

"SCRUTINY"

by  
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FADE IN:

INT. MOVIE THEATER LOBBY - NIGHT

BIG JIM CANNING, a handsome, lanky loner in his late 20s, leans against a CONCESSIONS COUNTER of a dark second-run movie theater.

He stares at the PEOPLE COMING AND GOING as if he could steal their souls with his gaze.

He zeroes in on an unaccompanied TODDLER in her STROLLER. She holds a wilting bouquet of three bright YELLOW DANDELIONS. He looks around and can find no one minding the child.

Jim walks over to the toddler and without provocation or warning SLAPS her face.

The BABY SCREAMS. Her mother, NANCY MCCREEDY, arrives to comfort the child. A CROWD of onlookers expresses horror.

TWO USHERS and a FAT MAN tackle Big Jim and easily bring him to the floor.

Jim's face is pressed against the dirty carpet under the fat man's knee. Big Jim smiles.

INT. COURTROOM - DAY

Big Jim Canning stands before the witness box as a BAILIFF holds a BIBLE under his left hand.

BAILIFF

Do you Declan James Canning swear  
to tell the truth and nothing but  
the truth so help you God?

BIG JIM

I'd rather swear upon "The Origin  
of the Species" or even "Valley of  
the Dolls." And that's the whole  
truth.

JUDGE

Pretend it's the Kama Sutra for all  
I care, Mr. Canning.

(MORE)

JUDGE (cont'd)

But I wouldn't give up on God if I were facing what you are.

BIG JIM

Jesus and me, we're cut from the same shroud. He, too, was a contrarian. Made blind men see. Made lame men walk. Black is white. Water is wine. For all you know, I'm Christ two-point-0.

JUDGE

You make this awful easy.

EXT. LATE SUMMER SKY - DAY

A DANDELION SEED helicopters through the sky. Then another. A GROUP OF DANDELION SEEDS are carried away on their fluff.

EXT. CEMETERY ROAD - DAY

A GREYHOUND BUS travels slowly alongside a never-ending CEMETERY with row upon row of old GRAVESTONES.

A BILLBOARD - advertising a new apartment complex - stands in the cemetery to face the nearby highway. It makes an accidental joke:

*IF YOU LIVED HERE YOU'D BE HOME NOW*

INT./EXT. GREYHOUND BUS - DAY

DAGNY CANNING, an attractive, dressed-down young woman, dwarfed by her BAGGAGE, lifts a professional CAMERA to take a picture of the ironic billboard.

Dagny puts the camera down and studies the PREGNANT WOMAN in the seat in front of her. She's too young, and except for her belly, too thin. She takes a magazine quiz "CAN YOU JOIN MENSA?" Dagny smirks.

EXT. CEMETERY - DAY - CONTINUOUS

Pre-adolescent LANDRY SIMMONS blows the fluff off DANDELIONS gone-to-seed into a MAYONNAISE JAR already half filled with similar seeds.

Landry's small, timid. It's impossible to tell if he maintains such strong focus on his task because of his loneliness or his laser-beam smarts. He scans the graves for more clumps of dandelions.

EXT. CANNING HOUSE - DAY

Dagny walks up a path to her childhood home. She carries her LARGE SUITCASE, DUFFEL BAG and CAMERA CASE. She passes three childishly made TOMBSTONES for long-dead pets.

INT. DAGNY'S CHILDHOOD BEDROOM - DAY

Dagny stands in the doorway with two CAMERAS around her neck. She sets the suitcase down gingerly, but just drops the bag.

She lifts her camera and looks around the room through its viewfinder. A TREADMILL. BARBELLS

A MATTRESS, still bearing her girlier-than-thou Laura Ashley SHEETS, is propped against the far wall alongside the room's only window. She snaps a picture of it.

She sets the cameras on a child's DRESSER. She opens the top drawer to discover a stash of PORNO and AUTO MAGAZINES. She leaves the drawer open and walks over to the mattress. She pulls off the SHEET, sending DUST to dance in the window's sun streaks.

She bunches the sheet into a makeshift pillow and lies down on the treadmill, staring at the ceiling, where PEELING PAINT hangs in odd shapes.

A KNOCK at the frame of the open door.

Before she can react, her father, DECLAN CANNING, wearing a stained short-sleeve shirt and tie enters. He's looks sickly.

DECLAN

Not like you remember it, huh,  
Dagny?

She bolts upright.

DAGNY

You scared me, Declan. I love what  
you've done with the place.

DECLAN

I'm glad you decided to come. You  
don't have to tell me anything you  
don't want; just did he hit you?

DAGNY

I promise, Declan, if he hit me,  
he'd have more than a failed  
marriage; he'd have an "inny" where  
his "outty" ought to be dangling.

DECLAN

You always could shoot more than just pictures. For what it's worth, I'm sorry it didn't work out.

DAGNY

I'm under-whelmed, Declan. I thought I could count on you for one good I-told-you-so.

DECLAN

Sorry to disappoint.

DAGNY

If there's one dish the men in my life serve hot, it's disappointment.

Dagny stands up and walks to the window.

DAGNY

Sycamore's gone.

Declan notices the porno in the dresser and shuts the drawer.

DECLAN

Things are gonna change over seven years.

DAGNY

You turned my room into a gym?

DECLAN

Had to try something. My bosoms got bigger than your mama's.

DAGNY

That's no mean feat.

DECLAN

I don't know what was worse, the doctor telling me to exercise or when he told me not to bother.

Dagny withholds the laugh that her nervous father desperately seeks. He smiles at her and nods back to the dresser.

DECLAN

Most of the crap in here is your brother's. He's pretty much taken over the whole house. Now he can't go to work, he set up his studio in the basement.

DAGNY

Jimmy. How is big Jim?

DECLAN

Same still. Kind of guy that pees in the neighbor's pool. From the diving board.

DAGNY

I saw the magazines.

DECLAN

Odd thing is he uses the car books and the girly books to the same end. We can't keep enough Kleenex in this house.

DAGNY

Gross.

Dagny trips on the treadmill as she heads to the closet.

DECLAN

We can get rid of that thing. Mostly I just pile laundry on it. Or you can have it if you want.

DAGNY

My whole life's a treadmill. Last thing I need is monument.

Dagny opens the closet door. No clothes. A BOWLING BAG bag sits on the floor. A simple URN occupies the top shelf.

DAGNY

You keep Mama in the closet?

DECLAN

Half of her anyway. Big Jim took the other half to that picnic spot of hers. He put her in a Zip-loc and got himself pulled over for speeding as usual. Cop saw that Baggie and did a field test. Poked a pinky in the powder and dabbed Mama right on his tongue.

DAGNY

Think she was still bitter?

DECLAN

Your Mama loved you.

DAGNY

She said she didn't get a minute's sleep the whole nine months she carried me because she could hear my crying in her womb.

DECLAN

That was your Mama. You could have come home right away, Dagny.

DAGNY

And miss staying at the Kingery? The hotel for tourists who think Motel Six is three too many? All the comforts of home ... if your mother died young and your father was a drunk. Sorry. Too close?

DECLAN

Well, hell, Dagny, didn't you get witty. Are you always so funny?

DAGNY

Never on Thursdays.

DECLAN

I'll steer clear come Thursday.

DAGNY

If I'm still here.

DECLAN

I want you to stay.

DAGNY

I know, Daddy.

INT. DAGNY'S CHILDHOOD BEDROOM - NIGHT

There's hardly enough light in the room to notice the treadmill is pushed up against a wall, and Dagny sleeps on the mattress, with no frame, in the center of the room.

She wakes with a start to find a MAN staring at her. It's her older brother, BIG JIM CANNING, and he wears only his briefs and a DETENTION MONITOR around his ankle.

BIG JIM

I knew you'd be back.

Dagny groggily relaxes her posture as she recognizes her brother in the dark.

DAGNY  
Jimmy? Hey, Big Jim.

BIG JIM  
We weren't born with umbilical  
cords; we were born with bungee  
cords. Spring. Boing. "I'm home."

DAGNY  
Who says I'm back?

BIG JIM  
I'm seeing you with my own eyes,  
ain't I?

DAGNY  
Yeah, and it's fucking freaky. You  
staring at me in the middle of the  
night.

She throws a SHOE at him.

Big Jim ducks. The shoe misses. He stands up laughing just to  
be clocked in the head by a SECOND SHOE.

Declan appears at the door.

DECLAN  
Big Jim, go; get to bed now.

BIG JIM  
I just needed a magazine.

DAGNY  
(Whispering)  
Jimmy? You holding?

INT. CANNING BASEMENT - LATER THAT NIGHT

Dagny studies Big Jim through the viewfinder of her 35MM  
CAMERA. They both wear PAJAMAS.

Big Jim returns the stare through the viewfinder of his  
professional VIDEO CAMERA. The Canning basement is Jim's at-  
home video studio, professionally complete with MIXING BOARD,  
STUDIO LIGHTS on stands and other equipment.

Big Jim takes a drag off a JOINT. At that moment, Dagny snaps  
a picture and puts down the camera.

BIG JIM  
My life is like my worst credit  
card.

(MORE)



BIG JIM (cont'd)  
I have twenty-eight percent  
interest and a shit-load of  
penalties.

DAGNY  
What Socrates failed to say is a  
life examined too much is no life  
at all.

Dagny takes a drag and makes a smoke ring.

DAGNY  
What's a bad day for him?

BIG JIM  
He takes a step. Stops. Starts. Two  
steps. Stops. It's like he's  
walking in Morse code. Sometimes he  
can't even get out of bed. I have  
to prop him up to give him his shot  
... and a beer. Get it, shot and a  
beer?

DAGNY  
Shot "and a" beer. Hug "and a"  
kiss. Swing "and a" miss. His whole  
life can be summed up in "and a's."

Jim reaches for the JOINT and sucks it deep.

DAGNY  
The one real thing, him and mom had  
in common. Jim Beam.

BIG JIM  
You look like her... Hair foot and  
a club lip.

They both laugh. It's the pot.

DAGNY  
Now you're being mean. Some people  
let themselves go, but she went  
twice.

BIG JIM  
I meant you look like her when she  
was young.

He passes the joint to his sister.

DAGNY  
Declan's not really drinking booze  
with that medicine is he?

BIG JIM

Nothing wrong with a little Jameson's. It's the original chemotherapy. And please don't harsh my high with your Adult-Child-of-an-Alcoholic crap. You'd be an alcoholic, too, if you gave birth to an adult child.

Jim takes a deep drag.

BIG JIM

The more he drinks, the less codeine he takes. More for me. Ever have it? Codeine? Like little hugs from Jesus.

DAGNY

So why did you do it?

BIG JIM

What?

DAGNY

Slap a baby?

BIG JIM

I don't know. It was there.

DAGNY

Ass. That's "mountains" you're thinking of. I guess you got what you fucking deserved then.

BIG JIM

Whoa! You suck your husband's cock with that mouth?

Daggy laughs.

DAGNY

Not anymore. I can't believe I'm here again. I saw a pregnant girl on the bus taking a Mensa test in a magazine. I just know she thought it was about her period.

Jim laughs.

DAGNY

So you been getting any?

BIG JIM

Put it this way: My life's so empty  
last night I had a sex dream of me  
watching porn.

DAGNY

And if it weren't for the crabs,  
you'd have no life below your  
waist.

BIG JIM

If it weren't for the lice, you'd  
have no life above your neck.

They laugh again.

DAGNY

Boy, the invective is infectious.  
I'm home two minutes and I start  
talking like you.

Big Jim goes to his desk, opens a drawer and takes out  
everything he needs to ROLL A JOINT.

BIG JIM

Would it be better if I had a  
reason for hitting a baby? What  
could it be? We had a long-standing  
feud? She cut me off in traffic?  
Milk breath brings out the animal  
in me? She sold me some bad shit?  
Everyone wants to make a federal  
case out of it.

DAGNY

It did make national news. Even  
*Entertainment Tonight*.

She picks up her camera and zooms in, studying portions of  
Jim's face closely as he works intently at his task.

BIG JIM

Jealous much?

DAGNY

Fame and infamy are not the same.  
You're lucky you had no record.

BIG JIM

*Entertainment Tonight*, really? See  
the entertainment value was not  
lost on America.

DAGNY

Victor had it on his show almost every night.

BIG JIM

All I did was smack the thing. A few months earlier, it would have been perfectly legal to mash it up with a clothes hanger.

DAGNY

You have the best eyelashes.

BIG JIM

I have a nicer chest, too. I can wear anything.

DAGNY

I bet you even made the county's orange jumpsuit look good.

BIG JIM

I'm an autumn.

With her thumb and forefinger, DAGNY makes the shape of the loser "L" on her forehead.

Big Jim returns the salute by making the letter "C" on his forehead.

Daggy snaps a picture of it.

INT. CANNING KITCHEN - DAY

Mama's URN is now the centerpiece of a windowsill altar that includes two CANDLES and a POTTED IVY. Yep, Daggy's home.

Daggy warms her hands around a COFFEE MUG while she steps back to admire her windowsill handiwork.

Declan enters.

DECLAN

We should make you a party. A welcome-home shindig. I bet the whole town comes.

DAGNY

There's an enticement. Whole town's nothing but a wasteland of wannabes populated by mouth-breathers, cousin-fuckers and public urinaters.

DECLAN

Sounds like a party to me.

Dagny smiles and raises her coffee cup in a salute to Declan.

Declan closes in for a hug and rubs his nose against hers in a childish "Eskimo kiss."

DECLAN

And each and everyone of them  
misses you. Especially them  
cousins.

Dagny finally gives Declan the laugh he so craved.

DECLAN

I knew that laugh would return. You  
never were as angry a person as you  
wanted to be. I remember walking  
you to kindergarten. Three pounds  
of hair and two pounds of smile.

Big Jim enters with a PEOPLE MAGAZINE. He has it turned to a page with a published photograph of Dagny's.

DECLAN

Well, look who's up before noon.

DAGNY

Can I get you something, Big Jim?  
Coffee? Juice? A tumbler of toddler  
tears?

BIG JIM

Sign this, will you, Dagny?

DAGNY

You want my autograph?

BIG JIM

E-bay.

DAGNY

I'm not a star, Jimmy, I'm a  
photojournalist. Six people in the  
world know my name.

BIG JIM

Two's enough for a bidding war. And  
you're a paparazzo, but who's  
counting?

Dagny signs her name with a flourish.

DAGNY

If you can be a filmmaker, then I  
can be a photojournalist.

Big Jim spots his mother's URN. He opens it and removes a pinch of the ashes.

