

THE GRIEF RANCH

by

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INT. TERESA'S HOUSE - DAY

TERESA, Latina, 35, is stirring a pot of macaroni and cheese. There is a big pile of DIRTY DISHES in the sink, and DIRTY CLOTHES on the sofa. Her daughters KATRINE, 5, and ROWENA, 4, come in with dirty faces from playing outside. Teresa's eyes stay on her stirring.

ROWENA

I'm hungry!

TERESA

I'm making dinner, okay?

KATRINE

What are we having?

TERESA

Macaroni and cheese.

ROWENA

We had mac and cheese yesterday.

TERESA

I don't care. It's what we're having.

Katrine opens the refrigerator door.

KATRINE

Mommy, there's still mac and cheese in here.

TERESA

I know.

No, she didn't. She forgot.

ROWENA

I'll get the juice.

KATRINE

Then why are you making more?

TERESA

Okay, I *don't* know, alright? I'm just trying to cook something. This one has peas in it.

Teresa rinses off her hands and dries them with a DISH TOWEL. Rowena grabs a BIG ORANGE JUICE BOTTLE from the fridge.

KATRINE

But there's some right here. You don't need to cook more.

TERESA

I'm just trying to feed you kids, okay?!

ROWENA

Mommy, don't yell.

TERESA

(tears in her eyes)
I'm not yelling!

KATRINE

Mommy, it's okay. We can do it.

Teresa sighs and holds the dish towel to her chest. Katrine takes the leftover MAC AND CHEESE out of the fridge, but accidentally spills it on the floor. It too has peas in it.

TERESA

Great! Now look what you did! I don't need any help!

Rowena has TWO GLASSES and is unsteadily trying to pour the juice.

ROWENA

Katrine made a big mess!

Teresa tosses the DISH TOWEL down on the counter by the stove and snatches the juice bottle away from Rowena.

TERESA

Rowena please, just sit down.
Katrine, sit down. You're in the way,
both of you! I'll take care of it!

There is a KNOCK at the door. Rowena takes a step toward the door.

TERESA (cont'd)

Rowena, don't step in it! *Mierda!*

Rowena freezes. Teresa sets the juice on the table and goes to answer the door. Rowena notices the dish towel is too close to the STOVE BURNER and has caught fire.

ROWENA

Mommy, it's burning!

TERESA

What?

ROWENA

The dish towel, it's burning!

TERESA

Ay, Dios!

FATHER ENRIQUE

(through the door)

Teresa, are you okay?!

Teresa rushes back toward the stove, but meanwhile Katrine grabs the juice and uses it to put out the fire.

TERESA

Katrine! No!

FATHER ENRIQUE, Latino, 50, dashes through the door, along with Teresa's mother, ANITA, Latina, 57.

FATHER ENRIQUE

Are you okay? Kids, are you alright?

KATRINE

Yeah. Mommy's mad.

Teresa breaks down and cries. Father Enrique hugs her gently, while Anita sees to the kids.

ANITA

Ay, niñas, let's clean this up, okay?

ROWENA

Is it me? Is mommy mad at me?

ANITA

No, cariño, she's not mad at you.

ROWENA

But that's all who's here. Just me and Katrine.

ANITA

I think maybe she's mad at God, sweetheart.

KATRINE

Is it okay to be mad at God?

FATHER ENRIQUE

It's going to be okay, Teresita. God
has found help for you.

2 INT. JOSH'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

JOSH EDMUNDS, 17, lanky and athletic, and his mother DIANE,
40, argue. Diane is patient, but tired.

JOSH

I'm not going.

DIANE

Dr. Swanson thinks it's a good idea.

JOSH

Dr. Swanson doesn't know anything.

DIANE

Josh, you're hearing voices.

JOSH

I'm hearing *Dad*.

DIANE

Josh, your father's gone.

JOSH

I know that!

DIANE

I've already paid the fee. You're
going.

JOSH

What if he doesn't come?

DIANE

What? Who?

JOSH

What if Dad doesn't come with me?

DIANE

Josh, if your father is trying to
talk to you, in spirit or something,
then he should be able to go
anywhere, right? If it's really your
dad, he'll talk to you, and if it's
not, then the therapist will help you
get better.

JOSH
I'm not crazy.

3 EXT. MIDDLE CLASS HOME - BACKYARD - DAY

Funeral reception: About 20 people with food and drinks speak in hushed tones.

SUZETTE, 21, slim and pretty, sits on the SWING of an old SWING SET. As she gets up and walks toward the house, all eyes turn to her. As she reaches the back door, everyone goes quiet. Suzette pauses, takes a deep breath, walks inside.

MOURNER #1
Poor girl.

MOURNER #2
Poor girl? What about her sister?

MOURNER #1
I don't think I could live with myself.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

The house is full of mourners. There is a PHOTO of Suzette's sister, REBECCA, framed by BOUQUETS OF FLOWERS. As Suzette enters the kitchen, her mother, MARY, 45, turns to her father, DAN, 48, and hisses:

MARY
Get her out of my house!

He hesitates.

MARY (cont'd)
Now!

Dan tries to gently turn Mary away from Suzette. Mary points to the photo, as she excoriates Suzette.

MARY (cont'd)
(to Suzette)
She was the good one. Why wasn't it you?

DAN
Mary, she's your daughter.

MARY
 She is *not* my daughter! My daughter
 is *dead!*
 (to Suzette)
 And *you* killed her!

Mary breaks into hysterical sobbing as Dan hugs her close and, behind her back, gently waves Suzette away. Suzette bolts out the front door of the house, crying.

4 INT. HOSPITAL INTERIOR - DAY

Kelly, a hospital administrative worker, 50, chubby, types away at a computer on a hallway counter next to a NURSE. A hospital volunteer, CLARA, 65, is pushing a PATIENT in a WHEELCHAIR, as they carry on a cheerful conversation.

CLARA
 Then my youngest grandson, Charlie,
 oh, he's just a little ball of
 lightning, he is!

The wheelchair hooks on a MEDICATION CART, dragging it.

KELLY
 Jesus, watch where the hell you're
 going!

CLARA
 Sorry, I--

KELLY
 You could've spilled meds everywhere!

CLARA
 But...I didn't.

KELLY
 Just move on!

Clara struggles to disentangle the wheelchair from the cart.

KELLY (cont'd)
 Go! Idiot!

Clara, red-faced, frees the cart and rushes away awkwardly. The NURSE answers the desk phone.

NURSE
 (on phone)
 Yeah, she's here. Gladly.
 (MORE)

NURSE (cont'd)
(to Kelly)
Supervisor wants to see you. Now.

KELLY
(under her breath)
Bitch.

Kelly goes down the hall, enters her supervisor's office.

5 INT. SUPERVISOR'S OFFICE - DAY

The SUPERVISOR, 60, takes a deep breath to control her anger as Kelly enters.

KELLY
Well? Now what?

SUPERVISOR
Kelly, I'm going to have to let you go. Unless...

Kelly is stunned.

KELLY
Let me go? I've been here for years.

SUPERVISOR
Each year angrier than the last. We sympathized after your son died, but this has just gone on too long.

KELLY
I'm not stealing meds, they're prescription!

SUPERVISOR
That's not the issue. I did some checking around and I found a grief therapy facility. Insurance covers it. You leave Friday.

KELLY
What if I refuse to go?

SUPERVISOR
Clean out your desk.

KELLY
Fuck.

6 INT. ALLISON'S LIVING ROOM - DAY

ALLISON, 55, blonde, perfect yoga body, stands in her living room talking with her daughter NINA, 30, brunette, five months pregnant.

ALLISON

I'm not going to some damn ranch out in the middle of nowhere! I'm staying right here in my house--the house David and I've lived in for 32 years.

NINA

Mom, I'm not going to expose my family to this any longer.

ALLISON

Expose them to what?

NINA

Mom, you're angry. All the time.

ALLISON

Why shouldn't I be angry? Your father knew he was diabetic and he still didn't take care of himself. You know he was eating *donuts* at work?

NINA

Mom, diabetes wasn't the cause of death.

ALLISON

The point is, he left me. And he left you.

NINA

I'm not going to have my baby start her life in a house full of anger.

ALLISON

You can't live somewhere else. I need the rent money.

NINA

Eric and I have already been looking online for an apartment.

ALLISON

Fine. I'll just get someone else to live here.

NINA

Mom...

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EXT. STREET - DAY

MIKE 52, is walking slowly down a side street. FRANK, 64, pulls up abruptly in his car. He calls to Mike through the window.

FRANK

Mike!

Mike keeps walking. Frank speeds the car ahead abruptly and into the next driveway, cutting off Mike's path. Mike stops. Frank gets out of the car and talks to him.

MIKE

I'm not coming back, Frank. I told you that. Not now. Not in the fall.

FRANK

What are you always telling your kids, Mike? "Never give up. Don't give up, no matter what."

MIKE

That's sports, Frank. Sports.

FRANK

No, when you tell 'em that, you're talking about *life*, and you know it. Look, Mike, one of the school counselors told me about this ranch, with this therapist who specializes in grief.

MIKE

(skeptical)

A ranch.

FRANK

She's really good, Mike. The best.

Mike looks away. Frank takes a piece of paper out of his pocket.

FRANK (cont'd)

I printed this out from the website. You don't have to like what it says. In fact, don't read it. Just go. The school board has agreed to pay for it.

MIKE

Because the bastards don't think I'll go.

FRANK

Actually, yeah. Still, it's approved.

Frank puts the paper in Mike's shirt pocket. He claps his hand on Mike's shoulder.

FRANK (cont'd)

Please, Mike. Go.

Frank gets back in his car. Mike waits impatiently until Frank starts the car and backs it out onto the street.

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EXT. - STREET - SMALL TOWN - LATE AFTERNOON

Outside a small diner, Josh waits on a bench with his duffel bag. The ranch caretaker, ROLLIE, 64, weathered face, pulls up in an extended cab PICKUP TRUCK, gets out.

ROLLIE

You must be Josh.

JOSH

Yeah.

ROLLIE

I'm Rollie, caretaker for the ranch.
You can throw your duffel in the
back.

Josh throws his duffel bag in the truck bed, and gets in the front seat. Rollie drives a bit, trying to get a sense for Josh's mood.

ROLLIE (cont'd)

You're the last one. Everybody else
is there.

JOSH

Have they done this before? This
"grief ranch" thing?

ROLLIE

Hm. Nope, you all are the first.

They drive a little further in silence.

JOSH

It's nice out here. I like the
country.

ROLLIE

You're the first one of the bunch to say more than two words on the ride in.

JOSH

They're all sad and depressed, I guess.

