

SPLATTER

"Just Another Typical Working Day"

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Property of Paramount Television

TEASER

FADE IN:

EXT. MONA'S HOUSE - SUNDAY

A perfect Sunday morning. Tacky realty flags outline the lawn of a lower middle-class brick home in south Chicago. A "For Sale" sign stands in the lawn.

INT. MONA'S HOUSE - SUNDAY

Wearing her best church clothes, MONA (50's) puts an upbeat polka record on the old turntable in her spotless white living room.

Mona sits on her couch. Resolutely holding the gun to her head, she closes her eyes. Then slowly squeezes the trigger. CLICK! Nothing happens.

Mona investigates the chamber. Pulls out the bullet in question. The hammer left a dimple in the casing.

MONA

Somebody should put a freshness
date on these things.

Mona closes the chamber. Ready to try again. She returns the weapon to her temple and shuts her eyes tight. This time, the PHONE RINGS. Mona opens one eye. Should she answer it?

Gun in hand, a frazzled Mona approaches the phone. On the way, she steps on a child's toy truck. Mona trips and falls. The GUN FIRES.

Bits of Mona's brain and blood splatter on her carpet, her furniture and the vinyl LP. Her answering machine engages.

MONA (O.S.)

Hi, you've reached Mona. Sorry, I
can't come to the phone right now.
But please leave a message so I
don't have to endure thirty seconds
of dial tone.

BEEP.

SHEILA (O.S.)

It's Sheila. Just a friendly
reminder to tidy up a bit. Your
first open house is today.

SHEILA (O.S.) (CONT'D)
 And I don't want you embarrassed,
 when a bunch of strangers start
 traipsing through your house.

EXT. MONA'S HOUSE - SUNDAY

Yellow police tape joins the realty flags.

BUD ZAJICEK (30), an unkempt, teddy bear of a man and his brother, DAVE (27), gaunt and over-caffeinated, arrive in their white ZAJICEK BROS JANITORIAL cargo van. Their company slogan is emblazoned on the side: No Pain, No Stain.

BUD
 Whatta we got today, Dave?

As they climb out, Dave checks his worksheet. Their drab coveralls come complete with embroidered name tags.

DAVE
 Looks like another gun accident.

BUD
 Ouch!

SHEILA SLOTNIK (50's), the listed realtor, streaks across the lawn to greet them. Her business suit and close-cropped hair send mixed signals of bull dyke, cancer survivor and haute couture fashionista.

SHEILA
 Mr. Za-Ji-Sek, I'm Sheila Slotnik.
 And I'm so glad you're here.

BUD
 It's pronounced...

Sheila ushers them towards the house.

SHEILA
 It's unimaginable. Mona was my best
 friend, you know.

BUD
 It's pronounced Zai...

SHEILA
 (choking back vomit)
 And now...bits of her are
 splattered everywhere.
 (beat)
 Of course, this would be the day I
 pick for my open house. You have to
 clean this mess up as quickly as
 possible.

Bud treats his client with calm and polite understanding.

BUD

We have no idea what we're up against. The house might only need a light loufa but could, just as easily, require a major douching.

(beat)

And there's a chance we'll hafta come back a couple more times. Just to make sure Mona's blood stains don't haunt the place.

SHEILA

Come back?

(looking at her watch)

But people will start to arrive in the next couple hours.

BUD

Sheila, if we phone it in, the house will start to smell in a week. Is that what you really want?

SHEILA

Absolutely not. I want you to do a good job. A very good job. Just please, do it quickly.

Bud and Dave approach DETECTIVE MARTY BICKEL (40's), paunchy and punchy. Directing the lone UNIFORMED OFFICER to pull down the police tape. He greets our guys with an insincere smile.

BICKEL

I was wondering when the untouchables were gonna show up.

DAVE

Cut us some slack, Bickel. This is a rush job. And then we've got a multiple homicide across town which they tell me is a two-hoser.

Dave hands Bickel his clipboard.

DAVE

If you'll just sign the release, we'll get started.

BICKEL

Hang on. I don't sign nuthin until I've completed my thorough investigation and am convinced there's been no foul play.

Bud eyes the Uniformed Officer taking down the police tape.

BUD
Then what's he doin'?

Bickel's busted. He hocks a loogie into the grass and, reluctantly, signs the release.

BICKEL
Heaven forbid, I keep you ghouls
away from your scrubbing bubbles.

Bud and Dave share a knowing look -- pray for patience.

BICKEL
The only good thing about gun
accidents is those people aren't
around to pollute our gene pool
anymore.

BUD
It wouldn't hurt you to be a little
more sensitive.

BICKEL
I'm as sensitive as the next guy.
Hell, I got the whole first season
of "Sex And The City" on DVD.

Our guys escape Bickel's grasp just as DEPUTY CORONER DANA REILLY (27) wheels out Mona in a body bag. With black, Betty Page bangs, she's vibrant and vivacious (in a Gothabilly way).

DAVE
Here comes the Angel of Death.

BUD
Can you deal with her today?

DAVE
No way. Shoulda thought about that
before you married her.

Bud picks a flower from Mona's garden. He cautiously crosses the yard and hands it to Dana.

BUD
Hey, Dana. I killed something for
you.

Dana smiles cautiously. Putting the flower behind her ear.

DANA
Thanks, Bud. That's sweet.

Both struggle with an awkward silence that envelops them.

DANA
So...how's business?

BUD
Oh, you know. If they keep dying,
we'll keep trying.

Dana smiles awkwardly. Unable to force a polite laugh.

DANA
I've heard that one. A few times.

BUD
Oh, right. Sorry.

DANA
I know it's none of my business.
But we've been separated for almost
two years. Maybe you should think
about getting laid?

BUD
Are you coming onto me?

Dana shakes her head politely but negatively.

DANA
If I've learned anything, it's that
when it comes to romance, marriage
is a major buzz kill.

Just then, ANDREA (23), Mona's daughter, arrives in a rust-bitten junker. Looking too tired and harried for someone that young and pretty. Her son, HAYDEN (6), cautiously gets out but doesn't want to be here.

Once Andrea spies her mother's body, she rushes towards the gurney. Completely overwrought.

ANDREA
Is this her? Is this my mother?

Andrea tries to open the body bag.

DANA
That's really not a good idea.

BUD
Trust me, Miss. You don't wanna see
your mother like this.

ANDREA
Whatta you care? This isn't your
mother in here.

Andrea pulls at the zipper. Bud grabs her arms gently.

BUD

You don't want this image burned in
your memory.

Overcome with grief and frustration, Andrea attacks Bud.
Pummeling him with her fists and forearms.

ANDREA

Don't ever tell me what to do!

The policeman stops pulling down tape. Crossing the yard to
restrain Andrea. Hayden jumps to her rescue. Attacking the
policeman with his little fists.

HAYDEN

Leave my mom alone!

Andrea spits venom at Bud.

ANDREA

Who are you anyway? Why are you
here?

Sheila tries calm down Andrea.

SHEILA

It's okay, Andrea. I called him.
He's going to make it look like
none of this ever happened.

FADE OUT.

END OF TEASER

ACT ONE

FADE IN:

INT. MONA'S HOUSE - SUNDAY

In protective HASMAT gear, Bud stands in the doorway of Mona's house. Spritzing saltwater into the air.

BUD

Maka i'noa ka makua. Me ke kei'ki
hi'wa hi'wa. A me ka uhane
hemolele, Amene.

DAVE

Do we have to do this every time?

BUD

If I don't ask the god, Akua, to
make the kapu 'amama, the ghosts in
here will never find peace.

Bud unties a malei lei hung across the doorway. Grabs his cleaning supplies and enters the house. Dave close behind.

DAVE

But you're not qualified to perform
that ceremony. You've never even
been to Hawaii.

CUT TO:

Bud and Dave examine the blood spray on Mona's white couch.

DAVE

Well, whatta ya think?

BUD

I suspect it's a poly-blend. But
who can be sure? Federal law was
violated the minute the cleaning
label was removed.

