

Norma Day

Written by

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(Based on a True Story, Norma Jean's Sun, Memoir by Kris Courtney)

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"NORMA DAY"

FADE IN Aerial:

Music plays as the aerial view drifts across the top of town in the early morning light. Dew and Mist plays against the surface of roof tops, the sparkles of light and glitter from morning dew upon the Fall foliage reflects into the camera lens. The Spiral of the local Church towers above the mist and the Bells sound above laughter and glimpse views of children running and playing around the yard, to the church ... The walking by, waves and wholesome late 1920's family town on a Sunday morning in America as the view focuses upon the house on the hill and slides into the car approaching

EXT. MUNCIE INDIANA TOWN - MORNING

THE CAR WINDS DOWN THE ROAD TOWARDS (LOCATION) COLORS, VIEWS AND CAPTURES REFLECT THE FALL WARMTH OF AN INDIANA TOWN

NARRATOR

The morning opens and a mist of innocence appears across the countryside, telling us the day is new. The feeling of hope and love and the humble awareness of duty is clear, if only for a moment.

It is that inspiration that follows us into a small town, where we are awakened by a cool frost to the laughter of children playing on this Sunday morning.

Driving through the fall of 1928, the trees cover the hillside; it is as if a collection of sponges and rags dipped in paint have been thrown against the ground, each one offering an array of amber, gold, ruby, and sienna, like purple diamonds sparkling in the morning sun.

SERIES OF SHOTS: INSIDE CAR

MARY

"Settle down now, children. You need to be on your best behavior when we get there...and Johnny, you will not get those pants dirty today, you hear me?!"

Mary says this sternly but lovingly, looking back at her children in the back seat.

JOHNNY

"Yes, Mother,"

Johnny replies, already squirming in his creased trousers

FADE OUT. TRANSITION TO CAR CONTINUING ON RURAL ROAD
SHOT:(hovering above)

NARRATOR

As this journey begins, I recount the tale from this same old house resting on the hill.

It offers a view of the carnival that comes every year to this small town and sets up just across the tracks.

HOUSE ON HILL:

As the car enters the long drive, the grass is noticeably high, the grounds showing signs of neglect. The flowers have softened below their once high, proud stance of beauty. You can see this home had been cared for with love and diligence in the past, that it had stood tall and firm, but was now shadowed with stains. The broken glass that cloaks the upstairs window tells the story of an empty future, or a past that need not be spoken. Though the fence around the side yard still stands strong, it needs a painting, and the swing set is rusted with neglect. It speaks in the wind, claiming its independence and its loneliness.

GLADYS

"Hello, Mary. Robert, you look so handsome. Come in, come in,"

Gladys said, greeting her family at the door. The children follow close behind, eager to get into the house that always has fresh-baked pies or treats. It has been two long years since this a child laughed or gasped in excitement here.

ROBERT

"Gladys, you look lovely this fine morning," Robert said. "I am still not sure why I didn't marry you instead of your Sister."

The women turned and smiled at the joke, chuckling with polite laughter.

JOHNNY

"Where is Hildreth?"

Johnny asked loudly, to be sure he'd be heard above the adult talk.

GLADYS

"She must be upstairs, honey," said Gladys, "Go up and see if you can find her. Be careful, though—all of you, and stay in the side yard if you go out... I mean it!"

JOHNNY

"Yes, Aunt Gladys,"

The children said in unison, and ran up to find their cousin.

The void they left was instantly filled with concern and a sense of distraction... discomfort. The adults went into the kitchen, each searching for the exact moment to speak, each reaching for a word of comfort that might ease the burden of pain in Gladys' heart. Mary wrapped her arm around Gladys to connect and absorb the impact.

MARY

"How are you doing, dear? Is it getting any easier? You know we would love to take you with us today. The preacher asks about you all the time and prays for your happiness."

Sorrow and the weight of a ton of granite could be heard in Gladys' reply.

GLADYS

"My heart and soul are better, but I'm not ready to go just yet. I look forward to these Sundays with the children. It gives me a direction and fills the empty space left behind, if even for only a day. Your children are mine, too, and I love them all so dearly, Mary, Robert.

I just need a little more time."

NARRATOR

Knowing the only thing they had to offer was silence and empathy,
(MORE)

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

Robert and Mary hugged Gladys and each other. For a while the only sound was the ticking of the clock on the wall as the adults settled into their memories.

DISSOLVE TO: STILL LIFE PAINTING IMAGE OF SHOT

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

The trail of heartaches, glory, and achievements that each of our

players brings to this tale defines a pattern of character that will last a century.

The little house on the hill that oversees a collection of roofs below gives sight every year to a pallet of change, change felt by all who are watching, watching for the good and evil spirits who battle for souls once touched only by divine innocence.

FLASH BACK 2 YEARS HOUSE ON THE HILL

TRANSITION FROM ART TO SHOT

(summer view)

Two years ago on a humid Indiana summer day, Gladys' husband Larry came home for lunch.

Larry had a good job working for the local rail yard, a job considered by many as one which would ensure him a lifetime of financial security. However, on this day, lifetime and security would leave his grasp and never return. For this is the day his children of two became one.

(sound track level 4)

Sound track levels reflect sad/joy 1-10 with 1 being tragic, 10 Divine

LARRY CAME UP THE ROAD TO HIS HOUSE AND WAVED TO HIS FRIENDS OUT THE WINDOW OF HIS TRUCK. HE NOTICED A MAN, WALKING ALONE. THE MAN HAD A HARSH LOOK ABOUT HIM—UNUSUAL, BECAUSE WORK WAS SLIM FOR DRIFTERS AND IT WAS SUMMER. LARRY WAS USED TO SEEING RAIL-JUMPERS AT THE YARD, BUT HAD NEVER SEEN THIS ONE BEFORE. AS LARRY PULLED INTO THE DRIVE, HE FELT THE HOUSE'S SILENCE AND THE IDEA THAT SOMETHING WAS WRONG SWEEPED THROUGH HIM. THE FEELING WAS SO STRONG IT FORCED A GASP FROM DEEP IN HIS CHEST. IT WAS A FEELING HE HAD NEVER FELT BEFORE. HE STOPPED THE TRUCK AND WALKED FEVERISHLY TOWARDS THE HOUSE, NOT TAKING THE TIME TO CLOSE THE CAR DOOR. HE WAS MET ON THE PORCH BY GLADYS, IN TEARS, HER EYES SWOLLEN AND HER HANDS SHAKING.

GLADYS

"He's gone Larry...he took him away
and I can't find him."

Gladys voice shattered; she was no longer able to speak.

LARRY

"What, woman? What are you saying,
Gladys? Where is Doyle?"

Where is Hildreth... Where are the
children, dammit?"

When he got no answer, Larry walked through the house in terror, expectant with fear, not knowing what he would find.

LARRY (CONT'D)

"Doyle," he yelled,

"Hildreth, get in here!"

Out the side door, he strode towards the swing set that sat shiny and new in the yard.

HILDRETH

"Coming, Father, I'm sorry. I told
Mommy all I remember.

It's my fault, isn't it, Daddy?"

Hildreth cowered as she reached her father.

LARRY

"No, child, I'm not mad at you. I
need to know where your brother
is."

Larry held Hildreth's shoulder in
his big, strong hand.

"Do you know where he is?"

Hildreth looked down at the ground, shaking her head.

NARRATOR

The days that followed were filled as much with desperation as hate...at the circumstances...at the world...hoping for God's grace to show a morsel of reprise. Searches were undertaken, questions asked.

TRANSITIONAL VIEWS OF SEARCHES AGAINST WOODED AREAS, THE RAIL YARD, FIELD BEHIND THE HOUSE ON THE HILL

The focus was on what needed to get done to find their only son. But with each knock at the door, Larry and Gladys' hopes dwindled.

FADE IN VIEW TO THE INTERNALS OF THE HOUSE, DIMMED AND DREARY APPEARANCE FROM IT PREVIOUS LIGHT, SAD ENERGY

One week and three days later, the answer came. Ring, ring, ring...

Larry turned to Gladys, who no longer sprang to respond to the wooden box on the wall next to the front door, in hopes that it might offer good news.

Instead, she trembled as she walked from the kitchen in slow motion. Somehow she knew that this call would be different. Standing in shadow cast as the bright sunlight created her silhouette, her dress and style apron waved in the breeze at the edge of the door, her stance weakened at the fear of what came next...

GLADYS

"Yes, hello?"

VOICE ON PHONE

"Mrs. Falkner, this is Sheriff Lancaster,"

the voice said quietly, almost tenderly.

"Can you and your husband come down to the hospital, please?"

(MORE)

VOICE ON PHONE (CONT'D)

I'm afraid I have bad news. I need you to corroborate that in fact we have found your son."

The Sheriff knew his words were stabbing his neighbor in the heart.
"I am so sorry, Gladys."

(shot description)

The house fades into a shadow atmosphere from the inside and the structure appears hollow, wooden cracked floors of neglect and abuse, viewed from deep inside the house now, clearly years and decades have passed. As the transition shot of the door way appears, a single silhouette of a young girl stands inside the walls on this side of the screen-door (a small rip in the screen, a rattle sound of the hinge and handle loose), a light breeze drifts against the base of here lightly worn patterned summer dress. Her wavy hair is a brownish auburn tint or blond that casts through the light that back lights her from front, outside the trees have a familiar gold and amber glow of fall again, the only color visible in this scene that pulls the viewers eye deep.

Located in a panoramic edge of the shot to the right is a cast shadow of a wheel chair and a man, a weakened elderly man with head held in proper gazing towards the door. The room appears cluttered, littered with what seems to show as a box or square like images and angles that rest against any form of perpendicular to each from floor to ceiling. All seems cool to the view and yet known that this is the same house from reference before, the man in the chair speaks, raspy, slow, wise, broken ...

INT. STORY TELLER - NIGHT

The sound of calm and gentle peace of tone -(sound track begins to somberly lift - level 6-7)

SHADOWED GIRL (IDENTITY CONCEALED)

"Did they ever find out what happened to the kid Pap's?"

A tender but lessoned voice of all 17 asks in the dark, slightly turning her head to an angle of partial view to carry her voice into the back of the room.

SHADOWED MAN (IDENTITY CONCEALED)

A mans voice rasp, yet soft as to speak of kindness once known responds

"Yes, yes they did child. It seemed like years went by, nobody really knew why or how, but Aunt Gladys became a widow not long after that and the baby girl Hildreth went to stay with the others for a while."

SHADOWED GIRL

"What happened then, I mean did they like move away or did they all just stay right there? Tell me the rest Pap, please..."

Sound of a daunting and blues , deep emotional experience

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT./INT.

THE ARIEL VIEW LEAVES THE HOUSE AS PERHAPS IT MAY HAVE SAT THEN AND NOW TO FOLLOW A MORE COLD FALL SCENE TRANSITION AND AS THE VIEW FLY'S, THE SEASONS CHANGE AND CREATE A MYSTICAL AND MAGICAL TRANSITION TO EARLY SUMMER AND TAKES PLACE DURING THE NARRATORS FOLLOWING LINES. ALL TO CONCLUDE AT THE LOCATION -

NARRATOR

Even though history cannot recount the terror of such a tragedy on these mortal victims, the damage is easily recognized. Damage of spirit; the lack of trust; locking the door at night for fear of the unseen...
All who came after would carry the weight, paying a toll for passage to the next generation.

Sound travels far inside a home at night for every child who hears the whispers and tears through the upstairs banister. Just as this ripple in one family's history grew to a wave of fear, so did the stature of the individuals who had witnessed it.

(MORE)

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

The future carries the scars from the harm done before. One hopes that the past will allow us to shape and control the next step, to avoid the dangers, the foolish errors and mistakes that echo the last generation, and the one before that. But instead, the path, though inviting with its colors of gold and silver and the sounds of laughter and joy, is also shrouded in mystery, obscured in grays.

Sound track pause -complete silent transition ...

Never in our silent moments of illusion do we sense the dark parallel that lives beside us. Nor do we suspect the carrier.

MIDDLETOWN AMERICAN DREAMS

COUNTY FAIR THE YEAR MOVES FORWARD TO 1935 AND THE ERA OF AMERICA BECOMING A WHOLESOME IMAGE. THE SCENE ARRIVES AT THE ENTRANCE GATES TO THE FAIR ON A WARM SUMMER EVENING WHOLE FAMILIES CAME TO RIDE THE RIDES AND ENJOY THE LONG SUMMER NIGHTS UNDER THE COLORED LIGHTS. THE SOUND OF BELLS, LAUGHTER, AND SCREAMS AND THE TASTE OF CAMEL, SUGARCANE, AND ROOT BEER FILLED THE AIR FOR MILES. ON THIS PARTICULAR SUMMER NIGHT HILDY, AS SHE PREFERRED TO BE CALLED THESE DAYS, AND THE BOYS WALKED DOWN THE MIDWAY IN UNISON.

A DUSTY MIDWAY

The roadies are shouting and the air is thick with scents and murky haze from cigarettes and steams floating away off vendors... The lights glimmer through the clouds of hue colors, each from a various form of food or exhaust...

SERIES OF CAPTURES THAT SPOT THE COMPLEXITY OF THE MIDWAY

TOMMY

"Hey, Johnny, I bet you can't knock those balls down this year,"

JOHN (JP)

"Can too! You just wait, I'll show you,"

THE COLLECTION OF KIDS LAUGHING AT THE ATTEMPT AND TALKING ABOUT THE NEXT RANDOM THOUGHT OR JEST GLANCING ALL AROUND AS YOUTH ATTENTION SPANS SO OFTEN BOUNCE

Benny and the others laughed. Hildy walked alongside Johnny, her curly red hair bouncing. She gave him a big nudge.

HILDRETH

"I know you can knock them down, Johnny. I believe you!"

JOHN (JP)

"Thanks, Hildy. You're always in my corner, ain't you?"

Hildy grabbed Johnny's hand and they ran off into the sea of people to become lost in the dusky lights.

JACK

I BET THEY DON'T COME BACK FOR A WHILE!

BENNY

THEY BETTER BEFORE PAW FINDS OUT ABOUT IT AGAIN...

FADE TO A SET OF SHOTS THAT PAN DOWN THE MIDWAY

THE BOYS SMIRKED AND TURNED TO PAY CLOSER ATTENTION TO THE GROUP OF ROUGHNECKS HEADING THEIR WAY. NOT A WORD WAS SPOKEN, BUT A GLOSSARY OF FACIAL WARS WAS PLAYING OUT ON THEIR FACES. THE TWO CLANS OF CHILDREN SQUARED OFF, READYING FOR BATTLE. THE DISTANCE BETWEEN THEM CLOSED AND THEN CLOSED SOME MORE. JUST AS IT SHRUNK TO NIL, THE AIR THICK WITH TENSION.

Sound track of excitement

AT THE LAST MOMENT, ALL EYES FOCUSED ON THE GROUND AT THEIR FEET AND THEY PASSED EACH OTHER BY.

It was a victory of sorts, and great sighs of relief were released. All of the boys dressed in rolled up jeans, random overhauls for the smaller stature or the rebel of the group.

BENNY (CONT'D)

Who was that? Did they know you?

HE SHEEPISHLY ASKS JACK THE LARGER OF THE BOYS NEXT TO BILL

JACK

"Yeah, I know them. Those were the Carter boys from the other side of town. Their dad has that tool shop so they think they're slick and tough."

Jack spoke with resentment and frustration.

"That big one, his name's Donny. Watch out for him, he'll cut-cha to look atcha."

In a town of so few, names and faces are known to all and not much is left to secret. An advantage to the privileged few; a burden of proof to the masses.

VIEW BEHIND A SHADOWED BARN / HORSE & LIVESTOCK BUILDING. THE LIGHT CASTS A GLIMMER IN THE BACKGROUND AND THE VIEW FOCUSES ON TWO FIGURES LEANING AGAINST, THE STRONGER BEING A HOVER ABOVE AS IF TO CAPTURE THE GIRL AGAINST THE WALL ...

HILDRETH

Johnny, why do they say that our kissing is forbidden when it feels so right?

THE TWO FIGURES WERE SHADOWED IN THE LIGHT AGAINST THE SIDE OF THE BARN. WRAPPED IN A WARM EMBRACE, THEY TALKED OF LOVER'S DREAMS.

JOHN (JP)

"Well, we're cousins and all,"

Johnny answered, his voice full of confusion.

"They say you ain't supposed to, 'cause of God and all, I guess.

But Hildy, if'n I was gonna marry someone, I sure hope they're just like you."

HILDRETH

"You think we could ever have kids, John? I want lots of kids, and they say we shouldn't do that either. Can we anyway...please? You know I love you more than anyone else in the world..."

MOVING MAGIC OF TIME CHANGE

IN FAMILY LIFE OF INDIVIDUALS GROWING UP AND BACKGROUND
SCENES WITH VARIOUS SHOTS TO MATCH DESCRIPTION OF LIFE
EXPOSED 1935 THROUGH 1945

(shot description)

SHOTS / TRANSITIONS OF IMAGES THAT
TRAVEL TIME WITH REFERENCE TO THE
EVENTS LISTED. SMALL DETAILS WITH
WHOLESOME AND CHARACTER BASED VIEWS

At the tender ages of seventeen and fourteen, Johnny and Hildreth knew that folks got married and started families all the time. But they were also old enough to know that the sin of incest was just that—a sin.

There was nothing that explained the attraction between them, not the closeness of the two families or the loss of Hildreth's brother. But the more their families tried to tear them apart, the more Johnny and Hildreth sought to connect. The families mutely agreed to deny what was in front of them as long as they could. It was only when it became obvious that nothing they could do would change the outcome that the families accepted, albeit in quiet disgust, the situation. Embarrassed over Hildy's "status" and the upcoming nuptials, the Parkers agreed a simple ceremony with a justice of the peace would be best.

SCENE SHOTS OF FAMILY DINNERS / HILDRETHS PREGNANCY IN STAGES
WITH A 6-7 MONTH JUSTICE OF PEACE SERVICE

Robert made it clear to Johnny that he was to work hard and become his apprentice. Hildy's pregnancy ensured John would work extra hard and Robert made sure of it.

SHOT VIEWS OF CONSTRUCTION WORK BY JP AND THE FAMILY

John's duty to war and country was sidestepped, as his brothers and even his sister went to join their big brother Bill in the Army. Although Johnny had always had a reputation as the class clown and the joker of the family, nobody was smiling over the time ahead. They knew that even if birth defects avoided the family now, they would likely eventually manifest in future generations.

VIEW OF THE WAR OVER, BILLS RETURN, MILITARY CELEBRATION

Silently, with fear in their hearts, they agreed to stay mute. If the children from this union were healthy and safe, they would be better off not speaking of it again. After all, pride and distinction were important.

RANDOM VIEWS OF THE KITCHEN TABLE LADIES GOSSIPING AROUND
COFFEE AND PIE IN A ROCKWELL SETTING

Further disclosure would only destroy something that had become so strong in recent years. And that was not going to happen on Robert Parker's watch!

Mary stayed close to her sister Gladys until her death.

SHOT / TRANSITION OF THE HOUSE ON HILL

Some say her broken heart took her sooner than she should have gone. Either way, Mary felt a moral duty to care for Hildy when Gladys passed away. Devastated but dedicated, Mary continued to stand by her children as Hildy and John's life unfolded. Her faith was strong, but she blamed herself for not seeing the signs early enough, or perhaps for not doing something to prevent them from becoming so dependent on one another. Not knowing the answer drove Mary to religious worship, hoping for a better everlasting eternity for sinners. In essence, Mary became the matriarch for this ship of fools.

CONTINUED ARIEL VIEWS OF THE TOWN

(commentary of events)

Whether by silence or sin by omission, each who willingly goes this way will pass the corpses of those whom he hurts. I believe that each sin carries a value and that its cost holds a judgment in purgatory.

Although everything that occurred and everything that was to follow may not be clearly understood by those of us in life, we must always ask the questions. It matters not that we assign ourselves a religious persuasion; it matters not where we spend our final days. Though this may be something we cannot accept until we accept the inevitability of our own death, what matters is that we leave the way we came into this world, with God by our side.

NARRATOR

As the newly formed Parker family grew with the last of three (first Charlie, then Charlotte, and now Norma Jean) happiness was everywhere in 1949.

Robert's dream for and ideals of a safe generation to follow had come true. By now, Johnny had become a construction supervisor for his Dad and was looking at other opportunities to further his family's legacy.

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

The men came home safely from battle, strengthened by combat. Pride in America and the new America presented provided hope and direction for everyone.

The Parker's stayed close as a family unit, coming together at heartfelt family reunions. Robert had begun to slow down this year and the duty of gathering the family fell to John(JP).

It was summer again and the fair was once more in town. Cars lined the drive of the family home, on display. Children bounced and played, watchful eyes following every move.

Laughter and food was plentiful, cold beer and good conversation adding to the joyful occasion.

Family came from as far as California, where Tommy and Martha had settled after the war.

CAMERA FADES TO BRING INTO NEXT SHOT AFTER AN ARRAY OF B/W PHOTOS FROM THE ERA OF TIME TO REFLECT ON THE HAVES AND SHADOW THE HAVE NOT'S IN A NOSTALGIC REFLECTION

RESTORED HOUSE ON THE HILL FAMILY REUNION 1949

(Series of shots that bounce from inside the newly decor deco house / extras laughing / gay time of celebration, shots include outside "Swing Set in Back-ground" white clothes cover tables outside , party style era-color ware and the breeze blows in another indiana summer heat - ladies ever so proper with fans - gentlemen with the white handkerchief to wipe the sweat and a cold beer to quench the thirst and prime the jest.

NARRATOR

As dusk began to set on the events of the day, the older children,

Charlie and his sisters, Janet, and Rocky--there must have been ten of them altogether--decided to go to the fair.

With sheepish grins and polite respect they asked to go and were told yes, as long as each was responsible for the group and nobody was left alone. Memories carried generations ...

Excited, the tribe advanced down the drive to walk the mile or so to the fair gates. Their walk took them over the railroad tracks that lined the middle of the road deep inside the shadows of town.

Here in this town the tracks that once haunted the family still brought on a moment of fear, one of doubt and confusion of the kind that flashes across one's mind.

In that flash of clarity, one finds oneself experiencing either a moment of relief--or of confinement.

It was no different for these children except that they knew on which side of the tracks they belonged, and had the comfort of knowing they would return to a place of security and love.

TRANSITION FROM ART TO SHOT (FAIR GATE, SIDE W/SALOON)

CHARLIE (SUPPORT CAST)
Hey, who's that there?

CAMERA FOLLOWS THE KIDS AWAY FROM THE HOUSE TO NEW SCENE
APPROACHING THE FAIR GATES

MIDWAY THROUGH TO THE OTHERSIDE

Sound track evolves from previous celebration into a caution,
fear of the dark, unknown predicting danger

DOWN THE EDGE OF THE DIRTY ROAD THAT FOLLOWED THE TRACKS INTO
DARKNESS STOOD TWO FIGURES PARTLY IN SHADOW, A MAN AND A BOY,
BY THE LOOKS OF THEM. CAUGHT BY THE RAISED VOICES, THE GROUP
PAUSED AND WATCHED THE SCENE UNFOLD.

Then there was a violent burst, the sound of a muffler
exploding, as if in anger. Dust flew up and around the truck,
which was suddenly barreling toward the children, driven
insanely. It lurched by the group, only to stop as
aggressively as it had started next to a building down the
street.

They heard a door slam, loud enough to shake the hinges that
held it.

DON SR. (SUPPORT CAST)
"Go to hell, punk, leave me alone,"
the man yelled.

DONNIE (YOUNG)
"Go to hell, you sonofabitch.

You're a filthy drunk. All you do
is hurt us! I wish you would just
go away!" the boy's voice carried
from the shadows.

TRUCK / DUST / SOUND OF VIOLENCE IN TONE

The sign above the door read "Sam's Place." A large jagged
man emerged to disappear inside the bar, and likely inside
the bottle.

NARRATOR
The fact is that this side of the
tracks offered only more of the
same: confinement to your own
personally defined hell.

(MORE)

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

The children recognized the same evil in what they witnessed that had given rise to the stories about their great uncle.

Today, their distance from a slice of reality was just enough to keep them safe from something they knew, that life was frail and layered with dark avenues of change.

Later that evening, the girls among them veered off a little ways and left the boys to etch out their egos. They soon came across another group of young men. This year at the fair was no different from others, of course the children and young adults gathering, declaring their territories. Though more alike than different, each group still wanted to carve out a unique identity it could call its own. As the block of boys came towards them, giggling laughter was instantly replaced by shy, reserved postures and they huddled instinctively. The young women, feeling the shift, stopped and huddled too. There was safety in numbers.

MIDWAY SET ASIDE TO A GROUP OF PICNIC TABLES AROUND THE FOOD VENDORS - CROWDS WALKING BY WITH ISOLATION OF SHOT TO NORMA AND CATHY AS THE BOYS APPROACH.

NORMA JEAN (GIRL)

Oh my, uh oh

JANET

Girls, you keep your mouth shut, Charlotte dont you say a word to these boys now, you hear me!

CHAROLETTE

If'ins I wanna talk, Im gonna!

NORMA JEAN

Sis, you wont say a word unless I tell you, your going to get us all in trouble!

BILLY NORRIS

Trouble, why heck thats my middle name, One of you girls call ?

Smiling and grinning at Charlotte, eyes and chemistry ignited without a word between them and Norma watched it before she too was distracted by a force she had not prepared for nor was equipped for the advance to be made.

BILLY NORRIS (CONT'D)

"Who wants to know what my first name is?"

Standing tall with iced hair, in a pair of jeans that hovered above white socks, Billy's black shoes reflected colors from their Saturday-night shine.

BILLY NORRIS (CONT'D)

"It's Billy."

JOHNNY (TEENAGER)

Pay No Never mind that one! He dont know how to talk to a group of Fine Young Ladies likes yourself here!

The shorter but more confident young man looked at Norma Jean as he spoke.

JOHNNY (CONT'D)

But I sure would like to try.

They call me Johnny."

DEMUR YET FORWARD FOR A YOUNG WOMAN OF HER UPBRINGING, NORMA WAS QUICK TO RECOGNIZE THE ATTENTION. SHE TURNED AWAY, BUT WITH A GLIMPSE OF A SMILE TO LET JOHNNY KNOW SHE ACCEPTED HIS ADVANCE. MEANWHILE, CHARLOTTE WAS BUSY BEING PLAYING THE MOUSE IN A GAME OF EXCITEMENT. HORMONES, HOURS OF PREPARATION TO DRESS AND TO SCULPT THE HAIR JUST SO...ALL TO ENSURE THE DOOR WOULD BE OPEN TO THE CHANCE THAT YOUNG LOVE COULD ENTER WITHOUT PARENTAL KNOWLEDGE. THE ANTICIPATION CRACKLED IN THE AIR LIKE A GAME OF CATCH WITHOUT THE NEED FOR A TRAP.

AFTER A WHILE, THE THRILL OF FORBIDDEN FRUIT WORE OFF ENOUGH THAT THE CLANS WENT THEIR SEPARATE WAYS, HAVING NOTED THE OTHERS AND NOW HAVING THE FODDER FOR GREAT GOSSIP FOR THE REST OF THE NIGHT. AS THE SOUNDS BEGAN TO QUIET AND THE DIRT BEGAN TO SHOW ON EVERYONE'S SHOES, WINNINGS WERE COLLECTED, LOSSES LAMENTED, AND THE GROUP WALKED HOME. SOME WALKED IN PAIRS, OTHERS ALONE, BUT THEY WERE NEVER OUT OF EACH OTHER'S SIGHT, ESPECIALLY WHEN CROSSING TO THE OTHER SIDE OF THE TRACKS, SOMETHING THEY ALWAYS DID IN UNISON. ANOTHER NIGHT AT THE FAIR WAS OVER.

