

"A Happy Life"

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"If you want to live a happy life, tie it to a goal,
not to people or things."
... Albert Einstein

"A Happy Life"

FADE IN:

INT. DANNY'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY

WE FOLLOW A SLIP OF SUNLIGHT into the room. It falls upon DANNY JORDAN's closed eyes as he lies on his sofa, arms splayed sideways. A lollipop stick between his smiling lips. A AAA "Bed & Breakfast" guide on his lap.

WE MOVE to a corner curio cabinet in the middle of a wall and a collection of damaged Pelicans, ceramic, wicker, stuffed or stone birds scattered on the shelves.

Beside the curio cabinet, a turntable on a stand by the TV. A collection of 45s, neatly boxed, flaps still open. The words "For Scott" on one side.

An empty rifle rack mounted on the wall.

INT. DANNY'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

A hulking, long-haired figure rolls out of bed, pulls on her pink, size-14 rabbit slippers, bathrobe.

INT. DANNY'S HOUSE - BATHROOM - DAY

The figure plops down on the john. WE HEAR tinkling. She wipes, blesses herself, FLUSHES. She shuffles to the sink, turns on the faucets, tests the water, mutters in Spanish.

WE FOLLOW the figure's feet as they flop briskly along the hallway's sculptured carpet toward the sunken living room.

INT. DANNY'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

The figure, CARMINA, 35, 6'4" transsexual, sporting a healthy morning growth, hair piled high on her head, and caked mascara, stops, wipes her hands on her robe.

CARMINA

Danny. We got the no hot water again.
I hate to wake you, but you know we
need the hot water.

She steps down into the living room, flops toward a table lamp, clicks it, no good. She checks the bulb.

CARMINA (CONT'D)

(sotto)

Bombilla. Stupid lightbulb.

She raises the front shade, and moves to the sofa, where Danny, late 40's, lies asleep, that serene, subtle smile still arcing his lips. Another lollipop stick is stuck near his collar by a smear of what appears to be green mud.

Carmina leans close, right over Danny's placid face. She pulls a ragged afghan across him.

CARMINA (CONT'D)

Okay, you just a-sleep, big boy.

JIMMY (O.S.)

Tell him there's no --

Carmina wheels dramatically, covers up.

JIMMY, 22, skivvies and wife-beater T, stands in the hallway, scratching his balls.

CARMINA

Shh. He's a-sleeping.

JIMMY

Well, a-wake him the hell up. Damn.

(walks off)

Stupid spic.

CARMINA

Basura blanca. Puerco gandul. Culo.

A TROMPING down the hallway. BRENDA, 20, bone thin, skanky hair, "Total Bitch" long T, struts up.

BRENDA

You ever cuss out my boyfriend in Spanish again, I'll rip your fake tits out, you nasty bitch!

Brenda jabs Jimmy in the gut.

BRENDA (CONT'D)

Don't be such a wus.

Jimmy stares back blankly, wanders down the hallway.

Carmina cusses her out en Español. Brenda stands brazenly, arms crossed, both middle fingers erect, cigarette makes three.

BRENDA (CONT'D)

Do not even try it with me. I took one whole semester of Spanish, and I learned every swear word in the book. So, ivete a tomas port culo! (sic)

CARMINA

Sue your teacher.

BRENDA

Rank ass ho.

CARMINA

No ass skank.

Carmina looks past Brenda to BOYD, 62, bad comb-over, white T, gym shorts, prodigious bulge downstairs.

BOYD

What's going on?

BRENDA

The freak's trying to hump him again.

CARMINA

I tol' you before about saying that.

Carmina ROARS, sweeps up Brenda in a massive bear hug. Brenda jabs her smoke at Carmina's face, catches her hair...

Carmina SCREAMS, hair smoking. They go at it like the worst of WWE.

Boyd eyes Danny, times the wrestlers' passing, moves closer.

JIMMY (O.S.)

You guys got power out there?

Carmina and Brenda go down, tangled. Skin everywhere.

Jimmy sits on the living room ledge, reaches over and grabs Brenda's cigarette as she goes by, takes a drag.

Boyd leans his ear close to Danny's mouth.

BOYD

Daniel? Dear Lord. Help us now.
Don't take my failings out on him.
Someone call 9-1-1!

Boyd makes the sign of the cross over Danny.

The "girls" keep fighting, bang into the sofa, which dumps Danny over and onto the floor, right where Brenda falls as she goes flying, Carmina mounts her in a cloverleaf move.

Brenda agonizes, turns her head to her father, eye to eye.

BRENDA

Danny? DANNY?!

BOYD

Where's the phone?!

CARMINA

(giving up her hold)

He's okay, right?

A long moment of concern from all.

JIMMY

WAIT A MINUTE! LISTEN! ALL OF YOU!

(gets their attention)

Has anyone made coffee yet?

Brenda climbs up, kicks Jimmy in the shin, finds Danny's cell, opens it: DARK SCREEN.

ROLLIE, 39, scrawny, shock of dark, never-combed hair, retro clothes he's slept in, pencil behind his ear, leans against a wall, roll of gas station brown paper towels under his arm.

ROLLIE

"Mankind is just a bunch of dogs."

He scrawls something on the towels with a stubby pencil.

Through it all lies Danny, face sideways and smiling still.

BRENDA

Where's the regular damn phone?

Carmina and Boyd scurry about looking for it. Carmina digs through the sofa, sobbing, retrieves the cordless, tabs it.

CARMINA

Dead. Oh, no...

CLOSE ON DANNY'S SMILE

CLOSE ON BRENDA'S face. Anger. She runs over to Danny, kicks him in the side.

Rollie chronicles all on his paper towel notepad.

BOYD

(pulls her away)

Don't kick your dead father.

BRENDA

(kicks him again)

How could you?

OUTSIDE A SIREN. All eyes crank hard toward the window.

EXT. DANNY'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

A Fire & Rescue Ambulance pulls up. PARAMEDIC JACK, 28, body builder bod, pulls open the ambulance's back hatch, yanks out a gurney and crash pack. He rushes up through yard crap.

Jack looks across the fence. BILL, 55, robe half open, stoops to pick up his newspaper.

BILL
Guess they finally did it, huh? Knew
it was just a matter of time.
(Jack hustles on)
Couldn't get you any help down there?

JACK
Cutbacks.

BILL
Need a hand? I'll go put my drawers
on.

JACK
I'm good.

Front door flies open. Brenda meets him, arms crossed.

BRENDA
Gonna talk all day?!

Jack pushes by her and into the house.

INT. DANNY'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Front door still open, Jack presses a stethoscope against Danny's chest, checks his carotid. The crowd hovers.

JACK
I need you all to give me some room.

They comply grudgingly. Rollie chews on a banana, scribbles.

ROLLIE
"A man can die and yet not only live in
others but give them life."

A KNOCK on the front door.

SHERIFF TOM (O.S.)
Followed the siren. Morning, folks.

SHERIFF TOM, 54, husky, moustache, slight limp, peeks in through the front door, steps inside, removes his cap.

SHERIFF TOM (CONT'D)

What seems to be the -- oh.

Jack, really working his stethoscope over Danny's heart, glances up at Sheriff Tom, who ambles over, kneels down beside him. The others look on.

Jimmy eyes the Sheriff, leans close to Brenda, whispers...

JIMMY

Question. Did you or did you not put my weed away?

EXT. DANNY'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

A Mustang GT convertible pulls up, stops short in the yard beside the ambulance. SCOTT JORDAN, 44, scruffy good looks, hustles out of the car. Bill leans nearby.

BILL

They finally sucked your big brother dry. Poor sad, son of a bitch.

CLOSE ON SCOTT'S LOOK OF SHOCK, as he ignores Bill.

MATCH CUT TO:

EXT. DANNY'S HOUSE - DAY

INSERT: "YEARS BEFORE"

Scott, younger, watches a younger Danny jog back toward him and the moving truck he stands in. The yard and house are immaculate. Scott lifts the box onto Danny's shoulder.

SCOTT

Got it?

DANNY

Uh-huh. Gimme another one.

SCOTT

Don't think so.

MARNIE (O.S.)

You drop that box and I'll kick your fat ass! That's my mother's Rockwell plates.

They both look back toward the house, where MARNIE, 29, pretty plain and plenty pregnant, stands, fists on her hips.

MARNIE (CONT'D)

Big idiot.

SCOTT

Wow, she's kidding, right?

DANNY

(eyes the box)

No, they're Rockwells.

He speed-walks off toward Marnie.

INT. CLAIRE'S HOUSE - DINING ROOM - NIGHT

CLAIRE JORDAN, 60, floral appliqueed top and khakis, drops another pork chop on Scott's plate, sits down at the dinner table across from him.

CLAIRE

He's a big boy. He'll figure it out soon enough. Don't worry. He doesn't.

SCOTT

But, Mom, she's taking advantage of him, getting him to marry her, that house, all because she's pregnant, which still isn't sitting right with me.

CLAIRE

Maybe you're just jealous that he's settled down with one girl.

SCOTT

What's that supposed to mean?

(a look from Claire)

You know he's talking about taking on another job?

CLAIRE

That's crazy.

SCOTT

That's what I'm saying.

CLAIRE

We have to let him try to be happy.

SCOTT

He only thinks he's happy.

CLAIRE

Well, you can't be happy being alone.

SCOTT

I'm alone. You're alone.

Claire stares straight ahead.

INT. DANNY'S HOUSE - MASTER BEDROOM - NIGHT

Boxes everywhere. Queen bed, simple dresser, nothing on the walls. Master bath door open. Marnie stands at the mirror, primps. A Motown tune begins to play in the bg. Marnie grumbles. A SIREN SOUNDS.

MARNIE

No. Not again.

The music grows louder, louder, mixes with the siren.

DANNY (O.S.)

Stereo's hooked up!

MARNIE

DAMMIT!

Danny, in his boxers, pokes his head around the corner.

DANNY

First night in our new house.

MARNIE

I don't know what's worse, that music or having a damned fire station at the end of the street.

He switches off the bathroom light, brings a lit candle around from behind his back.

MARNIE (CONT'D)

I need my light, thank you.

DANNY

Use the candle.

She switches the light back on, snatches the candle from Danny, runs water on it.

MARNIE

Please go to bed and turn off that ridiculous jungle music. Why can't you like something cool like disco or country or something?

DANNY

I don't know why I like this. I just do.

MARNIE

I just do. Nitwit. You know what, sleep someplace else tonight. I need some space.

Danny's stunned into non-motion.

MARNIE (CONT'D)

Now.

Danny walks out.

INT. DANNY'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Danny tosses a pillow onto the couch.

MARNIE (O.S.)

(now in full makeup)

What are you doing?

DANNY

I'll just sleep here.

MARNIE

I don't think so.

EXT. DANNY'S PICKUP/DRIVING - NIGHT

Danny's small pickup cruises across a bridge toward the ocean. He glides slowly by a seedy Motel. "Vacancy" sign buzzing on and off. A few Seedy Types hanging over a railing flicking cigarettes toward the pool area.

INT. DANNY'S PICKUP - CONTINUOUS

Danny drives on. Something catches his eye, and he quickly steers off the highway and parks in front of a quaint Bed & Breakfast nestled on the edge of the intracoastal waterway.

Danny starts to get out but hesitates. He notices the special kind of halo around the building with the full moon as backdrop.

He watches a Couple climb the small porch steps. They kiss before they enter.

Danny gazes up to where a Lady leans out a window to simply draw in the early evening air and a Man comes up behind her, hugs her, holds her tight.

Danny rests his head on the steering wheel and takes in this lovely place. His eyes focus on the main sign perfectly framed in honeysuckle.

"Riverside Bed & Breakfast -- Like Home... only Better"

Danny climbs out and walks toward the two-story pastel building wrapped up and down in white porches as if drawn by some form of human magnet.

INT. RIVERSIDE B & B - NIGHT

Danny is guided up stairs by AGNES, B & B proprietor. She's a rosy-cheeked cherub of a woman with long hair tied back in tiers.

Couples, laughing, pass Danny with warm salutations on the way down.

DANNY

Wow, everyone seems so happy here.

AGNES

Of course they do. It's a happy, happy place. I'd never wanna work anywhere else. This is my joy.

Danny pauses, then follows her upstairs.

INT. RIVERSIDE B & B - DINING ROOM - DAY

Danny sits at a long table with several other people, including the two couples he had watched from the night before as well as the ones on the stairs. All are laughing, passing platters of breakfast foods.

Danny scoops eggs from a tray onto his plate. One of the other diners assists him. He's all smiles...

But he's slowly being distracted by a building whine, a cry, that is quickly overtaking the din of happy chatter until it becomes a SCREAMING...

INT. DELIVERY ROOM - DAY

Marnie's SCREAMING like a banshee. Danny's bawling and taking Polaroids as a DOCTOR tends to Marnie.

DOCTOR

Push now, steady, steady.

MARNIE

Screw you! I told you to knock me out, dammit. GET HIM THE HELL OUTTA HERE!

Danny lowers the Polaroid, stares as if beholding a miracle. A baby CRIES.

LATER

Danny's holding the baby, gushing tears.

DANNY

You're gonna have a great life, little girl, whatever you want. Whatever...

The baby begins SCREAMING. Sounds just like Marnie...

EXT. A DITCH - DAY

Danny, Utilities Commission hardhat on, digs with great gusto, hums. His rookie co-worker, STU, 23, wiry, blond surfer hair, sits outside the hole, wipes his face down.

DANNY

Supe drives by sees you loafing, you might get in trouble.

STU

C'mon. My back's killing me.

(Danny digs on)

Man, I never seen anyone enjoy digging dirt like you do. It's unnatural.

DANNY

What they pay me for.

STU

They don't pay you to have fun doing it, trust me. How many years you got in?

DANNY

Almost ten.

STU

Ten?! For real?

DANNY

First job out of school.

STU

You should be riding a desk by now.

DANNY

Nah. Not smart enough for that.

STU

Really? Hump a pole. More bucks.

DANNY

Heights make me seasick.

STU

So, you're cool just digging ditches?

DANNY

Yup, saving up to buy my own Bed & Breakfast someday. Not sure where it's gonna be, but I know it'll be someplace special. Out of this world, where everyone'll be happy.

STU
Ha! That's classic. You're a hoot,
man.

Danny stops long enough to check his watch. Waits,
waits...

DANNY
Okay. Four o'clock. Let's head in.

Danny gathers up his gear. Stu just shakes his head.

EXT. FOOD GIANT - DAY

Danny's Toyota pickup zooms up and parks. Danny climbs
out, straightens his work shirt, smooths down his hair,
helps an old lady manage an unruly grocery cart, before
zipping inside through the electric doors.

INT. FOOD GIANT BACK ROOM - DAY

A makeshift office near the employee washroom. Danny sits
across from MR. LINTON, 45, crew-cutted store manager,
application in hand, who sips coffee through a straw.

LINTON
Nope, not gonna work out.

DANNY
Excuse me, sir?

LINTON
Says you already work forty hours a
week for the U-C. You gonna quit that?

DANNY
(a little laugh)
Oh, gosh, no. That's my career.

LINTON
Uh-huh. But, see, we're looking for
someone to work 39 here.

DANNY
Thirty-nine?

LINTON
No fulltime. No benefits. Five to
midnight, five days a week. Saturday
mornings.