Declan stirs a cup of coffee at the table then gets up and looks in the refrigerator.

While Declan's back is turned, Big Jim sprinkles the ashes into his father's coffee mug.

Declan returns to the table with MILK and pours a bit into his cup, stirs, then take a sip. Big Jim laughs.

DECLAN

Glad to see you in a good mood.

INT. BIG JIM'S BEDROOM - DAY

Jim's room is lined with floor-to-ceiling BOOKSHELVES bowing under the weight of manuals, books and magazines.

Jim throws the autographed PEOPLE magazine on his bed. Something catches his eye through the window to his backyard.

He looks out and sees Landry with his MAYO JAR FILLED WITH DANDELION SEEDS in the yard next door. With every facial muscle betraying his curiosity, Jim watches the boy intently.

EXT. LANDRY'S YARD - DAY

Landry takes the lid off the MAYONNAISE JAR that is now filled to the brim with dandelion spores. He drops in a MATCH and watches the fluff burn away in a poof.

INT. CANNING KITCHEN - DAY

Daggy and Declan sit at the table nursing their coffees.

DAGNY

I don't think I can handle it.

DECLAN

This is what family is about,  
Daggy. He keeps to himself mostly.  
Always busy with something or  
other.

DAGNY

People live with this kind of thing for years.

DECLAN

Some, I guess. My HMO only pays for paper platelets.

DAGNY

How much time you have?

DECLAN

Doctors are weathermen. Just guessing. Always wrong.

DAGNY

What if this one's right?

DECLAN

If he's right, my permanent cold-front should move in about three months from now. But the fires will thaw me out soon after.

DAGNY

You're going to hell?

DECLAN

I meant the cremation. Thanks, though, for your unflagging faith.

DAGNY

Cremated, huh, have you already picked out your closet?

DECLAN

I kept her in there for her own good. If she's out in the open, Jimmy's always picking and pawing at her.

DAGNY

Probably why she killed herself in the first place.

DECLAN

Daggy, don't. Poor woman was always melancholy.

DAGNY

Not all depressed people shoot themselves.

DECLAN

Some do.

EXT. LANDRY'S YARD - DAY

Big Jim watches from his screen door as Landry plants the dandelion seeds in his mother's VEGETABLE GARDEN.

The BANG of Jim's screen door shatters LANDRY'S focus. He looks over the fence and spots Jim in shorts, his ankle monitor glinting in the sun, dominating the boy's attention.

BIG JIM

Hey, Chief.

Landry lifts his head in a nod that serves as the world's laziest greeting. It's enough of an invitation for Jim.

BIG JIM

No school today?

LANDRY

Home schooled.

BIG JIM

My mother wanted me home schooled.  
But she couldn't find a home to  
take me.

LANDRY

They said on the news that you're  
like super smart.

BIG JIM

Is it a Catholic School?

LANDRY

What?

BIG JIM

Your home. Aren't home-schoolers  
Jesus freaks? No offense.

LANDRY

We're not Catholic.

BIG JIM

It's weird to ask you this since  
neither one of us is new to the  
neighborhood: What's your name?

LANDRY

Landry.



BIG JIM

I'm Jim, but I guess you saw that on the news. Landry. Cool name. Like Tom Landry?

LANDRY

My dad got to name me if I was a boy, and my mom gave me my middle name. The other way around if I was a girl.

BIG JIM

Marriage is compromise.

LANDRY

Tell them. She gave him the only thing he wanted when I was born.

BIG JIM

A son?

LANDRY

A divorce.

BIG JIM

So what's your middle name?

Landry does not answer.

BIG JIM

That bad, huh? That why you're planting weeds in her garden?

Landry does not answer, but continues his work.

BIG JIM

Why did you drop the match in the jar? Come on. I won't tattle-tale.

LANDRY

To burn off the fluff. It's no use if they get carried away.

BIG JIM

I guess that's true for all of us.

Landry pauses and studies Jim's face.

BIG JIM

Your mother must be a good teacher.

LANDRY

This was my idea.

BIG JIM  
Good idea.

LANDRY  
I thought you didn't like kids.

BIG JIM  
What gave you that idea?

Landry nods toward the confinement bracelet on Jim's ankle.

BIG JIM  
That was a misunderstanding. A sociology experiment gone wrong.

LANDRY  
Sociology?

BIG JIM  
All of life is a sociology experiment, and I'll be damned if I sit it out in the control group.

LANDRY  
What did the experiment show you?

BIG JIM  
If you hit a baby, run.

LANDRY  
Are you Catholic?

BIG JIM  
When I was your age. Does it show?

LANDRY  
Were you fondled, like on the news?

BIG JIM  
Not big on small talk, are you? I was dumpy and had acne. I was an "altar-nate" boy.

Landry looks up from his work and smiles at Jim.

EXT. TRUMP TOWER - NEW YORK STREET - NIGHT

A GROUP of aggressive PAPARAZZI with VIDEO and 35MM CAMERAS bounce off each other like pin-balls as a STARLET exits the hotel to FLASHES, keeping her face completely covered as she pops into the backseat of a waiting LIMO.

PAPARAZZO ONE  
She only stops for Dagny.

PAPARAZZO TWO  
Where is Dagny?

PAPARAZZO ONE  
That's what Victor wants to know.

PAPARAZZO TWO  
Uh oh. Trouble in parasites?

INT. AIRPORT SECURITY CHECK - DAY

His face, his suit and his demeanor collaborate to tell all comers that VICTOR VERDIGO means business as he quickly walks with his CARRY-ON through the terminal.

PAPARAZZI follow him, rolling tape and flashing pictures.

VICTOR  
Really, guys? Do you see TMZ  
wasting their time? Is this what  
I'm paying you for? I already have  
pictures of me, go find some  
fucking stars.

PAPARAZZO TWO  
You're the only star here.

VICTOR  
Don't forget it.

Victor puts his carry-on on the security conveyor belt.  
AIRPORT SECURITY approaches him.

AIRPORT SECURITY  
State your name.

VICTOR  
Victor Verdigo.

AIRPORT SECURITY  
From TV?

VICTOR  
That's right.

AIRPORT SECURITY  
Well you're no stranger to cameras,  
Mr. Verdigo, can I have you step  
into the body scanner.

VICTOR  
How long does it take?

AIRPORT SECURITY  
Just a few seconds.

Victor heads into the booth.

VICTOR  
If this ends up on the internet or  
on some show like mine...

AIRPORT SECURITY  
Don't worry. No chance of that.

Victor positions himself in the booth.

AIRPORT SECURITY  
Spread your legs and hold your arms  
up over your head.

Victor does as told.

VICTOR  
So did you get any pictures of  
anyone famous? I'll pay.

AIRPORT SECURITY  
Good thing I know you're joking.

VICTOR  
Okay. Hurry up. As your camera can  
see, I have a full bladder.

INT. DAGNY'S CHILDHOOD BEDROOM - NIGHT

Dagny sleeps lightly on her makeshift bed. She opens her eyes  
and is startled by her father standing in her doorway.

DAGNY  
What is it with you people?

DECLAN  
Sorry. I didn't mean to scare you.  
I was just thinking about the day  
we first brought you home.

DAGNY  
It's good to be home, Dad. You want  
me to make you some tea?

DECLAN

No. I'm just on my way back to bed.  
I get up about four or five times a  
night. Take care of your prostate.

He smiles and winks at her.

DAGNY

Okay, Declan. I will.

INT. BASEMENT STUDIO - DAY

The face of elderly lawyer FRANK LAWLER fills a MONITOR.

FRANK LAWLER

(acting for the camera)

The courts gave you this money.  
Don't wait for it while your bills  
pile up. I can turn your structured  
settlement into cash, or my name  
isn't Frank Lawler.

Big Jim stands behind a video camera and drags his headphones  
off his head.

BIG JIM

And cut. Perfect.

FRANK LAWLER

It isn't you know.

BIG JIM

What?

FRANK LAWLER

Frank Lawler isn't my name. Herbie  
Rosenberg. When I started nobody  
wanted a Jew lawyer - can you  
believe that? I changed the "y" in  
lawyer to an "l" to become Frank  
Lawler. Now I'm eighty-four years  
old and now everyone wants a Jew.  
Jew lawyer, Jew doctor, Jew  
accountant. I can't change back.

BIG JIM

Still, age has its benefits. Your  
job must be easier now that the  
ambulances chase you.

Lawler gets off his stool and loosens his necktie with one  
hand as he wags a finger at Big Jim.

FRANK LAWLER  
You're a pistol like your mother.

BIG JIM  
Well, you are what you eat.

FRANK LAWLER  
This spot will be ready to run on  
Friday? I'm putting it on the world  
wide internet, too. No one watches  
commercials anymore. God-damn Tivo.

Big Jim hands Lawler a FedEx envelope.

BIG JIM  
Would you mind? I can't go further  
than my front yard.

FRANK LAWLER  
So why didn't you hire me for your  
case?

BIG JIM  
I wanted a Jew. Who knew?

EXT. CANNING HOUSE - DAY

The RED VIOLATION LIGHT on Big Jim's ankle monitor lights up  
and Jim counts the BEEPS out loud.

BIG JIM  
One, two, three...

He pulls his leg back into the boundaries of his front yard.  
Then he sticks it out of bounds again onto the sidewalk. The  
red light goes on.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

DAGNY opens cabinet doors, one by one, and closes them with  
disappointment.

She kneels to investigate the cupboard under the sink.

She opens the doors and screams then bumps her head as she  
scrambles to her feet.

In the cabinet is a long-ago sprung MOUSETRAP, holding the  
SKELETON of a mouse, perfectly articulated as if laid out by  
an archeologist.

INT. CANNING KITCHEN - NIGHT

DAGNY wears long RUBBER GLOVES and has a PLASTIC BAG turned inside out as she crouches before the under-sink cabinet to retrieve the dead mouse. Big Jim enters.

BIG JIM  
No! Leave it.

DAGNY  
You knew about this?

BIG JIM  
I want to see what happens next.

DAGNY  
Jim you have like a 300 I.Q. You know what happens next. The guys in the white jackets come for you.

EXT. LANDRY'S YARD - DAY

As typical, Landry sits alone on his PATIO. He reads a MAGAZINE so intently, he does not notice Big Jim approach the fence that separates their yards.

BIG JIM  
What are you reading?

Startled, Landry freaks a bit in his sloppy attempts to conceal the forbidden magazine.

BIG JIM  
Good reflexes, Sport. What is it?

LANDRY  
Nothing. A magazine.

BIG JIM  
Ah. I see.

Big Jim sits on the ground next to the fence - a task more difficult than he had assumed.

BIG JIM  
Do you talk to your dad much?

LANDRY  
No.

BIG JIM  
What you've got there is perfectly normal. Really, we all do this.

LANDRY  
My mom would freak.

BIG JIM  
Well, it's not like you run and  
tell her. Let me see it.

Landry reluctantly hands over the magazine. Much to Big Jim's surprise, it is not porn, but a *TV Guide*.

LANDRY  
Do you get the Discovery Channel?

INT. BIG JIM'S DEN - DAY

The door opens onto a wonderland of BOOKS, RECORD ALBUMS, SCIENCE GADGETS, DVDs, MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS, FISH TANKS.

BIG JIM  
Welcome to the Smithsonian  
Institute Museum of Discarded  
hobbies. Big screen's in here, kid.

Landry's eyes widen to take it all in. Full-sized replica of a MOVIE ALIEN. A FROG preserved in a jar. Bottles of CHEMICALS. FLASKS and BEAKERS. BOOKS. Books. Books.

LANDRY  
Wow. Are you a mad scientist?

BIG JIM  
I prefer angry.

Big Jim turns on the television.

LANDRY  
I never saw such a big TV. I can  
watch an hour a week plus the news.

BIG JIM  
Discovery Channel is 148.

Suddenly the TV is the last thing on Landry's mind. He looks around at the artifacts, reaches out to touch a stuffed EAGLE then pulls his hand back.

BIG JIM  
This isn't a museum, kiddo. If  
something strikes your fancy, pick  
it up and touch it. You learn  
through osmosis. Dig in.



INT. COUNTY CLERK'S OFFICE - DAY

Even a fine tailored suit can't contain all the blustery personality that is VICTOR VERDIGO, who rings the COUNTER BELL for service several times.

He peeks his head over the counter and sees WOMEN at several desks. None in a hurry to get up and help him. He drums his fingers on the counter.

A CAMERAMAN behind him props his TV CAMERA on his shoulder, and light fills Victor's face.

VICTOR  
Some service, please? You can't  
hide forever.

Victor RINGS THE BELL repeatedly then notices a LARGE MIDDLE AGE WOMAN heading his way.

VICTOR  
(singing to "Here Comes  
Santa Claus")  
Here comes menopause; here comes  
menopause, right down menopause  
lane.

The woman arrives at the counter and removes the bell from harm's way.

WOMAN  
Sir. Sir. This is a government  
building. Can I help you?

VICTOR  
I need to see all the public  
documents on the Declan James  
Canning case. D-J-C-F-seven-seven-  
two-seven-zero-nine.

WOMAN  
Why?

VICTOR  
None of your business. Get me your  
boss.

WOMAN  
Sir, I think you should turn that  
camera off.

VICTOR

Thank you. You've been as useful as  
a tampon at Chastity Bono's house.  
Get me your boss.

EXT. CANNING HOUSE - DAY

Jim, dressed in full SPANDEX BIKING GEAR, rides a deluxe  
RACING BIKE around the perimeter of his house, making lazy  
loops, careful not to trip his ankle monitor.

Soon Landry, dressed casually in an UNZIPPED JACKET, rides  
his regular old BIKE follows Jim in the same circle.

Jim speeds up. Landry tries to pass. It's an unofficial race.

INT. CANNING BASEMENT - NIGHT

Big Jim edits a commercial at his computer. He hears Landry  
calling for him.

LANDRY (O.S.)

Jim.

Jim is irritated by the interruption, so he keeps working.

LANDRY (O.S.)

Jim.

BIG JIM

Come here. I'm busy.

LANDRY (O.S.)

I can't. There's no toilet paper.

BIG JIM

I can't exactly go out shopping.  
Just wad up a page from a magazine.

LANDRY

I can't do that.

BIG JIM

Then you'll have to sit there until  
I'm done here.

INT. CANNING TOILET - DAY (CONTINUOUS)

Landry picks up the People magazine from a MAGAZINE BOX and tears out a page. It is the photo page that Jim had Dagny autograph.

He wads it and rolls it to soften it up. His face shows discomfort as he puts the makeshift TP to work.