HOUSE ON HILL:

LIFE WAS FULL FOR THE PARKER FAMILY. IT WAS 1956 AND THE GIRLS WERE COMING INTO THEIR OWN. JOHN, ALSO CALLED J. P. OR PAP BY SOME, WAS PROUD AND RIGHTFULLY SO OF THE LIFE HE'D BUILT, SUPPORTING HIS FAMILY AND BEING ABLE TO OFFER THEM MANY CHANCES FOR EDUCATION AND TRAVEL. SINCE THEIR LAST VISIT TO THE FAIR THE SUMMER BEFORE, CHARLOTTE HAD BECOME A SEAMSTRESS, AND HAD GONE TO WORK FOR SINGER AS A GARMENT WORKER, CHARLIE HAD JOINED THE NAVY, AND NORMA WAS GETTING READY TO GRADUATE HIGH SCHOOL. NORMA'S DESIRE FOR A MODELING OR ACTING CAREER HAD FADED, BUT SHE WAS STILL A SHINING STAR. THE YEAR BEFORE, FOR HER BIRTHDAY, SHE'D BEEN GIVEN THE GIFT OF A FULL PORTRAIT, PROFESSIONALLY PAINTED, TO USE TO PURSUE A MODELING CAREER. NORMA HAD BECOME A WOMAN, A BEAUTIFUL WOMAN, WHO LEARNED EARLY ON THAT HER GRACE AND EDUCATION, COMBINED WITH GOD'S GIFT OF BEAUTY, WOULD TAKE HER FAR. HER INNER BEAUTY DID NOT TAKE A DISTANT SECOND EITHER, AS LIGHT RADIATED FROM EVERY CORNER OF HER BEING. THE TALL SKINNY YOUNG MAN FROM THE FAIR, THE ONE NAMED BILLY, WAS CALLING ON CHARLOTTE. BUT JOHNNY HAD SET HIS SIGHTS ON A PRIZE WAY OUTSIDE HIS REACH WHEN HE SET THEM ON NORMA. NOT THE TYPES TO GIVE UP EASILY, THE BOYS HAD A PLAN TO REMOVE THEM FROM THE LIFE THEY LIVED ON THE OTHER SIDE OF TOWN. FRANKLY, SOCIAL DIVIDES WERE COMMON IN THIS TOWN IN THOSE TIMES. JOHNNY, WHOSE HEART, COMPASSION, AND DRIVE TO BETTER HIS LIFE WERE MATCHED ONLY BY THE FEAR OF FAILURE AND THE LONELINESS THAT CAME WITH THE REJECTION OF THOSE WATCHING FROM ACROSS THE TRACKS, DID NOT GIVE UP. J. P. BOUGHT SOME LAND AND BEGAN BUILDING A NEW HOME FOR THE FAMILY.

LAND WAS STILL INNOCENT THEN AND INDIANA CORNFIELDS LINED THE VIEW FOR MILES. WITH CHARLIE GONE, THE NEED FOR HELP WAS CONSTANT, BUT IF THERE WERE TO BE TIES BETWEEN BILLY, JOHNNY AND THE TWO PARKER WOMEN, IT WOULD HAVE TO GO THROUGH J. P. FIRST. TO COURT A MAN'S DAUGHTER, ONE'S INTENT AND IMPLEMENTATION WAS CRITICAL. IN THIS CASE, ONE DAUGHTER EXPERIENCED ONLY A MODICUM OF OVERSIGHT; THE OTHER WAS UNDER LOCK AND KEY. NOBODY GOT CLOSE TO NORMA WITHOUT J. P.'S KNOWLEDGE AND APPROVAL. BUT IT DIDN'T TAKE LONG BEFORE JOHNNY AND NORMA WERE FALLING IN LOVE. NORMA WAS THE PRETTIEST GIRL IN SCHOOL AND JOHNNY, THE LEATHERNECK, WIELDED AN IMAGE TO DEFEND.

INSIDE HOUSE WITH HILDRETH AND THE GIRLS SITTING AROUND THE KITCHEN WHILE THEY CLEAN, COOK AND TALK ABOUT THE RECENT WEEKEND EVENTS AT THE FAIR...

HILDRETH (MOTHER)

So, charlotte , tell me about the fair? Did you have fun?

CHAROLETTE

It was perfect Mommy! We had Candy and rode the farriswheel, and they even had the horses out too!

CHAROLETTE (CONT'D)

But then we ran into those

Slapping against charolettes leg, Norma hushes her under the table. Each girl dressed in a proper Bobby socked era flair.

HILDRETH

You did what, running did you say?

NORMA JEAN

No Momma, she was just talking silly! We were with Janet & Cathy and she tried to run away from us, thats all she was saying, isn't that right Sis?

Norma glares with the most vibrant green eyes and stern sisterly face.

CHAROLETTE

Oh, yeah I guess that's what I meant. Sorry Mommy

Sheepishly the girls turn as if to leave the kitchen and Hildreth quickly returns them with a sharp command.

HILDRETH

Girlssssss, tell me the truth! I can tell when your hiding something from me, what is it? You didn't run into those Norris boys again did you?

HILDRETH (CONT'D)

You know you're father has told you to leave them alone, that one short boy, whats his name, Johnny? He keeps asking your Dad if he can call on Norma Jean! He will have nothing to do with it.

HILDRETH (CONT'D)

And Young Lady, you best be leaving that tall one alone, he is just pure meanness and I dont trust him!

NORMA JEAN

Momma, you know if that boy was to come calling on me and all, you think Daddy would let him work for him, He's really a good worker! I see him picking up and moving stuff all the time down at the grain elevator whilst I'm at work, seeing how its just next door and all ?

For months now the two youth have been stealing kiss and time away before and after school, work and in the shadows of evenings downtown, in the soda shop. And every where Big Sister went, 'LiL Sis followed along.

LATER IN THE AFTERNOON, THE GIRLS WERE HANGING OUT IN NORMAS ROOM WHILE SHE PREPARED HER HAIR FOR A CAMERA SESSION AT THE LOCAL DEPARTMENT STORE FOR A MODELING SESSION. CHATTER AND GOSSIP ABOUND IN THE ROOM.

THE ROOM IS FULL OF ERA VINTAGE WALL PAPER, PINK AND LACE OF A HIGH SCHOOL BEAUTY QUEEN.

NORMA JEAN (CONT'D)

Charolette, I told you now to tell Momma, you're going to get us both in trouble with Daddy and then we won't ever get to see Johnny & Billy again! You dont want that, Do Ya?

CHAROLETTE

No, I'm sorry Sissy, I just get so excited and feeling funny inside when I think about Billy.

CHAROLETTE (CONT'D)

He kissed me ya know ...

She says with all the giggles and blush of two teenage girls would have when talking about boys ...

NORMA JEAN

You better not let Momma hear you say that ...

NORMA JEAN (CONT'D)

Was it Fun ???

Norma continues to prep her hair, the sounds of a 45 record playing "Young Love" by Tab Hunter

The scene begins to focus upon Norma as she starts to speak

NORMA JEAN (CONT'D)
Charolette, I'm gonna marry that
boy someday ya know, Johnny that
is!

NORMA JEAN (CONT'D)
I know it will be hard for Momma
and Daddy to accept him, But he
loves me and I love him Too!

CHAROLETTE
I like his brother Billy, He has
the eye for me you know!

But I thought you were favoring
that Donny boy, the tall one that
Kathy and Butch hang around ?

NORMA JEAN
Yes, he's really handsome and all
but there's just something about
that Johnny. Besides, Pap likes him
workin' He's a Real Hard worker!

You should see his muscles Sissy...

CHAROLETTE
Are you gonna go see him tonight,
you going skating ain't ya ?

HILDRETH
Girls !!! Get down here for supper
now, dishes need to be put out and
table set!

The girls straighten the room and arrange their dresses,
Norma more so than Sissy. The smell of fresh baked pie and
dinner's Pot Roast on the table fill the house with comfort
and knowledge that at least for today, all is good ...

CHARLOTTE EXITS THE ROOM AND CAMERA RANDOMLY CIRCLES AROUND
NORMA AS SHE PREPS, PRIMPS AND PUTS THE VIEW INTO A VOYEUR
WITNESS OF A YOUNG GIRL BECOMING A LADY AS SHE STARES AT THE
HIDDEN PICTURE OF JOHNNY SHE PULLS FROM UNDER PILLOW,
FOOLISHLY & DREAMING OF YOUNG LOVE.

NARRATOR

Life was full for the Parker family. It was 1956 and the girls were coming into their own.

John, JP. ~ Pap by some, was proud and rightfully so of the life he'd built, supporting his family and being able to offer them many chances for education and travel.

Since their last visit to the fair the summer before, Charlotte had become a seamstress, and had gone to work for Singer as a garment worker, Charlie had joined the Navy, and Norma was getting ready to graduate high school. Norma's desire for a modeling or acting career had faded, but she was still a shining star. The year before, for her birthday, she'd been given the gift of a full portrait, professionally painted, to use to pursue a modeling career. Norma had become a woman, a beautiful woman, who learned early on that her grace and education, combined with God's gift of beauty, would take her far. Her inner beauty did not take a distant second either, as light radiated from every corner of her being, she excelled in accounting.

JP bought some land and began building a new home for the family. Land was still innocent then and Indiana cornfields lined the view for miles. With Charlie gone, the need for help was constant, but if there were to be ties between Billy, Johnny and the two Parker women, it would have to go through JP first! To court a man's daughter, one's intent and implementation was critical. In this case, one daughter experienced only a modicum of oversight; the other was under lock and key.

Nobody got close to Norma without J. P.'s knowledge and approval.

(MORE)

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

But it didn't take long before Johnny and Norma were falling in love. Norma was the prettiest girl in school and Johnny, the leatherneck, wielded an image to defend.

CUT TO:

LIVING ROOM SCENE OFF SIDE OF KITCHEN (SHOT VIEWS FROM KITCHEN AS GIRLS COME IN FROM STAIRS BETWEEN)

JOHN (JP)

Girls, come here for a minute, I want to talk to you for a moment.

NORMA GRABS HER FAVORITE SPOT, ON JP'S KNEE AGAINST THE ARM OF THE LARGER PATRIARCH CHAIR IN THE ROOM AS THE OLDER BUT SHADOWED DAUGHTER GRABS THE FOOT STOOL FOR A PERCH.

JOHN (JP) (CONT'D)

You two need to listen to me for a bit and hear what I have to say to you. And I want you to pay attention to what I am telling you!

HILDRETH WALKS INTO FROM THE KITCHEN WITH HER APRON AND HANDS WIPING DRY FROM THE CHORES USING A DISH TOWEL, FINDING HER MATRIARCHATE POSITION IN THE LESS YET EQUAL CHAIR IN THE OTHER SIDE OF THE CENTER SMOKING TABLE THAT ALWAYS PRESENTED SEPARATION OF WHO MANAGES WHICH SIDE OF THE AFFAIR.

JOHN (JP) (CONT'D)

Here Mother, sit and join us ...

Hildreth smiles and glances the strength of a single view to the girls that only a Mother can offer, silently speaking to each that this is important to Father and even should you not heed, allow Him to feel your attention ...

HILDRETH

Of course Father, Now girls you listen to what your Dad has to offer you, he loves you very much!

CHAROLETTE

We LOVE Him Too!

NORMA JEAN

Shhhh, be quiet Sissy

CAMERA TRANSITIONS BETWEEN CHARACTERS THROUGH OUT AND FINDS FOCUS UPON JP, STERN AND FOCUSED TO SAY THE RIGHT THING AND CONCEAL THE REST...

JOHN (JP)

Girls, Mother tells me you both have been giddy and talking to a couple boys around town. I hear one of them in fact has been coming to your work Norma at the Soda stand, is this true?

NORMA JEAN

Well, Yes Father, he's that Fella I told you about, the handsome one that I want to go the Skating Rink with, he's really handsome. We met at the Fair last year , remember ?

Norma's hand slides comfortable to her Dads arm and sends a comfort of love and touch to her support in hopes that his opinion and judgement will yield a softer result.

CHAROLETTE

And Daddy, I been liking his brother too "Billy" He is really tall and funny and he stil -----

JOHN (JP)

I am not gonna hear about all of that just now, I'm talking to Norma Jean and that is what I want to say! You'll get your chance Sissy

All knowing from the glance, the room shifted in tone that Charlotte would not get her turn and that the interruption shouldn't happen again. Hildreths glance again controls the behavior of one and allows freedom for the remaining actors in this family stage she directs ...

JOHN (JP) (CONT'D)

Norma, this "boy" as you call him is actually a Man from what I understand. I know who he is, and I know all about his family. I spoke to his uncle "Lugg" today and had a nice little chat about you and him!

NORMA JEAN

Yes, yes he is a little older ...
She speaks softly and reserved

JOHN (JP)

Well, I want to ask you to introduce your friend to us over dinner next week after church on Sunday. You think you can make that happen? I would like -----

CHAROLETTE

OH Daddy - can Billy come too !????!

JOHN (JP)

No! I want to meet this man who is wanting to court Her! He is 4 years her Senior and I am not going to allow that without meeting him first!

You are older, you should have good enough judgment by now Sissy, if that Billy Fella is someone you like, then bring him over one afternoon, let me talk to him, get to know him ...

CHAROLETTE

Okay Daddy, really I can do that? Oh that will be swell and I can't wait for you to know him, he is so funny and nice to me, we have a blast when he walks with me to work. I like him a lot

Charlotte jumps from her place and springs over all to give Pap a kiss on the cheek and dances towards and up the stairs, her voice pitched high with excitement as she heads to her room ... All others in the room remaining simply look at each with care, worry and release knowing the results are going to be a challenge, they always have been before ...

HILDRETH

I did the best I could , she is going to have to learn everything the hard way, same way me and your Father have had to learn. But raising you kids have been a direct blessing from God, we just simply don't deserve you kids.

Hildreth solemnly reaches across the smoking table and ashtray to hold JP's hand resting on the edges of the bottle as to seal the secrets of what only they know.

NORMA JEAN

She'll be Okay Mother, I'll keep an eye on her. Besides, Once you meet Johnny (thats his name) you will know how wonderful he is and you will like him and his brother too!

Later that evening in the quiet of the bedroom and the safety of knowing the girls were not able to hear them speaking,

VIEW INSIDE THE MASTER BEDROOM, LIGHTS LOW AND THE TASK OF TURNING IN FOR THE NIGHT, JP IN HIS LONG-JOHN'S NAD THE GRACEFUL COTTON NIGHT GOWN OF HILDRETH, THE ROOM FULL OF VICTORIAN STYLE DECOR AND SIMPLE TREASURES

HILDRETH

You didn't tell her again, are you not ever going to tell any of them Father?

JOHN (JP)

Hildy, damn it, we said that from the very beginning! Why are you asking me this again? God gave us three healthy children!

HILDRETH

Papa, I don't think you did wrong, I just think maybe we should tell them about the risk. Just because Charles's kids are all OK, doesn't mean that something else couldn't happen? You know what they told us!

JOHN (JP)

Turn the light out Mother!

Soon Norma, fifteen, and Johnny, twenty, could regularly be found in the malt shop after class. Admiration or fascination, who could say, but their eyes and hearts connected. Norma was the envy of all as she rode in Johnny's car, a rat rod that could win a race without spilling a drop of gas. Johnny resembled that little-known Cutter from Fairmont, James Dean

MADISON STREET DRIVE-IN DINNER

The lights are bright in blue, green and yellow diamonds of light dance across the cars that pull through, honking or simply low with attitude as they channel past the two lovers against the cut up Oldsmobile.

Each glance of puppy love and sparkles while Johnny watches the view of jealous boys passing ...

The sounds of rumble, the music and clutter of laughter from each car packed with kids from rival schools.

JOHNNY

You know I'm going to have to fight every one of these boys that come through here! Especially if they keep looking at my Girl !

The smile of tenderness from Norma's face soft and pastel but yet so attracted to the testosterone and 'Bad Boy' image that JR (John Ronald) gave off, it was thick with scent.

NORMA JEAN

Why dont you just relax and know that I am with most Handsome Man in town and that you are who I want to be with forever... I've seen these other boys my age and they are nothing compared to you, I love you

"HONK Ruffling of car squall and sudden rush of a bright red Chevy Coupe pulls up next to the two lovers in a thunder.

DONNIE

Hey Cutter - isn't that little girl too young for you?!!!

Laughing and a collection of greased power struggling hoods appear from the car as the tall one emerges from the drivers side and pears over to the otherside at the two lovers.

NORMA JEAN

(Whispers) Johnny, leave it alone, dont bother with him.

JOHNNY

Hey Fella's, how about we don't bother with this and you go about your way and we will too, we were just about to leave anyway ...

Couple of the other thugs standing on each side of the two against the lesser of Rods in appearance but far more lesson in the ways of the street, Johnny quietly escorted in protection to his date and found the car handle and slid her over as he too entered the car and started to close the door

BUTCH

No need to run off so quick there

DONNIE

Yeah, whats your hurry, lets talk a little more. Maybe she would rather ride in a better car than that shedtown ride you got there?

Laughter with snide remarks and movement back and away, non really wanting a fight other than humiliation attempts at adulthood. The car door closes and the Rat-Rod fires on all 6 cylinders with a rumble as the teenage glances of the greasers lack understanding of the man pulling away ...

NORMA JEAN

Bye Donnie' tell your Momma Hi!

Norma shouts with spiking voice in attempt to cower the statue of a boy that she finds interestingly enough of a play toy this time around , her looks served both ...

Later , cruising the normal route of Madison and 12th, the racing and parallel road block of two cars reaching the light, Players dancing in circles around the doors. A young man from Fairmont shouts over to wave and slumps with complete confidence of knowledge that someplace else will fill a greater purpose for each of the drivers...

(James Dean cameo/mock)

NORMA JEAN (CONT'D)

Who is that JR ? You know him?

JOHNNY

His names Jimmy, his Momma lives in Fairlmont and my cousin works on their farm. Cool cat, says he wants to go to California.

JOHNNY (CONT'D)

Thats where Im gonna take you someday Angel, you and me - Just driving around all those Mountains. I hear they have fresh water in all those rivers, you can just jump right in them! Not like around here where the factories and all ...

NORMA JEAN

Father said he wants you to work for him, here and be a part of the crew and family business. You know, like how you helped build the house? You can't go without me!

JOHNNY

I will never leave you, NEVER !!!

THE EVENING CLOSES AND FADES INTO A SERIES OF EVENTS AND NARRATION OF THE TWO TAKING PLEASURE IN EACH AT THE SKATING RINK, SODA COUNTER AND FAMILY DINNERS FOR WHAT APPEARS TO LAST FOREVER, BUT SHORTENS TO WEEKS ... A CAPTURE OF SMALLTOWN LIFE FROM THE VIEW OF LOVERS

DRIVE IN MOVIE THEATER

THE CAMERA YIELDS ACROSS THE DRIVE IN AND ALL THE CLATTER OF POPCORN SOUNDS AND THE FILM BARELY NOTICED OF THE JOHN WAYNE CLASSICS AND THE CARTOONS OF CHARACTERS WALKING ABOUT.

NORMA JEAN

"What has you so quiet tonight, Johnny? Is something wrong?"

JOHNNY

"I have to leave soon. I've signed up for the Marines!"

"I didn't know how to tell you, so this is it. I wish I knew a better way, Norma, but the good news is when I get done with boot camp, maybe you could come with me."

JOHNNY (CONT'D)

"I can get us a house and we can move to California and live in the sun, go to the beach, play in ---"

NORMA JEAN

STOP !!!

Norma screamed in a rush of emotion and tears ...

NORMA JEAN (CONT'D)

"John Ronald! You told me you would stay here! ...Work with Father, learn a trade, and care for us!

Why, why now? Take me home!"

Not another word was spoken on the trip back. The rumble of exhaust slowly hushed as they pulled in front of JP's. Without turning, Norma opened the door and got out.

JOHNNY

Can I call upon you later?

Norma paused and bent down to the window.

NORMA JEAN

Why?

Norma walked away knowing this was the last time she would see Johnny, perhaps for forever.

NORMA ENTERS THE HOUSE UPON THE HILL, WEEPING AND RUNS UP THE STAIRS SPEAKING TO NOBODY ...

HILDRETH

He must of told her tonight?

Speaking directly towards the patriarch , sitting as throned and expecting defense, ready with an explanation that never surfaces for conversation ...

JOHN (JP)

Then lets just leave it be, no need

JP places his pipe casually with authority back into his stern mouth and returns the shroud of the newspaper ...

NARRATOR

It was only a few days ago when the misdeeds of a Cutter found himself in a position of temptation and thieving for the desire to make a better life for himself.

In that temptation, JR was arrested stealing some grain from a local feed store, be it all for good purpose to help his family, he was an adult and that crime weighed heavy on his future.

TRANSITION BACK TO COURT HOUSE

CAMERA FADES BACK INTO A VIEW OF TWO ELDERLY GENTLEMEN STANDING IN A CORNER, WATCHING THE PASSERS BY AND TALKING IN SECLUSION ...

JOHN (JP)

I understand the Norris fella may have to go to jail for this?

As JP always has, presents his cradle of pipe to signal control and wisdom to the situation.

TOM ELLIS, JUDGE

Well, yes he may have to do that.
But there is another path he could
take if we had reason to think it
may be a better choice John ?

The two men stand with direction and the closed door hand
shakes, good old boy network assigns life and retards chance
for most without ever knowing, today was not exception.

JOHN (JP)

Tom, let me know what day you need
that new porch poured on your house
and I am sure, absolutely sure, I
can find another strong young man
to help with that job ...

A week later, Johnny left for the Marines. The town never
even noticed he was gone. The two lovers never spoke again in
person after that night, at least by means of words ...

TRANSITION BACK TO HOUSE

A few weeks went by, and his letters piled up at the Parker
family home. Hildreth began keeping the patriotic red and
blue-striped envelopes inside the never opened drawer by the
front door.

Hildreth struggled with what the right thing to do was,
hoping Norma was not aware of their existence, and after a
month or so they stopped. The life of the broken hearted
teenager continued, perhaps a little less bright, but
hopefully stronger for the effort.

TEENAGER'S

THE CAMERA LOWERS TOWARDS TWO GIRLS WALKING DOWN A TREE LINED
TOWN SQUARE FILLED WITH PASSER BY, CHATTER OF GOSSIP OF THE
WOMEN PASSING AND THE GLANCE OF RESPECT. THE SHOPS DECORATED
WITH THE REMAINING FAN-FARE OF SUMMER CELEBRATION IN AMERICA.

CATHY

I like that new Dress Norma, where
did you get it?

NORMA JEAN

Mama got it for me with the money I
made from that picture magazine at
Ball Stores last month, You like
it? Really ?!

Always humble in presentation, Norma never allowed her beauty to become ahead of her wisdom and Grace even at a child's age and the older she became more of a Woman, the more she carried that quality.

CATHY

I like the way it makes your green eyes stand out and sparkle.

CATHY (CONT'D)

Hey (She says with Enthusiasm) Are you going to be able to come to the Fair tonight, are we going? The boys are gonna be there and you can finally meet Donnie ...

NORMA JEAN

I have to ask Mr Dalton but I am sure if I get all my work done and come in another time to make it up he will let me, he has before ...

THE SHOT FADES / PANS OVER THE SQUARE AND MOVES INSIDE THE SODA SHOP WHERE MR. DALTON IS BEHIND THE COUNTER

NORMA JEAN (CONT'D)

"Pardon me, Mr. Dalton, do you mind if I take off a little early today?" Norma asked her boss timidly, her green eyes dancing.

"Say around four o'clock? It's the fair and all and Cathy and I want to go."

MR DALTON

"Ugh-hm."

The stout, well-dressed man cleared his throat and Norma held her breath. Would he refuse her request?

"I assume you will be making up the time you miss, Norma, is that correct?"

Mr. Dalton said sternly.

NORMA JEAN

"Oh, of course, Sir -yes Sir"

Mr. Dalton nodded and Norma thanked him graciously and then went off to attend to duties.

(Parallel events & character action scenes)

BROWN COUNTY INDIANA

DURING THE PERIOD OF TIME WHILE THE GIRLS BECAME SELF SUFFICIENT, HILDRETH & JP BEGAN TO REACH FOR A DREAM OF THEIR OWN. AND ON SUCH A DAY, J. P. ANNOUNCED THAT HE HAD JUST RETURNED FROM A TRIP DOWN SOUTH WHERE HE HAD FOUND SOME REAL ESTATE HE WANTED TO BUY. HILDRETH, RESERVED BY NATURE, WAS QUICK TO ASK ALL THE RIGHT QUESTIONS, HOPING TO KEEP HER HUSBAND FROM MAKING WHAT COULD BE A MAN-SIZED MISTAKE.

SCENE TRANSITION

THE CAMERA ROLLS THROUGH A PATH OF FOLIAGE AND GRASSY KNOLLS SURROUNDED BY THE TALL AND MAJESTIC PROTECTORS OF GODS GARDEN

When J. P. and Hildy stood in the shadow of tall tress, looking out at their land, it was clear this spot would become home.

Serenity touched their souls, and they felt grateful. The joy of family reunions and happiness was surely not far behind. In the spring creatures and sights, and an escape from the everyday world, would be theirs. The restless nights were filled with anticipation, minds busy with planning and purpose. It was going to be grand, simply grand.

SIDE SHOW AT THE FAIR

THE CAMERA ONCE AGAIN FOCUS ON THE LIGHTS AND THE GLITTER EMERGING FROM THE DUST. THE SOUNDS ALL TOO FAMILIAR AND THE PEOPLE PASS BY WITH ALL THE TRINKETS OF FOOLISH DREAMS...

CATHY

"So, are you going to talk to him tonight?" Cathy asked

NORMA JEAN

"Talk to whom?"

Norma asked, putting just the right amount of boredom into her voice.

CATHY

"Oh, you don't fool me, Norma, so don't you play that game.

(MORE)

CATHY (CONT'D)

Donny, of course! You know he'll be here tonight. Butch said that we could double date on the Ferris wheel, if you want."

NORMA JEAN

"I don't know if Donny is my type, Cathy. He's handsome, but his family scares me, especially his dad. His mom is real nice, though."

SOON THE YOUNG WOMEN HAD REACHED THE FAIR'S MAIN GATE, WHERE THE SMELL OF COTTON CANDY AND ROOT BEER MET THEIR NOSES AND THE SOUND OF THE BARKERS, ENTICING THE CROWD TO JOIN THE FESTIVITIES, RUNG IN THE AIR.

The young man at the fair stood away from the crowd for a moment to observe.

Life has a way of slowing down and then hastening on without our noticing sometimes; this time and place was no different. The boy this young man had been, the one who had stood boldly in the dim light of the railroad tracks and who had found his future defined in that moment, was the same man who now held tightly to the stature of the adult he had become. His father had long since gone, taking the boy's childhood with him before his thirteenth birthday. The boy's mother, Velma, was a broken woman, forced to become dependent on her only son, Donny.

Donny arrived at the fair with his friends, Charlie and Butch. Don was tall and well-groomed, a powerful example of a hardworking nineteen year-old full of testosterone. Butch, the smallest of the group, was something of a cut-up, a scrappy, feisty character, good to have around whenever you needed a laugh or a bright idea. Charlie was as honest as they come, his place in the group only challenged when someone else got it in his head to join their small click. In blood and brotherhood, however, this gang of comrades stood strong. Donny had heard about Norma's sister and about Norma's own fling with the Norris family, and the knowing gave Norma an aura of excitement and intrigue. Tonight Don was going to find out what was so special about this young woman.

MULTIPLE ANGLE SHOTS TO CAPTURE A 360 VIEW WITH STATIC AND DYNAMIC 1/2 SHOTS

(CONT'D)

DONNIE

"Butch, you'd better not set me up with a horse, I'll smack you into next week." Don said in a smoke-tarred voice.

BUTCH

"Geez, Donny, give me some slack, man. I wouldn't do you that way. Besides if Cathy is her best friend, you think she's going to be any less of a doll?"

Laughing, Charlie was quick to point out the last time Butch pulled a prank on the gang.

CHARLIE

"If you do, Butch, I'd make sure to run real far after that last hoax you pulled. You almost got us all killed by that gal's old man."

DONNIE

"Damn right, that was a close one,"

Donny said, slapping Charlie on the back.

DONNIE (CONT'D)

"Hey, Chuck," Don said more softly, "thanks for helping Mom with her groceries. I appreciate that. She has a rough time of it, but she always tells me how you help her. You're the best, pal."

Charlie humbly shook his head, embarrassed. He'd only done what was the right thing to do for his family.

BUTCH

"Hey, you." Butch gave a loud whistle and signaled to the women walking in the gate, "Over here."

With one leg on a bench, cigarette in hand, Donny abruptly stood at attention. He tossed aside the butt, brushed off his black leather jacket, and made a quick brush of his hair by his hand against the perfectly formed coal black silk.

His legs presented a pressed line in the crease of his jeans, and his physique revealed the instant icon of a proud young man.

Charlie glanced over and whispered,

CHARLIE

"She looks like a keeper, Don't screw this one up, chump."

BUTCH

"Where you girls been, we've been waiting for a half hour. Hey, Norma, this here is Donald Carter, we call him Donny. You know Charlie."

"Hi," said the young women in unison.

NORMA JEAN

"I've heard a lot about you, Mr. Carter," Norma said.