ROLLIE

You're not?

JOSH

Well...I was. I am sometimes. But not all the time.

ROLLIE

Yeah?

JOSH

My dad...he talks to me sometimes. My mom says I shouldn't tell people, but I don't care.

ROLLIE

Your dad the one you lost?

JOSH

He passed about three months ago. At first it was really tough. But then one day I just felt the urge to go to this place my dad and I used to hike. When I got to the top and rested for a minute, I heard my dad's voice.

ROLLIE

Wow.

JOSH

He says, "Beautiful day." And I thought, yeah, it is. And for that moment, I was just thinking about the beauty of the place, and how lucky I was that he was my dad.

ROLLIE

Huh.

JOSH

Part of me felt bad about *not* feeling sad--ya know? But another part was just glad to feel happy again for a minute.

ROLLIE
That all he said?

JOSH
That's all he *had* to say. When he said "beautiful day," I *felt* it. It's like he helped me feel life again.

They drive in silence for a while.

ROLLIE
Here we are. The grief ranch.

9 EXT. GRIEF RANCH - DUSK

Rollie and Josh enter the main building.

ROLLIE
Okay, let me show you your room first. You can dump your duffel and then decide where you want to hang out for the evening. There's nothing on the schedule til tomorrow.

They walk upstairs to Josh's room. It's small, but cozy.

ROLLIE (cont'd)
The bathroom's down the hall. There's another full bath on the first floor, and maybe you noticed the half bath by the front door.

JOSH
Yeah.

ROLLIE
First group session is in the morning, 9:00am. Breakfast is from 8:00 to 9:00. There's some grief literature in the living room. I'll be in the dining room if you need me. Ever I'm not there, my room's on the first floor, last one at the end of the hall. I'm available 24/7. Got it?

JOSH
Last room, end of the hall. What's the wifi password?

ROLLIE

No Internet. Dr. Charney says it wouldn't be conducive to the healing process. There's no cell reception either. If anyone has to make an emergency call, you can use the land line in the kitchen. If anyone back home really needs to contact you, they have that number. Or they can email us, and we'll let you know. You good?

Josh sets his duffel bag in a corner.

JOSH

I'm good. Thanks, Rollie.

ROLLIE

24/7.

Josh nods, gives a thumbs-up. Rollie goes downstairs, Josh follows. Rollie passes through the living room into the dining room. Josh walks into the living room. There he sees Teresa, an unopened magazine in her lap, staring off at nothing. Kelly, agitated, flips through a magazine. Allison is doing yoga. There is a neat stack of PAMPHLETS on the TABLE.

JOSH

Hello.

No answers.

JOSH (cont'd)

Good evening.

Teresa looks up, then back down again. Allison meets his gaze briefly, but keeps on with her yoga.

KELLY

(not meeting his
gaze)

Hi.

JOSH

I'm Josh.

No replies.

JOSH (cont'd)

Am I the only guy here?

Allison switches to another yoga position.

ALLISON
Mike's outside on the balcony.

10 EXT. BALCONY - EARLY NIGHT

Josh finds the door to the balcony, and goes out. Mike is at the far end. Considering the lukewarm reception he got inside, Josh stays by the door, looks up at the early night sky, stars beginning to come out. He climbs onto the railing, dangles his legs over, and gazes at the stars.

JOSH
(quietly)
Dad?

Josh scans the sky as if an answer might come.

11 INT. KITCHEN - EVENING

Rollie is having a CUP OF COFFEE. He has a JOURNAL and a PEN, and is taking a few brief notes. EARL, 45, African-American, athletic build, walks in with a confident stride, opens the fridge. There is one BEER inside.

EARL
I had a twelve-pack in here. What happened to the rest?

ROLLIE
Dr. Charney said she didn't want any alcohol on the premises. I saved you the one.

EARL
Charney's renting the ranch for the week. She doesn't get to decide ranch policies, nor dictate what I do.

ROLLIE
It's in the contract you signed.

EARL
I know. Doesn't mean you had to abide by it. Speaking of, shouldn't she be here by now?

ROLLIE
Woulda thought so. Have you met your guests yet? Said hi?

EARL
They're not my guests, Rollie.

ROLLIE
It's your ranch, Earl.

EARL
I don't really want to be part of this thing. I prefer regular, happy dude ranch type guests.

ROLLIE
'Cept we ain't had none of those yet.

EARL
We will. It takes some time for the marketing to kick in. You wanna call her?

ROLLIE
You're the one who set this up. But yeah, if you go introduce yourself to these folks--let 'em know who you are, in case they need anything--I'll make the call.

EARL
In case they need anything, *you* can help them. I'll call Charney.

Earl grabs a NOTE off the FRIDGE and picks up the handset of the WALL PHONE.

12 INT. DINING ROOM - MORNING

Rollie is serving breakfast to those present: Allison, Kelly, Teresa, and Mike. HAM AND EGGS are already on their plates, and there's a BOWL OF FRUIT on the table. They have their coffee, tea, and juice.

ROLLIE
I'm gonna go get those kids outta bed, in case they want some breakfast.

As Rollie leaves the dining room, he passes Josh entering.

ROLLIE (cont'd)
Oh good, you're up.

JOSH
I smelled breakfast.

ROLLIE
Help yourself.

Rollie goes to wake up Suzette. Josh enters the dining room and helps himself to a big plate of food.

KELLY
Well, someone's got an appetite.

JOSH
It looks good.

The group eats in silence. Teresa has no food, just nurses a cup of tea.

13 INT. SUZETTE'S ROOM - HALLWAY - DAY

Rollie knocks on the door.

ROLLIE
C'mon, Suzie!

SUZETTE
I told you last night, I don't want breakfast.

ROLLIE
That's fine. But you need to be at the table, 'cause I have an announcement.

SUZETTE
Alright. Gimme a minute.

ROLLIE
I'll be right here.

After a minute, Suzette comes out, dressed in jeans and a sweatshirt, hair uncombed.

SUZETTE
It's "Suzette."

ROLLIE
Suzette. C'mon, sweetheart.

14 INT. DINING ROOM - DAY

Rollie enters with Suzette. When Mike sees her, he flinches a little.

ROLLIE
Everybody, this is Suzette. She was
the first here, but she's been in her
room.

JOSH
Hi.

They look at her, but no one speaks.

ROLLIE
Talkative bunch.

No reaction.

ROLLIE (cont'd)
You're going to be spending a week
together. You really oughta at least
say hi.

KELLY
Hello.

ALLISON
Hi.

TERESA
(with effort)
Hello.

Mike is silent. Rollie fixes him with a stare, kind but
persistent.

MIKE
(voice cracking a
little)
Hello.

ROLLIE
Okay, good. Since you don't seem in
the mood--who could blame ya--I'm
gonna do the introductions. Some of
you may have met last night. Anyway:
(pointing)
Suzette, Josh, Mike, Allison, Kelly,
Teresa. I mentioned yesterday, you
might see Earl around, but he's not
participating, he's just the owner of
the ranch.

So, a little announcement: When Dr.
Charney didn't arrive last night,
Earl called her.

(MORE)

ROLLIE (cont'd)

Turns out Dr. Charney--who was five months pregnant--went into early labor yesterday. So, she won't be joining us.

KELLY

"Won't be joining us"? She's the whole reason we're here!

ALLISON

Uh, no, she's *not* the reason we're here.

KELLY

You know what I mean.

ROLLIE

So, we gotta figure out what we're gonna do. First question: Stay or go?

KELLY

If I go back, my boss is gonna fire me.

ALLISON

If my daughter knows I quit, she's gonna move out, and I can't afford to stay in my house without her.

SUZETTE

I can't go back to my family, and I don't know where else to go.

MIKE

I'm leaving. I didn't want to come here, anyway.

JOSH

I like this place. I'm gonna stay.

Teresa, eyes wet with tears forming, looks out the window as if there is an answer out there, then looks down at the floor.

TERESA

I can't go back to my children how I am now.

ROLLIE

Okay, well, Earl and I have an appointment in town at 10:00, so Mike, if you don't mind, I'll just drive you in then.

MIKE

Sure. I'll go grab my suitcase.

ROLLIE

I guess the rest of you can get showered or whatever you do to start your day. When I get back from town we can figure out what the heck we're gonna do with our time here.

Earl pops his head in through the veranda door, catches Rollie's eye and nods toward the deck. They go outside.

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EXT. VERANDA - DAY

EARL

Well?

ROLLIE

I hope we can handle this.

EARL

"We"? This isn't my deal. If this goes sideways, I'm not responsible.

ROLLIE

(sarcastic)

Thanks for your support.

Josh pokes his head out the door to the veranda.

JOSH

Have you guys seen my cap? It's green, says "Sedona" on it?

ROLLIE

Nope. Maybe you left it in the truck?

JOSH

Could I check?

ROLLIE

Sure. It's unlocked.

JOSH

Thanks.

Josh steps back in through the door.

16 EXT. RANCH - DAY

Josh runs out to the truck. He opens the door, finds his CAP on the seat. He heads back to the house, stops on the porch near Mike.

17 EXT. PORCH - DAY

JOSH
(showing his hat)
Thought I'd lost it.

Mike makes no comment.

JOSH (cont'd)
So, you're not staying?

MIKE
Nope.

JOSH
Why'd you come in the first place?

MIKE
Principal set it up. I'm a coach--
high school.

JOSH
Without consulting you?

MIKE
No, I agreed to it.

JOSH
What are you gonna tell him?

MIKE
Doctor can't make it. Nothing I can
do about it.

JOSH
I lost my dad.

MIKE
I'm sorry.

JOSH
I got this hat when we went to
Sedona. It reminds me of him.

MIKE
I don't like reminders.

Rollie appears on the veranda, walks over to Mike.

ROLLIE
Bank had to push Earl's appointment
to 2:00. Okay if we take you then?

MIKE
I guess.

ROLLIE
Thanks. Josh, we're going to have a
little "get-to-know" meetin' in a
couple minutes.

JOSH
Be right in.
(to Mike)
You wanna come? You've got a couple
hours.

MIKE
Doesn't really make sense for me to
get to know anyone.

JOSH
Yeah.

Josh enters the house.

18 INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

The other clients are in the living room, and Josh joins
them. Rollie enters, with Earl trailing behind him.

ROLLIE
Hey, everyone, this is Earl. He's the
owner of the ranch. He arranged to have
this, uh...retreat, would you call it?
Anyway, he set it up with Dr. Charney.
He won't be taking part. I wasn't
supposed to be either, but...anyway, if
you see him around, you won't wonder
who the heck he is.