INT. CANNING KITCHEN - NIGHT

Standing at the stove, Big Jim cooks hot dogs while he smokes.

Jim walks over to the table where Landry spreads mustard on white bread.

Jim flicks his ash into a dented pop can and balances the cigarette on top of it before returning to the stove.

Landry picks up the cigarette.

Big Jim turns around and catches him.

BIG JIM

You're curious about smoking?

LANDRY

I know it's bad. Everyone cool does it still.

BIG JIM

And that makes you curious? Go ahead, then, give it a try. It's not possible to suppress curiosity. Smart people have a need to know.

Landry puts the cigarette back on the pop can.

BIG JIM

Seriously. I won't tattle-tale.

Landry picks the cigarette back up and place it tentatively to his lips.

BIG JIM

Not like that. You have to suck it in. Suck it in as hard as you can.

Landry obeys and immediately goes into a convulsive cough.

He drops the cigarette on the table. Big Jim takes a hit and through his exhaled smoke admonishes the boy.

BIG JIM

Now you'll never have to try that again. Nothing to be curious about anymore.

INT./EXT. CANNING CAR - DRIVING - DAY

Dagny shivers as she drives. She turns the heat up to full.

INT. OIL CHANGE GARAGE - DAY

Dagny looks woozy through the windshield as she pulls into an oil-change lane.

She opens the car door and steps out to find that her legs are suddenly too weak to support her.

She falls on all fours and THROWS UP into the mechanic's bay.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

The TELEVISION blares an episode of "BEWITCHED." Landry, sits on the floor to use the coffee table as a desk. He is glued to the TV despite doing his homework. He puts down his pencil just as Big Jim enters the room.

LANDRY

Witchcraft is evil.

BIG JIM

Darren is evil. He has this magical creature under lock and key suppressing her gifts and her true identity. This beautiful being must conceal her true nature.

Landry tries to hand Jim the paper he's been working on, but Jim makes no attempt to receive it.

LANDRY

Can you look this over before I turn it in?

BIG JIM

What does it matter? You're turning it into your loving mother. If she fails you, she can go flunk herself.

LANDRY

I'm trying to get a Nintendo DS.

BIG JIM

It'll never happen. She won't even let you watch TV more than an hour a week and you've been online twice in your life.

LANDRY

Plus I can watch the news.

Landry huffs and again hands the paper up to Big Jim. Jim scans it quickly. Landry looks at him expectantly.

Jim finds the TV remote and turns off the set.

BIG JIM

Don't bother me with ordinary. I'd rather you be retarded than ordinary. At least it's an excuse.

Jim crumples the paper and tosses it to Landry.

BIG JIM

Be extraordinary or shut the fuck up.

Landry studies Jim's face for a second. Jim shows intense interest in how Landry will react. Suddenly Jim dry heaves.

BIG JIM

I'm gonna be sick.

Jim runs out of the room.

LANDRY

You're over-reacting.

Landry hears Jim throw up in the other room.

LANDRY

OK. How do we make it fucking extraordinary?

INT. EMERGENCY ROOM - DAY

Dagny lies in an emergency room bed. A YOUNG DOCTOR pulls the CURTAIN open and smiles at her.

DOCTOR

Did you have a flu shot this year, Ms. Canning?

DAGNY

No. Doctor, is there any way that this is not the flu?

DOCTOR

It could be a virus, but nothing too serious.

DAGNY

Is there any way I could have been poisoned?

DOCTOR

Like food poisoning?

DAGNY

No, like someone intentionally slipping something into my coffee or something like that?

DOCTOR

Do you associate with people who would do that?

DAGNY

Not normally.

INT. CANNING HOUSE - BIG JIM'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Big Jim sleep, all bundled up. His bedroom door flies open.

A SHADOW FIGURE whooshes in and beats him with a BROOM.

Big Jim reacts with flailing limbs and finally focuses enough to recognize Dagny as his assailant.

DAGNY

Wake up, you bastard.

BIG JIM

What?

DAGNY

You asshole.

BIG JIM

That's a "fat" thing to say.

DAGNY

You tried to poison me?

BIG JIM

What are you talking about?

DAGNY  
I'm not an experiment.

BIG JIM  
Dagny, stop.

Big Jim leans over the side of his bed and dry heaves.

BIG JIM  
Dagny, stop. I have the flu.

Dagny tires herself out and gags a bit before falling into bed next to her nauseated brother.

DAGNY  
Move over. The flu? Are you sure?

BIG JIM  
What else could it be?

Dagny laughs.

DAGNY  
It's your little friend. Kids are like toilet seats.

They shush each other as they hear a strange SQUEAKY sound.

Declan passes the doorway. He looks haggard as he pulls an oxygen tank on SQUEAKY WHEELS. He pauses at the doorway.

Dagny stares at him for a second.

DAGNY  
I'm sick, you know.

Without a mutter, the truly sick Declan turns straight ahead and continues to wheel his oxygen down the hall.

INT. MCCREEDY HOME - DAY

The TODDLER that Jim smacked plays with a SIPPY CUP in a BOUNCY CHAIR. Her parents, KAREN and JOE MCCREEDY hang on every word, as Victor paces in front of them.

VICTOR  
What happened, happened. Why not bring closure to the entire situation. There was no real damage. Your beautiful daughter is over it, but think of the tale she'll have to tell when she gets older. Society values television.  
(MORE)

VICTOR (cont'd)  
 Why not turn the whole tragic scene  
 into a positive thing. Think  
 "college fund."

KAREN  
 I don't know, Mr. Verdigo. It  
 seems, I don't know, tasteless.

VICTOR  
 Sympathize with Mr. Canning. He  
 needs closure too. They say a  
 sociopath is someone who tries to  
 fool society by creating a false  
 impression of his own moral value.  
 But a psychopath? A psychopath  
 tries to fool himself.

JOE  
 And what is Jim Canning?

VICTOR  
 Good TV.

EXT. MCCREEDY HOME - DAY

Victor gets into the passenger seat of his car as the  
 cameraman waits behind the wheel.

CAMERAMAN  
 How did it go?

VICTOR  
 Candy from a baby. Bleeding hearts.  
 I'd rather have a brilliant nemesis  
 than a boring friend.

INT. LANDRY'S HOME CLASSROOM - DAY

A spare bedroom has been converted into a study room complete  
 with BULLETIN BOARD, CHALK BOARD, MAPS and CHARTS.

A PARTNER'S DESK dominates the room. A sulky Landry props his  
 head up on one side of his desk. His beautiful mother, ARIEL  
 tries to be cheery on the opposite side.

LANDRY  
 Why didn't you tell me?

ARIEL  
 I wanted to make sure there were no  
 other options.



LANDRY  
I'm not going.

ARIEL  
For God's sake, Landry, I'm not  
sending you to military school.  
It's just around the corner. I went  
to public school, and I loved it.

Landry slams his book shut.

ARIEL  
You to be an adult about this.

LANDRY  
I can't join those people already  
in progress.

Ariel takes his hand.

ARIEL  
I remember my first day of  
kindergarten. I cried and cried  
when my mother left me. But before  
long there was glitter and clay, I  
didn't want to go home.

LANDRY  
I don't know those kids.

ARIEL  
No one knows anyone at first.  
You'll make all kinds of new  
friends. Friends your own age.

Landry stands up and walks over to a WALL PHONE.

LANDRY  
Let me talk to Dad. He can send  
money if it's me that asks.

ARIEL  
Landry, Dad's not being a bad guy.  
He's helping all he can, but I have  
to get a job. That's that.

LANDRY  
What if they don't like me?

ARIEL  
What's not to like?

INT. BAR - NIGHT

Dagny, in a black cocktail dress, sits alone in a booth, awkwardly bopping to a country tune on a jukebox.

Two DRUNKEN FRIENDS from Dagny's past approach her booth.

DRUNKEN FRIEND

Dagny Canning. Is that really you?

The other woman rushes in and hugs her.

DRUNKEN FRIEND TWO

My God. When did you get back? Why didn't you call me? Does Ruben know you're back?

DAGNY

Short visit. Really.

DRUNKEN FRIEND

I see your byline all the time. All over. You know Leonardo DiCaprio?

DAGNY

Just as a blurred succession of baseball caps pulled over his face.

DRUNKEN FRIEND

Are you back for good?

DAGNY

Not for good. For better or worse.

Pudgy lawyer RUBEN BRIN, a man Dagny's age, returns to the booth with a beer and a martini, which he hands to Dagny.

RUBEN

Pardon me, ladies.

DRUNKEN FRIEND TWO

Wow, Ruben, it's like old times. Why didn't you tell me you were back with Dagny?

Ruben toasts his beer to Dagny.

The drunken women toddle off.

DRUNK WOMAN

Call me. We'll go to the mall.

Alone, Ruben and Dagny smile through an awkward silence.

RUBEN

The mall is dead. Bass Pro is all.

DAGNY

Ruben, we did our first date twenty years ago. We don't need to suffer through first-date jibberish now.

RUBEN

That's a relief. I don't go out much. I used to feel bad when I was a young punk that my father would come home from the job, wrestle off his work boots and sit in front of the TV all night. Except for the wing-tips, that's me all over.

DAGNY

I hate dating. I hate small talk, small dicks and small salads. I want a steak, a beer and I want a clean, empty bed in the morning.

RUBEN

I won't even waste time putting my socks back on.

DAGNY

Awww. Promise?

EXT. CANNING HOUSE - FRONT YARD - DAY

Landry helps Big Jim rake leaves.

BIG JIM

I haven't been in school in decades, and when I see those back-to-school ads, I still get shivers.

LANDRY

What's the worst thing about it?

BIG JIM

I shouldn't prejudice your mind.

LANDRY

Tell me one thing.

BIG JIM

I remember having to read aloud. Second grade maybe. Everyone had to stand up and do one paragraph with everyone looking at you.

(MORE)

BIG JIM (cont'd)

I counted the desks to see which my paragraph would be, so I could practice. I was afraid there would be a word I didn't know. It was even worse than that. The first word had a letter I didn't know. When I stood up, I was totally silent.

LANDRY

How could you not know a letter in second grade?

BIG JIM

I never saw a "G" like that before. It looked like a pair of spectacles turned sideways. I only ever saw g's the way we printed them.

LANDRY

Did the other kids laugh at you?

BIG JIM

No. That's the best thing I learned in school. No one gives a shit about your paragraph. They're all worried about their own paragraph.

LANDRY

What else?

BIG JIM

Germs. Measles. Mumps. Mono.

LANDRY

So that's the worst of it?

BIG JIM

Except for gym class. That's hell.

INT. CANNING LIVING ROOM - DAY

A documentary plays on an educational TV channel. Landry sits too close. Too engrossed.

Big Jim, en route to the sofa, stops dead when he hears the approaching CARNIVAL TUNE of the ice-cream truck.

BIG JIM

What kind of ice cream do you want?

LANDRY

No thanks.

Big Jim shrugs and runs out the front door.

EXT. CANNING HOUSE - DAY - CONTINUOUS

Big Jim runs to the middle of his front lawn while removing some SINGLES sloppily shoved into his shorts pocket.

He hails the ice cream truck with grand airplane-landing gestures. The truck stops in front of the house.

DRIVER  
You want something, Buddy?

Jim motions to the driveway.

BIG JIM  
Pull in.

DRIVER  
No way. Come to me.

BIG JIM  
I'm a paying customer.

DRIVER  
Not so far.

BIG JIM  
Just pull in.

DRIVER  
No private property.

BIG JIM  
You think I'll jump you? Hijack you? I just want some ice cream.

DRIVER  
You have to come to me.

Jim points to the ankle monitor.

DRIVER  
My point exactly. You're a pillar of society.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY - CONTINUOUS

Big Jim bursts back into the house, passing the perplexed Landry, as he rushes into the kitchen.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY - CONTINUOUS

Jim flings open the FREEZER DOOR and takes out a half gallon of ICE CREAM. He pulls down two BOWLS from a cupboard and dishes up servings for himself and Landry.

He grabs a whole FISTFUL OF SPOONS from a silverware drawer and returns to the living room.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY - CONTINUOUS

Big Jim hands Landry a bowl of ice cream.

LANDRY  
I'm lactose intolerant.

BIG JIM  
Says who?

LANDRY  
My mom.

BIG JIM  
There's no such thing as lactose intolerant. That's something women made up so they wouldn't have to breast feed. When's the last time you had ice cream?

LANDRY  
I don't know. Never.

BIG JIM  
That's a sin. One bite won't kill you. If you go into convulsions, I'll finish it for you.

Landry hesitantly takes a spoonful. Love at first bite.

Big Jim takes a spoonful himself. He puts the used spoon down and takes a fresh one for his next bite, refusing to put even his own spoon back into his mouth.

Landry shovels it in. Almost instantly, he locks up with his first ice-cream headache. He lets the last bite dribble from his lips and starts to panic.

LANDRY  
It's lactose. I'm dying.

Jim takes another bite off a fresh spoon.

BIG JIM  
 It's a little ice-cream headache.  
 It happens to everyone. Here, how  
 many fingers am I holding up.

Big Jim holds up his middle finger.

LANDRY  
 Call my mom. Call an ambulance.

BIG JIM  
 Nut up, Kid. Want some whipped  
 cream?

EXT. BASEBALL FIELD - GYM CLASS - DAY

Four kids stand on the sidelines waiting to be picked for a team. Landry is one of the boys. The second is a FAT KID, the third is a LANKY NERD and the fourth has just one arm.

Standing opposite them are TWO TEAM CAPTAINS backed by a couple of the BIG JOCKS who were chosen first.

CAPTAIN ONE  
 OK. We'll take Olsen.

The fat kid, with no enthusiasm, walks over to his captain.

The second captain eyes his prospects with disdain.

CAPTAIN TWO  
 Then. I'll take... the new kid.

Landry perks up.

BILLY THE BULLY slaps the second captain on the arm.

BILLY THE BULLY  
 No, not him.

CAPTAIN TWO  
 Never mind. We'll take Kevin.

Landry stops in his tracks and returns to the line while the one-armed boy takes his place on the team.

EXT. BASEBALL FIELD - DAY

A ball is hit deep to right. Landry tentatively hoists his glove skyward. Miracle of miracles, he'll make the catch.

CAPTAIN

Cover him.

Billy and a bunch of other kids run toward Landry. Billy bounces into him just as the ball touches his mitt. The ball plops onto the sod. Landry follows soon after.

CODY scrambles for the ball and throws it to first.

Landry lies on the grass staring up at the cloud formations.