NORMA JEAN (CONT'D)

"Are you the rough guy everyone says you are? Cathy told me to watch out for you,"

Norma's eyes let everyone know she was joking.

DONNIE

"Well, I think I can carry my own"

It was at that moment that the world went silent.

Some say it was love at first sight; others say the chase began. A student of religion might tell you that God, the crowning Creator, stepped in to reveal two people's divine path. Others might argue that divinity is nothing more than a collection of exaggerated emotions explained by science and that in this world we should only believe what we can see or touch. But at this moment, two parallel universes collided.

Parallel: always the same distance apart and therefore never meeting, like two voices singing together but preserving the same pitch intervals all the way along. Only this melody suddenly met and the pitch coincided with a jolt as Norma's eyes met Donny's. And suddenly Donny could think of nothing else but winning the prize, the heart of the beautiful woman who had captured his full attention.

The night flew by in flashes of exhibitionism, blatant femininity, and naïve laughter. The bonds formed would last a lifetime, but what was to follow would strain the patience of any man or woman. Questions would be asked that no reason could answer. Homes would be destroyed, souls burned. All eyes would strain to focus on a phoenix that might raise their spirits. If only they could have seen or known... but perhaps they did. Perhaps in the seeing they chose not to acknowledge what they saw.

Perhaps they would come to regret their actions, to have remorse for what they were to do. In the amber cast of light across the dirt Midway, however, on this summer night at the fair, two innocent lives came together, orchestrated somehow, to play out a scene only rehearsed many times before; to embark on a journey that began at its fullest, full of encouragement and hope. Still young enough to shed any inconvenient thought of damp, unwelcome sorrows, the men and women of this small town were ready to take on the world.

This year the fair provided solace, comfort in its fantasy, illusion, and grandeur. The barkers, roadies, and drifters huddled together, counting their rewards with tales of thieving, each one with a taller story than the last. The smell of livestock, considered gold by some, left a path of dust and dirt, tired children at their heels to catch loose stragglers. But everyone came of one mind and left different, altered, in ways they could not always recognize. Prizes won, heartaches matched by stomach pains, all with a cost—but worth the effort, according to those who had them. Moms and dads let their innocent offspring believe that they too could reach for the golden ring, that perhaps there was more to this world than what had been provided. In the end, was it truth or fantasy?

How was one to know if he or she were being led down the right path? The fair gave hope in its abundance of adrenalin and excitement, the sense that anyone could knock down the pins and lay down his burdens, no matter how heavy. Surely, this collection of souls had paid their dues and tolls so they would have access to enjoy the fruit of God's world.

WEDDING DAY

October 1958 was brisk, interrupted only by a short, sweet Indian summer, after which the colors fell swiftly to the ground with abandon. A blanket of sage, sienna, ocher, orange, and yellow covered the town. Random specs of white and gray buildings offered a checkerboard appeal.

This was the view today from the church down the way, but most were not aware for the flurry of activity in their midst. Today was the wedding day!

NORMA JEAN

"Cathy! Where's my makeup bag?"

Shouted a partially dressed bride.

CATHY

"Here, right next to you, Norma. Geez, you think Donny can hear you?"

HILDRETH

"Settle down, my dear, this too shall pass."

Norma's mother had appeared to allay all fears and concerns, though her own lay just under the surface.

HILDRETH (CONT'D)

"This fretting will get you nowhere. Your father and I are proud and pleased for you."

Charlotte spoke with frantic anxiety rehearsed.

CHAROLETTE

"Sis, you're going to be fine. Just remember we all love you dearly and God will watch over you and your new family forever."

Norma was excited, but confused as well about what to do with this feeling she was experiencing.

NORMA JEAN

"Can you gals leave for just a second, please? I need to talk to Mom. You too, Sis"

Perhaps a bit offended, the others left politely. The door slowly closed and Norma began to weep.

NORMA JEAN (CONT'D)

"Mom, I haven't told Donny about our family history and I'm afraid.

What if he finds out and leaves—like his dad did?"

Norma's voice trembled with anxiety.

"I could not live through a divorce. It wouldn't be right, it would be shameful. Please tell me what to do, should I still marry him or tell him now?"

THE CAMERA FINDS THE EVER PRESENT LIGHT OF THE SUN THAT HAS FOLLOWED NORMA FROM EVERY ANGLE AND THE GLOW OF RADIANT BEAUTY IN HER WHITE LACE WEDDING GOWN, HAND MADE BY FLOSSIE. THE SIDE ROOM IS FILLED WITH FLOWERS AND BEAUTY, ANTIQUE (ALTHOUGH NEW) WOOD DETAILS AND GOLD PRONOUNCED PRESBYTERIAN RELIGION STYLE ARRANGEMENTS OF ICONIC SYMBOLS AND STAINED GLASS WINDOWS THAT ECHO THE CHRISTIAN HOPE & CHARITY

Norma's mascara had begun to streak. Her mother wiped the dark smears with a tissue and said,

HILDRETH

"Norma Jean, you need to understand that these are your choices.

I cannot make them for you. If this man loves you and your life together is to be, then any news you share now or later is only going to make you stronger. J. P. and I have struggled with this.

HILDRETH (CONT'D)

You know we are not ones to judge.. We have our own failings.

Nevertheless, you and our family together are blessed. Follow your heart, dear, you will make the right choice."

NORMA JEAN

"But what if something happens? You know, like Sissy's girl.

I don't know if I can do that. That will Kill Donnie, he wont be able to understand, they will all hate me for this! And the Baby, Oh My God Mother, what about the baby ?"

A soft knock at the door silenced the women and light entered the room. The figure at in the doorway stood as if readied for battle, and then entered the room with purpose.

FLOSSIE

"What's wrong, child, today is your day!?"

The tall confident woman said standing in the Arched path to the Cathedral where hordes of family and town folks chatter.

HILDRETH

"Hello, Flossie, Norma just has the jitters I think"

FLOSSIE

"Well, I can tell you this, today is your wedding and you're the star!

You don't think I made these gowns up for nothing,"

Flossie jested.

The ladies laughed and soon fears, replaced by the usual pre-wedding nerves, had been all but forgotten. The room filled once again with chatter and laughter. The players were ready to follow the script set before them.

ARRAY OF SHOTS AND ANGLES BEGIN TO NARROW TOWARDS THE ALTER AS THE LIGHT REFLECTS AND SOFTLY HIGHLIGHTS THE SOUND OF LIFE, FREEDOM AND HAPPINESS

As the grand array of pews filled with family and friends, never was a place so alive. It seemed that the chain of despair which had held tight to the Carter family had finally been broken. Surely something this glorious could do no wrong. The Sunlight of the Spirit was surely present?

Butch and Cathy stood by as Norma and Donald became one that day. Filled with the anticipation of his and their potential, Don Jr. was sure he would not repeat the past. It was his intent to protect this woman until the day they would part in death, God help him. Norma, too, felt the need to set the past aside and honor her heritage.

DYNAMIC TRANSITIONS/FADES IN & OUT OF THE CEREMONY AND THE SILENCE AND SURROUNDING SOUNDS WORK IN SYNC WITH CLOSE UPS AND EMOTIONS FROM THE PASTOR, WEDDING PARTY, AUDIENCE AND ULTIMATELY THE PAIR TO UNITE. DONS FACE STERN IN INTENT AND MASKED IN BEAUTY, NORMAS EMERALD EYES CARRIED THE WEIGHT OF HER ENTIRE FAMILIES CONSEQUENCES WITH ONE SHARP TWO WORD SENTENCE AND THE SCENE ENDS AT HER SIDE OF SHOT FOCUSED THROUGH TO THE PASTOR AS HE MAKES FINAL UNION AND THE EXIT IS OF CELEBRATION FROM ALTER TO THE PINK CADILLAC WAITING TO CARRY AWAY IN FRONT OF A GLORIOUS WHITE MIDWESTERN CHURCH AND THE AMBER GOLD CRIMSONED TREES EMBRACING

PASTOR

"I now proudly introduce,

Mr & Mrs. Donald Carter. You may
kiss your Bride"

FIRST APARTMENT

The period table and it's shiny chrome legs wrapped the colorful blues and cream tinted top with the chairs reflecting the light of the morning sun. One tucked under to conceal the ripped vinyl seat. Sound of the old refrigerator in the back and the fan that ran with a slight clatter in the room behind to push what little precious air the Indiana Summer would offer at this time of the morning...

FLOSSIE

"How are you feeling today, honey?
Do you want me to bring your
laundry up for you?"

Asked Flossie, coming over to sit by Norma, who was holding her round belly yet dressed in Grace and the always present glow of strength and determination of beauty.

NORMA JEAN

"Not necessary, Grandma, but it
would be nice. I have just about
hit my limit with chores.

(MORE)

NORMA JEAN (CONT'D)

It's just so hot today! That fan you gave us helps a little, but a cold cloth is about the only thing that works."

The days were slow, the nights long. Each awakening brought an early departure by Don, who secured the door behind him. Today was no different, except for a flash of insight that let him know that today was the day his child would be born.

DONNIE

"I'll be here in a minute when you call, Norma. I just know today is the day that Kris will arrive."

Donny was smiling and laughing as he sipped his morning coffee and got ready to leave.

Don had always said from the start that no matter what, boy or girl, the baby's name would be Kris and Norma agreed. Neither had focused on their fears of what the future would bring if they gave birth to a child with "problems." In fact, it had been just the opposite, and their aspirations could not have been higher.

DONNIE (CONT'D)

"She'll be a beautiful girl, Norma, just like her mother!"

NORMA JEAN

"And you get to change all the diapers," Norma kidded.

DONNIE

"Umm, yeah, sure..." Don gulped.
"Whatever you say, Norma."

The two parted. Don walked down the stairs. He passed by the window of Flossie's house and waved good-bye.

DONNIE (CONT'D)

"Keep a close eye on her, and come and get me when it's time," he said. "I think today's the day, Grandma. Make sure the suitcase is in the car, too, please."

FLOSSIE

"I'm sure we'll be fine, Donny. Martha Rose said she was coming over later to help me jar up some berries. Norma will be careful. I was going to make some dinner tonight, if you'd like me to."

DONNIE

"Sure, Grandma. Thanks, you're the best."

FLOSSIE

"Love you, son, have a good day at work then."

It was already eighty degrees and the temperature and humidity were both climbing on this Labor Day, September 1, 1959. Restless and wanting to escape the heat upstairs, Norma went down to visit Flossie about an hour later. Flossie was quick to offer her a chair.

FLOSSIE (CONT'D)

"Dear, dear, you are holding on to that baby, aren't you? You look exhausted, Norma, and the day hasn't even started, honey."

No sooner had she spoken than a sheen of sweat appeared on Norma Jean's face. Seconds later, the rush of water could be heard splashing to the floor. Martha Rose had arrived moments before and together she and Flossie had the experience, knowledge, and wisdom to know just what to do.

A CHILD ARRIVES

Arranged as in a screen of jesters all were keen to carry a spirit of Joy, Celebration and determination to mask the fear that resided in each of those in attendance. The room was full of light, the sun always ever so present in Norma's world whether by gods gift or her own energy, the room contained a flow of blessings...

FLOSSIE

"BREATHE, breathe... Push!"

Norma held tight to Flossie's hand, both for comfort and strength. J. P. sat in the corner, watching with tears in his eyes, of joy or pain it was hard to tell. Hildreth, Flossie, and Martha circled the bed.

Don stood near the window, encouraging Norma at each push, his face flushed with worry and excitement.

When Doctor Thomas walked into the room he was quick to ask the group to leave.

JOHN (JP)

"Come along, Mother, it's time for the doctor. Let's go get a cup of coffee. Flossie, you want to join us?"

They left and shut the door.

DOC THOMAS

Dr. Thomas quietly told the couple that he had great apprehension about the outcome of the moments to follow. He went on to say that he had taken the liberty to prepare a support team of nurses in case any "abnormalities" or "difficulties" arose. His meager assurances were of little comfort to the distressed couple.

DONNIE

"Is she going to be okay, Doctor?"

Don turned away from Norma to speak to the doctor. He did not want to make Norma any more anxious than she already was.

DOC THOMAS

"I have no real concerns for the health of the mother here. It's the child that needs our focus now.

I am going to send in a nurse and we will prepare your wife for delivery. We are going to advance her labor shortly.

I assume you will be in the room with us, Don?"

DONNIE

Yes, of course I will , no question!

Don glanced at his wife, speaking with his deep and directive stance to assure his partner that all will be handled!

DOC THOMAS

"Keep in mind, Don, Norma, that although our original review suggests there is potential for additional concern, we simply don't know.

Don't forget, the good Lord above is in charge here, folks. We may have done all this worrying for just another normal, healthy baby. So let's keep that in mind."

Don and Norma heard the doctor's words, but little could quell their anxiety. In moments they would know the truth, the reality of what lay ahead. Would their child be a "normal, healthy" baby—or something else?

TAKEN FROM THE SECLUSION OF THE ROOM, NORMAS FIGURE OF HEALTH IS ESCORTED THROUGH THE HALLS TO A BIRTHING OR WAITING. EACH OF THE PATRIARCHS AND MATERNAL ICONS LINED THE WAY TO OFFER A LAST GIFT OF HOPE, SMILE OR ASSURANCE.

CHAROLETTE

Dont worry Sis' Them Doctors and Nurses know just what to do and they took real good care of me !

In her frantic and anxiety speech, Charolette attempts to offer support in a fearful manor that draws the issue of silent stares from Hildreth.

THE OPERATING ROOM CARRIES THE BLUE HAZE OF LIGHTS AND THE WELL KNOW CHILL OF COLD STEAL TABLES AND THE MASKS OF ALL WHO WATCH NEVER ALLOWING A CONNECTION TO THE NEXT SUBJECT OR IMAGE TO APPEAR. THE SMELL OF ETHER AND ALCOHOL AND THE CLATTER OF UTENSILS LAYING METHODICALLY ALIGNED UPON A TRAY AT THE END OF NORMAS FEET. STANDING AT THE OTHER END AND SITTING ARE DONNIE AND THE ANESTHESIOLOGIST POSITIONED FOR WHATEVER IS ASKED. THE CAMERA GLANCES TO CATCH A VIEW OF CONFUSION AND FOR A MOMENT, JUST A SECOND OF FEAR IN THE EYES OF THE STRONGEST MAN IN THE ROOM! IT DID NOT ESCAPE THE WITNESS OF NORMA NOR THE SOUNDS...

DONNIE

"I love you Baby, just relax and breathe - this is all going to be Okay and so are you!"

THE SHOTS RANDOMLY IN PERSPECTIVE DANCE ACROSS THE FACES AND THE ROOM NEVER SHOWING THE MEDICAL DETAILS BUT MORE THE BREATHE, THE EYES AND HAND GESTURES OF TOOLS & SOUNDS. EACH SEQUENCE BECOMES SLOWER AS THE EVENT TRANSPIRES INTO WHAT BECOMES LIFE ALTERING AND A NEW BEGINNING ...

The sigh of relief from birth that would certainly have followed was not to happen. One look, one split second was all it took to see that all was not as it should be in the mass of blood and fluids that had been expelled from Norma Jean's body. It seemed as if the clock stopped and the people attending in the room froze, knowing not what to say, not having the energy or courage to move from the spot.

The sounds of the hospital began to ring with an echo of detachment. The doctor's commands stumbled out in syllables until sentences grew into paragraphs that went unheard.

DOCTOR THOMAS SPOKE AND AS IF IN MIME , HIS WORDS SLUR AND THE DIRECTIVES GIVEN EXERCISED IN SLOW MOTION.

The lights of the room brightened and the look on Don's face became violet with ire. God All Mighty himself had struck them with his wrath; he had sent down a terrifying lump of maleness, a deformed, distorted example of a human figure that resembled nothing as much as a sight of death. Surely, this thing was not human—or at least not the baby boy He would choose to produce! How could this be? Was 'It dead?

It took every ounce of medical training and experience for the doctor to summon the courage the circumstance demanded. Instructing the attending to sedate Norma immediately.

NORMA JEAN

"I want to see my baby,"

Norma cried as her voice and body calmed and surrendered to the medicine. Something was horribly wrong. She knew it. Even through the discomfort of having just given birth, she was aware of the glimpses darting between the figures that stood round her bed. But nobody was prepared to answer her pleas.

Those still gasping with astonishment were asked to leave the room. It took repeated requests from Dr. Thomas before the attending nurses began to come back to themselves and their duties, to take the disfigured, dark purple child from the doctor's hands and perform the routine task of cutting the umbilical cord.

By all other accounts, this was a normal birth for the mother. Perhaps this was a dream, nothing more than fears left to burgeon into fantasy? But no, not this time. A quick nod of acknowledgment from Don and the decision was made to delay showing the mother her child and he failed to accept his own vision turning away and leaving the room in fury!

IN A RAGE OF PACE, THE CAMERA IS PINNED ON DON'S STEPS TO THE WAITING ROOM. IT IS THERE HE BRISKLY ASKS AND ESCORTS WITH AUTHORITY JP' TO A SECLUDED ROOM NEARBY.

JP HAD FULLY KNOWN THAT THIS DAY WOULD COME SIMPLY BY THE EVIDENCE OF HIS DAUGHTER CHAROLETTE AND PREVIOUS EVENTS. BUT HIS PRAYERS HAD BECOME SO DEEP, SO ROUTINE - EVEN HE HAD CONVINCED HIMSELF THAT THIS BIRTH WAS DIVINELY PROTECTED JUST AS THE MOTHERS LIFE HAD BECOME SO PINNACLE TO THE ENTIRE FAMILIES IDENTITY. THE ENTIRE CLAN REFERENCED NORMA FOR THEIR OWN PERSONAL CONNECTION ALL THAT IS GOOD IN LIFE.

DONNIE

"You listen to me Old Man and you
Damn well listen Good!"

With all the fever of a drunk in hysterical reference to his own past, the towering image of violent rage capable of exploding any minute, Don was ready to unleash wrath upon JP that was equal to the pitch of God's punishment imposed !

DONNIE (CONT'D)

"Whatever that thing was in there
is a result of you and your Fucking
Hillbilly incest and the curse you
have put on my life and the entire
family! I swear to God - Whatever
that is anymore, You're Going to
Help me raise this Kid and Every
single Fucking thing I ask of You
and your God-Damn freak of a Family
- DO YOU UNDERSTAND ME !!!

DONNIE (CONT'D)

That baby in there is not even
human looking John - You have
Burden me for my Entire Life NOW!"

JOHN (JP)

"I"

DONNIE

"SHUT The Hell Up !!! I dont want to hear your God Damn excuses - What has happened has happened, Water under the bridge Now you Bastard!

DONNIE (CONT'D)

"Norma has no Idea what has happened, they had to put her out because 'It was so grotesque. The Doctor and Nurses are now working to save 'It. And your going to do EVERYTHING in your Power to help me raise that child! I will find a way to pay for it all, whatever it is - But that means you have to be there for Norma and that baby ALL The TIME !!! Do You HEAR Me ??!!! DO YOU FUCKING HEAR ME!!!

Weeping in isolation, JP rests into a chair in the corner fully aware that his family secret was no more to those who will now carry the weights of liability.

THE TWO MEN GATHER THEMSELVES AND AGREE TO FORM A UNITED FRONT TO PRESENT FOR THE REST. ALL THE TIME, CAMERA SHOTS REFERENCED BACK TO THE WAITING ROOM WITH ECHO'S OF THE VOICES INSIDE. AND EMERGING FROM THE ROOM, THE WAITING ROOM FILLS WITH SIMILAR GASPS AND TEARS OF DISBELIEF ...

THE SCENE OF THE HOSPITAL RANDOMLY VIEWS THE WINDOW OF THE NURSERY AND IS SLIGHTLY FOCUSED ON THE EMPTY SLOT IN FRONT RESERVED BUT ABSENT. EACH SHOT SLOWLY FADES INTO THE DOCTORS OFFICE AND THE FOLLOWING SUMMARY OF A BROKEN AND EXHAUSTED PHYSICIAN AT DAYS END ...

DOCTOR THOMAS OFFICE

The lights are secluded behind with a golden warm glow against the oak wall board and the black & grey desk covered in papers and books of reference only interrupted on the edge with a flexible reaching lamp to write by in the long nights. The smoke of a cigarette and the ghost of a cloud fills the room. A private draw reveals a glass in hand for nerves ...

The Narrator voice reads aloud the following in emotionless and yet pain imposing detail, the sober and raspy breath of a sorrow review ... Each word unrehearsed

DOC THOMAS

Dr. Thomas, attending physician:

What appears to be a fetal congenital disfigurement of all external limbs and members associated. Includes: left leg inward turned and clubfooted with missing extension of all toes. The larger toe considered fused and webbed onto the second toe with extra flaps of tissue and deficient of all nails.

Knee and ankle formation is lacking extension and the tendon appears to be absent. Foot considered the stronger of the two; however, faces reconstruction in some manner. Thigh has firm muscle and appears correctly developed through to hip.

Right leg, all associated members have extensive damage and distortion. The foot is of a form similar to that of a large thumb or extended limb and has no other toe or limb digits visible. The webbing is extreme and covers well into the calf region, which appears to be absent all muscle and tendon arrangement.

The foot turned inward and has a degree greater than 90 inside value. The knee joint is mobile yet articulate and rotated. Femur bone be the only bone construct and would not be able to sustain as a weight-bearing limb in this condition.

Ankle mobility amalgamated and the grotesque nature of this limb suggests amputation. Thigh muscular arrangement is small in comparison to left leg; includes mass of webbing and tissue buildup behind knee joint, suggesting growth of extremities below are absent nerve and normal vascular progress. More to be discussed/consultation required.

(MORE)

DOC THOMAS (CONT'D)

Hip proportional to pelvis and lower back suggest contorted at best; will need surgical alignment. Fetus shows normal and functional genitalia. Torso appears to have distorted outline; organs shifted in alignment with emphasis on heart-lung cavities. Distended heart; chest wall suggests possible heart-lung deformities and want further attention. All vital signs stable.

Left arm appears to be functional from shoulder down to wrist with range of motion normal. Left hand particularly webbed and deformed with thumb and index rather normal.

All remaining digits appear distorted, deformed, or absent. Middle and second digits are missing from second knuckle and fused together both in skin and bone composition. Last finger is webbed and all have narrow movement. Growth of nail development is absent on middle digit, and distorted third and fourth with no sign of motion range on either. More consultation needed.

Right appendage is severe and reflects entire right side of body as malformed. Arm webbed from approximately shoulder to wrist with what appears to be no muscular development from elbow up. Indication of functional distortion, further consultation needed.

Right hand entirely covered in excessive skin and tissue. Right thumb and index fingers fused and webbed. Thumb appears to be absent joint one. Index is absent from second knuckle beyond. Middle and second be normal and stable in development. Small latter digit inhibited by what appears to be a band of constrained skin. Blood and restricted movement;

(MORE)

DOC THOMAS (CONT'D)

wants further consultation. Range of motion and use of this arm is constrained at best and considered for amputation.

Fusion of joint and capacity to use full extension is limited and underdeveloped.

Head and neck normal and have full range of motion with little conflict. Facial and cranium bones with eye, nose, and mouth conform to expected normal appearance. Ear development is normal on both sides with minor lack of skin and curvature on top of left, not expected to affect future external or internal use.

All early cavity search checks unambiguous with no visible deformation. Facial appearance considered excellent.

All other physical abnormalities as seen or not, is to be further discussed and reviewed subject to future discoveries.

First assessment assumes all skeletal and muscular development will need extensive corrective measures to follow. Fetus suffers from extreme congenital confinement defects limited to no further role without far-reaching tries at prosthesis or reconstruction.

At preliminary stage, I would consider this fetus exceedingly disfigured, not able to walk or work without support or custodial care for some time, if at all.

It is this observer's opinion based on medical knowledge only: fetus is and should be considered for possible exclusion. As previously understood, child has not been presented to Mother. In addition, there is no known treatment or course of correction!

(MORE)

DOC THOMAS (CONT'D)
Immediate rectification with
intensive equipped procedures will
be required of the fetus that is
outside the scope of this
facility's knowledge and ability.
Transfer of accounts and patient
suggested. Consultation required.

Dictated by Dr. Thomas, September 1, 1959 -11:35 pm

INT. STORY TELLER - NIGHT

SHADOWED GIRL (IDENTITY CONCEALED)
"Did they ever find out what
happened to the baby Pap's?"

SHADOWED MAN (IDENTITY CONCEALED)

A mans voice rasp, yet soft as to speak of kindness once
known responds

"Not really child, it did not
matter at his point, water under
the Bridge is how Don felt ..."

It would be long into the next day
before all involved were made aware
of the conditions as explained by
Dr. Thomas. The waiting room went
silent. What was there to say? They
had all known the possibilities
that this pregnancy could bring,
but now their fears had been
realized. It was not until later
that first day after that the
Doctor had begun to assemble a
group of his peers to consult with
him on this perverse case, but he
had talked with Donny and provided
his medical observations. The only
thing that was clear was that this
was completely new territory for
the lot of them.

(MORE)

SHADOWED MAN (IDENTITY CONCEALED)

The hours that followed passed in slow motion, each member of the family treading ever so cautiously so as not to give vent to the anger, frustration, and sadness building inside. The urge to lash out was strong, however, and it took all their effort to meet the task head-on while listening to so many strangers discuss what had transpired.

Faith and pride were being tested to a point of fracture. This family had never claimed freedom from strife and surpassing the point of pain had always been a fact of life. But this time, in their shame and guilt, life was dealing them a blow that would take every ounce of support they could offer one another.

The question in their heads went around and around I think asking:
What had they done to deserve this?

THE CAMERA AGAIN FADES OUT AND NEVER REVEALS BUT ONLY A SHADOW OF WHAT APPEARS TO BE A LONG AND CONTAINING SPACE OF DISTANT AND PRESENT FIGURES OF DARKENED ITEMS WITH ONLY HINTS OF GLISTENING SUN SPARKLES RACING ACROSS THE ROOM AS THE SUN BEGINS TO MAKE ITSELF VISIBLE FROM THE EXTENDED VIEW REACHING WELL OUT IN FRONT OF THE GIRL IN THE DOORWAY ...

DISSOLVE TO: PRIVATE HOSPITAL ROOM, NORMA

NARRATOR

On the morning of day three, the tears had all since dried up. Together medical professionals, parents, and grandparents accompanied the new family to listen to Dr. Thomas. Explaining his recommendations to the group, Dr. Thomas knew his words revealed the angst he felt. Numb from exhaustion, he knew decisions had to be made quickly, and that Don's presence in the room meant he would have the final say.

TRANSITION BACK TO HOSPITAL

NORMA'S PRIVATE PATIENT ROOM NOW LINED WITH FAMILY

DOC THOMAS

"Good morning, everyone. What I am going to tell you, after having consulted with the other doctors, will be difficult to hear. I have to warn you that the information we have is critical.

First, the child is doing well and is resting as well as can be expected. I'm sure by now you have had the chance to see him and know that he is an exceptional and beautiful baby boy."

The room glances at the bed where Norma is still sedated but groggy from the anesthesia and slightly awake enough to witness the figures in the room and the concerns marked upon the faces of each. The tall stature of Don stands next to the bed, careful not to show emotions but rather to take the lead of Patriarch away from those who surrender willingly now...

DONNIE

"He gets that from me!"

Everyone laughed nervously, trying to dispel the aura of thick grief in the room. Then they waited for the rest of the news. Not one to refuse solid advice from those whom he trusted, Don knew he needed to listen, needed to hear whatever the doctor had to say, and then be quick to assure Norma that all had been taken care of. The next step was to find a solution.

DOC THOMAS

"Well, I'm glad to hear you have a smile in your heart for this child. I think we can do much good for him. Perhaps, and I say that with caution, perhaps if we do, we will be able to give him a somewhat normal and productive life. Nevertheless, it's going to take a lot of work and we need to start immediately. With that said, Norma, Don, we recommend that to start we place your son inside a cast, a full-body cast.

(MORE)

DOC THOMAS (CONT'D)

The constraint of the cast will aggressively allow his frail bones to move into a position that will later make the task of rebuilding easier. Currently, we need time to collect information and research our choices. Although we have all agreed,"

Turning to include the men behind him,

DOC THOMAS (CONT'D)

"Our best chance is to use restrictive traction, such as one would use for a broken bone."

Flossie was quick to voice her question.

FLOSSIE

"Are you saying you're going to break the little angel's bones and then cast them?"

One of the other white-smocked men answered,

DOCTOR 1

"No, not right now, anyway. Our hope is that the form of the cast will allow his defective bones to move into position, the way a broken arm or leg can do. Frankly, it's the only thing we can do until we are sure he is stable enough to perform reconstruction."