EARL
Hello. I'm sorry it's under these
circumstances, but I'm glad I can
make my ranch available for you. If
you need anything, ask Rollie.

People quietly say or nod thank-you.

ROLLIE
Thanks, Earl.

Earl waves acknowledgment and goes back into the kitchen.

ROLLIE (cont'd)
Okay, first thing, today's "schedule", if you wanna call it that: After this, I'll give a brief tour of the ranch to anyone who wants to see it. Then lunch. Earl and I have to go into town at 2:00, and we'll take Mike back. The rest of the day...I have no idea. If anybody thinks of something, let me know. I hope we can find a good way to spend your time here.

Okay, we're here, so we might as well talk. Everyone agreed on that?

No one reacts much: a nod from Josh.

ROLLIE (cont'd)
Well, I guess if you really disagreed, you'd be out on the front porch with Mike. Uh,...me personally, I've actually never lost anyone close to me. But if you'll bear with me, I'll do my best to sort of...be a moderator, I guess?

KELLY
I can lead the group.

Kelly moves to the head of the table.

ALLISON
No. I think Rollie should lead it.

KELLY
I have a lot of experience in the health care field.

ALLISON
This isn't health care.

JOSH
I'm good with Rollie.

Kelly gives Josh a look that says "You're just a kid, what do you know."

ROLLIE
 Okay, well, let's take a vote then.
 All in favor of Kelly leading?

Only Kelly's hand goes up.

ROLLIE (cont'd)
 All in favor of me?

Everyone else's hand goes up, though Teresa's only goes up a few inches.

ROLLIE (cont'd)
 Alright. So, let's go around the room
 and just say why we're here.

JOSH
 My dad passed away.

ALLISON
 My husband died.

SUZETTE
 My sister died.

It's Teresa's turn. When she doesn't speak, Kelly does.

KELLY
 My son passed away. That was several
 years ago, and I'm fine now. But my
 workplace thinks I should be here,
 so...vacation.

ROLLIE
 Teresa?

Teresa's face scrunches up as she tries to give her answer.

TERESA
 My husband.
 (breaking into sobs)
 Mi hija!

Allison moves to comfort Teresa, touching her arm.

ROLLIE
 (translating)
 "And her daughter." Okay, I think
 that's enough for now. There's coffee
 and tea in the kitchen, some crackers
 and cheese, fruit. Anyone wants to
 join me on the veranda is welcome.
 (MORE)

ROLLIE (cont'd)

Otherwise I'll check in again in about an hour to see who wants to explore the ranch a little.

Rollie gets up and leaves the room. Josh follows, as does Suzette. Allison and Kelly stay with Teresa.

19 INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Several people grab a drink, and some take a bit of food. One by one they file out to the veranda. Rollie goes to the front porch first.

20 EXT. FRONT PORCH - DAY

Mike is still on the front porch. Rollie approaches him.

ROLLIE

Mike, I know you're not gonna be part of the group, but why don't you join us for a cup of coffee on the veranda.

MIKE

Yeah, maybe.

21 EXT. VERANDA - DAY

The women are at the near end, the men and Josh are in the middle, and Suzette is by herself at the far end. Mike comes out with a cup of coffee from the kitchen, and walks to join the men.

MIKE

It's always the same, isn't it? Men in one spot, women in another.

ROLLIE

Yeah. But I don't think that's what it's about this time.

MIKE

No?

They look to the women, who are comforting Teresa.

JOSH

She lost her husband and her daughter.

ROLLIE
Both in the last year. The little
girl was just two weeks ago.

MIKE
Damn.

ROLLIE
Speakin' of little girls...
(indicates Suzette)
that one there's all by herself.

Rollie goes over to talk with Suzette.

22 EXT. VERANDA - DAY

MONTAGE:

People chat for a while. Some remain silent, drink in hand.

23 EXT. VERANDA - DAY - LATER

ROLLIE
Excuse me, can I have everyone's
attention for a minute?

They stop and listen.

ROLLIE (cont'd)
In about fifteen minutes, I'm gonna
give a little tour of the ranch. If
you're interested, be back here by
then.

Josh stays on the veranda. The others go back inside.

24 EXT. VERANDA - DAY - LATER

Rollie, Josh, Allison, and Kelly are gathered for the tour.

25 INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Mike looks out, sees who is there: not Suzette. He goes and
joins them.

26 EXT. VERANDA - DAY

ROLLIE
Mike. Glad you're coming with us.

Mike nods.

ROLLIE (cont'd)
Okay, let's get started then.

KELLY
This is it? This is everybody?

ROLLIE
Not everyone wanted to go. I figure if they don't wanna, they don't hafta.

KELLY
That's unacceptable. Do you think Teresa should be left alone right now?

ROLLIE
Kelly, I'm not a counselor. I don't wanna push anybody.

KELLY
That young lady should not be left alone.

ALLISON
I'm afraid she's right.

ROLLIE
If you want to ask her again, you go do that.

Kelly strides off to Teresa's room.

27 EXT. TERESA'S ROOM - DAY

KELLY
Teresa, we really think you should come on the tour of the ranch with us.

TERESA
I'm sorry, I just don't have the energy.

KELLY
I don't think you should be alone
right now.

TERESA
I'm okay.

Allison shows up.

ALLISON
Teresa, I know Kelly's kind of bossy,
but we agree. You should come with
us.

TERESA
I'm tired.

KELLY
We're not leaving until you come with
us.

TERESA
No, please. You just go.

ALLISON
Fresh air will be good for you. For
all of us.

KELLY
You're holding up the train, Teresa.

TERESA
Ay... Okay, just a minute.

28 EXT. VERANDA - DAY

Josh rocks slightly on his heels, like he can't decide
whether to move or not.

JOSH
I'll be right back.

ROLLIE
Where you goin'?

JOSH
If Teresa shouldn't be left alone,
Suzette shouldn't be left alone
either.

ROLLIE
Go. We'll wait.

29 INT. HALLWAY OUTSIDE SUZETTE'S ROOM

Josh knocks on Suzette's door. There is a clinking of glass on the other side of it. Josh doesn't take notice.

JOSH
Suzette, come with us on the ranch tour.

SUZETTE
I don't want to. I just wanna listen to music.

JOSH
You need to be with people.

SUZETTE
No, I don't. Thanks, Josh, but I don't wanna see the stupid ranch.

JOSH
We should all stick together. We're worried about you.

SUZETTE
You don't even know me.

JOSH
They said Teresa shouldn't be alone. None of us should be alone. *I don't wanna be alone.*

SUZETTE
Ha! You're doing just fine. Your dad died, and you're just as chipper as can be.

Josh is stunned into silence, but he stays by the door. After a moment:

SUZETTE (cont'd)
Josh? Josh?

No answer. Josh looks at the floor, holding back tears. The door opens.

SUZETTE (cont'd)
I'm sorry.

Josh looks up at her.

SUZETTE (cont'd)
I'm sorry, Josh. Thanks, for coming
to get me.

JOSH
You'll come?

SUZETTE
Yeah, I'll come.

Josh smiles through his almost-tears.

30 EXT. VERANDA - DAY

Everyone else is waiting on the veranda, when Josh and
Suzette arrive.

ROLLIE
Alright, great, we've got everybody.
This'll just take 20 or 30 minutes.
It's not a big ranch, but there are
some nice spots if anyone wants a
place to just think, or sit and talk
together. And if you like horses,
we've got some nice gentle ones.

KELLY
Equine therapy.

ROLLIE
Well, I don't know about that.

ALLISON
Using horses for therapeutic
purposes.

ROLLIE
I know what it is, but we're not set
up for that.

KELLY
You should be.

Rollie stifles a smart-ass remark.

ROLLIE
Alright everyone, follow me. First,
the stables.

31 EXT. FIELD - DAY

Rollie steps off the veranda and the others follow him.

ROLLIE

Over there's the campfire pit. We can gather there in the evenings if we want. Maybe roast hot dogs for supper tonight.

Rollie walks on. They cross a wide field and arrive at the stables.

32 EXT. STABLE - DAY

ROLLIE

Before we go in, I just wanna say, if anybody's afraid of horses, there's no need to be. They're big animals and if they get startled they might make a move that startles you. But they're very aware of their surroundings, and they're not going to step on you. And of course, they'll always be either in their stall or in the field, so you won't be with them anyway, unless you want to. But I know some people like horses, so I just wanted to introduce you.

Rollie goes inside, and the others follow him, except Suzette.

33 INT. STABLE - DAY

Kelly notices that Suzette didn't come inside, and she goes back outside to get her.

ROLLIE

That there's Rayo. It means "lightning" in Spanish. Maybe he was in his younger days, but now he's calm, standoffish even. He usually shies away from people, so don't take it personal if he ignores you.

Indeed, Rayo is at the back of his stall, facing away from them.

ROLLIE (cont'd)
 Heard us comin', didn't ya, boy?

34 EXT. STABLE - DAY

KELLY
 C'mon.

SUZETTE
 I'm afraid of horses.

KELLY
 I had one when I was a girl. They're
 very gentle most of the time.

SUZETTE
 "Most of the time"?

KELLY
 They're more gentle than most people.
 C'mon.

SUZETTE
 Alright.

Kelly ushers Suzette into the stable.

35 INT. STABLE - DAY

ROLLIE
 Over here's Daisy and Dandelion.
 They're sisters.

Daisy and Dandelion approach the gate of the stall to
 inspect the humans.

ROLLIE (cont'd)
 You can feed 'em if you want. There's
 a basket of apples by the door. And
 this here at the end is Glory. She's
 old, and blind in one eye, but she's
 actually the leader of the group.

As Suzette passes by his stall, Rayo turns around to face
 her and snorts, getting her attention. Rollie notices.

ROLLIE (cont'd)
 It seems like someone's got Rayo's
 interest after all.
 (to Suzette)
 Wanna give him an apple?

SUZETTE

No. No thanks.

Kelly grabs two apples from the basket and hands one to Suzette.

KELLY

Don't hold on to it, just offer it.
Like this. Palm flat.

Kelly offers the apple to Rayo, who reaches his head out of the stall, grabs it with his teeth and munches it.

KELLY (cont'd)

Okay, now you.

SUZETTE

He can have two?

ROLLIE

(chuckles)

He's a thousand-pound beast.
Yeah, he can have two.

Suzette offers the apple to Rayo, who munches this one too.

KELLY

Good!

ROLLIE

Anyone else wanna feed somebody?

JOSH

Sure.

Josh grabs a few apples. He hands one to Teresa, who accepts it, being too shy to refuse.

KELLY

Palm flat.

Josh offers his apple to Dandelion, who happily eats it.

