

"A Fathers Burden"

by

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FADE IN:

A full moon shines over down town Chicago. As snow flakes swirl across the city, street corners are jammed with parked cars. Through the window of a brick building, a flashing light reads: "MRS. JOHNSON'S RESTAURANT."

INT. MRS. JOHNSON'S RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Customers socialize, eat and move about in a packed restaurant. A CHUBBY MAN in a wrinkled suit sits around a crowded bar. Six men seated across from him rant as their eyes are glued to the television. The chubby man pulls out his wallet and takes out cash. He places twenty dollars on the bar as he looks up at the tv. He slides his wallet back into his pocket.

MRS. JOHNSON, 55, a charismatic African American walks towards the chubby man. She smiles as she places a beer mug and a plate of hot wings in front of him.

MRS. JOHNSON

Here you go.

Mrs. Johnson picks up the twenty dollar bill and places it in her front pocket.

CHUBBY MAN

Thanks...keep the change.

The chubby man picks up a wing and takes a bite as Mrs. Johnson watches. He quickly places the wing back on the plate and sips on his beer, as his eyes bulge out.

MRS. JOHNSON

(smiles)

RACHEL made em extra hot just like you suggested.

The chubby man places the mug back on the table and nods his head as he grabs a napkin and wipes his mouth.

CHUBBY MAN

Yeah...that's how I like em.

Mrs. Johnson shakes her head and grins as she walks away. The six men surrounding the bar rant as they watch television.

On the opposite side of the bar, FIVE MEN and TWO WOMEN sit around a table. The men are in suits while the women are dressed casually.

All eye's are locked on HENRY LIVINGSTON. Henry, 30, a well dressed and confident African American lawyer stands.

Henry takes off his suit jacket and hands it to the WOMAN seated next to him. He rolls up both sleeves as his tie hangs neatly around his collar.

ROMONA, 30, an attractive African American, places the jacket behind Henry's chair. The ENTOURAGE LAUGHS as Henry bends down to kiss her.

Henry stands and looks around as the group smiles in silence.

HENRY

I would like to thank all of you
for your support during the
Mitchell case.

Romona smiles as she firmly holds Henry's left hand.

HENRY

I'm sure my sister and mother are
looking forward to the money you
tycoons will be spending tonight.

The group LAUGHS.

JASON, 32, a impudent Caucasian lawyer, grins as he takes a sip of wine. He places the glass on the table and looks at Henry.

JASON

Hey, you're the big shot attorney.
Why don't you give us all a break
and grab the tab for once.

HENRY

(grins)
You're talking to the wrong person.
Romona's in charge of the finances.

JASON

Looks like she took over the
grooming and wardrobe department if
you ask me.

LAUGHS and MUTTERS from the group.

ROMONA

(smiles)
ok Jason. Save the standup act for
amateur night.

JASON

(gins)
Romona...where's the love? We're
suppose to be on the same team here.

RACHEL, 35, beautiful slim head chef and big sister of Henry, walks towards the table. Every one turns and looks as Henry embraces her with a hug.

RACHEL

Hey everyone. I just wanted to welcome y'all in person.

HENRY

Hey guys, I want you to meet Rachel. She's not only my big sis, but she's the head chef and partial owner of this establishment.

Kudos from the group.

ROMONA

I love this place Rachel. I'm sure business will thrive now that you all are in a central location.

RACHEL

I sure hope so girl. How's my little niece?

ROMONA

She's a hand full. I'll bring her by the house Sunday.

Henry looks down at his watch and walks towards the bar. Rachel smiles at the rest of the ENTOURAGE.

RACHEL

Y'all enjoy the rest of the evening, I really need to head back to the kitchen.

The LADY FRIEND, Romona, Jason and the Three MALE LAWYER'S say farewell to Rachel. Rachel turns and walks away.

The LADY FRIEND looks at Romona and smiles.

LADY FRIEND

So, how long have you been with Henry?

ROMONA

We've been married for ten year's now, but we were actually child hood sweethearts.

JASON
 Hold up...don't tell me we have to
 sit here and listen to another
 rendition of how you fell in love
 with Henry?

The group CHUCKLES. Romona turns and looks at the LADY FRIEND.

ROMONA
 (whispers)
 And he wonders why he's not married.

JASON
 (grins)
 Hey, I heard that Romona.

Mrs. Johnson and Henry walk towards the table holding two
 pitchers of beer. MARK, 30, African American dressed in
 urban attire enters the restaurant.

Mark walks towards the group as Mrs. Johnson and Henry place
 pitchers on the table. Mark hugs Mrs. Johnson and kisses
 Romona on the cheek. Henry smiles and embraces Mark.

HENRY
 What took you so long man? You
 would be late for your own wedding.

MARK
 Looks like I'm right on time dog.

Mark picks up one of the Mugs recently filled by Mrs.
 Johnson and takes a sip, while Romona stands.

ROMONA
 Mark, you can have my seat. I need
 to head out early so I can pick up
 LISA.

The group UTTERS in disappointment.

MARK
 Word? That's not a good look.

Mark sits down while Romona puts on her coat and hat. Henry
 hugs Romona and kisses her before he sits.

ROMONA
 You guys have a wonderful evening
 and don't drink too much.
 Congratulations honey.

Henry waves at Romona while Jason gulps down the wine from
 his glass.

Romona hugs Mrs. Johnson and gives her a kiss on the cheek. She tucks her handbag and proceeds to exit. Mark sips beer from his mug as the others chat and view their menus.

HENRY

Ma, can you take our orders now?

MRS. JOHNSON

Ok gang, what'll we have?

INT. PARIS RESIDENCE - NIGHT

Two YOUNG GIRLS sit quietly on a plush couch watching television. LISA, 7 with pony tails, daughter of Romona, and RUSTY, a seven year old Caucasian, dig into a bowl of popcorn. KATHRYN PARIS, a 32 year old, slim Caucasian housewife, leans from the kitchen into the living room to check on the girls.

RUSTY

Mom, can me and Lisa have more ice cream?

KATHRYN

No Rusty. You two have had enough sweets for one night.

The phone RINGS.

Kathryn leans back in the kitchen and walks towards the phone. She picks up the phone and puts the receiver to her ear.

KATHRYN

Hello...hey Romona...the girls are doing just fine. I was just putting away the dishes.

Kathryn turns towards the counter and picks up a dish. She places the dish in the dishwasher and closes the door.

KATHRYN

I know...tell Henry, Jay is sorry he couldn't make it. The hospital called him in again.

She walks out the kitchen and enters the living room. She sits next to Lisa and Rusty.

KATHRYN

She's right here.

Kathryn hands the phone to Lisa. Lisa places the phone next to her ear.

LISA
Hello mommy...I love you too.

RUSTY
(points at tv)
Hurry up Lisa, you're going to miss
the best part.

LISA
Mommy...I gotta go. The best part
of the movie's coming up.

Lisa hands the phone to Kathryn and resumes watching television. Kathryn places the phone to her ear.

KATHRYN
(grins)
Aren't they a riot? I know...See
you in a minute.

Kathryn pats Rusty on the head and stands. She turns around and walks in the kitchen while holding the phone.

EXT. DOWNTOWN CHICAGO STREET - INTERSECTION -NIGHT

Romona sits in a black BMW. She watches two cars drive across while she waits. She looks up at the red street light and sighs. Romona then turns around and reaches for her handbag.

ROMONA
(snaps fingers)
I knew I forgot something.

EXT. DOWNTOWN CHICAGO STREET - LATERAL ROAD - NIGHT - SAME

A DRUNK MAN, 24, gulps a bottle of whisky while recklessly driving a black, 1997 Cherokee Jeep. HEAVY METAL VIBRATES from the car speakers as he continues to speed. As he crosses a red light, he barely manages to elude a white Toyota Sedan in the intersection. The DRIVER of the white Toyota swerves and blows the HORN. The DRUNK MAN laughs and continues to drive.

EXT. DOWNTOWN CHICAGO STREET, INTERSECTION - NIGHT - SAME

As Romona places her handbag in the passenger seat, the street light turns green. She looks up and drives the car slowly into the street but is quickly blinded by bright headlights from her right.

On the opposite side, The Drunk Man steps on the brakes as a black BMW crosses his path. The jeep skids in full momentum.

DRUNK MAN

Oh shhh!

The black Cherokee Jeep RAMS into Romona's BMW and CRUSHES the car from the side. Glass windows SHATTER and her handbag is thrown across the street. The car ALARM SOUNDS OFF as smoke fills the air.

INT. HOSPITAL - WAITING ROOM - NIGHT

Two FEMALE NURSES sit behind a counter as a DOCTOR and a YOUNG WOMAN walk by. Mrs. Johnson, Rachel and Mark remain seated while Henry paces about in front of a vendor machine.

TWO OLD MEN, ONE OLD WOMAN AND ONE MIDDLE CLASS WOMAN look on, as Henry frantically walks towards the Two FEMALE NURSES behind the counter.

HENRY

(hands behind head)

Hey...I really need to know what's going on with my wife. Where's DR. PARIS?

OLD NURSE

Sir, DR. PARIS will be with you as soon as the surgery is complete.

The phone RINGS.

YOUNG NURSE

Hello, Cook County Hospital. May I help you?

Henry folds his arms and frowns as he walks away from the counter. Mrs. Johnson walks towards Henry and puts her arms around him. She kisses him on the forehead.

MRS. JOHNSON

Baby, you gotta believe in God and have faith in him.

HENRY

Ma...She can't leave me now...I can't go on without her.

MRS. JOHNSON

Henry, I'm sure Romona will be just fine.

While Henry and Mrs. Johnson embrace one another, DR. JAY PARIS enters the room shaken and sad. He is a 35 year old tall Caucasian with a beard. Henry walks towards him.

HENRY

Jay...how's my wife? Is she ok?

Dr. Jay Paris tucks in his lips and raises his eye brows as he looks at Henry. Mark, Mrs. Johnson and Rachel look on in fear as they stand next to Henry.

DR. JAY PARIS

(shakes head)

I'm so sorry Henry...Romona didn't make it.

Tears run down Henry's cheeks as he drops to his knees. He places his hands on top of his head while everyone sadly looks at him. He balls his fist and raises both arms in the air.

HENRY

(in tears)

No! This can't be happening to me.
No! Why me? Oh God, what am I going to do? Ma, What am I going to do?

Dr. Jay Paris, Mark and Rachel stand in tears as Mrs. Johnson places her arms around Henry's his neck and embraces him.

INT. MRS. JOHNSON'S HOME - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Mrs. Johnson lays across the couch as she watches tv. She picks up the remote and flips through the channels. The door bell RINGS.

Mrs. Johnson gets up and walks towards the door. As she opens the door, she raises her eye brows and shakes her head.

MRS. JOHNSON

Come in SKIP...I have to admit, I'm a little surprised to see you.

SKIP, 56, handsome but poorly dressed African American enters as he kisses Mrs. Johnson on the cheek.

SKIP

Good morning to you too. Now tell me what's so important, you had to invite me over?

MRS. JOHNSON

We need to talk about Henry.

SKIP

What about him? Is he ok?

MRS. JOHNSON
He's taking Romona's death pretty hard and you not showing up at her funeral didn't help.

SKIP
What are you talking about?

Confused, Skip walks into the living room and takes a seat on the couch while Mrs. Johnson closes the door.

MRS. JOHNSON
You heard me...why didn't you show up at the funeral?

Mrs. Johnson walks over and sits next to Skip. The two look at each other.

SKIP
Hey, this is all new to me. I haven't heard from anyone...What happened?

MRS. JOHNSON
You mean Rachel never called you to let you know about Romona's car accident.

SKIP
(shakes head)
You expected Rachel to call me...You should have just called me yourself. Especially about something like this?

MRS. JOHNSON
Excuse me, but I was too busy consoling our son and running a restaurant.

SKIP
I'm just saying...You know the kids and I don't see eye to eye, so any news I hear about them has to come from you.

