

THE GRIEF RANCH

by

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INT. TERESA'S HOUSE - DAY

TERESA (Latina, 29, slight accent) 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 on the counter 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, 47.

FATHER ENRIQUE

Are you okay? Kids, are you alright?

KATRINE

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?

JOSH
What if Dad doesn't come with me?

DIANE
Josh, if your father is trying to
talk to you, in spirit or whatever,
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. All eyes turn to her as she gets up and walks toward the house. 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, full of life) pushes an ELDERLY FEMALE PATIENT in a WHEELCHAIR, chattering cheerfully.

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 a couple of feet.

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 grabs the cart and violently jerks it free, jarring the wheelchair and scaring the Patient.

KELLY (cont'd)

Go! Idiot!

Clara, red-faced, rushes away awkwardly. The NURSE answers the ringing desk phone.

NURSE
(on phone)
Yeah, she's here. Gladly.
(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 (female, 50, calm but firm) takes a deep breath to brace herself 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
I did some checking around and I found a grief therapy facility. Insurance covers it.

KELLY
And if I refuse to go?

SUPERVISOR
Clean out your desk.

KELLY
Fuck.

SUPERVISOR
It's your call.

They lock eyes--the Supervisor calm, Kelly furious.

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, six months pregnant). Nina's husband ERIC (32, tall, dark hair) stands silently beside Nina.

ALLISON
I'm not going to some damn ranch out in the middle of nowhere! I'm not leaving my house--the house David and I 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 didn't take care of himself. You know he was eating *donuts* at work?

NINA
Mom, diabetes wasn't the cause of death.

ALLISON
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 started looking online for an apartment.

ALLISON

Fine. I'll just rent out your room to strangers.

NINA

Mom, we wanna stay, but...

ALLISON

But I'm a bitch, is that what you're saying?

Nina shrugs her shoulders.

ERIC

C'mon, Nina. Let's go.

Allison glares at them, proving it true.

7

EXT. STREET - DAY

MIKE 52, is walking slowly down a side street. FRANK, 60, pulls up abruptly in his car. He calls to Mike through the window.

FRANK

Mike!

Mike keeps walking. Frank pulls into the next driveway, cutting off Mike's path, and gets out of the car.

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. No matter what."

MIKE

That's sports, Frank.

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 out into the street. Frank takes a folded piece of paper out of his shirt pocket.

FRANK (cont'd)
I printed this out from the website.
The school board has agreed to pay
for it.

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

FRANK (cont'd)
Please, Mike, go. I understand it's
too soon right now. But we want you
back in the fall. I do. The kids do.

Mike bites his lip and looks at the porch of the nearest house. Frank gets back in his car and looks at Mike a long moment before backing out onto the street.

8 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.

9 INT. PICKUP TRUCK - DUSK

Rollie drives, trying to get a sense for Josh's mood.

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

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

ROLLIE
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 after the shock of realizing I just heard my dad's voice, I thought, yeah, it is. And for a 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.

10 EXT. GRIEF RANCH - EVENING

Rollie and Josh enter the main building.

11 INT. GRIEF RANCH - EVENING

ROLLIE

Okay, let me show you your room. 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.

12 INT. JOSH'S ROOM - EVENING

Josh's room is small, but cozy.

ROLLIE

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 you have 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--which we check when we're in town--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.

13 INT. LIVING ROOM - EVENING

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
(to all)
Hello.

No answers.

JOSH (cont'd)
(a tad louder, but
still tentative)
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 on the balcony.

14 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
(softly)
Dad?

Josh scans the sky as if an answer might come.

15

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, business-like) walks in with a confident stride, opens the fridge. There's one beer inside.

EARL

I had a six-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 a 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 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.

16

INT. DINING ROOM - MORNING

Rollie is just finishing serving breakfast to Allison, Kelly, Teresa, and Mike. Ham and eggs are on their plates--except for Teresa nursing a cup of tea--and there's a bowl of fruit on the table. They have coffee, tea, and juice.

ROLLIE

I'm gonna go get those kids outta bed, so they don't miss breakfast.

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

ROLLIE (cont'd)

Oh good, you're up.

JOSH

(smiles)

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

Looks good.

The group eats in silence. Teresa nurses a cup of tea.

17

EXT. 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.

Rollie heads down the stairs, and Suzette follows.

18 INT. DINING ROOM - DAY

Rollie enters with Suzette. When Mike sees her, he flinches
a little and looks down into his coffee cup.

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)
(kind but firm)
Awright, c'mon.
(MORE)

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

KELLY
Hello.

ALLISON
Hi.

TERESA
(softly, 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. 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 I quit, my daughter'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 have anywhere 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.

Josh's leg moves as he sits, but Teresa is on the other side of the room and it's too awkward to get up and walk all the way over to comfort her. The others are too lost in their own grief or anger.

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.

19 EXT. VERANDA - DAY

 EARL
Well?

 ROLLIE
I hope we can handle this.

 EARL
"We"? This isn't my deal, Rollie. 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
Maybe you left it in the truck?