DAVE

Lemme try my concoction of ammonia
and hydrogen peroxide.

Dave squeezes the liquid contents onto the stain. But the results are less than acceptable.

BUD

Maybe it's cotton.

Bud applies a bottle of ordinary shampoo to the stain. He smiles proudly. This does the job quite nicely.

DAVE
Impressive.

BUD
What can I say? It's a gift.

CUT TO:

As they work, Bud finds the yellow truck that triggered Mona's death. He carefully wipes her blood from it. Then rinses out his sponge in the "Brains" bucket.

DAVE
Whoa there. What are you doin'?

BUD
Rinsing my sponge.

DAVE
In the brain bucket? You know, perfectly well, the enzymes that dissolve blood clots turn gray matter into glue. Are you trying to make more work for us?

(beat)
Why do I even try to create a more efficient system, if you can't follow a few, simple procedures?

BUD
Sorry, I got a little distracted.

Bud shows Dave the toy truck.

BUD
Nuthin like a tragic death to take the shine off your childish innocence.

DAVE
Don't go there, Bud. Everyone dies. You can't change that.

Bud holds out the truck.

BUD
But if you could do something to make this kid's life a little easier, wouldn't you?

DAVE
You make it sound easy but it never turns out that way.
(beat)

DAVE (CONT'D)

Like that time you roped us into
dumping that guy's ashes on
Comiskey Field -- during a game.

BUD

I can't understand why anyone would
be a White Sox fan either. But it
sure made his widow happy.

DAVE

Along with breaking several state
and federal laws.

Dave gestures towards the bloody mess behind him.

DAVE

Our job description only requires
us to flush and floss these stains.

Above the stains, a few family pictures hang on the wall.

DAVE

Nobody's payin' us to deal with
their grief.

BUD

Who said anything about getting
paid?

INT. ANDREA'S APARTMENT - SUNDAY NIGHT

Bud KNOCKS. Using the feeble safety chain, Andrea cracks open
her door. In the background, Hayden plays a violent first-
person shooter video game.

ANDREA

Do I know you?

Bud offers up the truck with a friendly smile.

BUD

Hi. I'm Bud Zajicek. This is my
brother, Dave.
(cautiously)
You kicked my ass, this morning.

ANDREA

Sorry about that. But this is not
exactly the best day of my life.
Bud holds up the truck again.

BUD

We found this at your mom's house.
Is it okay if we come in?

ANDREA

Oh, sure. For a second, I guess.

Andrea lets them into her dishevelled apartment.

ANDREA

Sorry about the mess. I plan to
rejoin the world of the living,
some day.

Bud smiles cheerfully but Dave is disgusted by the clutter.
Instinctively alphabetizing a stack of CD's.

BUD

We're sorry about your mom. It's
never easy when a life reaches its
climax.

The 'L' train rumbles by. Shaking the room. Only Bud and Dave
seem to notice. Bud holds out the truck to Hayden.

BUD

Here ya go, pal. I thought you
might want this back.

When Hayden recognizes Bud, he runs to his mother. Shielding
her with a plastic broadsword in his hand. Andrea gently runs
her fingers through his hair.

ANDREA

Hayden, it's okay.

Bud holds out the truck again. Hayden, reluctantly, takes it.

ANDREA

Where are my manners? Can I offer
you a can of pop or something?

BUD

No, we're fine.

ANDREA

Are you sure?

Andrea enters her messy kitchen.

DAVE

We don't wanna be any trouble.
Andrea finds her cupboard bare.

ANDREA

(to herself)

Good one, Andrea. Offer 'em
something you don't have.

Andrea looks at all the photos on her fridge. A small shrine of Hayden at different ages. Mona in many of them.

ANDREA

I've made a mess of everything.

Andrea starts crying and can't turn it off. Hayden tries to comfort her but to no avail.

ANDREA

This is all my fault.

BUD

How could that be?

ANDREA

I knew my mom had a gun in her house. And I told her I didn't want it and Hayden there at the same time.

DAVE

So how does that make her death your fault?

ANDREA

If she hadn't been getting rid of that gun, none of this would have ever happened.

Andrea breaks down crying again. There's a KNOCK at the door. Reveal HELEN PAYNE (60's), Hayden's paternal grandmother. Her demeanor's warm and friendly but her expectations are not.

HELEN

I just heard about Mona. I'm so sorry.

Andrea dries her eyes.

ANDREA

Thanks, Helen.

Helen kneels in front Hayden. Making studied eye contact.

HELEN

And how's my only grandson doing?

Hayden simply shrugs his shoulders and looks at his feet.

HELEN

Would you like to spend the night at grandma's house?

Hayden shakes his head. Backing up into his mother's arms.

HELEN

You need time to deal with Mona's funeral and settle her estate. Maybe Hayden should stay with me for the next couple weeks.

ANDREA

That's nice of you to offer but I think I should be with him, right now.

HELEN

But you work full-time and go to school. How much time do you really have, Andrea?

Andrea's polite veneer wears thin.

ANDREA

Hayden, go to your room for a minute.

HAYDEN

But I don't wanna.

ANDREA

(gently but firmly)
I'm not giving you a choice.
Please, do it. Right now.

Dave wants to avoid this too. Kneeling next to Hayden.

DAVE

I bet you got a room full of really neat toys.

HAYDEN

My mom says I'm not allowed to play with strangers.

DAVE

I'm not a stranger. I'm Dave.
(cautiously)
Uncle...Dave.
(warmly)
And your mom's right here.

Resigned to his fate, Hayden leads Dave to his room.

HAYDEN

Is Uncle Dave sleeping over?

Helen's visibly appalled.

ANDREA
(embarrassed)
No, he's not that kind of uncle.

INT. HAYDEN'S ROOM - SUNDAY NIGHT

Just one look will tell you Hayden's obsessed with guns. Toy guns litter his room.

DAVE
I'm gonna go out on a limb and
guess you like guns.

Hayden aims a large water-soaker at Dave.

HAYDEN
I'm not goin' with my gramma.

Dave holds his hands in the air.

DAVE
Why? Don'tcha like her?

HAYDEN
I don't like her house. It smells
weird.

INT. ANDREA'S APARTMENT - SUNDAY NIGHT

Helen eyes Bud curiously. Not sure what to think of him.

HELEN
I only want to help, Andrea. And
Mona did so much for you. She
helped pay your tuition. And even
picked up Hayden after school so
you could attend classes.

ANDREA
I know something's gotta give.
That's why I'm quitting school. For
a while, anyway.

HELEN
But you may never go back. And
can't spend your life working
minimum wage jobs. It's not fair to
Hayden.
(beat)
I think you should consider moving
closer to me. So I can help.

ANDREA

That's nice to offer. But the added commute just means I'll have even less time to be with Hayden.

HELEN

Quite honestly, I don't see any other choice. Who else is going to help you?

(off Bud)

This guy?

Dave rushes into the room with Hayden on his back. They're having a great time together.

BUD

(timidly)

Yeah, sure. We could get Hayden home from school.

Andrea, Helen and Dave are shocked by this offer.

HELEN

What?

DAVE

What?

ANDREA

You can't be serious?

BUD

It's no big deal.

Bud smiles sheepishly -- not sure what he just stepped in.

DAVE (O.S.)

Good one, Bud.

EXT. ANDREA'S APARTMENT - SUNDAY NIGHT

Bud and Dave climb into their van.

DAVE

What about our business? We don't have time to run around town playin' soccer mom.

BUD

You saw the bind Andrea was in. What's the big deal?

Someone KNOCKS on the window. Bud rolls it down. Revealing Helen.

HELEN

I don't know why you're doing this
but I won't allow anyone to come
between my grandson and me.

(menacingly)

And I plan to make you regret it.

Bud smiles awkwardly. Not sure how to acknowledge this threat.

BUD

(weakly)

Okay.

Helen GROANS in frustration and storms off.

DAVE

Good one, Bud. Now, an old lady's
gonna kick your ass.

