

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. Katrine notices the dish towel is too close to the STOVE BURNER and has caught fire.

KATRINE

Mommy, it's burning!

TERESA

What?

KATRINE

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? Niñas, are you alright?

ROWENA

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 (60, 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. 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's true.

7 EXT. STREET - DAY

MIKE 52, athletic build, in track pants and a "Clearwater High" t-shirt, is walking slowly down a side street. FRANK, 60, white shirt and tie, pulls up abruptly in his car. He calls to Mike through the window.

FRANK
Mike!

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

MIKE
I'm not coming back to the school,
Frank. I told you that.

FRANK
What are you always telling your
players, 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.

MIKE
I can't coach those girls. Can't
coach anybody. I'm done.

FRANK

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.

MIKE

Why? I'm not coming back.

FRANK

They know that.

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

FRANK (cont'd)

Please, Mike, go.

Mike bites his lip and looks over 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 bus stop bench with his duffel bag. The ranch caretaker, ROLLIE, 62, 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 looks at Rollie and decides to confide in him.

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. RANCH HOUSE - 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.

Josh looks at his cell phone--no bars.

JOSH (cont'd)

What's the wifi password?

ROLLIE

We don't have Internet. Cell reception usually works. When it doesn't, we use the land line in the kitchen.

(MORE)

ROLLIE (cont'd)
 If anyone back home can't reach you on
 your cell, they have our land line
 number. 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 on her mat near the veranda windows. 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)
 Hello.

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 walks 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?

He 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 biscuits and 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.

18 INT. SUZETTE'S ROOM - MORNING

Suzette takes out a pill bottle from her overnight bag, looks at it, places her hand on the cap to open it...but doesn't. She exhales, puts the bottle back, and zips up the bag.

18 INT. HALLWAY - OUTSIDE SUZETTE'S ROOM - MORNING

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. After you, sweetheart.

Suzette heads down the stairs, and Rollie follows.

19 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 else speaks.

ROLLIE
Talkative bunch.

No reaction.

ROLLIE (cont'd)
(kind but firm)
Awright, c'mon. 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.

Rollie shifts his tone slightly.

ROLLIE (cont'd)

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
 (firmly)
 I'm staying.

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.

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.

20

EXT. VERANDA - DAY

EARL
 Well?

ROLLIE
 I hope we can handle this.

EARL
 "We"? This isn't my deal, Rollie.

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.

21 EXT. DRIVEWAY - 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.

22 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 anybody.

JOSH
Yeah, I guess.

Josh enters the house.

23

INT. LIVING ROOM - MORNING

The other clients are already seated, and Josh joins them. Rollie enters, with Earl trailing close behind.

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 either, but...anyway, if you see him around, 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, just 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, we're together, 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.

(MORE)

ROLLIE (cont'd)
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 at a loss 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. 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.

24 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.

25 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.

26

EXT. VERANDA - DAY

Allison, Kelly, and Teresa 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 Rollie and Josh.

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 Allison and Kelly comforting Teresa.

JOSH

(to Mike)

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

Rollie goes over to talk with Suzette.

27 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, glances at Mike, then turns 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.

28 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 him in, Kelly and Allison still arguing.

29 EXT. VERANDA - DAY - LATER

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

30 INT. KITCHEN - DAY

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

31 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.

32 INT. HALLWAY OUTSIDE 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.

33

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.

34 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, his eyes red.

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 palm up to indicate she can go first, and they walk down the stairs.

35 EXT. VERANDA - DAY

Everyone else is waiting on the veranda, when Suzette and Josh 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 I mean we're not set up for it.

KELLY
You should be.

Rollie stifles a smart-ass remark.

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

36 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 of short grass and
arrive at the stable.

37 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.

38 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?

39 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.

40 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 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
(to Teresa)
Go ahead.

Teresa shyly offers her apple, in two hands with flat palms, 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, and he closes the door.

41 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.

(MORE)

ROLLIE (cont'd)

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

42

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 and find your way back.

Suzette fidgets, ready to go. Teresa stands up, lose toward the ranch house.

ROLLIE (cont'd)

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

43

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

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 through the front door, through the yard, and up onto the veranda. 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.

44 EXT. - VERANDA - DAY

LUNCH MONTAGE

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

45 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.

46 INT. HALLWAY - OUTSIDE SUZETTE'S ROOM - 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.

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, quickly heads back downstairs, then outside.

47 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.

48 INT./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.

49 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 them?

ROLLIE

Sure.

(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.

50 EXT. STREET - DAY

EARL
(to Mike)
Best of luck.

Earl walks off down the street to the bank.

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.

51 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.

52 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.

53 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.

54 INT. LIVING ROOM - MORNING

The first official session. 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.

(MORE)

EARL (cont'd)

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."

(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, sure. "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 don'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 am just sad. Why did God have to take my husband and my daughter? We are good people. There is no reason.

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...

(MORE)

JOSH (cont'd)
 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.

55 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.

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 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, unheard by the others.

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
 (apologetic)
 Yeah, I'm kidding. Just, human
 relations isn't exactly my area.

