporated those measurements into his design.

(beat)

This is more than a piece of furniture, it's an extension of me.

All of the women in the room turn and look at Henry in unison, as if to say: *Measure me.*

INT. SALLY STEIN'S LIVING ROOM - EVENING

Henry is at the bar working on a Jameson, listening as a group of women bombard him with their residential desires. The voices of DEIDRA and KRISTEN rise above the rest.

KRISTEN

I used to be in love with granite countertops, but now I think I'm in love with Caesarstone.

DEIDRA

Do you believe animals have souls?

(CONTINUED)

KRISTEN

You absolutely have to come over
and give me an estimate.

DEIDRA

Here, take my card.

The other women all scramble to produce their cards, including AMY GARNER, a woman who isn't comfortable in a crowd. Sally enters from the dining room.

SALLY

Before we sit down, I'd just like
to say that tonight will be no
ordinary dinner party.

A loud CRASH in the kitchen precedes the entrance of Sally's CATERERS, who are all blind. At first their dark sunglasses suggest they could be an iconic British band, but there's no mistaking the way they move: slowly, zigzagging about, trying to feel their way through an unfamiliar setting.

SALLY

The meal we are about to eat will
be consumed in total darkness.

INT. SALLY'S DINING ROOM - EVENING

The guests are seated at a long table, wearing BLINDFOLDS, listening as Sally explains the art of dark dining. The caterers move about the room, bumping into things as they attempt to serve arugula salads with caramelized pears.

SALLY

When sight is removed, your
remaining senses become heightened
and you discover a new appreciation
for the subtleties and complexities
of whatever you're experiencing.
The craze was started by a blind
clergyman who opened the first dark
restaurant in Switzerland, where he
employed blind people to serve his
customers.

The guests are all excited to partake in this adventure. Henry, seated next to Sally, leans over for a sidebar.

HENRY

You brought them here all the way
from Switzerland?

SALLY

Van Nuys. The Swiss were unavailable.

(CONTINUED)

Henry nods, unfazed. Sally addresses her guests.

SALLY

No one is allowed to talk until the meal is over, and you can't take your blindfold off unless you're choking to death. Now, if you will all raise your wine glasses.

Some guests knock over their wine glasses, others can't seem to locate them. Only Henry and Sally navigate the task successfully, their instincts in tune with their perceptions.

SALLY

Bon appetite.

Henry and Sally's wine glasses come together for a toast, slowly, like young lips moving in for a first kiss.

After the toast, Henry takes a sip and sits back to savor the complexities of a 1982 Chateau Latour. His body suddenly becomes perfectly still, surprised by a new sensation.

ANGLE ON: Sally's hand moving up Henry's inner thigh, en route to his groin, the center of his gravity.

Henry struggles to stay true to his code, but he's trapped, and liking it, a moment that becomes even more surreal when some of the other guests begin to MOAN with delight, overwhelmed by the flavors in their wine.

INT. / EXT. SALLY'S FOYER - NIGHT

Amy Garner lingers while Sally says good-bye to her remaining guests. Henry watches Amy from the perimeter, noticing a certain, agitated sadness in her eyes. When the others are gone, she steps forward eagerly.

AMY

Thank you so much for having me. It was just--amazing. So cosmopolitan. Really great, in every way.

SALLY

I'm glad you came.

AMY

(turning to Henry)
It was so nice to meet you. You have my card. I really hope you'll come by and give me an estimate.

HENRY

I'll see what I can do.

(CONTINUED)

Henry and Sally watch Amy walk out to her car. She turns and waves; actually waves.

HENRY
She new in town?

SALLY
She and her husband moved here a couple of years ago. But we just met last week.

HENRY
Been in LA that long and she's still that nice.
(beat)
Almost makes me feel like I'm back in Illinois.

They turn and face each other, but for different reasons.

HENRY
About that--appetizer you served me.

SALLY
I'm not looking for a relationship.

HENRY
I still have some work left to do on your house.

SALLY
Send Victor or Miguel.

Henry debates the technicalities of his rule. Sally interprets his silence as her cue to close the door.

INT. SALLY'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Henry and Sally slam into FRAME, cracking a mirrored wall. They spin onward, pawing at each other's clothes, leaving a path of home-improvement projects in their wake: A bottle of RED WINE crashes to the floor and stains the sandstone. A chair falls and scratches the breakfront.

On the dining room table where they ultimately land, Sally's high heel DIGS into the wood, leaving a deep SCRATCH on the surface as Henry breaks his golden rule.

SMASH CUT TO:

TITLE: *"Confessions of a Contractor"*

END OF TEASER

ACT ONE

FADE IN:

INT. SALLY'S MASTER BEDROOM - MORNING

Henry awakes and discovers that he's alone in Sally's bed. He looks around, discombobulated, wondering where she went.

INT. SALLY'S DINING ROOM - MORNING

Henry enters in his boxer shorts. He spots a note on the table and opens it up. It reads: Had to run. Can you fix this or do we have to start over? He looks down at the red wine STAIN she's referring to on the brand new sandstone floor.

EXT. HOUSE IN SANTA MONICA - MORNING

ERIN MONTGOMERY, 30, cute, but socially awkward, is reading *The Unbearable Lightness of Being* in her old, boxy Volvo. When she sees Henry pull up, she quickly checks her appearance in the rearview mirror before getting out to greet him.

HENRY

Sorry. I should have said 9:30.
Traffic was hell.

ERIN

Personal traffic, or the kind where
all the cars are in front of you?

HENRY

Little of both.

ERIN

Yeah...? Which way did you come?

HENRY

This is a trap, isn't it?

ERIN

Could be.

Henry nods. He then reaches into the cab of his truck.

HENRY

In that case, I had to make a stop.
(he hands her a small bag)
Ham and cheese croissant. Your
favorite.

She smiles, begrudgingly, then addresses her suspicion.

ERIN

How was Sally's dinner party?

(CONTINUED)

HENRY
 Fairly standard.
 (holds up business cards)
 More jobs to choose from.

She wasn't talking about work. But then again, he knew that.

INT. DEIDRA'S HOUSE - MORNING

Henry and Erin are seated across from Deidra, one of the women from Sally's party. On the couch next to her are two Persian cats with matching bows in their hair.

HENRY
 So, Deidra, what is it you're
 looking to do to your home?

DEIDRA
 Who is she again?

Deidra is preoccupied with Erin, who is sneaking small bites of her croissant. Erin puts it away self-consciously.

ERIN
 Sorry. I always forget to eat.
 He has to remind me.

HENRY
 Erin's the designer I work with.

DEIDRA
 She doesn't act like a designer.

HENRY
 Yeah, well, that's not really a
 requirement in my book. She's got
 great taste, and I'd be lost
 without her. So, your house.

Deidra regroups. She was expecting Henry to come alone.

DEIDRA
 I want to turn one of the guest
 bedrooms into a jungle-gym for my
 cats, like the one Buddy Hackett
 used to have in his house. I'll pay
 you twice your rate, and you can
 have your pick of the litter when
 the cats have kittens.

INT. KRISTEN'S HOUSE - MORNING

Kristen, also from Sally's party, is seated next to her husband, TED, who is looking over a client QUESTIONNAIRE.

(CONTINUED)

TED

Why do you need to know how many hours of sleep we average a night?

HENRY

Because we believe the first blueprint of every job is the blueprint of our client. People spend the majority of their time inside the home. That home should be a place where you feel comfortable, safe, happy. It's as important to your well-being as the food you eat.

ERIN

Like clothes.

All eyes go to Erin, which she immediately regrets.

ERIN

You wouldn't walk around in a suit that doesn't fit. Why should your home be any different?

Ted is old school. He's not sure what to make of all this.

TED

Kind of unconventional for a contractor, isn't it?

ERIN

Henry's not your typical contractor. He's more like a house tailor. To customize your home, he needs to know your personal measurements.

KRISTEN

I love clothes. Does that help? Should I write that down somewhere?

TED

Okay, enough of the artsy-fartsy mumbo-jumbo. Let's just get down to brass tacks here. My wife says you're the best in the business, but you're picky about the jobs you take.

He pulls an envelope out of his blue blazer and puts it on the coffee table in front of Henry and Erin.

TED

That should make it easy. Courtside Lakers' tickets. With parking.

(CONTINUED)

Henry and Erin exchange a look. His expression reminds her that gifts are never free.

HENRY

That's real nice of you, but I'm gonna have to pass. I'm a Clippers fan.