MRS. JOHNSON
And that's the problem Skip. You have to take more initiative to be in their lives...You're still their father.

SKIP

(sighs)

So what's going on with Henry?

MRS. JOHNSON

Since Romona passed, he hasn't been himself. He's currently on a leave of absence at the firm.

SKIP

So what do you expect from me? The boy and I haven't spoken in years and he's grieving the loss of his wife.

MRS. JOHNSON

All I'm asking is that you try to reach out to him. He needs as much support as he can get.

Skip stands.

SKIP

Ok...I ain't making no promises, but I'll see what I can do.

INT. MALL - FOOD COURT - DAY

Henry sits at a table alone while reading a book. He sips on a mug and looks up. As he looks around, he zooms in on a YOUNG MAN and other WOMEN walking with their DAUGHTERS. He turns and stares at a COUPLE as they walk by holding hands and smiling. He frowns and goes back to reading his book.

Mark is walking and notices Henry sitting alone. He walks towards him and touches Henry's shoulder. Henry closes his book and looks up.

MARK

Long time no see. Where you been player?

HENRY

You know...I've just been taking time off putting things into perspective.

Mark pulls out a chair and takes a seat at the table.

MARK

I can feel that... Man, I spoke to your mother the other day and she said she hadn't heard from you.

HENRY

To be honest, I really haven't spoken to anyone.

MARK

You don't have to deal with this alone. If you ever need someone to talk to, you can always holler at me...So how's Lisa?

HENRY

She's doing well. She's with my in-laws...How's the wife?

Mark stands.

MARK

She's good...you know she's a few months due. Listen, I'm glad I ran into you but I'm actually in a rush. Hey, let's keep in touch.

Henry stands as he and Mark hug.

HENRY

Thanks. I'll come over when things settle down.

Mark turns and walks away as Henry sits. Henry takes a sip from his mug and reopens his book.

INT. MRS. JOHNSON'S RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Customers socialize, eat and move about. WILL, 15, African American wearing baggy clothes and his friend JOE, 15, enter. Will directs Joe to the bar and continues towards the kitchen.

INT. MRS. JOHNSON'S RESTAURANT - KITCHEN - NIGHT - SAME

Will enters. Rachel turns and looks at him.

RACHEL

Boy, What took you so long?

WILL

Ma. I told you me and Joe wouldn't be back until seven.

RACHEL

Did you stop by your grandmother like I told you?

WILL
 Yeah ma. She wants you to call her too. She's upset you didn't tell grandpa about Romona's funeral.

Rachel pulls out a knife and begins to cut the onions on the table.

RACHEL
 I don't know why, It's not like he would've showed up.

WILL
 Can me and Joe get something to eat?

Rachel puts the chopped onions in a frying pan.

RACHEL
 Do you and Will have money to pay for it? If not, y'all can help do the dishes.

WILL
 Come on Ma. Stop buggin.

RACHEL
 (smiles)
 Who's buggin. You the one trying to eat me out a restaurant.

Will shakes his head as Rachel kisses him on the forehead. Joe enters.

JOE
 Hello Mrs. Livingston.

RACHEL
 Hey Joe.

Joe walks over to Will.

JOE
 So what's up? Your mother going to hook us up or what?

Rachel looks at the two young men and smiles.

WILL
 (shakes head)
 Joe, you don't even wanna know what she just said.

INT. HOWIE'S BAR - NIGHT

Customers socialize and move about in a smoked filled room with dim lights. Skip downs a beer while seated alone. He places a beer bottle on the table next to six other empty bottles. He looks across the room towards HOWIE. HOWIE, 56, burley bar owner pour's alcohol in a glass.

SKIP

Hey Howie!

Howie looks up and stares in Skips direction.

SKIP

Send two beers my way when you get a chance!

HOWIE

Haven't you had enough all ready?

SKIP

(smiles)

How long have you known me? You should know I'm just getting started.

Skip takes out a lighter and a pack of cigarettes. He removes a cigarette and places it between his lips then sparks it with the fire from the lighter. He inhales and blows out smoke.

Skip looks up only to see Howie heading towards him holding three beers. Howie arrives at the table and places two beers in front of skip. He sits down in the empty chair across from skip and takes a sip from the bottle.

HOWIE

So how did the visit go with the ex wife?

SKIP

She's just now telling me our sons wife passed away and she want's me to reach out to him.

HOWIE

Sorry to hear that. So what's wrong with her asking that?

SKIP

I ain't spoke to Henry or his sister in years...but she expects me to initiate this.

HOWIE

She does have a point here...You're the parent.

Skip takes a sip from one of the beers then takes a pull from the cigarette.

SKIP

When those kids were little, I vowed never to let them see me down and out. Once I lost my job and their mother left me, I vowed to stay out of their lives until I was back on top.

HOWIE

What happened?

Skip takes another sip of beer and places the cigarette in the ash tray.

SKIP

(smiles)

Never got back on top.

HOWIE

So what you gonna do besides drink up all my beers?

SKIP

Don't know. I'm thinking about paying him a visit, but I have no idea what to say.

Skip frowns and proceeds to gulp the remainder of the beer in the bottle.

INT. INDOOR SOCCER FIELD - DAY

TWENTY TWO LITTLE GIRLS run around playing an organized game of soccer as parents are seated on benches beside the field. Kathryn and Dr. Jay Paris are seated among NINE WOMEN and SIX MEN.

ELEVEN GIRLS on Rusty and Lisa's team sport blue uniforms while ELEVEN GIRLS on the opposite team run around in red uniforms. Lisa kicks the ball between two girls and directs the ball to Rusty. Kudos and APPLAUDS from the PARENTS, on both sides of the field, as the REFEREE directs the girls.

Rusty weaves through a wide open lane and kicks the ball through the goal as the goalie on the red team dives in vain.

Kathryn and Jay quickly jump from their seat and proceed to clap. Henry walks around the corner in smiles. He sits next to the two and shakes their hand.

HENRY

Sorry I'm late...looks like the girls are doing well.

KATHRYN

We're just glad you made it. How are things coming along with you?

HENRY

I'm hanging in there. The way Lisa's handled it all has made it much easier on me.

DR. JAY PARIS

She really misses you Henry. I'm sure she will be thrilled to see you.

HENRY

I miss her as well. Don't worry about dropping her off with my inlaws...I want to spend some time with her.

The Horn sounds off and the girls end play on the field. The scoreboard displays a final score of 2-1. Lisa and Rusty jump around with their teammates in a victory celebration as the girls in opposition slowly walk off the field towards their PARENTS on the opposite side.

Lisa spots Henry as he looks on and jogs towards him.

LISA

Daddy, you made it!

Lisa jumps on Henry and hugs him.

HENRY

Good game sweetheart. I see you girls won another one.

LISA

Daddy, are we going home or are you dropping me off at GRANDMA RETTA'S again?

HENRY

Daddy needs more time for himself, but I promise things will get back to normal soon.

Henry holds on the Lisa's hand as the two walk away. Kathryn, Dr. Jay Paris and Rusty waive towards Henry and Lisa as the families head towards the exit. Henry and Lisa waive back.

EXT. CHICAGO SUBURBAN STREET - DAY - SAME

Henry drives as Lisa sits in the passenger seat of a red 2007 BMW 5-series 530i. Cars and PEDESTRIANS are on the move around them.

LISA
Daddy, are you mad at me?

Henry looks confused as he looks at Lisa.

HENRY
No honey...what made you ask me that?

LISA
Since mom died, it's like you don't want me around anymore.

HENRY
That's not it sweetheart...I just really miss your mommy right now and I need some time alone.

LISA
I miss mommy too, but I feel better when I'm with you.

Shaken, Henry bites his bottom lip as his eyes glass up.

HENRY
So how are things with GRANDMA RETTA?

LISA
It's ok, but I'm ready to come home. She keeps saying I lost a mommy and a daddy.

HENRY
What!

Angrily, Henry puts his left hand over his mouth and slid's it down his chin. He turns and looks at Lisa.

HENRY
Guess what baby?

LISA
What?

HENRY
 We're going to pick up your things
 from GRANDMA RETTA and you're
 moving back home.

Lisa brightens up as Henry leans her way. Lisa leans towards him and kisses Henry on the cheek.

LISA
 (smiles)
 For real?

Henry grins as he nods his head.

LISA
 Thank you daddy!

INT. GRANDMA RETTA'S LIVING ROOM - DAY - SAME

DAVID MALONE, 55, also known as GRANDPA, sits on a love seat as he reads a magazine. He straitens his eye glasses as LORETTA MALONE, 55, also known as GRANDMA RETTA, watches television.

The two look up as the doorbell RINGS. David Malone places the magazine on the coffee table and jumps out of his seat to open the door. He smiles as Lisa and Henry enter.

DAVID MALONE
 Look who's here. My my my
 Henry...How you doing?

Lisa and Henry hug David as Grandma Retta walks towards the group.

LISA
 Guess what grandpa?...Daddy's
 taking me home today!

Grandma Retta and Henry stare at each other seriously while David continues to smile.

DAVID MALONE
 Good for you. Did you gals win again?

LISA
 Rusty kicked the winning goal. You
 should have been there grandpa.

HENRY
 Lisa, go upstairs and pack your
 things...Let me talk to your grand
 parents.

LISA

Ok.

Lisa hugs Grandma Retta and heads upstairs. Henry looks at Grandma Retta.

HENRY

Mrs. Malone, why would you tell my daughter she does not have a father?

GRANDMA RETTA

She doesn't. Since my daughter died you've neglected that little girl. Do you think you're the only one grieving?

David Malone heads back to his love seat as Henry and Grandma Retta stand in confrontation.

HENRY

I just needed some time to figure out what I needed to do...If it's been such a burden for you to keep her, you should have told me earlier.

GRANDMA RETTA

Having my granddaughter has not been a burden at all. As a matter of fact, I don't think you're stable enough to take her back.

HENRY

I don't have to stand here and listen to this.

Henry looks towards the stairs as David looks on from his seat.

HENRY

Honey, hurry up lets go!

GRANDMA RETTA

You don't have to take her. All I'm asking you is to spend more time with her.

HENRY

So you figure telling her she doesn't have a father helps the situation.

Lisa walks down the stairs dragging a large suitcase. Henry walks towards her and picks up the luggage. David leaves his seat and walks towards the group.

GRANDMA RETTA

(shakes head)

Lisa, come give Grandma some sugar.

Henry walks towards the door as Lisa hugs and kisses her grand parents.

DAVID MALONE

Henry, it was good seeing you son.

Henry turns around and looks at David.

HENRY

Thanks...That means a lot..Sorry about...

DAVID MALONE

Don't worry about all that. Just take care of our grand daughter and keep in touch.

Grandma Retta angrily walks away as Henry and Lisa exit. David closes the door and heads back to his seat.

INT. MRS. JOHNSON'S BED ROOM - NIGHT

Mrs. Johnson is vertical on her bed while wearing a white night robe. She picks up a pair of reading glasses on the table next to the bed and places it above her nose. She leans over and picks a red scrap book. She opens the book and smiles.

MRS. JOHNSON

Boy does time fly.

There is a picture of Mrs. Johnson and Skip embracing one another several years earlier. Mr's Johnson turns the page and there is a picture of her and Skip with their arms around two young children.

Mrs. Johnson smiles as she slides her finders across the picture. She closes the scrap book and looks at the ceiling. Mrs. Johnson leans over and places her reading glasses and scrap book on the table. She turns off the table lamp and the room is pitch dark.

EXT. MRS. JOHNSON'S RESTAURANT - DAY

Skip stands in front of the door holding a small black box. The sign on the door reads "closed". He looks through a glass window and then looks at his watch. He is casually and neatly dressed.

A black Navigator pulls up and parks on the corner. Mrs. Johnson opens the door from the driver seat wearing dark sun glasses. She walks around the car with keys dangling from her hands.

MRS. JOHNSON
When you start being on time Skip?