 JOSH
Could I check?

 ROLLIE
Sure. It's unlocked.

 JOSH
Thanks.

Josh steps back inside through the veranda door.

20 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.

21 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 pushed Earl's appointment back.
Okay if we take you at 2:00?

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.

22

INT. LIVING ROOM - MORNING

The other clients are already seated, 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, now you won't wonder who the heck he is.

EARL

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.

(a new start)

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

No one reacts: just 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 only from the wrist.

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.
(disdainfully)
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)
Y mi hija!

Allison moves to comfort Teresa, touching her arm.

ROLLIE
(translating, voice
breaking)
"And her daughter."

They all take a moment to absorb this information and witness Teresa's pain. Rollie is lost for how to proceed.

ROLLIE (cont'd)
Okay, I think that's enough for now.
There's coffee and tea in the
kitchen, some crackers and cheese,
fruit.

(MORE)

ROLLIE (cont'd)

Anyone wants to join me on the veranda is welcome. 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.

23 INT. KITCHEN - MORNING

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.

24 EXT. FRONT PORCH - MORNING

Mike is still sitting in the rocking chair on the front porch, not rocking. 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

Maybe.

Mike stares out at the landscape. After a moment Rollie, with nothing more to offer, goes back inside.

25 EXT. VERANDA - DAY

The women are at the near end, Rollie 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.

ROLLIE

How's the coffee?

MIKE

(sincere)

Yeah, it's good.

ROLLIE

Earl buys it, imported from Costa Rica. Keeps me goin' on a rough day.

MIKE

Men in one spot, women in another.

ROLLIE

Yeah, I don't think that's what it's about.

Josh looks toward Kelly and Allison, comforting Teresa.

JOSH

She lost her husband and her daughter.

ROLLIE

Husband to cancer last year. Little girl hit-and-run driver, just two weeks ago.

Mike glances toward the women, quietly shaken.

MIKE

Damn.

Rollie bites his lip.

ROLLIE

I prob'ly should'na said that. That kinda details oughta stay private.

He exhales, looks off toward the barn, then toward Suzette.

ROLLIE (cont'd)

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

Rollie goes over to talk with Suzette.

26

EXT. VERANDA - DAY

Rollie stirs Suzette with a touch on her shoulder, and she turns to him. Mike sits down in a chair. Josh stays by the railing, glancing at Mike, then turning in the direction of the women. Kelly and Allison stand and argue quietly. Teresa sits down in a rocking chair, spots a TABBY CAT walking slowly along the side of the barn and lets her gaze follow it absently. Rollie comes over and squats next to her, talking softly. After a moment Rollie stands up.

27 EXT. VERANDA - DAY - CONTINUOUS

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, meet me here then.

Josh stays on the veranda. Rollie goes in the house, and
the others follow at their own paces, Kelly and Allison
still arguing.

28 EXT. VERANDA - DAY - LATER

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

29 INT. KITCHEN - DAY

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

30 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.

31 INT./EXT. TERESA'S ROOM - DAY

Kelly knocks on the door. It's ajar. She pushes it open but
stays in the doorway.

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

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

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

Allison shows up, having caught the conversation as she
walked up the stairs.

ALLISON
Teresa, I know Kelly's kind of bossy,
but I 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.

32 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.

33 INT. HALLWAY - OUTSIDE SUZETTE'S ROOM - DAY

Josh knocks on Suzette's door. There is a clinking of glass
on the other side of it, but Josh doesn't 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. Suzette opens the door and sees Josh looking at
the floor, holding back tears.

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
(brightens a little)
You'll come?

SUZETTE
Yeah, I'll come.

Josh smiles through his almost-tears. He holds his hand out
to indicate she can go first, and they walk down the
stairs.

34 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.

35 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
stable.

36 EXT. STABLE - DAY

Rollie stops outside the stables to give a short speech.

ROLLIE

Dr. Charney didn't have any plans for equine therapy, and our horses are not trained for it. But they're here, and I know some people like horses, so I just wanted to introduce you.

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

37 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?

38 EXT. STABLE - DAY

KELLY

C'mon.

SUZETTE

I'm afraid of horses.

KELLY

I had one when I was a girl. Most of the time they're very gentle.

SUZETTE

"Most of the time"?

KELLY

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

SUZETTE

Alright.

Kelly ushers Suzette into the stable.

39 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, too shy to refuse, accepts it and holds it in two hands.

KELLY

Palms flat.

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

JOSH

Go ahead.

Teresa shyly offers her apple to Daisy, who 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.

(looks at Kelly)

Even if you've had experience with horses before. Okay then, back out into the sunshine.

Rollie leaves, the others follow him outside, he closes the door.

40

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--the group in two--along a meandering path among some small hillocks, then up the gentle slope of a medium-sized hill.

41 EXT. HILLTOP - DAY

They are all assembled on the hilltop. A strong breeze blows. It's a great view of the whole ranch area. At the edge of the group, Josh speaks softly, as if to his dad.