INT. AMY GARNER'S HOUSE - DAY

GREGG and Amy Garner, the friendly woman from Sally's party, are on the couch, filling out their questionnaires across from Erin. Henry drifts about the room, studying the sterile setting, puzzled by the absence of something.

AMY

Are you sure I can't get you anything? Lemonade? Iced tea?

HENRY

I'm good, thanks. Have you lived in this house the whole time you've been in LA, or did you move here recently?

GREGG

Why?

AMY

It's just a question, hon.
(to Henry)
It'll be two years next month. Gregg still isn't used to the way things work out here. It's so competitive. Everybody seems to have their own decorator, or one of those feng shui experts.

HENRY

Why'd you leave Missouri?

GREGG

The weather. We couldn't handle another Midwestern winter.

ERIN

Which is why you want us to build you a gym and a spa. You're ready to embrace the California lifestyle.

AMY

Exactly. We're tired of feeling like we don't belong.

(CONTINUED)

Henry nods. Gregg looks at his watch.

GREGG

I'm afraid I'm going to have to cut this short. Sorry I couldn't be more helpful with my questionnaire. It was nice to meet you both.

(he shakes hands with Henry and Erin)

I hope we can come to some kind of agreement. I know how happy it would make Amy.

Henry watches Gregg leave for another room in the house.

AMY

He's a day-trader. He gets nervous being away from his computer while the market is still open.

HENRY

In this economy, who could blame him?
(a thoughtful pause)
When would you like us to start?

EXT. GARNER HOUSE, BRENTWOOD - DAY

Erin and Henry walk out to their vehicles.

ERIN

A little odd, but overall, the best of the bunch.

HENRY

Can't go wrong with Midwesterners.

ERIN

(beat, detects something)
That doesn't sound very convincing.

HENRY

It's probably nothing.

ERIN

What...? Now you're not gonna share your professional concerns with me?

HENRY

They've lived in that house for two years and there's not a single picture of them anywhere. Almost feels like a rental.

(CONTINUED)

ERIN
Sort of like your place?

HENRY
My place is a rental. And what's that supposed to mean? "Now you're not gonna share your professional concerns?"

ERIN
It means what it means.

She gets into her car. He smiles, piecing it together.

HENRY
You're still stewing about Sally not inviting you to her party.

ERIN
I'm not stewing.

HENRY
Oh, you're stewing. I know stewing, and this is some serious, knock-down-drag-out, full-frontal stewing.

ERIN
What is her deal with me? I was nothing but nice to that woman.

HENRY
She's obviously threatened by you.

ERIN
Sally's threatened by me? The woman who's like perfect in every way? Please.

HENRY
You're smart, intelligent, you've got great--

ERIN
(starts the engine)
I have an eye appointment. I'll see you up at the spec house.

HENRY
Who wouldn't be threatened by you?

ERIN
I'm running you over now.

He steps out of the way and watches her drive away.

EXT. HENRY'S SPEC HOUSE, DRIVEWAY - DAY

A new, extraordinary house in the hills that is near completion. Henry gets out of his truck and is confronted by a neighbor and his Chihuahua. This is OSWALD, a body builder who looks like he swallowed a steroid grenade.

OSWALD

The noise coming over my fence is bad enough, but if you commit another violation, I'm going to report you to the city.

HENRY

What are you talking about?

OSWALD

You're not allowed to start work before 7:00. It's the law.

HENRY

We don't. Never have. Did you get the wine basket I sent over?

OSWALD

I don't drink.

Oswald marches off. Henry mumbles to himself:

HENRY

Shoulda gone with the fruit.

EXT. / INT. SPEC HOUSE GARAGE - A MOMENT LATER

Henry's crew is hard at work in a wood shop that's been set up in the garage. His two lead men, his brothers-in-arms, VICTOR and MIGUEL BAUTISTA, step forward to give him some flak.

VICTOR

You slept with her, didn't ya?

HENRY

Don't be ridiculous. The dinner party was a complete bore.

VICTOR

Unbelievable. Now we're never gonna finish that place. Just watch, she's gonna start adding stuff. The garage, landscaping. That's the whole point of the rule. Once you break it, the job never ends.

(CONTINUED)

HENRY

Miguel, will you please tell Victor he has nothing to worry about. Your brother seems to have lost his ability to understand English.

Miguel begins speaking to Victor in Spanish. Victor tries to smack him, but Miguel backs away, chuckling.

VICTOR

If you didn't sleep with her, where the hell you been?

HENRY

Lining up a new client.

INT. SPEC HOUSE GREAT ROOM - DAY

Real estate agent CECELIA GRANDERSON, 40's, high-strung, is giving three SAUDI BUSINESSMEN a tour of the house. This is Henry's masterpiece and no detail has been overlooked. Cecelia points out some of the built-in cabinetry work.

CECELIA

As you can see by the cubist nature of the house, Sullivan has been strongly influenced by his idol, Jonathan Selnick. He's also added a few personal touches. This section here was built out of exotic woods he inherited from his father, who was also a contractor.

SAUDI BUSINESSMAN

This wall is a good place for a TV. The wood will have to go.

Henry and the Bautista brothers enter in time to hear this.

HENRY

Sorry, but you can't put a TV in here. There's another room for that.

Cecelia shoots Henry a look, urging him to keep quiet.

HENRY

The cabinetry stays, Cecelia. It's going in the buyer's agreement.

CECELIA

(beat, forcing a smile)
Gentlemen, this is Henry Sullivan. He designed and built the spec house.

(CONTINUED)

HENRY
How's it going?

He studies the Saudi men as he waits for them to respond.

HENRY
O-kay. Nice chatting with you.

He ventures off with Victor and Miguel in tow.

HENRY
What is she doing here? She's
supposed to call first.

VICTOR
We have a bigger problem.

INT. SPEC HOUSE KITCHEN -- CONTINUOUS

Henry enters ahead of Victor and Miguel, passing his eccentric friend BILL, who is photographing the kitchen on a tripod.

BILL
Question.

HENRY
Shoot.

BILL
You think Van Gogh ever stopped in
the middle of a self-portrait and
said: Holy crap, I'm painting
myself again?

HENRY
Self-Portrait with Bandaged Ear.
You can see it in his eyes.

Henry turns on the faucet to fill the coffee pot, but no water comes out. Victor steps in.

VICTOR
That's the problem.

INT. CRAWL SPACE - MOMENTS LATER

Henry, Victor, Miguel and Bill are on their stomachs beneath the house looking at where the pipes have been removed.

HENRY
This is all I need right now.

BILL
Who'd steal a bunch of copper pipes?

(CONTINUED)

MIGUEL

Meth addicts. Smack heads. Anybody looking for a quick 500 bucks.

HENRY

Then why didn't they just rip open the walls? There's not a scratch anywhere. Why do it the hard way?

No one has a theory on that. Victor spotlights an area.

VICTOR

Whoever it was got interrupted before they could finish. My money says they'll be back for the rest when the drugs wear off.

HENRY

We need to tighten up security. No sense in re-piping until we know it's not gonna happen again.

INT. KITCHEN -- DAY

Cecelia enters and discovers Henry and the guys climbing out of the crawl space through a trap door in the pantry.

CECELIA

Why isn't the water working? It's bad enough you insulted a potential buyer, but now he has to use the bathroom and there's no water!

HENRY

Tell him to go in the bushes.

CECELIA

The *bushes*? He's wearing a dishdasha.

VICTOR

What's a dishdasha?

BILL

A thawb.

MIGUEL

What's a thawb?

HENRY

It's Arabic for garment.

CECELIA

Okay, everybody just--stop talking. Could I have a word? In private.

(CONTINUED)

HENRY

It's cool. They're family.

CECELIA

Fine. You need to get your act together. You need to fix the water situation immediately, and start behaving like a professional. And that means hiring a real photographer. Not Bill, your unemployed friend who's behind on his rent. I mean it. Not everyone finds you and your traveling band of misfits as charming as I do.

HENRY

Could I have a word? In private.

He leaves. Cecelia follows. Victor, Miguel and Bill look on.

BILL

Least she finds us charming.

EXT. SPEC HOUSE - A MOMENT LATER

Henry and Cecelia step outside to continue their conversation.

HENRY

Just because you've sent me a lot of clients over the years, doesn't mean you can talk that way about my crew.

CECELIA

I'm sorry if I offended anyone, but you can't expect every buyer to appreciate the house the way you want them to. The economy has killed the market. You have to start thinking about paying off the bank.