SKIP
I'm a little nervous about meeting with Henry. Did you tell him I would be here.

MRS. JOHNSON
Nope.

Mrs. Johnson and Skip embrace. She opens the door and the two walk in the building.

INT. MRS. JOHNSON'S RESTAURANT - DAY - SAME

Mrs. Johnson turns on the lights as the two walk towards the bar.

MRS. JOHNSON
You look nice.

SKIP
You know I can clean up when I want to.

MRS. JOHNSON
(smiles)
For what it's worth, I'm glad you decided to do this.

SKIP
What about Rachel? Is she coming in too?

MRS. JOHNSON
(shakes head)
Her shift doesn't start until later.

Mrs. Johnson looks at the clock on the wall. The time is 7:45 AM.

MRS. JOHNSON
I told Henry to come early so he should be arriving any minute now.

Skip places the box on the bar counter and sits down. He stretches his fingers and places his hands over his mouth.

SKIP
 What about getting me a cold one
 out of the fridge?

Mrs. Johnson looks at Skip and frowns. She shakes her head in disgust. She grabs an apron from the wall and places it around her neck.

MRS. JOHNSON
 No. I'm not supporting your habits.

SKIP
 Habits? What are you talking about?
 I just want a beer.

MRS. JOHNSON
 Skip...your a alcoholic asking me
 for a beer before eight in the morning.

SKIP
 (smiles)
 Thanks for the reminder.

MRS. JOHNSON
 I just think you should be sober
 before you talk to Henry. That's
 one of the reasons why our marriage
 didn't work.

The door opens as Henry enters. His smile quickly turns into a frown as he looks at Skip.

HENRY
 What are you doing here?

Skip stands up and looks at Henry. Mrs. Johnson backs away into the kitchen.

SKIP
 Hello son. I heard what happened to
 Romona and I just wanted to give my
 condolences.

Henry shakes his head with a smirk on his face.

HENRY
 I see some things never change. As
 usual your timing is perfect...The
 funeral was a month ago.

Skip walks towards Henry.

SKIP

Son...I don't want you to think for a minute that I ever stopped loving you and your sister.

HENRY

It all sounds good Skip, but see...actions speak louder than words.

Henry shakes his head and folds his arms. He looks at Skip with a smirk.

HENRY

Here's the funny part. After you left, every day, me and my sister would rush home from school expecting you to be there...and we both know how that turned out.

SKIP

I regret walking out on you kids and your mother...and that's something I will have to live with for the rest of my life. Listen, you have a right to be angry...I'm just asking for is a second chance.

Mrs. Johnson walks out the kitchen holding a dirty white towel. Henry looks at Mrs. Johnson and grins.

HENRY

Ma, listen to this fool. He walks out on us, we never hear from him unless he needs money for liquor and smokes, he contact's me a month after my wife's funeral, and he want's me to open up to him? What a joke!

MRS. JOHNSON

Henry, don't disrespect your father like that. Can't you see he's trying to reach out to you?

SKIP

Son...your mother thought it would be a good idea for me to reach out to you since you were being distant from everyone...especially your daughter.

Henry looks at Mrs. Johnson with disgust.

HENRY
That's what this is all about?
Listen, I don't need him Ma.

Henry turns towards Skip and looks him in the eye.

HENRY
I made it through law school and
became an associate without you and
you damn sure can't advise me on
family values, so this conversation
is over.

Henry turns around and heads towards the door.

MRS. JOHNSON
Henry wait!

Henry opens the door and exits. Skip looks at the small
black box and hands it over to Mrs Johnson.

SKIP
I told you this wasn't a good idea.

MRS. JOHNSON
Give him some time. He's going
through a lot right now.

SKIP
I need to run a few errands.

Skip looks at the black box being held by Mrs. Johnson.

SKIP
Give that to Henry when you get a
chance.

MRS. JOHNSON
ok...and thanks for coming down
today. It really meant a lot...just
give em some time.

Skip and Mrs. Johnson embrace and he exits.

INT. CITY TRAIN - DAY

Skip sits among commuters as he views the city through a
window. The train comes to a complete stop and the door
slides open. 2 MALE COMMUTERS exit while Jason and 3 WELL
DRESSED GENTLEMEN enter. Jason and the 3 gentlemen sit in
the empty seats across from Skip.

GENTLEMAN ONE

What's the deal with the Henderson case?

GENTLEMAN TWO

I think that's Henry's.

Skip turns his attention towards the group.

JASON

Not any more. ALLEN tossed it on my desk yesterday.

GENTLEMAN THREE

Have any of you heard from him?

JASON

Nope...but I spoke with his sister about a week ago. He's still having a hard time dealing with his wife's death.

GENTLEMAN THREE

You didn't hear it from me, but the firm is thinking about letting him go.

JASON

Are you serious? Where did you hear that.

GENTLEMAN THREE

I heard Allen and some of the other big wigs talking about his lack of communication and production.

GENTLEMAN TWO

That's crazy, he's one of the best lawyers at the firm.

GENTLEMAN ONE

You know what they say. Nobody cares about the past and it's all about what you've done lately...Henry been M I A for some time now.

JASON

I need to see if I can get him back in the office.

Skip stands and walks towards the group.

SKIP
 Would you gentleman happen to be
 talking about Henry Livingston?

Stunned, the group turns towards Skip.

JASON
 Yes...Who are you?

The train comes to a complete stop.

SKIP
 (smiles)
 I'm his father

The door opens and Skip exits. 5 COMMUTERS enter as Jason and the 3 GENTLEMEN gaze among themselves in disbelief.

EXT. POOR CHICAGO NEIGHBORHOOD - CHURCH GROUNDS - DAY

A cab pulls up next to a small white building. Skip exits the cab and closes the door. He looks up at the building as he cover both hands over his mouth and blows into his hands. He removes his hands from his mouth and rubs them together as he walks through the snow towards the entrance of the building. A sign on a building reads: "FELLOWSHIP BAPTIST CHURCH."

INT. FELLOWSHIP BAPTIST CHURCH - OFFICE - DAY - SAME

PASTOR JONES, 65, a gray haired African American wearing eye glasses is seated in front of a computer when Skip enters. PASTOR JONES, with wide eyes and a bright smile, stands and hugs Skip.

PASTOR JONES
 It's been a while since you've been
 around Skip...how's life treating
 you son?

Skip removes his arms from around Pastor Jones and looks down at the floor with a sad face as the Pastor looks on.

SKIP
 I don't know where to begin Pastor
 Jones. It hasn't been easy.

Pastor Jones sits on top of his desk with his arms folded as he looks at Skip.

PASTOR JONES
 Have a seat and talk to me.

Skip sits in a chair placed in front of Pastor Jones. He takes off his hat and unzips his jacket.

SKIP

It seems like no matter how hard I try, I can't do anything right. I've lost my kids, my wife and my job. What have I done to deserve this?

PASTOR JONES

Listen son, as long we live, we'll experience trials and tribulations. The important thing is how we respond when those situations occur.

SKIP

No matter what I do, it's always wrong.

PASTOR JONES

Maybe you should examine what it is that you're doing. Last time you and I spoke, you were running away from your family to keep from hurting them and you had turned to alcohol for support and comfort.

SKIP

God knows I love my children, but they do not want anything to do with me. Who can blame them...I'm a complete failure.

PASTOR JONES

Maybe you should stop focusing on yourself and start focusing on the people you love. Relationships aren't based around self pity.

Skip looks at Pastor Jones with wide eyes.

SKIP

What do you mean?

PASTOR JONES

Just like you want people to forgive you and to understand your trials and tribulations, you have to be willing to listen to others and to be there for them when they're down.

Skip stands up and places his hat on his head.

SKIP
What should I do?

PASTOR JONES
That's between you and God. Just
pray about it son...God never fails.

SKIP
Thanks Pastor Jones.

PASTOR JONES
(smiles)
You're welcome in the house of God
anytime Skip...Don't be a stranger.

Skip and Pastor Jones embrace before he turns around and exits.

EXT. DOWNTOWN CHICAGO - LAW FIRM - DAY

Henry, holding a brief case, walks towards a tall skyline
building. Pedestrians roam about.

JASON (OS)
Henry!

Henry turns around. He is approached by Jason and 3 well
dressed gentlemen.

JASON
I didn't know you were coming in
today...It's good to see you man.

HENRY
What's up fellas?

Jason and the three well dressed men acknowledge Henry while
nodding heads.

JASON
Fellas...could you guys excuse us?
I'd like to have a word with Henry.

The three well dressed men turn away and head towards the
entrance of the building.

JASON
Don't know how to tell you this but
I have some bad news.

HENRY
What's the problem?

JASON

The guys upstairs put me in charge of the Henderson case and they are thinking about replacing you.

HENRY

Replace me...Are you serious?

JASON

As a heart attack. I'm glad you decided to come in today.

HENRY

Jason, there is no way I can work effectively under these conditions. I was actually coming in today to grab some information on the Henderson case to take home.

JASON

I don't know what to say man. The partners want you in the office or they'll find a replacement.

Jason pats Henry on the back before he turns and walks towards the building.

EXT. CEMETERY - DAY

A red 2007 BMW 5-series 530i weaves around a hill and stops. Henry steps out the car and heads towards a tombstone. He drops to his knees with tears falling down his eyes. The tombstone reads: "IN LOVING MEMORY OF ROMONA LIVINGSTON, 1977 TO 2007."

Henry places his fingers across the words on the tombstone.

HENRY

(in tears)

I love you baby...I miss you so much...I miss you.

INT. HOWIE'S BAR - NIGHT

Customers socialize and move about in a smoked filled, dim light environment. Skip enters and heads towards Howie.

HOWIE

What's up man. You'll never believe who's in here.

SKIP

Who?

Howie, points across the bar. Henry is passed out at a table alone.

SKIP

Is that Henry? What the hell is he doing in here?

The two men walk towards Henry. Whisky and beer bottles are scattered across the table.

HOWIE

Does this remind you of anyone?

SKIP

This is ridiculous. How could you allow him get twisted like this?

HOWIE

Hey, he handed over his car keys, his wallet and demanded I continue to serve him. I didn't have a choice.

Howie hands over a set of keys and a wallet to Skip. The two man look at Henry as he continues to lean over the table.

SKIP

Hey, do me a favor and help take him out to the car.

Skip and Howie remove Henry from the table and carry him out the bar.

INT. HENRY'S HOME - BED ROOM - NIGHT

Skip looks on as Henry lays sound asleep under his covers. Skip flips the light switch and closes the door.

INT. HENRY'S HOME - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT - SAME

Skip enters and looks around. He looks at a picture of Henry, Rachel and Mrs. Johnson. He picks up a frame with a picture of Romona, Henry and Lisa. He smiles as he places the frame back on the table.

Skip walks towards the wall, where a laminated bachelor degree from the University of Illinois hangs. Skip smiles as he looks on with teary eyes.

INT. HENRY'S HOME - BED ROOM - DAY - SAME

Henry yawns and stretches his arms while slowly opening his eyes. He sits up and quickly removes the covers. He jumps out of bed wearing a wife beater and a pair of boxers. He opens the door and rushes across the hall.

He opens a door, only to find an empty room with pink wall covers.

HENRY

Oh God, what have I done?

Henry panicky rushes back to his room and picks up the telephone. He begins to dial numbers as he places the phone to his ear.

HENRY

Hello Ma, it's Henry...did you pick up Lisa yesterday?

Henry looks across the dresser and picks up a sheet of paper.

HENRY

Hold up ma...let me call you back in a minute.

Henry hangs up the phone and lifts the note closer to be read.

INSERT - THE NOTE

SKIP (VO)

"Hello son. Don't worry about Lisa. She's with your inlaws. Your wallet and car keys are on the kitchen counter...Son, I know I haven't been much of a father to you and I apologize. When you and your sister needed love, support and guidance, I was no where to be found and there is nothing I can do to change that. My selfishness was the blame and I hope you can find it in your heart to forgive, but I don't expect you to forget. I'm proud of the man you have become and I hope we can build a new relationship moving forward...I love you son."