DANNY
I'm your man.

LINTON
(re application)
Says here you're married, got a kid.

DANNY
Brenda. Uh-huh. Ten months old in 12
days. You should see her. She's got
these great big rosy cheeks and --

LINTON
I'm sure she's adorable. When do you
plan to eat and sleep?
(Danny smiles)
I don't do late.

DANNY
Hate that myself.

Linton just stares at Danny, the perfect applicant.

INT. FOOD GIANT - LATER

Danny stands at the back room flap door and stares out into
the bright grocery store.

DISSOLVE TO:

The same grocery store's abuzz with shoppers now.
Christmas decorations everywhere.

AT CHECKOUTS

Hustle-bustle at critical mass.

Danny, red bow tie, bib apron, bags away joyfully, finishes
a Customer's order, hands him his plastic bag, notices two
counters over, a young Bagboy improperly bagging for a very
frustrated MRS. KAREN DELANEY, 35, black.

Danny takes over, pulls the groceries already bagged out of
plastic, quickly sets up three double-paper sacks, and
carefully and strategically packs them up, while

Mrs. Delaney smiles appreciatively, looks over at NORMA,
37, the portly cashier, who winks.

KAREN DELANEY
Thank you, Danny. That was so sweet.

EXT. FOOD GIANT - NIGHT

Danny follows Mrs. Delaney to her car.

DANNY
Kids all excited about Santa coming?

KAREN DELANEY

Driving me nuts. How about yours?

DANNY

Brenda. She wants more Barbie stuff.
How's doctor Delaney?

KAREN DELANEY

Busy as ever, you know.

DANNY

I do know. He put me on pre-diabetes
pills last week.

KAREN DELANEY

Oh, he never told me.

DANNY

I don't think he's allowed.

Danny loads up her Volvo. Karen dips into her wallet,
pulls out a ten, folds it in half. Danny finishes up.

DANNY (CONT'D)

There you go. All belted in.

KAREN DELANEY

(offers him the money)

Here you go. Merry Christmas, Danny.

Danny peers around warily, hands the money right back.

DANNY

Oh, no, ma'am. We're not allowed.

KAREN DELANEY

I know, but it's Christmas. All the
other baggers are taking tips.

DANNY

Not me. Store pays me fine, Mizz
Delaney.

KAREN DELANEY

Danny, c'mon, we went to high school
together. You know my first name.

DANNY

Okay, well, Merry Christmas, Karen
Grover, glee club president, class
treasurer, vocal team captain, and
Spanish Honor Society member.

And with that he wheels off, hopping up and riding the
basket to glide back to work even sooner. Mrs. Delaney is
left holding her ten and watching Danny wrangle empty
carts.

INT. CLAIRE'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Scott stretches out on the sofa near the Christmas tree, tying tinsel into a bow. Claire paces at the front window.

SCOTT
They'll get here when they get here.

CLAIRE
We said 11 o'clock. He's never late.

SCOTT
Yeah, he's not.

A HORN TOOTS OS. Claire peers out the window.

CLAIRE
Oh, dear Lord.

SCOTT
What?

Scott rolls off the sofa, heads for the window.

THEIR POV: A brand new black convertible, huge bow across the ragtop, pulls up, parks.

SCOTT (CONT'D)
He did not.

Danny climbs out the passenger side, reaches into the back seat and lifts out Brenda. Marnie's still fluffing her hair in her rearview.

THROUGH THE OPEN FRONT DOOR

Claire and Scott stand in the doorway, as Danny with Brenda still in his arms and crying, walks up, toting gifts.

SCOTT (CONT'D)
New family vehicle?

DANNY
Yeah, Marnie's favorite of all time.

SCOTT
Little pricey, don't ya think?

DANNY
Tell me about it.

CLAIRE
Come to Grammie, Brenda.

BRENDA THE KID
No, I don't want to!

DANNY
She's upset. Daddy got her the wrong
dreamhouse. Didn't I, Bren?

BRENDA THE KID
YOU GOT ME THE CHEAP ONE!! It's crap,
Danny!

Marnie, finally out, walks backwards toward the house.

MARNIE
God, is that a beautiful car or is that
a beautiful car?

When she turns, the door's still open, but everyone's
inside.

INT. CLAIRE'S HOUSE - DINING ROOM - LATER

Dinner in progress.

DANNY
It's so great having the whole family
together.

MARNIE
Can't believe you don't have a
girlfriend you can bring home for
Christmas, Scott.

SCOTT
Got plenty of girlfriends, just can't
afford one I can bring home.

Danny blurts out a laugh. Marnie scourges him with a look.

MARNIE
Maybe you're just not working hard
enough.

SCOTT
That's for damn sure.

BRENDA THE KID
Mommy, Uncle Scott said "damn."

SCOTT
Damn right I did.

Marnie shoots Danny another look.

DANNY
Um, um, Scott, we're trying to not...

MARNIE

(to Danny)

What the hell's wrong with you? Spit it out, you mouse. Um, um.

SCOTT

Hey!

MARNIE

Put a cork in it, bowler boy!

Claire rises, gestures with her fork.

CLAIRE

No, you cork it, you... talking to my boys like that, asking for such an expensive gift. Danny works too much now. You're gonna send him to an early grave. He's pre diabetic. His father died young, too young.

MARNIE

Listen, Mom, if your son works too much, it's because he wants to work too much. If he buys me expensive gifts,

(eyes Scott)

and he can afford to buy me expensive gifts, it's because he wants to buy me expensive gifts. Right, Danny?

DANNY

Um...

MARNIE

Think I've had enough holiday cheer.

She snatches up Brenda, totes her under her arm, heads for the door, stops.

MARNIE (CONT'D)

Daniel!

Danny finishes shoveling some stuffing in, wipes his mouth with a napkin, reaches across for a hug from Claire and Scott.

DANNY

Thanks. Thanks. Merry Christmas.

Danny hustles off after Marnie. Claire plops down in her chair. Scott sips from a glass of wine, sets it down. The Jaguar SCREAMS OFF OS. Claire dabs at her eye with a napkin.

CLAIRE

She treats him like dirt because he's slow. It's just terrible. Cruel.

SCOTT
(a mock toast)
Merry Christmas.

INT. DANNY'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Christmas decorations are at a minimum. Tiny tree, badly decorated. Danny sits on the floor, cross-legged, headphones on, his High School yearbook open. His finger moves to Karen Grover's photo.

INSERT PHOTO: Karen's face changes to Karen Delaney's, older, that chic hairdo.

KAREN'S PHOTO
Hi, Danny, watch'ya listening to?

BACK TO SCENE:

Danny's face brightens.

DANNY
David Ruffin. "My whole world ended."

KAREN'S PHOTO
Oh, that one's too sad.

Danny thinks a moment, looks back toward the hallway. He pops up, lifts the needle, finds another 45, places it on the turntable, hustles back to position with the book.

"Dancing in the Street" kicks in. Danny looks down at Karen's picture, leans close, aims a headphone her way. She nods, starts bopping.

KAREN'S PHOTO (CONT'D)
Martha and the Vandellas. Now you're talking. Let's dance.

DANNY
I can't.

KAREN'S PHOTO
Sure you can. C'mon.

Karen reaches out. Danny does, too.

EXT. FOOD GIANT PARKING LOT - DAY

Karen and Danny dance among the cars, shopping carts, bag boys, customers.

Karen's a natural, while Danny starts off clumsily, but quickly picks it up. He's moving like all he needed was sweet music and Karen. Bells are RINGING.

Soon the others join in, a slickly choreographed dance routine, utilizing cars, buggies, even bags of groceries.

CLOSE ON DANNY'S JOYFUL FACE

DANNY
Wow, this is so great!

KAREN DELANEY
What the hell are you doing?

DANNY
What?!

MARNIE (O.S.)
What the hell are you doing?

Danny's joy SCREECHES to a halt; he turns to us.

INT. DANNY'S HOUSE - RETURN TO SCENE

Danny's holding one headphone against his yearbook, DJ style. Marnie, phone in hand, stands over him. A SIREN SOUNDS OS.

MARNIE
I know the answer, but humor me. DO
YOU GO OUT OF YOUR WAY TO PISS ME OFF,
OR ARE YOU JUST PLAIN IGNORANT?!

DANNY
I don't think so.

MARNIE
Which one?

DANNY
Both. Neither?

MARNIE
God... You didn't hear the phone?
You deaf, too?

Marnie stomps off, tosses the phone behind her.

MARNIE (CONT'D)
It's bowler boy. Don't stay on
forever, I'm waiting on a call.

Danny picks up the phone.

DANNY
Hey, Scott.

EXT. SCOTT'S SUPER BOWL - NIGHT - ESTABLISHING

A few cars in the lot out front. Christmas lights in the window. Pins painted like candy canes adorn the door glass.

INT. SCOTT'S SUPER BOWL - NIGHT

Place is pretty much dead. Christmas decor. Just a couple of senior bowlers -- "unique" styles.

Danny, at the lane 29 desk, watches the seniors kiss after a good roll, then gets back to his work. He's scratching out some math on a note pad. Scott's in "approach" mode.

DANNY

Sixty feet, right?

Scott rolls his eyes, but doesn't turn back.

SCOTT

Yeah, 60 feet plus or minus.

That momentarily stops Danny, but he gets back to work, as Scott releases his ball and picks up a "picket fence" spare.

Danny hands him the paper as he passes Scott on the way to the lane. Scott eyes the paper.

SCOTT (CONT'D)

So, what's this? Five thousand four hundred and fifty six?

Danny grabs a red ball from the return, sizes up the pins before him, some 60 feet away.

DANNY

That's how many bowling lanes 'til you'd get to outer space, if they were, you know, stacked on top of each other.

SCOTT

Right. I knew that.

Scott sits as Danny releases a 20 mile-an-hour fast ball, straight as an arrow right at the one pin, which explodes into the others and earns him a noisy strike.

DANNY

Wow, this is so fun. I can see why you like working here.

SCOTT

I work here because I own the place.

DANNY
But it's your joy, right?

SCOTT
You should join a league, get out of
the house a little bit, have some fun.

DANNY
I don't know, I'm pretty busy.

Scott WHISTLES to someone back at the check-in desk. A
sexy Female Employee walks over with a couple of tall
drinks, hands them to Scott. She kisses Scott behind the
ear so no one but Danny can see.

DANNY (CONT'D)
Wow, she's pretty.

SCOTT
Yeah.

DANNY
She your girlfriend?

SCOTT
One of 'em.

DANNY
Don't you want just one?

SCOTT
For what?

DANNY
To be your other half. To be the
person you love, no matter what. To
complete you, Scott.

SCOTT
Complete me? Marnie completes you?

DANNY
Yup. Both my girls do. All I need now
is my B & B.

SCOTT
Look, Danny, I'm worried about you.
(Danny sips his drink)
So is Mom. Worried you try too hard to
make Marnie happy, you're killing
yourself.

DANNY
Nah, not really. Long as I have
Brenda.

SCOTT

First the house. Now that car. Have you thought about Marnie maybe getting a job?

DANNY

She has a job.

SCOTT

Yeah?

DANNY

Uh-huh. She's a housewife, and a mother.

SCOTT

Look, you work two jobs already, you've got Brenda in daycare after school, how can you possibly make ends meet?

(Danny shrugs)

Danny, do you ever think maybe you let people take advantage of you?

DANNY

No.

SCOTT

You're a nice guy, easy-going. Sometimes people glom onto guys like you.

DANNY

If they do, it's okay. It makes me happy when I help people. That's why I'm really cut out for the whole bed and breakfast concept.

SCOTT

The bed and breakfast. Right. When's that gonna happen?

DANNY

(with a gesture)

Down the road...

CLOSE ON DANNY'S FACE, innocent and eager.

INT./EXT. DANNY'S PICKUP/MOVING - NIGHT

Danny's eyes are sagging. He stretches them open, slows, spots an abandoned grocery buggy, pulls the pickup over. He climbs out, takes a moment to admire the millions of stars hanging over him.

HE SEES: A STACK OF THOUSANDS OF BOWLING LANES PILED ONE ATOP THE OTHER, END TO END. BACK FROM SPACE TO...

EXT. DANNY'S HOUSE - DAWN

Quiet. Porch light still on. Nothing stirs. Finally, the front door opens just enough for a MAN to slide out. He furtively darts across the lawn and out onto the street to a nearby flashy car, climbs in and drives off.

EXT. ALBERTSON'S PARKING LOT - DAWN

Danny's pickup truck full of shopping carts pulls up, parks. Danny, heavy coat on, gloves, climbs out, begins unloading carts, pushing them into a line, one cart inside the other.

The STORE MANAGER steps out through the electric doors.

STORE MANAGER

How many you find?

DANNY

Eleven.

STORE MANAGER

You got eleven carts in that little pickup? That's a lot of work.

DANNY

Tell me about it.

STORE MANAGER

I'll go get your twenty bucks.

DANNY

Huh? Twenty bucks?

STORE MANAGER

Twenty bucks a load. That's the deal. What I pay the kids. Five cart minimum.

DANNY

I thought it was twenty bucks each?

STORE MANAGER

Each? You kidding? For these old carts?

DANNY

I been driving around all morning...

STORE MANAGER

Look, you want the twenty or not?

Danny tucks the last cart into place, nods.

The Manager blows in his hands, ducks back inside. Danny pulls off his gloves, lifts his tailgate back into place, turns to watch the sun rising up over the grocery store.

EXT. A DITCH - DAY

Danny digs away. A new CO-WORKER goofs off.

INT. FOOD GIANT BACK ROOM - DAY

Danny clocks in, pulls on his apron, heads out into the store, straightens a display as he goes by.

INT. DANNY'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Danny and Brenda, now 12, sit at the kitchen table. Marnie, dressed up, hair bouffed, roots around, looking...

MARNIE

Where the hell are they?

BRENDA AT 12

You look way hot, Mom.

Danny looks at the cheap TV dinner before him.

DANNY

I'm not so sure I should eat this.

MARNIE

(stops short)

Look, I didn't have time to make your stinking diabetes food tonight, okay?! I spent all day at the salon and picking up your daughter.

He digs in. Marnie finds her car keys, heads for the door.

DANNY

Where you going?

MARNIE

I've got a date. Whatta ya think!

(turns back)

Look, I'm meeting an old friend from high school. She's dealing with some things.

BRENDA AT 12

She'll like your hair. It's real sexy.

Marnie shoots her a look, exits with a SLAM.

BRENDA AT 12 (CONT'D)

You know she's lying, right, Danny?

Danny pokes at his food.

INT. DANNY'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Danny's sound asleep on the sofa, headphones on, a hint of smile arcing his mouth. Marnie creeps in, tiptoes past him and down the hall. Danny opens one eye.

INT. DANNY'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Marnie, back to us, undresses. Danny walks in.

DANNY
You need to be more careful.

MARNIE
Dammit! You scared the crap out of me.
What are you doing creeping around in
the middle of the night?

DANNY
You need to be more careful around
Brenda. She figures stuff out.

MARNIE
She does, huh? Bully for her.

Danny walks out.

INT. FOOD GIANT - DAY

Danny bags groceries at Norma's register, notices Marnie, decked out again, pushing her way past shoppers, an envelope in her hand. Danny waves.

NORMA
Is this the missus, Danny?

