

SCRIPT TITLE

Written by

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Based on, If Any

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PLAUDIT JONES: AWAKENING

TEASER

FADE IN

EXT. JONES HOME - NIGHT

MUSIC plays, *Dust in the Wind*, by Kansas.

A new ranch style house in an upscale neighborhood. HAMMERING seems to be coming from inside the house.

INT. JONES HOME - MASTER BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

The Master Bedroom, a king sized bed sits in the middle of an adjacent wall. Opened wardrobe boxes are scattered throughout the room.

PLAUDIT JONES (40), his salt and pepper hairline recedes, barely hangs on to his fit build as forty years take its toll. He's mid-life and on the edge of a crisis with depression feeling like a hobby.

Plaudit affixes a picture of Myrtle Marie Jones to the newly hammered nail. It sits within a wall of friends and relatives staring at him. He steps back admiring his work.

LYNETTE JONES (38), once a high school cheerleader aspiring to relive her popularity within Tulsa Society, enters from the Master Bath in a robe while wiping cream off her face.

LYNETTE

Are you serious? Your mother will be watching us as we sleep and, you know, sex?

PLAUDIT

(under his breath)
As if we ever.

LYNETTE

I'm sorry. What was that?

PLAUDIT

Alexa, turn off the music.

The ECHO DEVICE lights up and the MUSIC stops.

PLAUDIT (CONT'D)

I said most of these people are
dead. Where have the years gone?

LYNETTE

It's late. We should go to bed.

Lynette pulls back the sheet and climbs into bed.

LYNETTE (CONT'D)

Are you going to church with me and
the kids tomorrow?

PLAUDIT

I have to go to work. I've got to
pay for this new house we can't
afford.

Lynette rolls her eyes, grabs moisturizer on the night stand.
She rubs it on her arms and hands.

LYNETTE

Tomorrow is Sunday.

(remembering)

I recall you agreeing to move out
of our old neighborhood, find the
kids in a better school.

PLAUDIT

We have some viewings and I have a
customer coming in. Besides, You
don't have a religious bone in your
body. You go just to be seen.

LYNETTE

That's not true. I volunteer. Next
week I'm heading up the pot luck.

PLAUDIT

If you really want to make a
difference, why don't you volunteer
at the soup kitchen downtown?

Lynette closes and SNAPS the lid on the moisturizer shut.

LYNETTE

The homeless can't afford funerals
and plots.

PLAUDIT

What?

LYNETTE
 (deep breath)
 How many from our church have sent
 business your way? I go to remind
 people to come to you in their
 moment of need.

Lynette puts the moisturizer back on the night stand and turns off her side lamp.

Plaudit sits in the dark on the edge of the bed staring at the photos. The MOONLIGHT illuminates Myrtle's picture.

INT. JONES HOME HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER

Plaudit quietly closes the Master Bedroom door. He looks at a couple half empty boxes in the hallway. His attention is drawn to light coming from a cracked bedroom door.

INT. DREW'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

DREW JONES (13), a book worm, sits at a desk in his bedroom next to his twin bed. Barefoot and in his pajamas, he stares at a jar on his desk with a live grasshopper.

The door CREAKS open as Plaudit enters.

Drew remains focused on the glass jar.

PLAUDIT
 Drew? What are you doing, son?

DREW
 This new school. I hate it.

PLAUDIT
 Wow. Two weeks. Is that enough time
 to make a true decision?

DREW
 They want me to commit murder.

Drew leans down on the desk. His nose nearly touches the glass jar as the grasshopper stares back at him.

Plaudit looks at the grasshopper, a BOTTLE of alcohol and some COTTON BALLS. He connects the dots.

PLAUDIT
 What happens if you don't?

DREW

I flunk science. I have a hit list Mrs. Roberts gave me of the insects I have to kill. If that wasn't enough, I stick pins in them like trophies. I don't want to be a serial killer.

PLAUDIT

Wow.

DREW

Exactly.

Plaudit sits on the edge of the bed.

PLAUDIT

Some people believe each soul has selected the hour and the place when he or she will transition from this world. A cotton ball soaked in alcohol dropped in the jar is simply the instruments used for its departure.

DREW

What does that even mean?

PLAUDIT

(questioning himself)

I don't know. Maybe don't beat yourself up about it.

DREW

I still feel guilty. It's not working. Besides, do grasshoppers have souls anyway?

PLAUDIT

If they don't, complete her hit list and demand Mrs. Roberts give you an "A".

DREW

And what if they do?

PLAUDIT

Harriet Beecher Stowe said, "The bitterest tears shed over graves are for words left unsaid and deeds left undone."

DREW

Who?

Defeated, Plaudit sinks believing he's failed as a father.

PLAUDIT

It doesn't really matter.

Plaudit looks at Drew and then the grasshopper. As if a stroke of genius, he picks up the glass jar and holds it up looking at the grasshopper eye to eye.

PLAUDIT (CONT'D)

Mr. Grasshopper, my son Drew truly regrets what he must do in order to make an "A" in his class. But, I know he will honor you by giving you the best spot in his box.

(to Drew)

Would you like to provide some words you don't want unsaid?

Drew stands up and takes the jar from Plaudit.

DREW

I'm really sorry Mr. Grasshopper. I hope it is your time.

PLAUDIT

Okay. Let's go to sleep. You can give him the night and do what you need to do tomorrow.

Drew places the jar on the desk.