BACK TO SCENE

Henry gently places the note back back on the dresser and sits on the edge of his bed. He slides his left hand over his mouth and chin and sighs.

EXT. LISA'S SCHOOL - DAY

Grandma Retta drives as Lisa sits in the passenger seat of a silver 2007 Nissan. Cars and STUDENTS are on the move around them. Grandma Retta stops the car and kisses Lisa on he cheek.

GRANDMA RETTA
Have a nice day sweetie... Love you.

LISA
I love you to grandma.

Lisa removes her seat belt and exits the car. She closes the door and Grandma Retta drives away. As Lisa heads towards the building, she is approached by Rusty.

RUSTY
Lisa, you think your dad will let you sleep over this weekend?

LISA
Gotta ask my grandma...I'm back with her again.

RUSTY
Why?

LISA
Who cares? My dad doesn't.

Lisa and Rusty walk up the final stairs and open the door as the two kids enter the building.

EXT. HENRY'S HOME - DAY

Henry walks away from the front door and is headed towards his red BMW when a silver Nissan pulls up in the driveway. Henry looks on as Grandma Retta steps out the car and walks towards him.

HENRY
Before you say anything, I want you to know that you were right and I think you should keep Lisa until I work out my problems.

GRANDMA RETTA
Thanks for not making this more difficult than what it already is...I just came to pick up her things.

HENRY
I apologize for not picking her up yesterday...I was just going through so much.

GRANDMA RETTA

You should tell that to your daughter...for what it's worth, I hope you work out whatever issues you have soon. Your daughter loves you and she needs you now more than ever.

Henry looks at Grandma Retta and smiles.

HENRY

Thanks.

INT. MRS. JOHNSON'S HOME - LIVING ROOM - EVENING

Will sits on the couch smashing buttons on a joystick as he plays a video game. He is glued to the television until he hears a KNOCK on the door. He turns and looks towards the door.

RACHEL (OS)

Will! Get the door.

Will puts the joystick down and walks towards the door. He opens the door.

WILL

Hey grandpa.

SKIP

Hey son.

Skip enters and the two embrace.

RACHEL (OS)

Who is it?

The two gentlemen walk in the living room.

WILL

It's grandpa!

Skip and Will sit on the couch as will picks up the joystick from the floor.

SKIP

What's that?

WILL

What you know about video games?
Its the new madden on PS3.

SKIP

(laughs)

I don't know nothing about that...

Rachel enters the room wearing a white robe and a head scarf. She angrily looks at Skip.

RACHEL

What are you doing here Skip? Will, cut that game off and go wash those dishes.

Will puts down the joystick and nods at Skip as he exits.

SKIP

Sweetie, I just want to apologize for not being a good father to you...just want to reach out.

RACHEL

Spare me the sermon Skip. Mom is not here and I don't have any money.

SKIP

Hey, I can't blame you for feeling the way you do, but that is not why I'm here.

Rachel shakes her head and smirks.

RACHEL

You abandon me, Henry and Ma, and all of a sudden we're suppose to welcome you with open arms?

SKIP

No...and I don't expect you to. All I'm asking is for you to forgive me for being selfish and for hurting you all these years.

Rachel looks on with tears.

RACHEL

You have no idea what we went through...why should I forgive you?

SKIP

Because I love you and I'm willing to do whatever it takes to be the best father I can be moving forward.

Rachel puts her hands over her mouth as tears stream down her eyes. she turns around and walks out the room. Skip frowns as Will slowly enters.

WILL
 Don't worry about it
 grandpa...she'll come around.

Skip walks over to Will and gently places his arms around his shoulders.

SKIP
 I hope you're right son...I really do.

INT. CITY NIGHT CLUB - EVENING

Henry sits alone while the music BUMPS. The dance floor is packed. As he sips a beer, a BEAUTIFUL WOMAN, MIA, gives him eye contact. He takes another sip as MIA walks towards him.

MIA
 Are you alone tonight?

HENRY
 (nods)
 Yes.

MIA
 What a coincidence, so am I. Do you mind if I join in?

HENRY
 Not at all.

The woman grabs a chair from the table across from Henry and places it next to him. She sits.

MIA
 The name's Mia...So tell me...

HENRY
 Henry.

MIA
 (smiles)
 Ok Henry...what's a handsome man like yourself doing in this dump all alone?

HENRY
 (smiles)
 you know...sometimes you just want to get out and get away. How about yourself?

MIA
 Every now and then a lady has needs.

Mia smiles and licks her lips as she stares at Henry.

MIA

It's a little crowded in here. Lets say we head out and go some place a little more private.

Henry grins as he sips on his beer.

INT. HENRY'S HOME - BED ROOM - NIGHT

Henry and Mia enter the room kissing and taking each other shirts off. Henry lays on the bed as Mia climbs on top of him. She kisses him on his neck and chest while he squeezes her bottom. She reaches for the zipper on his pants. He grabs her hand and sits up.

HENRY

I'm sorry Mia...but I don't think this is a good idea.

Mia puts the cover over her chest and sits up.

MIA

What?

HENRY

I don't know what I was thinking...I truly apologize, I just can't do this.

Henry picks up his shirt and puts it on. Mia sits on the bed shaking her head looking puzzled as Henry buttons up his shirt.

MIA

unbelievable!

INT. MARK'S HOME - KITCHEN - DAY

Mark sits at a table with two glasses filled with orange juice reading a newspaper. TERRI, his pregnant wife, walks over holding two plates with pancakes, eggs and links. She places one of the plates in front of Mark and picks up one of the glasses of orange juice. She takes a sip after placing the second plate down, and slowly sits down across from Mark.

MARK

Still need for me to change the oil in your car?

TERRI

No. I took it to the shop last week.

MARK

What? I told you I was gonna to be
free this week...

There is a KNOCK on the door. Terri and Mark look at each other.

MARK

Wonder who that is.

Mark slides his chair from under the table and stands. Terri waves at Mark to sit down.

TERRI

Sit down honey, I'll get it. Lord
knows I can use the exercise.

Mark sits as Terri slowly slides from her seat. There is another KNOCK, as Terri exits. Mark cuts into the pancakes and takes a bite. He takes a sip of orange juice. Terri returns in the kitchen holding Henry's hand.

TERRI

Look who the wind blew in.

Mark stands and embraces Henry. Henry looks at Terri and puts his hand on her stomach.

HENRY

Terri, you the only woman I know
who can walk around pregnant and
still turn heads.

MARK

Don't get her started.

TERRI

Whatever...Henry, you had breakfast
yet?

HENRY

Naw...but I don't want to impose.

TERRI

Impose? Spare me...sit down let me
fix you a plate.

Henry and Mark sit down at the table.

MARK

What's up?

HENRY

I'm not going to lie. It hasn't been easy. Lisa is back with my in-laws.

Terri pours a glass of orange juice for Henry and places the glass next to him.

HENRY

(looks up)

Thanks.

MARK

So what's wrong?

HENRY

I'm just overwhelmed right now. First Romona then my job. Now it's Lisa and my father.

Terri slides a plate with pancakes, eggs and links in front of Henry.

TERRI

I think I'll head out so you two can talk...Henry, it was good seeing you again...Don't be a stranger.

HENRY

Thanks Terri. Next time you're at the restaurant, tell my mother to put the bill on my tab.

Terri smiles. She picks up a glass of orange juice and her plate.

TERRI

I'll hold you to that.

MARK

I don't know dog...as much as she pigs out, that might not be a good idea.

TERRI

Shut up Mark.

Terri exits. Henry looks towards the hall to make sure Terri can not be seen.

HENRY

Earlier this week, I got drunk at Howie's and my father brought me back to the house.

MARK

What? How that happen?

HENRY

I went to confront Skip about all my feelings over the years, and I knew Howie's was his spot. I wined up drinking the night away while waiting for him.

MARK

(smiles)

Word...That's wild. So did y'all get to talk?

HENRY

Not really, but he left a note telling me how proud he was of me. The funny thing is, I don't know if I should be upset or not.

MARK

Give him a chance man. At least he's trying to reach out.

HENRY

Yeah...but I can't forgive him for all of those years just because he writes one pity note.

MARK

I'm going to be honest with you. I think you need to be a man and go talk to your father. Let him know how you feel.

HENRY

You're right...Hey, I forgot to tell you, I had someone over the house last night.

MARK

(shrugs head)

What?...isn't it a little too early for all that?

HENRY

Nothing happened. I couldn't stop thinking about Romona...couldn't even get it up.

MARK

(laughs)

What? Was she hot?

HENRY

She was fine as all outdoors...she
Left the house disgusted though.

Mark shakes his head and laughs while Henry takes a sip of orange juice and eats a link.

MARK

If I know you like I think I do,
you'll be straight. Just talk to
your father and give Lisa a lot of
attention. Oh, and make sure to
keep in touch with the firm...let
em know what's up till you ready to
go back.

INT. MRS. JOHNSON'S RESTAURANT - DAY

Customers socialize and eat. Mrs Johnson walks out the kitchen holding a tray of food and beverages. She walks over to a MAN and WOMAN and places the items on the table. The couple smile and nod their heads as she walks away. She walks behind the bar and takes a sip of water. Rachel walks through the front door.

MRS. JOHNSON

(frowns)

You're late.

RACHEL

Sorry Ma, it wont happen again.

Rachel grabs her apron and heads to the kitchen as Mrs. Johnson looks on. TWO ROWDY MEN stand up and begin to bicker.

ROWDY MAN 1

Screw you...she's still my wife!

ROWDY MAN 2

It's not my fault. I sleep with
whoever I want to and so does she!

Everyone in the room turns towards the two men as Skip enters. The two rowdy men begin to scuffle.

Skip runs over and removes Rowdy Man 1 off of Rowdy Man 2. Skips shoves Rowdy Man 1 out the building. He walks towards Rowdy Man 2.

SKIP

Sir, exit the building or I'll have
her to call the police.

Skip points towards Mrs. Johnson. Rowdy Man 2 shakes his head and exits the building. Rachel and Mrs. Johnson walk towards Skip while the CUSTOMERS in the restaurant CLAP.

MRS. JOHNSON
Fool, you could have gotten
yourself hurt. What are you doing here?

RACHEL
I asked him to come Ma. I was with
him this morning...that's why I was
late.

Rachel looks at Skip.

RACHEL
Are you ok?

SKIP
I'm fine, thanks for asking sweety.

Skip looks at Mrs. Johnson.

SKIP
Can I at least get a thank you. You
know I'm a little too old for this
kind of foolishness.

Mrs. Johnson rolls her eyes and smiles.

MRS. JOHNSON
Thank you Skip.

Mrs. Johnson puts her arms around him and kisses him on the cheek. Rachel looks at Skip and turns away towards the kitchen. Mrs. Johnson walks towards the bar as Skip follows.

MRS. JOHNSON
(smiles)
Am I missing something? When did
you two start communicating?

SKIP
I paid her a visit the other night,
and she contacted me this morning.

MRS. JOHNSON
I want the details stupid. What did
you guys talk about?

SKIP

(smiles)

Hey, that's between me and my daughter...We still have a long way to go, but just say, the line of communication has just opened up.

Mrs. Johnson nods her head and smiles.

MRS. JOHNSON

Ok, that sounds real good. So why did she ask you to come here?

SKIP

She told me that you guys needed some help around here and that if I was serious about having a relationship with her, I should come help out.

Mrs. Johnson raises her eyebrows while holding a smirk.

INT. HENRY'S HOME - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Henry walks in the room holding a black box. He sits down on the couch and opens the box. Inside are old newspaper clippings. The first clipping reads: "HENRY LEADS COUGARS TO 5A STATE CHAMPIONSHIP." Below the headline is a black and white photograph of a football player eluding a tackler.