HENRY

I'm aware of that. But there's a piece of me inside that house, and the guy in there isn't the right fit.

CECELIA

You just met him. Give him a chance.

HENRY

People pay me to help them find whatever it is they're looking for.
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

HENRY (CONT'D)

That guy's looking for a house where he can park some cash and get a decent return on his money even if his son trashes the place.

CECELIA

How did you know the house is for his son?

HENRY

Because that's part of my job. The violent yellow Ferrari parked out front belongs to junior, the tall one who looks hungover. The Bentley behind it belongs to his old man.

CECELIA

(beat, comes clean)

I need this, Henry. I haven't made a sale in over six months.

HENRY

You're gonna get your commission. I promise. Right now, you just need to march back in there with your chin up, and tell that guy he'll have to use the bushes.

(off her smile)

See? You're feeling better already.

CECELIA

I still need a completion date.

Henry starts walking out to his truck.

HENRY

Soon.

CECELIA

That's not a real answer.

HENRY

As soon as possible.

"Use Me," by Bill Withers begins to play as Cecelia takes a deep breath and goes back inside with more confidence.

INT. SALLY STEIN'S MASTER SUITE - NIGHT

The headboard bangs into the wall, chipping away at the newly painted PLASTER as Sally and Henry climax. Bill Withers continues to PLAY on Sally's iPod, surrounded by gardenia-scented candles.

INT. DINING ROOM - NIGHT

Henry replaces the stained sandstone as Sally looks on, studying him closely in nothing but a short robe.

SALLY

So, what's your plan? Where do you see yourself five years from now?

HENRY

I've found my life works better without a plan.

SALLY

Is that why you renovate houses when you have the talent to make it as an architect? You're afraid to make that type of commitment?

HENRY

I renovate houses because I like changing the space.

SALLY

Then why did you go to all that trouble to build a spec house?

HENRY

To prove to myself that I could.

She waits to see if he'll expand on that. He doesn't.

SALLY

Can I offer you some advice?

HENRY

Everyone else is.

SALLY

Your spec house is a one of a kind. You should be focusing on new construction.

HENRY

We're in a recession. I'll be lucky just to cover my ass.

SALLY

Houses like that are recession proof. You just need somebody who knows how to expose you to the right group of people. Somebody who knows how they operate.

(CONTINUED)

HENRY

Somebody to fix me up? Make them think I belong?

SALLY

Joke all you want, but Cecelia Granderson and Erin--whatever her name is--are not capable of--

HENRY

Montgomery. I couldn't have done your house without her. You could at least remember her name.

SALLY

I didn't mean any disrespect. They're both great women, but they don't have the resources I have.

(beat)

You're a Jonathan Selnick fan. Do you think he would have gotten to where he is today if he spent all his time renovating houses?

HENRY

Selnick's a trained architect. I'm a contractor who knows how to draw.

SALLY

Then maybe it's time to change the way you see yourself.

The pain in his knees, and the diminutive nature of the task at hand causes him to give this some thought.

HENRY

What are you proposing?

SALLY

I know a true artist when I see one. Let me help you get the recognition you deserve. If I'm successful, I'll show you how to capitalize on that once you've had a taste of what I can do for you.

Sally walks over to Henry and loosens the tie on her robe.

SALLY

No strings attached.

The robe falls open six inches from his face; close enough for him to forget about all of his rules; close enough for her to feel his warm breath against her skin.

(CONTINUED)

HENRY

I guess we could all use a little fixing once in a while.

He leans in. Sally's eyes roll upward into her head.

EXT. GARNER HOUSE, BRENTWOOD - MORNING

Henry gets out of his truck and takes a moment to survey the idyllic street, his arms loaded with provisions. A small RAINBOW hangs over the mist of a neighbor's sprinkler. The sunlight feels especially immortal today.

He starts for the driveway and nearly collides with a woman named REBECCA PAULSON, 30's, running down the sidewalk in workout attire. This isn't your typical morning jog; she runs hard, as if trying to stay just ahead of something. Henry watches her race onward, the only thing out of place in this otherwise perfect picture.

INT. / EXT. GARNER GARAGE - MOMENTS LATER

Gregg is getting into his Mercedes, flustered by something.

HENRY (O.C.)

Beautiful day, isn't it?

Gregg turns around, a little startled.

GREGG

How long have you been standing there?

HENRY

Not long. I've got some sketches for you to look at.

GREGG

Show them to Amy.

HENRY

It'll only take a minute. I'm torn on the layout. I think you might be able to help me.

GREGG

I don't care about the layout. Just do whatever it takes to make her happy, and leave me out of it.

Gregg gets into his car and quickly starts the engine.

HENRY

You left your coffee on the...

(CONTINUED)

Henry's voice trails off as Gregg backs down the driveway. When Gregg brakes to put the car in drive, his travel MUG tumbles over and crashes into the street.

HENRY

Roof.

INT. GARNER HOUSE, LOWER LEVEL - MORNING

Victor, Miguel, Erin and the rest of Henry's crew are deconstructing the space as Amy looks on nervously. She approaches Victor, who is removing old light fixtures.

AMY

Aren't you supposed to shut the power off before you do that?

VICTOR

No habla Engles.

AMY

(to Erin)

Maybe we should wait for Henry. What if something goes wrong?

ERIN

It's fine. You you don't have to shut the power off if you know what you're doing.

Henry has been observing this from the bottom of the stairs.

HENRY

Morning everyone. Looks like we're off to a good start.

(holds up a pastry box)

¿Quién está listo para un donut?

Some of the guys stop to take a break. Victor and Miguel keep working. Henry hands Erin a little white bag.

HENRY

Everything bagel with cream cheese. Decided to mix it up.

AMY

It's all happening so fast. I'm having trouble seeing how everything is going to fit together.

HENRY

That's what the sketches are for.

He shows her his blueprint tube, but Amy remains on edge.

(CONTINUED)

HENRY

Could I bother you for a cup of coffee? I need a minute with my crew before we go over these.

Amy ventures upstairs. Erin's eyes narrow.

ERIN

Didn't you wear that shirt yesterday?

HENRY

Haven't had time to do laundry.

She nods, aware he didn't go home last night.

IN. GARNER KITCHEN - MORNING

Amy gets frustrated while opening a pound of French roast and coffee spills everywhere. Henry watches from the doorway.

HENRY

Reheat's fine.

Amy steps back, as if the coffee pushed her over the edge.

AMY

I think Gregg is having an affair.

Henry remains in the doorway where he belongs.

HENRY (V.O.)

Admissions like these are fairly common on the job site. People often feel more comfortable confiding in strangers. There's no real pattern to determine where or when they will come about.

AMY

I'm sorry. I didn't mean to...

HENRY (V.O.)

I was in the living room when Simon Feldmen confessed he'd hit a cyclist, and I was in the garage when Lisa Mueller told me her husband had lost his confidence. And once they're out, it's hard to get them back in.

AMY

You must think I'm pretty pathetic. Hoping a gym and a spa will help me turn back the clock and get my husband to notice me again.

(CONTINUED)

HENRY

I don't judge my clients. But you should talk to him about it.

(holds up the blueprints)

We can go over these when you're feeling better.

He turns to leave, to give her some space.

AMY

Why did you take this job...? You had offers from Sally's other friends. People with nicer houses. Why didn't you pick one of them?

HENRY

Because I like you.

AMY

That's it...?

HENRY

I thought I could help you shape this house into a place where you might feel more at home.

AMY

You can...I don't know what to believe anymore. Sometimes I think I can smell another woman's perfume on his clothes, and other times I think it's all in my head.

(beat, desperate)

I need to know for sure.

INT. GARNER HOUSE, LOWER LEVEL - LATER

Henry comes down the stairs, looking conflicted. Erin walks over to him.

ERIN

How'd it go?

HENRY

Slight change of plans.

EXT. SPEC HOUSE - NIGHT

Henry, Victor and Miguel get out of Henry's truck.

MIGUEL

Maybe the thieves were showing off. Like them dudes who rob museums in broad daylight.

(CONTINUED)

HENRY

People who rob museums in broad daylight do it because the security guards are in their seventies and they're armed with nothing but retractable key chains. That won't be the case tonight.

He pulls an AXE out of the tool locker in his truck. Miguel selects a sledge hammer.

VICTOR

I talked to our plumbers. They're booked on a commercial gig. It's not gonna be easy getting somebody good on such short notice.