JOSH

Beautiful day.

No answer, and no one else registers it either. Teresa, tired, sits down on the grass. Josh, Kelly, and Allison take in the view. Mike makes sure he's far away from Suzette.

ROLLIE

Everything you can see from here is Earl's property. It's not big by local ranch standards, but it keeps me pretty busy. If you ever get lost, you can always see this hill, and from here you can see the ranch house, the stable, the barn, the garage, the lake.

Suzette fidgets, ready to go. Teresa stands up, takes a step toward the ranch.

ROLLIE (cont'd)

Alright, yeah, let's head back. I've got lunch ready in the fridge.

42 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 the veranda and sees that Suzette is out there 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. 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.

43 EXT. - VERANDA - DAY

LUNCH MONTAGE

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

44 EXT. FRONT PORCH - DAY

Josh gently rocks in the rocking chair 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 stands by the railing, his back to Josh, who stops rocking, looks at the floor, then goes inside. Allison, Kelly, and Teresa come out onto the porch.

ALLISON
Suzette's not coming to say goodbye.

MIKE
That's okay.

KELLY
She thinks you're leaving because of her.

MIKE
Not true.

ALLISON
Josh needs you.

MIKE
I can't replace his dad.

KELLY
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.
(thinks)
Just a sec.

ROLLIE
Sure.

Mike goes inside, sees Earl in the kitchen.

MIKE
Which room is Suzette's?

EARL
Second floor, first door on the left.

45 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 takes a deep
breath, heads back downstairs, then outside.

46 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.

47 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.

48 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)
(to Earl)
While you're at the bank, I'm gonna
stop in at the cafe for a bit.

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

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

49 EXT. STREET - DAY

EARL
(to Mike)
Best of luck.

Earl walks off 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.

50 INT. CAFE - DAY - LATER

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

EARL
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 make sure 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 o' 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 spots him.

EARL

Well, what do you know.

51 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.

52 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)
 Okay, good.

53 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."
(MORE)

ROLLIE (cont'd)
(not sure where to go
with that)

Hmm.

EARL
There are some quotes here in the
front pages. Maybe we could read
those, one by one--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. Suzette looks at the floor. Mike
bites his lower lip.

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
I think maybe that's saying you have
to talk about your grief. Otherwise
you keep it inside and you just feel
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 pipes up, eager to play the leader.

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

She trails off. The group keeps a momentary respectful silence, then:

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, maybe this isn't really going to be the best approach.

MIKE

I don't think it would've worked anyway. It's all just bullshit. Words can't fix anything.

Another silent pause. Some heads nod.

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. I'm angry at...

(gestures up)

Life. Life is fucking shit.

Suzette leans her forehead on her hand.

TERESA

Mostly, I'm just sad. Why did God have to take my husband and my daughter? We are good people.

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 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... 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)

Alright, 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. Vegan.

ROLLIE

Right, Allison, yeah. Gotcha. 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 I really think everyone should be 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. A TABBY CAT walks up to Teresa and rubs against her legs.

54

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"? Now I'm a grief counselor?

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

EARL
Yeah, I'm kidding. Just, human relations isn't exactly my area.

ROLLIE
(chuckles)
You think it's mine? Frickin' ranch hand.

Rollie starts to clean up, Josh quickly pitches in, as Earl and the others head back to the ranch house.

55 EXT. CAMPFIRE DINNER - NIGHT

Rollie is alone at the fire with his guitar, playing a melancholy song, which continues over the following montage.

56 INT. HOUSE - VARIOUS ROOMS - NIGHT

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.

57

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

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, sits in the old-style wooden rocker and rocks.

58 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,...

Mike gets up for another cup of coffee. Allison goes into a yoga stretch. Josh comes back with Suzette, and they sit down near each other. The Tabby Cat walks past Kelly. When she bends to pet it, the cat takes two rush steps to get past her and nudge against Teresa's legs.

ROLLIE (cont'd)

Did everyone find some time to look at the manual?

KELLY

I finished it last night, then highlighted some this morning.

ROLLIE

Great. Anyone else?

Silence. No one.

ROLLIE (cont'd)
I feel like the substitute teacher in high school.

KELLY
It'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 hear 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; we did, sort of); 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.
(MORE)

JOSH (cont'd)
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.
(bursts out in sobs)

Josh awkwardly moves over to comfort Suzette, putting a hand on her shoulder. Teresa starts crying quietly, and the Tabby climbs into her lap. 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.

59 INT. DINING ROOM - DAY

People are mostly done eating lunch. Suzette is not there. Rollie comes in through the veranda 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 overhears, comes over and joins them.

JOSH
I can help look.

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.

60 INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

During the following, Rollie is shown often, confused and
helpless, sometimes holding the manual, sometimes not.

MONTAGE - THERAPY SESSION

- 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, the Tabby Cat sitting quietly next to her leg.

- 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.

- Finally Rollie tosses the manual onto the table,, slumps in his chair.