ROLLIE
 (chuckles)
 You think it's mine? I'm a frickin'
 ranch hand. Animal relations, sure.
 People, that's a whole 'nother
 ballgame.

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

56 EXT. CAMPFIRE DINNER - NIGHT

Rollie is alone at the fire with his guitar, playing a
 melancholy instrumental song (for example, Muriel
 Anderson's "It Never Gets Easier"), which continues over
 the following montage.

57 INT. HOUSE - VARIOUS ROOMS - NIGHT

MONTAGE: PEOPLE IN THEIR ROOMS

Teresa goes straight to bed, lies down and stares at the
 wall. Suzette grabs a half pint of liquor from her bag,
 pops a few pills, puts in earbuds, takes a drink, and
 listens to music on her phone. 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,
 and covers his eyes with his hand.

58 INT. KITCHEN - MORNING

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

59

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 rushed steps to get past her and nudges up 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. 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.

Suzette bursts out in sobs. Josh awkwardly moves over to
comfort her, 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.

60

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 soon. 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.

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

END MONTAGE

62

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.

KELLY

You won't get anywhere if you don't make the right choices!

Finally Suzette loses her patience and shouts.

SUZETTE

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

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 with defiance 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.

63 INT. KITCHEN - DAY

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

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

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

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

EARL
I can't believe you! Enough with this "I know better" crap! Everybody here suffered a loss. You did. 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.

64

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 her 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 corners 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.

65

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

Okay.

They walk to the lake.

66

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 near the end of the dock, a few feet away from it. Josh swims over to her and stands, 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 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.

67

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.

68 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.

69 INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Allison sits next to Josh, now in dry clothes with a blanket around his shoulders. Teresa steps aside as Mike dashes in through the veranda door. Allison stands to hear Mike's report. Teresa moves back to stand at the screen door again to talk to the Cat, 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 runs through the house to find the others.

TERESA

(to the cat)

Come. Entra, gatita.

70 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.

71 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
Caballos.

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.

72 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.

73 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.

74 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 legs 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 jumps 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 a 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.

75 EXT. FIELD - NIGHT

Kelly meets up with the men bringing back Suzette. Mike and Rollie are carrying her in a two-person seat carry--each man supporting a wrist and a leg, forming a kind of human seat beneath her. 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 hangs her head to try to hide the rope marks from view.

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.

76 INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

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

ALLISON
(reassuring Suzette)
I'll call 9-1-1.

Suzette reaches out and 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.

SUZETTE
No, please!

ROLLIE
(to Suzette)
It's alright, honey. I know the
people at Emergency Services.

Allison pockets her phone, and Rollie takes out his phone and dials 9-1-1.

ROLLIE (cont'd)
Hello, Brenda?

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

Teresa hugs Suzette, and Kelly puts a hand on her thigh and rubs it gently. Allison sits on the floor 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.

(pause for response)

Yeah, that's right. She seems okay, but we'd like you to look her over.

(pause for response)

Thanks, buddy, we'll be waitin' for ya.

77

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. 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, as the ladies converge on Suzette again.

78 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.

Fred opens the door and leaves.

79 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 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.

80 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.

81 INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Off in a corner, Rollie catches Kelly's eye and signals he
wants a private chat. She comes over to him.

ROLLIE
Think we should take her to a
doctor?

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

ROLLIE
In the morning, then?

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

KELLY (cont'd)
I don't think she needs to add that
to whatever's already on her
record.

ROLLIE
Right.

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

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

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

ROLLIE
(to Josh)
You gonna be okay?

Josh nods.

ROLLIE (cont'd)
See you in the morning. She's gonna
be okay. You're gonna be okay. Not
your fault.
(to Mike)
I'm gonna stay down here and keep
an eye on Suzette.

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

ROLLIE (cont'd)
Suzette, sweetheart?

She looks at him.

ROLLIE (cont'd)
If you want, we can take you into
town to the clinic, or--

SUZETTE
(raspy, but
forcefully)
No! I want to stay here. If I can.

ROLLIE
Of course. Kelly's getting you some
dry clothes.
(MORE)

ROLLIE (cont'd)

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

TERESA

Me too, I'll stay here.

ALLISON

Me too.

Kelly arrives with the dry clothes.

KELLY

We can stay with her in three-hour
shifts. I'll take the middle shift,
that's the hardest.

ALLISON

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

TERESA

I'm first, then.

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)

Get some sleep. We'll wake you if we
need you.

Rollie nods.

82

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 looks toward 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.

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.

84 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.

85 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.

86 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.

87 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.

88 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 now.

89 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.

90 INT. DINING ROOM - DAY

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 today...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.

91 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 herbal 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. 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.
(MORE)

EARL (cont'd)

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.

Kelly puts her hand on Earl's knee. Allison puts her hand
on the coffee table, at the spot Earl's hand would be if it
weren't in his lap. Mike meets Earl's gaze and nods gently.

92

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, and catches
Suzette's 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. 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.

93 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.
(MORE)

MIKE (cont'd)

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, and...that was it.

94 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

She 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.