EXT. ZAJICEK BROS JANITORIAL OFFICE - MONDAY

The office is a converted house on a busy street with bars on the windows. HASMAT garbage bags pile up in the driveway.

MIMI (O.S.)

Whatta ya mean you're not coming
today? We can't just set those bags
out on the curb. They're full of
human waste. And it's starting to
reek.

INT. ZAJICEK BROS JANITORIAL OFFICE - MONDAY

MIMI (35), former trophy wife turned office manager, wrestles with HASMAT on the phone.

MIMI

Maybe I'll just leave 'em on your
doorstep. How would you like that?
Hello? Hello?

Mimi hangs up in disgust. She looks to Bud and Dave who sit opposite each other at an old metal desk.

MIMI

Remind me not to send those jokers
at HASMAT a Christmas card this
year.

The phone RINGS again. Mimi answers politely.

MIMI

Zajicek Brothers.

(beat)

Yes, we provide that service.

(beat)

That depends how much time it takes. Would you say the mess is bloody, really bloody or splattered everywhere?

Books about death, dying and grieving fill the bookshelf behind Bud. Along with shrunken heads, a Tibetan prayer drum, a dream catcher and other such trinkets.

DAVE

You offered to pick up the kid, so you go do it, today.

BUD

No problem. But I thought you liked kids.

Dave carefully arranges the desktop so everything is evenly spaced and organized.

DAVE

I do like kids. That has nothing to do with it. But we shouldn't have been there in the first place.

BUD

But there's gotta be more to this gig than just cleaning up blood and guts.

DAVE

What you need is a hobby...or a hooker.

BUD

Call me crazy but I don't find either to be personally-fulfilling.

Bud turns the phone back to a jaunty angle.

BUD

And the biggest problem a six-year-old should have is with the playground bully. What's so wrong with wanting to help him out?

DAVE

I didn't say it was wrong.

Dave returns the phone to its perpendicular perfection.

DAVE

It's just not normal. That's all.

BUD

And Hayden needs to be with his mom while he grieves.

DAVE

Your Associates Degree in Grief Counseling from Moron Valley Community College, hardly makes you an expert.

BUD

And what about Hayden's other grandmother. You saw that look in her eye. Who knows what she's capable of?

The phone RINGS. Mimi answers again.

MIMI

Zajicek Brothers. Bud?

Bud picks up the phone.

BUD

Ya-llo. Hey, Dana.
(excitedly)
Sure, I'll come right now.

Bud hangs up. Filled with boyish enthusiasm.

BUD

Dana wants to see me.
(off his watch)
Can you get Hayden today?

Dave folds his arms crossly. Not wanting to budge but does.

BUD

Thanks. I swear I'll get him tomorrow. Cross my heart.

Bud bumps the phone, as he rushes out the door. Dave GROANS in frustration.

INT. COUNTY MORGUE - MONDAY

Covered corpses litter the cold room. Bud bursts in with bags of carry-out Thai food in his arms.

BUD

Hope you like soup!

Dana smiles sweetly. Arm deep in a human chest cavity.

DANA

Bud, you didn't have to do this.

Bud lays out the styrofoam containers of phad thai and satay on a covered corpse. Then takes a deep, cleansing breath.

BUD

I love the mindless hum of the
fluorescent fixtures in here. It
helps center my 'tan jon.'

(beat)

So why d'ya wanna see me?

DANA

It's about that shooting we were at
yesterday. I just got yesterday's
toxicology report.

Dana hands the report to Bud.

DANA

One day before Mona Krupinski died
from a gunshot to the head, she
tried to overdose on sleeping
pills.

BUD

What?

DANA

I have to send my findings to the
family. And knowing how you are
about these things, I figured you'd
wanna break it to 'em gently.

BUD

But if Mona wanted to commit
suicide, why didn't she leave her
daughter a note?

Dana grabs a large, three-ring binder off a shelf.

DANA

Truth is -- only about 40% of
suicide victims ever leave notes.

Dana reads her collection of suicide notes aloud.

DANA

"I couldn't stand another day of
snow." "Don't blame yourself for
cheating on me." "Remember to feed
the dog."

(beat)

DANA (CONT'D)

Truth is, they're not usually all that enlightening.

BUD

This is a tough one, Dana. Is there any chance you could lose that report or something?

DANA

It's possible. But if somebody finds out...

BUD

Never mind. But at his age, the worst secret Hayden should find out is the carefully manipulated Santa Claus conspiracy.

FADE OUT.

END ACT ONE

ACT TWO

FADE IN:

EXT. DEMON DOGS - MONDAY

A small hot dog stand in the shadow of DePaul University. It even has a nice outdoor seating section (if you don't mind eating under the 'L').

INT. DEMON DOGS - MONDAY

Coroner report in hand, Bud steps up to place his order. Reveal Andrea on the other side of the counter.

ANDREA
(startled)
Bud, what are you doing here?

BUD
Is there some place we can talk?

ANDREA
Not during the lunch rush.

BUD
But it's important.

A HUNGRY CUSTOMER heckles Bud.

HUNGRY CUSTOMER
Hurry up, pal. I'm starvin'.

ANDREA
Please order something.

BUD
Was your mom sad or depressed? Did she just break-up with a boyfriend?

ANDREA
Why are you asking me this?

Bud eyes the surly strangers surrounding him.

BUD
There's gotta be somewhere we can talk alone. Please.

EXT. DEMON DOGS - MONDAY

Out back, Bud hands Andrea the coroner report.

BUD

The coroner says your mother's death was no accident.

ANDREA

Are you kidding? That's great news. It means...what does it mean?

BUD

She was trying to commit suicide.

Andrea nervously paces around stacks of empty containers.

ANDREA

What? No way. That's impossible. The police said her death was an accident.

BUD

Nothing else explains the sleeping pills found in Mona's bloodstream.

ANDREA

Maybe she was just having trouble falling asleep?

BUD

Andrea, nobody takes a hundred sleeping pills accidentally.

ANDREA

But why would she do this? She wasn't sick. She wasn't depressed.
(distraught)
It's my fault. I should have paid more attention. I should have seen the signals. I could have prevented this.

BUD

Don't start blaming yourself. There's no fool-proof way to prevent suicide.

Andrea turns her anger towards Bud.

ANDREA

Really? What makes you such an expert?

Bud hesitates. Pressed to answer a question he'd rather avoid.

BUD

My grandfather killed himself, when I was a kid. With a razor.

BUD (CONT'D)

To this day, nobody knows why.

(hesitantly)

And I was the first one to discover his body. I just didn't want my grandmother to see him like that. I tried to clean it up as best I could but...

ANDREA

(apologetically)

Oh my God! I had no idea.

BUD

It happened a long time ago. But my grandmother never got over her survivor's guilt. And I don't want that to happen to you.

ANDREA

But my mom loved me. She loved Hayden. She wouldn't do something like this without a reason.

(beat)

At the very least, she would have left me a note. She must have.

Andrea heads straight for her junker car.

BUD

Where are you going?

ANDREA

I'm gonna find that note.

INT. MONA'S HOUSE - MONDAY

Andrea tears apart her mother's bedroom. Looking for a suicide note with determined desperation.

ANDREA

My mother wouldn't do something this...horrible without a reason. You believe me, don't you?

BUD

I believe she loved you. But there's nothing rational about suicide.

In a closet, Andrea finds piles of her childhood artwork.

ANDREA

This is the woman I know. Someone who couldn't bring herself to throw crap like this away.

Bud opens a can of Play-Doh. Finding the contents petrified.

ANDREA

Someone who changed jobs just so
she could pick Hayden up from
school. Someone who...

(tearfully)

Someone who wouldn't abandon us?

Andrea angrily throws her childhood artwork across the room.

ANDREA

This is just a waste of time.

(tearfully)

I hate her so much for doing this.

I don't want to...but I do.

BUD

Mona's death isn't your fault. No
matter how it occurred. But this
kind of anger will eat you alive.