END MONTAGE

61 INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY - CONTINUOUS

The noise hasn't died down. Voices overlap, tempers flare. Suzette sits in a stuffed chair, fuming, as Kelly stands over her, way too close, "air-thumping" the manual at her repeatedly. Finally Suzette loses her patience.

SUZETTE

You're just like my mother! "Do this!
Don't do that! You do everything
wrong!"

Everyone else stops what they're doing.

KELLY

(calmly)

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.

62 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!
(MORE)

EARL (cont'd)

Everybody here suffered a loss. You did. Their lives are none of your goddamn business. 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. And then I'm going to report to your boss that you actively obstructed other people's healing. Got it?

KELLY

(false bravado)

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, she did. 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 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.

63

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...

(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.

64 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.

65 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 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 me. 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)
Asshole!

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

SUZETTE (cont'd)
(through crying)
Some fucking compassion.

66 INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Josh enters the ranch house from the veranda entrance, 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.

Josh nods. Mike dashes to the front door, grabs an umbrella
from the stand, then runs out the veranda door, closing the
screen door. The Tabby Cat comes to the door. Teresa gets up
and opens the door for it, but it doesn't come in.

ALLISON
(to Josh)
It's okay, Mike'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.

67 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.

68 INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Allison sits next to Josh, who has a blanket around his
shoulders. Teresa steps aside as Mike dashes in through the
veranda door, then she moves back to stand at the screen door
again.

TERESA
 (to the cat)
 Come. Come in, gatito.

But the Tabby stays out in the rain.

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

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

69 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 looks at the rope for a long moment, then grabs it and climbs a built-in wooden ladder up into the loft. The horses shuffle more in their stalls, and their snorts grow louder.

70 INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Rollie shows up, with umbrellas and flashlights. Teresa is crouched down, holding the screen door open and trying to coax the Tabby inside. Suddenly she cocks her head to one side.

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 get up, but Allison gently grabs his arm and he reluctantly sits back down. She pulls the blanket back around his shoulders.

ALLISON
They can find her. She'll be alright.

71 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 snorts and neighs very loudly, and Rayo neighs and kicks at his stall.

72 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.

73 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. 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 Suzette, grabbing her 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 the loops of baling rope one by one. Rollie flies down the ladder in two steps.

Mike squats down slowly so he can hand Suzette off to Rollie, who gives her a hug. Earl takes deep breath and stops sobbing.

MIKE
Are you okay?

SUZETTE
[Y]eah.

MIKE
Can you breathe?

SUZETTE
(nodding)
[Y]eah.

Earl climbs down the wooden ladder and walks over to Suzette and the other men. Earl has tears running down his cheeks.

EARL
Are you alright?

SUZETTE
Ah ["I'm"] okay.

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

74 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. A flash of lightning lights them up, and Kelly spots the rope burns on Suzette's neck.

KELLY
Oh my god, you--? I'm so so sorry!
So so so so sorry!

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)
What's wrong with you?

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

75 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.

76 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
 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 fast, but
 steady.

(MORE)

FRED (cont'd)
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.

77 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.

78 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 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.

79 INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

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

ROLLIE
You alright?

EARL
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.

80 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. 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. 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.

81

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, sure.

82 EXT. STABLES - DAY

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

ROLLIE
Mike, ladies, you stay here with
Suzette.
(to Josh)
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...stupidness,
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.

83 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.

84 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.

85 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, 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 grabs the rope. 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 to ride.

Rollie smiles. He's in his element now.

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.

87 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.

88 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 a hot beverage.

EARL
I'll whip up some soup and sandwiches.

ALLISON
I can help with that.

TERESA
I can make tea.

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.

89 INT. DINING ROOM

All are present. They've finished eating. Some sip tea. Rollie reaches across the table and puts his hand over Suzette's and looks at her kindly. This catches everyone's attention, and he makes brief eye contact with each one in turn, then withdraws his hand.

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

KELLY
Sounds good. Which grief model will we use?

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

SUZETTE
Yeah. I *need* to talk.

ROLLIE
Earl, can you lead the second group?

EARL
Sure.

ROLLIE
Can you take Mike, Allison, and Kelly?

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

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

Kelly nods.

ROLLIE
Suzette, Josh, Teresa, with me here in the dining room. The rest of you with Earl in the living room. Eleven o'clock. Alright?

He scans the faces again, getting nods of agreement and a few "Uh-huh's" that everyone is on board.

ROLLIE (cont'd)
I'm available right now if anyone needs to talk private.

SUZETTE
I can wait.

Rollie stands up, steps behind his chair and puts his hands on the chair back. People start getting up and leaving the room. Josh moves to clear the table.

ROLLIE
Thanks, I got it, Josh.

Josh nods, puts his plate back down and follows the others out of the room.

90

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

Earl sits on the sofa by the coffee table, flanked by Kelly on the right and Mike and Allison on chairs opposite. They have mugs of coffee, and Allison has tea. A plate of cheese and crackers and apple slices sits on the table. The mood is somber.

EARL
Mike...good job last night.

MIKE
You too.