HENRY

Bribe them if you have to. Tell them we're tight on time.

MIGUEL

Let's go, *buey*. Man up.

VICTOR

Pfft. I'm way ahead of your ass.

Victor pulls a PISTOL out of his waistband.

HENRY

Are you crazy? Gimme that thing. You've got a fricken family.

VICTOR

Relax, it's just a starter's pistol.

HENRY

What, in case the crank-heads show up and a swim meet breaks out?

VICTOR

It's for intimidation, numb-nuts.

Henry turns on a two-way radio they use on the job site.

HENRY

Go to channel three. I'll take the front, you guys watch the back.

INT. GARNER HOUSE, LOWER LEVEL - NIGHT

The guys have left, but Erin is still there, near the stairs, trying to listen in on Gregg and Amy above. When she hears footsteps, she spins and races back to some tile samples.

(CONTINUED)

AMY

Oh, I didn't realize someone was still here.

Erin turns and sees Amy standing on the last stair, carrying a small load of laundry.

ERIN

I work better at night. It's kind of hard to concentrate with all the noise.

AMY

It's nearly ten o'clock.

ERIN

Is it that late? I'm kind of a tile freak. I like mixing and matching. Playing with patterns.

AMY

You should go. Somebody must be worried about you.

ERIN

Not really. I'm single, so...

Erin doesn't like hearing this out loud. Amy nods, softly.

AMY

It must be hard meeting people. With the internet and all, wondering who to trust.

(beat)

I don't even know where I'd begin.

Hearing Amy seemingly choose her own dysfunctional situation over the one she is in, causes Erin to confront the issue that has been nagging at her.

ERIN

Hey, you were at Sally's dinner party. How were Henry and Sally together? You know, as far as first dates go.

AMY

I didn't realize it was their first date. They seemed so perfect together, I just assumed they'd been an item for months.

Erin is now the one nodding softly.

INT. HENRY'S TRUCK - NIGHT

Henry, who's supposed to be watching the front door, has fallen asleep, exhausted from another long day.

EXT. SPEC HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

We're in someone's POV, creeping through the darkness toward Henry's truck...A massive hand rises into FRAME and...POUNDS on the driver's window. Henry nearly jumps out of his skin.

He rolls down the window and addresses Oswald, the body-builder with the little dog, out on his morning walk.

HENRY

Oswald.

OSWALD

It's 5:30. I thought I told you no work before 7:00.

HENRY

That ya did, captain. But I'm not working. I'm just waiting for the sun to rise.

OSWALD

I'm watching you, Sullivan. If I see another violation, I will do whatever it takes to shut your ass down. And that's a promise.

Oswald walks away, tethered to his little dog.

HENRY

Nice seeing you again.

When Oswald's out of earshot, Henry talks into his walkie.

HENRY

Looks like they're a no-show. Come on, I'll buy you breakfast.

INT. HENRY'S TRUCK - DAWN

Henry drives down the hill with the Bautista brothers.

HENRY

I think the juice is going to that guy's head.

MIGUEL

He can't do anything. The other neighbors know we don't start early.

(CONTINUED)

Henry notices that Victor isn't interested in the conversation, which is unusual.

HENRY

You're awfully quiet this morning.

MIGUEL

We got a game tonight. He's worried about Gabino.

HENRY

What's wrong with Gabino?

MIGUEL

He throws like a girl, and the other kids make fun of him.

HENRY

He just needs more practice. If he starts singing along to Judy Garland records, then we'll talk.

They pass an unmarked PLUMBING VAN, heading up the hill. The wheels in Henry's head begin to turn as he shifts his focus to the rearview mirror. Miguel takes notice.

MIGUEL

Someone you know?

HENRY

(beat)

That's what Oswald was talking about. They don't work at night. They ripped us off in the morning before we got there.

EXT. SPEC HOUSE - DAWN

Henry slows to a stop, keeping his distance. Sure enough, the plumbing van is parked in the driveway.

INT. SPEC HOUSE - DAWN

Henry, Victor and Miguel make their way toward the noise, Henry wielding the starter's pistol. They enter the MASTER SUITE ready to confront a team of thieves. Much to their surprise, they discover LEWIS, a fresh-faced kid, barely 18.

HENRY

Hands where I can see them!

VICTOR

A *kid*? We're being ripped off by a punk-ass little kid?

(CONTINUED)

Before the guys can even blink, Lewis scurries up a ladder and disappears into the ventilation system.

HENRY
(amazed)
You see that?

The SOUND of Lewis scurrying away from them forces the guys to react quickly, which isn't easy on very little sleep.

VICTOR
Smoke him out.

HENRY
Smoke him out? He's moving like a goddamn spider monkey.

Henry takes off after the sound. Victor and Miguel quickly follow. They dart in and out of ROOMS, yelling to each other every time they think they've pinpointed Lewis' location. At one point, Victor raises the axe and is about to hack into the plaster before Henry grabs the handle.

HENRY
What the hell are you doing?

VICTOR
I think he's inside the wall.

HENRY
He's not eight inches tall. He just sounds like he's in the wall.

Henry races off again, chasing the sound.

EXT. SPEC HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

Lewis kicks open a vent and jumps down into the grass. He runs towards his van, feeling like he's in the clear until Henry blindsides him, tackling him to the ground.

HENRY
Not so fast, Chim-Chim.

Henry pulls Lewis to his feet just as Miguel and Victor arrive, panting, grabbing their knees. Lewis hasn't even broken a sweat.

HENRY
You're troubles are just beginning.

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

FADE IN:

INT. SPEC HOUSE, GUEST BEDROOM - MORNING

This is the most contained room in the house. Lewis, realizing that no one can see inside the windows, looks downright scared standing across from Henry and Victor.

LEWIS

Aren't you gonna call the cops?

HENRY

Why, so they can slap you on the wrist and send you on your way?

Miguel enters and closes the door behind him.

MIGUEL

Nothing in the van except a beat-up mattress, a hot-plate, and some secondhand tools.

HENRY

Lives like a tweaker, but doesn't act like one.

LEWIS

I'm not on drugs, and I'm not a criminal. I've been looking for a job, I have, but nobody's hiring.

VICTOR

Keep your mouth shut.

Victor moves in, rolling up his sleeves.

VICTOR

We've been busting our asses on this house for almost a year, and you think you can just come in here take what's not yours?

LEWIS

I'll pay you back. Every penny. I swear.

HENRY

Who taught you how to work with copper? How'd you know how to get the pipes out without damaging the solders on the gate valves you left behind?

(CONTINUED)

LEWIS

My Dad. I used to be his apprentice. I was just trying to get some money for food. I coulda trashed this place, but I didn't. I respected the work.

Henry maintains his poker face, but something in his eyes suggests that he can relate to this kid.

LEWIS

Please, you can't kill me. I just turned eighteen.

Henry gives Victor and Miguel a look, and they both respond by chuckling.

LEWIS

You think this is funny?

VICTOR

You ain't gettin' off that easy, homes. We're behind schedule.

HENRY

You've got three days to re-pipe the house free of charge. When the work's been approved, I'll give you back the keys to your van. You'll report directly to these two.

Disbelief fades into relief, as Lewis begins to realize this was a test.

LEWIS

You're not gonna--

HENRY

You've got skills. If you've got something to say, say it with your hands.

INT. LA TENNIS CLUB - MORNING

Sally Stein approaches Cecelia Granderson who is having a light breakfast after a match.

SALLY

Hello, Cecelia. Mind if I join you?

Cecelia finds this odd. They're quite familiar with each other, but they aren't friends. Sally sits before she can respond.

(CONTINUED)

SALLY

How have you been? I haven't seen you in forever.

CECELIA

I don't play as much as I used to.

SALLY

Who has the time, right?

CECELIA

Can I help you with something?

SALLY

Yes, actually, I'm glad you asked. As you may know, I'm a big fan of Henry's work. And, well, if it's okay with you, I'd like to throw a grand opening party to unveil his spec house to the community.

CECELIA

I see...How long have you been sleeping with him?

Sally maintains her poise; returns the serve.

SALLY

There was a time when you could have sold this house on your own. But let's face it, Cecelia, you've lost a step. You're drinking too much. And now you're letting your own financial problems get in the way of Henry's future. He has great potential, but something is holding him back. If we expose the house to the right group of buyers, people who truly appreciate fine art, I think he might come to realize what he's capable of.

CECELIA

What *he's* capable of, or what *you're* capable of...? What was the name of your last little project? The French painter you escorted around town until he signed with a gallery in New York?