DANNY
Sure is.

NORMA
Well, we finally get to meet the other
half. She looks real sweet.

Marnie saunters up, hands Danny the envelope.

MARNIE
Get a lawyer.

She wheels and walks off. Danny, shocked, glances at Norma, who pretends she's fiddling with the register tape.

INT. ATTORNEY'S OFFICE - DAY

Danny, doleful, UC shirt and poorly-knotted tie, and Marnie, eager beaver, sit across the desk from an ATTORNEY.

ATTORNEY

Everything you've both already agreed to.

He hands one set of papers to Danny, one to Marnie. Marnie signs off on it quickly.

ATTORNEY (CONT'D)

That's a thousand dollars a month child support for Brenda until she turns 18, plus an additional 1,100 for Marnie, which includes her share of the home she's signing over to you, Mr. Jordan.

DANNY

Where will Brenda stay?

MARNIE

Don't worry about her. I'll tell you where to send our checks. You just make sure I get 'em on time.

INT. DANNY'S PICKUP/MOVING - DAY

Danny, still in his UC overalls, drives across the bridge, alone in the front seat. David Ruffin plays on the cassette.

EXT. ON THE WHARF - DAY

Sun is setting. Danny sits on a piling, staring over at the Riverside B & B, a shining beacon.

A PELICAN lands on the next piling, flaps his wings, turns to Danny. Silently they stare at each other.

PELICAN

(hollow-throated voice)

Man, you look like tortoise poop.
What's your problem, compadre?

DANNY

Divorce. I'm uncomplete.

PELICAN

You think you got it rough. Try bird-dogging trawlers all day for scraps. Hours on end. Your wings feel like they're gonna snap off at the scapulars, not to mention the stink.

DANNY

Sounds pretty bad.

PELICAN

It's no day at the beach.

(eyes a glum Danny)

C'mon, buck up, man. Load up your bill, catch the trade winds in your flappers, and fly on. Put her in your slipstream. Hasta la vista, sista.

(spots A SHRIMP TRAWLER)

Well, gotta buzz. Floating buffet in the channel. All you can eat before sunset.

DANNY

Okay. See ya.

PELICAN

Look at it this way. You probably married her for all the wrong reasons anyway, right? Well, down the road, pal.

With that, Pelican flies off, HAWKING, leaving Danny alone on the rocks, to ponder.

INT. UTILITIES COMMISSION OFFICE - SUNSET

THABISA, 30, admin clerk, a somewhat pudgy natural South African beauty, is busy sorting time cards. Danny walks in, still downtrodden. Thabisa smiles widely.

THABISA

Hi, Danny, how was your week?

Danny shrugs, as Thabisa looks out the window.

THABISA (CONT'D)

Such a lovely sunset this evening, I can smell the sweet warm air from outside. It comes sweepin' in when that door pops open. Such a gift, right Danny? We're all so lucky to be alive and working.

DANNY

Yes, I guess we are, Thabisa.

THABISA

You a-ok, my friend?

DANNY

Well, I am ready to get out of these overalls, that's for sure. Not very stylish, are they?

THABISA

You know, it's not what you wear Danny,
it's how you wear it. Here's your
envelope, please sign it off.

She hands Danny his pay and a clipboard. He eyes Thabisa.

DANNY

Thabisa. Have you ever talked to a
pelican?

THABISA

(giggles)

No, but I do love the sight of them.

DANNY

Next time I visit them, you wanna come?

THABISA

That's lovely, Danny. You will ask
when the time is right?

DANNY

Really?

THABISA

Really.

Danny walks out smiling. Thabisa studies after him a beat,
then, humming, gets back to work.

INT. CLAIRE'S HOUSE - DINING ROOM - NIGHT

Claire sets a plate of food in front of Danny. Scott sits
across from him.

DANNY

I'm not so hungry.

SCOTT

C'mon, man, you gotta eat. Mom made it
special.

CLAIRE

It's crustless vegetable quiche and
mashed cauliflower surprise, right out
of the Diabetes Diet Book.

Claire sits down, watches Danny, as he pokes at his meal.

CLAIRE (CONT'D)

You know what I think? I think it's
good you'll be on your own. You can do
some things for yourself for a change.

SCOTT
Couple'a bowling teams with openings,
could use a big buck like you.

DANNY
Doesn't matter what I do now. Brenda's
gone. Scott, I let you down. I'm
sorry.

SCOTT
You didn't let me down. What are you
talking about?

Danny rises slowly, can't make eye contact with Scott.

DANNY
I'm your big brother. I'm supposed to
set an example.

Claire grabs for Danny as he walks by, but he gets away.

CLAIRE
Oh, Danny.

SCOTT
Best thing that could've happened.
(beat)
Can you believe that guy? He wants to
set an example for me?

Claire stings Scott with a look.

INT. DANNY'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Danny sits on the floor in the middle of the living room.
He looks around the empty house, his eyes finally falling
on the turntable. He walks over to it, grabs up some 45s
and sends them flying in a fit of rage. DOORBELL RINGS.

DANNY
Go away!

The bell RINGS again.

DANNY (CONT'D)
I said go away!

MARNIE (O.S.)
Danny, open up!

Danny gathers himself, heads quickly for the door, pulls it
open. There stands Marnie.

DANNY
Marnie. You're back.

MARNIE

Yeah, sure I am.

Marnie waves down to the convertible. Rollie, towel roll under his arm, pencil at his ear, hair in a dry Elvis style, and his son LEO, 11, drably attired, spiritless, climb out of the car, pull tote bags with them.

MARNIE (CONT'D)

Danny, they need a place. They were staying with a friend of mine, and when Brenda and I moved in, well... there's just no room. And you've got all this empty space now.

The new boarders stroll up, nod. (Rollie will always be seen in either a raincoat over a flannel shirt or no raincoat.)

DANNY

I don't know, Marnie. It might be good for me to be on my own for awhile.

MARNIE

Who gave you that stupid idea? Scott?

DANNY

No. Mom.

Marnie grunts, shows the newcomers in.

LATER

Rollie and Leo sit on the sofa. Danny's picking up his 45s, wiping them off, stacking them away. CLOCK TICKING.

ROLLIE

So, got any ciggies?

DANNY

Huh?

(Rollie gestures "a
smoke")

No, don't smoke.

(beat)

You like music?

ROLLIE

Can it be sucked into one's lungs?
Just ribbing you, daddy. Music kicks.

Danny looks over at Leo lurking in a corner. He's a dark, mysterious kid, bangs nearly covering his eyes.

DANNY

What about you, Leo?

Leo simply stares back at him.

ROLLIE

He internalizes. Digs TV. Got one?

DANNY

Marnie took it.

ROLLIE

Rick had a nice big one.

DANNY

Who's Rick?

EXT. JOHN DONNE MIDDLE SCHOOL - DAY

Not much activity. Danny's work truck slides up. Leo climbs out. The other kids stare at him as Leo, black pants, deep purple shirt, bags around his eyes, turns back to the truck.

Rollie slides over to the passenger side, exhales smoke.

ROLLIE

Danny's gonna drop me off at the unemployment. Remember, kid, the road is life. And this is just a new hunk of your personal road.

Leo stares back blankly. Danny leans across Rollie.

DANNY

Have fun learning stuff, Leo.

The truck pulls away. Leo walks toward the school entrance, where he's quickly wanded over by security guards.

INT. FOOD GIANT - DAY

Danny's bagging groceries. EMMA, 61, cute, petite, curly grey hair, stands at the counter, opens her purse. Danny pays special attention to the groceries.

DANNY

Someone's got a diabetic in the family.

EMMA

My hubby Carl. How'd you know?

DANNY

Groceries. Me, too.

EMMA

Oh, no, really?

DANNY

Yes, ma'am.

EMMA
 Comme le monde est petit, no?
 (off his confused look)
 Small world, isn't it?

DANNY
 Seems pretty big to me... but some
 things are closer than you think.

Emma winks. Danny winks back.

INT. LIBRARY - NIGHT

Danny walks past the dapper LIBRARIAN's desk.

LIBRARIAN
 Hey, Danny, got Triple A's new B & B
 guide.

DANNY
 Great, hold it for me, Lars. I'm
 looking for big birds right now.

LIBRARIAN
 Oh, Sesame Street? That man was pure
 genius, wasn't he? Far corner.

Danny shrugs, walks on.

LATER

Danny stands at a wall of books, looks through a huge book
 on birds, finds a section on Pelicans, turns the pages to
 photos of the different varieties.

INT. DANNY'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Danny grunts and moans while he barely nudges the heavy,
 maple curio cabinet deeper into a corner, while Rollie
 watches and ruminates over his paper towel scrawlings. Leo
 lurks in a corner.

The cabinet ready, Danny, winded, lifts a tissue-wrapped
 object off the breakfront. He unwraps it, sets a ceramic
 brown pelican in a prominent position on the middle shelf.

ROLLIE
 What's that?

Danny pulls a card from his pocket.

DANNY
 It's a pelican.
 (reading, struggling)
 "Pele-can-us occi-occi-dent-al-is.
 (MORE)

DANNY (CONT'D)

Identification Tips: Length: 41 inches,
Wingspan: 90 inches. Sexes similar."

ROLLIE

Come again? Their sexes what?

DANNY

(shrugs that off)

There's different kinds, but the
Dalmatian one's the rarest. It's white
with black tipped feathers. You might
go your whole life and never see one of
them, unless you go to some real exotic
faraway place. I'd really like to see
one someday. Wouldn't you, Leo?

Leo stares his blank stare.

DANNY (CONT'D)

Anyway, I'm building a pelican
collection for my B & B, like Rockwell
plates, only pelicans. The B & B's my
goal. You should make goals for
yourself, Leo. Like when President
Kennedy made his goal to put a man on
the moon in nine years. You know how
long it really took?

ROLLIE

Let's see, how long's it take to build
a fake moonscape in a giant warehouse?

DANNY

Only eight. He beat his own goal. But
he got his head blown off before it
happened, so he never knew about it
coming true. Too bad, huh?

Leo walks off. Danny admires his pelecanus occidentalis.

INT. DANNY'S HOUSE - MASTER BEDROOM - NIGHT

Danny sits on the edge of his bed, lifts his shirt, aims a
hypodermic syringe, just as Rollie looks in on him.

ROLLIE

Hey, what'cha got going there?

DANNY

Biosynthetic human insulin.

ROLLIE

Give you a buzz? Wanna share?

DANNY

I don't think so.

Rollie jots a note on his paper towel roll.

DANNY (CONT'D)

What are you always writing?

ROLLIE

The history of my life. My travels.

DANNY

Wow. Where have you traveled to?

ROLLIE

Well, nowhere yet.

DANNY

You don't have to go very far sometimes to go someplace really different.

ROLLIE

Come again?

DANNY

For instance, it's only 62 miles to outer space. That's all, 62 miles. About the same as from here to Binghamton... but if you went that way...

(aims his thumb up)

ROLLIE

Anyway, someday when I don't have so many responsibilities I'll stretch wings.

DANNY

Where's Leo's mom?

ROLLIE

Good question. One night I roll over, there's a cold blank place in my bed where there used to be a warm fully realized woman. I'm left with an empty checkbook, a drawer full of debts, and a 7 year old kid with learning disabilities.

DANNY

Wow. But that's good she left Leo. Right?

ROLLIE

Yeah. Sure. Hey, I been pondering on something. You got this grand chamber for one person and I'm stuck in one of them little hamster pens with the boy.

DANNY

I better take care of this.

ROLLIE

Food for thought, anyway, huh?

Rollie ducks out. Danny plunges the needle into his belly.

INT. DR. DELANEY'S OFFICE - EXAMINATION ROOM - DAY

DR. DELANEY, 40, handsome, black, chart in hand, pulls a stool over and sits down beside Danny, who's on the examination table.

DR. DELANEY

Everything's looking pretty good.
You're marginal on your blood sugar
levels, right around 120. My guess is
you could still do better on your diet.
I want you to work on that, okay?

Danny nods. Delaney taps his chart on Danny's leg, heads out, turns back.

DR. DELANEY (CONT'D)

Oh, Karen was telling me you went to
every one of her vocal recitals back in
high school, her Diana Ross phase.

DANNY

She did? You talked about me?

DR. DELANEY

We did. She's quite fond of you.

DANNY

Oh, um, I just bag her groceries.

DR. DELANEY

Let's keep it that way, huh?

Danny begins to stammer. As Delaney exits:

DR. DELANEY (CONT'D)

Kidding. See you in two months.

Danny breathes a sigh of relief.

SERIES OF SHOTS:

1. Danny digs up a storm in a ditch.
2. Rollie sprawls out on Danny's bed, smoking, writing.
3. Leo sits in the dark living room, looking out the front window, raising and lowering the shade. Danny watches.
4. Danny bags groceries, chats it up with Sheriff Tom.
5. Danny signs off for his check for a grinning Thabisa.

6. Danny and Leo shop for TVs at Best Buy (or similar).
7. Danny sits in his pickup at the fire station at the end of his street, shares a laugh with a couple of firefighters.
8. Danny, shopping, picks up another ceramic pelican from a glass shelf of ceramic birds, examines it, his face reflected in the mirror behind the shelves.

WE PUSH INTO THE MIRROR, CLOSE ON DANNY'S FACE.

MORPH CUT TO:

EXT. A DITCH - DAY

DANNY, greying, moustache, digs away, alone. A UC truck pulls up, parks. JOE, black, 38, in a clean UC shirt, climbs down, strides toward the ditch. Danny spots him, digs faster. Joe lights a cigar.

JOE

Jordan, climb out. Let's talk.

Danny sets the shovel aside, climbs out, follows Joe over to a bus stop bench, where Joe sits.

DANNY

I'm pretty dirty.

JOE

C'mon, man, take a load off, would ya?

Danny pulls out a handkerchief, sits on it.

JOE (CONT'D)

How's it going?

DANNY

Good, good.

JOE

Good?

(Danny nods)

You seem nervous. Everything okay?

DANNY

Stopping work. Supervisors don't like to see that.

JOE

I am the supervisor.

DANNY

Yes-you-are.

JOE
I told you to stop.

DANNY
Still.

JOE
Jordan, I was going through your file.
Next April you got your 25 years in.
Retire at full pension.

DANNY
Yessir. April first.

JOE
Twenty five years. That's a lot of
ditches.

DANNY
Tell me about it.

JOE
In that 25 years, you know how many
sick days you took?

DANNY
I went to my doctor a few times, but--

JOE
Always after work. Not during. Even
though you could've taken a sick day
for a doctor's appointment.

DANNY
I wasn't sick. Not really.

JOE
Right. Right.
(he leans closer)
You get ten sick days a year. Company
gives you that. Hands it right over.

DANNY
In case you're sick.

JOE
Yes, but no one ever checks...
(frustration builds)
Look, you got 250 sick days built up.

DANNY
Wow.

JOE
Yeah, wow. Tomorrow I want you to call
in sick and I want you to stay sick
until next April first.

DANNY

But, it's May.

JOE

I know what month it is. I also know you retire with sick days in the bag and the company only pays you for half of what you're holding.

Joe gets up, stretches. Danny rises with him, grabs his handkerchief, goes for a handshake.

DANNY

Thanks, Joe. Thanks a lot.

JOE

You got it, Bud. Now get back to work. Don't want your supervisor catching you fluffing off.