Henry smiles and shuffles the article to the bottom of the pile. He picks up the second clipping. The second clipping reads: "FORMER HIGH SCHOOL ALL-AMERICAN NOW SUCCESSFUL LAWYER." Below the headline is a black and white photograph of Henry standing between Four WHITE MEN, all dressed in suits.

HENRY

(grins)

Wow...My first case.

Henry looks down at the box and raises his eyebrows. He places the article down and picks up a photograph sticking out from underneath the remainder of the newspapers. The photograph shows him in a graduation gown shaking the hand of an OLDER MAN while receiving a certificate. Henry turns the photograph and the words on the back read: "THE PROUDEST DAY OF MY LIFE, HENRY GRADUATES FROM LAW SCHOOL."

Henry places the photograph in the box and dazedly looks up at the ceiling.

INT. FELLOWSHIP BAPTIST CHURCH - PULPIT - DAY

Skip, Mrs. Johnson, Rachel and Will sit among the CONGREGATION as Pastor Jones stands behind the pulpit.

PASTOR JONES

Too many times, we stereotype the devil as an ugly creature with horns on top of his head. In actuality...the devil can also be a well dressed, handsome fellow, who can quote scripture word from word.

Skip looks on as the CHURCH WOMAN in front of him claps.

CHURCH WOMAN

Preach it reverend!

PASTOR JONES

See, the devil likes to see us angry and upset with each other. He likes it when we only care about our immediate family. Turn to Luke chapter six verses thirty two through thirty five.

Pastor Jones takes a sip of water and wipes his forehead.

PASTOR JONES

For if ye love them which love you, what thank have ye? for sinners also love those that love them. And if ye do good to them which do good to you, What Thank have ye? for sinners also do even the same.

Mrs. Johnson nods as Rachel and Skip give eye contact.

PASTOR JONES

And if ye lend to them of whom ye hope to receive, what thank have ye? for sinners also lend to sinners to receive as much again.

CHURCH WOMAN

(claps)

Tell it!

PASTOR JONES

But love ye your enemies, and do
good, and lend, hoping for nothing
again; and your reward shall be
great, and ye shall be the children
of the highest: for he is kind unto
the unthankful and to the evil!

The CONGREGATION applauds as several stand to their feet clapping including Mrs. Johnson. The CHOIR behind the preacher stands up and the HEAVY LADY sitting in front of the piano begins to play. A SHORT WOMAN standing in front of the choir begins to sing.

SHORT WOMAN

AMAZING GRACE, HOW SWEET THE
SOUND...THAT SAVED A RECK LIKE
ME...I ONCE WAS LOST, BUT NOW I'M
FOUND...WAS BLIND BUT NOW I SEE.

CHOIR

AMAZING GRACE...

SHORT WOMAN

AMAZING GRACE...

CHOIR

HOW SWEET THE SOUND...

SHORT WOMAN

HOW SWEET THE SOUND...

CHOIR & SHORT WOMAN

THAT SAVED A RECK LIKE ME...

CHOIR

I ONCE WAS LOST...

SHORT WOMAN

I ONCE WAS LOST...

CHOIR

BUT NOW I'M FOUND...

CHOIR & SHORT WOMAN

WAS BLIND BUT NOW...I SEE.

Skip and Rachel hug as Skip kisses Rachel on the forehead. Mrs. Johnson and Will smile as they look on.

HEAVY LADY

Thank you Jesus!

INT. GRANDMA RETTA'S LIVING ROOM - DAY

Grandma Retta sits on the couch as Lisa enters the room. Lisa looks sad.

GRANDMA RETTA
Your father called earlier...hey,
what's with the sad face?

LISA
I don't wanna talk to him.

GRANDMA RETTA
What's wrong? Don't you want to
spend time with your father?

LISA
Nope...He doesn't care about me...I
hate him.

Grandma Retta walks over to Lisa and hugs her. She kisses her on the head as she embraces her. She holds her hand and leads her to the couch. The two take a seat next to one another.

GRANDMA RETTA
Baby, your father loves you. He's
just going through a lot right now.

LISA
If he loves me, why doesn't he want
me around?

GRANDMA RETTA
It's not that he doesn't want you
around. He just needs some time
alone to resolve some complicated
problems.

Grandma Retta puts her arms around Lisa.

GRANDMA RETTA
Lisa, we all make mistakes. I was
wrong when I said some of those
things about your father. I was
angry and mad at the time...and I
know you don't really hate your father.

Grandma Retta gently slides her fingers through Lisa's hair and smiles at her.

GRANDMA RETTA
Just give it some time...he'll come
around. He loved your mother and he
loves you.

Lisa looks at Grandma Retta and the two embrace.

INT. MRS. JOHNSON'S HOME - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Skip, standing, looks at the antique's on the wall, as Mrs. Johnson enters holding a glass of water. She hands it to him.

SKIP

Thanks.

Skip takes a sip from the glass and glances back at the wall.

SKIP

You always did have taste.

MRS. JOHNSON

(smiles)

I don't know about that...after all,
I married you.

As Skip turns around. He laughs as he walks closer to Mrs. Johnson.

MRS. JOHNSON

Hey, I just wanted you to know that
I'm proud of how you've been
dealing with the kids lately...it
felt good having you in church with
us today.

SKIP

I'm the one who should be thanking
you. Despite all the times I've
hurt you, you've always been there
for me.

Skip and Mrs. Johnson draw closer and lock eye's but Mrs. Johnson draws back.

MRS. JOHNSON

It's a little too quiet in here.

Mrs. Johnson turns towards the stereo and presses a button. An old classic THUMPS through the speakers. Skip smiles as he walks towards Mrs. Johnson.

SKIP

Remember when we use to go dancing
on Fridays?

MRS. JOHNSON

I sure do...that was a long time ago.

SKIP

Why don't you grant me a dance for
old time sake.

Mrs. Johnson smirks at Skip and slowly walks into his arms. The two slow dance together as Mrs. Johnson leans her head on skip shoulders, and closes her eyes.

SKIP

For what it's worth, I never
stopped loving you.

Mrs. Johnson opens her eyes while the two continue to dance.

MRS. JOHNSON

I see you still have two left feet.

Skip and Mrs. Johnson grin as the two continue to dance.

CUT TO:

INT. LOCAL GYM - DAY

Rachel jogs around a track as Will, Joe, and three other YOUNG MALES engage in a game of basketball. Skip is drenched in sweat as he looks on from a bench, with a towel around his neck. Rachel jogs towards him and takes a seat. She picks up a white towel and wipes her sweaty face.

SKIP

Will's a great kid...you've done a
great job raising him.

RACHEL

I try...he reminds me of Henry at
his age.

Skip frowns as he takes the towel from his neck and wipes his face with it.

RACHEL

So tell me dad, what drove you away
from us all these years.

Skip looks at Rachel and puts the towel back around his neck.

SKIP

I'm sure you're tired of hearing
excuses...

RACHEL

No...I want to know.

SKIP

After winning a few big cases, I started trying to live up to everybody's expectations. Work became more important than family...The first time I lost back to back cases, I felt like I was a failure and I just wanted to get away.

Rachel sadly stares at Skip as he turns his head away from her and looks down with a frown.

SKIP

Once it was obvious alcohol had taken over, your mother and I decided it would be best for us to go our separate ways.

RACHEL

But why didn't you come see us? Didn't you care what was going on with us.

SKIP

Of course I cared, I stayed in touch with your mother all the time. I even attended some of your volleyball games and some of Henry's football games. I was just too embarrassed to show my face.

RACHEL

Why didn't she tell us?

SKIP

My drinking became so bad, we just decided it would be best that I cleaned up first before I came back into you and your brothers lives...I never lived up to the agreement but I never stopped loving you and your brother.

Rachel walks over to Skip and the two embrace. Will looks over at the two from the basketball court and smiles.

INT. MRS. JOHNSON'S HOME - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Mrs. Johnson looks towards the door as Will enters holding a basketball in one hand. Mrs. Johnson smiles as Will locks the door, and places the basketball on the floor. Will walks over to Mrs. Johnson and kisses her on the cheek. He sits on the couch next to her.

MRS. JOHNSON
Where's your mother?

WILL
She had to drop grandpa off.

Mrs. Johnson raises her eyebrows in surprise.

WILL
Why aren't you with grandpa?

MRS. JOHNSON
Something's just aren't meant to be.

WILL
I don't know, you seem awfully
happy when he's around. I see how
you two look at each other.

MRS. JOHNSON
(grins)
We did have something special, but
that was a long time ago.

Mrs. Johnson gives a glaze stare.

WILL
It's just good to see him and mom
finally getting along.

MRS. JOHNSON
(nods head)
Hopefully the same can happen with
him and your uncle.

EXT. POOR CHICAGO NEIGHBORHOOD - PROJECT HOUSING GROUNDS -
NIGHT

A black Ford Navigator with tinted windows stops at the
corner. Cars are parked, but the street is silent. LOUD
MUSIC and CRIES of a baby ECHO out of the building. Rachel
looks at Skip as he places a white towel in his bag and zips it.

SKIP
(frown)
Thanks for the lift...I really
enjoyed spending time with you and
Will today.

RACHEL
Same here...hey, you feeling ok?
You look a little sick.

SKIP
 I'm ok...was just thinking...maybe
 we should try to get Henry and Lisa
 to come along next time.

RACHEL
 (raises eyebrows)
 Oh...I see.

SKIP
 I've tried...

RACHEL
 Hey, I know...I'll talk to him...he
 just needs some time.

SKIP
 (smiles)
 Thanks.

Skip and Rachel embrace. Skip grabs his bag and exits the
 vehicle. As Rachel drives away, he looks on.

INT. MALL - FOOD COURT - DAY

Henry sits at a table alone while reading a book. Jason
 walks towards him and touches Henry's shoulder. Henry
 closes his book and looks up.

HENRY
 (smiles)
 Have a seat man. What took you so long?

Jason sits directly in front of Henry.

JASON
 Traffic was pretty bad. So what's up?

HENRY
 I've been thinking long and hard
 about this.

Jason looks at his watch with a smirk.

JASON
 about what?

HENRY
 How would you like to partner with
 me and start our own practice?

JASON
 (grins)
 You're kidding right?

HENRY
(shakes head)
No, I'm serious as a heart attack.

JASON
Wow...that sounds interesting...give
me some time to think about that.

HENRY
(smiles)
Hey, take your time. If anyone
understands time and patience, it's me.

JASON
(laughs)
That's an understatement.

HENRY
(smirk)
anyway, I know we've talked about
this in the past, and ever since
Romona passed, I've realized life
is too short to wait for our
dreams...we have to grab it before
it's too late.

Henry and Jason are interrupted by a loud RING. Henry reaches for the cell phone in his pocket and answers the phone.

HENRY
What's up sis? Yea, I'm actually
meeting with Jason right now...

Henry looks at Jason and smiles.

HENRY
Rachel says you still owe her from
your last tab.

Jason grins and waves off the notion with his right hand.

HENRY
Hey, I'm pretty busy right
now...umh...ok, I'll come by with
Lisa when we're through.

Henry places the phone back in his pocket and looks at Jason.

HENRY
Just look at it this way...We've
had some success at the firm early
on, but it'll take time before we
make partner.

JASON
What about getting clients?

HENRY
The resume speaks for itself. Name
two better associates than us?

JASON
Wow...this is the Henry I know.
Always living life on the edge.
Gotta say...happy to see you back.

HENRY
Thanks...I'm getting there but I
have a few more things I need to
get in order. Just think about it,
and let me know if you're on board.

Henry and Jason stand up and the two men shake hands.

JASON
Sure thing...you'll be hearing from
me soon.

INT. GRANDMA RETTA'S LIVING ROOM - DAY

Lisa looks out the window while sipping on a soda. She
smiles as Henry drives his red 2007 BMW 5-series 530i in
front of the house.

LISA
Grandma, dad's here!