Dr. Thomas continued with a nod.

DOC THOMAS

"We know it may seem hard to understand, but this child has presented us with a situation unlike anything any of us have ever seen at this hospital.

There was one other similar case, which was quickly sent to Riley's and then St. Vincent's in Indianapolis. Our research is leading us to recommend you there as well. However, we feel that time is of the essence.

(MORE)

DOC THOMAS (CONT'D)

I expect to have more information later today and at that point I will want to speak with you and your family further. For now, though, do I have your approval to continue?

I can tell you that should we not continue, the child's bones will continue to strengthen into their current position. It is the only choice we have, Don."

All eyes turned to Norma and Don, who had grasped Norma's hand in his. Norma gave a quick nod of agreement.

The thought of her son engulfed in a prison of plaster before ever knowing the feel of freedom and the idea of never seeing the joy of her son's capacities was crushing her to the point of collapse. Knowing the people around her were stronger than she at that moment, she simply waved to signal she wanted to be alone.

The crowd began to exit, their expressions grave but optimistic about the outcome of this first effort. They wondered what would be next, but again silently agreed to hold their tongues. A Family Secret had begun by choice ...

THE CAMERA SLOWLY PULLS WIDE TO SHOW IN THE ABSENCE OF WITNESS, DON'S COMFORT RETURNS TO HIS WIFE AND THE WARRING PAINS OF WHAT HAS BEEN DELIVERED TO THEM.

AN HOUR LATER, IN A ROOM FILLED WITH INSTRUMENTS AND THE COLD STEEL TABLE OF MEDICAL DEVICES, A SMALL FIGURE LAY IMMERSSED IN A BATH OF WATER. COTTON, PLASTER, AND TOOLS MORE COMFORTABLY SEEN IN A WORKSHOP SURROUNDED THE CHILD, NOW UNDER BRIGHT LIGHTS.

NEVER HAD ANY OF THE DOCTORS BEEN SO CHALLENGED, AND EACH ONE WHO TOUCHED THIS BOY'S LIFE WOULD DO SO WITH HEARTFELT PAIN. THE WRAP OF MATERIAL SLOWLY ENTRAPPED THE SMALL BODY WITH EACH LAP AROUND THE SKIN.

THE PERFORMERS COULD NOT HELP IT; THEY WANTED TO LOOK AWAY BUT COULD NOT. AS IF SPOKEN ALOUD, THE SINGLE THOUGHT RANG OUT OVER AND OVER: GOD, WHAT HAVE YOU DONE? THE DOCTORS DARED NOT LOOK AT EACH OTHER FOR FEAR THAT A FLAW WOULD APPEAR IN THEIR DEMEANOR. WITH EACH LAYER, WRAPPING, WRAPPING, ENTRAPPING, THE INFANT BESEECHED THEM FOR AN ANSWER, AN EXPLANATION. BUT THERE WAS NONE TO GIVE.

These shots all include the slight tears and overwhelming feeling that each are witnessing ... The color and strength of this shot has to convey the trap, the prison being imposed upon innocence and the results of another's act - Be it God or Human, the results now are permanent!

How would this child understand? The tears shed that morning were not the child's, but of those in attendance.

When the last bit of wrapping had been applied and the last fold conformed to the shape determined best, the three-day-old body was successfully enveloped in a white prison of hell. With photos and recorders in place, each step of the event was noted for review, and the hardened mass of plaster lay still upon the platform.

Soon it was wheeled into a single room to remain separate from all others.

The years of segregation and discrimination had begun. Nobody wished for it, certainly, and perhaps no one understood how it happened. But, when presented with the facts, the question was surely how-or better, if-there was even the slightest chance that the outcome for such a child, with any amount of corrective measures, could be altered. Surely if there ever was a time for a redo, this would be it. But who are we to question the methods of God? Who are we to ask if such an abomination is truly a child of God? But how could He allow such a mistake to happen? After all, what could possibly be in store for such a child? Could this instead be called a phenomenon?

Were these the questions of those involved-or would they become the questions of the child? Perhaps some would say that there is a better world beyond; I would have to say, at what cost? And who defines the punishment? For now, barely the size of a telephone, the child lay helpless, buried alive inside a stark white plaster in a cold dark room with no way out.

COLLECTION OF TIME

All time starts somewhere and for the life of Norma and her task of raising this child, it begins now!

On day four, the tasks seemed endless. No singular solution presented itself, even with an entire family and staff of medical personnel at the feet of the small cause.

By now, Norma had been released to go home if she wished. With her only child captured and held, however, there was but one place to be. Her pain remained invisible to most. She had been taught well by the women before her how a matriarch was to behave and by then it had become instinct. No one would see the tears she cried inside.

Don did what he knew how to do, and he went about it with single minded purpose. He would work, work to ensure his family would be as strong and financially secure as possible. This was not a man to succumb to resistance, no matter its origin.

Dr. Thomas spoke to the young couple daily.

DOC THOMAS

"I want to assure you that we are all doing the best we can, Norma, Don. I have placed a call to have your son expedited to a specialist who deals with these types of difficulties. His name is Dr. Carl Martz.

He is known as the one of the best orthopedic surgeons in the country."

Dr. Thomas spoke with a confidence to disguise the heavy layer of fear he held. As Norma, presented in her light as the Sun entered the room to enhance her glowing skin ...

NORMA JEAN

"Please be honest with us, Doctor.
What should we do?
(MORE)

NORMA JEAN (CONT'D)

Do we need to go see this doctor or will he come here?"

DOC THOMAS

"I cannot say for sure, Norma, but according to his receptionist we do know that he is able and interested in meeting with you. I should know something later today."

NORMA JEAN

"Can I hold my son today?" Can't I pick him up and touch him?"

Dr. Thomas paused.

DOC THOMAS

"No, Norma, I'm sorry. But he will be out of these casts in less than a week and we should have a clear idea about what we need to do then. I know this is painful and hard to endure, but I can only ask you to have faith and believe we are doing our best."

Later that day what was to become the familiar sight of a lonely soldier of a woman standing in front of a glass window could be seen. Perhaps her thoughts were of guilt and remorse for not barring this child's entrance to the world. Perhaps she thought she was being punished for her family's choices.

The questions, without answers, paved a long road, one she would travel every day of the rest of her life.

EXCEPT FOR THE SOUND OF THE WOMEN'S HEELS TAPPING THE TILES, THE HALLWAYS OF THE HOSPITAL WERE LONG AND QUIET. THE TWO FIGURES, ELEGANTLY DRESSED AND PROPER, APPROACHED NORMA'S SIDE. BY NOW, HILDRETH AND FLOSSIE HAD BECOME THE TAPESTRY OF SUPPORT FOR THEIR LITTLE GIRL AND HER SON.

They had silently agreed to become a force of one, to assist wherever needed, in these most difficult of circumstances.

HILDRETH

"How do you feel today, Norma Jean? Your doctor said he released you. Are you planning on going home later?"

When Norma didn't answer, Flossie tried again.

FLOSSIE

"He's an angel, you know, dear.
Look at those blue eyes. Those are
his father's in him, you know."

Flossie said this with pride as the women clucked nervously, watching the baby who lay in tranquil stillness, disturbed only by the occasional nurse who came to check on him and perform routine tasks.

The minutes turned to hours; the conversation lagged until it finally ended altogether. The coffee was refreshed time and time again, as Norma continued to repel the attempted hug or the touch of a hand, knowing she was not able to grant her son the same. It was not until late that night when Don came to sit with her that she released her hold on the day to go home and rest.

This would be the first of many nights alone for Norma Jean. Her world was a world of the normal and the proper; it was not supposed to be like this. Her son was supposed to be strong, to have all the gifts this world had to offer. Damn you, God, damn you... Those were the words that rang in Norma Jean's head. In a society that frowned on all things different, all things outside the status quo, the mountain ahead seemed unbearably hard to climb. God had abandoned her and left her this deformed responsibility.

ON DAY 9 NORMA AND DON WERE SCHEDULED TO ARRIVE AT THE HOSPITAL TO FINALLY TOUCH AND TAKE THE CHILD HOME. AS WITH WHAT WAS SOON TO BECOME A PATTERN, DON WAS NOT PRESENT AND WORKING, HILDRETH ESCORTED ON THIS DAY.

Doc Thomas' Office was set to the side with the door open and facing the active and hurried Nurses station positioned just outside. The anticipation of Touching her child for the first time was painful and yet celebratory ... Norma, dressed in the most proper of slips and calf cut dress and her hair was perfect as if she had entered into a modeling scene. Her will power and strength was at full alert!

DOC THOMAS

"Norma, I would like to introduce
you to your Son, Kris!"

The Nurse slowly hands a bundle wrapped child with a glistening hair of golden blond emerging from the top.

The Mother now rests back into a chair shadowed by Hildreth and for the first time, she brushes the cloth from the child's face to reveal the blue eyes that opened wide and grinned to say hello ... Her best friend, his only ...

NORMA JEAN

"Hi Kris, I love you Son! Always"

The added weight of plaster and the bulk had presented her with a feeling of separation yet in that moment, that glance of a Spiritual Being in a Human Experience, She became a Mother and the Guardian of what has been assigned.

DR CARL MARTZ

THE CAMERA OPENS IN A WAITING ROOM FULL OF CHILDREN AND PARENTS. MOST HAVE A FORM OF CAST OR RESTRICTIVE DEVICES AND THE ROOM IS FULL OF CHATTER AND LAUGHTER WHEN NORMA ENTERS, ALONE CARRYING A BUNDLE WRAPPED IN BLANKET, SHIELDED FROM VIEW TO AVOID THE REHEARSED ANSWERS.

NORMA JEAN

"Hi, Norma & Kris, We have an appointment to see Doctor Martz this afternoon, Doctor Thomas referred us to you."

RECEPTIONIST 1

"Yes, we have been expecting you. Please have a seat and he will be right with you"

The receptionist spoke with a smile of apprehension.

Norma politely turns to find her place among the new society of disabilities and malfunctioned children in the room. Her manor and dress remains always in pure fashion. The other parents watch and glance as if to say welcome, if you belong!

WOMAN 1

"Hi, I love your Dress! And that necklace, so beautiful. What's your child's name? Boy or a Girl?"

NORMA JEAN

"His name is Kris, Thank you"

WOMAN 1

"What happen to him, did he break a leg or something? My little Billy can't seem to keep from running and falling out of a tree."

The room suddenly filled with catty chat and laughter at the joke all the while waiting on Normas answer.

NORMA JEAN

"No, Kris was born with challenges and birth defects, nothing so silly as falling. I protect him and watch after him better than that."

RECEPTIONIST 1

"Mrs. Courtney, The Doctor will see you and Kris now."

The room stunned and watches as the slender woman with Wit exits to the back ...

DR MARTZ

"Come in Norma, have a seat here. Let me hold this child please, may I have him?"

Her reluctance to let him go surfaces in emotion and she weeps at the separation. After being apart, her last breathe will be to let him go ever again ...

NORMA JEAN

"I am so sorry Doctor ..."

DR MARTZ

"Please, call me Carl, Norma"

THE SHOTS APPEAR IN RAPID SCENES OF MARTZ EXAMINING, MEASURING, VIEWS OF THE WAITING ROOM WHERE NORMA & KRIS BEGAN TO APPEAR REGULARLY, A SINGLE OR 2ND OPERATING/EXAMINING ROOM WHERE THE DOCTOR IS WRAPPING CASTS AND REMOVING - ON ONE SCENE WITH A CAST BEING REMOVED, THE FEAR OF THE SAW AND THE EYES OF AND TEARS OF KRIS AND THE COMFORT OF NORMA BY HIS SIDE AS THE BRACES AND DEVICES APPEAR IN NUMBERS.

In the weeks that followed, the child's prognosis became a little more optimistic. The doctors had reached a joint agreement regarding their program for the next six months and the first of many operations to come.

By the age of one year, the small body had undergone four reconstruction and/or removal procedures. The webbing from the right arm and hand had been trimmed to reveal a more functional set of digits.

Amputation to remove the entire lower half of the right leg had been considered on and off, but never implemented.

In addition, there was serious consideration given to the idea of installing a mechanical device that could serve as a finger or a thumb. Dr. Martz was aggressive, but Norma was persistent and these innovations went undone.

The general conclusion was that this child had shown enough strength, even in his silence, to overcome the hurdles ahead.

VISITORS, ICONIC PEOPLE (PARALLEL EXPERIENCES)

Another recovery room, and transition from Fear of having another device installed and thigh high confined cement stockings cover the child's legs laying in a bed with a partially raised head and the end of each foot hanging lifeless from steel cables dangling from traction bars at the end of a cold stainless frame.

THE CAMERA FOLLOWS BEHIND A WOMAN DRESSED IN FASHIONABLE AND BRIGHT CALF HIGH DRESS AND HEELS THAT SNAPPED WITH EACH STEP DOWN THE SHADOWED HALLWAY OF THE CHILDREN'S WARD. TUCKED UNDER HER ARM IS A STUFFED ANIMAL TOY OF THE CURRENT CARTOON SENSATION OF BUGS BUNNY. EACH GLANCE AND KIND SMILE AS THE ROTATION OF CAMERA SWINGS AROUND HER BLOND FRESH FACE ENTERING THE ROOM. THE LADIES EYE'S MEET AND NORMA RECEIVES WITH A SMILE OF ACCEPTANCE.

NORMA JEAN

Hi, How are you? Can I help you?

LADY "RUTH"

Hello, yes but my hope is to help you if I may. My name is Ruth, Ruth Lyons and I was made aware of Kris through some mutual friends.

Norma's smile grew with a larger confidence as the woman's tone was Maternal and comforting.

LADY RUTH

You must be Kris? I have heard a lot about you, Your pretty strong young man aren't you?

Timid and shy to respond without her approval, He glances at Norma first to assume the acceptance followed by his welcomed exuberant smile and pitched voice of noticing the character toy she carries.

KRIS

Is that Bugs? Bugs Bunny, is He for Me ?

The rustling of movement invokes the pain and limits visible and although all in the room know of the physical pain and restrictions of confinement, the recipient child fails to acknowledge the distraction for the prize set in front of him. Norma assists the kind Lady to present the gift.

LADY RUTH

Here Honey, this is a Gift I would like you to have as long it's Okay with your Mother?

The ladies wink and grin to know the impact this has to offer a benevolence of joy to another ... Normas eyes weep in glistened gratitude to the anonymous Angel ...

NORMA JEAN

Of Course it is, Thank you

THE TWO LADIES EXITED THE ROOM WHILE THE NEW TOY TOOK ON AN IDENTITY FOR THE YOUNG MAN AND BECAME A PLACE OF JOY RATHER THAN PAIN AND FEAR.

THE CAMERA FADES INTO A TABLE AND THE CAFETERIA WHERE THE LADIES SIT DRINKING A COFFEE ...

LADY RUTH

Norma, I want to give you some numbers and information that may help you in this time of need.

These people handle children with disabilities on a regular basis and can offer you educational and
.....

NORMA JEAN

I'm sorry, Kris is not stupid! And he is not crippled, we are taking all the steps we need to make that part of his life as transparent as possible.

I appreciate your gift and that was very kind of you, But that Does NOT give you the authority to put my Son in a category he does not fit!

LADY RUTH

I apologize Norma, that is not what my intent here suggests. I am wanting you to know that Dr Martz is aware and recommended that I speak with you.

(MORE)

LADY RUTH (CONT'D)

I live in Cincinnati and visit here quite often and can be of some help to you if you would allow me.

I have talked with others already and I am fully aware of your desires, thus the reason I only offer you the numbers and the gift.

NORMA JEAN

I'm sorry, please forgive my sudden defense - I am all he has and I am not going to allow him to fall into a "System" or go into a special needs facility, he is so much more than that and has shown strength to endure what is put in front of him.

LADY RUTH

Forgive me, I was under the impression his Father was available?

NORMA JEAN

Oh he is, He simply works so much and his family has a business that keeps him busy. We are doing very well and I work in Real Estate. That allows me to be with Kris as much as needed, I' sure you understand.

The ladies grin politely to know that the conversation and chat has reached it's conclusion.

LADY RUTH

Here are those numbers and Carl has all of this in his Office too should you ever decide. My home number is here, written on the back and you can call me anytime Norma!

You are very strong woman and you have an Incredible task ahead of you. There is no doubt in my mind after meeting you, That you are going to be just fine and he is going to thrive. You both are very Blessed!

Thank you for letting me take some of your time Norma

The ladies stand and exchange a delicate and warm handshake goodbye.

THE HEELS OF EACH SNAP IN UNISON AS THE CAMERA FOLLOWS BOTH DOWN A HALLWAY TOWARDS THE END. ARROWS POINT TO EXIT AND ORTHOPEDIC WING AND EACH TAKE THEIR ASSIGNED DIRECTIONS

FADE

NOVEMBER 1963

Kris Laying in front of the TV on the floor surrounded by crayons and papers that scattered the path to the Kitchen and the sudden sound of that beeping noise emerged from the box against the wall. The assassination of JFK.

The braces around Kris' legs and the arm encased into another cast, the child raised to comfort his Mother who was sitting at the Kitchen table weeping and with each attempt, Norma returns the care to assure the child it is nothing they have done. Off in the background the Refrigerator covered in colored images of paper that create a collage.

NOTE of Content & Purpose:

It is the intention of this script to allow creative license of the actors and directing personnel to improvise and allow the emotional energy of each of these stages to move so in a way that creates dialogue & action drawn from the Talents of those involved. The story board of images and lines are a guide to allow each artist & professional to operate outside the box of rigid , to feel and transition that energy in a way that is manifested into the audience.

FADE OUT. TRANSITION TO CAR TRAVELING (HOVER ABOVE)

A WEEKEND CONVERSATION WHEN ONCE MY FATHER WAS VISIBLE AND MY MOTHER HAD JUST TAKEN ME TO A CUB SCOUT MEETING WHERE SHE HAD BECOME THE DEN MOTHER IN HOPES OF MAKING SURE HER SON WAS INCLUDED AND REGARDED AS EQUAL TO THE REST OF WHAT SOCIETY DEFINED AS NORMAL CHILDREN.

THE CHURCH BASEMENT WAS FILLED WITH CHAIRS AND THE PROPER FOOD ARRANGEMENTS AND REFRESHMENTS ON THE WALL. THE OTHER CHILDREN GATHERED BY THEIR MOTHERS HIP AND ALL CHATTERED WITH GOSSIP WHILE NORMA PLAYED THE HOSTESS WITH ALL THE GLAMOUR ONE COULD PRESENT TO A ROOM FULL OF EYES THAT QUESTIONED THE SAME VERBIAGE 'WHAT HAPPENED TO HIM ?

NORMA JEAN

OK, Gather round kids , we have to talk about how we are going to be part of this years Pinewood Derby!

Norma speaks with enthusiasm and confidence

MOTHER 1

Are 'All of the children going to
be able to race cars Norma?

The woman spoke with a glaring prejudice in her voice

NORMA JEAN

Of course Donna, this is an equal
chance event for each Scout to earn
their badge and maybe even win!

Norma glances at Kris and the woman blinks to snarl back and
know that her discrimination was not welcomed.

NORMA JEAN (CONT'D)

Now here, be sure to fill out these
forms and for those of you, Make
sure you take these home and have
your parents get them back to me as
soon as possible, You too Ricky!

Smiling and orchestrating, Norma handles the room and the
scene unfolds as the crowd scatters to enjoy the food.

Off the side, a couple of the Cubs gathering around Kris.

KRIS

Hi, you gonna build a fast car ?

He speaks to one of the boys as he smiles and delights in the
moment of excitement and being a part of the group ...

BOY 1

Mines going to be Blue with big
wheels and fast!!!

BOY 2

Mines going to beat all you, its
going to be the fastest one and go
zoom !!!

The boy says waving his arms and showing a swooping of
excitement and laughter among themselves

BOY 3

Hey, how come you wear those things
on those shoes, you're shoes are
funny ... Did you break your arm
too , What happened to you ?

The group of boys suddenly glance to the silent Kris now wanting to answering directly to them yet shamed instantly for the failed image he presented. In the background Norma and another Woman empathetic to the situation watched with readiness.

KRIS

No, they tried to fix my arm - it was broken and they had to do stuff. I have to wear these, that's just the way God wanted It to be...

THE CAMERA SHOT ROLLS TOWARDS NORMA AND HER POSITION OF HOVER

NORMA JEAN

I wish I could take all that away from him at times , But he has to learn on his own. This world is not going to be kind to him ...

WOMAN 2

I think you and Don have done such a wonderful job , I just don't know how you do it Norma. He is so strong to survive and not only make it but thrive through all of this!

When is his next surgery ?

NORMA JEAN

We are supposed to have him at Rileys on the 20th. They are going to attempt to extend his ankles again. This time he will have to have full length up to his waist to straighten his calves , Dr Martz said this will be the last time they will have to anything to his left leg hopefully ...

THE CAMERA SCANS ACROSS THE ROOM AND FINDS THE BOYS LAUGHING AND JESTFUL PLAY AS MOST KIDS DO. THE GLANCING EYE OF CONTACT FROM KRIS TO NORMA AND THE SCENE FADES BACK TO THE HOUSE LATER THAT EVENING...

SET INSIDE THE LIVING ROOM, DON READS THE PAPER IN HIS CORNER CHAIR AS NORMA CLEANS THE KITCHEN AGAIN AND CARES TO HER TIDY HOME OF MODEST MEANS. KRIS PLAYS ON THE FLOOR AS MOST TIMES SINCE CLIMBING INTO FURNITURE MOST DAYS SERVES AS MORE PAIN AND CHALLENGE THAN SIMPLY SCOOTING AND ROLLING THE HEAVY EQUIPMENT AND CEMENT TOMBS ENGULFING HIS LIMBS.

NORMA JEAN (CONT'D)

Kris, tell your Father about what we did at Cub Scouts today!

KRIS

OH Yeah !!!

Kris speaks with Excitement and puffed out cheeks of Joy as he turns awkwardly towards his Dad

KRIS (CONT'D)

Dad, Guess what, Today - today at Cub Scouts - Guess what we Got?

Always seeking to exchange a smile with his father, Don had lost his emotional skills and buried them decades ago on a dirt road with his Father and was only able to offer a shallow response of interest to his Son now positioned at his feet gazing up with light and anticipation of approval.

Don folds the paper to one side, only to reveal partial interest.

DONNIE

What, what did you get?

NORMA JEAN

Don, listen please...

Norma speaks softly as she eased her Maternal instincts into the situation and politely encouraged Don to pay full attention to this important event. Don folds the paper away and sits up towards the front of his chair and grants a smile to the child eager at his side and pulled up to the edge, sounds of metal and clinks of braces appear...

DONNIE

Okay, tell me about this Hotrod, what did you get today 'Pal ?

KRIS

We got a pickwood derby c.....

NORMA JEAN
'PINE Wood Derby car!

She corrects her Son

KRIS
Pinewood car, we get to make a car
to race like the big race cars by
Grandma and Grandpa Parkers house.

Can you help me with it, will you
Daddy please?

Somewhere amid our struggles to remake my body, my father found the time to be successful in his acquisition of money and fame in his trade. I was enrolled in school during the fall and winter months; during the summer I had all my operations.

I remember two events that included my Dad. One of them I only remembered after being shown a picture in which he was lying on the floor with me, playing with a miniature army. The second was the Pinewood Derby contest. There was to be no second-place finish.

In the weeks prior, my dad took me to his engineering and tool shop where his world existed in exact thousandths' of fractions, in precise instruments and foreign sounds. For me it was always a feeling of being less than, exaggerated by the comparison of my failed body to the precision instruments and creations built there. Nonetheless, I was excited just to be at his side. I did not care about the race. In fact, I did not even understand what we were doing because my dad had entered the race for me. I recall sitting on a stool, watching, amazed that this man was my dad. Strong, tall, and proud, he was someone I did not know except in dreams or at the occasional dinner. I think I was the one whose pride should have been recognized that night.

KRIS (CONT'D)
"Do you think we could win second
or third maybe, Dad?"

I asked him, knowing I did not deserve first.

DONNIE
"Son, there is no such thing as
second, there is only first. Don't
forget that!"

I never did forget my father's words, even though I have tried many times since to understand the consequences of that statement.

Those poor kids stood watching my father and me, wrapped again and held in place by shiny metal that weighed more than my entire body. The colorful homemade boxy black-wheeled toy moved ever so sluggishly down the narrow track, the lead-weighted, precision ground-racing wheel aero-tool for which I was responsible already steadied for the next challenger. I felt sorry for the other kids, but I dared not show that concern to my dad. It was his moment of glory for his crippled son. Nobody challenged or denied the award, but we never entered again and from that day forward the trophy sat for all to see. Perhaps the experience of seeing my father's workplace enlightened me as to what was happening to my body in some way.

THE EVENING SHOT OF A RITUAL FOR BEDTIME & THE SHOTS THAT FOLLOW AS THE STARRY EYED BOY LAY READY FOR HIS TORTURE AND DISTRACTED ONLY BY THE NEW SHINNY TROPHY ON HIS TABLE

I have always slept with a pair of metal shoes connected to either the bed itself or to a heavy strap of steel. My nights were filled with tears and cries of tortured pain.

STRAPPED & MOUNTED TO BED

NOTE & IMPROVISE SILENT SCENE

THIS SCENE NEEDS TO BE ONLY IN PAIN OF SILENCE AND THE ACT OF SECURING KRIS'S BODY INTO THE TRACTION DEVICES AND ARMOR THAT HIS NIGHTLY ROUTINE OFFERED AND THE PAIN OF THE TASK THAT FELL UPON THE IMPOSER OF PAIN FOR THAT NIGHT. THE SORROW AND THE LACK OF WORDS THAT CAN DESCRIBE IMPALING YOUR ONLY CHILD!

My arms were often secured as well to prevent movement or enable motion. As a child, I experienced the confines of my own personal insane asylum. Perhaps most children escape, enjoy the play-land of a room filled with toys in their dreams. I never dreamed between the walls of my concealment. A refuge or haven it was not.

One of the most memorable aspects was the smell. I can to this day describe the smell of flesh or scar tissue. It is as unique a smell I have ever encountered, one which has offered a peculiar sense of identity, or perhaps an eccentric personal awareness.

MATRIARCH GATHERING

It was August again and the Casts of Kris's legs had become a routine part of the landscape at their house as Flossie, Hildreth and Norma sat at the Kitchen table inside a small Salt-Box house filled with Boxes. On this day, the family was preparing to move into a new 3-story luxury house that Don and Norma had built custom in the same part of Indianapolis that Arwood and family lived. By this time, Norma had begun to work as a Realtor Agent for a very successful agency in town and it allowed her the freedom to attend all of the doctor appointments and hospital requirements while school was out for the summer.

1967 AND THE FANCY WINDOW AC UNIT WAS BLOWING SWIFT INSIDE THE SMALL KITCHEN OUTLINED IN TURQUOISE AND CHROME EMBOSSED WHITE FIXTURES. THE INDIANA SUN GLEAMED THROUGH THE WINDOWS AS THEY FOLLOWED NORMAS PATH AND CHORES.

FLOSSIE

I'm so Proud of you Honey, you have handled all of this with so much strength and love!

I bet your excited to be moving finally, do you need me to help with anything else besides the drapes? I have the bedroom sets all finished and in the car by the way.

HILDRETH

What fabric pattern did you make Kris's room Flossie?

FLOSSIE

The top half are blue with a while staggered pattern and white trim.

The ladies all smiled and comforted in that knowing they curtains were made with loving care...

NORMA JEAN

Mom, when did Dad say he was going to be finished with that cabinet? I was hoping to have it for the house party. I know it will look so nice with the dining room set Don & I ordered. You should see this thing, it is huge, 10 place. I cant wait!

FLOSSIE

That reminds me, I have the Silver Set in the car too, Do you want me to leave it here or take it with me tomorrow?

NORMA JEAN

No, just keep it and we can take all that over at once.

You want some more Coffee Mom ?

HILDRETH

No Sis , I've had enough. My sugar is a little low, I may want some Orange Juice though in a little bit if you don't mind.

You know your Sister Charlotte is having fits again, she struggles so much sometimes...

NORMA JEAN

I know, I wish there was something we could do for her.

FLOSSIE

Speaking of doing something, when is Kris scheduled next ? Are they going to try and rebuild the side of his right one again?

NORMA JEAN

Yes, Dr Martz wants to take him in next week and after these stitches are removed from his ankle on the one side, he is going to a full right operation, He calls it a "triple arthrodesis"

He says this will be the one that fuses his foot so that there will be no chance of him falling anymore

HILDRETH

How long will he have this one?