Danny grins, heads for his shovel and ditch, starts digging. Joe strides over to the long, narrow hole.

JOE (CONT'D)

So, I'll be expecting your call tomorrow morning?

DANNY

Yessir. If I'm sick.

JOE

(winks)

Gotcha.

He walks off, stops, looks back at Danny, scratches his head, climbs up in his truck. Danny digs away.

INT. DANNY'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Danny's unloading groceries. Rollie sits at the table, smoking, writing on his paper towel roll.

DANNY

Where's Leo?

ROLLIE

In the room watching the tube, no doubt. The 20 inch false prophet. "My witness is the empty sky." Know who said that?

DANNY

Maybe you guys should hang out more.

ROLLIE

What, like you and your kid?

DANNY
I'd spend more time with Brenda
whenever she wanted to.

ROLLIE
Therein lies the truth for us both.

DANNY
Don't think so.

Danny lifts a white box out of a sideways turned brown bag.

ROLLIE (v.o.)
What's that?

DANNY
Birthday cake.

ROLLIE
Yeah, whose birthday is it?

DANNY
Brenda's. 18. That's a big one.

ROLLIE
Right. No more "kidimony." Good for
you, man.

DOORBELL.

INT. DANNY'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Danny pulls open the door: Brenda and Jimmy, suitcases
beside them, guitar case slung over Jimmy's shoulder.

BRENDA
God, what took so long?

She and Jimmy step inside, pulling bags with them.

DANNY
Happy birthday, Bren.

BRENDA
Mom said to come stay with you now.

TEEN LEO, same look, more hair, zits, hangs back in a
corner.

DANNY
Wow, that's really, really great.

Danny hugs the life out of her, but Brenda ignores him,
takes a gander at the curio cabinet, loaded with pelicans.

BRENDA
God, those are like so hideous.

Rollie walks into the living room, cake ablaze in his hands.

ROLLIE

"Houses are full of things that gather dust."

JIMMY

Looks like you would know.

Brenda takes one look at the cake, then Danny.

BRENDA

That's solid sugar. What, you want me to end up fat, like you? Let's go, Jimmy, we're taking the big room.

ROLLIE

That's our room. Where me and my boy bond.

BRENDA

Completely creepy.

She struts off with Jimmy.

Rollie hands Danny the cake, candles burning wax all over it, takes off after Brenda and Jimmy, who fends him off with the guitar case.

INT. DANNY'S HOUSE - MASTER BEDROOM

Brenda and Jimmy are settling in, chucking objects aside at will. Danny KNOCKS on the door, pushes it open.

BRENDA

Yes?

DANNY

Jimmy, I'd like to talk to Brenda alone.

BRENDA

We don't believe in secrets, Danny.

Brenda plops down on the bed, crosses her arms, impatiently. Jimmy plops down behind her, starts braiding her hair.

DANNY

Um, okay. It's hard on a kid when their parents split up. And even though you never had the time to spend with me so much before, I want you to know that I'm glad we're back together now and I'm gonna make it up to you.

(MORE)

DANNY (CONT'D)

We'll do all kinds of stuff together.
Okay?

Brenda giggles behind her hand. Jimmy jabs her in the side. She sniffs the giggle away.

BRENDA

Okay. Cool. Whatever.

Danny steps back out into the HALLWAY. Leo's been at the door, listening. Danny closes the door.

WE HEAR Brenda and Jimmy cracking up. Leo looks up at him. A beat. Danny pulls a phony smile, trudges away.

INT. DANNY'S HOUSE - KITCHEN

Rollie's shoving cake into his mouth. Danny eyes the massacred cake.

INT. UTILITIES COMMISSION OFFICE - DAY

Thabisa sets a decorated cake behind Joe, who leans against the front edge of his desk. The room is cluttered with people, suits and clericals. Stu, now a lineman, at the door, signals to the others and they duck out of sight.

Danny, overalls filthy from work, stands at the open door.

HIS POV: Joe against his desk. Arms crossed.

DANNY

You wanted to see me, Joe?

JOE

Damn right I do, Jordan. What took you so long, huh?

He gestures Danny in. Danny steps inside, spots the others when they yell, "Surprise."

JOE (CONT'D)

You know what tomorrow is?

DANNY

Thursday.

JOE

April 1st. Danny Jordan Retirement Day.

The others applaud. Joe hops up, reaches behind him for the cake, a massive "25" emblazoned in red, hands it to Danny.

DANNY

Wow.

Joe looks over to one of the Suits, who passes a long, wrapped package to Joe.

JOE

For 25 years, Danny.

(to the others)

This guy never missed even one day.

(for Danny)

Even though he could have.

More applause. Others yell, "Open it!" Danny unwraps his gift, revealing a gold-plated shovel.

JOE (CONT'D)

That's real gold plating.

DANNY

Holy cow.

JOE

You get hard up, just have somebody melt it down for you.

DANNY

(reads the engraving)

"Danny Jordan." That's me. "For 25 years of excellence to the company."

More applause. Danny's genuinely moved.

JOE

Now, let's have at that cake!

Danny eyes the massive sugar overload on a tray. Thabisa brings him a plate, leans close, whispers...

THABISA

I'm still waiting for those pelicans.

She lifts her brows, heads back to the cake table.

INT. DANNY'S PICKUP/MOVING - DAY

Danny drives along sleepily, spots a BLURRY IMAGE OF LEO on the side of the road, thumbing. Danny rubs his eyes, steers the pickup over, rolls down the passenger window.

DANNY

Where you going, Leo?

Teen Leo shrugs, looks down the road. Cars fly by.

DANNY (CONT'D)

Come on home. I've got leftover cake.

(no answer)

You think nobody cares if you stay or go, right?

(Teen Leo yields a nod)

They don't care if I do, either. I know that. So what? Too bad for them.

A long moment. Leo pulls open the door, climbs in.

EXT. DANNY'S HOUSE - DAY

Danny drives up. Leo climbs out, walks toward the house.

INT. DANNY'S PICKUP - CONTINUOUS

Danny rests his head against the steering wheel, looks up.

HIS BLURRY POV: Two figures, a woman and a man stand at the front door.

Danny blinks his eyes drearily, grabs his shovel, climbs out.

EXT. DANNY'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Brenda and Jimmy stand on the stoop now. Danny waves.

DANNY

Hi, Bren!

JIMMY

That paper towel psycho locked us out!

Danny takes a step, drops the shovel and collapses. Brenda rushes to Danny's side with Jimmy, who grabs the shovel.

JIMMY (CONT'D)

What the crap's this?

He tosses it aside. Brenda lifts Danny's head.

BRENDA

Get help!!

Jimmy runs back up to the house, BANGS on the door.

JIMMY

Lemme in, you bum!

Rollie pulls open the door, blocks entry.

BRENDA

His eyes are rolling back, dammit!

Danny's eyes stop rolling and fix on Brenda.

DANNY

Water.

BRENDA

Water!!

Danny tries to sit up, can't manage it. Leo paces.

Jimmy runs from the house with the water hose, accidentally shoots water all over Brenda and Danny.

BRENDA (CONT'D)

Thanks a whole helluva lot, nitwit.

Brenda snatches the hose away from Jimmy, kinks it, allows a little to drip out into Danny's mouth. She lifts Danny up. The kink gives. Water drenches Danny.

INT. DANNY'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Brenda hangs up the phone. Danny lies on the sofa.

JIMMY

Are you gonna ask him, or what?

DANNY

Ask me what?

BRENDA

Got a lead on a job. I just need a car.

JIMMY

We found a choice, tricked-out Celica for only three grand.

(reads from classifieds)

Check this out, man. "S-T sport coupe. 4 cylinder. 1.6 liter. 5 speed. A/C. Power steering and windows. CD." Know what the blue book says he should get for this?

ROLLIE

(strolls in)

A sucker?

Brenda aims double birds at Rollie.

JIMMY

Fifty-eight hundred, and they don't even take into consideration all the extras this dude's put in it.

BRENDA

Store said to take the night off.

DANNY

I said tell them I was gonna be late.

BRENDA

I know, but I thought we could take a look at the car or something if you had the night off.

DANNY

I'm going to work.

JIMMY

Brenda's got this great lead on a job, but she needs wheels, man.

ROLLIE

Why don't you get a job?

Jimmy sighs.

BRENDA

(to Jimmy)

Answer him!

(Jimmy shrugs)

Okay. I will. Jimmy's a wannabe musician, which is more than I can say for you, mister day lose-erer.

Danny walks between them toward the hallway, where he spots Leo, his hands over both ears. Danny winks, which forces the tiniest of smiles out of Leo. Danny remembers...

DANNY

Where's my shovel?

EXT. DANNY'S HOUSE - NIGHT

YELLING from inside the house. Danny picks up his shovel. Bill, beer in hand, stands by his car, trunk lid popped.

BILL

Hey, Danny, don't make me call the cops again, huh? What's with the gold shovel?

DANNY

It's for my retirement.

BILL

A little young to retire, aren't you?

DANNY

You're retired, aren't you, Bill?

BILL

Me? No. I'm disabled. Big difference.

Bill lifts a bag of golf clubs out of his trunk. Danny shrugs, walks off.

INT. DANNY'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Danny finishes mounting a rifle rack over his stereo equipment. It's slightly crooked, but close enough. He lifts his gold shovel up onto the top rack, steps back, admires it, looks over at Leo, who offers no feedback.

INT. FOOD GIANT - NIGHT

Danny bags, as cashier Carmina, obviously bothered, makes mistake after mistake for an IMPATIENT CUSTOMER, long hair in a pony tail, doo rag, tats all over his muscular arms. Carmina checks the register tape, a Pampers in her grasp.

CARMINA

(sniffs back tears)

I'm not sure I got both the Pampers.

DANNY

You okay, Carmina?

IMPATIENT CUSTOMER

Hey, it's fine, leave it alone.

(to Carmina)

You got 'em both, okay, let's move on.
I've got the rest of my life ahead of
me and I don't want to spend it here
with you two gumps.

He slides the Pampers down to Danny, who bags it.

IMPATIENT CUSTOMER (CONT'D)

(under his breath)

Freaks.

CARMINA

What was that?

IMPATIENT CUSTOMER

You heard me. Hustle it up. You're
not cracking the genetic code here.

Carmina's really boiling now. Art Linton, jaw swollen, watches from a distance.

CARMINA

What's someone like you doing having
kids for, anyway?

IMPATIENT CUSTOMER

I did not just hear you say that.

Art Linton CLEARS HIS THROAT. Carmina spots him. She waits, reaches for a six pack of Bud on the conveyor. As she scans it, one of the cans breaks loose of the plastic holder.

IMPATIENT CUSTOMER (CONT'D)

Can you make this any more difficult,
you... FREAK!

With that, Carmina hauls back, can in her right hand, and comes flying across the checkout counter, the can a weapon. With every smash into the customer's head...

CARMINA

I-am-not-a-freak!

The Customer goes for Carmina, but she lifts him into another massive bear hug, squeezing him so tight his face goes beet red and his eyes bulge.

EXT. FOOD GIANT - NIGHT

Danny, minus his apron, keys in his hand, heads for his pickup around back. He stops when he hears CRYING. There in the back by the dumpsters sits Carmina, eating a microwave burrito. Danny squats beside her.

DANNY

Carmina, you okay?

CARMINA

Yeah, yeah. Just go.

DANNY

What'd the police say?

CARMINA

Asshole didn't press no charges. Those Pampers were for his girlfriend, not his wife. Bastardo tramposo.

DANNY

That's good, huh?

CARMINA

Oh sure, great. Evicted at the morning and fired at the night. I got no car, no money, no family. I got nothing. Guess I'll go back to hooking, which I could never make a buck at 'cause of my being full-figured.

She looks up at him, pathetically, taco sauce on her face.

INT. DANNY'S HOUSE - HALLWAY/ CARMINA'S ROOM - NIGHT

Danny tiptoes along, Carmina behind him. HUMMING SOUNDS emanate from the master bedroom. Walls vibrate. Danny cracks an uneasy smile. They move on. He opens the door to his room, switches on the light.

DANNY
(whispering)
You can stay in here. I'll sleep out
on the couch.

CARMINA
No, I cannot do that.

DANNY
It's okay. Bathroom's across the hall.
Get in early for hot water.

She reaches up and kisses Danny on the lips, passionately. Danny's staggered, disturbed by it.

CARMINA
You could stay in here too. A thank
you?

DANNY
(wiping his mouth)
No. NO! I'll go out there.

CARMINA
Is not so bad... just different, you
know?

Danny nods, and quickly pulls the door closed behind him.

Carmina sits down on the bed, looks over at the phone on the night stand. She picks up the phone, punches the tabs.

A SERIES OF TONES as we FOLLOW the phone line to the wall.

EXT. DANNY'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

ON THAT PHONE LINE, outside, as it snakes up the side of the house and juts across to a telephone pole. TONES CONTINUING ON THE POLE and the line, as a SPARK streaks across.

EXT. OUTSIDE CAGUAS, PUERTO RICO - NIGHT

A single, leaning pole on a dirt road. Two lines trail from it off into the woods.

WE PICK UP THAT SPARK AND FOLLOW IT ALONG THE LINE TO

A tiny, run-down house. Trees broken all around it.
Lights out. A PHONE RINGS inside. A faint light flickers
on.

AN OLD WOMAN'S VOICE

Ho-la?

INT. DANNY'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY/DAWN

Danny lies on the sofa, eyes wide open. A BLOOD CURDLING
SCREAM OS. Danny bolts upright, turns to the hallway.

INT. DANNY'S HOUSE - BATHROOM

Carmina's wrapped in the shower curtain. Jimmy's standing
in the middle of the room, hands on his hips, bareass
naked. Carmina's still SCREAMING! Danny pokes his head
in.

DANNY

What's going on?

Jimmy wheels to him, full frontal. Danny averts his eyes.

JIMMY

I come in to shoot a piss and I found
that. What the hell is it? It's
got... and... It's some big, fat...
weird thing!

CARMINA

I'm full-figured! Tell him, Danny.

INT. FOOD GIANT - NIGHT

Danny bags groceries for an even older Emma, smiles.

DANNY

How's your hubby making out?

EMMA

He passed away, Danny. Last month.

DANNY

Oh, I'm sorry. I saw the food was
still--

EMMA

Habit... Don't want to let go.

(she's thinking)

You know what? I'm cooking you
a special dinner, from a book
recommended on TV by Wilford Brimley
himself.

DANNY

No, that's okay.

EMMA

Now, I insist. I'm an excellent cook,
par excellence, diabetically disposed.

Danny looks over at Norma, who grins and continues working.

EXT. UPSCALE HOME - DAY

A black Celica S-T sport coupe, smoking, a lighted Pizza sign on top, parks in the driveway. Brenda climbs out, reaches back in for a box of pizza, heads up the steps. She rings the doorbell. CHIMES.

The UPSCALE HOMEOWNER, sports jersey on, pulls open the door.

UPSACLE HOMEOWNER

'Bout time. Damn game's almost over.

BRENDA

Your stupid gate wouldn't open. I had to wait for someone to let me in. It's thirteen fifty.

UPSACLE HOMEOWNER

Better not be cold.

He hands her a hundred dollar bill.

BRENDA

Like I can break that.