JOSH

Go ahead.

Teresa offers her apple to Daisy, and she eats it.

ROLLIE

Okay, we've left Glory out. Who wants
to feed Glory?

No one speaks up.

ROLLIE (cont'd)

Mike?

Mike shakes his head No, but Josh hands him an apple anyway. Mike reluctantly walks over to Glory.

ROLLIE (cont'd)

Palm up.

Mike feeds Glory.

ROLLIE (cont'd)

Okay, everybody's fed, let's go back out and see the grounds. By the way, do not come out to the stable unless I'm with you. Even if you've had experience with horses before. Okay then, back out into the sunshine.

Rollie leaves, and the others follow him outside.

36

EXT. POND - DAY

They come to the pond. There is a dock, a raft, a rowboat on the shore, and a canoe tied to the dock.

ROLLIE

This is what around here we call a lake. Some of you might you call a pond. Anyway, it's what we got, and we like it. You can wade out to the end of the dock, but after that it gets deep quick. Who here can swim? Show of hands?

All hands go up except Teresa and Suzette.

ROLLIE (cont'd)

If you can't swim, don't go past the end of the dock. And--this goes for everyone--if you get in the boat or the canoe, wear a life jacket. Life jackets are in that shed over there, along with seat cushions.

(to Josh)

Josh, you're an outdoorsman, I'll bet you're an excellent swimmer, right?

JOSH

(proudly)

Yup.

ROLLIE
Wear a life jacket.

Josh nods. Busted. He wouldn't have.

ROLLIE (cont'd)
Any questions?

JOSH
Hours?

ROLLIE
Any time you want. But if you're gonna be on or in the water, don't be alone. Have a buddy. Anything else?

No questions.

ROLLIE (cont'd)
Okay. I'm not gonna show you the whole ranch, but I am gonna take you to the top of that hill, where I can point you in the direction of some nice places for hikin', or for just sittin' and thinkin'--um, in case you get tired of doin' that indoors.

Rollie walks a ways, and then up a small hill. They follow.

37

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

People start funneling into the kitchen. It's buffet style. Mike peeks in from the porch window to see who's in the kitchen. He waits for Suzette to grab her food, then goes inside and into the kitchen. Earl is still in the kitchen. The others are on the veranda or in the dining room.

MIKE
Am I the last one?

EARL
(nods)
Thought maybe you weren't gonna eat.

MIKE
I decided I'd have a bite.

Mike makes himself a plate. He checks and sees that Suzette is on the veranda talking with Josh, so he stays inside, in the dining room. A minute later, Suzette comes inside to the dining room.

SUZETTE

Too windy out there for me.

Mike gets up, heads back into the kitchen, then goes out to the veranda, the long way, through the yard, not the dining room. A minute later Suzette comes back out, now wearing a sweater.

MIKE

(to no one in particular)

Lemonade's good.

Mike chugs his glass, goes back inside, into the kitchen. He sets down his plate and pours himself a half glass of lemonade.

38 EXT. - VERANDA - DAY

LUNCH MONTAGE

Josh and Suzette are together. Kelly and Allison argue with each other. Teresa stares into the distance.

39 EXT. FRONT PORCH - DAY

Josh is standing by Mike's suitcase. Mike comes out.

JOSH

Sorry to see you go.

MIKE

Thanks.

JOSH

We'll miss ya. I will, anyway.

Mike nods, then sits in the rocker. Josh walks away. Allison, Kelly, and Teresa come over.

ALLISON

Suzette's not coming to say goodbye.

MIKE

That's okay.

ALLISON

She thinks you're leaving because of her.

MIKE
Not true.

KELLY
Josh needs you.

MIKE
I can't replace his dad.

ALLISON
You haven't looked at her once. You
won't stand within ten feet of her.
You think she doesn't notice?

MIKE
Look, no offense, but you guys can't
guilt-trip me into staying.

TERESA
God bless you, Mike. Was it a
daughter you lost?

KELLY
Chicken-shit.

Rollie comes out the front door.

ROLLIE
You ready, Mike?

MIKE
Yeah... Just a sec.

ROLLIE
Sure.

Mike goes inside, sees Earl in the kitchen.

MIKE
Which room is Suzette in?

EARL
Second floor, first door on the left.

40 INT. HALLWAY - DAY

Mike goes up the stairs to Suzette's room. He knocks.

MIKE
Suzette?

SUZETTE
 (through the door)
 Yeah, goodbye. I'm sorry I didn't
 come out. I'm not feeling well.

MIKE
 I'm not leaving because of
 you...because you're here.

SUZETTE
 I know.

MIKE
 I'm sorry about your sister.

SUZETTE
 (bursts out sobbing)
 It's my fault!

Mike, stunned, doesn't know what to say. He leaves, goes
 back downstairs, and outside.

41 EXT. FRONT PORCH - DAY

Mike steps out, picks up his suitcase.

ROLLIE
 Say goodbye to Suzette?

Mike nods.

ROLLIE (cont'd)
 Sure she appreciated that. Ready?

Mike nods again. They walk over to the truck.

42 EXT. PICKUP TRUCK - DAY

Earl is in the passenger seat. Rollie folds down the rear
 cab seat for Mike, then climbs in to drive. Mike gets in
 with his suitcase, and they drive off.

43 INT. PICKUP TRUCK - DAY

Rollie drives them into town. Mike is silent the whole
 ride.

EARL
 Boy, that Latina woman, what a rough
 blow.

ROLLIE
Teresa, yeah. You heard?

EARL
I was in the kitchen. But I heard her pain when she started sobbing. I heard someone say on the veranda, she lost her husband and her little girl?

ROLLIE
She's got two more back home she wasn't doing a great job taking care of.

EARL
It's gotta be damn near impossible to recover from something like that. How do you know she's got two kids?

ROLLIE
Dr. Charney sent you the background on everybody.

EARL
Oh. Those files that I said, "Here, Rollie, you handle these."

ROLLIE
Yeah.

EARL
Could I read those?

ROLLIE
Sure, they're your files.
(after a moment)
I thought you didn't want to be involved in this thing.

EARL
Nah, no, I don't. Forget it. Not my business.

ROLLIE
(to Mike)
You sure are quiet.

Mike doesn't respond. They drive until they arrive in town.

ROLLIE (cont'd)
Okay, while you're at the bank, I'm gonna stop in at the cafe for a bit.

EARL
 Alright. When I'm done at the bank
 I'll come find you.

Rollie parks the truck by the bus stop. The three of them
 get out of the truck.

44 EXT. STREET - DAY

EARL
 (to Mike)
 Best of luck.

Earl walks down the street.

ROLLIE
 Well, Mike, I guess this is it.

MIKE
 Yeah.

They shake hands. Mike walks toward the bus stop. Rollie
 walks toward the cafe, carrying his laptop.

45 INT. CAFE - DAY - LATER:

Rollie is at the café on the laptop. Earl enters and sits
 at the table.

EARL
 Okay, done.

ROLLIE
 How'd it go?

EARL
 Oh, you know, banks. But, I'm a
 businessman, I know how to work with
 them. Hey, can I borrow your laptop a
 minute? I want to check they sent me
 the right document.

Rollie slides the laptop around to Earl. A pretty red-
 headed waitress, LORETTA, 53, brings a to-go cappuccino to
 Rollie with a big smile.

ROLLIE
 Thanks, Loretta.

LORETTA
 (flirty)
 Sure you don't wanna drink it here?
 It's my slow time. I'll sit and split
 a piece of pie with ya.

ROLLIE
 No, I'm sorry, Loretta, I can't.

LORETTA
 (playful annoyance)
 Party poop.

Rollie smiles, takes a sip of the cappuccino. Loretta swings her hips as she walks away. Earl closes the laptop and swings it back around to Rollie.

EARL
 All set. Let's go.

ROLLIE
 Hold on a sec.

Mike appears, coming out of the restroom.

EARL
 Well, what do you know.

46 EXT. CAFE - DAY

The three men leave the café and get in the pickup.

47 EXT. RANCH DRIVEWAY - LATE AFTERNOON

The pickup truck comes back from town. Josh is on the front porch. Rollie and Earl get out, then Mike.

48 EXT. FRONT PORCH - LATE AFTERNOON

Josh, in the rocking chair, sees Mike and perks up.

JOSH
 Mike!
 (calming himself)
 You're back.

MIKE
 Yeah.

JOSH
I'm glad.

MIKE
Yeah, well...

JOSH
We're gonna do our first session.

MIKE
(uncertain)
Yeah, good.

49 SESSION 1 - SATURDAY MORNING

All the clients are gathered in the living room, plus Rollie.

ROLLIE
Okay, I guess it's time to take a stab at this.

Earl enters from the kitchen.

EARL
I wonder...if you all wouldn't mind if I sat in?

ROLLIE
Please do. I mean, if people don't mind. Anyone mind?

No hands go up.

EARL
Let's put it this way. If it's okay for me to be here, please raise your hand.

All hands go up, no hesitation.

EARL (cont'd)
Thank you.

Earl sits down.

ROLLIE
You want to take over, Earl?

EARL

No. But if I could just say...I've been kinda standoffish, and I'm sorry about that. I thought there was gonna be a therapist here, and my background is business, so I just kind of separated myself from this. I haven't read your files, but Rollie has.

ROLLIE

Dr. Charney thought someone should have the background information.

EARL

But maybe it can help for me to be here. Just to have another person on the team, so to speak. Okay Rollie, it's all yours.

ROLLIE

Well, this morning we said briefly why each of you is here. So now,...

Rollie is stumped on how to proceed.

EARL

You've got some grief manuals, right? How about if everyone picks up the manual and we'll see what's in there.

Without much enthusiasm, the clients pick up manuals from the table. Josh gets up and passes them to people who aren't sitting near the stack.

EARL (cont'd)

Rollie, why don't you start.

Earl reads from the manual.

ROLLIE

"Grief comes in and out of our lives, in some shape or form, more than we would like in life. It's hard to know how to navigate our feelings in the midst of such immense change, and it often can feel like you're the only person experiencing what you're feeling."

Hmm. There are some quotes here in the front pages.

(MORE)

ROLLIE (cont'd)

Maybe we could read those, one by one, and they can be discussion starters. Josh, could you start?

JOSH

Okay. "You will not 'get over' the loss of a loved one; you will learn to live with it."

Teresa stifles a sob.

JOSH (cont'd)

"You will heal, and you will rebuild yourself around the loss you have suffered. You will never be the same again. Nor should you be the same, nor would you want to. But you can be whole again."

ROLLIE

Okay, maybe that's not the best one to start with. Mike, can you read the next one?