SALLY

If it's your commission you're worried about, you can have it. I'm not after your money.

(CONTINUED)

CECELIA

Then what are you after? Applause
for discovering a new talent,
someone to make you feel like
you're back on the A-list?

Deuce. Sally hesitates before responding.

SALLY

Everyone knows you're struggling,
Cecelia...Let me help you.

EXT. SPEC HOUSE - MORNING

Henry exits and sees Erin getting out of her car.

HENRY

Hey. Any updates on the Garners?

ERIN

Nothing you don't already know.

HENRY

So no fights when Gregg got home?

ERIN

They barely spoke.

He nods; files this away. Her body bears a greater weight.

HENRY

Well, thanks for hanging out.

ERIN

Yeah, sure. You know me, always
happy to fill in while you're
gallivanting around with Sally
Stein. Ask Erin, she couldn't
possibly have plans.

HENRY

I wasn't out gallivanting with
anyone. I was here, asleep in my--

ERIN

Is that really how you see me?
Because you should know, I'm a very
exciting person. People invite me
to do stuff all the time.

Henry's phone RINGS. He sees that it's Cecelia calling.

ERIN

It's fine. Take it.

(CONTINUED)

He pockets the phone, focused on Erin, who in his eyes, is behaving like she's been abducted.

HENRY

Where is this coming from?

ERIN

I'll tell you where it's coming from. I had a breakthrough last night, while I was waiting around to see if anything would happen at the Garners. I realized I need to take some time off to figure out what I'm doing with my life.

HENRY

Okay, just slow down a second.

ERIN

I think it's time I went back out on my own, Henry.

HENRY

You hated being out on your own. You got panic attacks whenever you had to meet with new clients. You said a woman in Malibu had to drive you to the emergency room.

ERIN

I know what I said. But I don't want to wake up ten years from now in somebody else's house. I want to have a life inside my own home.

A long pause, as Henry tries to wrap his head around this.

HENRY

Take all the time you need.

EXT. BRENTWOOD - DAY

Henry's truck rolls to a stop at a residential intersection.

INT. HENRY'S TRUCK - DAY

Henry looks at the road ahead, deep in thought. VOICES turn his attention to the driveway of Rebecca Paulson, the woman who ran past him. She's arguing with WADE GIDDINGS, a rival contractor. When a car HONKS behind Henry, he pulls over.

EXT. REBECCA'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Wade sees Henry approach as he's getting into his own truck.

(CONTINUED)

WADE

What do you want?

HENRY

Working on a house in the hood,
just thought I'd stop by and make
sure everything was up to code.

WADE

Why don't you mind your own goddamn
business for once.

HENRY

That bad, huh? You're consistent,
Wade. I'll give you that.

Wade drives off in a huff. Henry walks over to Rebecca.

HENRY

Whatever that guy just said to you,
don't take it personally. Wade
Giddings is a crook.

Rebecca doesn't respond. Instead, she puts her energy into
clearing away a pile of demolition debris so she can get her
minivan out of the driveway. Henry tries to assist her.

REBECCA

I don't need your help. You people
are all the same. You start a job,
then you disappear when a better
one comes along. I'd rather do it
myself!

He holds up his hands and respectfully retreats to his truck.

INT. GARNER HOUSE, HOME OFFICE - DAY

Gregg is at his computer, day-trading stocks. He notices
something out in the YARD and leans over for a better look.

It's Henry, brushing and splashing PAINT on the only section
of the house visible from Gregg's desk.

EXT. YARD - CONTINUOUS

Henry steps back to study his tribute to Jackson Pollock.
Gregg approaches from the slider in his office, mortified.

GREGG

What are you doing?

HENRY

Experimenting.

(CONTINUED)

GREGG

The outside of the house isn't part of our agreement. You're ruining a perfectly good paint job.

HENRY

I don't know. I kind of like it.

GREGG

It looks ridiculous. People will think we've lost our minds.

HENRY

So you do have an opinion?

(beat)

Good to know.

GREGG

You're trying to provoke me?

HENRY

No. I'm just trying to get to know you. Because if I don't know you, I can't do my job properly.

He pulls Gregg's client questionnaire out of his back pocket.

HENRY

You didn't answer a single question on your questionnaire. And since you've decided to step away from the project and let your wife handle everything, I just want to make sure you don't have this kind of reaction when you see what we're doing to the lower level. I've been down that road before. It never ends well.

GREGG

If it were up to me, I'd fire you right here and now. But since this is a gift for my wife, and she seems to like you, I'm gonna pretend like this didn't happen.

(points to the paint)

Now fix that.

Gregg turns and starts walking back to his office.

HENRY

I'll leave the questionnaire here on the patio table. In case you change your mind.

(CONTINUED)

EXT. ANAWALT LUMBER - DAY

Henry gets out of his truck and makes his way toward the lumber yard, dialing his cell as he walks.

HENRY

Hey, I need a favor. Things took a left turn in Brentwood.

INT. BILL'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

Bill's car is chock full of odds and ends including pamphlets of *CliffsNotes* from his last substitute teaching gig.

BILL

Walk away. I mean it, dude. Just build whatever they want and get the hell out. Who cares what happens to them after you leave?

INTERCUT:

HENRY

The wife thinks her husband's having an affair. She asked me to help.

BILL

Meaning?

HENRY

I want you to follow him.

BILL

No can do. I'm already following somebody, and it's no picnic.

HENRY

Who?

BILL

Turn around.

Henry turns and sees Bill parked on the street, waving at him.

HENRY

Me...? Who in the hell hired you to follow me?

BILL

Victor and Miguel. They're trying to settle a bet about whether or not you're sleeping with Sally.

(dead air)

I'll take that as a yes.

INT. SPEC HOUSE KITCHEN - DAY

Victor and Miguel are watching Lewis solder pipes in the cramped crawl space. Victor's mind is elsewhere.

MIGUEL

I gotta say...There's advantages to being a small plumber.

VICTOR

What if Henry's on to something?
What if Gabino's not just a late bloomer? What if he really is...

MIGUEL

Gay?

SALLY (O.S.)

Hello...?!

The Bautista brothers exchange a look. Sally enters a moment later with a polished WOMAN in a pant suit.

SALLY

Hola Victor, hola Miguel.

Victor and Miguel nod and slip into their shy mode, continuing their charade that they don't speak English.

SALLY

I'm here to show the house to a reporter from *Architectural Digest*. We'll stay out of your way.

VICTOR

Henry no está aquí ahora mismo.

SALLY

I know you speak English. If you see Henry, will you remind him about the art opening tonight?

Victor and Miguel just nod.

SALLY

Don't be embarrassed. Henry's life is about to get very interesting. You're going to have to get used to communicating with his clients.

She ventures off with the reporter. Victor sticks out his hand, needing no further evidence to settle the bet. Miguel pulls out his wallet.

INT. LUMBER YARD - DAY

Bill looks on, as Henry fills a cart with lumber.

HENRY

Are they paying you?

BILL

They're picking up my per diem.
Plus gas and parking tickets.

HENRY

Christ. First Erin, now the
Bautista brothers.

BILL

You told Erin?

HENRY

No, I didn't tell her. I'm not an
idiot. She used her special powers.
Now she's saying she needs some time
off to figure out what to do with
her life.

BILL

You know she's crazy about you.

HENRY

I'm pretty crazy about her, too.
But I can't act on that. I'll
screw everything up. She knows I'm
not the type to settle down.

BILL

No wonder you're into Sally Stein.
She's a fixer, dude. Just like you.

HENRY

Easy Freud.

BILL

Guess it's easier fixing other
people than it is fixing yourself.

Off Henry, as this resonates.

INT. ART OPENING, PACIFIC DESIGN CENTER - NIGHT

Henry makes his way through the party. Sally, dressed in a
long, elegant gown, lights up when she sees him.

SALLY

You made it.

(CONTINUED)

She gives him a kiss.

SALLY

You're just in time. There's someone I want you to meet.

HENRY

I didn't realize this was formal.

SALLY

(on the move)

Nonsense, you look great. Which reminds me, I bought you a couple of suits. They just need to be tailored.

She leads him over to a distinguished gentleman who has his back to them.

SALLY

Jonathan?

JONATHAN SELNICK, 53, turns around, delighted to see her.

JONATHAN

There you are. I've been looking everywhere for you.

He gives her a kiss on the mouth. There's an attraction between them, perhaps even a history.