NORMA JEAN

He thinks about 8 weeks, it will cross over into him starting school, But I can't avoid it this time, he is just going to have to learn to deal with it at school.

(MORE)

NORMA JEAN (CONT'D)

I think he is old enough now and seems to be handling the stares and comments better.

Although I caught him the other day acting out at someone who called him names, I am just not going to let that happen! He is no different than the rest of those kids!

NEAR THE EDGE

The year had been filled with medical office visits, measurements and challenge. As usual Don was nowhere to be seen and the separation between family and Father was now at it's widest gap. Norma had become a Single parent , Cooperation without Association to the marriage.

Known and assured that this will be the last rebuild (4) of the child's right leg and foot, Norma had begun to find herself tired and exhausted from carrying this responsibility. Although John, Hildreth and Flossie had continued to provide the duties assigned from that single day in 1959, Norma's burden and shadows began to appear on her face and stance in these times of distress.

DR MARTZ

Ok Folks, here we go again, Norma he will be fine!

Dr Carl martz assures the weaken Mother

NORMA JEAN

Carl, I am scared about this one. You said it would be more intense and that the risk is higher simply because of the transfusion your going to use this time.

You're Sure He is Safe!?!

DR MARTZ

Yes Norma, he will be fine. There will be a little bit of blood loss on this simply because of the amount of reconstruction we are going to do this time, but I do not expect any difference in recovery. He has handled all of this very well throughout the years, He is a strong young man!

JOHN (JP)

Tell me Doctor,

JP Speaks with an authoritative and improvised Fatherly approach to comfort his Daughter.

JOHN (JP) (CONT'D)

Is this going to be similar to the previous when he will require additional equipment and braces, Or is this for the purpose of removing these braces?

Will he be able to wear conforming shoes after this operation?

DR MARTZ

No, I'm afraid what we are hoping to accomplish is simply to permanently fuse his leg and foot into a 90 degree formation. This will allow him to use and keep this leg for at least another 20 years we hope before amputation.

Keep in mind, our task here is to keep from removing his legs too soon ... That will come in time no matter what I suspect, especially if he falls under the same condition of family history of Diabetes! Lets not put the cart before the horse here...

Anymore questions?

NORMA JEAN

No Sir, thank you. You know where I will be - same place as I always am

Norma speaks with a hint of Jest in that she will be in the familiar waiting room and chair that has become a second home during these events ... Dr Martz exits and the family gathers in apprehension and tears of support and hugs

4 1/2 HOURS PASS BY WITH SLOTH SENSATIONS , THE WAITING ROOM IN A BROWNISH AND GREEN PERIOD MAUVE AND THE SMOKE FILLS THE CLOUDED ROOM SET TO THE SIDE.

NORMA KNOWS THERE IS A PROBLEM AND THE TENSIONS ARE HIGH AS SHE REPEATEDLY ASKS FOR STATUS FROM THE UNDER STAFFED NURSING ATTENDANT. PACING THE FLOOR, HER PATIENCE IS THIN AT THE VERY MOMENT THE DOCTOR RETURNS AND OPENS THE DOOR

NORMA JEAN (CONT'D)

There was a problem, what happened
Carl! Tell me he is Ok, what
happen?

John , Hildreth and Flossie all stood with equal concern and surrounded the blue smocked man with a white capped coat that shows signs of blood stains unsuccessfully hidden ...

Norma's eyes catch the witness of the blood and knows that it carries her family burden , her emotional release is over whelming and her breathe escapes as she sits back down in assistance by those next to her. Her mascara drips as she peers up at the Man who holds her fears ...

DR MARTZ

He is going to be OK Norma, He is Fine, I promise you - This was a hard Surgery. I told you that we were reaching into a new area and this would be difficult.

But Successful, Very Successful!

The Doctors smile, partial exhausted grin gave comfort to the gathering crowd that included a nurse.

JOHN (JP)

What can you tell us at this point!?!

JP asks with fear disguised as Patriarch Control

DR MARTZ

I can tell you that we had some trouble. We were originally going to extend and restructure his big toe, but after getting in, we hit a couple major blood vessels that were not expected, He lost more than we anticipated and we had to give him twice the amount of blood and sedate him an extra hour.

He may take longer to regain from that, do not be surprised if he sleeps for another couple hours

FLOSSIE

How is his heart and breathing, did he fall or have trouble with any of that either? Just tell me my little precious is going to be Ok ?

Flossie weeps and yet holds her position of Iconic Matriarch in a room full of statues ...

THE NEXT FEW HOURS ARE SPENT IN WAITING, WATCHING THROUGH A GLASS BARRIER TO A ROOM OF ONE , ONE SPIRITUAL SOUL OF A CHILD DESPERATELY HANGING ON TO LIFE. THE VISIBLE CONDITION OF SEPARATION AGAIN RETURNS AND MOTHER & CHILD ARE APART DURING CRITICAL NEED.

9 HOURS TRANSPIRE AND FINALLY THE VIEW APPEARS OF A ROOM WHERE THE DRAPES ARE OPEN SLIGHTLY WITH A SMALL RAY OF SUNLIGHT APPEARING AGAINST THE SKIN OF NORMA SITTING ASIDE HER SON. THE WALL CHAIRS FILLED WITH REMAINING ACTORS OF FAMILY AND APPEARING FATHER STANDING IN WITNESS. EVEN DONNIE FOUND THIS TO BE A TIME OF ATTENTION.

INT. STORY TELLER - SUNSET

THE HOUSE ON THE HILL WEARS FURTHER AND THE EVENING SUN SITS LOW BEHIND. THE SEASON TAKES ON A BLOOD RED SUNSET AND THE CAMERA TRANSITIONS BACK INTO THE SAME CLOUDY DARK ROOM WITH MASKED EDGES AND BOX CORNERS THROUGHOUT ONLY KNOWN BY THE DARKER SHADOWS AGAINST THE FADED GREY WALLS

SHADOWED GIRL (IDENTITY CONCEALED)

Did he die Pap's ?

SHADOWED MAN (IDENTITY CONCEALED)

No, the child was fine this time
Honey, But they sure worried.

That Lady with a Toy was never seen again though, at least not by the boy! She did give a wonderful gift of kind, that young man carried that stuff animal for years. His best friend at times ... Maybe his only during those experiences.

SHADOWED GIRL

I dont know how anybody could have that much pain and still be happy and be normal... Whewww, I just dont understand.

Did they stop or what happen next?

SHADOWED MAN

Well, it wasn't long before

.....

THE CAMERA APPEARS TO HOVER OVER THE SCENE DESCRIBED

NARRATOR

Over the course of the next few days, the room is full of activity, doctors and fears. The blood soaked cast is replaced 4 times in attempts to prevent bleeding from a massive operation that almost appears to be more than anything anyone expected.

For the first time in noted history, Even the patient took notice of the fear. Prior, there was never a face, an identity or sign of what fear should look like ... All of the purity of wholesome Midwestern Joy was a struggle to find this time and although the recovery was slow to come, the realization this time was not only the most frightening, it sent a Clear Signal, it was the Last!

LUXURY HOUSE ON A HILL

THE SCENE BEGINS TO APPEAR OF A FAMILY HOMES EVENING WHEN NORMA SITS AT THE FAMILIAR TABLE IN THE NEW LUXURY HOME ALONE WAITING ON HER HUSBAND TO RETURN.

The stress on the family and the center core of whatever adolescent love was available had long since faded under the umbrella of suspicions late night arrivals and drunken arguments. Norma had spent her entire life up to this point as the Mother of a child with special needs and had placed her own importance in line behind that of being a loyal wife as well. Through the guilt or moral standards of the times, she would stay beside her husband at all ends, or so it seemed.

The pair of them have made a grand life for themselves and the house of cards that appeared on the outside perhaps took clues from the young boy upstairs asleep and the devices that required to keep him a foot. Despite organizations such as "March of Dimes" and Various Family & Church efforts, Norma and Don had raised Kris with a firm and strict adherence to the Ideal that his life was as equally qualified as those with all the physical members assigned by God's Grace.

Tonight as the sound of a car door closes quietly to not wake the neighbors and dare disturb the waiting fury. The entry door from the garage closes as a statue of a man slumped and staggering appears with rattled shirt and jacket...

NORMA JEAN

Hello....

The voice catches the man off guard in response as Donnie turns to grin that slurred appearance of illusion

DONNIE

Hey , whatcha doin there ...

His speech rumbles with apprehension at first to conceal the lack of his verbal or emotional and physical control...

DONNIE (CONT'D)

Uhhmmmm, you're not in bed? Is everything Ok ?

NORMA JEAN

Out with the guys from work again ?
That makes three times this week
doesn't it Donald ?!!!

As if a switch in the wall had been flipped, his Ego and Drunken defenses took arm and the tone of Don's voice recoiled from pacifier to attack in a deep aggressive growl

DONNIE

Hey, who the Hell do you think takes care of all this around here? I can and WILL go out to drink with the guys any god-damn time I want!

You do your part and take care of the cripple kid and I will do mine! If it wasn't for your Fucking Hill-Jack family , we wouldn't have this problem in our lives anyway!

NORMA JEAN

You listen to me and hear me good Don Jr. - We have placed all that behind us and this has nothing to do with Kris or my family! And you know that, your Drunk and acting Just like your Dad!

Is this what you want, to come home every night and fight over the fact that your not able to be a part of all this and afraid!??!!

DONNIE

Shut Up!!! I never wanted any of this to happen. I love that Boy, it's just too much. But I'll be Damn if I am anything like that Ass I had for a father and I stayed!!! I never left you, I paid cash for this house and between us both, we have made a life for ourselves!

Don't give me that shit Norma!

ACTION NOTE:

Improvising and camera shots follow these actors through an entire dialogue of verbal banter.

THE CAMERA FADES AND SHOWS A SMALL FACE CROUCHED AT THE TOP OF THE STAIRS THROUGH A SERIES OF RANDOM VIEWS WHILE THE ARGUMENT EXPANDS AND SLOWLY ENDS WITH A TRANSITION OF THE BOY WALKING ASSISTED BY EQUIPMENT BACK TO BED IN TEARS

FIGHT BACK

THE CAMERA SHOWS A LONG HALF TREE LINED STREET IN A SPRING SUMMER DAY AND THE LOCAL SCHOOL WAS LETTING OUT. AS WITH ALL SCHOOL DAYS, NORMA WAS CLOSE ENOUGH TO WATCH EVERY STEP AND YET FAR ENOUGH AWAY TO STAY UNNOTICED AS KRIS WALKED AND BATTLED THE PAVEMENT HOME.

THE BUS LETS A NUMBER OF KIDS OFF AND FOLLOWING KRIS ARE THREE OTHER BOYS LOCAL FROM THE NEW NEIGHBORHOOD WHOM HAD BEEN PREVIOUSLY MOCKING AND MAKING FUN OF THE STRANGE NEW KID WHO SPOKE LITTLE.

BOY 4

"Hey, Freak, Shrimp, Stubby!"

They yelled, knocking Kris' books out from under his other, uncasted arm as he prepared to defend and escape.

KRIS

"Please, leave me alone. I didn't do anything to you."

Norma watching from afar

NORMA JEAN

"Hit 'em, Kris, hit 'em back!"

Kris Gasped in astonishment. He had never failed to follow her advice, but this had come from left field. Confused, but used to doing what he was told, he swung to hit them. Losing his balance, fell to the ground. Attempting repeatedly to grab at something, anything to regain balance and pick himself up, but each time was hit again or simply knocked over like a bobble toy.

Weeping and sobbed with each effort, Norma finally came to scatter the boys. Her appearance confused the children and later that day one of the parents came over to apologize and found a Mother who was exhausted in an effort to strengthen her child for a world that will not be so easy in the very near years to follow...

NOTE of Theme at age 9 - Excerpt's:

THE ATTENTION TO SCRIPT AND THE PATTERN OF SHOTS TO FOLLOW ARE BASED UPON IMPROVISATIONAL AND ARTISTIC INTERPRETATION - COPY IS PRESENTED IN FIRST PERSON EXPERIENCE FROM THE CHILDS PERSPECTIVE FROM THIS POINT FORWARD AND YIELDS TO A SUGGESTED COLLECTION OF BOTH LOCATION & EMOTIONALLY BASED SMALL SCENES THAT WILL FADE BACK & FORTH. THE JOURNEY COVERED UP TO THIS POINT HAS NOW SPAN 40 YEARS AND WILL BE RELATIVE TO ONLY THE NEXT SINGLE DECADE OF TRAVEL ACROSS AND BACK TO THE SAME OLD HOUSE ON THE HILL - REFERENCE THE STORY TELLER

IT IS THE INTENTION THAT THE FOLLOWING ACTION/TRANSITION/COPY IS FORMED BY TALENT AND MULTIPLE SHOTS FORMED TO EXPRESS ARTISTICALLY EACH DESCRIPTION AND SUBJECT TO INCLUSION OR ADDITION AT TIME OF EDIT.

First Person - Scene/Action/Excerpt Description Copy:

I never stopped wondering whether the fear and pain they inflicted that day had affected those boys. Were they guilt-ridden, knowing what they had done? Or had it been easy to forget? My pain, on the other hand, which never went away, was nothing more than another ache to live with.

Across the street lived a family of boys who were my age. I recall the many times during the summer I stood at the edge of the fence to watch them swim in the in-ground pool in their backyard. It smelled from afar of the clean scents of life and energy. I had never enjoyed the water except at the hospital pool when they took me for therapy. I had all the normal young boy attitudes and beliefs, or so I thought. Why couldn't I swim with the others?

Somehow, my mother caught wind of my desire and managed to arrange for me to do just that. Unfortunately, the looks on the kids' faces as they stared at my deformities and spoke in quiet whispers was another reminder that in fact I was all too different. I am equally sure that it was an overwhelming experience for my mother. I wish I had understood then. I guess I was just the spoiled rich crippled kid in the neighborhood. Oh, how I grew to hate that word, crippled.

My dad bought us a little motorcycle, a Honda 50. Mind you, I was at best three-foot tall with one arm that I could not use. We had a picnic table in the back of our yard that abutted against the field of a church. I learned to stand on the table, lean the motorbike against the wood and climb aboard. I learned how to fall! But soon I had figured out how to coast ever so softly up to the table and lean over enough to get on and off all by myself. Our life in this new home was young, but good. Strict, too. There were no shoes in the dining room and every Sunday we clipped the grass from the edge of our drive. Perhaps we had found happiness.

I only wished that happiness was within me. I know that most of you who read this will struggle with, perhaps even reject, the idea that I have lived my entire life feeling as if an existence as Frankenstein was my only fate in life. But since I can recall, I have had the overwhelming desire that when I met someone new, he will look me in the eye and not be compelled or distracted to look at my body, my hands, or the metal equipment supporting them.

As a child, my family made it very clear that I should not pay attention to this reaction, and that I should consider myself special. I understand that approach; it is the one I would use, too, if I found myself in their shoes.

Nevertheless, today, isolated and alone in a world where normalcy is measured in terms of visual perfection, an abnormal figure, a hand that scares the person shaking it, only means a sense of disconnection for its bearer. Throughout my childhood, I not only knew I was different, but every day I knew that I was second- or third-class-at best.

As a result, I created a false identity, one that I hoped would make me appear larger, bigger in attitude, more intimidating. I tried often, but continued to fall decidedly short of my goal. It would not be until much later and after much failure that I would find a solution to the emotional scars left by my trying to fit in.

If only I might have heeded the words of my wise mother when she said, "This too shall pass," words she used to remind me of our blessings on every occasion—whether they applied or not.

Family reunions took place at our house and were filled with food and love. J. P. was eagerly working on completing his first phase of the cabin at Trail's End in hopes of having the next reunion there. Everyone had come to accept the past, though there was an ever-present undercurrent of gentle concern for future generations to come. In previous years, we gathered in the car to go visit Grandma Flossie and the small dairy, but big ice-cream store, next door. Flossie was always quick to greet us when we arrived. I can still see the signs along the way, the last one's appearance indicating we had made it safely. The backyard was filled with grapevines and the smell of blossoms ready to unfold for the jellies or jams to come.

Once, when visiting, a man whom I later came to know as Uncle Bill was there. Seems we all have an Uncle Bill. It struck me as odd when I learned he was Grandma's son. Uncle Bill was accompanied by a man who spoke little and carried a black case; not a friendly man. I later learned that Uncle Bill often visited a place called Havana. He is said to have died in the Philippines, and the stories say he was a CIA agent, that he knew a little something about that day Mom cried years ago. We used to visit Martha Rose and my cousins as well. I remember my Uncle Herb, too, a huge, strong man who built houses. I later fell from my cousins' grace, but at that time they were always willing to tolerate the crippled kid. I didn't know then the impact of our relationships and how they had made adjustments to accommodate me. I am grateful to them for their kindness, and the kindness of their mother, my Aunt Diane, truly one of the most gracious women I have ever met. Other than family, I never really had any friends. I think it was because nobody knew how to relate to someone so different in a world full of same. In this world, should they have had to? It took far too much effort to be involved with a kid with braces.

Either way, I found myself astonished when I encountered one of the people I'd known back then and he actually remembered me as a child. I believe there was both shock and compassion in his eyes. Perhaps he was one of the kids who came and sat on the blanket with me under the tree on long warm afternoons. Perhaps these children had been told to "go sit with the poor little boy," but either way it was appreciated. To be truthful, though, I only felt as if I belonged when I was with other kids who were sick or deformed like me.

When we went to Dr. Martz's office other children were often there, but I do not remember ever seeing another with as many metal braces or casts. I always enjoyed meeting and talking with them, though, because in those moments I did not feel alone, even for a moment. I believe it is easier to understand the temporary isolation that comes from an illness or an emotional setback, but isolation that is unremitting takes on an identity of its own, a substance, if you will. I never learned how to talk fluidly or socialize normally with others, the ones I saw as having all the things in life freely offered to them, all the things I had been denied.

Sure, I was intelligent and understood language; in fact, I would excel to the point of having no avenue of expression for the things I felt. It was the mid-sixties then, and to be an American meant getting a job in a factory and working hard for thirty years until it was time to retire. This was the recipe for happiness. I understood that it may be true for all the others, but not for me. Half of my body not only did not work, but was numb and determined to be useless without support. How could I ever be a part of something with which I had no connection? Denied even the basics of normalcy, I didn't belong; I was a misfit.

You might say I felt sorry for myself. Or perhaps that I needed help. You might pass judgment and decide that I deserved whatever came to me. All I can tell you is that in my world there have been so few like me that help and understanding is at best a guess. How could anyone understand? Escape from reality was a daily chore, an exercise in control.

I lay lifeless and separate from the people touching me, while the hard leather-bound shoes with bolts and screws extending from their soles and sides were forced onto my legs. I prayed for the exercise to conclude, never wanting it to begin again. I listened to the crash and clink of steel bars against my skin, bitterly aware that they represented my only hope for walking. It became all too apparent that I would have to completely accept the fact that my body and my life would never function on its own, that I would always need the assistance of someone or something else.

That attitude and the need to find release led me into the next era of my life. I had begun to expand on my personal method of escape, which utilized pencil, paper, and paint as a mode of expression.

Grasping a writing device was difficult, and manipulating the curve or angle of even a simple letter presented pain and frustrations most will never know. I was nine with the body of a fifty-year-old, or so it felt.

Norma, with the humor of recognition and an overprotective nature, was always quick with praise. In truth, she was my best friend, my only real companion for many years. I didn't have to explain anything; there were no questions to answer, no justification to provide. When asked, "What happened to you?" I came to realize that the best answer was "it." "That's the way it was at birth, that's the way God wanted it to be."

The word "it" became a mandated personal reference.

BROWN COUNTY ESCAPE

THE SCENE OPENS WITH A FADE/TRANSITION SHOT OVER THE CABIN IN BROWN COUNTY AND THE SOUNDS OF A MOWER, THE IMAGE OF HILDRETH WORKING IN THE FLOWER GARDEN AND THE CLEAN / CLEAR SCENTS OF SPRING IN SOUTHERN INDIANA. JP WAS RIDING HIS PRIZED MOWER WITH PIPE IN MOUTH PROMINENTLY HOLDING HIS PATRIARCH POSITION WITH PERMISSION. THE CAMERA SETTLES TOWARDS HILDRETH AND KRIS PLANTING FLOWERS BY THE EDGE OF THE RED OCHRE CABIN.

The pair of Matriarch and student working in hand to add color and texture to the isolated paradise.

HILDRETH

Hand me the yellow flower there
honey...

KRIS

Grandma, how come Mom brought me
here and was upset crying and all?

HILDRETH

Well Kris, your Mom and Dad are
busy doing things and I had asked
her to bring you to the Cabin and
help us , we just wanted you come
play and be with us for a while.

The petite lady of 4'11" looks wit ha smile of Grace
disguised to the child again in cast of arm.

HILDRETH (CONT'D)

Besides you know that Grandpa wants to have you help him drive the Bull-Dozer to make more paths out in the woods, You said you wanted to do that , right ?

KRIS

Yeah! You think he will let me do it by myself? I bet I could do it!

HILDRETH

I dont know about that , But I'm sure he will let you help.

Let me have those red ones there please, hand me that one there.

Methodically the chore of gardening and landscaping the cabin went on for days and dinners and cooked meals of a boy spending time with his Grand Parents.

THE CAMERA DRIFTS BACK INTO THE LANE THAT EXTENDS TO A SIGN OF "TRAILS END" COVERED IN THE FULL BLOOMS OF DOGWOODS AND THE ABSTRACT COLLECTION OF COLORS

The local kids down the road in Rural Indiana still using outdoor means of modern running water that the Parkers knew never to take for granted. Random scene or shot of Kids playing in a rustic, deep country setting that contrasts the luxury cabin nestled at the end of the road left above ...

TIME TO CHANGE

RANDOM SHOTS TO FOLLOW HERE THAT WILL START TO OUTLINE THE SCOPE OF NORMA LEAVING HER JOB AT A REALTY SHOWING OF A HOUSE LISTING AND GOING DIRECTLY TO THE NEW BUILDING THAT SERVED AS HER LUXURY HOUSE FOR A MERE 14 MONTHS.

NORMA LEAVES AND CAMERA RIDES ALONG HER DRIVING , DRESSED IN A BLOUSE AND SKIRT, HER 68 BONNEVILLE IN GOLD TRIM , FINISHED PAINTED NAILS AND THE RED STAINED CIGARETTE HELD IN HER FINGERS AS A LADY SHOULD, HER RAGE AND FRUSTRATION IS CLEAR.

Soundtrack is cheating heart period car radio tunes

Pulling up in front of the House, the Truck Movers already in place and have most items removed.

NORMA JEAN

Hi, Hopefully you were able to find everything and had no problems.

MOVER 1

Oh No Mam' We found the Key and your instructions. Were almost done and ready to take off.

If you want to do a walk through and let me know if we've missed anything, I think we got it all.

THE TWO WALK THROUGH A HALF EMPTY HOUSE NOW SHOWING THE SIGNS OF EMPTY DRAWERS AND HIGH END FURNITURE WITH PIECES MISSING, THE WHOLE HOUSE NOW SHOWED SIGNS OF ABANDONMENT

THE CAMERA FOLLOWS A FADED WALK INTO THE EMPTY CHILDS ROOM WITH A SLOW TRANSITION FROM HALLWAY INTO ROOM AND SLIGHT FOCUS ON THE INDY-500 RACE CAR WALLPAPER AS IT LEAVES THE ROOM VIA WINDOW INTO THE BRIGHT LIGHT AND APPEARS SHOT INSIDE THE SMALL KITCHEN OF A MODEST MOBILE HOME. HILDRETH AND NORMA SIT ALONE OVER A CUP OF COFFEE

NORMA JEAN

How was Kris during your visit, Did he ask many questions ?

HILDRETH

No, he wanted to know why you had to take him there so quick, But once he got on the Dozer, He forgot all about that part ...

The ladies jest in a managed giggle & grin.

NORMA JEAN

I just didn't know what to do Mom. I have had all the lies and cheating I could take and there was no way I could tell him. He loves his Dad, he worships Him!

Norma takes a small sip of her coffee as she glances to the side of the table as Hildreth reaches for her Purse.

HILDRETH

Sis, I have something I want to give you and I need you to listen to what I have to say before you get upset with me.

As she spoke, the paper package envelope appears on the table edge and is slide across towards Norma. While her hand remains upon, the ladies hands touch to grasp ...

HILDRETH (CONT'D)

When you were young, it was my job to care for your best interest. No different than you have done so well for Kris.

Your Father & I had nothing but your best interest at hand Norma, you just simply need to know that!

Slowly Norma slides the package across and opens the cavity and peers inside and pulls out a small portion of what appears to be hundreds of smaller edge colored letters. Each one title Norma and return from the United States Marine Corp

HILDRETH (CONT'D)

You're Father and I both think we made a mistake and although hind sight is always better, we want you to have these. Please, don't hold anything against me, we love you!

NORMA JEAN

Are these what I think they are,
Are these from Johnny?

Norma glances through the dates and opens one to read. As she weeps with emotion, her courage and strength takes over!

NORMA JEAN (CONT'D)

Mother, I dont hold anything against you, But I can't read these right now. I will later, I promise!

How long did he send these ?

HILDRETH

Oh I don't know, I guess they stopped coming about 3 months after he left.

I promise you, I only read one or two of them, I never opened most. He truly did love you Sis, maybe he would like to hear from you ...

CAMERA SHOTS APPEAR IN AN ARRAY OF SCENES THAT SHOW NORMA AND KRIS IN RANDOM PLACES OF SCHOOL, WORK AND EATING OUT TOGETHER AND WITH EACH - NORMA PROVIDES THE PROTECTION

AND THE CARE EXPECTED WITH A CLOSE-UP VIEW OF HER REACTIONS TO THE STARES AND GLANCES, THE COMMENTS AND OPINIONS THAT ALWAYS FOLLOWED THE YOUNG MAN.

ON A SATURDAY SUMMER MORNING INSIDE THE QUAINLY DECORATED TRAILER, A MAN APPEARS.

ATTENTION MARINE

On a hot day humid from the Indiana sun, I came out from my bedroom to see a man sitting inside my mother's kitchen. I had never seen such a person before. I was shy with concern for my mother's safety.

NORMA JEAN

"Don't be frightened, Kris, I want you to meet a friend of mine. His name is Johnny."

Before me stood a man in a uniform that announced his presence with loud bold colors across his broad chest. Trim and neat, with a voice deep and firm, he said,

JOHNNY

"Pleasure to meet you, son."

I stood, quietly repulsed by the words this man used, and then escaped into the mental seclusion I had perfected. I would not appear again for many years to come. I politely excused myself and retreated to my room, not ready to believe that another man had entered our lives. I understood Norma's need to the degree a child could, but I did not understand her request of me. Was I to accept without reservation or compromise all that had been taught to me? Would I now not only be a freak of nature, but unwillingly transformed into another man's son? I did not understand my role. Here stood a United States Marine Corps Drill Instructor who intimidated me to my core. I feared even looking at this man and had no idea how to talk to him or what to say.

The next couple of weeks went by quickly. Johnny's thirty-day leave was ending and Mom took me aside to announce she was going to marry this man. I had been spending a lot of time at my grandmother's house in Muncie since Johnny had appeared, and it seemed that our lives were falling back to where they had begun.

What once before seemed like a world of endless-if unlikely-possibilities now became small and secluded.

Introduced to new terms, such as "step-cousin," I was distrustful and refused to accept this new turn of events. Gathering to go to the county fair, we walked down the same dirty Midway alleys through which so many had strolled before. I resented the excitement. I felt as though I were on display. The gawking, the laughing, the stares, and whispers grew louder with every pass of a stranger. Between leaving all that I knew—a comfortable home with two parents—and my physical isolation, I had reached the end of my tether. I rebelled with a violence and anger that had been suppressed for years.

All my life I had been the quiet, protected, humble, "strong" young boy who endured strife and misery with little complaint. Dealing with poverty now as well, new struggles beyond my world as it had existed began to surface. Someday, I knew I would exorcise the pain I felt, a pain no man or woman should have to experience. I was accused of being spoiled and isolated from reality; my accusers were correct. I found myself not wanting to speak and even made manipulative efforts to undermine and confuse my mother's new relationship.

It took many years for me to come to understand Johnny and Norma's lifelong connection and how it had evolved. At the time of their wedding ceremony, however, the one I witnessed from the sidelines when the two of them were joined as one, I knew nothing but my own misery. Even though they explained to me in words about divorce, I had no conception of what that really meant, or the capacity to draw certain conclusions. At age nine, within the confines of the small social bubble of a world I had managed to explore, there was no divorce, only the sudden appearance of an entirely new group of adults and children to whom I had no previous connection.