UPSACLE HOMEOWNER

Not my problem. Guess it's on you.

BRENDA

This is pizza delivery, dude. Not the Bank of America.

UPSACLE HOMEOWNER

You've got a serious attitude problem, you know that. I'm calling your boss.

BRENDA

You're calling my boss?

The Homeowner nods, defiantly.

BRENDA (CONT'D)

Cool. Would you tell him this...

She unflaps the pizza box, exposing the pie, and heaves it at the Homeowner, hitting him squarely in the jersey number.

BRENDA (CONT'D)
Guess it's on you, dipshit.

Brenda tromps off toward her car, climbs in, blows smoke as she peels out of there, leaving the Homeowner enraged.

EXT. DANNY'S HOUSE - DAY

Jimmy sits on the front porch, thumping out a rhythm on his bass guitar.

INT. DANNY'S HOUSE - BATHROOM - DAY

Carmina, her hair in big rollers, alternates chomping a hot dog as she uses a tweezer to finish trimming Danny's eye brow. Satisfied, she adjusts his collar, dimples his tie, makes him look in the mirror. Leo watches.

CARMINA
Oh, my god. Look at you. Isn't he handsome, Leo?

Leo looks at both of them, nods.

CARMINA (CONT'D)
Jacket.

Leo grabs Danny's "dinner jacket", hands it to Carmina.

CARMINA (CONT'D)
Well, Leo, you are such a huge help.

Carmina assists Danny with the jacket.

EXT. DANNY'S HOUSE - DAY

Danny, dressed up, walks out, trailed by Rollie.

JIMMY
Whoa, dude. Who died?

ROLLIE
Man pursuing his destiny. AKA a date.

JIMMY
No way.

DANNY
It's not a date. One of my customers invited me over for a diabetic dinner.

Danny takes off for his pickup. Jimmy follows him.

JIMMY

Hey, Danny. You ever been on a jet ski?

DANNY

No.

JIMMY

Oh, man, they are so freaking tight. I know this guy over in Dover who's selling a nearly perfect one for fifteen hundred.

DANNY

No thanks.

JIMMY

It's a great deal.

(thinks a beat)

And it'd knock Brenda's socks completely off, man. Make her super happy.

Danny re-considers, as the Celica, smoking even worse, flies up into the driveway and SCREECHES to a stop. Brenda jumps out and SLAMS the door.

DANNY

Brenda, you're supposed to be at work.

BRENDA

Yeah, well, I quit.

Jimmy slithers over to her, wraps his arms around her, bites her on the neck. Brenda whaps him away.

JIMMY

Aw, honey...

DANNY

You quit?

BRENDA

I got fired, okay? But I was a pube hair away from quitting anyway.

DANNY

But it was your first day.

BRENDA

Well, thanks so much for rubbing it in. Sorry I couldn't work my whole life away digging ditches, like you!

Brenda starts bawling, runs for the house.

JIMMY
Wow, that was epicly inconsiderate,
(turns to Danny)
Dude.

INT. EMMA'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Kitchy, crowded decor, Tinker Bell gels over a breakfront.
Emma's decked in an above-the-knee black, V-necked halter
dress, too sexy for her age, exposing wrinkly cleavage.

DANNY
So, you like Tinker Bells, huh?

EMMA
(bosom into the table)
Care to see them?

Danny pushes himself away from the table. Emma vamps over.

DANNY
Well, I better go now.

EMMA
(rubs his head)
You are such a nice young man.
(Danny's eyes widen)
You're my favorite bagger, too. Your
skills have not gone unnoticed: boxes
on the outside, jars upside down at the
bottom, breads and chips on top, cold
items separated and doubled. That's an
art. L'art de faire épicerie, no?

Danny's totally confused.

EMMA (CONT'D)
We women appreciate it, so much.

She leans around him and plants a huge, slobbery kiss all
over his lips. Danny, eyes exploding, wriggles free.

DANNY
I'm glad you like my bagging. Um...

Danny breaks for the door, which is locked from the inside.
He turns to Emma. She shows him the key.

EMMA
You want it, come get it.

She drops it down her top.

FX: A key travels down a cavernous boob path.

Danny's mouth falls open. He stammers for a long beat. Emma waits hopefully, then weakens, almost to the point of tears.

EMMA (CONT'D)
 Je solitaire, Daniel. Do you understand?
 (nothing)
 Lonely?
 (he nods)
 Yes, yes. I see it in those achingly sad brown eyes.
 (nudges closer to him)
 Carl and I hadn't been a couple in many, many years.

Emma leans her head into Danny's chest, listens.

EMMA (CONT'D)
 Thump. Thump. Thump. Help me, Danny. And I will help you.

She looks up at him, teary, doe eyes. A CLINK. They both look down.

There lies THE KEY at Danny's clunky work shoe, across from Emma's black O-ring thong sandals and her arthritically curled but red-painted toes. Danny steps on the key, looks back up at Emma, whose face sinks.

EXT. EMMA'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Danny's pickup REVS and pulls away at a manic pace.

EXT. DANNY'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Danny's pickup pulls up, but there's no place to park. The place is overrun with cars, people. A party in progress in the front yard, with Jimmy's band ROCKING OUT LOUD. Brenda's dancing, half naked.

Rollie and Leo sit cross-legged and watch from different corners of the yard. Carmina's standing over Leo.

INT. DANNY'S PICKUP

Danny, fresh from his "date", stares out at the scene, notices Bill running down his yard toward the car. Danny throws it in reverse and books it.

INT. SCOTT'S SUPER BOWL - NIGHT

Scott's busy as hell. The place is buzzing with moonlight bowlers checking in.

He spots Danny walking in, says something to his cashier, and heads off in Danny's direction.

AT A BOOTH, LATER

Danny's nursing a water. Scott's trying to keep an eye on things, but it's clear Danny is disturbed by something.

SCOTT

So, how many are there now?

Danny shrugs.

SCOTT (CONT'D)

See, I've been trying to tell you, you can be too nice a guy sometimes --

DANNY

But it --

SCOTT

I know, I know, it makes you happy to help people. But you don't seem happy to me. Maybe you don't even know what happy is, Danny. Maybe nobody does. Ever consider that?

(Danny stares blankly)

Look, we're getting busy. I should get back to work, huh?

Danny nods dully. Scott sighs, hops off to make nice with his customers. Danny walks out.

EXT. RIVERSIDE B & B - NIGHT

Danny's pickup is parked in the lot.

Danny rests his head on the steering wheel and gazes up at the B & B. Shadows pass by the windows.

INT. FOOD GIANT - NIGHT

Danny blocks shelves in a virtually empty store.

INT. DANNY'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

Danny pores over his mail at the kitchen table.

Rollie walks in, holding a near empty ice bag on his head, sees what's going on, immediately does an about face.

DANNY

Hey, Rollie.

Rollie drifts into the kitchen, picks up a brochure amongst the mail pile.

ROLLIE
What's this? Tennessee?

DANNY
Oh, that's a pretty nice B & B that's up for sale.

ROLLIE
(with a smirk)
Oh, right. Hell, you got one of them going already, don't ya?

DANNY
Yeah. I guess. But I want a special one, the kind people will save up for to take a vacation to. A place that's different from anyplace else. Better than home, that's for sure.

ROLLIE
When's all this gonna happen?

DANNY
Down the road.
(as he reads a bill)
Got any money for me, Rollie?

ROLLIE
Uh, little slow in the day labor biz, what with the economy in the crapper and all. Working on it, though. Fear not.

Rollie escapes. Danny opens up a bill from the phone company, and double-takes.

DANNY
Ho-ly...

INT. DANNY'S HOUSE - HALLWAY/CARMINA'S ROOM - DAY

Danny KNOCKS on Carmina's door.

CARMINA (O.S.)
Yes? Who is?

DANNY
I is. Me, Danny.

CARMINA
Okay, come in. I'm decent.

Carmina, wrapped in a bath towel, sits on the bed, half an apple pie beside her. Danny steps in the room, phone bill in hand, keeps his distance. Carmina swallows some pie.

CARMINA (CONT'D)

What's that?

DANNY

It's a phone bill, a big phone bill.

CARMINA

Oh, I bet I have some calls on there. See my Mommata lives in Puerto Rico and you know how they had that hurricane down there, and it went right through her house almost, so I was worried about her a lot, you know?

(grabs her purse)

I got my unemployment check yesterday. How much is my part?

DANNY

Eleven hundred dollars.

Carmina looks up slowly, starts crying.

CARMINA

Everything I do is bad.

DANNY

That's not true.

CARMINA

Yes, it is.

DANNY

You're real good at some things.

CARMINA

Yeah? What?

INT. A WAREHOUSE - NIGHT

It's amateur wrestling night for the locals.

Carmina sits on a stool in a corner. Danny stands over her, spraying water from a fan/sprayer across her face. Leo hands her a towel. He looks out into the audience. Thabisa finds a seat, waves. Danny waves back.

Carmina's sweating up a storm, can't catch her breath. She's dressed in a woman's body suit, with a diamond on the front that reads "The TransBender".

CARMINA

See. I suck at this, too.

Carmina looks across the ring. There stands THE EVIL ONE, a man in black tights and black mask, itching for round three.

Leo lays an assuring hand on Carmina's shoulder.

Carmina touches him on the top of his head, mouths "Thank you." The BELL SOUNDS. Danny drops out of the ring, leaving behind:

DANNY

Mr. Evil One called you a freak.

Carmina, eyes now on fire, bounces up, disappears out of frame. A beat. She comes flying back into it, lands on her back. Danny and Leo cringe. Thabisa hides her eyes.

EXT. ICE CREAM SHOPPE - NIGHT

Danny and Thabisa lick cones.

DANNY

There's this one, called a Dalmatian. It's the biggest pelican in the whole world.

THABISA

And where can we see this biggest bird?

DANNY

Not around here, that's for sure, but maybe someday I'll spot one.

THABISA

Maybe you will!

DANNY

I still can't believe you came to a wrestling match.

THABISA

You called. I came. That's all.

Danny just stares at her.

INT. FOOD GIANT - DAY

Norma and Danny work the counter.

NORMA

Well, I wished I'd'a seen that.

DANNY

No, you don't. But they paid her fifty bucks. We all went to Popeyes.

Danny bags for customers and they move on.

NORMA

Maybe Linton'd give her her job back if
you talked to him.

DANNY

Maybe if you talked to him.

Norma frowns. A bottle of cheap red wine moves down toward
Danny, who drops it into a bag and looks up at his
customer. There stands Boyd, clothes in disarray, hair
tousled. Danny, eyes narrowing, hands the bag to him.
Something familiar about this guy. Boyd stares back at
Danny, BELCHES.

NORMA

Sir...

Boyd staggers out, bouncing off counters and baskets,
apologizing profusely to every inanimate object he
contacts. Danny's eyes follow him.

DANNY

(to Norma, as he takes
off)

Be right back, okay, Norma?

EXT. FOOD GIANT - DAY

Boyd's wending his way through cars, already slugging down
the wine, making a blessing motion with his free hand
toward those who avoid him, like a fat BLACK WOMAN with two
kids.

BOYD

Shop in peace.

Danny's closing on him.

DANNY

Father Boyd!

Boyd stops short, slowly cranks his head around, to see
Danny approaching. Boyd staggers on.

BOYD

You got the wrong pal, guy.

Danny reaches out to stop him.

EXT. SKIPPY'S SUB SHOP - DAY

The shop's at the end of the strip mall which includes Food
Giant. Danny sits down beside Boyd at a concrete picnic
table, hands him a white Styrofoam cup.

DANNY
Here's another one.

Boyd frowns, sighs, takes a sip. He's sobered up somewhat, and not all that happy about it.

BOYD
Aaaaahhh. Tastes like crap.

DANNY
Finish it, and I'll get you more.

BOYD
Oh, goodie, thank you, Daniel.
(he scrutinizes Danny)
Okay, where were we?

DANNY
The urge.

BOYD
The urge, right.

DANNY
To drink?

BOYD
(shakes his head)
That came later. This was a different
kind of urge. You catch my... thrust?
(Danny doesn't)
I gave in to it over and over again.
And the church continually ignored it
until Sister Mary Immaculata and I
were...

He looks up at Danny, realizes he doesn't want to go there, not with him.

BOYD (CONT'D)
Well, anyway.

DANNY
But you loved being a priest, didn't
you? When you love doing something
that's your joy. Right?

BOYD
(mutters)
But that's not all I loved doing.

DANNY
Oh. You were the best priest I ever
had.

BOYD
Sorry about that.

Boyd lifts the bag and bottle, eyes Danny.

EXT. DANNY'S HOUSE - DAY

Claire and Scott walk up past the Celica, now up on blocks, and a JET SKI tipped on its side in a pool of oil.

SCOTT
Mom, he's probably not even home.

They move through the eyesore of a yard to the front door.

CLAIRE
Why don't you want me here? What are
you trying to hide?

Claire presses the DOORBELL, eyes the yard, as she waits.
Scott, antsy, grabs her arm.

SCOTT
See. No one home. Let's go.

Claire lasers him with a look, leans on the DOORBELL again.

BRENDA (O.S.)
All right. I'm coming! Jeez!!

The door yanks open. There stands Brenda in one of Jimmy's
Snarling Dogs T-shirts; sweating, her hair a tangled mess.

BRENDA (CONT'D)
Oh, hey.

CLAIRE
Brenda. Are we interrupting anything?

BRENDA
(with a knowing wink)
Well, kinda.

CLAIRE
Oh...

SCOTT
Is Danny home?

BRENDA
No, he's working.

CLAIRE
I thought he was off on Wednesdays.

BRENDA
He's pulling extra shifts now.
Works every day.

Behind Brenda line up Rollie, Boyd, Carmina, bruised beyond makeup, Leo and Jimmy, who's just wearing skivvies.

CLAIRE
(to Scott behind her
hand)
Who are all these people?

SCOTT
Um. Roommates?

A beat. Claire's fury building. She wheels, and stomps back toward Scott's car. Scott takes off after her.

INT. SCOTT'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

Scott climbs inside, looks over at Claire.

CLAIRE
Why didn't you tell me?

SCOTT
You know how Danny is. He likes to feel independent.

CLAIRE
Independent?!

Scott frowns, CRANKS the engine.

CLAIRE (CONT'D)
That's it! You tell Danny until he stops letting people take advantage of him, his house is off limits to me, and my house is off limits to him.

SCOTT
Ma!

CLAIRE
Don't you ma me. That's it. I won't stand by and watch them kill my son!

EXT. ALBERTSON'S PARKING LOT - NIGHT

Danny unloads five baskets from the back of his pickup, lines them up. The Store Manager hands Danny twenty bucks.

STORE MANAGER
Funny how you can't carry more than five buggies at a time in your pickup now.

DANNY
Yeah.

INT. DANNY'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Danny sits on the sofa, sorts through his B & B brochures. He looks over at Leo and Carmina at the kitchen table, Brenda strutting down the hall tailed by Jimmy, through the window to Boyd out front flipping through a dirty magazine, and finally to Rollie squatting in a corner jotting notes.

Danny collects the brochures, walks into the kitchen, and dumps them in the trash can.

DANNY

Can I get anybody anything?

INT. FOOD GIANT BACK ROOM - DAY

Danny sits at the produce cutting counter, pricks his finger, drops blood on a test strip, drops the strip into his test meter. Manager Linton walks by with a can of Cool Whip.