Suzette lowers her eyes, then looks over thoughtfully at Milagros as she 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 life in her eyes.

95 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)
Not today. Thank you.

96 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...we were together thirty years.

(realizing)

I don't know.

97

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. Only
 Teresa and Kelly remain sitting, separately.

98

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
 (matter-of-factly)
 My son...was on a fishing boat in
 Alaska. There was a storm and he
 was washed overboard.

JOSH
 Did...they find him?

KELLY
 (slightly irritated)
 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.

99

EXT. HILLTOP - EVENING

Kelly sits in the grass, pulling the petals off a
wildflower and tossing them aside sharply. Josh approaches,
respectfully. Kelly notices and looks up at him.

KELLY

(with conviction)

It's my fault.

JOSH

It's not. We all agreed it's not
our fault what other people do, or
what happens to them.

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. Eight
years ago.

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 kneels and puts his
arm around her. After a long moment:

JOSH

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

KELLY

(breaking out of his
embrace)

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 sobs)

And I don't know how else to be.

Josh looks at Kelly sympathetically, but says nothing.

100

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.

(MORE)

ROLLIE (cont'd)

I heard people tell a lot of stories in 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 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.

Kelly stares at the Cat in Teresa's lap, so as not to look at the people.

101 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

Your sister died when you took her out drinking. *But you didn't kill her.*

EARL (cont'd)

Maybe 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.

EARL

I'm not saying this is the reason your sister died. But, for me, I kind of feel like *maybe* I can contribute to life more than I was doing. What we've been through here the last couple days has got me thinking I can have a more fulfilling life. But I've got to become a different Earl Washington.

SUZETTE

I definitely feel like I have to change. Either I change--completely--or I'll just feel like a piece of shit for the rest of my life.

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 loose wire on the far fence line.

Rollie takes a pair of gloves and some needle-nose pliers from his back pocket, and hands one glove to Suzette. Earl pats her on the upper arm and starts toward the ranch house as Suzette and Rollie head toward the far side fence line.

102 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.

103 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 can do this one. Show me how?

ROLLIE
Great. Josh?

JOSH
Got it.

ROLLIE
(to the rest)
Alright, folks. Head on in, grab a
tea or coffee. We'll join you
shortly.

Mike, Allison, and Teresa start toward the house as Rollie,
Josh, Suzette, and Kelly finish with the horses.

104 INT. DINING ROOM - DAY

All are present except Rollie. They are 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 take the time--just
spend thirty minutes and see what
happens. Both people don't have to
talk. We've got two hours before
dinnertime, so if you feel it's
productive you can go longer if you
want.

EARL
Okay, 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. All outdoors, since it's a
nice day.

105 EXT. FRONT DRIVE - DAY

Earl and Suzette sit on some large flat 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 I wasn't high when I
tried it, and the horses hadn't
made noise...and the cat.

EARL
You won't try again?

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

EARL
You're sure?

SUZETTE
No. Hanging there, I was terrified. I
thought I was going to die, and I
really really didn't want to.

EARL
Glad to hear that. No, I didn't see
any signs with my son.

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

Well, clearly I can't encourage
everyone else to move forward if
I'm still stuck blaming myself. You
know, when you all came here I
didn't want to have anything to do
with you. But now I feel
almost...excited...about the
possibilities of helping people.
That was *not* the old Earl
Washington.

106 EXT. FRONT PORCH - DAY

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

107 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. But if that's the case,
then 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 a future.

(smiles)

Yoga only fills up so much time in
a day.

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

108

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. 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 show others they can do the same.

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

109 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 takes it and begins brushing a horse.

- Josh and Rollie carrying dipping water buckets in 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.

- Josh sitting on the hilltop with his eyes closed.

- Suzette on the veranda, gazing at Josh in the distance on the hilltop.

- Kelly sitting alone on the front porch.

- Rollie loading suitcases and bags into the truck bed.

110 EXT. DRIVEWAY - DAY

The pickup truck is ready to go, luggage in the truck bed. Rollie is in the driver's seat. Earl helps Teresa into the front passenger seat. Allison enters the back seat on the driver's side, and Mike enters beside her. Before Earl can close Teresa's door, Milagros, out of nowhere, jumps into the truck and up onto Teresa's lap.

Allison brushes some dirt off the middle of the back seat just as Mike sets his hand down there, inadvertently 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,
realizes)
in common.

ALLISON

(pushing past the
awkwardness)
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.

111 EXT. PORCH / DRIVEWAY - DAY

Josh stands, and Suzette and Kelly sit in the rocking chairs, as the 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.

112 INT./EXT. STABLES - MORNING

SUPER: THREE MONTHS LATER

Rollie and Suzette are in the stable shoveling horse shit, putting it into a wheel barrow just outside the open door. Earl walks up, excited, and speaks 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 her shoveling.

SUZETTE

What?

EARL

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 group leader for the mid-September kids' cowboy 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.
Have fun, you two.

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

EARL
Will do.

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

ROLLIE
(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 Sundays. Sometimes she and Mike get together for coffee.

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

Suzette works on the ranch and is getting a counseling certificate from 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