I celebrated my tenth birthday with my new family in the three-room house. It was a poor neighborhood in town, just on the other side of those same tracks other generations had feared to cross on their way to the fair...

On that day, we traveled as a collection of strangers to the dusty Midway. I found myself torn between feeling like an example of lost fame and a disfigured inclusion into a life not understood.

A DUSTY MIDWAY

The roadies are shouting and the air is thick with scents and murky haze from cigarettes and steams floating away off vendors... The lights glimmer through the clouds of hue colors, each from a various form of food or exhaust...

SERIES OF CAPTURES THAT SPOT THE COMPLEXITY OF THE MIDWAY

As we walked the channels where previous feet had left footprints in the dirt, my view was limited to the path in front of me to prevent a stumble or fall. I had never experienced this kind of despair. Never had I thought the kind of words that now flooded my head in constant accompaniment to my lurching step.

THE KIDS AND PEOPLE ALL APPEARED STRANGE, THE CAMERA FOLLOWS THE SIMILAR PATH OF CARNIVAL FROM 2 DECADES PAST AS IF NOTHING HAD CHANGED BUT THE CLOTHES AND HAIR OF THOSE WHOM PASSED EACH YOUNG ADULT & CHILD ALIKE

BOY COUSIN 1

Hey, Kris - What happened to you anyway, how did you lose your fingers? You cut 'em off or something?

GIRL COUSIN 1

Shut Up !!! Leave him alone

KRIS

No, it's Okay - That's the way it was when I was born, That's the way God wanted it.

BOY COUSIN 1

So you got all your toes and stuff , or are they gone too ?

KRIS

Yeah, some of them ...

The laughter of child confusion and tease began to circle the Kids and names of "stubby & cripple" became normal conversation for the group of the unaware. Only a glance from a couple came with empathy or understanding and the night went on in a cloud of dust from the path walked.

It was as if my deformed body had been captured by a distorted soul over the last months. No safe harbor or vessel to declare home, I had always known what it felt like not to belong. Now I longed for an escape to fill the void left by this distraction from what had become my normal, invisible separation from human contact.

God, give me relief from the future!

Later in the same series of days, in a small church surrounded by people I did not know or understand, I watched my Mother walk to a Church alter and hold a Man I could not bare and lacked the understanding of how She could?!?

Later that afternoon in what I only recall now in photographs, the crown of new Jesters arranged in assorted rooms of another small salt box house with a collection of furniture and items that had long since seen the years of use, But it was as if this collection of normal people did not know they were poor or that life had better to offer, it was if they knew what makes life full without having it...

NOTE: The various Director Scenes and Improv's here should be limited only to 1-4 line appearances with a single capture of dialogue for each transition. It is the goal to move through the summer rapidly. Primary characters are only supported by extras with background movement.

INT. STORY TELLER - MIDNIGHT

THE HOUSE ON THE HILL WEARS FURTHER AND THE EVENING HAS TURNED TO A MOONLIT DARKNESS. THE SOUNDS OF NIGHT OFFER A RHYTHM OF COMFORT TO THE TALE BEING PRESENTED FOR AS MANY TIMES NOW AS THE DAYS GO FORTH AND THE CAMERA TRANSITIONS BACK INTO THE SAME CLOUDY DARK ROOM WITH MASKED EDGES AND BOX CORNERS THROUGHOUT ONLY KNOWN BY THE DARKER SHADOWS AGAINST THE FADED GREY WALLS ARE ALL BUT COMPLETELY INVISIBLE IN THE DARKNESS OF THE NIGHTS PURPLE HAZE AND IRIDESCENT GLOW

SHADOWED GIRL (IDENTITY CONCEALED)

I still don't understand Pap, Why did he do that, how come they just didn't stay together and all?

She had everything a Mother could ask for didn't she ?

SHADOWED MAN (IDENTITY CONCEALED)

Well, I guess this is the part of the story about how money can't buy love or make you happy child ...

The fact that her childhood sweetheart came back into her life seemed like a good thing, she was happy again, at least it seemed that way. I suppose a person would do just about anything to be happy.

SHADOWED GIRL

But what about the kid, I mean didn't he need his Dad and what about all that stuff they were doing, operations and all ?

Did they stop or what happen next?

SHADOWED MAN

That was the last year they tried to fix the boy's legs, yes it was. He had that arm stretched out but it didn't work too good, caused that family and him a lot of pain, sure did ...

But time was coming soon when the young boy would start learning things the hard way. Life was going to be different for all of them real soon ...

THE CAMERA FADES AWAY INTO BLACK AND FIZZLES INTO A JET AIRLINER AND A STEWARDESS WALKING DOWN THE ISLE TOWARDS THE FRONT. OFF TO THE SIDE THE VIEW WRAPS AROUND TO SEE NORMA & KRIS SITTING AND ANXIOUS.

STEWARDESS

Hello, May I offer you something to drink or eat, Today we have a chicken sandwich with a grape salad?

NORMA JEAN

Thank you, we will take one of each please and I would like a scotch , JB - 2 ice neat please! He will have a Ginger Ale if you have it?

STEWARDESS

Yes, we do ... How old is he?

KRIS

I'm ten, This my first time on an airplane!

The young blond blue eye boy says with both fear and Pride! The Stewardess hands over the food in its well prepared form with all the delicate servings of that day ... The ladies exchange pleasantries as she turns to the next traveler ...

CALIFORNIA OR BUST

The plane landed in a fury of noise, knocked about like a toy. I was excited and anxious. Our flight from safety into the dangers of the entire world opened in a flash as we exited the cabin door. I had never experienced anything like it before. The air was thick enough to touch, but there was nothing I could see, no puff of breath of the kind I was used to seeing. The warm air coated my skin with a damp sensation. Norma Jean seemed as excited as I was. We were standing at the entrance of a large room when her husband Johnny, as I called him, entered. My efforts at walking and running in joy were interrupted when he spoke,

JOHNNY

"Hello, Kris, what did you think of the plane ride?"

My reaction was calculatingly cold and I replied only with a disrespectful,

KRIS

"Fine."

I would soon learn that disrespect would not be an avenue of the lesser evils in this new collection of strangers. Then I felt fury grow inside as I witnessed my Mother grasped in the throws of a passionate kiss as they embraced ...

My mother and her new husband had an extreme challenge ahead of them, one which I had no business trying to sabotage. Nevertheless, I was lost, believing I had no one on whom to depend, other than my mother—and she was caught up in her new marriage. My dad was gone, my Grandma, everyone who understood, all the family members who would come to the rescue if there was ever a problem. Suddenly they were two thousand miles away; how could they help us now? We were on our own.

The doctors had performed 20 surgeries by now and there was really nothing left to be done; my body was as good as it was going to get. Like a broken dish never to completely useful again, I felt abandoned. I still wore braces of heavy metal with leather shoes and a corrective brace I slept with every single night. I had steel-toed shoes before they were in fashion. It was just before we left to come to California that I had one of my last casts removed.

I can tell you that throughout my entire life I never forgot the horrendous sound of that electric saw cutting the casts off my legs and arms. The fear that seared through me every time I heard that saw start up with its deafening buzz sent me into uncontrollable sobs.

Oddly enough, that experience was in direct contrast with the doctors who used to touch my body, with their soft warm compassionate hands. I almost felt privileged in those moments.

Over the next few months, my mother introduced me to some people about whom I had only heard stories, like her brother Charles who lived in a place called Palm Springs. Charles' place had the feel of a far-away land, a kind of sanctuary that offered safety to those who understood. The drive was always long and hot, with little or no signs of life that I could recognize. The desert is a vast place for a small child, but by now I had developed a tougher shell and was more agile handling myself.

The limits of my physical constraints, not having any sensation from the knees down, became less important relative to our activities. It was not long before we started to take trips to Los Angeles to visit a woman named Martha and a man called Tom. It seemed that another family we knew had emerged from the sand.

My deceptions and wrongdoings were as yet still undiscovered by my mother. I found endless opportunities at amusement parks, places called Knott's Berry Farm, Sea World, and Disney Land. These were places where I could go and feel comfortable and I flitted between the crowds of strangers, dissolving into the shadow-masses. Every turn was filled with fantasy and illusion. It was a world without flaws—a far cry from the local fair back in Indiana.

Even though Norma was often distracted (by what I later learned were her own fears), she was constantly attending to my needs as well as a new bride could. In these times of distraction, I was aware that my behavior and attitude became intolerable, and the short-haired, tanned man we now lived with was quick to point that out. To this day, I am nothing short of amazed at how loving, compassionate, and caring these two adults were, though I could not see evidence of this at the time.

EQUALIZER OF REALITY

Not long after we arrived in California, I began to look for ways to entertain myself. By now the rage and frustration within me was intense and ever-present, but I had very little understanding about why I was feeling this way.

I soon found another kid who was willing to set aside judgment in pursuit of mutual interest and benefit and it was not long before we were stealing fishing lures from the local store, and selling them to the anglers down at the fishing pier in San Diego. The rush of adrenalin that came with each theft filled that angry empty space temporarily. I also had my first exposure to someone who would become a longtime friend, someone who seemed not to care what I looked like or what I could or could not do. This "friend" didn't talk to me, but did much of the hard work for me. At the age of ten I smoked my first joint. I am not sure how to explain the experience other than to say that marijuana made me feel equal. All of a sudden I was not the kid with the freak shoes in the braces and the missing fingers. I wasn't any of that any more! All of a sudden, I was as good as everyone else.

BICYCLE KID

Come on , Lets go - You can Do this!

The two Boys stand around the corner of a local Woolworths and calculate what fishing lures to steal or grab and run. Kris , not ever committed even the thought other than a stolen strawberry as a child was anxious yet fully engaged!

KRIS

OK, I got this , lets do it ...

CAMERA SHOTS ARE FOLLOWING THEM AS THE TWO BOYS WITH STRIPPED SHIRTS, ANKLE HIGH JEANS. THE OTHER KID HAS ON A CONVERSE STYLE FLAT TENNIS SHOE AND KRIS IS CLAD WITH HARD CASED LEATHER BROWN SHOES THAT SPARKLE WITH DIM LIGHT WHEN THE SIDE BRACE APPEARS FROM HIS ANKLE SIDES. HIS WALK IS SLOWED BUT BOUNCED IN EXCITEMENT OF THE TASK

BICYCLE KID

Lets get some blue ones, they like them ...

He whispers into the side of Kris' ear

KRIS

Okay, I can get some smaller ones and fit them in my pocket

The Boys make a grab of 7 or 8 items and in a hurried stance find themselves filled with excitement and fear. After selling the goods on the long viewed fishing pier , the exchange of one such was that in the form of a joint!

CAMERA VIEWS TRAVEL BESIDE THEM AS THEY SCRAMBLE TO THE CORNER AND RACE FROM THE STORE PARKING LOT ON THEIR BIKES HEADED FOR THE SCRUB BRUSH DIRT ROADS OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA ON A SUNNY FALL DAY. THE LAUGHTER AND BANTER FORMS A FRIENDSHIP THAT REPRESENTS A PATTERN OF ALTERING REALITY FOR KRIS. ACTIONS SOON LED AFTER SELLING THE LURES THAT THE YOUNG SIDE PARTNER INTRODUCES KRIS TO A PARALLEL REALITY THAT NOW HOLDS A KEY TO ESCAPE.

We moved again, this time to government family housing on a military base. To me, it was yet another penalty I deserved. I knew it was my fault. I had caused the break up of my family. I felt my mother would be much happier without me in her life. In reality, Norma's pain was severe as well, as she grasped for security and fought her own demons.

When we arrived at the small town called Barstow, however, in the middle of the Mojave Desert, it was to find that the harshness of the life there was more extreme than anything I had ever known, ever known existed. The people there appeared hardened, etched into the jeans they wore, with skin that told many tales. Trips to the ocean and the carnival parks became a thing of the past.

A year or so went by with little fanfare. I had been scolded for using curse language, experienced my first Christmas without snow, and had successfully gone one whole year without seeing a doctor for the first time in my life of eleven years. I also had become more involved in art. I entered contests at school and although I was never recognized, I was not ignored either.

Norma was becoming discontented and restless, so Johnny had requested a transfer to the desert. Originally our new place offered visions similar to where my uncle lived. When we arrived at the small town called Barstow, however, in the middle of the Mojave Desert, it was to find that the harshness of the life there was more extreme than anything I had ever known, ever known existed. The people there appeared hardened, etched into the jeans they wore, with skin that told many tales. Trips to the ocean and the carnival parks became a thing of the past.

The little house sat on a dusty plat of land, ten acres in size, at the end of a road surrounded by sagebrush. Walls of hot dust, rocks that glimmered in the daytime, crooked telephone poles that dangled glass beads and strings of copper, peppered the landscape. I used to stare at those lines, imagining they led to treasures on the other end.

The only reference point I had to my previous home was the water hole I found in the middle of a field that otherwise served as a yard of rocks.

As we pulled up to the lone stretch of slightly paved dirt road, a man came to greet us with a smile.

COWBOY 1

"Hello thar', par'ner. Welcome!"

The man in rigid jeans that hovered somewhere above his gray boots, spoke loudly.

JOHNNY

"Well, thanks. My family and I are moving in here today,"

Johnny replied.

COWBOY 1

"Would you like a hand?"

This man became a friend to our family and worked our land as his own. I wish I remembered his name.

Some of my fondest memories come from this period of my life. Even though I had to learn new escape methods, the challenge made the experiences more attractive and exhilarating. By now, Norma had let me wear a regular shoe. I was finally twelve and able to put on a tennis shoe.

This allowed my right side to look like anyone else's. Even though I had no foot on my right side, we made up for it by stuffing socks and tissue paper in the toe of the shoe, and this made me feel as if I were getting a whole new start. With this trick of illusion, I could wear a boot, peddle a bike normally, and even drive someday! We were happy here, alone and distant as it was. We raised pheasants, chickens, and chuckers, or desert quails. We also had a couple German shepherds, Guy and Sarge. Sarge was a retired Marine Corps dog.

THIS SECTION CONTAINS VARIOUS ACTION & STILL LIFE SHOTS THAT ARE REFERENCED IN THE STORYBOARD PHOTOS

I remember how proud Johnny was of a horse we kept in the back corral we built. He bought the black Arabian stallion for Norma as a birthday gift and they called it Na'Ho. I learned how to drive, too, when Johnny bought an old '53 Dodge, a five-window truck.

The floorboard was so rusted out we had to weld a kitchen chair to it just so I could sit up and drive. The only thing to hit was sagebrush, so the driving was easy. We learned how to use pistols, too, and we all thought Norma was cool in her gun holster.

One day, I had pissed off the drill instructor again. My punishment was to move a pile of wood into the back of a trailer so we could haul it away. After about ten boards or so, I uncovered a sidewinder rattler. I ran yelling inside the house and Johnny came out. He moved that entire pile from one spot to the next, but no snake. About five minutes later, I found it again and this time Mom came out with her gun to show off her newfound talent!

It was during this period I began to learn how to protect myself from the questions of others. The right clothes and the right haircut appeared to satisfy most people's inquiries into one's health. I learned quickly to never wear shorts. I had discovered the penalty for swimming in public long ago.

To this day, my hair, shoes, and clothing remain the single point of focus for me every day that I am strong enough to groom or dress. I learned little secrets, including the one of stuffing my shoes with tissue or extra socks to appear as though I had a real foot filling the space. We had become cowhands of the high desert with the boots, jeans, and shaved haircuts to prove it. Even though I could not wear the boots for more than a few moments at a time, they did provide me with a glimpse into belonging. And all I ever wanted, all I ever attempted, was to belong.

Not too long after we'd moved into this wide-open range, Norma found a Soapbox Derby contest. When she asked if I would like to enter I said yes, being the brave little soul that I was. Johnny said he'd help me build a car. We were a lot poorer now and didn't have the wealth of tools or engineering skills we had in prior days, but boy did we have fun. I won an award, too, for the best dressed! The cars that raced passed and left me trolling behind at the starting gate were no match for my "Lil-Devil," a red and white, plywood boxed car that needed an extra push to slide down the hill. I sure wished everyone I had left behind could have been there.

We had access to the extended military stables in the area and once rode horses out to a place called Calico Ghost Town. I always was quick to let my alligator mouth override my hummingbird ass, and this day was no exception.

Mom always rode a fast pony and today I asked her if I could ride hers and she could ride mine. Well, all four feet two inches of me climbed aboard with the confidence of a fool.

We were about ten minutes into the ride, sitting at the entrance of a long stretch of abandoned road when Johnny asked me if I thought I could handle a "little run."

"Yaha!" I shouted, not waiting for the word, and took off, my legs barely able to hold onto a bicycle, let alone a fifteen hundred-pound horse in full gallop.

Within seconds, Johnny and another man were alongside me, attempting to grasp onto the reins of the excited horse, shouting "Don't let go, Kris, don't let go!"

My body was now bouncing on the saddle, its horn the only thing I had to hold onto to keep me on the back of the horse. Each second was an hour and the road ahead was becoming treacherous due to the chunks of abandoned asphalt. Each stride of the massive animal made me feel I had landed on a trampoline of rubber tires.

I noticed out the corner of my eyes, which I am sure were the size of grapefruits, that two men were reaching from either side for the charger's head to steer him down from the run. I heard the swoosh of a hoof racing past my head as I let go of the horn. Instantly I was tumbling like a rag in a washing machine, scraping, sliding, and slicing across the "road." My arms and knees burning on impact, it appeared that my previous twelve years of pain management was coming in handy.

Norma, in full run and screaming, moved to catch me, and was met with a bloody, but laughing, teenager-in-the-making.

NORMA JEAN

"Kris, are you okay? My God, look at you!"

KRIS

"I think so, Mom. But believe me, I won't do that again."

I was feeling pretty good, actually, thinking the ride had come to a satisfyingly safe finish.

JOHNNY

"Damn right, you won't!"

The ruffled authoritative voice I had come to know...

JOHNNY (CONT'D)

"Get your ass on that horse, boy!"
 "We aren't done just because you
 wouldn't listen. ...You just had to
 ride that horse..."

Norma turned over the reins of my original slow horse to me with a scolding smile and I finished the ride home with a smile of my own.

ANOTHER ACTION SHOT OF THE INSIDE OF THE FLAT HOUSE IN THE DESERT: ON THIS DAY, THE PARENTS HAD LEFT FOR THE AFTERNOON IN ANOTHER DAY OF ADULT PLEASURES, BAR-ROOM ESCAPES OR SIMPLE ABANDONMENT.

The decor of the house offers little know that a Midwestern Girl was living in a Southwest home. The stucco Mauve with poverty assorted furniture as clean and arranged as possible by a former beauty queen of a luxury life forfeited.

In an afternoon of loneliness , Kris makes a phone call.

KRIS

Hello, Grandma ?

The young tanned boy sits at a metal kitchen table with the heat of the afternoon sun casting a shadow across the room.

FLOSSIE

Hello baby, How are You , Oh my
 what a Great Surprise this is!

How's your Mom doing?

KRIS

Oh, She is doing Okay. I just
 thought I would call you, I miss
 you and was just thinking about
 calling you. I wanted to tell you
 about what all I have been doing.

FLOSSIE

You sure you're allowed to be
 calling me, this will cost a bit?

KRIS

Yeah, Mom said I could ...

The act of lying had become an acceptable means by now to cover the pain of truth ...

THE TWO PARTNERS IN LIFE OF FAMILY SPOKE FOR WHAT SEEMED LIKE A HOURS OF JOY & HAPPINESS. THE ENCOURAGEMENT AND AFFIRMATION FROM HIS GRANDMOTHER GAVE KRIS A BOOST IN SPIRIT AND COMFORT TO KNOW THAT SHE WAS ONLY A PHONE CALL AWAY. YET ALL THE WHILE KNOWING THERE IS PENALTY ...

A week or so has transpired and in true fashion to the drunk jester act, Johnny was raging in frustration to his life and perhaps the resentment of a child's presence. All mind his own 5 children of past life, Kris' image symbolizes all that is wrong or imposing.

After what appeared to be a flash of Fury from Norma & the Angry TAZ moving through the rooms, the shouting soon began.

JOHNNY

Kris, did you call Indiana, Did you call your Grandma?!

Spending most of my life terrified of what later became a mechanism of survival, I coward in voice and fear to the debate over truth or escape.

NORMA JEAN

JR, dont be Mean, Kris just tell me , Did you call Grandma?

KRIS

Well, I just called to say hello , I missed her, I just wanted
.....

With the RAGE & EXPLOSION of a Drunk that perhaps my Father witness on a dirt road a lifetime ago, I watched an Event unfold that would become a life lesson ...

The RAGE and Improve of this Experience is Set to the Talent of each player to feel the Energy and Violence

IN A SERIES OF SHOTS AND FEAR CLOSE UPS, WIDE AND SOUND - JOHNNY TEARS THE PHONE FROM THE LIVING ROOM WITH CORDS FLYING AND THEN FOLLOWS HIS STEPS OF FIRE TO THE KITCHEN WEAR THE ROOM OF ATTENDANCE IS COWARD AS THE TRAINED SOLDIER ACCURATELY DESTROYS THE WALL THAT HOLDS ANOTHER MOUNTED PHONE AND SENDS THE DEVICE EXITING THROUGH THE CLOSEST WINDOW , THE GLASS SPRAYS ACROSS THE FLOOR...

NORMA JEAN

Go to your Room Kris - NOW !!!

JOHNNY

God Damn Right Fucker - Get the
hell out of my Sight!

The door of my room served as little comfort but Yet I knew it would not open for the rest of the day or night. I gathered a familiar method of escape and laid across the floor of papers and sticks of color and vanished reality. The sounds slowly stopped from the echo of anger, screaming and the torture of hearing Norma Cry and knowing that the Guard between us would never allow me to pass ...

The Next Morning, I found what the Lesson of this experience was to become and how Domestic Violence in the Home behind closed doors can be coped with and no visible for the wear. As I emerged to the Kitchen, Norma presents me with a simple Breakfast as rehearsed for many past. But this time the sounds of a New Day remained silent and the glaring Hole in the wall had become white and flat again , A far change from the depth of cavity that was created the day previous. This event was never discussed and I understood what a family secret of pain looks like ... More so, Violence was an acceptable expression of feelings and dealing with life issues that you either did not agree or accept

AS IF IT NEVER HAPPEN

We also traveled a lot. We piled into our old International pickup or Rambler station wagon for trips across country, stopping along the road to camp, hunt, and fish in the wide-open spaces of the western landscape. I had a new beagle puppy after our German shepherds had passed on; Scooter was his name. I also learned how to clean and feather a host of birds real fast after a band of coyotes attacked one night.

On the Colorado River just outside Needles, our campsite was often a happy place. The heat waves danced across the water as the fire burned long into the night. The purple majestic ambers slowly gave way to a gold shine of darkness, the likes of which I have never seen since. Perhaps these are the memories that continue to drive me towards the water's edge as an adult.

I learned a lot about life in those years, but still never felt part of the rest of the world in any given situation. Perhaps the isolation of the desert does that to a person, too, allows them to disappear without explanation. It's a place where the elements strip the flesh from anything not able to fight the battle. I fought, but never could win that fight. And though I have many times wished for a second chance to combat the wrongs of my life, I have only been able to do the best I could with what I was given.

Johnny retired from the Marine Corps a year or so later in a grand ceremony. For me it was astonishing to see him in that context. I don't think I ever let him know that I was proud of him. I was too busy blaming him.

My Mom was working for a water company in Hinkley, keeping books and all. It seemed like everyone knew everyone in those days, and people were all too glad to help you when you needed or asked. I went back once to visit that little town many years later to find our tiny farm. The stalls were long since gone, of course, dry walls of dust the only thing still standing.

We were soon to leave the great state of California; it was 1973. We had seen all the glory of thousands of miles, mountains that shined, waters that talked. Each journey was eclipsed only by the visual discoveries around the next corner, and sometimes we didn't see another person for days. The time was set for us to embark on our last trip across country in our old truck with a camper. A '66 thunderbird in tow, we slowly moved over the crest onto the plains of Middle America to rejoin the family we had left behind in Indiana.

There were temporarily distractions with visits to places that echoed of carnival rides and street-fair barkers. Mom and Johnny often went to Las Vegas for a day trip or an evening of fun and took me with them. I enjoyed these trips immensely and the sights in those days were risqué even by today's standards. Women with enchanting smiles and clothes of rainbows. Men enthralled by the lights that led to dens of unspoken pleasures. Utopia, I suppose, of a sort that promised love for the common man. I spent most of my time at the Circus Circus; it was there I felt the connection to a fabric deeply woven into my own history. The excitement, mystery, and intrigue were beguiling, and I felt at home. I was not particularly interested in gambling, but being there was like the movies into which I escaped every chance I got. I treasured the experience of going to the theater, which I did regularly; there, for that brief time, nobody could see me. I was released to be someone else, to have another identity. The characters on the screen spoke to me without judgment and demanded nothing of me.

We traveled across a vast sea of grass. Dodging between thunderstorms, cooking lunch from the catch, our miles became a classroom of experiences never repeated.

Our windows were like a television that rolled through programs of nature, each one offering a new scene with fresh smells that spoke of the land we traveled. Strangers slid past our view and with each mile became another memory.

In reflection, our life was the journey of misfits. We were actors reading a script lost long ago. And after many nights, which all became dawns, the masquerade slowly ended.

PRODIGAL DAUGHTER RETURNS

The rickety clanks and squeaks of the long journey ended; I sat up with great anticipation to see what would appear around the corner of the tree-lined gravel path ahead. Our arrival had been timed to the reunion and inaugural opening of a little hand-built cabin in the woods found at the end of a trail. Little did I know that when the Family all left and the Party was over this year, I would be the only one remaining and all those left, Including Norma & Johnny...

The reunion was a blast that year in the rugged three-room cabin.

CELEBRATION OF SCENE AND FAMILY FOR THE RETURN OF THE LOST FROM CALIFORNIA. THE JOY WAS ALWAYS SHADOWED BY WHAT NOW WAS BECOMING A VISIBLE STRAIN ON NORMA AND THE JESTER BY HER SIDE AND THE REBEL OF A CHILD TEENAGER. THE CONVERSATIONS ARE ALL LIGHT, GLANCING BUT THE PROGRESSION OF THE WEEKEND CELEBRATION SHOWS SIGNS OF WHO AMONG THE CROWD IS JOVIAL AND JEST AND WHO IS THE JESTER!

RANDOM CONVERSATIONS INCLUDE NORMA & HILDRETH SPEAKING OF HOW CARE AND FAMILY ARE STRUGGLING FINANCIALLY AND NORMAS CHOICE TO BE WITH JOHNNY. JP'S ATTEMPT TO CURB THE JESTERS ATTEMPT AT APPROVAL AND QUANTIFY AS A PROVIDER IN ANSWERING THE QUESTIONS OF CARING FOR A WOMAN WHOM NOBODY QUALIFIED.

THE PARTY HAD CLOSED AND IT WAS NOW MONDAY EVENING AND THE WEEK LONG ARRAY OF CAST ONLY LEAVES THE MISFITS FROM THE ROAD AND HOSTS. IN AN ATTEMPT TO ARRANGE LIFES NEXT CHAPTER, THE CHARACTERS MEET ABSENT THE CAUSE TO THE PURPOSE:

JOHN (JP)

So, tell me what your plans are now
Sis? Mother tells me you want to
leave Kris with us?

(MORE)

JOHN (JP) (CONT'D)

Are you sure that is a wise Idea,
Mind you he can stay as long as he
wants, but what are you doing?

Johnny will be quick to interrupt and attempt to prove his value and explain the poverty and reason, it would not be welcomed injection at this point, yet tolerated.

JOHNNY

Well Sir, Our hope is for him to
spend some quality time with you
and Mom so you can catch up and in
all fairness , so he can get
grounded. He has taken on such a
.....

Norma snap's the conversation away

NORMA JEAN

Daddy, I don't know what to do.?
Mom and I spoke in detail about
this yesterday and I have exhausted
all that I know how to do and I
think he holds this marriage
against us and at the very least,
he is resentful at Johnny for
attempting to be his Father.

I simply think if we can put some
distance between us and allow him
to spend some time here in the
country and then Johnny and I can
get our affairs in order. A Camp if
you will , here with you ...

THE CONVERSATION TAKES A HEATED AND THEN FINALLY A
RESOLVED CONCLUSION WITH CONDITIONS OF TIME.