LINTON

How's it coming?

Danny checks his meter.

DANNY

Okay.

Linton heads for the cooler.

DANNY (CONT'D)

Mr. Linton, how's your mouth?

LINTON

They wanna open up my gums again. No way. Fool me twice, ya know?

DANNY

Yeah. Hey, did you notice Norma's new haircut?

Linton's caught off guard.

DANNY (CONT'D)

She's looking pretty great these days.

Linton ducks into the cooler. SOUND OF COOL WHIP.

INT. FOOD GIANT - DAY

Danny bags groceries at Norma's register, hands a perfectly packed small bag to that rugged-looking Paramedic Jack, who drops a few coins in a "Help Our Church" donation can.

NORMA

Thank you, hon.

DANNY

Need help with that, Jack?

JACK

No, got it, Danny. Hey, you should stop by and check out my new defib. It's hot. Bunch of new bells and whistles.

DANNY

Wow. Will do. Thanks, Jack.

As Jack exits, Norma watches his ass, GROWLS.

NORMA

I'll say it's hot.

LINTON

(walks by)

No growling at the registers.

NORMA

I swear that man has it in for me.

DANNY

I don't think so. We were just talking about your new haircut.

NORMA

Sure you were.

DANNY

Mr. Linton has a hard time letting things out. Which I think could be a cause of all his mouth problems. You know, all that bad stuff building up inside with no place to go?

Her eyes follow Linton as he turns down an aisle, glances back. Scott taps Danny on the shoulder.

SCOTT

I tried calling you.

DANNY

Oh, hey, Scott. Phone got turned off. I'm a little behind on my payments. Carmina's been making a lot of calls to Puerto Rico and I'm trying to help out Boyd. He's in counselling now and --

SCOTT

Boyd?

DANNY

Yeah, Father Boyd, remember? He doesn't like anyone to call him that anymore, the "Father" part.

(whispers)

He's not a priest now. He's back to just a normal person like us.

(behind his hand)

Don't think he could hack the no sex part.

(Scott eyes him
curiously)

I'm gonna shut off the long distance on the phone when I get it back on and get a cell phone from a guy Jimmy hooked me up with. Long distance is free on that.

SCOTT

Can you take your lunch now?

DANNY

I don't usually take a lunch.

SCOTT

Can you today?

Danny looks over at Norma.

NORMA

Go.

EXT. SKIPPY'S SUB SHOP - DAY

While customers line up at the window, Danny and Scott sit at a concrete patio table, subs and drinks between them. Danny's not eating, just staring off, looking beat. He rests his head on his arms on the table.

DANNY

Can't believe Mom said that.

SCOTT

She's worried about you, Danny. So am I. You look worn down. You've lost weight. Are you sleeping?

DANNY

Yeah, with my two Tylenols. Mom really said that? Guess it's okay. I've got a new family anyway.

SCOTT

Well, thanks a lot, bro. Those people aren't your family -- they're like a cult of... social misfits... parasites.

DANNY

Scott, this is it. My house is my B & B. I mean, it's not perfect, but I've got my goal already. Pretty lucky. I could've gotten shot in the head first, but --

SCOTT

Would you stop that! Those people are not your goal, the B & B is.

DANNY

I didn't think you believed in my B & B idea.

SCOTT

Well... I was wrong. Okay. I admit it. They're using you, Danny. You can see that, right?

DANNY

What about Brenda? You think my own daughter's using me?

SCOTT

Hell, yes. And you let her get away with it. Look, I know about you and Marnie.

DANNY

Don't know what you're talking about.

SCOTT

I know that Brenda's not really your kid. You felt sorry for Marnie, you did her a favor. But you don't have to keep playing that card. Okay?

Danny stares off distantly, as we

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. PIGGY'S BARBECUE - DAY - FLASHBACK

Younger Danny sits at a table alone, work clothes on, gobbling down some brown ribs. He can't help but watch Marnie, 29, waitress, crying, as she pulls a slice of pie from a display.

Danny lifts the PIG-FACED BARBECUE DISPENSER, squirts some more barbecue on the ribs, while staring at Marnie.

BARBECUE PIG FACE

(gravelly, slobbery
voice)

Don't just stare. Anybody can stare.

DANNY

I'm not staring.

BARBECUE PIG FACE

Yeah, and I'm Glatt Kosher.

A WAITRESS strolls up, refills Danny's Coke.

DANNY

Um, everything A-okay with the new girl?

WAITRESS

Oh, her. She's got major problems. Major. Get ya anything else?

Danny doesn't answer, just watches Marnie deliver the pie and retreat to the back, hand over her mouth.

BARBECUE PIG FACE (O.S.)

(singing, deep, Elvisy)

"Tomorrow will be too late..." Hey, did you know Elvis often used barbecue sauce on pizza? Waste of a good condiment in my book. Huh, Danny?

SCOTT (O.S.)

Danny?

EXT. SKIPPY'S SUB SHOP - RETURN TO SCENE

Scott glares at Danny.

SCOTT

Listen, you worked half your life at a job, you've got a nice pension, enough to enjoy a comfortable life. But you're working your ass off, and you still can't even make ends meet.

DANNY

It's hard on them, Scott. You know, with the economy in the crapper and all.

SCOTT

I'm gonna give you some money.

DANNY

No.

SCOTT

(goes for his wallet)

How far off are you? Couple hundred do?

DANNY

Let's see. I owe the phone company 18 hundred and I'm behind on the Celica payment, the jet ski and two months on the house.

SCOTT

The house? Danny, you gotta be close to paying that thing off.

DANNY

I did pay it off, but I got a little equity loan, you know, 'cause the rates were so low and I needed the money.

SCOTT

Oy. Look, you gotta do something, man. I'm not kidding. These people are gonna--

Scott stops to watch what appears to be a Pink Pixie, complete with tutu, wings and a mask, who's flitting her way toward them, led by a magic wand.

SCOTT (CONT'D)

What the -- ?

The Pink Pixie drifts ever closer, the other customers laughing and clearing a path for her. Finally, she lights at Danny's feet and falls in a ball of pink before him. She touches Danny with her wand.

She's close enough now where we recognize Emma, who pulls out a note from God knows where, starts to read.

EMMA

"I offered you repas. I offered you amor. Our affair flew by too fast so I fly to you once more."

Emma pulls a house key out now, hands it to Danny, rises, bows, and flits away to APPLAUSE.

SCOTT

Holy crap, Danny. What was that?

DANNY

Oh. She's just a little solitaire. That's all.

They both watch her dash across the grocery store parking lot, lifting off the ground in sloppy Jetés, as she goes.

EXT. ON THE WHARF - SUNSET

Thabisa, dressed for work, and Danny sit close to each other on a wood bench. Danny eyes the Riverside B & B across the water.

THALISA

When I was a little girl in Simon's Town mummy would take me down to Foxy Beach to count the penguins. That's how I learned to count.

DANNY

Wow. Sorry, you wouldn't get much counting in here. I don't know where they are.

THABISA

Maybe they went Christmas shopping.

Danny breaks out into a loud laugh.

DANNY

I bet that's it. Probably wrapping up fish right now.

THABISA

I wonder if they decorate trees, too.

DANNY

Maybe with pelican poop.

They both laugh now. Thalisa takes Danny's hand, and he gulps. They stare across to the Riverside.

EXT. FOOD GIANT - DAY

A Salvation Santa RINGS his bell outside the store.

Danny walks out with Karen Delaney's groceries past the Santa. Karen stops at the Salvation volunteer, drops a couple of bucks in the can. Danny walks off without her.

Karen catches up, watches him closely. Danny's a bit off.

KAREN DELANEY

Everything okay, Danny? You look...

DANNY

I'm sorry, what?

KAREN DELANEY

Have you been keeping your doctor's appointments?

Danny shrugs and loads her groceries in a new SUV. Karen rustles through her purse.

DANNY
No, thanks, Mrs. Delaney. We're not
allowed to take tips.

KAREN DELANEY
Well, it's not really a tip, it's more
like
 (retrieves a small
 wrapped box)
a gift.

DANNY
You got me a present?

KAREN DELANEY
 (hands him a tiny box)
Uh-huh.

DANNY
Gosh, I can't take it.

KAREN DELANEY
Why not?

DANNY
I don't have anything for you. I
didn't know we were...

He looks deep into her beautiful eyes.

KAREN DELANEY
Wow, it's getting cold, huh? Look,
every time you bag my groceries you
give me a gift. I see the way you pack
me up. Women pay attention to things
like that.

DANNY
Yeah, I heard.
 (a beat)
Okay.

KAREN DELANEY
 (hands him the gift)
You can open it.

Danny gets right to it. His eyes bug, as he pulls a tiny,
delicate pelican figurine out of the wrapping.

KAREN DELANEY (CONT'D)
I hope it's okay. I asked Norma if
you, you know, liked anything special.
I found it online. She said you had a -
-

DANNY
Can I hug you?

Karen nods. Danny bearhugs her.

DANNY (CONT'D)

Thank you very, very much.

ON DANNY'S FACE -- Full on tears.

INT. DANNY'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Danny, eyes wide, finds just the right spot for his Dalmatian pelican. Dead center, eye level, top shelf. He clears other pelicans out of the way, sets the Dalmatian on its perfect perch. Boyd walks up behind him, a mug in his hand.

BOYD

That's a nice one.

DANNY

It's a Dalmatian. Extremely rare.
Bad session tonight, Father?

BOYD

Boyd. Not father. We had a deal.
Session was fine. Comes down to I'm
just frustrated. I was given this
divine gift and I feel overly compelled
to use it. Understand?

DANNY

You mean your calling?

BOYD

No, Daniel, not my calling.

DANNY

Right. You need anything? Are you
comfortable? You want some coffee?

BOYD

I'm set.

Danny steps close enough to see inside the mug.

BOYD (CONT'D)

Wanna smell it?

DANNY

I have to believe a priest, right?

BOYD

Former priest.

INT. DANNY'S HOUSE - BATHROOM - NIGHT

Danny injects insulin into his stomach, takes a bite of Rocky Road ice cream, injects some more.

INT. CLAIRE'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Claire and Scott decorate their Christmas tree.

SCOTT

How 'bout I call Danny, get him over here to help us?

CLAIRE

Has his situation changed?

SCOTT

No. So, what, this is some kind of tough love thing?

CLAIRE

Yes. That's exactly what it is. Tough, angry, bitter love mixed with a lot of hatred for certain people. Hand me that baby Jesus bulb.

INT. DANNY'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

A ceramic manger in Leo's hand, as he and Carmina decorate their scrawny Christmas tree, while Brenda, Jimmy, and Rollie hang all over the furniture, smoke and direct.

BRENDA

No, not up there. Too heavy.

CARMINA

Where you want it, Miss?

Danny walks in, revelling momentarily in the proceedings.

BRENDA

(to Jimmy)

You gonna let that thing threaten me?

JIMMY

I'm not sure she was.

BRENDA

Wake up, idiot. Of course, she was.

CARMINA

Don't listen to her.

BRENDA

Jimmy!!

Danny eyes Jimmy, who's reluctant to push this.

ROLLIE
(singing off key)
"The hills are alive with the sound of
losers." My favorite Christmas carol.

TEEN LEO
Why don't you leave Carmina alone?

For a moment, everything stops, as all are shocked by Leo actually saying something. Then...

BRENDA
Well, the mute speaks. What, you got
something goin' on with she-man?

She elbows Jimmy.

JIMMY
Yeah, kid. You hot for creature?

Leo goes after Jimmy, and they tumble onto the floor.
Brenda giggles with joy.

ROLLIE
Don't hurt him, Leo.

JIMMY
Bite me, mutant.

Leo does... bite. Jimmy SCREAMS bloody murder.

Brenda jumps on top of them. Rollie tries to pull her off, pushing Carmina back into the tree, which Boyd catches just in time, leaving Carmina to fall on her ass.

Danny snags Leo, totes him down the hallway.

Carmina, now totally pissed, goes after Rollie, who pulls at Brenda, whacks at Carmina, who bites Rollie, who SCREAMS.

A full-on funky brawl, with Boyd the only non-combatant. He sits, sips egg nog, spices it up with a flask.

Arms, legs, screaming, fists flying, bumping into Boyd, spilling the drink, all over him.

BOYD
PEACE BE WITH YOU PEOPLE! DAMMIT!!

He gets bumped again, goes after them, fists flying, but is quickly knocked backward into the curio cabinet which is now in the middle of the wall, the Christmas tree in the corner.

Danny rushes back in.

DANNY

NO!!

He leaps, but not in time. Pelicans fly everywhere.
CRUNCH!

Leo peers out from around the corner.

BRENDA

Damn you, Leo. See what you started!

CARMINA

The boy didn't start anything. Right, Rollie?

ROLLIE

Okay.

JIMMY

Yeah, like Danny's gonna believe some slug who writes on toilet paper.

Danny's on his hands and knees on the floor. He finds his Dalmatian pelican in pieces.

DANNY

LOOK WHAT YOU DID! LOOK! YOU GUYS ARE SUPPOSED TO BE MY FAMILY! What about you, Brenda? You're my daughter. Why don't you look out for me, huh?

BRENDA

Why are you on my case?!

(points at Carmina)

He did it! Not me! Why don't you just go straight to hell!

As Brenda stomps off, Danny eyes them all. Again, but faster now, and faster. They're spinning around him, faster still, like characters on an out-of-control merry-go-round, until they become a blur. Danny reels and passes out, the Dalmatian pieces in his hand.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - NIGHT

Danny lies motionless on a hospital bed. IV rigging on one side. On the other side, Claire, Scott and Dr. Delaney.

CLAIRE

How could he be in a coma? I don't understand.

DR. DELANEY

The diabetes. It's a very delicate balance. Could have overdone his insulin, or some new stress in his life.

CLAIRE

Oh, God.

SCOTT

It's okay, Mom. It's not your fault.

DR. DELANEY

We've got him on an I-V glucose and we'll keep a close eye on him.

SCOTT

How dangerous is this, doctor?

DR. DELANEY

It can be very dangerous. We'll monitor his vitals, watch his kidneys. He's a friend of my wife, you know?

CLAIRE

No, I didn't know.

DR. DELANEY

Yes, she thinks the world of him.
(his cellphone VIBRATES)
I'll check on him first thing tomorrow.

CLAIRE

Thank you.

Dr. Delaney heads out. A NURSE walks in, adjusts his drip.

NURSE

His body's really craving rest.

SERIES OF SHOTS (TIME LAPSE DISSOLVES):

1. Dr. Delaney checks in on Danny; Claire and Scott sit nearby.
2. Karen stands beside Danny's bed, leaves a bouquet of "Get Well" balloons across from him.
3. Nurse pats dry Danny's forehead, brushes back his hair.
4. Norma sets some holiday flowers on a table, sits. Mr. Linton walks in with a basket of fruit, looks over at Norma.
5. NIGHT NURSE picks the pelican pieces out of a drawer.
6. Carmina and Leo walk in with Boyd. They all bless themselves, pray.
7. Sheriff Tom and Paramedic Jack stop by.
8. The Night Nurse sets the repaired pelican on the table beside Danny's bed.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - NIGHT

Thabisa ties a SMILEY FACE BALLOON to a chair near Danny's bed. She leans close and whispers...