JONATHAN

You look absolutely divine, as always.

SALLY

Henry, I believe you know Jonathan Selnick, the architect.

Henry maintains his cool, but he'd be lying if he said he wasn't honored to meet his idol. Sally just smiles.

JONATHAN

The man we spoke about on the phone. You built the new house up on Mulholland I've been admiring.

(shaking hands)

Well done. I'm a fan.

HENRY

Thank you. Likewise.

(CONTINUED)

JONATHAN

Sally tells me she's planning a party to unveil the house. Any chance I could arrange a tour before the vultures descend? I'd love to see if the inside lives up to the promise of the exterior.

HENRY

Any time.

JONATHAN

How's Saturday? Say, two o'clock?

HENRY

I'll be there.

JONATHAN

Perfect.

(back to Sally)

Now you, you and I have some catching up to do.

Henry looks on as Sally and Selnick begin talking as if they are the only two people on earth.

ANGLE ON: Cecelia Granderson, mingling across the room, her eyes firmly fixed on Henry, Sally and Jonathan Selnick.

INT. PACIFIC DESIGN CENTER - LATER

Henry is sipping a Jameson at the bar, watching Sally work another corner of the party. Selnick saddles up next to him.

JONATHAN

You lost her already?

HENRY

I told her I needed some air.

JONATHAN

Can't say I blame you. I hate these parties...everyone pretending like they understand your work...That's why I stopped doing houses. I got burned out on the people.

HENRY

(beat, commiserating)

Most of them don't know what they want until after you build it, so you spend most of your time trying to deconstruct them just to save yourself the trouble.

(CONTINUED)

JONATHAN

And once you finally figure it out,
they wonder why it took so long.

Henry nods; takes a pull off his whiskey.

JONATHAN

(beat, sizing him up)
What's your take on hotels?

HENRY

I like them. The good ones, anyway.

JONATHAN

What is it you like about them?

Henry gathers his thoughts.

HENRY

They're temporary. You can leave
at any time. And when they're done
right, they make you feel like
anything's possible...It's the
reason I'm still a renter. I've
been with a lot of houses over the
years, but none I've wanted to
spend the rest of my life in.

Selnick smiles, intrigued by this perspective.

JONATHAN

Well put...I think your talents
might be better served in the
commercial sector. If I like what
I see on Saturday, I'd like to sit
down and talk to you about
collaborating with me on a hotel
I'm building.

HENRY

(at a loss)
You serious?

JONATHAN

That feeling you just described is
exactly what I'm looking for. Give
it some thought.

He pats Henry on the back and walks away. For the first time
since we have met him, Henry Sullivan looks overwhelmed.

END OF ACT TWO

ACT THREE

FADE IN:

EXT. REBECCA PAULSON'S - DAY

Rebecca is hammering two-by-fours together in her driveway.

INT. HENRY'S TRUCK - CONTINUOUS

Henry notices Rebecca as he's slowing to a stop at the residential intersection. He tries to continue onward when he sees her smash her finger, but he can't help himself. He stops and begins backing up.

EXT. REBECCA PAULSON'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Rebecca shakes off the pain as Henry approaches. He looks down at the disfigured apparatus on the ground.

HENRY
Whatcha makin'?

REBECCA
A jack for the ceiling in my
bedroom. What's it look like?

HENRY
From this angle, I'm gonna say...a
stick-figured sculpture of Richard
Nixon in profile.

His description loosens her up.

REBECCA
Before or after he resigned?

HENRY
Before.
(beat, introducing himself)
Henry Sullivan.

REBECCA
Rebecca Paulson.

HENRY
So, you gonna tell me what's wrong
with the ceiling in your bedroom,
or do I have to guess?

INT. PAULSON MASTER BEDROOM - A SHORT TIME LATER

The house is a mess. The walls are exposed. Personal items are in boxes. A section of the ceiling sags precipitously. Henry studies the situation as Rebecca looks on.

(CONTINUED)

REBECCA

Wade Giddings started the demo then quit when he got a better job.

HENRY

He'll do that. As for the ceiling, Nixon's gonna need a running mate.

EXT. SANTA MONICA AIRPORT - DAY

Gregg Garner pulls into a parking spot. As he makes his way towards a security CHECK-POINT, we see that he is being followed by Bill, who keeps his distance.

EXT. SANTA MONICA AIRPORT - DAY

Bill is hanging out at the fence near the control tower, watching a small, single engine CESSNA taxi out to a runway. A FLIGHT CONTROLLER steps outside for a smoke break.

BILL

Nothing clears the head like watching planes take off, huh?

The controller nods. Bill points to the Cessna.

BILL

That guy in that plane there. What's his deal? I feel like I've seen him somewhere before.

FLIGHT CONTROLLER

That guy...? That's the S.O.B. who cost me three grand.

INT. PAULSON MASTER BEDROOM - DAY

Rebecca watches Henry finish constructing a support frame.

HENRY

That'll hold it...I'm thinking about getting out of residential work, but call me after you file a complaint with the city, and I'll come back and give you an estimate on finishing the job.

REBECCA

You're not just saying that?

HENRY

One more house can't hurt. I know where you live, so it's not like I'll have to stop and ask for directions.

(CONTINUED)

REBECCA

Thank you. I'm sorry I was such a bitch earlier. I'm just really overwhelmed. How much do I owe you?

HENRY

File that complaint with the city and we'll call it even.

REBECCA

You have to let me pay you something. I insist.

HENRY

How about a sandwich?

INT. PAULSON KITCHEN - DAY

Henry takes in the kitchen as Rebecca makes him a sandwich. He notices that on the inside of a DOOR JAM leading to the laundry area, the height of Rebecca's daughters has been marked along with their age. Their heights stop at age FIVE. He drifts over to study the pictures on the refrigerator.

HENRY

How old are your daughters?

REBECCA

Seven. They're twins.

He nods, curious about the two year gap. He points to an ADVERTISEMENT taped to the fridge. It's for an upcoming real estate seminar conducted by DERRICK PAULSON.

HENRY

Is this your husband, Derrick?

REBECCA

That's him.

People usually offer additional details when talking about a spouse. Rebecca does not. Henry's phone rings. He answers.

HENRY

Yeah?

INT. INTERNET CAFE - CONTINUOUS

Bill's on the phone, sitting at a computer.

BILL

You were right. Garner's got a secret. Meet me at Headquarters and I'll give you all the details.

INT. REBECCA'S KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Henry hangs up. Rebecca offers him the sandwich on a plate.

REBECCA

Roast beef on rye. The house specialty.

HENRY

I'm gonna have to get that to go.

INT. HEADQUARTERS - DAY

Bill and Henry are seated in a booth at a bar they frequent. A blue, neon sign above the bar reads: HEADQUARTERS.

BILL

He owns a little Cessna, keeps it over at the Santa Monica Airport. Takes it out three or four times a week. But get this, he never goes anywhere. Just flies around in circles. Big, giant circles over the ocean. The controllers call him The Seagull.

HENRY

The Seagull?

BILL

Tip of the iceberg, my friend. Remember back in the 90's when the Texas Rangers were in the playoffs?

HENRY

I'm a recovering Cubs fan. Abstinence is better for my health.

BILL

Then you're gonna love this. Garner played six years in the majors, but that didn't come up when you Googled him because Gregg is his middle name. Kenneth Gregory Garner, or K.G. Garner, the name he played under.

HENRY

The wife failed to mention that.

(beat)

Why change your name after playing six years in the Bigs?

(CONTINUED)

BILL

Because he got Bucknered. During a playoff game. He was on the verge of scoring the winning run when he missed third base. Got called out when he should have been safe; cost his team the series. Following year, total head case. Couldn't hit a beach ball if it was sitting on a tee. After the Rangers cut him, he tried out for a couple of other teams, but he didn't stick.

Henry takes a moment to process all of this.

HENRY

Surprised the Cubs didn't pick him up.

INT. SPEC HOUSE, KITCHEN - DAY

WATER flows from the faucet. Henry shuts it off with a nod of approval.

LEWIS

I found a shorter path from the hot water heater, so there's less waste as it warms.

HENRY

Your old man taught you well. What happened to him?

LEWIS

(beat, reluctantly)
He took off when I was sixteen.

Henry, never one to dwell on sentiment, pulls out Lewis' keys. He stops short of handing them over.

HENRY

He teach you anything about wood?

LEWIS

He was a carpenter by trade.