Lisa places the soda on the coffee table and walks towards
the door as Grandma Retta walks down the steps. The car horn
HONKS as Lisa opens the front door.

GRANDMA RETTA
Hey speed racer...aren't you going
to give your granny some sugar
before you leave?

Lisa turns around and walks towards Grandma Retta.

LISA
Sorry grandma.

Lisa and Grandma Retta hug and Grandma Retta kisses her on
the forehead.

GRANDMA RETTA
Tell your dad to bring me back some
wings from Mrs. Johnson's.

LISA

Yes mam.

Lisa turns around and walks out the door, as Grandma Retta looks on.

EXT. GRANDMA RETTA'S HOME - DAY

Lisa opens the door and hugs Henry.

LISA

Hey Daddy.

HENRY

Hey pumpkin, ready to have some fun today?

LISA

Yelp.

Henry and Lisa wave to grandma Retta as Lisa closes the door and fastens her seat belt. Grandma Retta waves back. Henry drives away with Lisa as Grandma Retta looks on.

EXT. CHICAGO SUBURBAN STREET - DAY

Henry puts his right hand on top of Lisa's head and rubs it as he smiles.

HENRY

So how's daddy's little girl?

LISA

I'm ready to come home.

Henry places both hands on the steering wheel as he looks straight forward.

HENRY

I know...I want you back home too.

Lisa looks up at Henry with a smirk.

HENRY

Guess what? Daddy has a special gift for you.

LISA

(smiles)

Yeah, what is it?

HENRY

Open the glove compartment.

Lisa opens the glove compartment and picks up a small white box. She takes the lid off the box and pulls out a diamond ring hanging on a thin silver necklace. Lisa eyes and mouth are wide open. Henry looks on and smiles.

HENRY
That ring belonged to your
mother...It belongs to you now.

Henry squints his eyes and curls his lips while Lisa marvels at the ring.

LISA
It's beautiful.

HENRY
Hold on to it and never forget how
much she loved you.

Lisa puts the gift back in the box and puts the lid back on top. She puts the box in the compartment and closes it. She looks up at Henry.

LISA
Daddy...I love you.

Henry looks at Lisa and kisses her on the forehead.

HENRY
I love you too pumpkin.

Henry gloats as he continues to drive. Cars and PEDESTRIANS are on the move around them.

INT. MRS. JOHNSON'S HOME - KITCHEN - DAY

Mrs. Johnson slices carrots with a steak knife when the doorbell RINGS. She looks up and wipes her eyebrows with her forearm.

MRS. JOHNSON
Will, see who's at the door baby!

Mrs. Johnson picks up the sliced carrots and tosses them in a pot. She picks up an onion and begins to slice it when Rachel enters wearing a robe.

RACHEL
Hey Ma. Who's at the door?

Will, Lisa, and Henry enter. Every one bears a smile as Henry hugs and kisses Rachel. Mrs. Johnson puts aside her knife and wipes her hand, as Rachel hugs Lisa and kisses her on the forehead.

MRS. JOHNSON
Come give your granny some sugar.

Lisa walks towards Mrs. Johnson. Mrs. Johnson bends down and gives Lisa a hug and kisses her on the top of the head.

MRS. JOHNSON
Look at you. Just as beautiful as your mother.

RACHEL
Ain't she?

Mrs. Johnson stands erect as Henry walks towards her. The two embrace as Henry kisses her on the cheek. Henry looks at the stove.

HENRY
Is that vegetable stew I smell?

MRS. JOHNSON
Umh hum. Just like you like it. Rachel already baked some chicken and made some cornbread.

WILL
Yea, and I made the lemonade.

HENRY
(grins)
Guess I'll be drinking water today.

Will lunges a soft punch at Henry's arm. Henry pretends to buckle.

RACHEL
Will, take Lisa and let her check out your Nintendo.

WILL
It's not a Nintendo...It's a PS3 Ma.

RACHEL
Whatever, you know what I'm talking about boy.

WILL
(grins)
Come on Lisa.

Lisa walks towards Will and the two exit.

RACHEL

Let me go put on some clothes. I'll
be back in a minute.

Lisa softly taps Henry on the shoulder and exits. Mrs.
Johnson picks up the knife and begins to slice an onion.

MRS. JOHNSON

It's good to see you spending time
with your daughter.

HENRY

I try.

MRS. JOHNSON

Have you taken her to see your father.

HENRY

(shakes head)

Ma...don't start with me today. I
came to have a good time.

MRS. JOHNSON

You know Rachel and Will have been
spending a lot of time with him lately.

Henry eyes widen as he walks towards Mrs. Johnson. Mrs.
Johnson places the knife down and dumps the onions in the
pot. She rinses her hands in the sink.

HENRY

Is that right? So what does he want
now?

Mrs. Johnson turns around and looks at Henry as she dries
her hand with a dish towel.

MRS. JOHNSON

A second chance to love, and to be
loved by his family.

Rachel enters as Mrs. Johnson and Henry look on.

RACHEL

Hey you two, I miss anything
interesting?

HENRY

Nope...but obviously I have.

RACHEL

(puzzled)

ok...what's going on...

MRS. JOHNSON
Hey, you two need to step outside.
Rachel, talk to your brother.

RACHEL
ooh...I think I know where this is
going. We'll be back in a minute.

EXT. MRS. JOHNSON'S HOME - DAY - SAME

Henry closes the door as Rachel sits on the top step. Henry stands in front of Rachel with one foot on the bottom step.

HENRY
So what's this I hear about you and
Skip hanging out now?

RACHEL
Ever since Romona passed, it's been
all about you. You've been acting
as if you were the only one
effected by her death.

HENRY
(vexed)
What does my wife's death have to
do with you and Skip.

RACHEL
It's about not feeling sorry for
yourself all the time. About loving
the people around you.

HENRY
You should go tell that to Skip...

RACHEL
I'm telling it to you...I don't
know if you noticed, but you've
become what Skip use to be.

HENRY
(shocked)
What?

RACHEL
That's right. I heard about you
getting drunk and leaving Lisa
stranded.

Rachel stands.

RACHEL
 Running away from your family and
 neglecting your job...We get it.
 Bad shit happens to good people too,
 but walking around feeling sorry
 for yourself ain't gonna change shit.

Rachel walks towards Henry and pokes his chest with her finger.

RACHEL
 When we were kids we agreed we
 would never be like him...Well, you
 broke that promise.

HENRY
 So what have you two been talking
 about?

RACHEL
 He's changed Henry. He's really
 trying hard...I think you should
 give him a chance.

Henry looks up at the sky.

HENRY
 I've really been an ass ugh?

Rachel hugs Henry.

RACHEL
 Hey, we all make mistakes. That's
 why it's important to forgive and
 give people a chance to right their
 wrongs. Now let's go inside and get
 our grub on.

Mrs. Johnson looks out the window as Rachel and Henry walk
 up the steps and enter the house.

EXT. CHICAGO SUBURBAN STREET - NIGHT

A red 2007 BMW 5-series 530i strolls in the rain. Henry
 navigates the vehicle as Lisa silently sits in the passenger
 seat. The windshield wipers glide back and forth as Henry
 stares straight.

LISA
 Let's stop by moms tomb?

HENRY
 (arched eyebrows)
 But it's pouring out.

LISA
 I know, but since you gave me the
 ring...I've been thinking about her
 all day.

Henry looks at Lisa and smiles as he taps her knees with his
 right hand.

EXT. CEMETERY - NIGHT - SAME

The rain pours as Lisa kneels in front of a tomb. Henry
 stands behind Lisa as she pulls a white box from her pocket.
 Lisa opens the white box and lifts the thin silver chain. As
 the diamond ring dangles in the rain, Lisa kisses the tomb
 and places the chain around her neck. Henry walks towards
 Lisa as she stands. Henry places his hands around Lisa and
 the two stand soaked in front of the tomb. Lisa looks up at
 Henry.

LISA
 (smiles)
 Thank you Daddy...I'll never forget
 this day.

Henry smiles and two turn and walk away.

EXT. MRS. JOHNSON'S RESTAURANT - DAY

Skip stands behind the bar as CUSTOMERS move about. As Mrs.
 Johnson chats with an OLDER CUSTOMER. Delighted, Skip looks
 on. Jason enters and walks directly to the bar.

SKIP
 You look familiar...have we met?

JASON
 Yea, on the train a while back. I'm
 a friend of Henry's.

SKIP
 oh, that's right. Well, how can I
 help you young man?

JASON
 A beer will do...Sir do you mind if
 I ask you a question?

SKIP
 Shoot.

JASON
 Is it true that you won over a
 hundred straight cases before the
 Lexington trial?

Skip eyebrows arch.

SKIP
How did you know about that?

JASON
Let's just say I've studied a lot
of cases.

Mrs. Johnson turns behind the bar and walks towards the two men as Skip hands Jason a mug of beer. Mrs. Johnson stands next to Skip, in front of Jason.

MRS. JOHNSON
Looks like you two don't need an
introduction. What brings you by Jason?

JASON
I was hoping we could chat for a
minute.

MRS. JOHNSON
Oh, what's on your mind?

JASON
You know Henry and I have always
talked about starting our own law
firm...well, he approached me about
leaving the firm and becoming partners.

Skip looks on with interest as Mrs. Johnson slaps her hands together and moves them under her chin.

MRS. JOHNSON
What, that's a wonderful idea. Have
you two finalized this?

JASON
No, but you know how he is. He
wants me to let him know right away.

SKIP
So how are things at the firm?

JASON
Since Henry took leave, leadership
has gotten really sloppy and
unprofessional. I'm starting to
feel we can do better on our own.

MRS. JOHNSON
Skip, so what you think?

SKIP

(grins)

What, he asked you, not me.

JASON

Hey, I'm almost sold...Just weighing a few pro's and cons.

SKIP

You have any experience son?

JASON

Let's just say I plan to shatter your accomplishments one day sir.

SKIP

(grins)

Confidence, that's a good start.

MRS. JOHNSON

Oh my God. Wait until I tell Rachel.

Jason picks up the mug and sips as Mrs. Johnson walks away. Skip nods and smiles.

INT. LOCAL GYM - DAY

Henry peddles on a stationary bike, while head phones are attached to his ears. Six HEALTHY WOMEN and four HEALTHY MEN work out around him. Dr. Jay Paris enters with a towel around his neck. His eyebrows arch as he notices Henry. Dr. Jay Paris walks over to Henry and taps his shoulder. Henry stops peddling and smiles as he removes his head phones.

DR. JAY PARIS

Long time no see. How are you?

HENRY

I can't complain. How's the family?

DR. JAY PARIS

The family's fine...It's just this recent incident at the hospital that has me worried.

HENRY

What's the problem?

DR. JAY PARIS

Hey...you have enough to worry about on your own. Let's just say I'm looking for a good lawyer.

HENRY
 (smiles)
 So what am I?

DR. JAY PARIS
 (grins)
 You're an excellent lawyer, who
 last time we spoke, was out on
 leave from his occupation.

Dr. Jay Paris pats him on the back.

DR. JAY PARIS
 Well, it was good seeing you man.
 Let's keep in touch.

The two shake hands.

HENRY
 Oh, you'll be hearing back from me
 soon. I'm interested in knowing
 more about your little incident.

DR. JAY PARIS
 That's fine...but believe me,
 there's nothing little about it. My
 reputation is at risk.

Henry looks on as Dr. Jay Paris walks away. Henry puts his
 headphones back in his ears and begins to peddle.

INT. CITY TRAIN - DAY

Will and Joe toss a basketball back and forth as the
 PASSENGERS quietly look on. The train stops as Will and Joe
 exit.

EXT. DOWNTOWN CHICAGO STREET, INTERSECTION - DAY - SAME

Will dribbles the ball as the two walk along. PEDESTRIANS
 walk the street.

JOE
 So what's the deal with your
 grandfather? He and Mrs. Johnson
 hooking back up or what?

WILL
 She's digging him and all, but I
 don't know about all that.