THABISA

You still owe me some pelicans, you know.

She pats him on the hand, walks out, leaving him alone, tucked in, hooked up, comatose. A LOW WHISTLE, followed by, "Hey, Danny."

Danny's eyes open slowly, focus on the room. No one there. Another WHISTLE. "Here!"

WE MOVE UP to the yellow, big-eyed SMILEY FACE BALLOON, just above a silver one that has captured Danny's reflection.

SMILEY FACE BALLOON

(a hipster voice)

You gotta be awake after that.

DANNY

I guess I am.

SMILEY FACE BALLOON

Good, 'cause it's time we talked.

DANNY

It is?

SMILEY FACE BALLOON

Look, man. I know you're all about being good to people and making them happy and all that jazz. I'm in the same game myself. But you can take it beyond a point, you know?

(Danny stares,
transfixed)

Let me give you something to think about when you drift back into that comfy little coma of yours. You can spend your whole life doing for everybody else, and you know who gets screwed?

Danny shakes his head.

SMILEY FACE BALLOON (CONT'D)

You do, that's who. This is it. You get blown up one time. When the air runs out, you're a Munchkin voice, then you're done. Over. End of the rainbow. C'mon, I'm not telling you anything you don't already know, right?

(Danny nods reluctantly)

Okay, then.

(MORE)

SMILEY FACE BALLOON (CONT'D)

You gave it your best shot. Time to move on. Right? Remember how great you felt when your kid was born? Ever felt that way since?

DANNY

But those people depend on me. I can't just kick 'em out, can I?

SMILEY FACE BALLOON

Sheesh. Those people are punching holes in you, deflating you, that's what they're doing. Know what you are, D-man?

DANNY

No?

SMILEY FACE BALLOON

You're an enabler, classic symptoms. You help some people, it sticks. Others, the more you give 'em the more they want, the less they'll do for themselves. You had a dream. What happened to that?

(Danny looks away,
shrugs)

See. Shake loose, cut the lines, let 'em float off. It's time. Trust me.

DANNY

But how?

SMILEY FACE BALLOON

You'll find a way.

DANNY

You sure?

SMILEY FACE BALLOON

Hey, I'm the number one character balloon in the world. I think I know from whence I speak. We straight on this?

(Danny stares blankly)

Save yourself. No one else will. See ya down the road.

Danny looks around the room, spots the Dalmatian pelican beside him, grabs it. He holds it close and stares out across his long body to the Smiley Face Balloon, then to Karloff's Mummy, before his eyes close again.

LATER

Danny's eyes slowly open -- there stands his family.

CLAIRE
Oh, Danny. How are you?

She hugs him. Scott grabs his hand.

DANNY
Awake.

CLAIRE
Good. You'll go home soon.

DANNY
To your house, too?

CLAIRE
Yes. To our house.

EXT. DANNY'S HOUSE - DAY

Scott and Danny sit in the Mustang, stare up at the house.

SCOTT
Want me to come in with you? Give you
some backup? Good bro, bad bro?

Danny shakes his head with determination.

DANNY
You know, I thought this was what I
wanted. It isn't. I know that, Scott.
I can't let people stand in my way.
(climbs out)
So, this is something I gotta do
myself.

SCOTT
Danny?

DANNY
(leans back into the
window)
Yeah, Scott.

SCOTT
I'm glad you're my big brother.

Danny grins, walks off toward the house.

INT. DANNY'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Danny sits on his sofa, the house guests standing before him.

DANNY
I'm a diabetic, okay. I have to take
care of myself. If I don't...
(MORE)

DANNY (CONT'D)

So, I want... I need you guys all to find someplace else to go. I'll help if I can. You've got two weeks. Any questions?

Danny looks directly at Brenda. Last chance.

BRENDA

Ha! Like we'd go anywhere else.

ROLLIE

"Our battered suitcases were piled on the sidewalk again. But no matter, the road is life." Know who said that?

JIMMY

Danny, I've got this guy who says he'll drop a new block in the Celica for eight hundred bucks. It's used, of course...

BRENDA

Why don't you just sell the damn Jet Ski that never worked and get my car fixed?

Carmina's bawling. Leo goes to her side. Boyd hangs his head, pulls out his flask, dumps some hooch down the hole.

Danny rises, and with a heretofore unseen fire in his eyes...

DANNY

I MEAN IT! EVERYBODY OUT. ONE WEEK NOW. ONE WEEK! THIS IS WHAT HAPPENS WHEN YOU ENABLE. I'M DONE ENABLING, OKAY?! STOP PUNCHING HOLES IN ME!

A beat. Danny's face is flushed. The "houseguests" look at one another, back to Danny. Brenda giggles.

BRENDA

Punching holes?! I'm your daughter, dammit! I can punch holes if I want.

Danny rivets his eyes her way. Cold. HER FACE MORPHS into baby Brenda's.

MORPHED BABY BRENDA

But... I'm your little baby.

DANNY

Doesn't matter. You heard me!

Real Brenda returns, shocked.

JIMMY

Dude, you can't just kick us out.

DANNY

Sure I can.

JIMMY

No you can't, trust me, man. I've played this tune before. The long arm's got our backs, not yours.

Danny looks to the curio cabinet, in the middle of the wall, even though the Christmas tree's gone.

JIMMY (CONT'D)

Brenda likes it better there.

Danny walks silently toward the curio cabinet. The others watch him, waiting for something to give.

Rollie scrawls on his paper towel sheets.

Danny reaches into his pocket, pulls out his Dalmatian pelican, starts to set it on the cabinet. A beat.

He drops the pelican back in his pocket, reaches out with both arms, grunts mightily, lifts the cabinet, and moves it back into the corner.

Danny takes the pelican out of his pocket again, sets it on the top shelf, among other pelicans whole and wounded, while the others eye him curiously, and SLOWLY DRIFT OUT.

INT. ATTORNEY'S OFFICE - DAY

Danny, in his best jacket and tie, sits with Scott across from the same Attorney.

SCOTT

Go ahead. Read it to him.

ATTORNEY

(picks up a book, reads)

"A person is guilty of a forcible entry who either: 1. By breaking open doors, windows, or other parts of a house, blah, blah, blah; or, 2. Who, after entering property peaceably, turns out by force, threats, or menacing conduct, the party in possession."

DANNY

I didn't say they broke in.

ATTORNEY

But you don't hold any type of lease?

(Danny's look answers)

(MORE)

ATTORNEY (CONT'D)

This isn't really my field, but unless we can assert some kind of forced entry or pending threat, they're entitled to domicile in your house.

DANNY

What's domi-cile?

SCOTT

He means they can still live with you. See what I told you about these people? Now do you understand?

(to Attorney)

Okay, what if Danny sells the house?

ATTORNEY

They might claim squatters' rights or come after you legally, as long as you're still around to provide them with a comparable situation and don't provide it. You invited them in or agreed to it. That's where we stand.

CLOSE ON Danny, his wheels turning.

INT. LIBRARY - NIGHT

A stack of thick books before him, Danny reads. He stops suddenly, re-reads, following his finger. He looks up...

PRE-LAP A ZZZZZZZZZZ SOUND.

EXT. DANNY'S HOUSE - DAY

Danny aims an old Polaroid camera at the front of his house, pushes the button -- ZZZZZZZZ. He grabs the print, shakes it, strides toward the house.

INT. DANNY'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY

While the others watch him like he's nuts,

Danny, several photos in his teeth, stands way back in a corner, aims the camera. ZZZZZZZ.

INT. DR. DELANEY'S OFFICE - EXAMINATION ROOM - DAY

Danny fidgets. Dr. Delaney walks in with test results.

DR. DELANEY

Boy, I'm not seeing anything that would cause you as much pain as you say you're experiencing. And you say on a scale of--

DANNY
(winces)
Definite 10.

DR. DELANEY
(hands Danny a
prescription)
How did you hear about this again?

DANNY
Another doctor said it really helped
with this kind of pain.

DR. DELANEY
Another doctor?
(Danny ignores, winces)
Okay, it will knock it back, but only
take it if it gets intolerable. Don't
overdo it. Understand? Follow the
instructions. We'll run some follow-up
tests next week. Everything better on
the home front?

Danny shrugs. Delaney turns to go.

DANNY
Doctor?

DR. DELANEY
Yes?

DANNY
You really lucked out with Karen, you
know. I hope you tell her how great
she is... a lot.

DR. DELANEY
(taken aback slightly)
Did she say something to you?

Danny shakes his head. Dr. Delaney exits.

EXT. UTILITIES COMMISSION - DAY

Danny sits in his pickup, staring up at the UC sign. He
climbs out, slams the door behind him, and walks up the
building steps and inside.

EXT. FIRE DEPARTMENT - DAY

Jack leans into Danny's pickup, chats with Danny, reaches
in, shakes his hand. Danny pulls away.

INT. DANNY'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Danny walks in, looks over at the curio cabinet, back in the middle of the wall.

Everyone's sitting at the kitchen table, already eating.

BOYD

Daniel, you're late for what looks like could be our last supper.

CARMINA

(nudges Boyd playfully)

C'mon. It's killer riñones guisados and lengua rellena in a sofrito sauce.

TEEN LEO

Yeah, and it tastes amazing.

CARMINA

Why wouldn't it? You can't go wrong with calf kidney and the stuffed beef tongue.

Brenda, Rollie and Jimmy spew out their food.

BRENDA

I'm gonna puke.

TEEN LEO

I'll finish theirs.

CARMINA

That's my boy.

Danny's eyes rivet on Leo, then Carmina.

EXT. DANNY'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Boyd walks out to the front lawn where Danny sits, eyes up.

BOYD

(sits down)

What a bunch of stars, huh? My God.

DANNY

Boyd, is there really a heaven?

BOYD

Oh, sure. Definitely.

DANNY

How far after space is it?

BOYD

(eyes Danny seriously)

Well, let's see.

(MORE)

BOYD (CONT'D)

I'd say that heaven could be just at the edge or miles beyond. Light years beyond even. But... it could also be right here. That's what's so wonderful about heaven -- there's no real address, ya know? You could find it anywhere.

DANNY

What about under the ground?

BOYD

Anywhere.

DANNY

How 'bout under water?

BOYD

Believe that's covered too.

They stare back up at the starry sky.

DANNY

Ever miss being a priest?

BOYD

I miss hearing God's voice. He used to talk to me, but not anymore.

DANNY

Maybe you just can't hear him right now.

Boyd nods sadly.

INT. DANNY'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Jimmy sits on the floor, plucking out a tune on his guitar. Danny squats down beside him.

DANNY

Even though Brenda's my daughter, I don't think you should always do whatever she tells you... or let her call you names. It's not a good thing for either of you.

JIMMY

C'mon. I don't do that.

DANNY

Yeah. You do.

Jimmy looks up at Danny.

INT. DANNY'S HOUSE - HALLWAY - LATER

Danny KNOCKS on Carmina's door. Mudpack on, she opens up.

CARMINA

Hi, there.

(re mask)

Sorry about this.

Danny looks in. The 12x12 room is bright and flamboyant on one side, spartan on the other where a cot is wedged against a wall. Boyd's bed. Danny steps in. Door closes.

INT. DANNY'S HOUSE - CARMINA'S ROOM

DANNY

Carmina, I need to talk to you.

Carmina sits on her bed. Danny eyes her green mudpack. She takes some with her fingertip, licks it.

CARMINA

Avocado and cucumber. Want a lick?

DANNY

Uh, no thanks. I just wanted to tell you something important.

Carmina prepares for the worst.

DANNY (CONT'D)

The way you are with Leo. That's one thing you do good. Really, really good.

A fat tear plops out of Carmina's eye and slugs down through the mud. She hugs Danny.

INT. DANNY'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - LATER

Danny stands in the dark over his stereo. He wraps headphones around his neck, sits down on the sofa, grabs his bottle of Tylenol, swallows a couple dry. He pulls a lollipop out of the white bag, lies back, the cordless phone in his hand. He tabs in some numbers, waits.

DANNY

(into phone)

Hey, Scott.

(...)

No, I'm getting ready to go to sleep. Just took my Tylenols. Hey, I got something here for you. Need you to come pick it up first thing tomorrow. First thing.

(...)

(MORE)

DANNY (CONT'D)

Okay, thanks. You're a great brother,
Scott.

Danny clicks off the phone, sets it on his lap. He glances over at a box of 45s, flaps still open. On the side of the box: "For Scott"

He pulls his headphones up onto his ears, picks up the Triple-A B & B book, settles back. A SMEAR OF GREEN AVOCADO AND CUCUMBER MASK on his shoulder. WE SPIN OVER HIM TO

INT. DANNY'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - (THE NEXT) DAY

BACK TO... Carmina leans over Danny.

CARMINA

Danny. We got the no hot water again.
I hate to wake you, but you know we
need the hot water.

She flops toward a table lamp, clicks it, no good.

CARMINA (CONT'D)

(mutters)

Bombilla. Stupid lightbulb.

She raises the front shade -- a shot of morning sun.

WE MOVE PAST THE CURIO CABINET, ONLY DAMAGED PELICANS ABOARD. CARMINA TURNS TO US AND WE SWIRL THROUGH THE ROOM THEN OUT THE WINDOW TOWARD SCOTT, STARING IN SHOCK.

EXT. DANNY'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Jack wheels Danny to his ambulance. Scott runs beside him.

SCOTT

WHAT HAPPENED?!

JACK

Looks like his heart.

Jack zips Danny's body bag closed. Scott tips his head into his brother's chest.

SCOTT

Oh, God. Danny. NO!

JACK

I'll take good care of him, sir. He's
a friend. You should follow me.

Scott, distressed, looks back toward the house and the crowd of people who lived with his brother now surrounding the Sheriff, who holds a yellow piece of paper in his hand.

SCOTT

It's your fault! All of you! It didn't have to be like this.

He charges them. The Sheriff immediately goes for Scott, heads him off, drags him aside by his jacket.

SHERIFF TOM

All right, now. Settle down, settle down, pal. It's nobody's fault.

SCOTT

They killed my brother!

Sheriff Tom struggles to restrain Scott.

BRENDA

Uncle Scott!! My daddy!!

SCOTT

I'm not your uncle, dammit! Damn all of you!

SHERIFF TOM

Settle down, son.

Leo, crying, walks out with cardboard box, hands it to Scott.

TEEN LEO

He told me to give this to you.

Carmina leads Leo away.

SCOTT

Where's his shovel? I want that too!

ROLLIE

(scratches his head)

Sold it to pay the utilities bill couple months back.

Scott goes for Rollie, but the Sheriff restrains him, gestures with his head for Rollie to scram.

Rollie retreats back to the house, joins the others. Sheriff Tom waves back to the crowd at the door.

SHERIFF TOM

Ya'll go on back inside.

They do as he says. Neighbor Bill watches all.

Tom lets go of Scott. Together they walk down to the Sheriff's car, as the ambulance backs up.

Jack leans out the window.

JACK

All set?

Sheriff Tom nods. The ambulance pulls away slowly. Scott looks back at the dump of a house. Sheriff Tom pulls notes out of his breast pocket.

SHERIFF TOM

I've got work to do inside. Go with your brother, huh?

Scott staggers toward his Mustang. Bill waits there.