HENRY

Tell ya what...We could use an extra set of hands right now. You can work under Victor and Miguel for a week, but if you steal anything you're a dead man. You got that?

Lewis nods eagerly. Henry tosses him the keys to his van.

IN. SPEC HOUSE, GREAT ROOM - A MOMENT LATER

Victor and Miguel are installing molding. Henry approaches.

HENRY

I'm giving Lewis a one-week tryout.
I want you to keep an eye on him.

VICTOR

Glad you're thinking ahead. As long as you're shackin' up with Sally Stein, we're gonna need all the help we can get.

HENRY

All right, so I lied about Sally. Because I knew you'd make a big deal out of it, which you did anyway. But I'm gonna make it up to you. I've got everything under control this time.

At that very moment, Cecelia enters with great purpose.

CECELIA

Good, you're here. I need to speak to you about this party Sally Stein is planning.

Victor and Miguel give Henry a look before fleeing.

HENRY

I can explain.

CECELIA

I think it's a good idea.

HENRY

You do?

CECELIA

She's right. I was being selfish. We need to think about your future.

There's something in her delivery he doesn't quite trust.

EXT. GARNER HOUSE, MASTER BEDROOM - DAY

Amy, dressed in spandex, is doing step aerobics in front of an exercise DVD playing on the TV. She doesn't even break stride when she sees that Henry has entered.

HENRY

Gregg's not having an affair.

(CONTINUED)

Her pace begins to slow as this sinks in.

HENRY

Your problems go back further than that...I know about the game.

She finally stops going up and down the same plastic stair.

INT. GARNER LIVING ROOM - LATER

Amy reaches into a storage box and pulls out an old PICTURE of Gregg when he played for the Oklahoma City Redhawks.

AMY

He has no idea I still have this.
It's the year we met.

Henry studies the picture of Gregg playing in the minors.

AMY

He shuts down whenever I try to talk about it, so we go on pretending until one of the neighbors recognizes him. Then we move...But it just seems to follow us wherever we go...So we came out here to LA.

HENRY

Where it's easy to feel invisible, even when people are looking right at you.

She nods, seeing that Henry isn't talking about Gregg's desire for anonymity; he's talking about the way she feels.

AMY

I'm the only thing left from that period in his life. It's only a matter of time before he cuts me out, too...I never should have dragged you into this. There's nothing you can do to our house that's going to change the outcome.

Her admission brings about a heavy silence.

HENRY

I wish that wasn't the case.

EXT. SANTA MONICA AIRPORT - LATE AFTERNOON

Gregg Garner walks out of the tiny airport and makes his way toward his car. He stops when he sees Henry sitting on the hood of his truck, waiting for him.

(CONTINUED)

GREGG
You followed me?

HENRY
I can't make the space work. I'm
pulling the plug. Thought you
should know.

He walks over to the cab, putting Gregg on the offensive.

GREGG
Wait a minute. We have a contract.
You can't just quit.

HENRY
A gym or a spa isn't gonna help you
fix what happened on the baseball
field. You'd be better off putting
that money into something else.

This catches Gregg off-guard. Henry gets into his truck.

GREGG
You son-of-a-bitch. How dare you
show up here and tell me what I
should or shouldn't do. You have
no idea what I've been through.
You're just a goddamn contractor.

HENRY
I've been called worse.

Henry fires up the engine and drives away, leaving Gregg
alone on the pavement.

INT. SALLY'S FOYER - EVENING

Sally opens the front door and greets Erin.

SALLY
Thanks for coming.

ERIN
Your message sounded urgent.

SALLY
Sorry, I didn't mean it to. It's
just that Henry's been so busy
lately he hasn't had time to finish
all the little things around the
house. I was hoping you might be
able to take over the punch list.

They remain locked on one another, sizing each other up.

(CONTINUED)

ERIN

I don't think I'm going to be working with Henry anymore.

SALLY

Oh. I'm sorry to hear that. You two were always so cute together.

Nothing gets under Erin's skin like the word "cute." The way it flows off Sally's tongue awakens her territorial instincts.

ERIN

But let's have a look. I'll pass along the list to Victor or Miguel.

INT. SALLY'S MASTER BEDROOM - DAY

Erin is compiling a list of things that need to be fixed or tweaked, studying Sally as she points out the sound a door makes when you close it.

SALLY

This squeaks and needs to be adjusted...The master bath is fine. Oh, and this here.

She leads Erin over to the chipped plaster.

SALLY

The bed keeps banging into the wall. Is there anything you can do to stop that from happening?

From the way Sally is looking at her, Erin now realizes that this is the real reason she has been summoned here. Sally not only wants Erin to know she is sleeping with Henry, she wants Erin to know just how much Henry enjoys it.

Erin takes her time debating whether to let this go and move on with her life, or stay and fight.

ERIN

(pointed)

I think I might have a solution for that.

END OF ACT THREE

ACT FOUR

FADE IN:

EXT. LOFT, SILVER LAKE - MORNING

An industrial live/work space that used to be an old machine shop. Erin gets out of her car and rings the BUZZER.

INT. HENRY'S LOFT - CONTINUOUS

Henry's living quarters are classic minimalism. The majority of the space is consumed by a wood shop where Henry has a few furniture projects in the works. He answers the door and discovers Erin dressed in her nerdy, vintage thrift-store attire. He's excited to see her.

ERIN

Hey.

HENRY

Hey. Did you get my gift basket?

ERIN

I've been eating out of it for two days. I'm thinking about turning the basket into a boat.

HENRY

Lots of cheesy sticks?

ERIN

More than I can handle.

HENRY

Nice...Don't just stand there. Come in.

ERIN

I can't stay.

This brings about the subject he's been avoiding.

HENRY

Look, before you say anything, you need to know I can't accept your resignation. I can't function without you. I'll give you a raise, and I promise I'll never ask you to do anything weird, or unconventional ever again. From here on out, no more getting involved in the lives of my clients. No matter what they tell me.

(CONTINUED)

ERIN

But that's what makes you so good
at what you do.

HENRY

Not so sure about that anymore.

ERIN

Well now is not the time to be
questioning that because I've
already decided to stay.

HENRY

You have? That's--great, that's--
Jesus, you had me a little worried
there for a second.

ERIN

But I'll take the raise.

(beat)

And I met with Sally. I'm taking
over her punch list. Now you won't
have to drive up there every time
she needs something.

He studies her for a moment, puzzled to say the least.

HENRY

Good idea.

ERIN

I like to think so. See ya Monday.

He thought he had Erin figured out long ago, but this bold
move arouses his imagination. Erin passes Gregg Garner
getting out of his car. Henry's eyes don't leave her until
Gregg is standing right in front of him.

GREGG

You got a minute?

Henry steps aside, allowing Gregg to enter, which he does,
sheepishly, uncomfortably. Henry tries to loosen him up.

HENRY

Can I buy ya a beer?

GREGG

Sure. Thanks.

Henry leaves for the kitchen area. Gregg gravitates to a
collection of EXOTIC WOODS stacked on a large rack, drawn to
their beauty, the diversity of their grains. Henry returns
with the beers and hands him one.

(CONTINUED)

HENRY

No two patterns will ever be the same. They're like fingerprints.

GREGG

Where'd you get all these?

HENRY

I inherited them from my old man. He collected them, hoping to build something for himself some day. That day never came.

GREGG

When did he die?

HENRY

When I was eighteen.
(changing gears)
No time like the present, huh?

Gregg nods, reminded of his own situation. He reaches into his pocket and pulls out Henry's client questionnaire.

GREGG

I answered your questions.
(beat, from memory)
When and where was I happiest...?
Oklahoma City. The year I met Amy. Back when baseball was still a game, before it became a profession.
What is my greatest regret...?
That I've spent the last ten years ignoring the one person who stood by me...*If I were a room, what kind of room would I be...?* I don't know. I'm still working on that.

HENRY

What brought you around?

GREGG

Amy. The look on her face when I got home...I thought if I closed the door on that chapter of my life, it would eventually go away...I didn't realize I was making everything worse...Or maybe I did, and I just didn't know what to do about it.

(a pause)

Anyway, I just wanted to come by and apologize for my behavior.

(CONTINUED)

HENRY

That's the problem with the past.
If you ignore it, a part of you
gets stuck there anyway.

GREGG

How do I get out?

Henry ponders this for a moment.

HENRY

You miss the game?

GREGG

The early years.

HENRY

(beat)

I know of a good place to start.