JOE
 Your moms seem to be cool with it.

WILL

I know right...It's just good to see her happy again. Yo, what you worried about that for? The real question is how you gonna stop me from draining them scuds.

Will smiles as he flips his wrist to rotate the ball in the air. Joe grabs the ball while it's in the air and begins to dribble the ball away from Will. Will laughs as he chases Joe.

INT. MRS. JOHNSON'S RESTAURANT - DAY

Skip stands near the pool table when the phone RINGS across the room. Mrs. Johnson walks towards the phone as Skip picks up the eight ball and tosses it into the corner pocket. Mrs. Johnson picks up the phone and places the receiver to her ear.

MRS. JOHNSON

(smiles)

Hey, we were just talking about you.

Skip looks at Mrs. Johnson as he picks up a pool stick.

MRS. JOHNSON

He was just here...ok...ok...I'll let him know...Love you.

Skip walks towards Mrs. Johnson as she hangs up the phone.

SKIP

Who was that?

MRS. JOHNSON

(smiles)

It was your son...He wants you to come to the church at seven tonight.

SKIP

Fellowship?

Mrs. Johnson continues to smile as she nods her head.

MRS. JOHNSON

Yelp...Looks like you two have a lot to talk about.

SKIP

(smiles)

I guess we do.

EXT. FELLOWSHIP BAPTIST CHURCH - NIGHT

Henry stands alone holding a black box as Skip walks towards him. Henry does not notice, as Skip closes in.

SKIP

Hello son.

HENRY

(startled)

Hey...you caught me off guard there.
How are you?

SKIP

I have to say, I'm pleasantly
surprise that you wanted to talk to me.

HENRY

Hope you don't mind the location,
but you and I know this has been
long over due.

Skip looks down at the box in Henry's hand.

SKIP

I see you got my little gift...So
what's on your mind?

Henry walks towards the steps and sits. He places the box in his lap.

HENRY

when I was young I use to think I
had the greatest dad in the
world...I was the envy of all my
friends.

Skip places his hands in his pockets as he looks on.

HENRY

Some friends didn't know who their
fathers were, and others had
fathers who had abandoned them...but
not me. My old man was a big time
lawyer.

SKIP

Son, I've always loved you and...

HENRY

Just listen for a change Skip...hear
me out.

Skip raises his hands and tilts his head, letting Henry know he will concur.

HENRY

When you left, I lost my best friend...for some time, I blamed myself...thought I had done something wrong to run you away.

Henry places the box on the step.

HENRY

Every night Rachel and I waited for you to come back but finally it took it's toll. Can you imagine what it felt like for me to have to dodge my friends, so I wouldn't have answer questions about you?

SKIP

I can't...but I would like to apologize for not being a father to you. I don't expect you to forget what happened, I just ask that you give me a second chance to create new memories.

HENRY

I understand things got rough for you...hell, I'm going through a few things myself...but why didn't you keep in touch? How could you just walk away from your family?

Skip slides his hand over his mouth.

SKIP

I was a coward selfishly thinking about myself. By the time I realized how long I had been away, I was too shame to make that journey back home.

Skip shakes his head as Henry looks on.

SKIP

I managed to convince myself that you all would be better off without me.

HENRY

How?

SKIP

I don't know son. If you force yourself, you can believe anything that you want to...no matter how stupid it is.

HENRY

Rachel told me I was behaving just like you the other day.

SKIP

Hey, things happen...The real test of a man is how he bounces back up after he falls.

HENRY

For what it's worth...I wish we would have had this conversation sooner.

SKIP

(smiles)

There's an old saying...

Skip walks towards Henry and sits next to him.

SKIP

Better to loose the game on the field then to lose it in the bleachers.

HENRY

What does that mean?

SKIP

At least we're giving ourselves a chance to iron this thing out. To have continued not talking wouldn't have solved anything.

Henry opens the black box and picks up a newspaper clipping.

SKIP

I've never stopped loving you son, and I'm proud of all your accomplishments...You showed a lot of character calling me out here.

HENRY

It wont be easy, but I'll try to work this thing out. It's just that I have so many unanswered questions and built up anger...but I'm glad you showed up.

EXT. CHICAGO SUBURBAN STREET - DAY

Henry drives his red BMW as PEDESTRIANS are on the move around him. He slows down and parallel parks in front of Mrs. Johnson's home. Will and Joe are seated on the steps. Henry exits the car and walks towards the house.

HENRY
How are you guys doing?

Henry and Joe fist bump.

WILL
we're good.

HENRY
Are the ladies in?

WILL
Yeah...their in the kitchen.

Henry walks between the two and enters the house.

INT. MRS. JOHNSON'S HOME - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Henry enters while Rachel and Mrs. Johnson are seated on the sofa. The two ladies smile as Henry bends over to hug each.

RACHEL
So how did it go?

HENRY
I said what I had to say...it was nothing more.

MRS. JOHNSON
Well, I'm glad to see the two of you talking again. That's a start.

HENRY
I actually came over to talk to you two about something else.

RACHEL
Let me guess...Does it have anything to do with Jason.

Henry looks at Mrs. Johnson.

HENRY
So what you think Ma?

MRS. JOHNSON

I love the idea...what's more important, is how you feel about it.

HENRY

The other day when I had Lisa, I realized we have to live in the moment. We can't just expect that things will happen automatically.

RACHEL

So what's the problem?

HENRY

Since I spoke with Jason, I've had time to reevaluate the whole thing. If I stay at the firm for a little longer, I maintain a definite income and can save for an easier transition later.

RACHEL

I never thought about that.

HENRY

Not to mention strengthening the resume, and beefing Lisa's college fund.

MRS. JOHNSON

When Jason first told me, I thought it was a wonderful idea...and I still do. Like you said, there are pro's and cons. You have to be willing to live with whatever decision you make.

Henry kisses Mrs. Johnson on the cheek.

INT. HOWIE'S BAR - DAY

Howie removes four chairs from on top of a table and neatly slides them under the table when Skip enters. Howie is aware that someone has entered but does not turn around.

HOWIE

We're not open till noon.

SKIP

It's me man.

Howie turns around with a smile as Skip walks towards him.

HOWIE

You've been M I A. What's going on?

The two embrace.

SKIP

I work at the restaurant with my daughter and my ex now.

HOWIE

Get out of here. How's your boy doing.

SKIP

We're finally beginning to iron out a few things.

HOWIE

I'm glad to hear that. Want something to drink? It's on the house.

SKIP

I'll pass. It's way too early for that. I just came to thank you for being a good friend all these years...you know...

HOWIE

Who's the impostor in front of me? This is not the Skip I know...seriously, I'm just glad to see things are finally working out for you.

SKIP

It's just good to have my kids back in my life...I'll have to invite you over to meet the grand kids sometime.

Howie walks over to the next table and removes a chair to the floor.

HOWIE

Any time buddy, any time.

EXT. MARK'S HOME - DAY

Mark pushes a lawnmower as Henry arrives in the drive way. Henry parks the car and heads toward Mark holding two bottle waters. Mark stops the lawnmower and wipes his forehead with his forearm. Henry grins and tosses Mark a bottle water. Mark catches it with one hand.

MARK

Good timing...What brings you by?

HENRY

What if I told you I was going to partner with someone from the firm and we were going to start our own practice. Who would you think I was referring to?

MARK

Jason seems like a heads up guy...Why, is there something I need to know?

HENRY

You've always been one to play it safe...What do you think about me walking away from the firm and starting a practice with Jason?

MARK

I wouldn't jump into it unless I had a big case and a wealthy client already onboard.

HENRY

Why?

MARK

The expenses of finding a location, the cost of marketing and advertising, and building a reputation could make things pretty difficult in the beginning.

HENRY

True.

MARK

With everything you and Lisa's been through, are you mentally ready for the hard work and time you will have to put into it to make it successful?

Henry places his left arm across his chest and places his right hand on his chin as he looks down. Mark opens the bottle water and takes a sip.

MARK

If you guys can't leave the firm with a client and a big case in place, it'll be best to stay at the firm and fatten up the resume while saving money.

HENRY

A big client ugh?

MARK

Hey...regardless of what I say, it's something you have to decide on your own. Just think about the transition for Lisa.

HENRY

(smiles)

You're ok with me man. I don't believe all of those bad things people have been saying about you.

MARK

(grins)

What people? The only people talking bad about me is you and Terri.

The two men laugh. Henry opens his bottle water and takes a sip while Mark pours the one he holds over his head.

INT. HENRY'S HOME - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Henry sits on the couch wearing pajamas and a robe. Lisa enters wearing pajamas, holding a doll. She sits next to Henry as she wears the silver chain with the diamond ring around her neck.

HENRY

I see you still haven't found a place for that chain.

LISA

I have...I just felt like wearing it.

HENRY

Hey, I'm thinking about leaving the firm and starting my own practice.

LISA

Are you happy?

HENRY

I feel good about it.

LISA
Then you should do it.

HENRY
Your mother and I use to talk about
doing it all the time. She was
going to run the office while I
would add an extra partner. We
never got a chance to....

LISA
Daddy...you still have me...I'll
run the office.

Henry laughs and places his arm around Lisa as he kisses her
on top of the head.

HENRY
In due time...Just continue to get
good grades in school for right now.

LISA
Does this mean I'll be staying with
you from now on?

HENRY
Why not? I think it's about time I
started acting like your father again.

Lisa places both hands around Henry's neck as she sits on
his lap.

INT. MALL - FOOD COURT - DAY

Henry sits at a table alone. Jason walks towards him and the
two embrace. Jason sits across from him.

JASON
So this is like your official spot now.

HENRY
It never crossed my mind...I guess
you can say that.

JASON
(smiles)
I'm on board.

HENRY
After we spoke, I had some time to
think the whole thing over, and I
have two mandatory conditions.

JASON

Shoot.

HENRY

One, we find a client and have a case lined up before we turn in our resignations, and two, we both understand that my daughters needs come first, before any client.

JASON

(smiles)

Sounds like a winner to me.

The two men extend their hands and shake on it.

JASON

You know we can't take on any of the active clients from the firm. You have any in mind.

HENRY

It's funny you said that because I actually do have a client in mind. Meet me at the house later tonight. I want you to meet someone.

INT. MRS. JOHNSON'S HOME - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Mrs. Johnson lays across the couch as she watches tv. The door bell RINGS. She gets up and walks towards the door. As she opens the door, she raises her eye brows and shakes her head. Skip enters holding beautiful red roses. Skip kisses Mrs. Johnson on the cheek.

SKIP

These are for you.

Mrs. Johnson takes the roses from Skip and hugs him.

MRS. JOHNSON

How beautiful...What's the special occasion?

SKIP

I just wanted to thank you for everything you've done over the last few months.

Mrs. Johnson walks over to place the roses in a vase while Henry sits on the couch. She turns off the television and sits next to him.

MRS. JOHNSON
I'm proud of you for reaching out
to our children...They both love
you very much.

The two smile as they look eye to eye.

SKIP
Do you still love me?

MRS. JOHNSON
I never stopped loving you Skip.

SKIP
I've gotten my second chance from
the kids...how about their mother?

MRS. JOHNSON
It depends...

The two begin to kiss passionately. Skip falls on the couch
with Mrs. Johnson on top of him.

EXT. CHICAGO SUBURBAN STREET - DAY

Rachel drives as Will sits in the passenger seat of a black
Ford Navigator. Cars and PEDESTRIANS are on the move around
them.

RACHEL
I know I've been really busy at the
restaurant, but I just wanted to
spend a little time with you.

WILL
(grins)
A little Q T?

RACHEL
You know you can come to me about
anything...So what's been up with you?

WILL
I'm cool...since you and granddad
started talking, you smile more.
It's good to see you happy.

RACHEL
(grins)
So what you saying, I was a grouch
before?

WILL
I'm just saying, at least one of us
has our father back in our life.

RACHEL
Baby I'm...