EARL
Teresa, Allison, Kelly, good support during the night.

The women all 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...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.
(MORE)

EARL (cont'd)

So last year I quit the brokerage firm, took my profits and an early pension, and had my accountant buy 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 over the last year. But I never really dealt with it, so, I guess, this...is my chance.

Allison leans forward and puts one hand on Earl's hand, and reaches her other hand around Mike's waist. Kelly completes the chain by slipping her arm around Earl--but her thoughts are elsewhere.

91 INT. DINING ROOM - DAY

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

ROLLIE

Go on.

SUZETTE

Then my mother said she wished I was the one who was dead.

(she shrugs)

It should've been me.

Josh and Teresa are stunned into silence.

ROLLIE

Suzette, honey...

Mike passes through with his empty coffee mug, having caught Suzette's last remark.

MIKE

Fuck your mother!

SUZETTE

I'm an alcoholic. I took my sister out drink--

MIKE

No! Fuck your mother. You're a--okay, 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.

(MORE)

MIKE (cont'd)
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," refills his coffee cup, and moves on back to the
living room. After a moment, Josh speaks.

JOSH
Mike's right.

SUZETTE
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 cannot 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 "to be happy," 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.

92 INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

EARL
Mike, sounds like you came out of
your shell.

MIKE
You heard that?

ALLISON
(hint of a smile)
Loud and clear.

MIKE

Um, yeah, okay.

(takes a long drink
of coffee)

I'm a coach--girls' basketball. I pride myself on being able to read people. I've even helped a couple of my girls get through some rough spots. But my own daughter...I had no idea she was doing heroin. She wasn't that kind of girl. She was working, had her own place. But apparently she had been doing heroin for a while, and one day the dealer added fentanyl.

93

INT. DINING ROOM - DAY

ROLLIE

Teresa, would you like to talk?

Teresa shakes her head No. Rollie waits a moment in case she changes her mind.

TERESA

(quietly)

What is the name of the cat?

ROLLIE

Cat doesn't have a name. She's a barn cat. Never comes up to the ranch house. You're the first person I've ever seen her friendly with.

TERESA

Can I give her a name?

ROLLIE

Sure.

TERESA

"Milagros."

ROLLIE

"Miracles." That fits. If she hadn't coaxed you into standing by an open door on a stormy night--"

As if on cue, Milagros enters the room, trots over to Teresa and rubs against her legs.

JOSH
We wouldn't have heard the horses and
got to Suzette in time.

Milagros jumps up and settles purring in Teresa's lap. A peaceful look comes over Teresa's face--not quite a smile, but for the first time there is a spark of life in her eyes.

94 INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

EARL
Kelly, what's on your mind today?

KELLY
I don't have anything to say.

They all look at her, incredulous, waiting for her to continue anyway.

KELLY (cont'd)
No. Not today. Thank you.

95 EXT. BALCONY - EVENING

Mike and Allison alone.

ALLISON
So you just quit?

Mike shrugs.

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 fingers 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.

She moves to take his hand, but stops short, and Mike also pulls his hand back.

MIKE

Did you love him?

ALLISON

Of course. I mean...I thought I did. I don't know.

96

INT. LIVING ROOM - MORNING

All characters are present. Teresa absentmindedly pets Milagros in her lap.

MIKE

Coaching always got me through my other troubles--divorce and such--but now every girl I see at school just reminds me of Lisa, and makes me wonder why the hell I didn't see she needed help.

No replies, just a moment of respectful silence.

ROLLIE

Thanks, Mike. So now everyone has heard the basic stories they didn't hear when we split into two groups. If two heads are better than one, then maybe eight hearts are better than four. We may not have a counselor, but we have eight--seven--people who know what grief feels like. So if we do a different split later, or if you feel like talking with each other between sessions, you know where everyone's at.

EARL

Don't count yourself out, Rollie. I think you know what grief feels like too, and I for one am glad to have someone here who isn't in it as deeply as we are.

Heads nod.

EARL (cont'd)

Alright, break time. Rollie and I will have lunch on the table in about half an hour.

Earl stands up, then Rollie. Some of the others get up. Teresa and Kelly remain sitting, separately.

97

INT. LIVING ROOM - AFTERNOON

After lunch. All characters are present.

EARL

Suzette, I want to say I am very glad you're here. And though I'm sorry you tried to do what you did, if you hadn't done it, I probably would've stayed stuck in my own grief--and anger--for who knows how long.

Suzette nods.

EARL (cont'd)

(with compassion)

Kelly, would you like to tell us about your loss?

Kelly sighs deeply.

KELLY

My son...was on a fishing boat in Alaska. There was a storm and he was washed overboard.

JOSH

Did they...find him?

KELLY

End of story. He's gone.

Kelly gets up, walks to the balcony, down the stairs, and down the path.

TERESA
Should we go find her?

ROLLIE
Let's give her some space. I'll
keep an eye on her from the
balcony.

98 EXT. HILLTOP - EVENING

KELLY
(with conviction)
It's my fault.