INT. DAGNY'S ROOM - DAY

The cloud formations turn into shapes of peeling plaster on Dagny's bedroom ceiling. She stares up at them, then with a burst of gumption grabs a broom and starts scraping away the peeling plaster, which snows on top of her and her mattress.

INT. ENGLISH CLASSROOM - DAY

Landry sits in the front row next to an obviously BLIND GIRL, DIANE. The ENGLISH TEACHER calls the rowdy class together.

ENGLISH TEACHER

Before we begin, Diane suggested an excellent idea.

The blind girl smiles proudly. Some of her classmates GROAN at the mention of Diane's name.

ENGLISH TEACHER

We will start a Braille Club to meet after school.

The GROANING grows.

ENGLISH TEACHER

Who would like to sign up?

Diane turns to Landry smiling, and though she can't really stare, Landry feels her stare burning his cheeks.

ENGLISH TEACHER

Come on, this is a wonderful opportunity. No one?

Diane coughs, which triggers Landry to raise his hand.

ENGLISH TEACHER

Excellent. Landry. Good scout.



BILLY THE BULLY  
Diane can read his pimples.

EXT. LANDRY'S BACKYARD - DAY

Ariel wears a floppy hat and garden gloves as she stares down a SEA OF DANDELIONS in her vegetable garden.

Landry, carrying a large CASE, walks into the backyard.

LANDRY  
I hate that school.

ARIEL  
No you don't. What's that?

LANDRY  
A Braille typewriter.

ARIEL  
I didn't see that coming. You  
didn't steal it, did you?

Landry just shakes his head as he aims for the back door.

INT. LANDRY'S KITCHEN

Ariel follows her son into the kitchen. He sets the Braille typewriter on the table.

ARIEL  
Want something to eat?

LANDRY  
Half Apple Jacks. Half Cocoa Puffs  
and chocolate milk.

ARIEL  
One shredded wheat coming up. You  
want grapefruit?

LANDRY  
You have it. It puts hair on your  
chest.

ARIEL  
Is that what he says? You know I  
don't like you going over there so  
much. What do you do over there?

LANDRY  
Nothing.

She sits at the table with her son.

ARIEL

I don't like that he's never been married. His age.

LANDRY

He never found the right receptacle.

ARIEL

Landry Christmas! See? Do you even know what that means?

LANDRY

No.

ARIEL

Don't repeat things if you don't know what you're saying. That's vulgar.

INT. DAGNY'S BEDROOM - DAY

Dagny, now garbed in grubby clothes, stands on a ladder, rolling a fresh coat of paint onto the ceiling.

Landry walks in.

DAGNY

Did Jim fall asleep?

LANDRY

Yep. Can I help?

DAGNY

You ever do this before?

LANDRY

No.

DAGNY

God knows you've had worse mentors. Grab a brush.

INT. SHOP CLASS - DAY

Billy the Bully and other STUDENTS mingle at the door.

Landry tries to enter. They block his way.

Just behind Landry, the school's only Indian student, AZIZ - who always wears a GREEN PUGREE, traditional Indian head-dress - enters. The group of students breaks up to make way for Aziz, and Landry is able to find a seat.

RANDOM STUDENT

I can't believe they let a terrorist near dangerous equipment.

BILLY THE BULLY

We're watching you, Aziz.

The classroom is filled with woodworking equipment and mostly disinterested students finding their places.

The SHOP TEACHER, missing two fingers, commands attention when he SLAMS together two pieces of WOOD.

LANDRY, alone at a work station for two, looks terrified.

SHOP TEACHER

We're starting a new project. A jewelry box. You should finish it in time to have a nice gift for your sweetheart for Christmas.

Landry perks up at this suggestion and smiles.

SHOP TEACHER

Who doesn't have a partner?

Landry hesitantly raises his hand.

SHOP TEACHER

Landry, you work with Aziz.

Landry meekly approaches Aziz's work space. Aziz does not acknowledge his presence.

EXT. LOMBARD SPECTATOR NEWSPAPER OFFICE - DAY

Dagny, dressed in a BUSINESS SUIT, sits in the guest chair in front of the EDITOR'S DESK.

The EDITOR flips through PHOTOS from Dagny's portfolio.

EDITOR

You have a keen eye, and it's obvious you have no trouble really getting into the moment.

DAGNY

Thank you. I figured while I was in town, I could lend my talents to the hometown team.

EDITOR

Daggy, how can I say this? This is a legitimate newspaper.

DAGNY

I don't understand.

EDITOR

We don't do what you do. I'm sorry.

INT. ENGLISH CLASSROOM - DAY

Diane stands in the front of the room at the teacher's desk. The English Teacher and Landry sit in the students' desks. The rest of the classroom is empty.

DIANE

I thought it might be interesting for you to experience school like I do. Ready?

Both Landry and the English teacher put on BLINDFOLDS.

DIANE

Are they on? Make your way to the wall, so you have something to guide you. Count your footsteps.

Landry and the English Teacher bounce into each other as they struggle toward the edge of the room. Diane squeals.

INT. CANNING LIVING ROOM - DAY

Big Jim, eyes closed, lies on the couch with the TV blaring.

Daggy enters with her PORTFOLIO and two GROCERY BAGS.

DAGNY

What are you deaf? I can hear it up the driveway. You're not even watching it. You're sleeping.

BIG JIM

I was resting my eyes. Why didn't you tell me you were going out to paint the town gray?

DAGNY

I had to get a few things to clean  
up around here. And some real food.  
You like light or dark rye?

Big Jim gets up from the couch and heads toward Dagny.

BIG JIM

I like my bread like I like my  
women: In a bag with a twist tie.

Dagny reaches into the bag and withdraws a box of GLUE TRAPS  
for mice. She tosses them to Jim.

DAGNY

Make yourself useful.

BIG JIM

No way. These are cruel. Ever watch  
a mouse die on these? I have.

He throws the box back to her. It hits her in the head and  
falls to the floor.

BIG JIM

It's stuck there, starving for food  
and water. It's little red shorts  
all twisted up. His big gloves  
falling off his Aushwitz arms.

DAGNY

I thought you liked observing  
things die.

INT. LANDRY'S KITCHEN - DAY

Landry, already dressed for school, prepares a BOWL OF CEREAL  
for himself. Ariel, in bathrobe, enters.

ARIEL

You're up bright and early. Maybe  
school's not so bad, huh?

She kisses Landry on top of his head, as he heads to the  
kitchen table with his cereal.

LANDRY

I'm making something in shop class.

ARIEL

Cool. What is it?

LANDRY

I can't say. It's for you.

Ariel starts a pot of coffee.

ARIEL

You're making a present for me?

LANDRY

Yes.

ARIEL

What did the kids at school say  
about your new shoes?

LANDRY

Nothing, Mom. They all have shoes.

INT. CANNING KITCHEN - DAY

Big Jim, wearing only his underwear and ankle monitor, enters the dark kitchen and starts to prepare coffee. He hears a SCRATCHING. He opens the cabinet below the sink and finds a mouse, small and cute, suffering on the glue trap.

BIG JIM

That bitch.

He picks up the trap and removes SCISSORS from a counter drawer. He tries to cut around the mouse. No good.

He rips a crumpled, plastic GROCERY BAG from another drawer and places the mouse, glue trap and all into it.

INT. GARAGE - DAY - CONTINUOUS

Big Jim, still wearing only his underwear, carries the BAG WITH THE MOUSE into the garage and places it under the back tire of his car.

He gets into the car and starts it up. He reflexively checks the rearview mirror seeing the closed garage door behind him.

He puts the car in reverse and inches it backward. He hears the POP of the bag, puts the car in park and slumps over.

He doesn't even bother to lift his head when he recognizes the RACKET of the automatic garage door rising behind him.

Dagny stands in the driveway staring at the running car.

She enters the garage and pounds on the driver's window.

Big Jim shoots up with a start.

DAGNY

Now what?

INT. RUBEN'S OFFICE - DAY

Ruben sits in his big chair behind his desk. Dagny sits in front of him with her feet propped up on his desk.

DAGNY

It's worse all the time. He's got some lonely boy next door convinced he's some rebel without a flaw.

RUBEN

Dennis the Menace "all growed up."

DAGNY

Not even. Dennis the menace was accidentally irritating. My brother practices pre-meditated mischief. The prank as social warfare. I think he tried to poison me.

RUBEN

You're not his legal guardian. Walk away. I get it. I do. He's off color; he's off-kilter; he's off-carousing when he's not under house-arrest; and that's all off-putting to you. So walk away.

DAGNY

The worst thing that could have happened to him is being sentenced to home. Not leaving that home is why he never grew up. He never could have been a contender, but with a passion and compassion, he could have been a man.

RUBEN

You'd rather have him in jail?

DAGNY

Isn't there another option?

RUBEN

I see what you're getting at: The white padded room. Dagny, why don't you go back to work?

DAGNY

I couldn't even get a job at the  
"Speculator."

RUBEN

I mean go back to your real life.  
Remember Victor?

DAGNY

How can I forget? He's all anyone  
talks about. You know what it's  
like to walk in a room and before  
people even say "hi, Dagny," they  
say, "where's Victor?" The guy's  
like Tinkerbell: He only lives if  
people are clapping for him.

RUBEN

You sound jealous.

DAGNY

When I married Victor, everyone was  
jealous, but he actually bent over  
backwards not to give me special  
treatment. I got all the shit  
assignments. No one noticed that.

RUBEN

You like people to notice.

Dagny cringes. She swiftly stands up and drags her hand  
across the spines of the perfectly shelved BOOKS.

DAGNY

What if he was a danger to himself?  
I didn't want to tell you this. I  
found him slumped over, running the  
car in the sealed-up garage.

RUBEN

Suicide? That doesn't sound like  
Big Jim.

DAGNY

All I'm saying is he needs the kind  
of attention I cannot provide.

RUBEN

Funny. Seems I remember him living  
under your constant scrutiny even  
when you were kids.



DAGNY

So I know. When Declan dies, he can't live alone. Ankle monitor or no ankle monitor.

RUBEN

Jump off that bridge when you get to it.

EXT. CANNING HOUSE - DAY

Ariel, almost well-dressed and almost late for work, race-walks toward the Canning house with Landry in tow. She adjusts her skirt as she drags her boy.

INT. CANNING LIVING ROOM - DAY

Big Jim lies on the couch with a serving-bowl filled with cereal as he watches TV. He is disturbed by the doorbell.

BIG JIM

(shouting)

It's open.

The bell rings again.

BIG JIM

Come in.

No response. Then a knock.

BIG JIM

God damn it.

Jim puts down the cereal bowl and answers the door.

ARIEL

I'm sorry I didn't introduce myself earlier, but Landry enjoys spending time with you, and I was wondering if you could watch him.

BIG JIM

Watch him do what?

LANDRY

I don't need a baby-sitter.

Jim glances across the street and notices a sliver of the face of his nosy neighbor peeking through askew curtains.

ARIEL

I wouldn't bother you, especially on a weekend, but it's a new job. My boss just called, and I can't look uncooperative.

BIG JIM

Landry's always welcome here.

ARIEL

It will be a couple, three hours.

Landry rolls his eyes as his mother toddles down the stoop adjusting her shoe strap.

Half way to the sidewalk, she turns and blows Landry a kiss. Jim makes a show of intercepting the invisible smooch in his clenched fist. He opens his fist and licks his palm.

Ariel rushes back to the front door.

ARIEL

This is OK, right, Mr. Canning? I mean, you're not a child M-O-L-E...

LANDRY

Mom! You're embarrassing me. Jim wouldn't hurt a flea.

BIG JIM

Unless that flea was to m-o-l-e your child. Then I would rip off every flea limb and put them in little envelopes and drop them in different Dumpsters around town.

ARIEL

I guess I can show Landry off at work They have "bring your daughter to work day." Why not sons?

BIG JIM

Lady, I'm joking with you. Once you know me, you'll find it very charming. Even that hypothetically dismembered flea would be enthralled by my legendary charm-infused antics.

LANDRY

Plus, you know where he lives.

BIG JIM

But suit yourself.

LANDRY  
(to Ariel)  
Would you just go?

Ariel kisses Landry on the forehead and dashes off.

EXT. CANNING HOUSE - DAY

Big Jim stands out of bounds. The ankle monitor BEEPS.

BIG JIM  
One, two, three, four, five, six...

Landry approaches on the sidewalk.

LANDRY  
What are you doing?

Jim sits on the front lawn, within bounds. Landry joins him.

BIG JIM  
When I was in school, I had a night job at the bank. Every night I would feed checks into this giant sorter. This giant machine that sorted all the cancelled checks by account number to be sent back to the people who wrote them out. It was louder than a mother-fucker. About an inch from my face, the machine had this big red button - like something out of a Bugs Bunny cartoon - and a sign that said "do not press under any circumstances."

LANDRY  
Let me guess why you don't work there anymore.

BIG JIM  
Under any circumstances. That means not even in an emergency. So what is the damned thing even there for? Sometimes you just have to know what will happen.

LANDRY  
What happened when you pushed it?

BIG JIM  
I never did. Maybe that's why I still think about it.

LANDRY

What will happen if you keep your leg on the sidewalk too long?

BIG JIM

Don't know. One squad car? SWAT choppers? Maybe it's an idle threat.

LANDRY

This is boring. Can I ask you something?

BIG JIM

What?

LANDRY

Is my mother a MILF?

BIG JIM

I'm sorry to tell you she is. Total "momshell." And your father's a DILFU.

LANDRY

What's a DILFU?

BIG JIM

A Dad I'd Like to Fuck Up.

LANDRY

Who's stopping you?

BIG JIM

Don't look now, but we're being watched.

Jim nods toward the house across the street. Landry follows his gaze to catch nosy neighbor.

LANDRY

Let's go inside.

BIG JIM

See what's on the Discovery Channel. Keep it low; my father's sleeping.

Landry gets up and heads toward the front door.

LANDRY

Do you have D-Y-I?

On the front porch, Landry tries the door. It's locked.

LANDRY  
(yelling over shoulder)  
It's locked.

BIG JIM  
No, it's not.

Landry tries again.

CUT TO:

EXT. CANNING BACKYARD - DAY

Big Jim pushes on a small basement window. It easily gives.

BIG JIM  
This one's broken. Climb in.

LANDRY  
I'll fall.

BIG JIM  
About two feet.

LANDRY  
You do it.

BIG JIM  
I can't fit.

Landry reluctantly gets on all fours, and then dives awkwardly head-first through the window.

He lands with a crash inside the basement.

LANDRY (O.S.)  
I broke something.

BIG JIM  
A leg?

LANDRY  
A camera.