Dogwood trees lined the back, which opened to a pole barn that kept J.P.'s equipment and woodworking tools safe from the cold winter soon to arrive. Although we were still many months away from December, the cool mornings of the September school-bus rides and the questions asked a hundred times were just weeks away. Living with my Grandma and Grandpa was a great experience for me, but challenging for them, I'm sure. Daily conversations had to be had surrounding my health and capacities.

When winter came, Mom joined Johnny on a cold snowy day to move into a house with old wood floors and noisy doors just down the street from the three-room house where they had been married in Muncie.

I was enrolled in yet another school, attending one without ever finishing the last, a trend which would continue throughout my life. That was the pattern of life we lived nowadays: move here, stay there.

Our lives begin to revolve around alcohol, more and more with each passing year. Johnny grew to resent my mother's request for him to retire from the service, although secretly I believed he too resented the Corps for stealing his life away. Only those who have experienced that life know what it does. At thirteen, I found myself involved with several kids who liked to smoke dope. Considering I was the blond-haired kid from California in a group of kids who'd never left the city, I underwent another transformation to fit in. I never really knew which direction to go, how to belong. I always knew that I would never be equal to the rest.

Nevertheless, given a good lie, a little courage from that bottle of schnapps we paid for with our allowances, I was as strong or able as the complete people were. I had discovered an equalizer. Unable to appreciate the way it had affected the lives of those before me and the destruction it wrought, I thought only of the oblivion and the transformation it lent. As long as I did not look into a mirror, I was good to go. Perhaps it was exactly at this stage of my life that Norma abandoned her attempts to discipline me. The new lack of guidelines allowed me the freedom of expression I thought I wanted, but I am more tempted to think that she was too tired to try anymore. Our lives were full of those great stabs at life, the ones where everyone sobered up long enough to take a trip to the cabin, go fishing perhaps. Then the stress of paying the monthly bills, losing another job, and the need to move again would release the ugly valve of indulgence. For a while, there was always another geographical cure.

The year was 1974 and my hair was almost to my shoulders. I wore flannel shirts painted with graphics, my bell-bottom pants stretching taller than my four-foot six-inch stature could hope to fit. I had been in nonrestrictive shoes for over two years now. My back began to show signs of altering its shape and I had started to lean to one side and walk with a pronounced limp.

Another surgery to straighten my arm failed, except for the lasting result of another scar to hide. I have never been able to use that arm because it has always been frozen at a ninety-degree angle, leaving me with limited extension. Over time, I discovered that since my body could not perform, my mouth and brain had to compensate.

I never considered myself particularly intelligent, but Norma did the best she could with home-schooling whenever I was unable to attend public school.

I'd always heard that intelligence was an equalizer, so I assumed that meant I, too, could follow a path of higher thought. My chosen brand of equalizer offered more immediate results, however, though ultimately it did an even better job of detouring me from any idea of pursuing a formal education. Although I had above-average street smarts, it appeared I also had few social skills, and only false courage to back up the ones I had. At the time could still share a quick snip of humor, mostly at my own expense, as well. Years later, however, I would be without a vein of laughter to draw upon for my own salvation.

THE CAMERA APPEARS TO WAVE BETWEEN TIME TRAVEL TO ANOTHER HIGHWAY AND THE SAME OLD RUSTED TRUCK THAT PAUSED IN ARKANSAS AGAIN LONG ENOUGH FOR ANOTHER DRUNKEN CAMPFIRE AND THE STAGE FOR ANOTHER JESTER'S APPEARANCE. THE OBVIOUS ALTERING BY NOW WAS THE CHANGE IN NORMAS APPEARANCE AND STRENGTH THAT HAS SLOWLY SHOWN SIGNS OF GREY AND SHADED LOSS THAT HER BORN GIVEN BEAUTY COULD NO LONGER CLOAK FROM THE TRAINED HEART OF WHAT I KNEW, SHE WAS SICK AND EMOTIONALLY EXHAUSTED IN HER LOYALTY

ARMIDILLA TOWN & BACK

In the summer of 1975, in the area of Temple and Killeen, Texas there sat a trailer on a parcel of land that had the appearance of a home for lost souls searching for a fresh start. Unfortunately, that family was us, as we had once again moved in search of Johnny's personal identity, or perhaps to comfort Norma's need to be cared for. Either way, one of Johnny's other children from a previous marriage had since come to stay with us for a while. We had traveled that year after my last surgery, twenty of them by the time I was fifteen, and found ourselves in Little Rock, Arkansas.

Coincidentally, J. P. and Hildreth also traveled south that year and we all delighted in the few weeks they were in close proximity. The town of Little Rock asked J. P. to ride in a parade aboard an old car with some fellow, a politician named Bill, whom I would later come to know by a different name. It was as predictable as the summer heat amid the haze of forest-green hills that J. P. would find his way to whatever party or parade was in the works.

This time our trailer sat against a backdrop of dusty hills in the great Lone Star state, close to another military base.

By now, Johnny's daily consumption was at least a case to my best guess. My stepbrother and I began to learn how to pick wild asparagus from the side of the road. Stealing the local farmer's vegetables led to quick getaways on a couple of rickety bicycles we'd found behind the barn of our rented can. Basically, we were nothing more than a couple of juveniles trying to find something to do.

With each week came another large box of Minute Rice that sat protected under the counter for me to use. Tonight's menu was special, the dish accented by a serving of green dandelions freshly picked that day. A chef I was not, but survival had forced me to learn to cook. I had already prepared another pan of rice with butter and salt on the stove when Johnny came into the room.

Norma made it a point to scrape Johnny's change from the bar each morning, noon, or night, after their forays into the gates of hell. The kitchen counter was littered with Schlitz beer cans, crushed and toppled against one another. The smell was that of a barroom, still soiled from the night before. Johnny was leaning to the side, one hand on his hip, his always-present soiled white Stetson on his head and half-opened plaid short-sleeved shirt displaying silver anchors of history. His jeans were turned at the cuff to reveal the same tattered, scuffed boots he'd been wearing for years. The dance began, loud drunken comments that amused only the fallen woman on the couch, and the attempt to avoid conflict at all cost.

Most nights when the jester appeared ready to wage war, I knew the correct steps to excuse myself and avoid the mental torture—and conflict—that was sure to follow if I didn't. Tonight would be different. I had to make sure my stepbrother not only had food, but would survive whatever was going to take place. As Johnny's anger surfaced, it was clear I had to place myself between the two of them. In doing so, I became the target of something I had no capacity to control.

"It's your fault she's sick!" the man standing at the table's edge yelled. Johnny moved closer, his words underscored with slam after slam of his fist on the table. I did not understand what he was saying—or why.

The Marine Corps sergeant had fire emitting from his eyes, a demonic glint that made me step back. In a flash, he had encircled my neck with a length of wire and lifted me to the sink in a violent, but well-executed, maneuver.

With all the effort the dying can command, Norma rose to her feet and demanded Johnny put me down. "Put him down J. R., NOW!" she screamed, holding her abdomen. She hobbled into the kitchen. My stepbrother was no fool and had silently disappeared into the other room.

I fell to the floor and waddled to the edge of the couch where my mother had been. In a moment, Johnny left the house in a fury. Rage had always gained results in our house and this time was no different... yet another skill I would later develop as a way to achieve the ends I wanted.

It was NEVER spoken of again, and not unlike the phone off the wall, or the fits of anger in destruction, there would be no evidence or witness - only scars

The following morning, I arrived at Indianapolis International to be greeted by my dad, Don Jr. Perhaps he was glad to see me, I don't know, but Don was polite and quick to take on the role I needed at the time. I always knew my Dad to express love through money—it was all about the size of the next gift. I believe now that his efforts were based on the fact that he'd never had financial security himself growing up and he simply wished to do better.

At the start of school in 1975, I was considered a misfit by appearance and, now, because of my antisocial behavior. Not being able to care for me since he was a bachelor, Don asked, or perhaps imposed on, Flossie, the one true stable person in our lives. Flossie's husband had passed on and the hope was she might be good for a boy who obviously was not adapting to society as well as expected. I did not deserve Flossie's grace and kindness; I only wish that I had appreciated the efforts she made on my behalf and her for making them.

I was like a kid in a candy shop, the jars overflowing. I was going to another new school where nobody knew me again and Grandma was fixing me dinner every night. Norma had stayed in Arkansas and would not be around for a while. I felt that it would be a period of rest for her, one she deserved. I was well aware of the burden I had caused, the liability I had become.

Don bought me the first in a series of cars. It was a 1961 Oldsmobile F85 with a pushbutton gearshift, and needed oil top-offs daily. I parked it on the street because Flossie did not want oil stains on her driveway. Soon that car was replaced with a '64 Buick convertible. I loved that car. I learned how to kiss a special young woman in the front seat, and had my first glimpse of a pair of breasts in the back.

I was naïve, amazed that anyone, especially this beautiful girl I had come to know, would allow me to touch her. How could she involve herself with me, in my twisted and ugly state of existence? My feathered wavy hair and blue eyes held some weight, but I was never going to be like the others. Always aware of what people saw when they approached me, I stuck my hands in my pockets and wondered how badly my limp would put them off. Always hoping to avoid the inquiries, my mask was never enough.

There were the usual questions, this time from the girl in my car. "What happened?"

I answered methodically, attempting nonchalance, "I was born this way. It's the way God wanted it." I really did see myself that way, and still do. I have lived my life with that vision of reality. The girl's questions were quickly replaced by a second, not-as-awkward kiss; I wanted to make sure I would develop my skills in that area into a talent. I lost my virginity to that precious young woman the same night we saw the movie MASH. Was it possible I belonged after all?

No longer a virgin, running around with a neighbor kid whose dad was a cop, supplied with pocket money when I asked for it, and a convertible! What else did I need? Oh yeah, a guy down the street who bought us punk kids booze because he knew one of us was a cop's kid. We drank enough schnapps, Heineken, and tequila sunrises to float a high school. In fact, I think that's what we were trying to do. We were the suppliers that year for booze before all the big events—the prom, the county fair, the local games. The one difference among us was that I never drank like the rest of the people around me, even then. I measured out what they needed against what I wanted. And by then I wanted whatever I could get.

Alcohol served a social purpose for the others, and allowed them to be funnier or kinder or more generous—sometimes towards me. Some of them appeared more intelligent...or did it only seem that way to me? It seemed from the start that mood-altering chemicals were destined to be a part of my life. The people around me must have been concerned about my consumption, but no one ever asked, "Kris, do you think you have a problem?" Was it because they expected no less from the crooked image standing in front of them? Was it because our family gatherings included the most regular guest of all—alcohol? Either way, I never saw the same level of abuse and aggressive use I would later experience in my own life. Was it nature or nurture that led to my thirst to escape into chemicals? Were my addictions due to the host of needs and wants that would never be filled?

I don't know, but an invalid at forty, cast aside by a society of winners and success stories, I know I have lived my life rummaging for an existence that could never be found.

In high school, on the "good side" of town, I felt even more out of place. I felt exposed. The braces and corrective shoes were gone, though I still needed them. Experiencing puberty like any other "normal" teenager was disconcerting to say the least. How could I grow into a normal teenager when there was nothing normal about me to start with? I began a steady retreat by means of an egotistical shell that kept me isolated from the overtures of others. My bearing was grandiose, loud, and emotionally underdeveloped.

I had no real avenue for stopping this progress. I expanded my horizons in the only way I knew how—in my dreams of leaving the town where I felt so trapped. Another geographical cure would fix things, surely. The problem was I had no way or money to do it. I had no skills and was extremely restricted physically. Since I'd gotten back from California, I had become aware of the limits, pain, and discomfort related to arthritis which occurred with the cold and wet weather. Norma's migraines had passed to me as well. Although most of my headaches related to my skeletal problems, it seemed they also appeared from stress.

I had tried a couple of regular jobs by now, washing dishes, flipping burgers, and the like. Every time I was let go or fired. I lived my life with the understanding that each time I had been given a chance because my dad or some family member had stepped in to aid my efforts. I had also adopted an attitude of reversed dependency that would not serve me well in the years to come. Either way, I still could not carry a large box and was less quick and less strong than even the weakest able body next to me. I had learned shortcuts and tricks to complete the tasks I needed to accomplish, but that is all they were, tricks.

While staying with Flossie, I involved myself with a community theater group and discovered that I could also change my identity through acting. The need to leave reality behind was gaining more strength everyday. I auditioned for the local Wizard of Oz production on a cool fall day. I hoped to be considered for the role of a masked munchkin, but dreamed of a grander part. I was home when the phone rang. "I'll get it, Grandma! Hello, Cross residence. ...REALLY?! Yes, Ma'am, I'll be there!" Unbelievably, I had the part I had hoped for...the best, the first, the wizard!

I spent the next few weeks preparing, fine-tuning my life's purpose. This must have been one of the few proud moments for my family. The work involved did not hurt me or involve physical constraints beyond my abilities. I could do it! I would succeed solely on my own.

Everyone was present every one of the seven nights we preformed. I was the wizard with blue hair, sprayed into a frenzied mess, and a robe of garments heavier than I was. A heavy paper-maché mask finished off the costume. In this world of fantasy I became someone else, someone who never once harmed, explained, or scared another person. My antics brought laughter, joy, and thunderous applause. I think if I had sat in the audience I too would have been astonished that the deformed child was playing the part of the great wizard.

This would be my highest achievement in life; I was the wizard, which is how it was supposed to be! The feeling of exhilaration could not be beat. I spent many other months searching for it in other plays. I had many other supporting parts, but never again a lead role. My acting experiences took on the same pattern I experienced when drinking or using drugs, that of searching for a high point of oblivion. I had started my journey of riding the rollercoaster, from extreme highs to bottomed-out lows.

But, man, didn't that breeze feel good.

* * *

I started to research New York in hopes of finding a place to belong. It was just before high-school graduation when Norma convinced me not to aim for that challenge. I had prepared roughly twenty-five letters to various families in the region to ask if they would extend their kindness to allow me room and board while I explored my acting possibilities. I will never know if Norma's advice was the best, but it was the safest, and that was her job as she saw it: to protect her son as best as she could. I never went to New York, and I never acted again.

Perhaps the curtain might have closed on our lives at that point and been more than enough. But with each disappointment only the faces changed. By now Norma had a perpetually tired appearance that weighed heavily on all of us who saw it. I alone knew and accepted the reason behind it.

A COLD CHANGE

Lying in bed with the chill of a winter's breath in the small house, I dreamed of what I could do to make myself a man. Flossie had graced me with far more care than I deserved. There's that word again, the reminder that I would never believe myself deserving, no matter what came my way. The smell of cigarettes followed me from the bedroom into the kitchen, where I found this angel of a matriarch sitting at the same place where she sat everyday, eating her breakfast. Her life was so clean, and rewarding her with my ignorance was something I felt I could no longer do.

"Grandma, I think I'm going to go visit Aunt Charlotte and Uncle Fred in Logansport today," I said with purpose in my voice.

It was January 22, 1978. Graduation last year had come and gone with little meaning for me, though it seemed to have importance to those around me, at least according to the pictures. Only Norma knew that due to all the time spent traveling and the lack of appropriate documentation I had been unable to receive a diploma. It was through sheer intimidation, or by conjuring a sympathy vote, that Norma had convinced the school administrators to allow me to limp-walk across the stage during the ceremony. I disguised that fact through lies for many years. Once again, it appeared I was a less-than-engaging player. Time for a move...

After my statement to Flossie, I packed away a few belongings in a small duffel bag, I felt energized and scared all at the same time. My fear of inadequacy had followed me all my life. I knew that should I become lost in my active escape with alcohol and drugs I would not be able to find my way home. But, with one last kiss and hug, I left my refuge and began to drive.

With a quick stop at the local town drunks' house to gain a little courage and some herbs to use along the way, I was off on my first journey alone. Being alone was not a new feeling, but the need to find a new home by myself was. It was a cold drive and the car's exhaust roared loudly. My '66 Chevy took me deep into Indiana farm country. The houses appeared like dots and then grew with each beat of the music that hid the sound of the rattling windows. Trees, showing signs of better days, lined the roads, like dead spectators of time or protectors of the future.

My mind filled with the illusion of hope that perhaps where I was going people would see me as a different type of man or that I could become the kind of person I so clung to in my fantasies. Each rush of the wind against the car shook the body but I plowed my way along—foolish, young, and drunk.

The familiar Plymouths that so often arrived in Gnaw-bone on August afternoons sat in front of the house. I knew that this was the home of a warm reception. I knocked on the door and with a burst of enthusiasm Charlotte grabbed me, pulled me into the warm room, heated by the steel box in the corner, and said, "My God, it's Norma's boy, Kris. Fred, come here!" Charlotte still spoke in the same high-pitched gasp I remembered so well.

"Well, look who's here, how are you, son?"

I guess I have to say that if you don't have an Uncle Fred in your family, I hope you find one. Uncle Fred's unconditional love encircled those in his presence, and was selfless, his soft heart worn on his sleeve for all to witness. If you needed anything he had, it was yours with no questions asked. His dedication to his ill-fated wife and children had left him a simple man with simple means. Paradoxically, he had become the most respected member of our entire family. I always loved this man. "I'm doing great, Uncle Fred, Aunt Charlotte. I wanted to take you up on your offer, visit for a while, if I might." I didn't remind them that this was an invitation from years ago.

Fred responded with the belly laugh that came from his round and solid, stocky frame, "Sure you can! Get this boy something to eat, Maw. He's hungry from that long drive." My aunt was eager to serve, complaining all the way. She'd lie down in front of a bus for you, but yell the whole time about how much you'd better appreciate it.

Uncle Fred's chair, grooved into the wood floor that squeaked from years of neglect, was quickly filled again as he watched the football game I had interrupted. Soon my grilled-cheese sandwich and soup, the substance of many meals to come, was on the table.

Not long after I finished, my cousin Billy, with whom I'd always had great fun at family reunions, arrived to say hello and welcome me to his territory. His sister Jenny, also warm and sincere, was in tow. I felt accepted and said a prayer that maybe this was going to work out after all.

Perhaps this next stab at life was the one that could align my actions with my soul and provide me with a reason for my distorted and deformed consciousness.

After a good night's rest, a few secretively shared joints, and a couple of public beers with my newfound family we stared at the television on that dried-out wood floor. The voice on the television was repeating the word "blizzard" over and over. With northern Indiana securely positioned in snow country, blizzards were not unusual in the spectrum of winter experiences.

Although there was plenty in the food pantry, we needed to prepare for the worst by collecting firewood and making sure everything was in order. I was as busy as could be trying to adjust my knowledge of the big city to this small collection of nonconformists in the middle of corn silos. Our preparation lasted well into the night, radios positioned next to flashlights, waiting and ready for what might come.

For the next two days we were confined to the small saltbox house. Next door was a building Fred owned as well, which served as the spot for drugs, music, sex, and booze. After all, it was the '70s and there was nothing else to do, right? The weather precluded any outdoor activities on this cold day so, with an introduction to a few neighborhood teenagers and some of my fine big-city herb, I was allowed to be a part of another crowd of shadows.

Five or six days went by before the sound of traffic replaced the snowy hush and the cardinal's song. The slush rose above the snow angels we had created. As the sun bounced brightly off the surfaces, my head throbbed from pain brought on by the partying of the day or night before. Shoveling snow was quickly replaced by foolish affairs and the behavior of hoodlums on the loose. Glory had arrived in this newfound group of misfits, a spot where I appeared to belong.

The woman with whom I had been having sex for the past week was simple in her enjoyment of being lost in smoke-filled rooms with strangers who took her body for pleasure. The cousins I had known only slightly when we had mischievously snuck drinks at Trail's End took on the traits of gangsters with a lust for oblivion. The gift of a simplified life and the stability of a loving matriarch only appeared to encourage us to rage with more insanity.

Then the phrase "perfect storm" didn't exist, but our antics had all the content and character of a blizzard and tornado combined... Active and violent delusion coupled with mind-altering chemicals and the reckless abandon for personal gluttony. If there was a God besides the plastic Jesus hanging on the kitchen wall of the saltbox, I did not care nor want to know.

Realizing my need to make a living, I used my blond-hair-and-blue eyes trick to secure a job at the local mall to sell shoes. Yes, shoes! How ironic, the three-fingered, good-looking freak who had no toes and no feet, selling shoes. I made it a point to once again separate from what I was in order to become what I wanted. The questions continued ...

EIGHTEEN YEARS - 5 TO GO

Norma had kept a close eye on me during this time. Between her and Aunt Charlotte, they had devised a plan to transfer J. P.'s mobile home to a small clean back lot on the outskirts of town. During one of their random visits, Johnny and my mother announced they were moving in down the street. I was oblivious to what must have been a heart-wrenching sight for my mother—me at my most drunken, slovenly worst.

If we're lucky we have people in our lives on whom we can depend. I had my mother. I hope that my dependence on her was healthy. I had tried to adjust to the fact that I had become an embarrassment to her, but by now, my behavior was unchecked and extreme. With no rules to follow and little, if any, respect for the people around me, I lost sight of the values with which I had been raised. With a grandchild on the way, Norma did not hesitate, however. Convinced the right thing to do was have me marry the mother of my child, Norma plunged herself into the affair of planning my wedding. Gail's family, on the other hand, found little to celebrate in their daughter's choice of a fallen man determined to do nothing but dissolve their daughter's life.

Gail was more of a codependent by association. This was a position she knew well from rehearsing it with her own father. Kyle Senior was a strong figure of a man—when sober. Unfortunately, no one knew him sober any more—nor did they want to, for he was too much fun drunk. Oh, how this group of strangers fit together seamlessly, each placed into position without force or complaint.

Surprisingly, the formal evening of our wedding went off as planned. All those who had spent time at the family cabin came to drink the warm, whisky Christmas-dinner cocktails and enjoy an evening of laughter. They all came, snapping pictures of the sorrow of a pregnant bride, the fool of a groom, and lost integrity.

Each whispered to the next the secret they shared and gossip filled the voids.

"Well, at least the boy made it this far; maybe the girl can straighten him out."

"I guess I would drink, too, but he acts an awful lot like his Grandpa!"

"Hope that baby'll be okay? It would crush her—you know, Norma, that is. I don't think she could handle something like that again."

Insanity as a description of my life sat comfortably, leaving little doubt for all factions of what I had become. Despite my best intention of settling down, my episodes of destruction brought about only more devastating outcomes... Destroying furniture, throwing items about in fits of rage, blacking out. I never remembered what I had done, and even found perverse glee in the tales of what I had done the night before. This torture had to end. I knew that. But how?

Through all of this was the ongoing relationship that Norma had now developed with her new healthy granddaughter. An Event of which perhaps the world carried heavy for but escaped attention of the one whom had already paid the cost.

The two of them had the kind of magical connection that all children seem to have with their grandparents. Norma was proud to spend time with her, entertaining her and encouraging laughter and joy. Flossie and Hildreth added to the mix with more love and adornment. Flossie, in her talent for clothing, created a coat made for picture-perfect winters at the cabin.

With the following summer came the Indiana heat, scorching our little apartment.

Norma, disappointed and embarrassed by my lifestyle, had left town with Johnny to return home, leaving their trailer available for the three of us to occupy. Norma had realized that her presence was not going to change my spiraling decent.

I found myself still alive, but wondered how anything positive, sincere, or holy could come from such a bedeviled life? It had gone unvalued by its owner for so long that one had to ask, Where was the hope? It has to be said that I had always noticed a crust of goodness outside myself; I just never felt I deserved to be included in it. Many sacrifices were made on my behalf. Norma had placed all other happiness in her own life aside to contribute to mine, to raise her son.

Through circumstance, Johnny had returned to Arkansas to join the band of children he'd left behind. With Gail and Norma teaming up together, I was getting yet another stab at life. Surely this one would catch.

Surely nobody could be that far gone, could have burned so many bridges he could not recognize the trail of broken hearts and dreams he was leaving in his wake?

Enrolled in the local technical college, I began classes to learn how to work in a society that distained me. I went grudgingly for the first few weeks to satisfy the need for proof of attendance and family scrutiny. The pull of the 300 Club, the Sportsman Bar, and Henderson's Tavern was too strong, though, calling me away with their pool tables, loose women, and cheap drinks.

Hence, no matter where I traveled, I never left. There I was, and thus, here I am.

Crushed and disappointed, Norma moved away and left my family treading water again. Needing an apartment, we lied and contrived our way into a duplex one block down from my favorite bar, which had the requisite five pool tables, plenty of working patrons needing to be entertained, and rum, plenty of rum. Flossie appeared one day with a bag of food.

Act Three in motion.

I burned every dollar that came my way and continued what was now my age-old routine of opening the tavern at 6:30 in the morning. With the stench of bad breath and sweat from the night before, I drank tomato juice and a draught to cure my stomach. I sat next to whichever man needed to tell his tale to start his day; I became the jester for whoever was buying that morning. I knew how to be a jester. Then, as the marks began to appear, I hustled the tables for that day's fund.

The cycle repeated for months on end. Another Indiana winter had come and gone. I grabbed a job for a few weeks at a time, but never lasted long, always fearing they would discover my shortcomings, my failings. I made an art form out of selling them on my potential and disguising my limits—until I didn't. Flossie checked on the child and comforted Gail when all seemed lost.

Gail was traveling back to her hometown more frequently as we became more distanced. Her reaction to my drunk fool of a self was almost pure disgust by now. Not able to afford or manage sanity, my binges were a continuous effort to stay away... away from it all. I wanted die so badly that all I thought about was how, where, and when I could do it. It was no longer a question of if, simply of who would find my body and in what condition when I did it.

My attendance or lack thereof was no longer expected—or missed—at Christmas get-togethers. Since Norma had returned to be with her soul mate in Arkansas, I had no true kin who would listen to me, not that I could blame them. Gail had tolerated my rages, car crashes, and binges as long as she could. I was a complete embarrassment to the human race and showed no signs of considering anything other than complete, total humiliation.

Many nights I sat in a chair in the front room, drinking rum to kill myself in the most cowardly way possible.

SURREAL SUMMER

Spring flowers and cool rainy days accented by the smell of raw dirt and the fishy aroma of worms dancing across the sidewalk filled the air.

Through the veil of my alcoholic haze, I began to get the feeling that something was about to happen.

Although I have never claimed to be a clairvoyant or even visionary, I have always known there is energy available to each of us, should we choose to use it. To use it wisely, however, has always been my dilemma. This time was different; I felt the need to wonder and look at the people around me. A change was coming. A change which stirred my soul.

I have learned that most functioning alcoholics and drug addicts have one characteristic in common: the knack of rising above their lives just enough to know that they do not have the capacity to cope with reality. Just enough common sense to support only that which will not interfere with their long-term plan to destroy themselves at a future point in time. This was the case for me now. Norma had not stopped coming to Indiana, sometimes with Johnny, to see us. My daughter was a magnet for her and the two of them were alike in looks and disposition. The need to be near her granddaughter gave Norma just enough of an excuse to check on her son.

This time I mustered up the ability to stay sober long enough to get drunk with Norma and Johnny in the spirit of celebration. My failings of the past months—and years—seemed to matter little. Norma looked as clear and beautiful as she had in at least ten years. With my best friend in the room, I paraded around as if to declare that my life was acceptable, progressing along without hitch. I was proud that I had recently taken another job and had actually gone to work for a couple of weeks. There was even a paycheck to spend on our celebration. Never mind the debt or overdue bills on the desk that Gail continually chased. My family had come to visit me; it was my duty to entertain them in the style they had come to expect. I only wish I could have offered the truth of my real emotions.

Many things went unsaid that day, but not necessarily unnoticed. We pretended that I wasn't lying, hiding what I did, thought, and felt. But I knew that Norma knew what was really going on. I did not have the wisdom or the courage, however, to talk to her about it. I also felt that Norma was not telling me everything. Sure enough, I found out later that her mother, Hildreth, was dying, and that she and Johnny had come to comfort J. P. and take care of what needed to be done in preparation for Hildreth's passing.

The following day we drove to the rest home where Hildreth had slipped away into a diabetic coma. In body, but not mind, I was able to call on some measure of strength to clean myself up in respect for my family.

Lying in fetal position, her eyes closed, I witnessed for the first time the throes of death and experienced what I imagined it would feel like to surrender to the silence. I was envious. Saddened over the disintegration it imposed on my Grandfather, I felt a certain resolve that it should not be the case that everything had to be this hard. In fact, death would be comforting.

Norma and Charlotte, who also had arrived that day, would now jointly take on Hildreth's role, filling a void her passing would leave behind for the Parker family. At Hildreth's funeral, her soul was visible in all the faces that skirted in front of us as they passed by her coffin. I had never felt comfortable with the open display of the dead; nor did I agree with the common practice of praising the dead simply because they were gone. To me, it seemed altogether shallow and pointless.