JOSH
It's not. We all agreed it's not
our fault what other people do.

KELLY
I have grandkids.

JOSH
Nice. How old are--

KELLY
But I'll never see them.

Josh looks puzzled.

KELLY (cont'd)
My son's not dead. He lives in
Paris, with a French girl--wife. He
hasn't spoken to me since he went
there after high school.

Josh gives her an inquisitive look.

KELLY (cont'd)
One of his former teachers told me
he lives there, but she doesn't
have--won't give me--his contact
information.

JOSH
Why the hell not?

KELLY

Alaska is the story I started
telling people when they kept
showing me photos of their
grandkids and I didn't even know
the goddamn names of mine.

She starts to sob ever so softly. Josh puts his arm around
her. After a long moment:

JOSH

Why? Why doesn't he...why won't he--

KELLY

Because I did my thing! I did the
Kelly thing. The "I'm smart, I
gotta take charge, gotta be right,
gotta always control the situation
every goddamn time..."

(she sighs)

And I don't know how else to be.

Josh looks at Kelly sympathetically, but says nothing.

99

INT. LIVING ROOM - MORNING

All are present. The last to sit down is Mike, with his usual
cup of coffee. Suzette, eager to speak, starts without being
prompted.

SUZETTE

I would like to start by saying,
I'm feeling some anger in the room
at Kelly, and it's making me
uncomfortable. Kelly is not
responsible for what I did. Yeah,
she was harsh, but I forgive her,
and I hope others can too. We've
got enough heaviness in the room
without adding more to it.

People look at each other, then at Kelly, considering.

ROLLIE

Along that line...I made a lot of
bad decisions in the first 40 years
of my life, and now I've been sober
for 22 years. One of the biggest
things I learned in AA is
forgiveness. At first I couldn't
forgive myself for some of the shit
I'd done.

(MORE)

ROLLIE (cont'd)

I heard people tell a lot of stories in the rooms of AA about bad stuff they'd done. And one day I realized that I didn't hate any of those people. Realizing I could forgive them made me start to think maybe I could forgive myself. Forgiveness is not a pick and choose. We've all got to forgive ourselves--and we can't be in the right frame of mind to do that if we're sitting around pointing the finger at others. Forgiveness is forgiveness.

KELLY

I'm sorry I've been such an asshole. Thank you, Suzette. I have some deep wounds--mostly self-inflicted--and I try to ignore them by putting my focus on other people. I have no idea how to change, but I am going to try to at least keep my mouth shut for a while.

100 EXT. CORRAL FENCE - DUSK

Rollie, Earl, and Suzette stand a little apart from the others at the corral fence. The ranch is quiet, and it's private here.

ROLLIE

I know it absolutely seems like your fault, but it's not.

EARL

Lots of young people every year do exactly what you did, without consequences.

ROLLIE

I, for one. Did it with both my younger brothers. One became an alcoholic, like me. The other one didn't. Nobody died.

EARL

So either life is just completely fucked up, and random bad shit happens--or there must be some kind of order to life.

ROLLIE

Even though we can't see it.

EARL

I'm not saying there is. I'm just really wanting to think there is. Maybe "big" experiences like yours--and mine, with my son--are forks in the road that can lead us to do something important in life--especially when we weren't exactly headed in the best direction.

SUZETTE

Or any direction at all.

ROLLIE

I don't mean to say your sister died to force you to change.

SUZETTE

I do feel like I have to. Either I change or I just feel like a piece of shit forever.

ROLLIE

I know you feel like a piece of shit right now. I've been there, believe me. But now I have a pretty good life--and I have a purpose. I think you have a purpose too.

EARL

You're welcome to stay at the ranch after the time is up, take some time to figure things out.

ROLLIE

Of course, we'll put you to work.

EARL

Not easy stuff, either.

ROLLIE

Shoveling horse manure every morning, for starters.

SUZETTE

It's actually my most appealing option right now.

EARL

Legally, you don't need your dad's permission, but we'd like to have his blessing.

SUZETTE

I think he'll be delighted. Take some pressure off him and what he's facing back...home.

EARL

This can be your home for as long as you want it to be.

SUZETTE

Thank you. Thank you both so much.

Suzette hugs them--first Rollie, then Earl.

ROLLIE

Okay then. First job: come help me tighten up some loose wire on the corner fence post.

Suzette smiles as Rollie takes a pair of gloves and some needle-nose pliers from his back pocket. He hands one glove to Suzette, and they walk toward the corner fence post.

101 EXT. RANCH LAND - DAY

The group walks the horses back toward the stables. The ground is dry now. Suzette walks close to her horse, and Josh keeps a quiet pace beside her. Teresa rides this time, relaxed and comfortable. Kelly walks her horse today. Allison and Mike walk side by side but not too close. Earl brings up the rear.

102 EXT. STABLES - MOMENTS LATER

They reach the stables and begin settling the horses - unsaddling, brushing, loosening the reins. Kelly takes care of her horse in silence.

ROLLIE

Josh, give me a hand with these two?