MIKE

"There is no grief like the grief that does not speak."

EARL

Anyone have anything to say about that?

No one does.

ROLLIE

Well, I think maybe that's saying that you have to talk about your grief. Otherwise you keep it inside and you just feel all alone. I guess me and Earl don't know anything about what you're going through. But you're all here, and you're all together, so you're not alone. For the next week, anyway, you won't be alone.

KELLY

Grief is a process. You go through stages.

ALLISON

The Kübler-Ross model.

ROLLIE

I didn't actually see Kübler-Ross mentioned in the manual.

KELLY

Denial, anger, bargaining, depression, acceptance.

ALLISON

I'm going to skip denial and go straight to anger.

ROLLIE

Okay, good.

ALLISON

My husband had diabetes. He knew he should eat right, but he didn't. He knew he should exercise, but he didn't. I offered to teach him yoga, but he couldn't be bothered. Wouldn't even take a simple walk around the block with me. He could've lived another twenty years, but there he was, bringing donuts to work every day "for the office." We could've had another twenty years of happiness, but no! He just, didn't, care!

After a moment, Rollie speaks.

ROLLIE

Okay. Anyone else feeling anger?

SUZETTE

My whole family's angry at me. My mom doesn't ever want to see me again.

TERESA

I'm angry...at God. Sometimes. I don't understand why He...

She trails off.

KELLY

Anger is healthy. It's an emotion like any other.

EARL

There's a diagram on page 7. Maybe we could get some ideas from that. Does anyone have any thoughts on the diagram?

No one speaks.

EARL (cont'd)

Okay, well it seems like, without a therapist to guide us through this material, this maybe isn't really going to work.

MIKE

I don't think it would've worked anyway.

ROLLIE

Is anyone else here Catholic who could maybe offer some insights to Teresa about her feelings toward God?

MIKE

I don't believe in God. But if I did, I'd be angry at Him too.

TERESA

Mostly, though, I'm just sad. Why did God have to take my husband and my daughter?

Silence. There is no good answer.

ROLLIE

Josh, is there anything you want to talk about?

JOSH

Uh...well, it doesn't seem to fit in with what everyone else is talking about.

ROLLIE

That's okay.

JOSH

Sometimes my dad, he talks to me. So I don't feel so bad. Like, when I was hiking once, I heard my dad's voice, he spoke to me. So although I miss him, I feel like he's not...not completely gone. I know that sounds weird, but, that's...yeah, that's it, that's all. Oh, and my mom thinks I'm crazy, so that's why I'm here.

ROLLIE

Okay, does anyone else have anything to say? About anything?

No one does.

ROLLIE (cont'd)

Well, that's a start. We'll give it another shot tomorrow. We're gonna have dinner at the campfire tonight. Hotdogs and fixins. Josh, you're a vegetarian, right? I've got veggie dogs too.

JOSH

Cool.

ALLISON

Me too.

ROLLIE

Oh, right, Allison, yeah. So, see you all at the fire pit, 6:00. If I don't see you there by 6:15, I *will* come and get you. I feel responsible here, and really want everyone in one place.

Rollie stands up, signaling the end of the meeting. Earl gets up quickly, then Josh. The others take their time, not really knowing where to go.

50

EXT. CAMPFIRE - NIGHT

People are gathered around the campfire with their plates of food. Rollie and Earl are set off a bit from the others, and can't be heard if they keep their voices low.

ALLISON

Teresa, you've got to eat more than that.

TERESA

I'm not hungry.

Kelly spoons some food from her own plate onto Teresa's plate.

KELLY

Try.

MIKE

All we're missing is the s'mores.

ALLISON

We don't need your smart remarks,
Mike.

A long moment of silence. Kelly gets more food for herself to replace what she gave Teresa, plus extra.

Earl and Rollie speak quietly.

EARL

Rollie, you should bring out your
guitar.

ROLLIE

I don't know. Mike's kinda right.
This isn't summer camp. It's just a
different place for them to be sad.

Josh and Suzette are at the food table, a little further away from the fire. Josh is eating some cookies for dessert.

SUZETTE

You think this place will do us any
good?

JOSH

I don't know. I like being here,
though. Look at those stars.

SUZETTE

I feel just as shitty as I did in the
city. But at least here nobody hates
my guts.

Back to Earl and Rollie, who speak again in low voices.

EARL

It's not easy being around six people
who are all sad as hell.

ROLLIE

It's kind of our job, though. I think
we can manage it for a week.

Rollie stands up, steps closer to the others and addresses them.

ROLLIE (cont'd)
Folks, can I have your attention...?
We made it through our first day.

ALLISON
Are we going to have another session
tomorrow?

ROLLIE
We're scheduled for one in the
morning and one in the afternoon.

MIKE
Today's session didn't go too well.

ROLLIE
No, but it was our first try. Did
anyone get anything at all from the
manual today?

MIKE
Nope.

JOSH
Not really.

ALLISON
No.

ROLLIE
Did anyone read any of the materials?

KELLY
I read it all last night.

No other responses.

ROLLIE
Tomorrow, let's have the session at
10:00. Hopefully people can use the
time after breakfast to read the
manual. Earl and I will too. It's
really all we have to work with.

Again, no response.

ROLLIE (cont'd)
Alright, if you'll just throw your
stuff in the trash and the recycle
containers, I'll take care of the
rest.

EARL
 (to Rollie)
 "Earl and I will too"? Shit, now I'm
 a freaking grief counselor.

ROLLIE
 No, you're not. But you did join the
 group.

EARL
 Yeah, I'm kidding. Sorry.

Josh stays to help Rollie clean up, as the others,
 including Earl, head back to the ranch house.

51 EXT. CAMPFIRE DINNER - NIGHT

Rollie is alone at the fire with his guitar, playing Muriel
 Anderson's "It Never Gets Easier." The song continues over
 the following montage.

52 INT. HOUSE - VARIOUS ROOMS - NIGHT 1

MONTAGE: PEOPLE IN THEIR ROOMS

Teresa goes straight to bed and stares at the wall. Suzette
 grabs a half pint of liquor from her bag, pops a few pills,
 puts in earbuds, and takes a drink. Kelly reads the grief
 manual. Josh looks thoughtfully at the ceiling, as if
 searching for his dad. Allison tries doing some yoga, but
 her heart isn't in it. Mike lays on his side on the bed,
 facing the wall, and covers his eyes with his hand.

53 INT. KITCHEN - DAY 2

Mike is in the kitchen drinking a cup of coffee. Allison
 enters and starts helping herself to the breakfast buffet.

ALLISON
 No breakfast this morning, Mike?

MIKE
 Already ate. I was up early.

ALLISON
 Where's Rollie?

MIKE
 Shoveling horse shit.

ALLISON
Country life, huh?

She makes herself some herbal tea and takes her food into the dining room. Mike follows her in.

MIKE
Whaddaya think of this place?

ALLISON
The place is nice enough. Therapeutic value...remains to be seen.

MIKE
Still, we should try to make the best of it.

ALLISON
Whoa, where's the cynic I was just starting to get used to?

MIKE
I was lying awake last night...and I realized...I lie awake every night. I'm a teacher, a coach. Before, I was really positive. And since...I'm kind of a shit sometimes.

ALLISON
After Hal died, I thought I was okay. But my daughter says I'm a bitch.

MIKE
I liked who I was. But I can't find that guy anymore.

ALLISON
Yeah.

Josh pops in.

JOSH
Morning.

MIKE
Morning.

ALLISON
Good morning.

JOSH
Anybody wanna go on a little hike this morning before the session?

ALLISON
No thanks.

MIKE
Maybe later.

JOSH
Alright.

Josh goes to the kitchen to get breakfast.

ALLISON
I think I'm gonna do some yoga on the veranda.

She gets up and goes outside. Suzette comes into the dining room on her way to the kitchen.

MIKE
Morning.

SUZETTE
Hi.

Suzette goes into the kitchen. Mike follows, pops his head into the kitchen.

MIKE
When Teresa comes in, could you two try to make sure she eats something?

JOSH
Sure.

SUZETTE
Okay.

JOSH
Where's Kelly?

MIKE
I don't know, but we don't have to worry about *her* eating enough.

Mike goes and sits on the front porch and rocks in the old-style wooden rocker.

54 INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

It's 10:00. Everyone is assembled, except Suzette and Teresa. Teresa enters the room and sits down. Josh gets up to go fetch Suzette.

ROLLIE

Okay, it looks like we can start in a minute. If anyone wants to grab a cup of tea or something,...

Allison goes into a yoga stretch. Josh comes back with Suzette, and they sit down near each other.

ROLLIE (cont'd)

Did everyone find some time to look at the manual?

KELLY

I read it last night, and again some more this morning.

ROLLIE

Great. Anyone else?

Silence. No one.

ROLLIE (cont'd)

I feel like the substitute teacher in high school.

KELLY

That's okay if people didn't read it. I studied it quite a bit, and I can explain it.

EARL

Really? Nobody else read anything?

ROLLIE

Kelly, I guess you have the floor.

KELLY

There are at least four models I think we should consider, but I'd like to start off with the "7 T's" model.

EARL

Is this the therapy model Dr. Charney was going to use?

KELLY

No, she has her own approach, but the 7 T's model is the one I like best.

MIKE

Yeesh.

ROLLIE

Listen, we don't have a therapist, so we've basically got nothing. Kelly is offering us *something*. Let's listen to what she has to say.

KELLY

The Seven T's outlines a plan for the journey survivors should take. The "T's" are Truth (don't hide it); Trust (let it happen); Therapy (find some); Treasure (cherish your loved one); Thrive (live in the best way possible); Treat (nourish yourself); and Triumph (this is the goal for your new life). Does everybody get that?

TERESA

You're going too fast.

ALLISON

This is too academic.

MIKE

"Triumph?" Such bullshit.

KELLY

Actually, it's real life. It's from a book by a woman whose son committed suicide.

A piece of Earl's donut breaks off and falls to the floor.

EARL

Shit.

MIKE

This isn't a suicide survivor group. It's a grief therapy group.

KELLY

Grief is grief. This is a model for grief.

Earl downs his coffee, gets up and goes into the kitchen.

TERESA

I want to understand it. It's just, it's hard for me to focus.

KELLY

Okay, I'll break it down. The first "T" is tell the TRUTH: Even if it's hard to talk about, tell the truth about how you lost the person you loved.

MIKE

"How I *lost* her"? She died, that's how!

ALLISON

Hal wouldn't admit his diabetes was a problem. He's the one who couldn't see the truth!