(beat)

Eventually, you've gotta put it
behind you. And that won't happen
until you forgive your mother.

ANDREA

But how can I without knowing why
she wanted to kill herself? Can you
understand that?

BUD

Probably a little too well.

EXT. MONA'S HOUSE - MONDAY

Bud and Andrea load cardboard boxes into his work van. Bud
checks out Mona's house.

BUD

Have you thought about moving home?
It's a nice neighborhood.

ANDREA

I wish I could. But I can't pay
that mortgage all by myself.

Bud motions to Sheila's realty sign in the yard.

BUD

At least, there'll be some money
from the sale of her house?

ANDREA

What money? My mom leveraged it to the hilt to help pay for my school.

BUD

Oh...right.

ANDREA

But the odd thing is I didn't know she was selling it. I saw my mom almost every day. Why would she keep that secret from me?

Bud scrutinizes Sheila Slotnik's name on the realty sign. Mona didn't keep that secret from everyone.

EXT. ELEMENTARY SCHOOL - MONDAY

Dave parks his work van outside the school in a tough, downtown neighborhood. He approaches Hayden who stands next to MISS VIRGILITO (20's), a pretty teacher.

DAVE

Hi, I'm Dave. Did little Hayden's mom tell ya I was pickin' him up?

Miss Virgilito nods her head.

HAYDEN

I'm not little. I'm almost seven.

DAVE

Sorry, H-man. I didn't mean anything by it.

HAYDEN

And my name's Hayden.

DAVE

Don't get all bent outta shape. I know your name.

(to Miss Virgilito)

This isn't goin' well.

MISS VIRGILITO

He's a good kid. He just needs a little time to adjust.

DAVE

Come on, Hayden. Let's get in my van and getcha home.

HAYDEN

But Gramma always took me home on the train.

DAVE
My van's right there. I can't just
leave it.

Hayden scowls and stomps towards the van.

DAVE
(to Miss Virgilito)
He'll warm up to me. Eventually.

Miss Virgilito looks past Dave and frowns. Dave turns. Spying Hayden climbing the steps to the 'L' train.

DAVE
I should probably go get him.

Dave runs frantically as Hayden boards the train.

INT. 'L' TRAIN - MONDAY

The train pulls away. A HOMELESS MAN takes the empty seat next to Hayden. Hayden doesn't like the way the man smells and changes seats.

From his new seat, Hayden surveys the seedy public transportation types around him. Regretting his decision.

EXT. STREET BELOW THE 'L' TRAIN - MONDAY

In his work van, Dave chases the 'L' train in vain. Swerving around traffic. Dodging cyclists. Rolling onto the sidewalk and into on-coming lanes to avoid stoppages.

Dave stops at the next station. Races up the steep staircase. Just as Hayden's train pulls in. Will he make it? No. Dave reaches the train just as it pulls away. He can see Hayden but can't reach him.

INT. ANDREA'S APARTMENT - MONDAY

Andrea picks up a small pile of laundry.

ANDREA
Is this all it takes to call Child
Services?

Helen leads social worker, JOCELYN BROWN (30's), around the apartment by the nose.

JOCELYN
When we get a phone call, we have
to investigate. That's the law.
(off her watch)

JOCELYN (CONT'D)
And when did you say your son,
normally, comes home?

ANDREA
Four o'clock. Usually.

HELEN
It's already 4:30.

ANDREA
I'm usually in class right now. My
mom used to get him. Maybe it takes
longer.

HELEN
And how well do you know the man
who's bringing him home, today?

Andrea's RINGING PHONE breaks the nervous tension.

EXT. 'L' TRAIN STATION - MONDAY

INTERCUT Dave talking on his cell phone.

DAVE
It's Dave. I've got bad news.
Hayden got onto the 'L' by himself.
He's heading your way.

ANDREA (O.S.)
Don't tell me that. Helen has a
social worker over here.

DAVE
So this probably wouldn't be the
best time for the little fella to
show up at your place all alone.

ANDREA
You got that right.

Dave looks at the metro map.

DAVE
Don't worry. I'll catch him. Or die
trying.

INT. ANDREA'S APARTMENT - MONDAY

Andrea eyes the social worker nervously.

ANDREA
(on the phone)
You better or I'll kill you.

Jocelyn opens the refrigerator door. Finding it mostly empty. Ticking off a box on her clipboard.

ANDREA

I was gonna stop at the store on my way home. But you said I needed to get here right away.

Jocelyn pulls out a bottle of chocolate syrup.

JOCELYN

Do you consider this to be part of a healthy diet?

ANDREA

That's mine. I'm a real addict. To chocolate, I mean.

Andrea spies a cockroach on the wall. Right next to Jocelyn (who hasn't seen it yet). Andrea tries to squish the bug without drawing any attention to herself. Carefully, very carefully. BANG! She doesn't quite pull it off.

EXT. CHICAGO'S MEAN STREETS - MONDAY

Dave's trapped in gridlock. POLICE MOTORCYCLES block the intersection for a funeral procession. The HEARSE slowly clears the intersection.

DAVE

(enviously)

Why couldn't that be me?

INT. ANDREA'S APARTMENT - MONDAY

Helen smiles smugly as Jocelyn continues her inspection. Andrea confronts her directly.

ANDREA

Why are you doing this? Why d'ya wanna tear us apart?

HELEN

You need time to get your act together. And it wouldn't hurt Hayden to spend some time with me. And his father.

ANDREA

Father? The only thing your son's ever cared about is copping bong hits and downloading free porn.

HELEN

He still deserves a chance to know his son. And learn there are more important things in life.

ANDREA

You just wanna save your son and can't do that without taking mine.

HELEN

I have Hayden's best interest at heart. And am starting to worry that he's not home yet, aren't you?

Andrea looks out the window. Another 'L' train passes but there's no sign of Hayden anywhere.

EXT. 'L' TRAIN STATION - MONDAY

Dave watches TRAIN PASSENGERS walk down the ramp. But can't find Hayden among them. He looks around frantically. Spying Hayden in the distance -- just as he turns a corner.

DAVE

Hayden!

Dave chases Hayden down the block.

DAVE

Hey. Hey! Hold up.

Dave grabs Hayden by the arms. Sternly confronting him.

DAVE

D'ya have any idea how dangerous that was? Promise me, you'll never do that again.

Hayden glares at Dave defiantly.

HAYDEN

Why? You're not my father.

DAVE

I'll tell you why. Because I said so that's why.

Dave looks up to heaven. Completely flabbergasted.

DAVE

Great, now I sound like my dad.

INT. ANDREA'S APARTMENT - MONDAY

Jocelyn hands Andrea a summons.

JOCELYN

This requires you to present your son to a judge next Monday. And if you want to keep him, make sure you're not late.

ANDREA

You can't be serious. I could actually lose custody of Hayden?

JOCELYN

That's for the judge to decide.

INT. SLUM HOTEL - TUESDAY

Bickel opens up a crime scene that's been locked down for several months. The smell is overpowering.

DAVE

Aw jeez, this one's a real tear down. D'ya think you sat on it long enough?

Bickel breathes through a handkerchief.

BICKEL

We've been trying to catch the psycho behind this for months. And had to wait for one of those celebrity psychics to sniff around the place.

BUD

Did it help?

BICKEL

Nope. But I know how much Oprah weighs.

Dave checks out the stains that have eaten through the carpet.

DAVE

I saw this one on the news. What did they call him? The Cicero Strangler or somethin' like that.

BICKEL

Whenever we get a serial killer, the media always tries to cash in with a brand name.

Bud opens a window.

BUD

Two deaths hardly rates serial killer status. Come on, this guy's no John Wayne Gacy.

BICKEL

I hear you're up to your old tricks again. When are ya gonna learn to steer clear of the surviving family? They're like drowning victims who'll just drag you down with 'em.

BUD

How'd you find out?

BICKEL

I know a lot more than I let on.

Dave looks behind the behind. He's completely disgusted.

DAVE

Aw God, what's that?