JOSH

Sure.

SUZETTE

I'll do this one.

ROLLIE

Great.

(to the rest)

Alright, folks. Head on in, grab a tea or coffee if you want. We'll join you shortly.

Earl nods, and the group starts toward the house as Rollie, Josh, Suzette, and Kelly finish with the horses.

103 INT. DINING ROOM - DAY

All are present except Rollie, drinking tea or coffee and snacking on plates of fruit. Rollie joins them, and after he pours himself a cup of tea, Earl speaks.

EARL

Rollie and I have an idea for something different today. We've seen some of you talking together between sessions, and we think that could be beneficial, so today let's do that instead of a group session.

ROLLIE

You don't have to talk if you don't want to. Just spend the time--just spend thirty minutes and see what happens. Both people don't have to talk. If you feel it's productive we've got two hours before dinnertime, so you can go longer if you want.

EARL

So, let's pair up, right down the line.

Earl picks pairs according to the order they're sitting in, from left to right around the room.

EARL (cont'd)

Me and Suzette, Teresa and Kelly, Mike and Allison, and Josh and Rollie. Any questions?

JOSH

Where'll we talk?

ROLLIE

I have some suggestions, so that each pair will have a private space, but everyone will be outdoors, since it's such a nice day.

104 EXT. FRONT DRIVE - DAY

Earl and Suzette sit on some big layered rocks by the front drive.

SUZETTE

I think maybe there's two kinds of suicides: people who think about it a lot and then do it, and maybe they show signs beforehand. And the other kind, they hide it--you'd never know. Either way, a person is gonna do what a person is gonna do. I'd be dead if my attempt wasn't drunk and half-assed.

EARL

You won't do it again?

SUZETTE

No. I won't. Did your son show signs?

EARL

I didn't see any.

SUZETTE

Then maybe he didn't show any. Either way, it's really not your fault. Of course you miss him. But blame yourself--don't.

EARL

You sure you won't try again?

SUZETTE

It's hard to pick up the pieces, after...what happened with my sister. But I'm starting to feel if I can be sober, maybe there's a place for me in this world.

EARL

I'm sure there is.

105 EXT. FRONT PORCH - DAY

Kelly and Teresa sit in rocking chairs on the porch. Teresa focuses on Milagros in her lap. Kelly stares out at the horizon.

106 EXT. DOCK - DAY

Mike and Allison sit on the dock with their legs in the water.

ALLISON

I know this sounds really stupid,
but I'm not sure I really loved
Stephen. So why am I grieving, why
am I angry, why am I such a bitch
that my daughter refuses to live
with me?

MIKE

The manual said grief is loss. You
were with him a long time, then you
lost him. You had something
together.

ALLISON

We had a steady, predictable,
reasonable life. I knew who I was.
Now, I can't see any future. Yoga
only fills up so much time in a
day.

Mike listens, but does not answer, as there was no question.

107 EXT. HILLTOP - DAY

Rollie and Josh sit on the hilltop, with all of the ranch and the ranch house in view. Josh is replying to something Rollie just said.

JOSH

(quietly)

"Keep on going" is the default.
Everybody keeps on going. If you're
alive, you're keeping on going. So
the question is, HOW are you gonna
keep on going? Feeling sad and
shitty all the time? For a while,
yeah, of course.

(MORE)

JOSH (cont'd)

But then maybe someday sometime you can maybe...appreciate a flower, or a sunny day. I got some help from my dad to turn me around. He did that for me, a couple times. But at some point, it's gotta be my decision. My decision to look for the good things. And maybe then some happy things. After that, maybe even some fun things. I don't see any fun things right now.

(voice breaks)

But I think that I could. And I want to.

(eyes fill with tears)

I think I deserve fun things again.

Rollie lets Josh collect himself.

ROLLIE

You do.

JOSH

Thanks for listening. In the group I try to keep it together, to be strong for the others.

Rollie smiles to himself at Josh's strength and generosity beyond his years.

ROLLIE

You will have fun again, Josh. And I'm pretty sure you'll teach others they can do the same.

Josh smiles, wipes his tears, and they look back toward the ranch house together for a long moment.

108 MONTAGE - A FINAL DAY AT THE RANCH

- The group gathered in the meeting room, sitting in a loose circle, Rollie facilitating. No big breakthroughs, just calm participation.

- Teresa and Kelly brushing a horse together. Kelly hands Teresa a brush without a word; Teresa accepts it.

- Josh helping Earl carry two water buckets to the trough.

- Allison leading a yoga stretch on the porch with Suzette; Mike watches but doesn't join.

- Suzette sweeping the stable floor while Rollie forks hay into stalls.
- The whole group at lunch, talking in small clusters. Nothing dramatic--just people who've lived together for days. Only Kelly and Teresa are silent.
- Allison rolling up her yoga mat and setting it beside her suitcase by the door.
- Mike and Earl having coffee together in the kitchen.
- Teresa on the sofa, petting Milagros in her lap one last time.
- Kelly sitting alone on the front porch.
- Josh sitting on the hilltop with his eyes closed.
- Suzette on the veranda, gazing at Josh in the distance on the hilltop.
- Rollie loading bags into the truck.