BILL

Got something you might want, but it'll cost you two hundred.

INT. FIRE & RESCUE AMBULANCE/MOVING - DAY

Front seat. Jack looks back in the rearview at bagged Danny.

JACK

Finally did it, huh, Danny?

Jack shakes his head, drives on.

INT. DANNY'S HOUSE - DAY

The crew sits on and around the couch. Carmina SNORTS back tears. The Sheriff stands before them, speaks seriously.

SHERIFF TOM

Folks, I hate to be the bearer of bad news. More bad news, but seems like your -- Danny left a note.

BRENDA

Oh, dear god!

SHERIFF TOM

Aw. You feeling bad, hon?

BRENDA

Yes. So bad. Guess I'm his only heir, huh?

(to Jimmy)

Is that the right word, "heir" or is it "heiress"?

SHERIFF TOM

I judge this note to be a legal will and testament.

JIMMY
 So, are you a lawyer too? Or a judge?
 I thought a judge had to --

Tom lifts his hand to stifle Jimmy.

SHERIFF TOM
 I am the legal authority... intatatum.
 Know what that means? Intatatum?
 (all shake their heads)
 Good. We move on...

INT. FIRE & RESCUE AMBULANCE - DAY

Jack's on his cell phone.

JACK
 (into phone)
 Scott?

INT. DANNY'S HOUSE - DAY - BACK TO SCENE

SHERIFF TOM
 Okay, all set for the read -- ?

A KNOCK at the door.

SHERIFF TOM (CONT'D)
 Ya'll want me to get that?

BRENDA
 NO! Just read the thing, would ya?!
 (MORE KNOCKING)
 Okay, get the damn door.

SHERIFF TOM
 Okee-dokey.

Tom pulls the door open. There stands Lineman Stu.

SHERIFF TOM (CONT'D)
 Yessir, what can I do you for?

STU
 Just checking to make sure we had a
 clean cutoff here.

SHERIFF TOM
 Explain your meaning. Clearly.

STU
 We had a work order to cut the power,
 which we did a few hours ago.

SHERIFF TOM
(flips a light switch)
It took, son.

BRENDA
What the hell?! Who ordered that?

STU
(off his work order)
Uh, Danny Jordan. Hey, is that the
Danny Jordan used to work at the
Utilities?

BRENDA
Yeah, so?

STU
I trained with him. He taught me about
setting goals. I'm up for another
promotion. He's kind of a hero to me.

Carmina BAWLS like a baby.

BRENDA
Oh, please.

INT. SCOTT'S CAR/MOVING - DAY

Scott drives along, wiping his eyes. On his cell phone:

SCOTT
Why there? I don't get it.

EXT. A ROAD - DAY

Jack's ambulance cruises toward a desolate shopping center.

INT. DANNY'S HOUSE - DAY

Sheriff Tom reads from the note in his hand.

SHERIFF TOM
"I don't want any kind of ceremony, and
last, I'm sorry, but there's nothing
left. The house no longer -- "
(another KNOCK)
Allow me, once again.

Tom pulls open the front door to A MAN IN A SUIT.

MAN IN A SUIT
This 1234 Cambio Court?

SHERIFF TOM
It is. And who might you be?

MAN IN A SUIT
(shows the Sheriff a
document)
Oh, I'm the owner of this house.
Closed on it yesterday, sight unseen.
(pulls out Polaroids)
Except for these.

SHERIFF TOM
Well, welcome to your humble abode,
sir.

MAN IN A SUIT
Place's for rent, if anyone's
interested.

EXT. AN ABANDONED STRIP CENTER - DAY

Jack climbs out, dashes to the back door, pulls it open,
hops up inside. Scott's car pulls up right beside the
ambulance.

INT. FIRE & RESCUE AMBULANCE - DAY

Jack unzips Danny, pulls out a stethoscope, listens to
Danny's heartbeat. Scott climbs up and in.

SCOTT
What are you doing?

JACK
Wait outside.

SCOTT
NO! ARE YOU NUTS?! HE'S MY BROTHER,
DAMMIT!

Scott grabs at Jack, who continues working.

JACK
Hey! Let me do my job here.

SCOTT
You're too late... aren't you?

JACK
Your brother took Actiq. Fentanyl
citrate, heavy duty pain killer.

SCOTT
So what?! Show some respect!

JACK
Actiq quiets the heartbeat. Down to
almost nothing. Almost.
(MORE)

JACK (CONT'D)

Comes in lollipop sticks, if you can believe that.

SCOTT

Lollipop? What the hell are you talking about? I don't believe this.

JACK

Your brother researched this himself. You should know that.

SCOTT

Why are you telling me this?!

JACK

Danny faked his own death.

SCOTT

He did what?! No way. He's not --

Jack prepares a hypodermic, shoots out a quick stream, finds Danny's forearm vein, goes in.

JACK

He should have come out on his own by now. This'll kickstart him.

Scott's very confused, but hopeful. They wait, and wait.

SCOTT

What's going on?

JACK

I don't know. He shouldn't... Was he taking anything else? Sleeping pills, anti-depressants. Smoking any pot?

SCOTT

No. NO! Just his Tylenol PM.

JACK

What?! Tylenol. Damn. I found two Fentanyl sticks. He went too deep. Take a hike, Scott.

SCOTT

No way.

JACK

Get the hell out of here!

Scott clears out. Jack rips Danny's shirt open, prepares his defib paddles, applies the juice. Danny lurches. Nothing.

JACK (CONT'D)

Shit! Shit! C'mon...

Jack hits Danny again. Another body lurch. Stethoscope.

JACK (CONT'D)

Shit...

Scott can't watch anymore.

EXT. AN ABANDONED STRIP CENTER - CONTINUOUS

Scott paces back and forth, angrily swinging Danny's shovel.

Jack climbs down, looks over at Scott, shakes his head.

SCOTT

NO! PLEASE, NO!

INT. FIRE & RESCUE AMBULANCE - CONTINUOUS

WE PUSH IN ON DANNY'S PLACID FACE... AND CLOSED EYES.

SMILEY FACE BALLOON (V.O.)

You get blown up one time, when the air runs out, you're a munchkin voice, then you're done. Over. End of the rainbow.

A WIND RISES. WE HEAR Scott raging outside.

EXT. AN ABANDONED STRIP CENTER - CONTINUOUS

Jack consoles Scott, as he sets the shovel down and folds into a fetal ball.

SCOTT

God, he was just a nice guy, you know? Why isn't that good enough anymore? Huh?

DANNY (O.S.)

Hey, Scott.

They turn to see Danny climbing out of the ambulance.

DANNY (CONT'D)

Boy, it took me awhile to fall asleep, but once I did, man I slept like a baby. My chest is really, really warm. Think I might have heartburn?

Scott rushes for Danny, hugs him. Jack doubles over in relief. Danny spots the shovel.

DANNY (CONT'D)

(to Scott)

Wow, did you have to give Bill his
fifty bucks back for my shovel?

Sheriff Tom's car pulls up. He climbs out, sizes things
up.

SHERIFF TOM

Guess all's well that ends well, huh?

(to Jack)

Hey, didn't show up too soon, did I?

INSERT SHOTS:

1. Dark. Stu cuts the service outside Danny's house.
2. Carmina lifts the shade in Danny's living room
3. Jack in the Ambulance, watches Danny's house, spots the
shade rising. He checks his watch, turns to
4. Sheriff Tom in his cruiser a few houses back.
5. Jack sends a text: "Danny needs you now."
6. Scott, waxing lanes, stops, pulls his phone from his
breast pocket.

BACK TO SCENE:

JACK

No. You did great, Sheriff.

SCOTT

Why didn't you tell me, Danny?

DANNY

Gotta save yourself, right, Scott?

Scott pats his big brother on the back.

EXT. CLAIRE'S HOUSE - DAY

Claire, fidgety, waits on the front porch. Scott's Mustang
pulls up. Danny hops out.

CLAIRE

C'mere, baby boy.

EXT. DANNY'S HOUSE - DAY

The crew exits with suitcases. Carmina pulls Brenda aside.

CARMINA

I just want you to know that your father was a great, great man.

BRENDA

Aw. Yeah? Bite me, freak.

Jimmy pats the tearful Carmina on the back, until Brenda yanks him away. They head for Danny's pickup, throw the bags in the back, climb in.

JIMMY

I'm really gonna bust ass to get some gigs now.

BRENDA

No, you're not. Know why? You're a for crap musician. You suck! You're gonna get a real job is what you're gonna do. Think I wanna end up like Danny, dead broke?

Jimmy opens the door, climbs out.

BRENDA (CONT'D)

What are you doing?

JIMMY

I don't know. But whatever it is, I can't do it with you anymore.

BRENDA

Fine! Who needs you!

Jimmy retrieves his gear, walks off down the street.

Brenda CRANKS the pickup, starts to back up, but a car pulls up behind her, and Norma climbs out of the passenger's side, walks up to Brenda's driver's side window, paper in her hand.

NORMA

Hiya, hon. Poor thing. So sorry for your loss.

BRENDA

Look, I'm in a hurry. Get out of my way.

NORMA

Well, unfortunately, I'm gonna have to throw a little wrench into the works now.

BRENDA

What are you talking about, lady?

NORMA

The pickup. Your pop donated it to my church.

BRENDA

No way.

NORMA

Oh, yes, way, hon. I've got the title right here, signed, sealed, delivered, it's not yours.

She shows Brenda the title. Brenda eyes it, throws her head back. Mr. Linton rises out of the other car.

BRENDA

Son-of-a-bitch.

Brenda climbs out, snatches her bag out of the back.

BRENDA (CONT'D)

Back to the hell that is my mother.

NORMA

I'll say a little prayer for ya.

Brenda takes off running.

BRENDA

JIMMY!

HER POV: DOWN THE STREET

Jimmy turns back.

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

STOP!

Jimmy takes off running, his bags flapping against his sides.

BACK TO SCENE:

BRENDA (CONT'D)

ASSHOLE!

Brenda tromps away.

Linton waggles his finger at Carmina, who minces toward him. He hands her an envelope.

LINTON

Danny said to give this to you.

CARMINA

What is it?

LINTON
Hey, no hard feelings, eh?

CARMINA
No, Arthur. No hard feelings.

LINTON
You know, I could use a good checker
back at --

CARMINA
(pecks him on his cheek)
I accept. Thank you.

Carmina walks back toward Leo, opens the envelope, pulls out what appears to be an official document. She scans it, folds it back up even faster. Her eyes on fire with excitement.

Norma backs up the pickup, and pulls away, following Linton.

Carmina and Leo find Rollie.

CARMINA (CONT'D)
I got my old job back and a place. My own apartment, two bedroom, six month lease, pre-paid. So, the kid's gonna stay with me for awhile. If it's okay with you.

ROLLIE
That what you want, Leo?
(a beat, Leo nods)
How you gonna take care of him?

CARMINA
(after a moment)
Like a mother... and a father.

ROLLIE
Where does that leave me?

TEEN LEO
Maybe you could travel.

ROLLIE
Yeah, huh?

Carmina totes both bags as she and Leo walk off. Leo looks back at his old man, as Boyd now stands with him.

BOYD
Well, whatta you know...

ROLLIE
 "You'd be surprised how little I knew
 even up to yesterday." Know who said
 that?

BOYD
 No, who?

ROLLIE
 Kerouac. That's who. He said it all.

With that, Rollie throws his tote over his shoulder, jams
 his roll of paper towels under his arm, and trudges off.

BOYD
 Hey, didn't he drink himself to death
 before he was fifty?

Boyd ponders a moment, starts off, but stops, looks up...

BOYD (CONT'D)
 I heard that. Yes, I did... Right.

As he walks off, he pulls a flask out of his pocket, drops
 it in the trash can on his way out of the yard.

A red VW convertible SCREECHES to a stop. Emma leans out.

EMMA
 You Boyd?

Boyd nods. Emma eyes him up and down, mostly down.

EMMA (CONT'D)
 I hear we've got things in common.

BOYD
 You're a lost sheep, too?

EMMA
 Yeah, sure I am. Hop in.

Boyd hops in. The VW makes a U-turn and GROWLS off.

Bill gets back to raking his yard.

INT. CLAIRE'S HOUSE - DINING ROOM - DAY

Claire has fixed a meal perfect for diabetics.

DANNY
 Man, this is good. I was so hungry.

CLAIRE
 Good, you eat.

SCOTT

So, Dan, you got your pension, the money from the house. Whatta you gonna do now?

DANNY

Actually, I'm flying somewhere 44 times farther away than outer space for a business opportunity.

SCOTT

A business opportunity?!

CLAIRE

Fly? You'll get nauseous, throw up!

Danny smiles confidently. JET ENGINES ROAR.

EXT. AN AIRPORT - DAY

Danny, bags and gold shovel in tow, steps out through the sliding doors. A MAN IN A FLORAL SHIRT meets him. He has a roll of blueprints under one arm. They shake hands, walk off. PRE-LAP A SPLASH!

EXT. UNDERWATER - CONTINUOUS

WE'RE PLUNGING DOWN INTO OCEAN WATERS. An image in the distance. Solid, man-made. AS WE PUSH CLOSER WE READ: "Danny's B & B -- Like Home... only Better & Wetter"

WE SWIM AROUND IT and see that this is definitely a B & B, leagues below sea level. THROUGH PORTHOLES: People inside... happy people, enjoying their time together. A shelf of pelicans behind them.

From under the lodge, a hulking Figure swims out in scuba gear. We follow him... TOWARD THE BRIGHTER SURFACE where a school of small fish dash about in a frenzy. The figure pushes through them to the surface.

EXT. WATER'S SURFACE - CONTINUOUS

A CLUSTER OF SMALL BOATS at a quaint marina, and a dive dock anchored in place off shore.

The Figure blasts to the surface, pulls off his mask. Danny, tanned, joyful. He dog paddles toward the shore.

EXT. ON THE SHORE - DAY

Danny walks out of the water toward Thabisa, who clutches the hand of a curly-haired TODDLER.

TODDLER

Popee!

Thabisa and Child meet him at the water's edge. Danny tosses his mask and tank aside and lifts the Toddler into his arms. He kisses Thabisa. They start to walk off together...

A HAWKING OVERHEAD. Danny looks up and spots A GIANT BIRD, SWOOPING LOWER AND LOWER.

DANNY

The Dalmatian...

The Pelican lands on the dive dock.

THABISA

The big one. Go, Danny. Hurry.

A moment, as he looks into the smiling, compassionate eyes of his lovely wife. Danny hands her their child, and we see their matching wedding bands. He jogs off.

He wades out into the shallow where it appears that he is walking on the glassy sheet for several long steps. But another step, and the sand bank quickly drops off, causing Danny to tumble face-first into the shallow water.

He swims for the

DIVE DOCK

The Dalmatian's great eyes fix on Danny, as he climbs up and sits beside the giant bird.

DALMATIAN

(a deep, resonant voice)

I've been hoping I'd run in to you, you know... down the road.

DANNY

Yeah?

DALMATIAN

Yes. You're a rare breed.

DANNY

Wow...

The bird slowly fixes his gaze out on the wondrous ocean that stretches before them as far as the eye can see...

DALMATIAN

It's really something, huh? All this.

DANNY

Tell me about it.

101.

They sit there together, as we slowly PULL BACK and...

FADE OUT.