For a moment no one else speaks. Then:

JOSH

My dad was kayaking. It's what he loved to do. But when he asked me to go with him that day I said no. My girlfriend wanted to go to the skateboard park so I went there instead.

SUZETTE

(holding back sobs)

She--she...she just never woke up.

Josh awkwardly moves over to comfort Suzette. Teresa starts crying quietly. Allison glances at Teresa, wanting to comfort her, but she is too stuck in her anger. Kelly stands, hands on hips, disgusted that her efforts to control have been thwarted. Rollie gives a small shrug of his shoulders. Mike grabs his half-empty mug and exits to the kitchen. Suzette darts out the door to the veranda.

55

INT. DINING ROOM - DAY

People are mostly done eating lunch. Suzette is not there. Rollie comes in the outside door. Earl gets up to go meet him.

EARL

You didn't find her?

ROLLIE

It's a big ranch. If the girl doesn't wanna be found,...

EARL
If anything happens, I can't be responsible.

Josh comes over and joins them.

JOSH
I can help look for her.

ROLLIE
No. Um, yeah, okay. We need to start the afternoon session. If she's not back in five minutes, you can go look for her.

Just then, a sheepish Suzette comes in through the veranda door. Rollie and Josh dart over to greet her.

ROLLIE (cont'd)
Where the heck were you?

JOSH
Rollie searched all over.

SUZETTE
There's...a hole in the wall under the deck. I ducked under there. I'm sorry.

ROLLIE
Shit. Been meaning to fix that. Would really appreciate if you didn't run off like that, Suzette. I understand you're in a lot of grief, but...next time if you need to be alone, just go to your room?

SUZETTE
Alright.

ROLLIE
We'll leave you alone if you really need to be, but we need to know where you are.

SUZETTE
Okay. Can I go to my room now?

Rollie sighs heavily. Earl has overheard, and joins them.

EARL
No. You had your alone time. You need to be with the group now.

SUZETTE

(hesitates, then)

Okay. Just let me run to my room for a second, then I'll be right back.

Earl doesn't say No, and Suzette heads to the stairs.

56 INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY - MONTAGE

During the following, Rollie is shown often, confused and helpless, sometimes holding the manual, sometimes not, finally tossing it onto the table.

Kelly is talking and no one is listening. Mike gets up for more coffee.

Allison has her arm around Teresa, who is crying into her hands in front of her face.

Earl sits bored, with his elbow on the back of the sofa and two fingers holding the side of his tilted head.

Josh is talking, and people are generally listening.

Kelly and Allison are standing up, arguing, as Kelly smacks at the manual in her hand. Rollie tries to intervene and make peace, as Earl folds his arms across his chest.

Mike and Allison are bickering, and Mike throws the manual to the floor.

57 INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

Suzette sits in a stuffed chair, fuming, as Kelly stands over her, way too close, "air-thumping" the manual at her, and pointing at Suzette repeatedly.

SUZETTE

You're just like my mother! "Do this! Don't do that! You didn't do it right!"

KELLY

Well, maybe if you'd listened to your mother, your sister would still be alive.

A HUSH goes over the room.

SUZETTE
 (softly, broken)
 What?

KELLY
 Who took an 18-year-old who'd never
 had a drink before and fed her hard
 liquor all night? On her birthday.

EARL
 That's enough, Kelly!

Suzette bolts out of the house, to the veranda, then to the
 yard, where she breaks down crying. She keeps going,
 walking now, without purpose or direction, still crying.

JOSH
 Way to go, you...you...

MIKE
 Bitch!

TERESA
 Ay, Diós!

ALLISON
 Jesus, Kelly.

People get up to walk out to the veranda. Kelly starts to
 follow them.

EARL
 No! You're coming with me. Into the
 kitchen. Now!

Kelly obeys, but defiance shows in her eyes. Rollie is at
 the door to the veranda, but now he turns and looks toward
 the kitchen. He stays by the kitchen door and listens.

58 INT. KITCHEN - DAY

EARL
 What the hell! Who are you to-- How
 did you even know?

KELLY
 I thought if I was going to help
 people, I should know what their
 situations were.

EARL
You looked at the client files? The private files?

KELLY
Rollie did. You did. I'm more qualified than either of you.

EARL
I can't believe you. Enough with this "I know better" crap. Everybody here suffered a loss. You did. And no, I did not look at the files. It's none of my business. And it's goddamn none of yours. The therapist is not here. You are not the therapist!

KELLY
I thought I could help.

EARL
Do everyone a favor, Kelly, and just butt out! Worry about your own life, not theirs.

KELLY
But the therapist--

EARL
Stop! If you butt in like this again, I'm throwing you in the truck and hauling your ass to town. Got it?

KELLY
Are you done?

EARL
Don't think I won't.

He waves her away. She goes to the veranda door, looks out, then goes to her room. Rollie enters the kitchen.

EARL (cont'd)
She read the client files.

ROLLIE
I didn't leave them out. She would've had to go looking in drawers to find them. You reamed her pretty hard.

EARL
She deserved it.

ROLLIE

Yeah. Don't forget, though, she suffered a loss too.

EARL

I was not out of line.

ROLLIE

No, you weren't. But maybe don't keep that anger at her all week. She lost her son, you know.

EARL

So you'd think she'd be more compassionate. How's the girl?

ROLLIE

I don't know. I figure she has enough people gathered around her for now.

EARL

People. Fucking people.

ROLLIE

You gonna stay with the group?

EARL

Yeah. I wanna make sure Kelly doesn't pull this shit again.

59

EXT. CAMPFIRE DINNER - EVENING

The group is gathered around the fire, eating hot dogs, veggie dogs, and sipping from mugs of tea or coffee. Dark clouds come in from the west, and the fire crackles softly, its light flickering on their faces. Kelly sits off to herself, scribbling notes in the manual. Josh walks away from the fire to look at the stars. Suzette gets up, takes a few steps in the same direction as Josh, fumbles in her pocket for her pill bottle, downs a few with lemonade and tosses the paper cup on the ground. Then she goes to join Josh. Rollie approaches Teresa at the campfire, crouches down, puts a hand on her shoulder, and simply smiles gently. The covers of her mouth curl up in an attempt to return his smile. Earl observes. Rollie stands up, then speaks.

ROLLIE

Okay folks, Earl and I'll clean up tonight. Let's buddy up for the walk back to the house. Allison, you and Teresa together. Mike...

(MORE)

ROLLIE (cont'd)
 (seeing Mike stiffen)
 Mike, you join Allison and Teresa.
 Kelly, come help me and Earl clean
 up.

Kelly makes another mark in the manual, then raises an index finger toward Rollie to indicate she heard him and will join them in a minute.

EARL
 You're really good with people.

ROLLIE
 Just kindness and common sense.

EARL
 You're gentle. I never understood
 gentle.

ROLLIE
 (smiles)
 I think the kids have already buddied
 up.

EARL
 She's 25.

ROLLIE
 She's a kid. I'm gonna go check on
 'em a sec.

EXT. UNDER THE STARS - NIGHT

Josh and Suzette stand close together. She gently rubs the small of his back.

SUZETTE
 I'm really glad you're here.

JOSH
 It's a good place.

SUZETTE
 No, I mean *here*, with me. Away from
 the others.

She rubs her hand up across his shoulder blade. Rollie approaches them from the side, stopping twenty yards away to give them their space. Suzette takes Josh's hand, but he keeps his limp, not returning her grasp.

JOSH
Ya know, I--

ROLLIE
Kids?

They turn toward him, and Josh frees his hand from hers.

ROLLIE (cont'd)
Beautiful, ain't it?

They nod.

ROLLIE (cont'd)
We're doing a buddy system, so
nobody's alone, okay?

SUZETTE
Can we stay out a while?

ROLLIE
Sure, but stay together, come back to
the house together.

SUZETTE
Got it.

Rollie turns to go clean up.

SUZETTE (cont'd)
Let's go to the lake.

She lightly grabs Josh's forearm to turn and steer him.

JOSH
(already walking)
Okay.

60

EXT. LAKE - EVENING

Josh and Suzette arrive at the lake. The sky is dark, before
a storm.

SUZETTE
Let's take a dip.

JOSH
It's gonna rain. We should go back.

SUZETTE
Lake, rain, it's all just water.
You need to relax.

JOSH
I don't have a bathing suit.

SUZETTE
Duh. Underwear.

JOSH
I dunno.

Suzette starts taking her shirt off. Josh turns away. Suzette takes advantage of that to grab a few pills from her shorts pocket and chug from the half pint bottle in her fanny pack. She takes off her shorts, then removes her bra and throws it on top of her clothes. She wades into the water, then dives in.

SUZETTE
C'mon in! it's nice! You like to swim, right?

Josh turns to face her, thinks a moment, then strips to his underwear and wades in.

JOSH
Yeah, it's nice. Soothing.

Suzette swims away, then stops and stands by the end of the dock. Josh swims over to her and stands a few feet away. His back is to the dock.

SUZETTE
C'mere.

Josh stays where he is. Suzette takes a step toward him and puts her hands on his shoulders.

SUZETTE (cont'd)
Strong shoulders.

Josh smiles shyly. She pulls herself up against him. He recoils.

JOSH
Whoa! You duh, you duh-- You don't have a bra on!

SUZETTE
I wanna feel free.

JOSH
You said "underwear." You said we could swim in our underwear.

SUZETTE

I have my panties on. Unless you don't want me to.

JOSH

No. I mean Yes. I mean, panties on. I have a girlfriend.

SUZETTE

I'm sad. I just want a hug.

A light rain begins. She moves close to him again. He doesn't retreat, and she hugs him. He hugs her back. They relax into it. Then she takes one hand off his shoulder and puts it underwater, between his legs.

JOSH

(startled)

No, I have a girlfriend.

But he doesn't move away.

SUZETTE

Does she do this?

JOSH

No, don't.

She starts kissing his neck. He moves away, backed up against the dock.

JOSH (cont'd)

Look, I like you. But I have a girlfriend, okay?

She steps forward and kisses him on the mouth. He breaks away to the side.

JOSH (cont'd)

(smelling alcohol on her breath)

Alcohol? You brought alcohol to the ranch?

SUZETTE

It eases things. Keeps me from crying, so much.

JOSH

I'm sorry, look, we're all hurting, but I can't do this.

SUZETTE

Do what? I just want a little
tenderness, a little compassion.

JOSH

No, I can't.

Josh starts wading ashore, turning for a moment to add:

JOSH (cont'd)

And you shouldn't be drinking.

SUZETTE

Don't be so judgmental! Have some
fucking compassion, Josh!

Josh starts putting on his shorts.