BICKEL

Looks like it used to be a goat.

DAVE

What's it doin' here?

BUD

I dunno. Either Ramadan came early this year or there's a major Satanic holiday that I'm not familiar with.

EXT. MONA'S HOUSE - TUESDAY

The real estate sign stands prominently in front of the house. Sheila Slotnik's name and photo branded upon it.

BUD (O.S.)

Mona never told Andrea this house was for sale. But she included you in on that little secret.

INT. MONA'S HOUSE - TUESDAY

Bud attends Sheila's open house.

BUD

D'ya have any idea why?

SHEILA

What business is it of yours anyway?

BUD

I suspect Mona was tying up the loose ends in her life and didn't want Andrea to find out.

SHEILA

What are you talking about?

BUD

Didn't you know? Mona wanted to kill herself.

This catches Sheila completely off guard.

SHEILA

What? But that gunshot was an accident. The police said so.

BUD

She also tried to overdose one day before a gun blew her brains out. That's probably more than a coincidence, don'tcha think?

SHEILA

Does Andrea know about this?

Bud nods head. This doesn't make Sheila happy.

BUD

And she's not dealing with it very well either. But who can blame her. Mona's left her in a pretty tough fix.

Sheila angrily opens the front door. Inviting him out.

SHEILA

You don't know anything about Mona. Or the hand she was dealt in her life. Having to raise Andrea all alone without any support from her alcoholic husband.

(beat)

And when Andrea got pregnant, Mona not only made sure she finished high school. She also did every thing she could to get Andrea through college.

(beat)

And Mona was no stranger to death either.

SHEILA (CONT'D)

She watched her own father die from brain cancer. So don't pass judgement on my friend until you know the whole story.

BUD

Look, I'm sorry. But I didn't cause the bloody mess in this room. Or the emotional one Mona left behind either.

When POTENTIAL BUYERS hear "bloody," they bolt out the door. Forcing Sheila to chase after them.

SHEILA

Please, don't go. I was going to tell you about the accident. And discount the asking price.

Bud's not proud of himself. Just then, the postal carrier drops Mona's mail through her door slot. Bud shuffles through the mail. Finding a legal letter from Rachel Johnston.

Sheila catches him red-handed.

SHEILA

I hope you're not planning on opening that.

INT. RACHEL'S LAW OFFICE LOBBY - WEDNESDAY

Bud and Dave enter the posh, lake-view Law Office of Mednik, Zeretsky, Zeretsky and Skolnik.

DAVE

Can this wait? Our best client's waiting for us. And this time needs more than just our standard rinse and spit.

BUD

There's only one reason why Mona would contact a lawyer. It must have something to do with her last will and testament. And I wanna hear Mona testify.

They approach the stalwart RECEPTIONIST (20's).

RECEPTIONIST

Are you here to fix the bathroom?

BUD

Umm, no. We need to speak to one of your lawyers, Rachel Johnston.

RECEPTIONIST
Do you have an appointment?

BUD
Do we need one?

The Receptionist smiles coldly in affirmation.

DAVE
(off his watch)
Can we go now?

BUD
This won't take long. If there's
any way we can skirt the rules.
Just this once.

The Receptionist smiles smugly and picks up the phone.

RECEPTIONIST
Security, we have a problem...

DAVE
Wait!

Dave reaches down to hang up the phone. She bangs his finger
with the receiver.

RECEPTIONIST
Nobody touches my phone.

RACHEL (30's), comes out to investigate the disturbance.
Wearing a sharp, business suit.

RACHEL
What's the problem, Dani?

Dave sucks on his sore finger.

DAVE
She hit me.

RECEPTIONIST
Don't worry, Rachel. Security's on
the way.

DAVE
We don't want trouble. Hell, I
don't even wanna be here.

BUD
Rachel Johnston? We need to talk to
you about Mona Krupinski.

RACHEL
Mona? You should probably come to
my office.

INT. RACHEL'S LAW OFFICE - WEDNESDAY

Rachel closes the door behind Bud and Dave.

RACHEL
Dead? Mona's dead? How? When?

BUD
Sunday morning. It was a suicide.

RACHEL
Suicide? Do you know why?

BUD
No. But we're hoping her will might
help answer that question.

RACHEL
I don't know anything about Mona or
her will. Are you guys cops or
what?

DAVE
No, we're only janitors. But we're
very good ones.

Bud eyes his brother irritably.

BUD
But if Mona wasn't preparing her
will, why did she contact you?

RACHEL
She didn't. I contacted her.
(reluctantly)
I, recently, discovered a lump on
my breast. And you have no idea how
hard it is for someone, in my
position, to track down my own
medical history.

BUD
But how could Mona help you with
that?

RACHEL
She's my birth mother.

FADE OUT.

END ACT TWO

ACT THREE

FADE IN:

EXT. RACHEL'S LAW OFFICE - WEDNESDAY

Rachel walks Bud and Dave to their van. They pass a massive red Calder stabile along the way.

RACHEL

I didn't know businesses like yours even existed. How do you guys deal with dead people every day and not have it affect you?

BUD

I prefer to think of them as the mortally-challenged.

(beat)

And right now, I'm more concerned about how Mona's suicide is affecting Hayden and Andrea. The last thing they need is to be pulled apart so soon after a tragedy like this.

(beat)

Which means we gotta make sure Hayden's other grandmother doesn't win his custody at that hearing on Monday.

Their van's parked in a cherry spot for police vehicles. Dave pulls down the "Official Police Business" placard.

BUD

You dunno how glad I am we found you. Who would have guessed that Andrea not only had a sister. But one who's a lawyer. That's gonna be so much help.

RACHEL

Don't take this the wrong way but I'm not comfortable reaching out to a family who relinquished me over thirty years ago.

(beat)

I have my own life. And my own problems. I'd just like to get my medical facts straight before I get the results from my biopsy on Friday.

EXT. UNITED STATES POST OFFICE - WEDNESDAY

Bud and Dave drop their cleaning supplies on the grand steps of Chicago's central post office.

BUD

Weren't we here last week?

Dave checks his worksheet.

DAVE

Just hope they don't start askin' for volume discounts.

INT. UNITED STATES POST OFFICE - WEDNESDAY

Bud mops a pool of blood off the inlaid marble floor. On hands and knees, Dave works out the stains in the grout.

DAVE

What d'ya think Andrea will think is worse? Learning her mom never told her she had a sister. Or finding out that sister doesn't want anything to do with her.

BUD

You can't blame Rachel. Wouldn't you be a little stand-offish, if mom and dad had given you away?

DAVE

Knowing what I know today, I'd say grateful would be a bit more accurate.

Dave looks at his watch and packs up his stuff.

DAVE

You'll hafta finish up alone. I've gotta pick-up Hayden. And Miss Virgilito doesn't like to be kept waiting.

BUD

You're kidding, right? It'll take hours to do this all by myself.

DAVE

What can I do? This free child care thing was your idea, remember?

INT. ZAJICEK BROS JANITORIAL VAN - WEDNESDAY

Dave talks to Mimi on his cell phone. Driving a morose and untalkative Hayden home in the van.

DAVE

Did HASMAT say why they can't pick up our garbage today?

(beat)

Well, when can they? Next week? That doesn't work.

(beat)

Mimi, I'm not blaming you. Don't worry. I'll figure something out.

Dave hangs up his cell phone. Glances at Hayden's scowl.

DAVE

Hey, you're not supposed to act like this for ten more years. D'ya wanna talk about it?

HAYDEN

How come it smells so bad in here?

Dave looks at the HASMAT garbage bags piled up in back.

DAVE

Just roll down the window. You don't wanna know.

Reveal a nasty bump on Hayden's forehead.

DAVE

Wanna tell me where that came from?

HAYDEN

I got into a fight at school and a kid hit me with a swing.

Dave winces just from the thought.

DAVE

It's hard to see that comin'. So who started it?

HAYDEN

Jake did. He said my grandma killed herself. But my mom said it was a s-sui-sui...

DAVE

Suicide?