INT. CANNING BASEMENT - NIGHT

Big Jim edits a commercial on his computer. He listens diligently as he tries to REMOVE A COUGH from a speech.

DOORBELL RINGS.

BIG JIM  
It's open.

DOORBELL again.

BIG JIM  
Go away.

Big Jim listens to see if the bell will ring again. Nothing. He returns his attention to the computer monitor.

Then he notices a SHADOW loom over him.

He turns. His apprehension becomes joy at seeing VICTOR.

BIG JIM  
Victor!

Big Jim gets up, and the men hug despite the fact that Victor carries an opened BEER BOTTLE in each hand.

VICTOR  
How you been, Brother?

Victor steps back and sizes Jim up as he hands him a beer.

VICTOR  
So let's see it.

Big Jim raises his ankle. Victor CLINKS his bottle on the ankle bracelet.

VICTOR  
Fancy hardware. Beats getting your  
ass reamed in prison.

BIG JIM  
How you been?

VICTOR  
Same old. Same old.

BIG JIM  
I don't know which word I hate  
more.

EXT. CANNING BACKYARD - NIGHT

Big Jim and Victor sit on lawn furniture around a fire pit.

BIG JIM  
I was only ever in court once  
before, and that was for jury duty.

VICTOR

I thought you were some kind of genius, and you don't know how to get out of jury duty? Just answer all their questions honestly - but masturbate the whole time. "He looks guilty ... I like guilty."

BIG JIM

Moron.

Victor opens another beer.

VICTOR

So how's your sister?

BIG JIM

Same as always: Honey bunches of ass pain.

VICTOR

I'll drink to that. She here?

BIG JIM

Sorry to say, she's on date.

VICTOR

No worries. I like my women like I like my stool: loose.

They clink their beer bottles together.

VICTOR

Don't tell me: Ruben Brin.

BIG JIM

Ruben says Dagny's the only girl he ever loved.

VICTOR

"Yids" say the darnedest things.

BIG JIM

I can't believe you're on TV with that mouth.

VICTOR

It's a gossip show. I'm supposed to be in your face. How's Declan?

BIG JIM

Mad at you.

VICTOR  
God knows what she's feeding him.

BIG JIM  
I don't know how he stays in good spirits. If I was him, I'd be feeling sorry for myself all day.

VICTOR  
He's a tough son-of-a-bitch. What about you? You holding up?

BIG JIM  
Just because the voices in my head don't sing *Ode to Joy* doesn't mean I'm not joyous. They just don't get together enough to rehearse.

Victor laughs.

VICTOR  
I hear you, Brother.

BIG JIM  
So, you come here like a caveman to drag Dagny back by the hair?

VICTOR  
All that would get me is a fistful of extensions and a court date. I'm here to see you. Business. I think your philosophy, goofy as it is, might play well on TV.

BIG JIM  
What philosophy is that?

VICTOR  
Joke 'em if they can't take a fuck.

EXT. BIG JIM'S STREET - HALLOWEEN NIGHT

All down the block, KIDS IN COSTUMES approach their neighbors' doors.

INT./EXT. LANDRY'S FRONT DOOR - HALLOWEEN NIGHT

The doorbell rings and Ariel is quick to answer.

On her porch stands a young MOTHER DRESSED AS A CHRISTMAS TREE with three small CHILDREN DRESSED AS PRESENTS.



ARIEL  
How adorable!

Ariel drops a CANDY BAR into each child's bag.

MOTHER  
What do you say?

SMALLEST PRESENT  
I'm sorry.

MOTHER  
No, say "thank you." She's learning.

ARIEL  
Landry, come see this.

Landry appears at the doorway just as Billy the Bully and Cody cross the street and walk up his porch steps.

ARIEL  
My son's middle name is Christmas.

The bullies laugh. Landry backs away.

MOTHER  
Have a good night.

Christmas Tree Mother herds her young "packages" away.

The Billy the Bully and Cody, dressed in regular street clothes, take their place in front of Landry's mother, holding out their bags.

ARIEL  
And what are you supposed to be?

BILLY THE BULLY  
Assholes.

She quickly drops a candy bar in each bag and shuts the door.

EXT. CANNING HOUSE - HALLOWEEN NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

The bullies pass the Canning place.

BILLY THE BULLY  
(shouting from the street)  
Hey, Perv!

Big Jim steps out onto his front porch with a candy bowl just as Billy the Bully tosses an egg at his house.

Big Jim catches the egg without it cracking and throws it back at the bully. Crack and SPLAT, right on his forehead.

His friends laugh at him and run onto the next house.

Big Jim retreats into his house, not noticing that Landry and his mother are watching through a window. Landry is thrilled.

INT. CANNING KITCHEN - DAY

Big Jim and Landry fit the last piece of a jigsaw puzzle in place on a large piece of cardboard.

LANDRY  
Tell me a dirty joke.

BIG JIM  
A man fell in mud.

LANDRY  
No, for real.

BIG JIM  
Why?

LANDRY  
So I don't look like some sheltered home-schooled loser all the time.

BIG JIM  
TV? Internet? You never heard a dirty joke?

LANDRY  
You never heard of parental controls?

Big Jim laughs as he covers the completed puzzle -- a picture of BABY DOLLS -- with wax paper.

BIG JIM  
Now you turn it over.

He flips the puzzle and removes the cardboard sheet from the top so the plain side of the completed puzzle faces up.

BIG JIM  
Now comes the fun part.

With a fine-looking set of acrylics and charcoals, Jim and Landry start sketching in a new work of art.

BIG JIM

When it dries, we take it apart and we have our own puzzle.

LANDRY

I don't want to make a mistake.

BIG JIM

You can't make a mistake. Just do whatever you feel.

Landry draws on his corner a sketch of a home, mother, dog, father and sun in the corner. He draws as Jim talks.

BIG JIM

So a priest and a rabbi are watching a bunch of young boys playing in a school yard. After a while, the priest says, "hey, let's screw them." And the rabbi says, "out of what."

LANDRY

That's a dirty joke?

BIG JIM

It's not a nursery rhyme.

LANDRY

I don't get it.

BIG JIM

It will work for you.

Landry does not hide his disappointment.

BIG JIM

Okay. A pirate walks into a bar, and he has this big steering wheel hanging out of his fly. The bartender, says, "hey, matie, you have a steering wheel in your zipper." And the pirate says, "Y'ar, it drives me nuts."

Landry laughs.

LANDRY

Y'ar it drives me nuts.

Big Jim studies Landry's artwork so far.

BIG JIM

What's your favorite subject at the new school.

LANDRY

Shop class.

BIG JIM

You like shop? Wow.

LANDRY

I'm making a present for someone.

BIG JIM

You knew my birthday is coming.

Landry grows silent and uncomfortable.

LANDRY

It's for my mom. I promised her.

BIG JIM

Relax, kid. I was teasing.

Big Jim pulls his wallet from his back pocket and hands Landry a twenty-dollar bill.

BIG JIM

My birthday really is coming. Here, buy me something. You can spend one dollar on me and keep the rest, or you can spend it all on me. Or any combination.

LANDRY

What do you want?

BIG JIM

If I told you that, I might as well just buy it myself. Let's see how well you know me. That's the cool thing about presents. A gift card says, "I have no idea who you are." But get someone just the right present? That's a connection.

The DOORBELL rings.

BIG JIM

You send out for breads?

LANDRY

No.

Big Jim answers the door. TWO straight-arrow MISSIONARIES stand at the ready, Good Book in hand.

MISSIONARY ONE

How are you on this blessedly beautiful day?

BIG JIM

Listen. I know the drill. Most people close the doors in your face, right? Don't lie; it's a sin.

Jim opens his screen door and sticks his monitored leg out. The boys' eyes lock onto the device.

BIG JIM

I'm a pretty big get. Tell you what. I'll let you come in and tell me the whole program - and this is where the Lord's testing you. I'll let you come in and sign me up, if you go back there in the yard and mow the grass, all the back and this bit up here. We got a deal?

MISSIONARY ONE

We're not supposed to do that.

BIG JIM

Seems to me Jesus did much more to win converts. Lawn mower's in the back if you want to reel in the biggest fish of the day. A felon.

Big Jim closes the door and returns to Landry.

LANDRY

Who was it?

BIG JIM

Couple of retards selling broken Girl Scout cookies. Feckless fucks.

LANDRY

You say the "f" word too much.

BIG JIM

Feckless? It just means incompetent.

They hear the sound of the lawn mower rev up. Landry goes to the kitchen looks out the back window.

BIG JIM  
Well, I'll be damned.

LANDRY  
Not if they can help it.

INT. CANNING LIVING ROOM - DAY

The two MISSIONARIES sit next to each other on the sofa. They are sweaty. Their ties are loosened. Their sleeves rolled up.

MISSIONARY ONE  
What makes you so sure?

BIG JIM  
That there's no God watching over us? Same way there's no such thing as a true documentary. Because our behavior changes when we're being watched. Usually for the better. If we were living under the observation of some supreme being, there would be no gangland murders, no abused babies, no Republicans.

Landry raises his hand anxiously as if in school.

LANDRY  
Maybe God blinks.

The missionaries glance over at Landry perplexed.

EXT. CANNING BACKYARD - NIGHT

A small BONFIRE burns on the grass. Jim reclines on an outdoor chaise. Dagny sits on a folding chair wrapped in a blanket. Ruben rests on the ground at her feet.

Landry carries an armful of sticks and twigs he's collected from the yard and drops them on the fire.

BIG JIM  
Watch you don't drop any squirrel shit in there.

Landry wipes his hands on his jacket.

LANDRY  
I never even saw squirrel..."doo".

BIG JIM  
No one has. It's a mystery.

DAGNY

That's good, Landry. Why don't you sit for awhile?

LANDRY

Bigger.

BIG JIM

Let him make it bigger.

Landry runs off. Declan exits the house to join the party.

DECLAN

He's like you, Jimmy. Likes fire.

Big Jim stands up and helps Declan into his chair.

DECLAN

Oh, my achin' back. My head's echoing like the Devil's own footsteps in an empty cathedral.

DAGNY

That's a precise description.

Ariel exits her house and stands in the shadows listening.

BIG JIM

It's not quite onomatopoeia, but "precise." That's a good word "precise." "Precisely." I love words that sound like what they mean. Soggy. Deliberate. The four-syllable way: Deliberate.

DAGNY

Whisper.

BIG JIM

Why?

DAGNY

No. That's the word. "Whisper." You almost have to whisper to say it.

Ariel moves to the fence and joins the conversation.

ARIEL

My word is *deter-minded*.

BIG JIM

What's that?

ARIEL

When I was like six, I raided my mother's bookshelf and found "A Tale of Two Cities." She didn't want me to be discouraged, so she warned it might be too hard for me. But I went full steam ahead, and read that some character or other was *deter-minded*. That must mean he is stupid or something, I decided. It wasn't until years later I realized he was "determined." I still read that word that way. Deter-minded.

Landry walks back to the group. His eyes are closed and he uses a long stick as a cane to feel his way.

DAGNY

You're getting really good at that blind stuff.

BIG JIM

A regular seeing-eye dog.

Landry throws the stick on the fire. He then sits right in front of it like a kid sitting too close to the TV.

ARIEL

I love an autumn fire.

BIG JIM

Well, don't just stand there all *deter-minded*. Come join us.

ARIEL

I'll get the marshmallows.

Ariel disappears into her house.

LANDRY

How many degrees is this?

DECLAN

When Jim was your age I took him to the fire department because he used to play with fire. They gave him a good scare and made him promise he wouldn't play with matches.

RUBEN

And thus you started him on a long career of lying to the authorities.



Ariel appears in the backyard and brushes leaves off a bench. She hands Jim a box of marshmallow PEEPS and hands Dagny a BOWL OF DANDELION SALAD.

BIG JIM

Peeps.

DAGNY

What's this?

BIG JIM

How about that? Purple chicks.

ARIEL

(answering Dagny)

Dandelion salad. A bumper crop.

Landry and Big Jim exchange knowing looks.

LANDRY

Weeds.

ARIEL

Landry, who's to say what's a weed?  
It has pretty flowers; it grows  
with no care; it had tasty leaves.

BIG JIM

It ferments into wine.

ARIEL

People kill them to grow grass,  
which has none of those attributes,

DAGNY

Smells good.

ARIEL

Landry, collect some sticks for the  
marshmallows.

Landry makes a show of leaving his comfortable spot.

ARIEL

I hope he doesn't bother you all by  
coming over too much. He hasn't  
really made many friends.

DAGNY

He's a great kid.

ARIEL

I know. I miss him.

BIG JIM  
You miss home schooling?

ARIEL  
It beat work as a dental tech. Not  
everyone keeps their mouths tidy.

Landry returns with about twenty marshmallow sticks. He hands one each to his mother and DAGNY, keeps one for himself, and turns the remainder over to Big Jim, whom he knows can't use the same spoon twice.

Dagny is amused.

Landry puts a Peep on a stick and carefully steers into the fire where it immediately bursts into flames.

BIG JIM  
Hey, maybe this is how we should  
cremate dad.

Never opening his eyes or moving a muscle, Declan chimes in.

DECLAN  
Just don't drip any marshmallow on  
me. I don't want to be in purple  
goo for all eternity.

BIG JIM  
I love it when you quote Dante.

INT. BIG JIM'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Later that night, Jim lies in bed watching one of his own television commercials.

He is annoyed that his CELLPHONE VIBRATES off his night-stand breaking his concentration.

He grabs the phone off the floor and answers it in one swoop.

BIG JIM  
Jim Canning.

ARIEL (V.O.)  
Jim. It's Ariel. Landry's asleep.  
Come over.

BIG JIM  
I can't. Remember?

ARIEL  
Oh. Right. Meet me in the gangway.

Big Jim hangs up the phone. He puts on his ROBE.

EXT. CANNING BACKYARD - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

Ariel is already at the back door waiting for him with a bottle of Tequila.

ARIEL  
I couldn't sleep.

She offers Jim the bottle, and he takes a swig.

ARIEL  
It's been a while. I mean like months. More than a hundred months.

BIG JIM  
If this is how you flirt...

Ariel laughs. She puts her arm around Jim and kisses him.

ARIEL  
Is this better?

Jim pulls her down onto a CHAISE LAWN CHAIR. The starry sky illuminates them as if characters in a fairy tale.

BIG JIM  
You're sure about this? It's not the booze? It's not your ex?

ARIEL  
You want me to sign a release?

Jim rolls over to kiss her. The chaise collapses.

They never see Dagny spying through her bedroom window.

BIG JIM  
Wait a second.