WILL
Hey, we've had this conversation
before ma. I was raised by two of
the strongest women in the world,
and the men in my life have all
been positive role models...can't
ask for anything more.

Rachel smiles as she pats Will on the leg.

RACHEL
You're a good Kid.

WILL
(smile)
Remember that when it's time to get
my license...and a new car.

RACHEL
Whatever...You need to grab some
hours in the restaurant and start
saving up.

EXT. HENRY'S HOME - NIGHT

Dr. Jay Paris walks to the door and KNOCKS. Henry opens the
door and invites him in. Henry closes the door behind him.

INT. HENRY'S HOME - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT - SAME

Jason is seated, but stands as Henry and Dr. Jay Paris enter.

HENRY
Jason, meet my neighbor, Dr. Jay Paris.

Jason and Dr. Jay Paris shake hands, and the three gentlemen
sit.

JASON
Henry tells me you are one of the
better surgeons in the midwest.

DR. JAY PARIS
I try...how about yourself?

Jason looks at Henry and points with a smirk.

JASON
I work with this guy at the firm.

DR. JAY PARIS
(grins)
OOh...I think I know what this is about.

HENRY
You got it...So have you found a lawyer yet.

DR. JAY PARIS
I've spoken to a few people, but I'm really looking for the best representation that money can buy.

HENRY
That's why I planned this gathering. So what's going on? What happened at the hospital?

The door bell RINGS.

HENRY
Just one minute you guys. Let me see who's at the door.

Henry heads to the door. When he opens the door, Skip stands smiling. Henry eyebrows arch.

SKIP
Hey son. Can I come in?

HENRY
I'm sorry, you caught me off guard...Of course you can come in.

Skip steps in and Henry closes the door.

SKIP
Bad timing?

HENRY
Don't worry about it.

The two enter as Dr. Jay Paris and Jason stand.

HENRY
Fellas, meet my dad.

Jason and Skip look astonished at Henry's response.

HENRY

You've met Jason, and this is my neighbor, Dr. Jay Paris.

Skip shakes hands with Jason and Dr. Jay Paris.

HENRY

He was the doctor with Romona the night of the accident.

The four man sit.

HENRY

Doc needs a lawyer and was just about to tell us about his situation.

DR. JAY PARIS

Received medical malpractice claim from an amputated trauma patient I operated on.

SKIP

Aren't protocols and procedures in place before these decisions are made?

DR. JAY PARIS

Normally, but this guy came in unconscious with no identification.

JASON

How bad was the injury?

DR. JAY PARIS

He had already lost a lot of blood...had lot of deep cut wounds.

HENRY

I don't get it, what led to the amputation?

DR. JAY PARIS

Turns out the patient has soft tissue tumors...Instead of just patching things up, I practically saved his life with the amputation.

SKIP

What's the problem here?

DR. JAY PARIS

Unconscious patients and their families have the right to make these decisions.

HENRY

Doctor makes life and death
decision for unconscious patient
with no identification. Sued for
malpractice.

Jason stands.

JASON

So who did you have in mind to
represent you on this one?

DR. JAY PARIS

I've been talking to some guys at
Clifford Change.

SKIP

That megafirm in the UK?

DR. JAY PARIS

Yea.

SKIP

Were talking seven hundred and
fifty an hour...If you ask me,
these guys can win this case for
much less.

Henry, with arched eyebrows quickly looks at skip with a
smile. He smiles and looks back at Dr. Jay Paris.

HENRY

He's right...Jason and I have
decided to start our own firm and
would love to have you as a client.

Jason looks on and nods.

DR. JAY PARIS

Wow...when did this happen?
Hey...I'm interested. I tell you
what, let me go home and discuss
this with Kathryn.

All four stand as Dr. Jay Paris stands and shakes hands with
all.

DR. JAY PARIS

You guys will be hearing from me soon.

EXT. HENRY'S HOME - NIGHT - SAME

Dr. Jay Paris walks to his home as Skip, Henry and Jason
look on. Jason turns to Skip.

JASON
 (smiles)
 It's good to get your recommendation
 after you grilled me earlier.

SKIP
 I was talking about Henry...I'm
 still worried about you blowing the
 case.

The three men laugh. Jason looks at his watch and turns to Henry.

JASON
 I'm about to head out. It's a
 little past my bedtime...I'll talk
 to you guys later.

Jason points at Skip.

JASON
 You keep it up, we might have to
 make you an equity partner.

Skip and Jason laugh as Henry looks on with a friendly smirk. Jason walks towards a red sports car. Henry and Skip face each other.

SKIP
 You know that was the first time
 I've heard you call me dad, since
 lord knows when.

JASON
 Really, don't recall...but hey,
 thanks for the pitch...I think you
 got us our first client.

Skip stands with a look of minor disappointment.

SKIP
 Anything I can do to help son...It's
 getting a little late...I'd better
 head out myself.

Skip and Henry shake hands. Skip walks away as Henry looks on.

INT. FELLOWSHIP BAPTIST CHURCH - PULPIT - DAY

Pastor Jones enters while Skip kneels in prayer. Skip opens his eyes and stands as Pastor Jones greets him with a handshake.

PASTOR JONES
 How are things coming along?

SKIP

What can I say...God is great...Thank you for all the prayers and lectures reverend. Seems like things are finally turning for the better.

PASTOR JONES

Hey, just continue to keep the faith. The lord never gives up on us...We just have to believe in ourselves and continue to ask for guidance.

SKIP

We're throwing Henry a party at the restaurant Saturday...I'm extending you a personal invite.

PASTOR JONES

Sounds fun...Think I'll take you up on this one.

SKIP

Sure thing. There will be lots of food...hey, we'll even heat you up a pitcher of apple cider.

PASTOR JONES

(laughs)

Now that's an offer I can't refuse.

Skip and Pastor Jones shake hands.

INT. MRS. JOHNSON'S HOME - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Rachel enters while Mrs. Johnson is seated on the sofa.

MRS. JOHNSON

What happened?

Rachel walks towards Mrs. Johnson with a frown. Rachel pumps her fist and smiles.

RACHEL

I got it...You are looking at a new home owner.

Mrs. Johnson stands and the two women embrace.

RACHEL

It should be ready in about a week or two.

There is a KNOCK at the door. Rachel turns around and opens the door. Skip enters and hugs her. The two gather around Mrs. Johnson.

MRS. JOHNSON
You're looking at a first time home owner.

SKIP
What? Well I'll be damn...congratulations.

RACHEL
(smile)
Thanks...You two have to excuse me, but I need to make a phone call...oh, I might need some help packing too.

Rachel exits as Skip and Mrs. Johnson sit on the sofa.

SKIP
Looks like someone is going to have a house all to themselves.

MRS. JOHNSON
(smiles)
Maybe.

SKIP
I'm looking for a roommate.

MRS. JOHNSON
How about a soulmate?

SKIP
What's going on here. I thought you said some things were just not meant to be.

MRS. JOHNSON
Some time things change. Let's take it slow and see where it leads us.

Skip holds Mrs Johnson hands.

SKIP
Hey...I have nothing to lose and everything to gain.

EXT. DOWNTOWN CHICAGO - DAY

Pedestrians and cars roam about among the cities beautiful skyline.

Parked cars are lined up on a street in front of Mrs. Johnson's restaurant.

INT. MRS. JOHNSON'S RESTAURANT - DAY

Customers socialize as Rachel roams the room. Lisa and Rusty are seated together across from Mark and Terri. Grandma Retta and David Malone sit at a corner table. Joe and Will play pool as Skip and Pastor Jones look on. The chubby man in a wrinkled suit sits around the crowded bar. Mrs Johnson places a mug of beer and a plate of hot wings in front of the man.

MRS. JOHNSON

Just the way you like it...this ones on the house.

CHUBBY MAN

That's why I love this place.

The chubby man picks up a wing and takes a bite as Mrs. Johnson walks away. The banner on the wall reads: "J & H ATTORNEY AT LAW." Skip walks over to Mrs. Johnson and places his arm around her shoulders. Rachel places a cake on top of an empty table next to Grandma Retta and David Malone.

WILL

Hey...here they come!

The room is silent as Henry, Jason, Kathryn and Dr. Jay Paris enter. Everyone claps as the four are embraced by the group.

CHUBBY MAN

(yells)

What's the verdict?

HENRY

Innocent, we won.

Dr. Jay Paris smiles as he pumps one fist in the air while the other arm hangs around Kathryn's waist. Lisa embraces Henry while Rusty joins her parents.

JASON

We didn't even have to put him on the stand. It was an open and closed case.

HENRY

Rachel, turn to channel nine...there should be some footage on the news.

Rachel grabs the remote and turns up the VOLUME on the television.

RACHEL
shhh! Here it goes, listen.

The entire room is silent.

NEWS REPORTER (ON TV)
Once again, trauma surgeon, Dr. Jay Paris has been cleared of all charges after being sued for malpractice by a former amputee patient. Ironically, his legal team were former associates at the prosecutors firm, and have gone on to start their own firm. Many who witnessed the trial feel Dr. Paris's dream team legal defense made a clear cut case of his innocence.

Kudos from the crowd as Jason and Henry raise their hands in the air.

JASON
Somebody hand me a beer. It's time to party!

LOUD MUSIC fills the room as the CUSTOMERS go back to socializing. Rachel hands Jason a pitcher of beer and an empty mug.

RACHEL
(smiles)
Make sure we don't have to drive you home.

Jason points at Rachel.

JASON
That shouldn't be a problem...Now that you're a homeowner, I can just crash at your place.

RACHEL
(smirk)
No sir. I need to keep my carpet stain free.

JASON
Can a white guy get a break here?

RACHEL

(grins)

That unpaid tab is all the break
you get around here...Congratulations
silly.

Jason grins and pours beer in his Mug.

JASON

I still got it baby...still got it.

Smiling, Rachel shakes her head and walks away.

EXT. MRS. JOHNSON'S RESTAURANT - DAY - SAME

Skip stands on the sidewalk smoking a cigarette. He paces
back and forth when Henry steps outside. Skip tosses the
cigarette and steps on it.

HENRY

What's up with you? Everything ok?

SKIP

I'm fine son...I'm just soaking
this moment in.

HENRY

The trial was a success wasn't it?

SKIP

Yes, but more importantly...I'm
proud of the loving parents and
successful entrepreneurs you and
your sister have become.

Skip takes his hands out of his pockets and looks in side
the restaurant. He quickly looks at Henry.

SKIP

Your mother did a wonderful Job
raising you...I wish more mothers
could be like her, and less fathers
like I use to be.

HENRY

No matter how angry I was after you
left, I always wanted to be a big
time lawyer like you.

SKIP

Why is that?

HENRY

I hated you for leaving, but a part of me always held on to the memories when you were around...some of my best times of my childhood.

SKIP

If I had a do over, I would have started my own practice, just like your doing right now. I would have had more time for my family.

SKIP

Son, sorry I wasn't there for you after you lost your wife. I can imagine what you've been going through.

HENRY

Hey, it's life. We reconcile, cherish, and enjoy the ones who are around.

SKIP

And all this time I've been away, I've missed out on you two, along with my grand kids...no way to bring back those years.

HENRY

After Romona died, I think I understood how you felt for a while. I just wanted to get away...away from everyone.

SKIP

Good thing you didn't make the same mistake I made.

HENRY

I know right...after talking to Rachel, she sorta put things into perspective.

SKIP

How's that?

HENRY

(smiles)

Let's just say it's good to have you back around...Dad.

Henry smiles and the two hug. Howie walks around the corner.

HOWIE
Hey, congratulations young blood.

Henry and Skip turn around and let go of one another.

HENRY
Thanks.

HOWIE
Well, what are you dead beats doing
out here? It's suppose to be a party.

SKIP
Come on in, want you to meet my
grand kids.

Howie looks at Henry and laughs.

HOWIE
Looking much better then the last
time I seen you, son.

The three men laugh as they enter the building.

FADE OUT.

The End