Hayden nods his head. Dave shakes his.

DAVE
So did fighting make you feel any
better?

Hayden nurses his injured forehead with his hand.

HAYDEN
At least, I know why my head hurts.

DAVE
I know things are messed up. But
your mother loves you. And nuthin
will ever change that. Ya know that
right?

HAYDEN
So what? Doesn't mean I can stay
with her.

Dave frowns, as he drives past a hospital.

DAVE
Hang on, tight.

Dave swerves into the parking lot at the last possible
second.

EXT. HOSPITAL LOADING DOCK - WEDNESDAY

Dave stops beside some dumpsters bearing medical waste
warning signs.

HAYDEN
What are you doing?

Dave nervously scans the area. No one's around.

DAVE
It's called a dump and dash. Don't
tell your mother I did this either.

SECURITY CAMERA POV: Dave cautiously gets out. Opens up the
back door and carries two HASMAT bags to the dumpster.

TWO HOSPITAL SECURITY GUARDS block Dave's path as he returns
to the van.

SECURITY GUARD #1
What d'ya think you're doing?

DAVE
That's a very complicated question.

INT. ZAJICEK BROS JANITORIAL OFFICE - WEDNESDAY

Andrea enters the office. Set in over-drive.

ANDREA

Hi, I'm Andrea. Is my boy here yet?

MIMI

No, but I expect all of 'em any minute.

Andrea checks out the office. She finds a large wooden mask behind Bud's desk. Staring into its ugly face.

ANDREA

What's this thing?

MIMI

I think that's a West African death mask. But it's kinda hard to keep all of Bud's stuff straight.

ANDREA

Why does he have it?

MIMI

Let's just say both boys are obsessive in their own special ways.

RAY YAMPOLSKY (40's), wearing a cheap suit, interrupts them.

RAY YAMPOLSKY

Hey Mimi, are the guys here?

Ray holds out his hand and introduces himself to Andrea

RAY YAMPOLSKY

Ray Yampolsky. American Heritage Janitorial Supply. We carry the largest line of chemical disinfectants and anti-bacterial agents in the Chicagoland area.

MIMI

You'll hafta come back later, Ray.

RAY YAMPOLSKY

Just gimme two minutes.

Ray opens a large plastic bottle and hands it to Andrea.

RAY YAMPOLSKY

Go ahead. Pour it on the floor

Andrea dumps the bloody contents on the well-worn carpet.

ANDREA

What is this stuff?

RAY YAMPOLSKY

Pig blood. And I'm gonna prove how effectively our new line of blood wipes cleans up this nasty stain.

Ray clicks on a handheld UV light. Illuminating his face.

RAY YAMPOLSKY

Even in ultra-violet light.

Mimi ushers Ray out the door.

MIMI

You better go before the police find your blood on my floor.

Mimi shuts the door behind Ray and leans against it.

ANDREA

A week ago, I didn't know this world even existed. How d'ya deal with it?

Mimi sets orange safety cones around the wet stain.

MIMI

Last year, my husband was murdered by a disgruntled employee during his company's Christmas party.

(beat)

I'm so glad Bud stepped into my life that day. If he hadn't taken pity on me and given me this job, I dunno what I would have done.

ANDREA

I feel like I've joined some strange club where the only requirement is the tragic death of a family member.

MIMI

I'm afraid it's a club everyone belongs to. Can you think of any death that's not tragic?

The PHONE RINGS and Mimi answers.

MIMI

Zajicek Brothers.

Mimi's sunny demeanor quickly disappears.

MIMI
We're on our way.

EXT. HOSPITAL LOADING DOCK - WEDNESDAY

Hayden sits in the back of an open police cruiser. A PARAMEDIC tends to the bump on his head.

HAYDEN
Mommy, mommy!

Andrea rushes up and gives him a big hug.

ANDREA
My baby. Are you okay?

Jocelyn flags down a POLICE OFFICER. Standing by a handcuffed Dave with Mimi beside him.

JOCELYN
You can take him now.

DAVE
You're kidding, right?

JOCELYN
I take the safety of my children very seriously, Mr. Za-ja-kek. For your sake, I hope it wasn't you who hurt that boy.

Bud arrives, as the police load Dave into another cruiser.

BUD
Where are they taking Dave?

MIMI
To jail.

BUD
Okay.
(long beat)
Y'know why?

Jocelyn grabs Hayden by the hand and takes him to her car.

ANDREA
Where are you taking my son?

JOCELYN
I don't doubt you love your son, Ms. Krupinski. But I'm not convinced you're in a position to take proper care of him, right now.

A Police Officer helps Hayden into the backseat.

HAYDEN

Mommy! Don't let 'em take me!

ANDREA

But I'm here for him, right now.

JOCELYN

And where will you be tomorrow?
Until your hearing, I'll have to be
responsible for his safety.

Jocelyn drives away. Hayden looks out the back window.

HAYDEN

Mommy! Mommy! Mommy!

Andrea breaks down crying. Feeling completely powerless.

BUD

Don't worry, Andrea. We're just one
good lawyer away from getting
Hayden back home where he belongs.

Andrea wipes away her tears with her sleeve.

ANDREA

Don't take this the wrong way, Bud.
But I think you should stop helping
me. I mean what d'ya do to people
you don't like?

FADE OUT.

END ACT THREE

ACT FOUR

FADE IN:

INT. CHILD SOCIAL SERVICES - THURSDAY

Jocelyn Brown's overworked and underpaid. And Bud and Dave's persistent nagging isn't helping her get any work done either.

JOCELYN

I wish I could give all my clients the attention they deserve. But that would mean neglecting eighty percent of my case load.

BUD

But you have to admit it's best for Hayden to remain with his mom.

JOCELYN

But we don't live in a perfect world, do we?

(off Dave)

And your buddy, here, sure isn't making it any better.

DAVE

(reticently)

He's Bud. I'm Dave. And I already said I was sorry.

BUD

Can you just tell us what the problems are so we can try to fix 'em before Monday's hearing?

JOCELYN

That's such a boy thing. But in my line of work, there's no such thing as a quick fix.

BUD

Please, throw us a bone.

Jocelyn looks at her watch impatiently.

JOCELYN

Only if you promise to leave me alone so I can get my work done and home to my family sometime before midnight.

BUD

Cross our hearts.

JOCELYN

First, we look for signs of a stable home environment. Simple things like a clean house and milk in the fridge.

BUD

We can fix that. No problem.

Jocelyn SIGHS. She wishes it was that easy.

JOCELYN

I also need to believe Andrea can deliver that on a consistent basis. And I don't know how anyone could accomplish that in one weekend.

BUD

Trust me, we've done more with less.

DAVE

Yeah, like the time that sky walker fell off his wire and hit Dearborn at 45 miles-per...

BUD

Not now, Dave.

As our guys walk away, Bud formulates their game plan.

BUD

We gotta find Andrea's lawyer and help make sure he's done all he can before Monday's hearing.

DAVE

D'ya think we can really help him?

BUD

I don't see how we can make things any worse?

INT. LEGAL AID OFFICE - THURSDAY

Bud and Dave confront Andrea's lawyer, STU WISNIEWSKI (20's), who can't even find her case file.

STU WISNIEWSKI

What did you say her name was?

BUD

Krupinski. Andrea Krupinski.

Stu fumbles through more files.

STU WISNIEWSKI

And you're positive she's my client?

DAVE

She was here yesterday. A blonde girl. Looks like she could stand to put on a couple pounds.

STU WISNIEWSKI

Oh yeah, I remember her. She was hot. What was her name again?

Bud and Dave share a knowing look. This isn't going well.

INT. RACHEL'S LUXURY CONDO - THURSDAY NIGHT

Dave stands alone in Rachel's sparsely-decorated living room. It's all cold steel, blue and gray. Not a soft edge in sight.

RACHEL (O.S.)

I'll be right down.

Dave fumbles with a metallic object d'art. Form and function fused into unintelligible meaninglessness.