Big Jim rushes into the house.

Ariel adjusts her clothing. She quickly checks her hair in the REFLECTION IN A BASEMENT WINDOW.

Jim returns with a BOTTLE OF LOTION.

He pumps some on his hand then plunges it down his pants.

ARIEL  
I assure you: I don't need lube.

BIG JIM  
It's Purell. Germs.

Ariel shrugs and throws herself at Big Jim.

Dagny lets the curtains fall back into place as she leaves the window.

EXT. GYM CLASS - DAY

Billy, Cody and Brianna encircle Landry.

LANDRY  
So the bartender says, "hey, matie,  
you have a big steering wheel  
hanging in your zipper. The pirate  
says "y'ar it drives me balls."

BRIANNA  
That don't even make sense.

BILLY THE BULLY  
I should punch you in the face, but  
I don't want to pop those zits and  
get puss on my fist.

CODY  
We can work around that.

Cody grabs Landry's arm and slaps it into his face.

CODY  
Stop hitting yourself.

EXT. CANNING HOUSE - DAY

Ariel sits on the front steps, while Big Jim VIDEOTAPES her.

BIG JIM  
I'm surprised you never modeled.  
The camera loves you.

ARIEL  
You're either a great charmer or a  
big liar.

BIG JIM  
I'm no charmer.

ARIEL  
Liar.

Landry comes walking down the street. When he gets to the porch, Ariel recognizes the tear streaks on his face.

ARIEL

Oh, honey. Those boys again?

Ariel hugs Landry. Jim tapes the interaction.

BIG JIM

What boys?

ARIEL

Some kids are bothering him at school.

LANDRY

Billy the Bully.

Big Jim puts down the camera.

BIG JIM

Next time he bothers you kick him in the balls.

Landry searches his mother's face for approval.

LANDRY

That's not fighting fair.

BIG JIM

You're not trying to win a ribbon. He'll stop bothering you.

ARIEL

Well, come on, let's get you cleaned up.

Ariel walks her son toward their house. Big Jim picks up the camera and zooms in on her swishing rear end.

INT. CANNING BASEMENT - DAY

Ruben enters Jim's basement studio.

BIG JIM

Finally broke down, huh? Bankruptcy commercials are big these days.

RUBEN

Jimmy, my firm doesn't advertise.

BIG JIM  
If Abraham Lincoln were alive  
today, he'd advertise his practice.

RUBEN  
Dagny thought I should make this  
appointment to talk to you.

BIG JIM  
Suit yourself. I'm still charging  
you my day rate.

The lawyer sits on the stool in front of the camera.

RUBEN  
Dagny's worried about you.

BIG JIM  
Seven billion people in the world,  
and my sister's the only one with  
worries. Her problem is she  
approaches me the way a nun  
approaches a run-on sentence:  
Something to be dismantled and  
diagramed and understood. If  
something is over your head, it  
can't be under your control.

RUBEN  
She's worried, that's all.

BIG JIM  
Since when is she her brother's  
keeper?

RUBEN  
Well, I guess since your father  
called her and asked her to be.  
That's why she came back.

BIG JIM  
What? What did she tell you?

Dagny's voice calls from upstairs.

DAGNY (O.S.)  
I'm ready, Ruben.

BIG JIM  
She's going out with you again?

RUBEN  
A casual thing.

BIG JIM  
Someone should slap an ankle  
bracelet on her. What do you see in  
her?

RUBEN  
She has a contagious laugh.

BIG JIM  
No doubt. Hepatitis C. Watch out  
for words beginning with "p."

EXT. CANNING HOUSE - DAY

Big Jim rides his BIKE around the perimeter. Ariel sits on his handlebars. Landry follows behind on his own bike.

INT. CANNING KITCHEN - NIGHT

Declan sits at the head of the table with an oxygen mask on. Big Jim sits next to him. Landry is next to Jim. Across the table is Dagny and Ruben.

Ariel carries in a BIRTHDAY CAKE ablaze with candles. She places it in front of Jim.

BIG JIM  
(to Declan)  
Want to help me blow out the  
candles?

Declan waves him off as Big Jim blows out all the candles.

LANDRY  
Did you make a wish?

BIG JIM  
I'm a little old for that.

One-by-one, two-by-two, the candles flame up again. Jim laughs and takes another deep breath and blows.

BIG JIM  
Trick candles?

LANDRY  
It was my idea.

Jim playfully smears frosting on his face.

DECLAN

Old nothing. I wish I was as old  
like you.

BIG JIM

You'd be a young man with cancer.

Declan laughs until he chokes.

Dagny shoots a knowing look to Ruben.

DECLAN

The scariest day of my life is when  
I asked my doctor if I should stop  
smoking, and he said, it doesn't  
really matter.

DAGNY

Scariest day of my life was when  
Victor didn't stop me from leaving.

DECLAN

What about you, kid? Anything scary  
happen to you?

LANDRY

I walked into my mother's  
bedroom...

RUBEN

Uh oh. I know this song.

LANDRY

And I found a book on her bed:  
"Home Schooling for Dummies."

Everyone laughs.

ARIEL

That's a helpful book.

INT. CANNING LIVING ROOM - NIGHT (CONTINUOUS)

The birthday party has re-assembled over a pile of gifts.

LANDRY

Now do mine.

Big Jim picks up a package, and unwraps it one swift tear to  
find an industrial-sized box of disposable spoons.

Big Jim looks perplexed. Declan and Dagny look terrified.  
Complete silence.



LANDRY

Now you don't have to run the dish washer just for ice cream spoons.

Big Jim looks embarrassed.

LANDRY

Don't you like it?

Jim laughs.

BIG JIM

It's a great idea. You proved you know me, kid.

Relieved, Declan and Dagny laugh.

ARIEL

I don't get it.

DECLAN

You will.

INT. SLEAZY MOTEL - NIGHT

Ruben and Dagny fall onto the bed of a cheaply furnished motel room. She breaks out of his embrace.

DAGNY

Wait a minute.

RUBEN

What's wrong?

Dagny patters to the toilet. The toilet DOOR cannot open all the way because it hits the bed in the too-small room.

Dagny re-emerges wearing the free plastic SHOWER CAP.

DAGNY

God knows the last time they washed the comforters.

She dives onto Ruben who rolls around on top of her. He kisses her sweetly at first then dives in.

RUBEN

Before I forget, Celia wanted me to ask you since you're back in town if you wanted to join the Rotary. She's president.

DAGNY  
Who's Celia?

RUBEN  
Celia. My Celia.

Dagny pushes Ruben off the bed.

DAGNY  
You're married?

RUBEN  
So are you.

Dagny studies herself in the CEILING MIRROR above the bed and shakes her head in disgust.

INT. CANNING KITCHEN - NIGHT

Big Jim prepares soup at the stove while Landry types on the Braille typewriter at the kitchen table.

BIG JIM  
Do me a favor will you?

LANDRY  
Probably not.

BIG JIM  
Ask Diane why they have Braille instructions on the ATMs at the bank drive-thru. How many blind people are driving?

Big Jim pours soup into three bowls. He walks one of the bowls to the table and sets it in front of Landry.

LANDRY  
I'm not asking her that.

BIG JIM  
So is she pretty, this blind girl?

LANDRY  
How am I supposed to know?

Big Jim tidies up the work space on the kitchen counter.

BIG JIM  
You can see, can't you?

Declan, dragging his oxygen tank, staggers into the kitchen. He props himself up in the doorway. He's weak.

DECLAN

Jim, Jim.

Big Jim drops the soup pot in the sink and rushes to Declan. He supports his father at the shoulders.

Landry, trying to make himself disappear, jumps up from the table and stands in the far corner of the room.

BIG JIM

Okay. It's okay. I've got you.  
We're going to the hospital.

Big Jim leads Declan to the back door.

BIG JIM

Landry, grab a blanket for the car.  
Landry, go.

Landry runs out of the room.

INT. CANNING GARAGE - NIGHT

Declan sits in the passenger seat. Landry swaddles a blanket over Declan.

Big Jim re-dials a cell phone.

BIG JIM

God damn it, Dagny. Pick up.

Landry closes the passenger door.

Big Jim sets the phone on the dashboard and backs out of the garage.

Landry stares at the departing car from the garage as the automatic door closes before him. Landry scurries under the door at the last second.

INT./EXT. BIG JIM'S CAR - DRIVING - NIGHT

Before they reach the end of the block, Big Jim's ankle bracelet flashes and beeps.

Declan seems to have passed out.

Big Jim picks up his cell phone and tries again.

BIG JIM

Call back ASAP. I'm rushing Dad to the hospital.

Big Jim turns right. A FLASH lights up the sky. It's a POLICE CAMERA capturing his turn. Declan stirs to consciousness just enough for a fatherly criticism.

DECLAN  
You'll get a ticket.

A POLICE CAR blazes up its lights and sirens behind him.

BIG JIM  
That's the least of my problems.

Big Jim pulls over.

As he waits for the cop to appear, he checks his father's pulse with two fingers to the throat.

EXT. SUBURBAN STREET - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

The cop steps out of his car with his gun already drawn.

COP  
Step out of the car with your hands  
clasped above your head.

Big Jim gets out of the car as instructed.

The cop slowly approaches.

COP  
Get him out of the car.

BIG JIM  
He's unconscious.

The cop roughly throws Big Jim against his car.

BIG JIM  
You can arrest me.

COP  
I don't need your permission.

BIG JIM  
Just get my father to the hospital.

A SUBARU rushes up to the "crime scene." The cop trains his gun on the approaching car, which squeals to a halt.

It's Ariel and Landry.

ARIEL  
Put him in my car.

The cop suddenly understands the gravity of the situation and helps transfer Declan to Ariel's car.

Landry swaddles Declan in the blanket and closes the door.

Big Jim attempts to climb into Ariel's car.

COP

Stop right there. Put your palms  
flat on the hood of your own car.

The cop motions for Ariel to drive off. She speeds away.

COP

Alright get in the car.

Big Jim grabs the handle of his car.

COP

Not that car, hotshot.

BIG JIM

My father's very sick. What choice  
did I have?

COP

Nine-one-one. You have the right to  
remain silent...

INT. CANNING LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Big Jim sits in Declan's usual chair. All the lights are off.

The front door opens. Dagny, in a cocktail dress, enters with a clear HOSPITAL BAG filled with Declan's belongings. She turns the lights on.

BIG JIM

Did you get that dress free at the  
bottom of a box of condoms?

DAGNY

Don't take it out on me.

BIG JIM

Of course not. You're always there  
when we need you. Who were you out  
fucking when Mom died?

Dagny drops Declan's bag and turns around as if to head back out. Jim softens.

BIG JIM

How is he?

DAGNY

Sedated now. He's never been a fighter, Jim. The Declan-ness of him is already gone.

BIG JIM

The Declan-ness? No, I get you. The Declan-ness. His Declanity. Kaput. I'm going to bed.

INT. SHOP CLASS - DAY

All the STUDENTS sit at their worktables with their finished JEWELRY BOXES. The SHOP TEACHER struts among them.

SHOP TEACHER

Every now and then I have the joy of giving an A on a project from an unlikely craftsman.

He stops at the table shared by Landry and Aziz.

Aziz sits straight and proud as the teacher reaches toward his project. Instead the teacher picks up Landry's jewelry box and holds it up for the class to see.

SHOP TEACHER

I would be proud to have this on my dresser. Congratulations, Landry. Today we varnish them.

Billy the Bully snarls at Landry. Landry notices.

Aziz extends his arm to fist-bump Landry. At first Landry ducks from what he assumes will be a punch but quickly recovers to return the friendly gesture.

INT. LANDRY'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

In his pajamas, Landry reads a BOOK in the center of his bedroom floor.

Ariel enters in her work clothes.

ARIEL

You're ready for bed. I wish I was. I'm exhausted.

LANDRY  
You're exhausted every day.

She lies on his bed, pats it as an invitation to join her.

ARIEL  
How was your day?

LANDRY  
Fine. I was looking forward to  
coming home to play school with you  
- like the old days.

ARIEL  
Honey, you're getting kind of old  
to play school. Rub my feet.

LANDRY  
I'm too old for that.

Landry picks up his SCHOOL SUPPLIES and stuffs them in a  
BACKPACK he slips over one shoulder. He leaves his room.

ARIEL  
(calling after him)  
I'm sorry, Landry. Let's play.

EXT. CANNING BACKYARD - NIGHT

Still in his pajamas and with his backpack, Landry slips into  
the broken basement window the way Big Jim showed him.

INT. CANNING BASEMENT - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

It's obvious that the odd collections in the basement make  
him nervous so he scurries up the stairs as soon as possible.

INT. CANNING LIVING ROOM - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

Landry finds Big Jim snoozing on the couch in front of the TV  
set. Landry drops his bookbag and heads to the bathroom.

INT. CANNING BATHROOM - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

Landry pushes on the bathroom door. He catches Dagny in the  
shower. His first naked woman. Panicked, he bumps his head  
trying to beat a retreat.

In the hallway, he pants heavily with his back against the  
wall. Composure regained, leans over to take another peek.

EXT. SCHOOL YARD - DAY

Billy the Bully and Cody lay in wait for Aziz as he rounds the corner.

BILLY THE BULLY  
Hey, Aziz.

Aziz keeps walking. Landry rounds the corner and sees trouble lurking. He stops dead in his tracks.

BILLY THE BULLY  
Aziz, I'm talking to you.

A GIRL a few steps away senses the tension.

BILLY THE BULLY  
My granddad says you'll fit in if  
we kick the Shiite out of you.

GIRL  
Fight!

SCHOOL KIDS start to gather. Aziz stops and turns to confront his harassers.

BILLY THE BULLY  
Hey everybody, how does an Arab  
feed her baby...

Billy pretends he holds a spoon and rears back his arm.

BILLY THE BULLY  
...Here comes the airplane.

Billy smashes the imaginary spoon into Aziz's forehead knocking the GREEN PUGREE from his head.

Without thinking, Aziz unleashes pent-up fury. He punches Cody once in the face. Cody knows he is out-matched and runs.

Billy takes a swing, but Aziz jumps on him sending him in a heap to the ground. They roll and struggle but Aziz always maintains the upper hand.

BILLY THE BULLY  
I'm sorry.

The crowd of kids gasp at hearing these words from Billy.

Aziz stands up and without a word continues to walk home.

Landry runs up behind him and hands him his PUGREE. They walk together without saying anything.



EXT. CANNING HOUSE - DAY

Landry and Aziz arrive at Landry's house.