EXT. BASEBALL FIELD, EAST LA - DAY

Victor and Miguel are coaching little league practice. Victor's effeminate son, GABINO, 10, is definitely the weak link on the team, and his teammates let him know it. Victor and Miguel are surprised to see Henry and Gregg approach.

VICTOR

What are you doing here?

HENRY

We stopped by to give you a hand.

Henry whistles between two fingers, calling to the kids.

HENRY

Bring it in!

GREGG

I'm not very good with kids.

HENRY

You'll get the hang of it.

The kids gather around home plate. Miguel and Victor exchange a look, wondering what Henry is up to.

HENRY

All right, listen up. Today you
guys are in for a serious treat.
Because today you get to play with
a real major leaguer. And I'm not
talking about some video game. I'm
talking about the real deal.

(CONTINUED)

The kids are all jazzed about this.

HENRY

Let's all give it up for Gabino's
good friend, Mr. K.G. Garner.

The kids all start clapping, looking over at Gabino, suddenly finding him cool. Victor gives Henry a confused, albeit appreciative look. Henry offers Gregg a bat.

HENRY

They could probably use some more
fielding practice.

Gregg walks up to the plate as the kids take their positions. He studies the ball in his hand, then tosses it into the air and hits a deep FLY BALL to Gabino in right field. Gabino dances around like he has to go to the bathroom, then he ducks out of the way, afraid of the ball.

Henry takes in the moment, the setting, the joy of watching kids play a game they love even when they commit an error. He steps back and pulls up Erin's number on his phone.

HENRY

How those cheesy sticks...? That a
girl. Listen, I need you to help
me track down some stuff on the
internet...I figured out what to do
with the Garner house.

EXT. SPEC HOUSE - DAY

Henry drives up and sees Sally and Jonathan Selnick talking next to Jonathan's car. He jumps out in a hurry.

HENRY

Sorry I'm late. I got hung-up with
a client.

Sally stares at Henry, leading him to believe that his tardiness is irrevocable.

SALLY

We toured the house without you.
(beat, big smile)
He absolutely loves it.

JONATHAN

It's a work of art. Even more
impressive than I expected. I'd
like you to come work for me.

Silence, as this resonates.

(CONTINUED)

HENRY

I don't know what to say.

SALLY

There's only one thing to say. Yes.

HENRY

I took another house.

SALLY

So. Tell them something came up.
Contractors do it all the time.

HENRY

I can't do that...This career you
see for me. It's not the one I see
for myself.

(beat, to Selnick)

The other night, when we were
talking at the bar, I said some
things I didn't mean. I like what I
do. I like the people who don't
know what they want, and I like
helping them try to find it. I'm
honored you even considered me, but
I'm not gonna be happy if my life
becomes something more than that.

SALLY

Don't be a fool, Henry. This is an
incredible opportunity. One I've
worked hard to arrange for you.

HENRY

And I appreciate it...We're a lot
alike you and me. We just measure
things a little differently.

Sally gives him a look he won't soon forget. Then she
marches over and gets into Selnick's car.

JONATHAN

I'm disappointed. I think we would
have worked well together.

He gets in and closes the door. Henry watches them drive away.

HENRY (V.O.)

If there's one thing I've learned
after seventeen years in the game,
it's this: Every house has a story,
and every homeowner has a secret.

MUSIC MONTAGE: "Fake Empire," by The National.

INT. HENRY'S LOFT - NIGHT

Henry is sitting at his drafting table, looking at a blank sheet of drafting paper, his phone against his ear.

HENRY (V.O.)
Sally Stein kept her secret well
hidden below the surface of her
beautiful veneer.

INT. SALLY STEIN'S HOUSE, MASTER BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

The bed is made, but the spread is wrinkled, indicating that someone has been lying on it. In the foreground, a cordless phone is ringing. Sally enters FRAME in her robe and sees Henry's number on her CALLER ID.

HENRY (V.O.)
She was not a woman who took, "No,"
for an answer.

Sally puts the phone down and exits FRAME.

INT. GARNER HOUSE, LOWER LEVEL - MORNING

Henry's entire crew, including Lewis, looks on as he walks them through his new design. For all of the chaos Erin puts up with, she can't deny the feeling she gets when Henry Sullivan is inspired.

INT. CECELIA GRANDERSON'S CONDO - NIGHT

Cecelia is eating take-out sushi in front of her TV, watching a nighttime soap. She's halfway through a bottle of wine and headed for the finish line, a distant look in her eyes.

INT. GARNER HOUSE, LOWER LEVEL - DAYS LATER

The crew is making progress, but they have a ways to go. Lewis rips a piece of molding on the table saw, as Henry observes his technique from a step ladder where he's building shelves. It's not hard to see himself in this kid.

EXT. GARNER HOUSE - LATE AFTERNOON

The crew is wrapping up for the day. Henry hands Lewis a week's pay. Lewis smiles, feeling good about himself.

INT. SPEC HOUSE - MORNING

Henry is looking at the built-in cabinetry work, the work that Cecelia showed the Saudis earlier. He runs his hand over the wood he used from his father.

(CONTINUED)

HENRY (V.O.)

My old man used to say it's important to set aside at least one room in every house for the husband. A den, a study, the garage. Any place he can call his own. These days, we call that place a Man Cave.

INT. GARNER HOUSE, LOWER LEVEL - NIGHT

Henry and his crew are scrambling to put the finishing touches on the ultimate Man Cave. There's a wide-screen TV, a bar, and plush recliners. The walls are covered in the baseball memorabilia that Erin tracked down: framed PICTURES of K.G. Garner, as well as old jerseys, hats, and baseball cards.

HENRY (V.O.)

Male sanctuaries, havens, tributes to the past, that, if honored correctly...might just lead to another championship in the future.

The MUSIC fades.

HENRY

Last looks. We gotta roll.

Henry makes adjustments to the furniture. Erin rearranges a few collector's items on the bar. Lewis wipes down the floor after Victor and Miguel take the last of the tools out through sliders. Bill shoots the "after" pictures.

AMY (O.S.)

Ready?

HENRY

Just about.

Henry and Erin come together for one last moment.

ERIN

Hope you're right about this.

HENRY

Fourth rule of renovation. You can't change the space, if you don't change the atmosphere.

(beat, calling to her)

Okay. Bring him down.

Amy nervously leads Gregg down the stairs, his eyes covered by a blindfold. Henry and the crew gather to greet them. When Amy takes off the blindfold, Gregg is utterly speechless.

(CONTINUED)

AMY
What do you think?

GREGG
(beat, a smile)
Man Cave.

Gregg gives Henry a nod. Then he turns and gives Amy a hug.

GREGG
I love it. Where did you find all
this stuff?

HENRY
You're the new assistant coach of
the Boyle Heights Braves. You're a
big ass deal in these parts.

He hands Gregg and Amy each a framed PICTURE. Amy gets the picture she kept hidden for all these years. Gregg receives a photo of himself with Gabino's little league team.

HENRY
Figured we'd let you finish the
room yourselves.

Gregg and Amy proceed forward to a bare space on the wall, where two picture hangers await in the soft glow of halogen light, aimed from above. They hang the pictures side-by-side.

EXT. GARNER HOUSE - NIGHT

CLOSE ON: a tool bag landing in the bed of Henry's truck. The gang loads up the last of the supplies.

MIGUEL
Where we going?

HENRY
Food and whiskey. In that order.

LEWIS
I hear that.

BILL
You look fifteen. The only way
we're gonna get you into a bar is
to have you gift wrapped.

LEWIS
I got a fake ID.

HENRY
Let me see that.

(CONTINUED)

Henry looks it over.

HENRY

You call this a fake ID? It looks like you made it at the library.

Lewis' reaction indicates that he did.

ERIN

I'll get him in.

VICTOR

Somebody just pick a place.

Henry's phone begins to vibrate. He answers.

HENRY

Hello...?

Erin knows him well enough to recognize that something is very wrong.

EXT. SPEC HOUSE - NIGHT

The house is engulfed in flames. FIREFIGHTERS are hard at work trying to put it out, but it's a losing effort.

REVERSE ON: Henry watching his masterpiece burn alongside Victor, Miguel, Erin and Bill.

VICTOR

They think it was arson.

(beat)

Any idea who?

Two L.A.P.D. DETECTIVES are talking to NEIGHBORS out on the street. Oswald, the man with the little dog, points at Henry, and the two detectives walk over to question him.

We PUSH IN on Henry as the detectives get closer and closer.

FADE OUT:

END OF PILOT