DAVE

Take your time.

Rachel enters. Even her comfortable clothes are too uptight.

RACHEL

Could you please put down my juicer? It's very expensive.

(beat)

And what's so important you couldn't tell me over the phone?

DAVE

Andrea needs a good lawyer for her custody hearing on Monday. And I was hoping you could help her out?

RACHEL

I'm sorry but I already log almost hours a week at work. And barely have enough time for my cat. Let alone for a family who didn't want me in the first place.

Dave finds a picture of Rachel on vacation with a HANDSOME, OLDER MAN.

DAVE

This your boyfriend?

RACHEL
 (uncomfortably)
 Sort of.

DAVE
 What? Is it not workin' out?

RACHEL
 (reluctantly)
 Well, it's complicated.
 (long beat)
 He's married. And my boss.

Dave puts the picture down as if it's contaminated.

DAVE
 Andrea's public defender can't
 remember where he parked his car.
 Let alone give her case the time it
 deserves.
 (beat)
 There's gotta be something you can
 do for your sister.

RACHEL
 I was raised an only child, Mr. Zaj-
 sek. So appealing to any sense of a
 sibling connection is just not that
 compelling.
 (beat)
 I also find out tomorrow if I might
 be dying. And that's all I can deal
 with, right now.

DAVE
 I can't force you to do anything.
 And I know your in a tough spot.
 But nobody's tombstone ever reads:
 'She was a good worker but we
 really didn't know her too well?'
 (beat)
 I'm afraid those stones just get a
 name and a date. And that's it.

INT. COUNTY MORGUE - FRIDAY

Bud finds Dana examining a severed head. The Reverend Horton
 Heat's GALAXY 500 blares on the boom box beside her.

BUD
 You busy? I brought ice cream
 sandwiches.

DANA

I could use a break. Just lemme
hose down, first.

Dana cleans up and takes an ice cream sandwich from Bud.

DANA

What brings you around here? Not
getting enough death at work?

Bud checks out Dana's gruesome work.

BUD

Maybe you should examine my head?
Andrea's lost custody of Hayden and
it's all my fault. I gotta learn to
mind my own business.

DANA

Don't be so hard on yourself, Bud.
Your heart's in the right place.

Bud straightens up. Completely exasperated.

BUD

And my head's up my ass. I only
wanna help. I just see so much
that's wrong in the world and...

He slumps on a gurney. Dana runs her fingers through his
hair.

DANA

It's not your fault people die.
Just think how messed up this world
would be if they didn't.

BUD

That doesn't help Hayden any. I
dunno. I just feel so...powerless.

DANA

You're the only person I know who
tries to save himself by trying to
save others.

(beat)

Tell me, have you had any luck
finding the motive for Mona's
suicide?

BUD

Nope. And every time I look at
Andrea, I see my grandmother all
over again. Why does stuff like
this always have to happen?

Bud fusses with Dana's dissection tools.

BUD
I almost forgot. I promised to call Rachel.

Bud finds her business card and dials his cell phone.

BUD
Not that I've got much to tell her. Andrea won't even return my calls.
(beat)
And the only thing I know about Rachel's medical history is that Mona's dad had brain cancer.

Bud closes his cell phone. Shocked by his own brilliance.

BUD
Ya know, what if Mona was sick? Terminally sick. From that same disease. That might push her into committing suicide.

DANA
It's possible. But I'd need a sample of her brain tissue to prove it.
(excitedly)
Which means we'll hafta exhume her body.

BUD
I dunno. There's gotta be some way that's a little less...creepy.

DANA
Are you kidding? I've always fantasized about digging up a grave with some big, strong guy.
(blushing)
But that's only half the fantasy.

BUD
No, I've got a better idea. And we won't even hafta get our shoes muddy to do it.

Bud grabs Dana and they rush out the door.

INT. RACHEL'S LAW OFFICE - FRIDAY

Dave steps into the doorway of Rachel's office. Finding her in a rush to get out the door.

DAVE
You gotta gimme two minutes.

RACHEL
I'm leaving to get the results of my biopsy. Is there any chance we can talk on Monday?

DAVE
But that's too late.
(beat)
Biopsy? Who's taking you?

RACHEL
No one. I'm going alone.

DAVE
You're going alone for something as important as that?

RACHEL
Yeah, sure. What's the big deal?

INT. ZAJICEK BROS JANITORIAL VAN - FRIDAY

Dave drives Rachel to the outpatient clinic for her biopsy.

DAVE
There are times in a person's life when you shouldn't be alone. And this is definitely one of 'em.

RACHEL
When you put it that way, it makes me sound kinda pathetic.

Dave hits a traffic snag. HONKING his horn.

DAVE
Move it, pal! This is a matter of life and death!

Rachel covers her face in embarrassment.

RACHEL
Please don't shout things like that.

INT. DR. LIPETZKY'S OFFICE - FRIDAY

Dave and Rachel pensively wait in an ugly office that can most politely be described as functional.

DAVE

Andrea needs a lawyer who'll walk into that court on Monday ready to take names and kick asses.

RACHEL

Even if I wanted to help, I couldn't. I'm a tax attorney. I don't understand family law.

DAVE

But you can't leave your sister's fate to some overworked public defender.

RACHEL

I've never even met my sister. And even if I found her the best family lawyer in the business, there's not enough time to prep her case properly.

Dave sits next to Rachel. Gravely staring into her eyes.

DAVE

I know you're head's somewhere else, right now. But I won't let you treat Andrea like some guy you can ditch the moment the relationship starts to feel like work. She's your sister. And that's a big responsibility.

Rachel doesn't want to hear any of this.

DAVE

You've met my brother. D'ya really think I like kneeling in blood with him all day?

(beat)

But I was not the little boy who discovered our grandfather in a pool of his own blood. He was.

(beat)

And I haven't spent my whole life thinking if I'd just cleaned up that bloody bathroom a little bit better, I coulda spared my grandmother a lifetime of guilt and misery.

Dave points to the name tag on his work uniform.

DAVE

And I sure wasn't the one who wanted to start this screwed-up business. But I'll be damned if I let Bud go through this all by himself.

Rachel wipes her eye. He's got her hook, line and sinker.

DAVE

Andrea doesn't need a lawyer. She needs a sister. And if her sister just happens to be a lawyer, I suggest you toss your weekend in the crapper and put that degree to work.

Rachel's inspired by Dave's pep talk.

DR. HEIDI LIPETZKY (O.S.)

Rachel? Your results are ready.

REVEAL DR. HEIDI LIPETZKY (40's), Rachel's oncologist. Rachel braces herself for the answer.

RACHEL

(hopefully)

And?

DR. HEIDI LIPETZKY

The test came up negative.

RACHEL

That's great.

Dave's confused.

DAVE

Isn't negative a bad thing?

EXT. ZAJICEK BROS JANITORIAL OFFICE - FRIDAY NIGHT

A disappointed Dana watches Bud dig through the HASMAT bags piled up on the driveway.

DANA

So this is what we're doing on a Friday night. I'm starting to remember why I left you.

BUD

Who'd have thought we'd be the beneficiary of government bureaucracy and inefficiency.

DANA
 (unenthusiastically)
 Yeah. Woo-hoo.

Bud finds the proper bag and opens it. Man, that smells bad.

BUD
 Got it. There should be enough of
 Mona's gray matter in here for you
 to prove she had cancer.

DANA
 But even if you're right, why
 didn't Mona just leave Andrea a
 simple note telling her this?

This deflates Bud's enthusiasm.

BUD
 Oh, yeah. Maybe there's still a
 chance we'll find it?

DANA
 But you searched her whole house.
 And it's not like the police would
 miss something that important.

Once again, Bud's gripped by his own brilliance.

BUD
 But the police didn't discover
 Mona's body, did they?

EXT. MONA'S HOUSE - SATURDAY

Bud finds Sheila locking up the house after another
 unsuccessful open house. She greets him with open disdain.

SHEILA
 You. Thanks to you, every realtor
 in the city knows how Mona died in
 this house. Now, nobody wants to
 buy the place.