They see next door that Big Jim is wheeling his TRASH CANS to the curb. But he stops at the grass line, knowing that one step further and his bracelet will go off.

LANDRY  
(to Aziz)  
Come on.

Aziz and Landry approach Big Jim.

BIG JIM  
Here comes the calvary.

Each boy takes a trash can and wheels it to the curb.

They return to Jim.

LANDRY  
Aziz, this is my friend Jim  
Canning. And Jim, this is my public  
school friend at school, Aziz.

Big Jim reaches out his hand for a shake. Instead, Aziz breaks down crying.

Big Jim hugs the boy, comforting him.

LANDRY  
Why are you crying? You won?

Big Jim nods his head at the nosy neighbor across the street. As soon as he does, her curtains fall back into place.

INT. CANNING BASEMENT - DAY

Big Jim is dressed well for a meeting with Ruben. He sits at his computer monitor as Ruben paces behind him.

RUBEN  
The parents are suing you. Not for hitting the baby, but for teaching the baby how to hit. Apparently the kid's been terrorizing the family's beloved Boston terrier.

BIG JIM

Must pack quite a right hook to be worth going back to court again.

RUBEN

It's all about money. Maybe I can get you out of this. I probably can. Unfortunately, now it has to be about money for you, too. Your sister suggested you could sell some of your "collections."

BIG JIM

You should stop talking about me to my fucking sister, *S'il vous plait*. Pardon my French. I thought you couldn't go to trial twice for the same crime. Double indemnity.

RUBEN

Double jeopardy. Wake up and smell the O.J. Simpson. Criminal Suit. Civil suit.

BIG JIM

How the hell did they know they could sue me now?

RUBEN

You won't believe it. Victor told them.

BIG JIM

I want a new lawyer.

INT. CANNING LIVING ROOM - DAY

Bored as hell, Big Jim has taken to painting the living room.

Landry bangs on the door.

LANDRY (OS)

Jim. UPS. A big box came for you.

BIG JIM

Bring it in.

LANDRY

It's heavy.

Big Jim opens the front door to find Landry trying to lift one end of the box.

Big Jim grabs the other end. They ease it through the door.

BIG JIM  
Watch the paint.

LANDRY  
I have to watch where I am going.

They put the box down. Jim slices it open with a putty KNIFE.

LANDRY  
What is it?

BIG JIM  
A T-Shirt press. I'm gonna make  
free T-shirts for my clients.

LANDRY  
With your name on it?

BIG JIM  
And a funny message like "one  
nation under surveillance."

LANDRY  
Can I have one?

BIG JIM  
You can have the first one.

INT. DECLAN'S HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

Declan is propped up on two pillows in bed. Dagny is armed with her cameras.

A large BLACK NURSE enters and Dagny snaps a photo of her.

BLACK NURSE  
I'm just here to look in on you,  
Mr. Canning.

DECLAN  
You're always looking in.

BLACK NURSE  
What's that?

DECLAN  
Nothing.

BLACK NURSE  
Did you have a bowel movement?

Declan does not answer.

BLACK NURSE

If you don't move your bowels,  
we'll have to do it for you. You  
wouldn't want that, would you?

The nurse smiles at Dagny who volleys the smile to Declan.

DECLAN

(to nurse)

What's the matter with you? Can't  
you see my daughter is sitting  
right here? Have some respect for  
privacy. How would you like if I  
talked about your private business  
in front of your kids?

BLACK NURSE

Mr. Canning, everybody poops.

INT. SCHOOL BOY'S ROOM - DAY

Landry is trying to get some paint out of his hair.

BILLY THE BULLY

What's that "Gland-ry"? Splooge in  
your hair?

CODY

He don't even know what splooge is.

LANDRY

It's paint. I was helping my  
neighbor paint.

CODY

You're friends with that perv?

Billy the Bully pushes and grabs at Landry.

BILLY THE BULLY

Show me where he touched you.

LANDRY

Stop it.

BILLY THE BULLY

You a pervert, too?

CODY

He probably liked it. No, your  
honor, the sex was "conceptual."

BILLY THE BULLY  
Not conceptual, "consexual."

LANDRY  
It's "consensual."

BILLY THE BULLY  
See. He admits it.

Billy punches Landry in the stomach. He lands on the floor.

Aziz enters. Cody and Billy stop their aggression. Billy grabs the prized JEWELRY BOX off of the sink and leaves Landry squirming.

BILLY THE BULLY  
You ain't got any family jewels.

Landry shows embarrassment as he glances up at Aziz.

LANDRY  
They're afraid of you. Thank God.

AZIZ  
Don't you mean "Praise Allah?"

Aziz helps Landry to his feet.

AZIZ  
This is why I don't tell them I am not a Muslim. I am a Buddhist from New Delhi.

INT. HOSPITAL - NIGHT

Declan looks gaunt as he lies in a hospital bed. DAGNY sits in a chair near him, a raincoat draped over her knees. He weakly motions for her to come closer.

DAGNY  
What it is, Dad?

He grabs at the oxygen mask covering his mouth, and she helps him take it off.

DECLAN  
I got something to say.

Dagny snaps a photo of Declan.

DAGNY  
I'm listening, Daddy.

She wipes a tear from her eye.

DECLAN

Jimmy told me the average weight of human feces is three-hundred-twenty grams per day. I been thinking about this. Multiply that by three hundred sixty days - because some days you don't go - and that's over two hundred and fifty-three pounds per year. Multiply that by an average seventy-four year life span, and that's eighteen-thousand, seven-hundred and twenty two pounds of shit. Nine-point-three tons of shit produced by each and every one of us.

DAGNY

Why are you telling me this?

DECLAN

What do you want me to say: "Rosebud"? Come judgement day, they'll be loading up the scales with all the good you did in the world and see if that even comes close to balancing out the shit-storm that was your life. Of course, just by being an American, you already won the life lottery; you have a better chance than anyone else of doing enough good to effectively offset the excrement.

He puts the oxygen mask back on and breaths deeply a few times. He takes the mask off again.

DAGNY

You want me to get a nurse?

DECLAN

I want you to cut the shit, Dagny.

INT. ENGLISH CLASSROOM - DAY

It's the after-school Braille Club. Diane and Landry sit at their separate desks each with a BRAILLE TYPEWRITER on it. Diane types away like a whirlwind.

Landry, with his blindfold on, easily makes his way to the teacher's desk where he feels for and find a stapler.

Billy the Bully and Cody SMASH THE DOOR open. Billy carries Landry's swiped jewelry box.

Billy puts the jewelry box down on Diane's desk.

BILLY THE BULLY

Hi, Diane. Landry was too shy to give it to you, but he wanted you to have this.

Diane picks up the box and feels all around it.

DIANE

What is it?

BILLY THE BULLY

A jewelry box.

CODY

He made it in shop class for you.

DIANE

How wonderful of you, Landry.

BILLY THE BULLY

He says he'd like to fill it up for you one day.

DIANE

Landry?

LANDRY

If you don't want it, my mom likes that kind of junk.

DIANE

Of course, I want it. No one at this school ever gave me anything. Thank you.

BILLY THE BULLY

Well, we'll leave you lovebirds be.

Billy and Cody leave. Landry and Diane sit in silence.

DIANE

I like you, too, Landry.

She reaches out to touch his knee. He pulls his leg in out of her reach.

INT. HOSPITAL - DAY

Dagny and Ruben sit in Declan's room. Declan is nonresponsive.

A nurse comes in and calmly checks his pulse. The nurse leans over and turns off a BEEPING MACHINE.

DAGNY

I hate the quiet.

EXT. CANNING HOUSE - NIGHT

Jim sits alone on the front porch as night falls.

The front door is open so he easily hears the TELEPHONE ring inside. It rings and rings. Jim stares off in the distance. No need to answer it. He knows the bad news.

He rubs the length of his long sleeve across his eyes.

INT. COURTROOM - DAY

Jim sits in the courtroom, handcuffed behind attorney Frank Lawler, who now takes his place before the bench.

FRANK LAWLER

We contend that in this highly decorous situation in a highly populated funeral home, there will be no opportunity for Mr. Canning to instigate trouble.

JUDGE

May I remind you, Mr. Lawler, that it was a controlled, public environment in which Mr. Canning attacked a defenseless baby?

FRANK LAWLER

Come on, Judge, it wasn't an attack, a tap, maybe, a smack. What harm can he do at a funeral home?

JUDGE

Don't phrase it like a challenge.

Jim stands up. Lawler quickly appears at his side to press him back down into his seat.



JUDGE

You would be very wise to  
discontinue this line of reasoning.

FRANK LAWLER

Then I'd like to conclude by  
pointing out the special bond  
between Jim and Declan Canning. Jim  
has no family, wife or girlfriend.  
This was an especially close  
relationship, and this court would  
be cruel in denying Jim Canning  
presence at his father's funeral.

JUDGE

I'll consider it if Mr. Canning  
would place himself in his sister's  
charge during the six hours when  
his ankle bracelet is removed.

Big Jim stands up.

BIG JIM

She's my sister. She's can't have  
authority over me.

FRANK LAWLER

What if you release him to me for  
the funeral?

JUDGE

Mr. Lawler, don't look a gift horse  
in the mouth.

EXT. SCHOOL YARD - DAY

Landry stands near the fence. He wears his nicest polo shirt  
tucked into well-pleated pants.

A BASKETBALL bounces off the back of his head. Cody follows  
soon behind it.

CODY

Why you all dressed up?

LANDRY

What do you care what I wear?

Billy the Bully joins them.

BILLY THE BULLY

You going to the funeral home for  
your pervy neighbor?

LANDRY  
It's his father who died.

CODY  
So you admit he's pervy.

Aziz wanders over to the small group.

AZIZ  
Shut up, Cody. Leave him alone.

CODY  
We're not bothering him.

BILLY THE BULLY  
He's our friend. Not like you.

Landry looks at Aziz and musters courage.

LANDRY  
Aziz is my friend.

BILLY THE BULLY  
Since we're all friends, how's  
about let's do something.

AZIZ  
What?

BILLY THE BULLY  
Let's look around the perv's house.

LANDRY  
They're not home. They're at the  
funeral home.

BILLY THE BULLY  
Exactly.

LANDRY  
We can't do that.

BILLY THE BULLY  
I thought you were getting cool.

CODY  
He's your friend ain't he? You're  
always there. He doesn't mind.

AZIZ  
You guys are assholes.

Aziz walks away.

CODY  
You don't need him as a friend.

BILLY THE BULLY  
We're the good friends to have.

INT. FUNERAL PARLOR - DAY

Declan is laid-out in his FINEST SUIT. A GROUP OF PEOPLE intermingle. Victor comforts Dagny in front of the coffin.

VICTOR  
I'm sorry.

DAGNY  
I know.

VICTOR  
I mean I'm sorry about everything.

DAGNY  
I can't believe came. Who would have pegged you as a good guy?

Big Jim approaches them.

BIG JIM  
Who are all these people? This is such an odd custom. Come and stare at my dead father.

VICTOR  
Yeah. I wouldn't be caught dead at one of these things. Just throw me in a garbage bag.

BIG JIM  
That's what Declan used to say, but there he is for all to see. Promise me if they give me an open coffin against my wishes, make sure my middle finger is sticking up.

VICTOR  
Deal.

DAGNY  
You guys are macabre.

VICTOR  
(teasing)  
I think I'll get Dagny stuffed.

BIG JIM  
That's what all the boys say.

EXT. CANNING BACKYARD - DAY

Landry slips into the loose basement window. A second later he appears at the back door to let in Billy the Bully, Cody and Brianna.

INT. CANNING BASEMENT - DAY

The kids marvel at Big Jim's studio and wonderland.

BRIANNA  
Wow. Look at this place.

Billy the Bully turns on the hot STUDIO LIGHTS.

BILLY THE BULLY  
We can make a movie.

LANDRY  
Don't touch anything.

BILLY THE BULLY  
Okay. Sure, boss. How about it,  
Brianna, wanna take your shirt off  
for the movie.

Cody spins a giant globe and Brianna picks up a crystal ball.

BRIANNA  
Did the old guy die in here?

LANDRY  
He died at the hospital.

CODY  
That's a relief.

Billy the Bully comes upon the T-Shirt press.

BILLY THE BULLY  
Cool. "One Nation Under  
Surveillance." Who wants it?

He throws the shirt over his shoulder. It lands on the hot STUDIO LIGHT. The kids don't notice that it starts to SMOKE up almost immediately.

LANDRY

No. Don't touch. I'm sure Jim will  
make you shirts if you want.

BILLY THE BULLY

I thought you were cool for once.

INT. FUNERAL PARLOR - DAY

An ELDERLY WOMAN approaches Victor and Big Jim.

ELDERLY WOMAN

Are you his sons?

BIG JIM

I am.

The woman shakes his hand.

BIG JIM

Thank you for coming.

ELDERLY WOMAN

I didn't have anything better to  
do. Are there cookies?

A FLASH goes off as Dagny shoots Declan in the coffin.

INT. CANNING BASEMENT - DAY

The basement studio is THICK WITH SMOKE. The intruders COUGH.

BILLY THE BULLY

I can't see. My eyes are burning.

LANDRY

Close your eyes. Get on the ground.

Billy the Bully and Cody get onto their hands and knees.

Landry picks up a GREEN T-SHIRT from the press and wraps it  
around his face the way he did it in Braille Club.

BILLY THE BULLY

Ha. He looks like Aziz.

BRIANNA

I'm scared.

Landry grabs her hand.

With his Braille Club ability to find his way in the dark, he leads Brianna, Billy and Cody out of the house to safety.

EXT. CANNING HOUSE - DAY - CONTINUOUS

Billy the Bully, Cody and Landry - still wearing the GREEN T-SHIRT on his head - scatter as soon as they are safely out of the burning house.

The curtains drop into place in the window of the NOSY NEIGHBOR across the street. But for the first time, she actually emerges from her house.

NOSY NEIGHBOR  
Stop. You kids, get back here.

Of course, they don't obey. Her screaming gets drowned out by approaching SIRENS.

The SQUAD CAR arrives first, followed by the fire trucks.

The Nosy Neighbor runs down her front stairs. She can't wait to share her information.

The COP practically catches her by her shoulders. The sirens block her voice, but her hand gestures describe the turban.

INT. FUNERAL PARLOR - NIGHT

A few people still mill about the casket. Dagny and Big Jim sit next to each other on a sofa near the front of the room.

BIG JIM  
I have to find one more pall bearer.

DAGNY  
What are you going to do now? You don't want to live alone, do you?

BIG JIM  
Aren't you staying?

DAGNY  
Maybe we should sell the house?