SUZETTE (cont'd)

Don't leave me!

Lightning strikes, and the rain changes from a drizzle to a
light but continuous rain. Josh collects his clothes and
walks away, carrying his shirt and shoes.

SUZETTE (cont'd)

You fucker!

Suzette lays her head on the dock and starts to cry.

SUZETTE (cont'd)

(through crying)

Some fucking compassion.

61 INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Josh enters the ranch house from the veranda entrance, pretty
wet. He's still carrying his socks. Allison is thumbing
through a health magazine. Teresa sits in a corner chair.

ALLISON

Jesus, look at you! Where were you
two?

Mike enters, carrying a cup of coffee.

JOSH

(distressed)

Suzette started to get sexual, and
I couldn't, and I just grabbed my
stuff, and I--

ALLISON
You left her there, in this rain?

JOSH
(distressed)
I told her we should go in, but she wouldn't listen. She's at the dock, crying.

ALLISON
Why is she crying?

JOSH
(almost crying)
She got all weird, she grabbed my crotch, I didn't want to, and she got upset, and she started yelling at me, and I--.

MIKE
I'll go get her. She's at the dock?

Josh nods. Mike dashes to the front door, grabs an umbrella from the stand, then runs out the veranda door. Teresa quietly gets up and stands at the door, looking out into the darkness through the open screen door.

ALLISON
Okay, Mike's got it. He'll get her. You get out of those wet clothes.

JOSH
(almost crying)
I have a girlfriend.

ALLISON
It's okay. It's okay, Josh.

She hugs him.

62 INT. STABLE - NIGHT

Suzette, tears streaming down her cheeks, barefoot and with her shirt half buttoned crookedly and no bra, enters the stable. The two older horses, Glory and Rayo, flick their ears, and Daisy and Dandelion start shifting in their stalls.

63 INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Allison sits next to Josh, with a blanket around his shoulders.

Teresa steps aside as Mike dashes in through the veranda door, then moves back to stand at the screen door again.

MIKE
 She's not at the dock.
 (to Allison)
 Get Rollie, get Earl, get Kelly. We
 need to go find her.

Allison gets up and runs through the house to find people.

64

INT. STABLES - NIGHT

Suzette grabs a small plastic bag from her jeans pocket. There are only two pills left--not enough, but she takes them. She throws the bag down, then flops onto some hay on the floor and stares up at the rafters. Something catches her eye: a dozen loops of baling rope hanging on a nail. She grabs them and climbs a built-in wooden ladder up into the loft. The horse shuffle more in their stalls, and their snorts grow louder.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Rollie shows up, with umbrellas and flashlights.

TERESA
 Horses.

JOSH
 What?

TERESA
 The horses, they are making noises.

They all stop and listen.

MIKE
 The storm?

TERESA
 They are getting louder.

JOSH
 There hasn't been any lightning in a
 while.

Earl enters the room.

ROLLIE
 To the stable. NOW!

Rollie, Mike, and Earl run outside without umbrellas. Josh starts to move toward the door, but Allison gently grabs his arm and he reluctantly stops. She pulls the blanket back around his shoulders.

ALLISON

They can find her. She'll be alright.

66 INT. STABLE - NIGHT

Glory and Rayo are looking in her direction, and Daisy and Dandelion are pacing in their stalls. Suzette has six loops of baling rope around her neck, connected to another six loops, like links in a chain, which are looped around a rafter. She crouches on the edge of the loft, then covers her eyes as she tilts forward and falls off. Daisy and Dandelion neigh, Glory neighs very loudly, and Rayo neighs and kicks at his stall.

69 EXT. FIELD - NIGHT

The three men run across the field toward the stable. They hear the horses quite clearly now. Rollie, especially, knows this means something is terribly wrong.

71 INT. STABLE - NIGHT

The horses are all going crazy, neighing and stomping loudly. Rollie is the first to enter the stable, with Mike and then Earl right behind. They all spot Suzette at once. She is swinging from the baling rope, eyes wide, gasping for breath, groaning from the pain of the rope against her throat. Rollie runs over to save her, but the other two men blast past him. Mike stands underneath Suzette, putting her on his shoulders to relieve the tautness of the rope. Earl flies up the built-in wooden ladder and goes above her, grabbing Suzette by her arms to give added support and relief. Rollie goes up right behind Earl, taking his knife out when he gets into position at the top. Earl is sobbing softly as Rollie carefully cuts each loop of baling rope one by one. Earl lets go of Suzette, and Mike lowers himself slowly so that she falls gently onto some bales of hay, his arms still holding her. Earl continues sobbing.

MIKE

Are you okay?

SUZETTE

[Y]eah.

MIKE
Can you breathe?

SUZETTE
(nodding)
[Y]eah.

Rollie and Earl climb-jump down the wooden ladder and dash over to Suzette and Mike. Earl has tears running down his cheeks.

EARL
Are you alright?

SUZETTE
Ah okay.

ROLLIE
Jesus. Alright, let her catch her breath a minute, then we'll take her to the house.

72

EXT. FIELD - NIGHT

Kelly meets up with the men bringing back Suzette. Mike and Rollie are carrying her on either side, like they would a winning quarterback after a game. Kelly spots the rope burns on Suzette's neck.

KELLY
Oh my god, you hung yourself?

Suzette covers her neck with one hand and her face with the other.

ROLLIE
Don't make her talk. Run ahead and make some tea. A whole pot.

KELLY
You got it.

Kelly notices Earl looks shook up.

KELLY (cont'd)
Are you alright?

Earl simply nods. Kelly runs ahead to the ranch house, reaching it just before the others.

73

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Teresa opens the door so the men can bring in Suzette. They lay her down on the sofa, and Josh grabs a blanket and wraps it around Suzette, who is crying in between wheezing. Allison is on the phone with 9-1-1.

ALLISON
Hello, 9-1-1?

Suzette suddenly knocks the phone out of Allison's hand.

SUZETTE
NO!

Suzette goes back to crying and wheezing.

KELLY
Emergency Services will have to report this to the police, and with what she's already got on her record, she doesn't need that.

ALLISON
She needs emergency care.

Allison picks up her phone, but Rollie gently grabs her wrist.

ROLLIE
Let me call. I know the 9-1-1 crew.

Allison hangs up, and Rollie takes out his phone and dials 9-1-1.

ROLLIE (cont'd)
Hello, Brenda?

SUZETTE
No, please!

ROLLIE
(to Suzette)
It's alright, honey.

SUZETTE
(raspy, distorted voice)
I'm such a fuggup. I fuggup everything, always.

Teresa hugs her, and Kelly puts a hand on her thigh and rubs it gently.

Allison sits on a footstool in front of Suzette and stays quietly present with her. Mike comes over and sits flanking Josh.

ROLLIE

Brenda, this is Rollie, at the Circle Bar. Who's not working the paramedic shift tonight?

(pause)

Yeah, that's right, who's not working. Okay, thanks.

Rollie hangs up and dials again.

ROLLIE (cont'd)

Fred? We got a situation at the ranch tonight. Girl tried to hang herself. She seems okay, but we'd like you to take a look. Thanks, buddy, we'll be waitin' for ya.

74

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT - LATER

Suzette sits on the couch, a blanket draped over her shoulders. She has stopped sobbing, and is pale but alert. Fred, mid-50s, rugged but laid-back, kneels in front of her with a flashlight and stethoscope.

FRED

Just look straight at me, okay?

Suzette raises her chin. Fred shines the light into her eyes, first one, then the other.

FRED (cont'd)

Pupils are fine.

Fred carefully checks Suzette's neck, his fingers pressing lightly. She flinches slightly but doesn't pull away.

FRED (cont'd)

(glances up at
Rollie)

No bruising on the trachea. Breathing sounds normal. Pulse is steady, considering. Her neck's not too bad but I'll patch it up and leave you some ointment.

Fred stands up and as he and Rollie walk to the door, the ladies converge on Suzette again.

75 INT. FRONT DOORWAY - NIGHT

Rollie sees Fred off in the front doorway.

ROLLIE
Off the record?

FRED
I was never here.

ROLLIE
Thanks, Fred.

FRED
(nods)
Call again if you need me. I'm off
duty 'til Sunday.

76 INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Mike is consoling Josh.

MIKE
It's not your fault.

JOSH
I left her alone. I should've been
more compassionate.

MIKE
(stern but warm)
Look, I'm a coach, and I know a
good kid when I see one. I don't
know what happened between you two,
but *do not* blame yourself.
Sometimes a...a girl is just gonna
do what a girl is gonna do.

Josh nods his head. He'll try. Mike pats Josh on the
shoulder, then stands up.

MIKE (cont'd)
She's gonna be fine. It's good you
told us to go find her.

77 INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

Rollie pours himself a mug of tea, then walks slowly over to
where Earl is standing.

ROLLIE
You alright?

EARL
Sure. Of course.

ROLLIE
Real quick thinking, what you did
in the stable. And Mike.

EARL
I just went on automatic.

ROLLIE
You saved her life.

Earl stares down at the floor.

ROLLIE (cont'd)
Kinda surprised how emotional you
were.

EARL
Yeah.

ROLLIE
Sure you're okay?

Earl nods. Rollie goes back to the living room.

78 INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Rollie signals to Kelly he wants a private chat. She comes
over to him.

ROLLIE
Think we should take her to a
doctor?

KELLY
I think what she needs right now is
to be in a houseful of people who
care about her.

ROLLIE
In the morning, then?

KELLY
It's just rope burns. If we take
her to a doctor, they'll have to
file an attempted suicide report
with the county.
(MORE)

KELLY (cont'd)

I don't think she needs to add that to whatever's already on her record.

ROLLIE

Right.

KELLY

We should get her into some dry clothes, though. I'll go upstairs and get some.

Kelly heads for the stairs. Mike leads Josh over to Rollie.

MIKE

I'm going to see Josh up to his room.

ROLLIE

(to Josh)

You gonna be okay?

Josh nods.

ROLLIE (cont'd)

See you in the morning. She's gonna be okay. You're gonna be okay. Not your fault.

(to Mike)

I'm gonna stay down here and keep an eye on Suzette.

Mike guides Josh with a gentle hand on his shoulder, and they go upstairs. Rollie walks over to the sofa.

ROLLIE (cont'd)

Suzette, sweetheart?

She looks at him.

ROLLIE (cont'd)

If you want, we can take you into town to the clinic, or--

SUZETTE

(raspy, but
forcefully)

No! I want to stay here. If I can.

ROLLIE

Of course. Kelly's getting you some dry clothes.