As our family had so often done before, after the funeral we gathered for a meal and to talk of earlier times. We talked of the cabin, the songs, the laughter and joy of a simple path that had led to Trail's End. Soon afterwards, J. P. sold the cabin and folded his life into a small home next to the local golf club in town.

Our visit through these few days was predictable: party all day with food, drink, and music, usually ending up at a step-cousin's or uncle's house to enjoy each other's antics. Laughter and booze, card games of euchre, arguments of cheating, and the infamous family member passed out on the couch, one of the kids lying on top as if to secure the night. A Rockwell painting we were not. Capturing the heightened feelings of oblivion: a family trait. This time it was obvious that everyone was gravely aware of the absence of one of its most beloved members.

It didn't take long after Mom left that my feet were leaving a trail of footsteps to the door of my local watering hole again. I lost the job I'd been holding. And the hideous four horsemen—terror, bewilderment, frustration, and despair—haunted me day and night, as I continued to look for ways out of this hell on earth.

On one such day, shaking already at 6:00 in the morning, I watched my loyal companion shuffle the child out the door to a babysitter's before traveling to a job that she used as an escape from me. I somehow knew today would yield another blow. It wasn't but an hour or so later that J. P.

called me to tell me that Norma had been taken to a hospital in Little Rock, to the local Air Force facility there. He went on to say that my mother had severe stomach pain and that the doctor had prescribed a medicine to resolve it. His call heightened my sense of my own mortality, but it also gave me the distinct feeling that something was going to happen that would change all of our lives forever. I knew it wasn't over yet. Adding insult to injury in that little town of Logansport at the crevasse of a hill, Charlotte had fallen victim to the disease that had raped her mother. After the amputation of both legs and cognitive function was all but gone, Charlotte's heart and mind sent her into a stroke. She entered the realm of death a few weeks later. It was a painful escape without the blessing of silence. In a matter of only weeks, the Parker family had lost two of the only three pillars who supported it.

Oblivious to the extreme dissolution of our family, my efforts remained selfishly ignorant of the world about me. Why would I alter my direction simply because some of my elders had died? I was quick to use their deaths as an opportunity to garner sympathy, however. Sympathy was always good for at least a couple of extra drinks at the bar.

It was another Wednesday. They had begun to run together, rainy, sunny, cold, hot, ad infinitum. I wanted to disappear and the only way I could find to accomplish this so far was through filthy dirty alcohol and drug abuse. To hell with the family that sacrificed everything for me; they did this to me anyway. If it were not for them, I never would have been born and never have had this miserable life. Besides, my contribution to life and the parts of it that mattered did not exist! Go to hell, world. Go to hell, God! You never did anything for me. You made me a freak, a joke. I wish to God I had never been born. Self-pitying and full of loathing, I cried in my beer. I have the worst life in the world, how can I go on living like this?

The phone rang loudly. With a familiar reticence to answer, I picked up the receiver. "Hello?"

It was Don.

DONNIE

"It's your mom. She has gone into surgery and you need to go to Arkansas."

A deep silence was the only response I had to offer.

Don went on.

DONNIE (CONT'D)

"I'll be there to pick you up in an hour. Take enough clothes to stay for a couple days--and for God's sake, son, be sober when I get there!"

I heard this demand clearly, even through the fog of alcohol.

I felt the urgency to move, but had no knowledge of what my place was. What role was I to perform?

As we drove to the airport, Don spoke to me only briefly and with a sharp cynicism about what I had become. His disapproval of his drunkard of a child was all too close to the disapproval he'd felt for his own father.

It was a memory that continued to govern his own actions, how he too would use emotional detachment as an escape from the news that had arrived that day.

He grasped my hand and put a packet of money into it with firm instructions.

DONNIE (CONT'D)

"Do not get drunk on this money, or I will beat you severely."

He spoke with a hint of jest in his voice, but his eyes were serious.

We said our goodbyes, knowing the next stop on my journey would not be an easy one. I held back, not wanting to go. Nothing in my life had ever finished well, let alone begun well, and I sensed that this would not be any different. It would take all I had to summon the courage not to cry in front of Norma. It would take more willpower than I had to keep from accusing Johnny for her troubles. His wild life of trouble, his drinking and irresponsible lack of attention to family... How the hell could anyone do that to her?! Norma deserved better than him anyway... what a #\$\$%\$#...; and so it went on inside my head and stayed.

The irony is obvious.

J. P. was already there, helping to manage Mom's care. I walked into a room with cold floor tiles. The bed was surrounded by a drawn curtain.

Excusing herself, the nurse stepped aside with a smile of compassion, stating that I must be Kris. I had seen many of those smiles in the days of my own care.

I shivered at the sight, which I slowly held to my heart when she smiled. Frail and ghostly white and gray, my mother's spirit was hovering above us, watching.

"Well, what have you gone and done now, Mom?" I went for the jest in hopes that it would disguise my pain.

Johnny sat quietly to the side, respectfully.

Norma's crackly voice brought forth tears of pain and joy.

NORMA JEAN

"I am so glad to see you. I love you, Kris."

My throat squeezed shut. My palms were sweating and my eyes dripped tears down my jacket,

KRIS

"Me too, Mom, me too."

Colon cancer had invaded her body over the last four or five years, according to the doctors. The invasion had progressed to Stage 4, which amounted to enough destruction of her body that the incision they'd made could not be closed. Norma weighed roughly one hundred and five this day in late June.

Over the next couple of days, we tried to convince Johnny to allow Norma to come home to Indiana. Johnny, always paranoid, a leftover from his days in the military, refused, leaving J. P. no other option than to accept rather than fight.

Arrangements to comfort Norma in the poor shack they called home tore J. P. apart, and distanced him even more from his daughter. It was no longer a question of whether death was at hand; it was a matter of when it would show itself at Norma's door.

In the obnoxiously obtuse manner I had perpetuated, I decided that Norma would be fine, that the problem lay with the treatment, not the disease. I certainly had been told about the severity of Norma's illness, but I was good at denial, and truly had no idea of the consequences.

It seemed like forever before I returned to Indiana and the shell of my family there. In the same way my father before me had done, I let my emotions run cold and evaporate from view. As sober and stale as I had ever been, I felt a deep understanding of hopeless desperation.

Without rhyme, reason, or connection to the world around me, I used the next few weeks to drown even deeper into the abyss. Each day dragged into the next as I waited for the next phone call. Waking on the floor or sitting in the car I would realize I had failed to pick up my family at a prescheduled time or location, the errand boy on whom nobody could depend. Endless scrapes with the law continued. My insecurities were gaining strength as the fear set in deeper. I hid money and bottles of booze everywhere I could think of to be sure there would never come a time I would not have access to the one thing I required. Finally, it came. Don's stern voice on the other end of the phone.

DONNIE

"Kris, it's time for you to go."

This time it was a breezy fall afternoon when I left for the airport. Moist leaves skirted across the yard. My task was to arrive at death's door.

I beckoned what sanity I could to present the reasonable facsimile of a normal man. The taxi ride from the airport in Arkansas was surreal and quiet. I almost asked the cab driver to drive right on past our destination, afraid of what I would see when I entered my mother's room. A room closely watched, I was certain, by the Devil and God alike.

SUNDOWN

The medical center had that same smell and ominous lighting that makes the skin take on an unearthly shade of pale pink never seen anywhere else. Meeting me at the entrance was the loving figure of the man upon whom so many had depended, J. P.

JOHN (JP)

"Hello, son, how was your trip down?"

he asked, more as a formality than with an interest in the answer. At the touch of our hands, the tears spilled over and we held strong to the feeling of warmth the live hands offered. Our family had always touched, it seemed. Perhaps it was the only thread of likeness we shared. Minus the fingers to grasp, I still had the comfort of knowing this man cared for my life almost as much as did the woman I was here to see. But I did not want to see the truth.

We walked into the lobby and immediately Johnny and a nurse engulfed me. It was as if I were being briefed on a classified military assignment.

JOHNNY

"Kris, what you're going to see is going to be hard,"

said the drill instructor. Never before had I witnessed the man so reduced.

JOHNNY (CONT'D)

"Your mother doesn't look like herself anymore; she's lost a lot of weight. She hasn't eaten any food for several days."

Withering inside with each word, I internally begged him to stop his description. I replied, "Well, I can help with that part. I can get her to eat something, right?" Speaking as the jester, I played dumb to shift the subject of a conversation I knew nothing about. The tone of the conversation remained somber, though, as the nurse continued to tell me about the equipment. I know they had coached her not to alarm me with details.

Reaching into my shallow soul, I limped into Norma's room. My Grandpa sat by the bed. The action slowed to a frame-by-frame exposure as I looked at the bed. The blankets rested on a silhouette of bones, sharp toes extending under the bed tray posted at the end. Her legs looked like the broken branches of a tree. I was startled and confused. Whose legs were they, whose feet? The skin had collapsed, shrink-wrapped over a collection of splinters with yellow nails at the end.

There was more space than body under the rest of the blanket.

The fragile empty breathing corpse I identified as my forty-four-year-old mother. Her breasts and chest wheezed with each forcible push against the reaper's tug. The beauty of her green eyes was shadowed and secluded inside a face which no longer gleamed with jaded brilliance. The smile her mouth etched when she managed to pull her eyelids upwards disclosed a tarnished bar of ivory that had hushed an auditorium and crushed more than one man's purpose. Hair that stuck out from a misshapen dome of flesh curled around listlessly and fell to a pillow littered by other strands of her identity. "Oh, honey," she said, and her body suddenly jerked violently, raging to escape. Her own recognition of her appearance was reflected in my eyes.

What I saw scared me so much that I didn't know what to do. Johnny and the nurse quickly settled her skeleton back to a resting place so she might gather her next breath. The drool easing from her lips was of a stench and color that only appears at death's entry. We sat to rest.

As I sat next to her and asked her questions of normal conversation, my powerlessness to grasp the seriousness of the situation was obvious. I insisted to myself that when her body regained strength we could fight this! That was, after all, the very message she had instilled in me, as I grew up so riddled with "challenges." "Fight, Kris, fight," was her motto to every potential defeat we might meet with my legs, feet, arms, or hands.

Surely, fighting was appropriate here, too.

Surely she could fight just a little more.

I went out to the waiting room and cried for what felt like hours. Her once strong beauty-queen appearance was gone and what air could enter was quickly respiration, taking an ounce of life with it. Norma's life was ending, and soon.

I was as a child—and that is actually what I was still—nothing but a child who had no idea of what it took to face death in its entirety as those around me had done so many times before. J. P. was about to lose the last of three women in his life in as little as two years.

Not only was the core of our family now gone, so was the energy to support those of us left. The backbone of moral fiber that was my grandfather had been broken many times over, and I, fool that I was, had had no respect for his pain. Even Johnny, in his selfishness, attempted to rouse himself to give homage to what would soon be Norma's memory, and had preformed a miracle of healing and comfort in her final days. It was all I could do to pull myself together enough to share what I knew were my last few moments with the angel who was about to leave me alone. Alone to face a war of terror, strife, and discouragement. I wanted to go with her on this last journey into death.

A day or two went by, hours filled with little talks, quiet windowwatching, wiping drool, being excused from the room for the periodic nurse's duties. Duties this matriarch had once preformed for me. During the next seventy-two hours, Mom took in some nutrition and her energy improved. She had refused treatment because of the advanced stage of the disease, but she was still sharp as a tack. I knew it wouldn't last, but I couldn't help the surge of hope it gave me. The storm was fast approaching.

We attempted short card games and found ourselves laughing about the past, our travels and mishaps now sources of pleasure. Song, dance, and food on an autumn day in Brown County allowed us to look away from the cracking skin around her mouth from lack of sustenance in the last weeks. The days of love and of sharing, and of Aunt Charlotte's green bean casserole brought seductive memories of goodwill and sibling rivalry.

Memories of the escapades of a rambunctious boy who refused to pull cattails from the pond in the mid-summer heat and drove a truck in the middle of the desert. Recollections of times that in retrospect were carefree, times before I knew better. And memories of the precarious pleasures of a schoolgirl with her childhood sweetheart who now, in the face of life's eventual request, sat alongside the final destination.

Today, the clock on the wall spoke loudly, each click, each second.

I slept huddled in the lounge, oblivious to the offers of comfort the attendants made. J. P. floated into the room and out, his expression more and more troubled with each pass. This time he stopped at my chair.

JOHN (JP)

"Maybe you should go in there now, Kris."

In my mind, my body sank to the floor, but I raised my head and sat up at attention. The very man who had taught me how to drink was sitting a few feet away and I found it ironic that what I really wanted to do was run in and do what we—I—had always done—grab a bottle and get started. Or maybe run to the truck and load up the fishing poles, yell at the dog, and drive away from our troubles. Instead, I prayed to God to please be with me and protect my mother. I did not really believe He would do anything for me, but I did hope He would care for her, so I asked anyway. The light in the room had been turned down to soften the bluish glare.

With Johnny on the far side of the bed, I pulled up a chair next to her and gently rested my hands on hers. The one person who had taken comfort in holding my disfigured hands was now in need of my comfort and I didn't know what to say or do. I sat quietly, not trusting my voice, and watched.

After a few moments, Norma asked that the head of the bed be raised a bit. Johnny did as she requested, reaching over her frail torso and lifting her into a more elevated position.

JOHNNY

"There, how's that?" he asked.

I saw in his eyes the love of a young man for his sultry roller-skating girl of the past.

NORMA JEAN

"Fine, just fine,"

she exhaled...

Norma turned to me then. I heard her words as if we were in a play, rehearsing our lines.

(MORE)

NORMA JEAN (CONT'D)

"Kris, do you hold anything against me, son?"

Caught off guard by the question, I reacted without thinking.

KRIS

"No, Mom, of course not, I could never do that! I love you."

The next few moments are vacant to me, even to this day. But then, consoled by my answer, Norma asked for the bed to be lowered back down again.

As I watched, paralyzed into observance, Norma's eyes focused on the ceiling above and she began to vomit and convulse. Her face set in acceptance for the violence of the moment, she called on her will and slowly began to drown on the fluids she harbored. The milky green fluids that escaped her lips and pooled on the pillow repulsed my senses. Her chest pounded and thrashed as her heart seemed to explode with a wild and fierce fever. With each breath, her lungs inhaled more vomit, her heart beating in unison with each gasp. The noise was deafening. Death, Rapture Himself, was in this room.

Though the body had not yet succumbed, it was as though a stillness and peace began before the last pounding of her heart ceased and her hands, her bitterly cold hands, gave way to the surrender. All of her small skeleton shook and then, as abruptly as the seizure had begun, it subsided.

Her hands stopped trembling. The sounds of slurping and expirating debris ceased. Silence came. Silence in the form of stillness; the strings that bound us together severed with a single swipe of the hand from God Almighty Himself.

Norma Jean's sun had set on the horizon forever.

* * *

Johnny reached across the bed and closed her eyes. The thought crossed my mind that perhaps he had done the same thing many times before in battle. Except this time, there was no victory or defeat. Only a moment recorded in time of another soldier who had served: Norma Jean. I ran, hobbling and limping as cripples do. For that is what I was, a crippled freak who wanted to die! KILL ME, DAMN IT, TAKE ME!

THE CAMERA SHOTS HERE FOLLOW THE ACTION DESCRIBED AND THE DIALOGUE IS CAPTURED IN EMOTION AND GRAPHIC. SOUND TRACK FOLLOWS THE SIMILAR GENRE OF DEATH AND WITHOUT FOCUS, THE SUN OUTSIDE THE WINDOW FALLS BELOW THE HORIZON AT 7PM , TOD!

AT THE TIME OF PASSING, SLIGHT AND VERY SILENT IN APPEARANCE AND SHADOW, A SOFT HINT OF GRACEFUL ANGEL WHITE CASTS ACROSS THE AIR AS NORMA LEAVES THE WORLDLY BODY , HER SOUL TRAVELS ... THIS VISUAL NEEDS TO BE EVER SO SLIGHT AND ONLY KNOWN TO THE VERY VERY ATTENTIVE VIEWER AND AUDIENCE. ALMOST A SUBCONSCIOUSLY AWARE THAT WILL MAKE SENSE IN THE FINAL SCENE.

IN THE CHARACTERS REACTION, EACH IS LEFT QUIET BUT THE FADE AWAY FROM THE ROOM FOLLOWS KRIS AS HE WALKS AWAY TO AN EMPTY DEEP HALLWAY. AS AN ACT LEARNED, HIS HANDS RIP AWAY A WALL FIXTURE EXITING THE DOORS AT THE END, THE NURSE SUMMONS A RESTRAINT OF HAND TO HER COWORKER IN RESPONSE ALLOWING THE EXIT. OFF SIDE VIEW 2-3 MEDICAL PERSONNEL ENTER THE ROOM FOR A TRAINED EXPERIENCE NOT TO BE SHARED OR KNOWN OF TAKING THE DEAD AWAY ...

365 OF TIME

The hideous four horsemen—terror, bewilderment, frustration, and despair appeared in darkness to remain this night. The moments took on an odor like none before. My misery and soul sickness was fluid, pouring out of me at every turn. I never wanted to see the sunrise again. I had not thought it possible to reach another point of no return—how could there be so many? The path to sanity was vague...

SHOT APPEARS IN THE NEON LIGHTS OF A PARKING LOT AND THE BUZZ OF LIFE MOVEMENT, ABSENT KNOWLEDGE OF ANOTHER SOUL PASSING WITHOUT FAIR OR KNOWN.

THE CAR DROVE AS STAGGER AS IT HAD FROM THE CRIPPLE DRIVING IT LATE INTO THE NIGHT. LEAVING THE HOSPITAL , THE CAR APPEARED IN MUSE AND TRANSPARENT.

A SNAP SHOT PAUSE AT A LIQUOR STORE SHOWS PURCHASE OF 3-4 VARIOUS SPIRITS AND CIGARETTES

CAMERA APPEARS INSIDE THE CAR AS KRIS IS DRINKING FROM THE BOTTLE. THE HEADLIGHTS GLARING AND SPARKLING AGAINST THE GLASS RIMS AND TEARS DRIPPING OF HIS CHEEK WITH EACH TIP OF THE POISON.

CAMERA SHOTS & STILLS BEGIN TO RECAPTURE SCENES FROM NORMA IN THE PAST AS THEY FLASH ACROSS THE WINDSHIELD (IMPRESSION OF FILM ROLL BEING PROJECTED AGAINST THE GLASS TRANSPARENCY) MOST OF THESE SCENES ARE REPEATED AT A 50% LEVEL AND CONTAIN ADDITIONAL SHOTS OR STILLS FROM THE COLLECTION OF FAMILY PHOTO'S CONTAINED IN THE STORYBOARD & RESEARCH ASSETS.

KRIS

"God help me; if you're there and you care for a soul like me, show yourself now!

"Give me proof!"

Time was empty; it paused unwittingly.

THE VIOLENCE OF THE WAVERING CAR AND THE HORNS , HEADLIGHTS AND THE FEAR OF RAGE THE CAMERA GLANCES AT THE SPEEDOMETER AS IT REACHES THE LIMIT OF 90MPH AND THE DRUNKEN RAGE OF ABANDONMENT GRIEF CONTINUE TO COMMAND THE SCENE. THESE SECONDS ARE ALL IN DYNAMIC ENHANCED SLOW CAPTION.

THEN IN A SLOW 365 ROTATION OF VIEW TO THE DRIVER THE CAR CATCHES THE EDGE OF THE HIGHWAY GRAVEL AND BEGINS TO ROTATE TO THE LEFT AND HEAD TOWARDS THE MIDDLE OF THE HIGHWAY BLINDED BY THE ON COMING HEADLIGHTS AS THE SCREEN GOES BLINDING WHITE, THE TIRES BEGIN TO EMIT A SOUND OF SURRENDER THAT WAS ONLY MATCHED BY THE CAPTAIN OF WHAT HAS NOW BECOME A VESSEL OF DIVINE INTERVENTION. THE CAMERA SITS IN THE PASSENGER SEAT AND FADES TO ESCAPE THROUGH THE WINDSHIELD AND TURN TO WATCH THE SMALL CAR SLIDE TO A SIDEWAYS FORM AND START TO ELEVATE FROM THE ROAD FOR A LIFT INTO A ROLL - AND THEN FADE TRANSITION INTO THE FINAL SCENE!

ARIEL FADE EXTERNAL FROM THE SMALL TOWN IN DARK AND THE IMAGES APPEAR OLD, WORN AND EMPTY WITH COLD PROFILES OF THE HOUSE/BUILDINGS/FIXTURES PRESENTING A DEATH APPROACH TO THE HOUSE ON THE HILL.

AS THE CAMERA APPROACHES THE FADED AND BLITHELY HOUSE WITH A MISSING SHUDDER AND BROKEN PORCH BOARDS THERE IS A SHADOW OF YOUNG LADY/GIRL(SHADOWED GIRL) RUNNING FROM THE EDGE AND DRAMATICALLY LEAVING AS IF TO SUMMON HELP OR FEAR OF WHAT SHE LEFT BEHIND. THE SHOT ENTERS INTO THE ROOM OF THE HOUSE ON THE HILL, DARKENED AND SHADOWED AND HOVERS ABOVE TO FIND ITSELF IN THE SIMILAR POSITION OF BEHIND A FIGURE(SHADOWED MAN) SLUMPED IN THE WHEELCHAIR FACING THE DOOR OF THE LONG ISOLATED MYSTERY ROOM...

Narrator begin speaking once the fade from light to dark between scene shots approaching the darken house.

NARRATOR

Life is filled with penalties
suffered for the actions of others
as well as our own. Punishment is
of our own making yet having
endured the path, the dusty Midway
that existed on trinkets and glitz
only to return to that same
illusion over and over in an effort
to grab the elusive ring of change,
the golden ring to solve your
struggles, a reward to counter the
penalties of sin.

Forgiveness is only a short grasp
away.

Here is the position of entry into the house

Twenty plus years of empty life
will pass by relatively unnoticed,
a lonely walk along the storefront
by a darkened, aged man, stride
assisted, mind weakened.

Camera hovers and rotates to position

This old house resting upon the
hill offers a view from just across
the tracks of that carnival once
visited.

My pallet is dry now. The colors I
see no more, My grave is waiting.

SLOWLY THERE IS A PAUSE IN THE DARK AND THEN GENTLY THROUGH THE LONG REACH AT THE END OF THE HALL, THE SUN'S LIGHT IS OPENING AND THE COLORFUL FALL UMBERING AMBER GOLD RED CRIMSON PURPLE JEWELS OF INDIANA FOLIAGE STARTS TO IGNITE WITH SPARKLES FROM THE MORNING DEW AND THE INTERIOR STARTS TO OPEN WITH A LIGHT THAT APPEARS DIVINE!

THIS ROOM IS A GALLERY OF ART & STUDIO FOR KRIS IN HIS LIFE AS AN ARTIST AND THERE ARE HUNDREDS OF FINISHED, PILED AND RESTING IMAGES OF ECLECTIC SCULPTURES, FINE ART FRAMED AND RAW CANVAS ON EASELS WITH A WORK SURFACE BENCH THAT APPEARS TO SHADOW ALL THE SHAPES AND CAST EDGES OF BEFORE. EACH SPACE FILLED WITH BRUSHES AND A LIBRARY OF DOCUMENTS AND BOOKS OFF TO THE SIDE. THESE IMAGES ARE OF APPROX. 175 INDIVIDUAL PAINTINGS OF CURRENT DATE AND COULD CONTAIN VARIOUS OTHER

AS THE BRILLIANT COLORS BEGIN TO APPEAR THEY ABSOLUTELY CAPTURE THE ENTIRE ROOM AND THE SOUND TRACK TAKES THE AUDIENCE INTO COMPLETE CELEBRATION !!!

AS THE CAMERA REVEALS BACK TO THE MAN IN THE CHAIR (KRIS, WHO HAS PASSED AWAY SITTING IN THE CHAIR AT OLD AGE "70ISH") THERE IS A TRANSPARENT AND YET CLEARLY DEFINED RECOGNIZED IMAGE OF NORMA THAT APPEARS TO WALK INTO THE ROOM. THIS GRACEFUL, DYNAMIC AND FULL COLORED IMAGE IS ONLY VISIBLE IN LIGHT OR BRILLIANCE AND JOINED BY SIDE OF FLOSSIE. TOGETHER THE TWO LADIES IN THE FULL GLORY OF THEIR BEAUTY REACH DOWN TO ASSIST KRIS FROM THE CHAIR. THE CAMERA IS ROTATING AROUND TO CAPTURE THIS EVENT AND STILL FINDS THE SECONDARY IMAGES OF BEAUTY IN ART TO BE FULL . THE CAMERA IN A VERY SLIGHT GLANCE CATCHES THE HANDS OF KRIS AS HIS FINGERS ARE COMPLETE & WHOLE. HIS ASSISTED WALK FROM THE WHEELCHAIR IS A FLUID STRIDE OF WALK AND WITHOUT DISCLOSURE, HIS DEFORMED RIGHT ARM REACHES OUT IN FULL LENGTH TO HOLD NORMAS HAND ...

OFF IN THE DISTANCE TO THE EXIT OF THE DOOR , THE LIGHT OF LIFE AND THE EVOLVING APPEARANCE OF A NEW DAY THERE IS ANOTHER TRANSPARENT FIGURE STANDING NEAR THE HUGE OAK TREE IN FRONT OF THE HOUSE ON THE HILL. THIS FIGURE RESEMBLES A CURRENT IMAGE OF JESUS AND IS STRETCHING HIS HAND TOWARDS THE THREE AS THEY HEAD OUT OF THE ROOM AND THE CAMERA HOVERS ABOVE THEM AS THEY EXIT THE DOOR. THE VIEW THEN TRANSITIONS AS AN ARIEL ESCAPE FROM THE TOWN AS THE WHOLE IS NEW AGAIN, THE PAINTED HOUSE IS WHITE WITH COMPLETE RESTORATION AND THE HALL / ROOM RECENTLY EXITED IS AN ADDITION TO THE BACK OF THE HOUSE ON THE HILL. THE CAMERA CAPTURES AS IT PROCEEDS DOWN THE GRAVEL DRIVE A SIGN AT THE ENTRANCE THAT READS "GALLERY & FINE ARTS" WITH A DESIGNER GRAPHICAL LOGO OF (N J) ...

THE EXIT SCENE SHOWS THE CARNIVAL AND THE BEAUTY OF THE TOWN ENTERED DECADES AGO AS IT APPEARS NOW IN A PRISTINE SMALL TOWN. AS THE SHOT BEGINS TO FADE FAR AWAY FROM THE TOWN, IT ROLLS INTO BLACK AND THIS LINE IS SCROLLED IN PAUSE ACROSS THE SCREEN TO SERVES AS THE ABSOLUTE END.

Never in our silent moments of illusion do we sense the dark parallel that lives beside us. Nor do we suspect the carrier.

THE END

CAST REPORT

PROJECTED TALENT

NORMA JEAN

(Elizabeth Banks, Scarlet Johansson, Frances McDormand, Charlize Theron, Gwyneth Paltrow)

JOHNNY

(Harvey Keitel, Fred Ward, Robert De Niro, Sean Penn)

NARRATOR

(Donald Sutherland, Ray Liotta, Morgan Freeman)

HILDRETH

(Emma Watson, Donna Dixon, Kate Mulgrew, Jody Foster)

DONNIE

(James Cromwell, Shia Saide LaBeouf, Kiefer Sutherland)

KRIS

(Gary Oldman, William H. Macy, Seth Green, Chris Cooper)

FLOSSIE

(Kathy Bates, Lynda Carter, Helen Mirren, Meryl Streep)

JOHN JP

(David Morse, Russel Crowe, Jack Nicholson)

CHAROLETTE

(Jennifer Jason Leigh, Emily Browning)

SHADOWED GIRL

DOC THOMAS

SHADOWED MAN

CATHY

GLADYS

CHARLIE

BUTCH

DR MARTZ

ROBERT

JACK

BENNY

DON SR.

BILLY NORRIS

JANET

LARRY

MR DALTON
MARY
PASTOR
TOM ELLIS, JUDGE
RECEPTIONIST 1
WOMAN 1
VOICE ON PHONE
MOTHER 1
TOMMY
BOY 1
BOY 2
BOY 3
WOMAN 2
LADY RUTH
MOVER 1
GIRL COUSIN 1
BOY COUSIN 1
STEWARDESS
BICYCLE KID
COWBOY 1