BIG JIM  
Why?

DAGNY  
I don't want to live here, Jim.

BIG JIM  
It's my house.

DAGNY  
It's my inheritance, too.

BIG JIM  
Inheritance? Dagny, cut the shit.

DAGNY  
Well, that sounds familiar.

A DETECTIVE and TWO UNIFORMED COPS enter the funeral parlor.  
They make a beeline for the unsuspecting Jim.

DAGNY  
What's going on?

DETECTIVE  
James Declan Canning?

Jim stands up.

BIG JIM  
Yes?

DETECTIVE  
You are under arrest.

Victor runs over to the action.

VICTOR  
This is a wake; what do you mean by  
this? It's sacrilege

A cop holds Victor back.

COP  
Sir, this is police business.

DETECTIVE  
Mr. Canning, you have the right to  
remain silent.

VICTOR  
He has legal permission to be out  
of the house.

DETECTIVE  
He doesn't have permission to burn  
it down.

BIG JIM  
What?

DETECTIVE

Arson. You have the right to remain silent, if you refuse that right...

Dagny punches Jim in the arm.

DAGNY

You bastard. This is the last thing Dad sees.

COP

Please, M'am. He can't see anything.

VICTOR

Don't worry, Jim, we're right behind you.

INT. JAIL CELL - DAY

Big Jim sits on his bed. Frank Lawler sits next to him in an uncomfortable wooden chair.

FRANK LAWLER

I'm working on it Jim. You can't be confined to house arrest, if you don't have a house.

BIG JIM

Where's Dagny staying?

FRANK LAWLER

I have no idea.

BIG JIM

You made her the boss of me, why can't I stay with her?

FRANK LAWLER

If that's what you really want, we can try to work something out. But Dagny. Dagny's been saying things, Jim.

BIG JIM

What kind of things?

FRANK LAWLER

Exactly what is your relationship with the boy next door?



BIG JIM

That's exactly my relationship.  
He's the boy next door.

FRANK LAWLER

Some people think you worked  
awfully hard to get permission to  
attend your father's funeral.

BIG JIM

He was my father.

FRANK LAWLER

The law hates coincidences. Good  
thing I deal in justice not the  
law. Fire marshal believes you put  
some kids up to burning down the  
place. I know him. He's an  
hysteric. Was it Jewish lightning?

BIG JIM

A skinhead couldn't find a Jew in  
this redneck neighborhood. Except  
for all the fucking lawyers--this  
town's biggest industry. Praise  
Mesothelioma.

FRANK LAWLER

It's just an expression, Jim. Means  
the place was burned down so the  
owner could collect on insurance.  
Maybe with your father dead,  
someone wanted to prevent Dagny  
from her fair claim on the house  
you live in. That's something the  
D.A. might propose.

BIG JIM

So now what?

FRANK LAWLER

Suppose you tell me about that kid  
next door.

BIG JIM

He's just a kid.

FRANK LAWLER

Well, your history with kids, shall  
we say, doesn't play well in court.

INT. LANDRY'S - DAY

Ariel carries a LAUNDRY BASKET into Landry's room. She picks up a pair of jeans from his bed and tosses them into the basket. She gets down on her knees and sweeps her arm under the bed. This nets some mismatched SOCKS and the "ONE NATION UNDER SURVEILLANCE" T-SHIRT.

She sniffs the T-shirt. She recoils, her frowning face clearly reacting to the strong smoke smell.

INT. COUNTY JAIL SECURITY CHECKPOINT - NIGHT

Dagny, dressed all in black and carrying a large SHOPPING BAG, steps up to the DESK. She notices herself on a SECURITY MONITOR. She uses the image to adjust the BARRETTE in her hair.

The SERGEANT is already rolling his eyes when he returns to the desk and sees Dagny admiring herself.

SERGEANT

Name?

DAGNY

James Declan Canning.

SERGEANT

Your name.

DAGNY

Dagny Charlotte Canning.

The sergeant scribbles her name onto his clipboard.

SERGEANT

What's in the bag?

DAGNY

Some things for my brother.

The sergeant motions for her to open the bag. He peers in. He sticks in his hand and pulls out several PLASTIC SPOONS.

SERGEANT

Is he digging his way out?

DAGNY

He has issues.

SERGEANT

So many of our customers do. What's in the box?

DAGNY

What box?

SERGEANT

The box. The box.

He reaches back into the bag and withdraws a SMALL METAL CUBE. He opens the top. He dabs his finger and pats some fine powder on his tongue.

DAGNY

My father's ashes.

The sergeant spits like a camel.

INT. COUNTY JAIL VISITING ROOM - NIGHT

Dagney carries her SHOPPING BAG to a visitor's table, but she's taken aback upon seeing Big Jim in the court-issued ORANGE JUMPSUIT, tapping his fingers on the table. She sits down.

DAGNY

I was wrong. You look terrible in orange.

BIG JIM

And you look fat.

DAGNY

Don't be ridiculous. Black is slimming.

BIG JIM

You could wrap Oprah around your back and you wouldn't be slim.

DAGNY

I don't want to fight.

Dagney brings the metal cube out of the bag, spilling Jim's spoons in the process.

BIG JIM

Christ, now they're no good.

DAGNY

Well, one step closer to being cured.

BIG JIM

That him?

DAGNY  
Keep your grubby hands out of him.

BIG JIM  
I've buried mice in better boxes.

DAGNY  
I had a romantic notion of  
commingling Mom and Dad's ashes.

BIG JIM  
That would just be a waste. I ran  
out of Mom's ashes long ago.

DAGNY  
What do you mean ran out? What's in  
the urn?

BIG JIM  
Little things I came across.

A weary Dagny packs the urn into her purse.

DAGNY  
What did you have for dinner?

BIG JIM  
Cheeseburgers.

DAGNY  
On a Friday? Meat?

BIG JIM  
You don't still believe in all that  
do you?

DAGNY  
Just for our parents' sake.

BIG JIM  
I hate to break it to you since you  
are a trained observer and all, but  
Mom and Dad are gone.

DAGNY  
Maybe they're looking down on us.

BIG JIM  
Why not? They looked down on us  
when they were alive. If God's  
gonna smite me - sitting in jail  
for arson and child-endangerment, I  
don't think the cheeseburgers will  
matter much.

(MORE)

BIG JIM (cont'd)  
I don't believe in heaven or hell,  
and Earth barely gets my attention.

DAGNY  
So you don't think there's a  
heaven?

BIG JIM  
I don't. And if there were, I don't  
think celestial beings would want  
to spend eternity looking down on  
earth, studying us dancing monkeys.  
Maybe that's hell.

DAGNY  
All right. I'm going home.

BIG JIM  
It burned down.

DAGNY  
Home-home. New York. Where I  
belong. I'm going back to work.

BIG JIM  
With Victor?

DAGNY  
It was wonderful of him to come to  
the funeral. All this way on a  
moment's notice. He really took  
care of me.

BIG JIM  
Well, I hope you're happier this  
time. You should know one thing,  
though.

DAGNY  
What?

BIG JIM  
Victor's taking care of me, too.

DAGNY  
How do you mean?

BIG JIM  
He thinks I can be a reality TV  
star?

DAGNY  
What connection could you possibly  
have to reality?

INT. SHOP CLASS - DAY

The shop teacher walks to the classroom door. He opens it to the PRINCIPAL accompanied by TWO POLICE OFFICERS.

Landry shoots a worried glance at Billy The Bully who turns away as if they had never met.

The police officers look eager to charge in on the kids, but the shop teacher gestures that he'll take care of it.

The shop teacher approaches Landry's desk. Landry shrinks.

SHOP TEACHER

Aziz. Aziz. I'm going to have to ask you to go with these men.

The shop teacher sympathetically leads the boy back to the cops, with his arm around him.

Landry straightens up and coughs. It dawns on him that he's off the hook.

INT. SCHOOL HALLWAY LOCKERS - DAY

Landry slings his BACKPACK around one shoulder and kicks his locker shut. He turns and heads down the hallway.

RANDOM STUDENTS WHISPER about him as he passes.

Landry scrunches his face when he hears the blind girl, Diane, call out behind him.

DIANE (OS)

Landry. Landry.

Landry stops and turns around. Diane carries a shopping bag. She catches up to Landry.

DIANE

Long time no see.

LANDRY

You used that one already.

Diane reaches into her bag to withdraw Landry's jewelry box.

DIANE

I believe this belongs to you.

LANDRY

Really? I can have it back.

DIANE

There is none so blind as he who  
will not see.

LANDRY

Is that a Bible thing?

DIANE

I thought you were home schooled?

LANDRY

I wish.

DIANE

I hope your mom likes it. I did.

LANDRY

Thanks, Diane.

INT. LANDRY'S KITCHEN - DAY

Landry comes home to find Ariel at the kitchen table with the  
smoke-smelling GREEN T-SHIRT spread out on the table.

He drops his books onto the floor.

ARIEL

Please tell me you had nothing to  
do with the fire.

LANDRY

What fire?

INT. JAIL - VISITOR'S ROOM - DAY

Big Jim sits at a table, drumming his hands with boredom.

Ariel and Landry enter. Big Jim stands and hugs each of them.

BIG JIM

I never thought I'd miss that ankle  
bracelet.

ARIEL

You'll be out very soon.

BIG JIM

What do you mean?

ARIEL

We had a meeting with the D.A.

BIG JIM  
That *deter-minded* son-of-a-bitch?  
So?

ARIEL  
Landry has something he'd like to  
tell you.

Landry can barely face Jim. Ariel scoots him forward.

LANDRY  
I brought some kids into your house  
when you were at the funeral home.  
We started the fire.

ARIEL  
It was an accident.

BIG JIM  
Landry? You? Why would you...?  
We're friends.

LANDRY  
It was an accident.

The anguish all over Jim's face sturdies itself into rage.

BIG JIM  
Do you know what you've done?

Big Jim hauls back to take a swing at Landry. He has new self-control. He stops himself before he makes contact.

ARIEL  
It was an accident.

Ariel buries Landry's head in her skirt.

Big Jim calmly places a hand on Landry's shoulder.

BIG JIM  
Just go. Please.

INT. TELEVISION STUDIO - NIGHT

Victor Verdigo wears a suit and carries a few NOTE CARDS as he hits his mark center stage.

FLOOR DIRECTOR (O.S.)  
Three... two... one.

Two TELEVISION CAMERAS push in closer to Victor who suddenly comes to life in their gaze.



VICTOR

And we're back to "What Would Happen?" I promised you this new show will be like nothing you've ever seen before. It's time for me to introduce you to the reason why. Big Jim Canning. Here's a young man with a genius I.Q., but he makes headlines for all the wrong reasons. Is Jim Canning simply in-touch with his inner-child or his inner-child molester?

Big Jim runs out onto the stage punching a CARDBOARD CUT-OUT OF A BABY before he reaches Victor.

VICTOR

Welcome, Jim, this show will follow your exploits. We have permission to shoot the civil trial in the case where you struck an infant.

BIG JIM

I could use the money.

VICTOR

To rebuild your house, which recently burned down?

BIG JIM

To buy a diamond ring.

VICTOR

Say no more. We'll follow that scenario in time. First tell us why you hit that baby.

BIG JIM

I didn't really hit her it was barely a tap.

VICTOR

But why tap her at all?

BIG JIM

We're cultures in a petri dish. Everybody is watching everybody else in this world. And when they're not, we're staring at our own navels. But no one was watching this baby. Struck me as odd.

VICTOR

So you struck a baby?

BIG JIM  
I wanted to see "What Would  
Happen."

INT. RUBEN'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Ruben and his wife CELIA lie in bed. She's peeling an orange. He clips his toenails as they watch "WHAT WOULD HAPPEN" on television.

RUBEN  
Big Jim's been getting the press,  
huh? Biggest thing to hit reality  
TV since "American Idol." You  
should have trapped - I mean tapped  
- him to be on the Rotary.

VICTOR (V.O.)  
(from TV set)  
As we follow Big Jim's trial,  
between court dates, we will send  
him out on little social  
experiments to see "What Would  
Happen." Up next. Breast-feeding in  
public. What happens when it's Big  
Jim doing it?

CELIA  
Hindsight is twenty-twenty.

INT. TV STUDIO - BACKSTAGE - NIGHT

Big Jim rushes down a hallway to his dressing room and dashes in before a gaggle of HANGERS-ON can catch up to him.

INT. BIG JIM'S DRESSING ROOM - NIGHT

Ariel and Landry sit in front of the LIGHTED MIRROR. They stand when Jim enters. Landry holds his mother's hand.

Ariel hands Big Jim a POTTED CLUMP OF DANDELIONS.

BIG JIM  
You came. I'm happy you came.

Ariel lets go of Landry's hand and hugs Jim.

ARIEL  
Do you have something to say?

Landry cries and throws himself at Jim.

LANDRY

I'm so sorry.

Big Jim rubs his head.

BIG JIM

I know you are, son. I know.

Big Jim takes what looks like a ring box from his pocket and hands it to Ariel who accepts with a delighted squeal. She opens the box, and her face lights up.

ARIEL

Will you put it on?

She returns the box to Jim. He takes out not a ring, but an ANKLE BRACELET. She puts her leg on a chair and he clasps the anklet to his first real girlfriend.

Ariel walks back to the dressing table and hands Landry a WalMart bag.

ARIEL

Landry has something for you.

Landry opens the bag.

LANDRY

I made it in school. Before I was expelled.

ARIEL

I've been home-schooling again.

BIG JIM

Cool. I still have a few things to teach him.

Landry pulls his hand-made jewelry box from the bag and hands it to Jim.

BIG JIM

You did this? It's beautiful. No wonder you liked shop. Heavy.

LANDRY

I filled it with the ashes of your house. I tried to get a little from every room.

Big Jim opens the box. Sure enough, it's filled with ash, glass and debris from the burned-out site.

BIG JIM  
That's absolutely brilliant.

EXT. TELEVISION STUDIO - NIGHT

Big Jim, Landry and Ariel exit through the stage door. A million CAMERA FLASHES go off, and VIDEO PAPARAZZI throw out inane questions.

PAPARAZZO  
What's next?

BIG JIM  
That's the big question, isn't?  
We'll have to see what will happen.

A photographer pushes through the crowd. And snags the definitive photo of Big Jim, Ariel and Landry.

When the FLASH subsides enough for them to see again, they recognize the photographer.

Her face reveals she is quite disgusted. That's Dagny.

DAGNY  
Are you going to stay in New York?

BIG JIM  
Why not? If we lived here, we'd be home now.

FADE OUT.