(MORE)

ROLLIE (cont'd)

You can sleep here on the sofa, and I'll stay in the recliner chair and be right here in case you need me.

TERESA

Me too, I'll stay here.

ALLISON

Me too.

Kelly arrives with the dry clothes.

KELLY

We can do it in three-hour shifts. I'll take the middle shift, that's the hardest.

ALLISON

I'll take morning. I'm an early riser anyway.

TERESA

I'm first.

Suzette nods, still distressed, but touched by all the love.

SUZETTE

(raspy, meekly)
Thank you.

Teresa adjusts a blanket around Suzette, and everyone goes to their respective posts or rooms.

KELLY

(to Rollie)
It's good you'll be on the recliner, but try to get some sleep. We'll wake you if we need you.

Rollie nods.

79

INT. LIVING ROOM - MORNING

Outside, the sky is overcast, and there is a light rain. Everyone but Josh is in the living room eating or drinking coffee or tea. Teresa brings a cup of tea and a small plate of food to Suzette. Mike stares at the stairs, tense. His shoulders drop with relief when Josh comes down the stairs, takes a quick look at everyone, then heads to the kitchen for food. When Josh comes back, Rollie speaks.

ROLLIE

Okay. I think today let's not try to really achieve anything. If it wasn't raining, I'd say let's take a long walk with the horses, but it's supposed to rain all day, so...

People look around at each other, wondering what might come next, but no one speaks. Rollie can find nothing more to say.

JOSH

Um... One of my best hikes with my dad was on a day like this. The last day of a five-day campout, and we didn't want to sit in the tent all day.

KELLY

But we're in a nice warm ranch house.

SUZETTE

I'd--. I'd like to get outside.

TERESA

Are you sure you are well enough?

EARL

We could put you on a horse if you get tired.

ROLLIE

Sure. We can saddle up the horses, and anyone who gets tired can mount up.

MIKE

I wouldn't mind being outside.

ALLISON

Okay, yeah, let's do it.

ROLLIE

Kelly?

KELLY

Okay, why not?

80

EXT. STABLES - DAY

Rollie stops the group a good 30 yards from the stable.

ROLLIE
 Mike, ladies, you stay here with
 Suzette.
 Josh, do you know how to saddle up a
 horse?

JOSH
 My dad taught me when I was ten.

ROLLIE
 Good. Earl, let's go.

Josh and Earl head to the stable. Suzette steps forward and touches Rollie's arm, stopping him. They stand alone away from the rest of the group.

SUZETTE
 Thanks for keeping my...foolishness,
 of last night, out of my record.

ROLLIE
 Sure.

SUZETTE
 If my dad found out he'd...

ROLLIE
 "Kill ya?"

Suzette finds a small smile at the irony.

ROLLIE (cont'd)
 Your dad loves you, doesn't he?

SUZETTE
 (slight tinge of
 hope)
 He sent me here.

Rollie gives her shoulder a squeeze and heads to the barn.

81 INT. STABLES - DAY

Rollie, Earl, and Josh are in the stable, only a little wet from the gentle rain.

ROLLIE
 Josh, you take Dandelion. Earl, can
 you saddle up Daisy while I do Glory?

EARL
I can get her started.

ROLLIE
Good enough. Let's give 'em some
apples so we start 'em off happy.

They grab some apples and move to the stalls.

82 EXT. RANCH LAND - DAY

Everyone is walking, with Rollie, Josh, and Kelly leading three horses by lead ropes. Earl is up front walking with Teresa, Suzette, Allison, and Mike.

83 EXT. RANCH LAND - LATER

There is only a light drizzle now. Kelly is huffing and puffing.

KELLY
I think I'm ready to ride.

ROLLIE
Okay.

Kelly moves beside the horse she's leading and grabs the side of the saddle. Rollie steps over to help her, but she brushes his hand away.

KELLY
I can do it myself. I'm an old hand.

With difficulty, Kelly puts her left foot in the stirrup. She pauses to catch her breath, then heaves herself up with such force that her foot comes out of the stirrup and she falls over the other side, dangling awkwardly, halfway to the ground. Mike and Allison are closest to her, and they quickly jump to support her, and then push her up. Josh, further away, stifles a chuckle and glances at Suzette, who gives a weak but definite smile. Rollie pulls on Kelly's left side to right her, and Teresa covers her face to avoid anyone seeing her own small smile. Earl sees Teresa's smile, which causes him to smile.

KELLY (cont'd)
(after collecting
herself)
Thanks. I guess maybe "old" was the
key word there.

All smiles turn to soft smiles of sympathy. Kelly is human.

ROLLIE
Anyone else want to ride?

SUZETTE
I'd like to try.

ROLLIE
Okay, come on over here to Dandelion.
(to Josh)
Josh, hold the lead rope firm.

Josh does. Rollie positions Suzette next to the horse and helps her get her left foot in the stirrup.

ROLLIE (cont'd)
Grab the horn with your left hand. On "three," I'll give you a boost and you swing your right leg up nice and easy. Ready?

SUZETTE
Yeah.

ROLLIE
One, two, three.

Suzette swings her leg up and lands in place.

ROLLIE (cont'd)
Well done! Anyone else care to ride?

TERESA
I'm--a little tired from walking,
but...I don't know.

Rollie smiles. He's in his element now.

84 EXT. RANCH LAND - A MOMENT LATER

The group moves forward: Suzette first, with her horse led by Rollie; then Kelly, with her horse led by Allison; then Teresa, with Josh leading her horse. Mike walks alongside Teresa's horse, and Earl brings up the rear with a watchful eye on everyone.

85 EXT. RANCH LAND - MONTAGE

Still walking and riding the horses. Various ups and downs and turns.

Everyone is looking more relaxed and comfortable now, but Mike still keeps a close eye on Teresa. Earl is still in the rear, but more relaxed.

86 EXT. STABLES - DAY

The group arrives at the stables. Rollie, Earl, and Josh help the others dismount.

ROLLIE
Josh, can you help me brush down the horses?

JOSH
Sure.

KELLY
I can help.

ROLLIE
Okay, thanks. Everyone else, go on in and get some a hot beverage.

EARL
I'll whip up some soup and sandwiches.

ALLISON
I can help with that.

TERESA
Me too.

ROLLIE
Great. We'll be in in a while.

Rollie, Josh, and Kelly take the horses inside the stable, and the others head toward the ranch house.

87 INT. DINING ROOM

They've finished eating. Some sip tea.

ROLLIE
I'd like to try, instead of one big group, breaking into two groups.

KELLY
Sounds good. Which grief model will be use?

ROLLIE
No model. Just talk. I feel like we
can talk now. Suzette, am I right?

SUZETTE
Yeah, I can talk. I need to talk.

ROLLIE
Earl, can you lead the second group?

EARL
Yeah.

ROLLIE
Thanks. Can you take Mike, Allison,
and Kelly?

On hearing Kelly's name, Earl takes a deep breath, then
releases it.

EARL
Yeah.
(to Kelly)
You're not the leader, got it?

Kelly nods.

88 INT. DINING ROOM - DAY

Earl sits at the head of the table, flanked by Kelly on the
right and Mike and Allison on the left. They have mugs of
coffee, and Allison has tea. A plate of cheese and crackers
sits untouched on the table. The mood is somber.

EARL
Mike...good job last night.

MIKE
You too.

EARL
Kelly, Allison, good support during
the night.

Kelly and Allison nod.

MIKE
(to Earl)
You were really shook last night. I
mean, crazy situation, but...that was
a lot of tears.

Earl fumbles with his coffee mug, takes a deep breath. All eyes are on him.

EARL

(tentatively)

I bought this ranch so I could get away. But, it seems I can't.

(another deep breath)

Fourteen months ago, my son...took...took his, own...life.

(big sob, then back to some control)

I couldn't face people. At work. Even strangers. Cashier at Starbucks. Couldn't order a cup of coffee without sobbing. So I quit the brokerage firm, took my profits and an early pension, and had my accountant by this ranch. Rollie runs it. In town, nobody knows. Rollie doesn't know. He just knew I was a sad, angry SOB, and his patience and kindness helped a lot. But I never really dealt with it, so, I guess, this...is my chance.

Kelly puts her arm around Earl. Allison gets up and puts her right hand on Earl's left shoulder and then her left hand on Mike's shoulder to include him. Mike puts his hand on Allison's back to form a sort of unclosed group hug.

89

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

Rollie is moderating the group consisting of Josh, Teresa, and Suzette. Everyone is focused on Suzette.

ROLLIE

Go on.

SUZETTE

My mother said she wished I was the one who died.

(she shrugs)

It should've been me.

Josh and Teresa are stunned into silence.

ROLLIE

Suzette, honey...

MIKE
 (passing with his
 freshly filled
 coffee mug)
 Fuck them!

SUZETTE
 I'm...an alcoholic. I took her out
 drin-

MIKE
 No! Fuck your mother. You're a--okay,
 maybe an alcoholic--but you're a good
 person, and your life matters. Your
 mother is a shit, if she can't see
 that you're hurting just as much as
 she is. Do not...Do NOT say it
 should've been you.

SUZETTE
 (to Mike, almost
 inaudibly)
 Thank you.

Mike collects himself, gives a half nod of "you're welcome," and moves on back to his group. After a moment, Josh speaks.

SUZETTE (cont'd)
 But, I can't go home. Ever.

ROLLIE
 Is there someone else you can stay
 with?

SUZETTE
 My dad says I can live with his
 sister, but...everybody hates me.

Suzette sobs quietly, and Teresa puts her arm around her.

TERESA
 I'm sure that can't be true.

JOSH
 Mike's right. You're a good person,
 you deserve....

Suzette looks at Josh as if to ask what is it she deserves. Wanting to say "happiness," but knowing it sounds absurd, Josh gently takes her hand and holds it. Suzette's gaze drops to her lap, as Rollie looks on helplessly.

//////// SCENES FOR PLACEMENT LATER //////////

90 INT. WHERE? - WHEN?

Mike and Allison alone.

ALLISON
So you just quit?

ALLISON (cont'd)
You're a coach, and you just quit.

MIKE
I don't want those kids looking at me
like I'm broken.

ALLISON
Are you?

Mike's hands curl up, and he looks down at the floor. After
a moment...

ALLISON (cont'd)
I had the perfect life. But now I
feel like there are some pretty big
cracks in the walls.

Mike's gaze comes back to Allison.

MIKE
I'm the coach. I'm supposed to be the
guy who can fix things. And I can't.

ALLISON
Those people...looking at you. Most
of them are probably looking at you
with compassion. I know I am.

She takes his hand.

MIKE
Did you love him?

ALLISON
I thought I did. I don't know.