BUD
 I know Mona had cancer.

SHEILA
 What?

BUD
 The coroner discovered it in a
 sample of her brain tissue.

Sheila looks like the sky has fallen.

BUD

But it's always bothered me that
Mona never left a note explaining
this to Andrea.

(beat)

Then I remembered you called me.
You called the police. And you were
the first person to discover Mona's
body. So you had to be the one who
found that note.

Forced into the position of villain, Sheila shows her hand.

SHEILA

Mona swore a long time ago that
she'd never die like her father.
And wouldn't put her family through
that same ordeal.

(beat)

So when she died the way she did, I
figured, why tell her anything?

BUD

But you kept the note after we
learned about Mona's suicide
attempt.

SHEILA

I tried giving that note to Andrea
a hundred times. But I could never
find the right time or the right
way to do it. I guess I was too
ashamed.

(beat)

I'm not a bad person. I was just
trying to help, Andrea. Can you
understand that?

Bud softens towards Sheila. He understands too well.

BUD

If you'd like, I could give her the
note. I dunno. Tell her I found it
under a mattress or something.

Sheila gratefully takes the note from her purse.

SHEILA

Thanks. That would help a lot.

INT. FAMILY COURT - MONDAY

Monday. There's nothing warm or fuzzy about this court
bearing the "family" adjective. It has the same desperate
energy as a Hollywood casting call.

There's HELEN's LAWYER, HAYDEN'S LAWYER and Andrea's lawyer, Stu Wisniewski. And nobody's smiling.

JUDGE HYRAM GOLDSTEIN (60's) wields an iron-fist to keep his heavy case load from drowning all of them.

JUDGE GOLDSTEIN
Does the defense rest?

Stu shuffles his pile of poorly organized paperwork.

STU WISNIEWSKI
Sure, your Honor.

JUDGE GOLDSTEIN
Before I make my decision, I'd like to thank counsel for their hard work and dedication.

(beat)
And given the circumstances, I think the child's mother would benefit from having six months alone to get her life back together.

All of Andrea's hope dies right here. Until Rachel bursts into court with an armful of paperwork. Bud and Dave in tow. Rachel crosses the banister and joins Andrea's table.

JUDGE GOLDSTEIN
And who are you?

RACHEL
I'm Rachel Johnston. I'm here to defend my client, Andrea Krupinski.

JUDGE GOLDSTEIN
It's a little late for that, counselor. The defense has rested its case.

RACHEL
Have you awarded custody yet, your Honor?

JUDGE GOLDSTEIN
I was just about to grant custody to the boy's grandmother.

Helen smiles. Her lawyer congratulates her.

RACHEL
I have a personal stake in the outcome of this case. If it pleases the court, I'd like to make my bid for custody.

JUDGE GOLDSTEIN
And why would I give him to you?

RACHEL
Because I'm Andrea's sister.

ANDREA
Sister?

This pronouncement gets everyone's attention. Rachel hands paperwork to the BAILIFF to present to the judge.

RACHEL
Half-sister, technically. But my adoption papers prove my biological status. And justifies my claim for custody.

Judge Goldstein views the paperwork in disbelief.

ANDREA
I have a sister?

Andrea turns to Bud.

ANDREA
How long have you known this?

JUDGE GOLDSTEIN
Silence in my court room.

Helen's Lawyer stands -- enough is enough.

HELEN'S LAWYER
Your Honor, this is most irregular. I demand that you grant immediate custody of the child to my client and proceed with your extensive backlog of cases.

JUDGE GOLDSTEIN
Don't tell me how to run my court, Adam.

Rachel approaches the bench with more paperwork.

RACHEL
Your Honor, the boy's grandmother has no legal standing for custody.

The judge views this paperwork with great interest.

RACHEL
At the time of his birth, Hayden's father relinquished all parental rights to avoid child support.

RACHEL (CONT'D)

(beat)

Which relinquished the legal rights
of the paternal grandparents, as
well.

(beat)

Leaving me the only living relative
willing and able to care for
Hayden.

Stu shuffles through his paperwork.

STU WISNIEWSKI

How did I miss that?

Judge Goldstein holds up a hand to silence Helen's Lawyer.

JUDGE GOLDSTEIN

I award temporary custody of Hayden
Krupinski to his aunt, Rachel
Johnston.

(beat)

But note, we'll set a hearing in
six months to determine his
mother's fitness to regain custody
of her child, at that time.

The judge BANGS HIS GAVEL. Andrea's strangely calm.

ANDREA

I have a sister.

INT. MONA'S HOUSE - WEDNESDAY

Andrea answers the door. Reveal Bud and Dave who hand her a
house warming gift.

ANDREA

Hey! What a surprise! Thanks.

(losing enthusiasm)

It's a fruit basket.

DAVE

It's the best one we could find at
Cracker Barrel.

BUD

You'll wanna crack open the wine
cheese log. It's excellent.

Bud and Dave enter the house. Finding Rachel and Hayden
playing on the living room floor.

DAVE

How's family life treatin' ya?

RACHEL
(mocking Dave)
Lemme tell ya, it sure beats dyin'.

Bud turns to Andrea.

BUD
Correct me if I'm wrong but I
thought you couldn't afford the
mortgage.

RACHEL
That was my idea. I don't know
anything about raising kids. And
figured I could use the help of a
real expert.

HAYDEN
You guys make it sound like I'm a
lotta work or something.

ANDREA
Umm, yes. That's exactly what we're
saying.

Dave presents Hayden with a video game CD.

DAVE
Thought we might try this out
together. There aren't any guns but
the guys really kick the crap outta
each other.

Dave and Hayden sit down and start playing. Andrea gives Bud
a big hug.

ANDREA
Thanks for everything. If you
hadn't made my life so miserable,
things would have never worked out
like this.

BUD
You're welcome. I guess.
(beat)
But I've got one more thing for
you. It's from your mom.

Bud hands Andrea the suicide note. Andrea sits down on Mona's
couch before reading it aloud.

ANDREA
Dear Andrea, I know you're mad at
me, right now. And it looks like I
took the easy way out.

INT. MONA'S HOUSE - DAY - FLASHBACK

Mona cares for her bedridden FATHER (60's). YOUNG ANDREA (5) plays nurse with some dolls nearby.

MONA (O.S.)

But believe me, the alternative was much worse. I know because I've lived through it once. And I refuse to let this disease repeat history on anyone I love.

EXT. ROADSIDE - DAY - FLASHBACK

As steam pours out of their engine, PARAMEDICS help ANDREA (16) give birth in the back of the car. Mona by her side.

MONA (O.S.)

And you're so much stronger than you even realize. Raising Hayden alone won't be easy but, at least, you'll be spared those regrets I've carried with me my whole life.

INT. MONA'S HOUSE - DAY - FLASHBACK

Mona climbs down the step ladder set below the attic crawl space. Gun in hand. She spies her own reflection in the glass of a portrait of Andrea and Hayden. A tear rolls down her cheek.

MONA (O.S.)

Please believe that I love you. I love Hayden. And I pray God will care for you, when I'm gone.

Mona puts the polka record onto the turntable. Then carefully sets the suicide note on the coffee table.

END FLASHBACK.

INT. MONA'S HOUSE - WEDNESDAY

Tears and hugs flow like cheap Champale. Andrea turns to Bud as she tries to wipe away her tears.

ANDREA

For some reason, I thought this note would make me feel better. How long will it be like this?

BUD
I dunno. But I can offer a short-
term solution.

Bud hands her a can of Play-Doh.

ANDREA
Is this for Hayden?

BUD
No, it's for you.

Andrea's confused.

BUD
Open it...and smell.

Andrea takes a whiff. Smiling immensely.

ANDREA
It smells like my childhood.

BUD
It only last a few seconds. But
trust me, it's plenty.

Dave smiles at Bud warmly. Confirmation that his big brother,
finally, did something right for a change.

FADE TO BLACK.

THE END