109

EXT. DRIVEWAY - DAY

Earl helps Teresa into the front seat of the cab. Allison enters the back seat on the driver's side, and Mike enters behind Teresa. Before Earl can close the door, Milagros, out of nowhere, jumps up into Teresa's lap. Allison brushes some dirt off the middle of the back seat just as Mike sets his hand down there, trapping her fingers under his as their eyes meet, then they both pull away.

ROLLIE

Looks like somebody's got a new
best friend.

Mike blushes, mistaking the remark as being about him and Allison.

MIKE

No, we just have some things--
(noticing the cat;
quieter)
in common.

ALLISON

(covering)
Yes, I think she's your cat now,
Teresa.

TERESA
(to Rollie)
Could I? I mean, can she come with
me?

ROLLIE
I think Milagros already made that
decision.

110 EXT. PORCH / DRIVEWAY - DAY

Josh, Suzette, and Kelly wait on the porch as a pickup truck
pulls up. Rollie steps out of the cab.

ROLLIE
Next!

Kelly heads for the truck, silently, head down. Josh and
Suzette look at each other. Josh subtly offers a hug by a
slight lift of one arm toward her, and they embrace for a
duration of three breaths, after which both their shoulders
relax, and they end their embrace. They share a small smile,
and Josh heads for the pickup as Suzette settles into the
rocking chair.

111 INT./EXT. STABLES - MORNING

112 SUPER: THREE MONTHS LATER

Rollie and Suzette are inside shoveling horse shit, putting
it into a wheel barrow just outside the open door. Earl
walks up, excited, and talks from outside the stable.
Rollie and Suzette keep shoveling during the conversation.

EARL
Got another camp lined up for
October!

SUZETTE
Great!

ROLLIE
Grief, or kids group?

EARL
Both, actually.

Suzette pauses for a second.

SUZETTE

Huh?

EARL

Yeah, it's a free program for kids who've lost a sibling or a parent.

Suzette goes back to shoveling, but slower now so she can focus on the conversation.

SUZETTE

Like Teresa's kids.

EARL

Yeah. In fact, I got them to include Teresa's two girls.

SUZETTE

Awesome!

EARL

Hey Suzette, would you like to be a helper for the kids grief group?

Suzette and Rollie both stop working. All the shit is in the wheel barrow now anyway.

SUZETTE

Yeah, I would, but--

EARL

They've got a training program.

SUZETTE

Sign me up! I'll be here anyway.

EARL

They mix horses and swimming with grief processing. Plus art therapy and cooperative crafts. Been doing it for years, with good results.

ROLLIE

You're not making any money on this, are you?

EARL

Don't need to. We've got three corporate groups coming in September.

ROLLIE
Have you got replies on the latest
followup emails?

EARL
Josh'll be a counselor for the mid-
September kids ranch weekend.

SUZETTE
Yay!

EARL
I heard back from everybody but
Kelly. They all seem to be doing
okay.

ROLLIE
Kelly'd be amazing if she could
just channel her energy in the
right way.

EARL
I called her supervisor at the
hospital, but she doesn't work
there anymore.

SUZETTE
I think she has a hard time
forgiving herself.

Earl cuts off the sadness about Kelly with:

EARL
I have to run into town for a bit.

ROLLIE
Tell Loretta I'll stop by on her
lunch break.

EARL
Will do. Have fun, kids.

ROLLIE
Haha.

Earl heads back to the house. Rollie hangs his shovel on a
wooden peg, then grabs a forkful of fresh straw from the
bale stacked by the stable door and starts spreading it
evenly across the floor.

ROLLIE (cont'd)
(to Suzette, smiling)
"Counselor Trainee."

SUZETTE
"Helper," he said.

ROLLIE
Ah, right.

SUZETTE
Counselor is too much responsibility.
Helper, I can do.

Rollie nods and gives her a smile, which she returns. He goes back to spreading straw, and Suzette grabs hold of the wheel barrow and wheels it toward the dumping area.

SUZETTE (cont'd)
(to herself,
thoughtfully)
"Counselor Trainee."

113

ONE YEAR LATER...

Mike has joined the coaching staff of an all-boys school.

Josh will start college in the fall and plans to study wildlife management. He no longer hears his dad's voice.

Allison lives with her daughter, son-in-law, and baby granddaughter, and teaches free yoga in the park on Sunday mornings. Sometimes she and Mike get together for coffee.

Teresa is living with her children and her parents, and the cat. Dr. Charney has been giving her free therapy sessions over video.

Suzette works on the ranch and is getting a counseling certificate in an online course recommended by Dr. Charney. Next she plans to learn equine therapy.

Kelly is nowhere to be found.

Earl is now making a profit on the ranch, and often offers its use for free to various charitable groups.

Rollie is dating the waitress, Loretta, and giving guitar lessons at the community center in town.

THE END