Plaudit pulls back the blanket on Drew's bed. Drew climbs in. Plaudit shuts off the light.

INT. JONES HOME - MASTER BEDROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Plaudit sneaks back into the master bedroom. As he walks by the wall of pictures, Myrtle Marie's picture slips and hangs at an angle. Plaudit stops and repositions the picture.

CUT TO:

EXT. CEMETERY - NIGHT

A calm summer evening. Crickets CHIRP and cicada BUZZ. FIREFLIES bounce around the night air as if performing a ballet to the symphony of insects. Stars blanket the clear dark sky.

Manicured grass stretches as far as the moonlight allows you to see. TOMBSTONES of all shapes and sizes stand in line posing as headboards for those quietly sleeping.

EXT. MYRTLE MARIE'S GRAVE - CONTINUOUS

Suddenly bright colored lights flash on the horizon. A distant mausoleum lights up like an over zealous discotheque. Thumping DANCE MUSIC silences the insects. The fireflies duck for cover in bushes lining the edge of the cemetery.

Three shadows of REVELERS race to a headstone covered in black taffeta. Their CACKLES and LAUGHS grow louder as they run up to the headstone.

RANDY DAVIS and BRIAN TRAINER are eighteen and dressed for clubbing. The third, their host, WADDELL ZIMMER, (28), Ichabod Crane as a Goth, watches their faces as he leans down and pulls the drape off the tombstone.

A SMART PAD mounted on the front under the name, Myrtle Marie Jones. He touches the smart pad.

The screen lights up the area around them.

WADDELL

There she is. You wanted something spooky.

RANDY

What the hell? I expected a ghost not an smart pad.

BRIAN

Who's Myrtle Marie Jones?

Waddell digs into his shirt pocket and pulls out a doobie. He lights it and passes it around.

WADDELL

It's a prototype. The boss put it in this morning.

Waddell pushes play and the recorded video message plays... It's a commercial.

ON THE SCREEN: The image of a GRIEVING HUSBAND (60) appears. Superimposed on the screen reads, "Actor - not a real mourner"

GRIEVING HUSBAND

My Emma was a real jewel. She was always full of life and cherished our forty years together. I'm going to miss you June bug.

The video plays as Waddell takes the doobie. He blows on the tip, then takes a puff and passes it on.

ON THE SCREEN: Another mourner, actor portraying a GRIEVING DAUGHTER (35), with the same disclaimer appears sobbing.

GRIEVING DAUGHTER

I miss mom everyday. I miss the late night chats in my room. Her advice on boys and life in general. Mom, you were the greatest.

The screen fades into images of sunsets, mountain scapes, rivers, and other calming images of nature as MUSIC SWELLS and the logo for *Digi-tomb, digital headstones* appears.

Waddell watches the other Revelers react with wonder... is it the amazement of the new feature to the cemetery plot, or the actual pot they're smoking.

ON THE SCREEN: The Grieving Husband one more time.

GRIEVING HUSBAND

We'll never forget you Emma. See you soon.

The smiling still image of a heavysset Emma, (60) appears with the text overlay, "Emma Roberts - Loving Mother and Wife, Full of Life".

Waddell reaches down and hits the pause button. The video image of Emma freezes on the screen. All three are stoned.

RANDY

Freak. Look at her. Full of something.

(laughing)

The woman must have been held together by Twinkies.

WADDELL

If only I had prepared her, we would know.

RANDY

Shut up!

BRIAN

My god, Randy, you didn't know he worked here? How else do you think we pull off these raves?

RANDY

Shit, I don't know, Bri. I just figured Waddell climbed the fence.

Randy takes a big draw from the weed and passes it on. He holds the smoke in as long as he can. He falls to his knees and blows the smoke all over the tombstone.

RANDY (CONT'D)

Hey, lady. You want a hit?

The Reveler gets up laughing and leaning on the tombstone.

Without warning, they hear a disembodied COUGH. Waddell and the others pause and look around, but they can't seem to find anyone in the dark. They all slowly look at Emma who sits frozen on the screen. They look at each other and burst out laughing.

DISEMBODIED VOICE

Hey, assholes! Off my grave.

Frightened, they all look at each other.

BRIAN

Okay, I'm ready for the booze.

RANDY

And some "e".

BRIAN

Definitely booze!

The three race back to the rave.

The frozen image of Emma fades away as static fills the screen. POP. The screen flashes the image of a scowling MYRTLE MARIE JONES (65). She was a 3 pack a day smoker with hair piled high and held up by hair spray.

Myrtle looks around and taps on the glass of the screen.

MYRTLE MARIE

Where the hell am I?

CUT TO BLACK:

ACT I

TITLE SEQUENCE

EXT. TULSA, OKLAHOMA - DAY

The Art Deco buildings of downtown Tulsa can be seen in the distance. Plaudit drives a tired Toyota Prius on mostly empty streets.

ON THE RADIO: *Another One Bites the Dust*, by Queen.

CHURCHES on every corner packed with cars. Tree lined streets provide a nice canopy to South Tulsa. The Prius crosses a bridge over the Arkansas River.

EXT. ROAD - MOMENTS LATER

Warm September day. Wind blows the unkept green grass along a quiet block on the edge of town.

ROAD SIGN, "Terrell's Funeral Home, Please, Drive Carefully. We Can Wait." Stands with a couple rusty bullet holes.

On one side of the road the EAST OF EDEN CEMETERY which spans the entire block. The other side a Quick Trip Gas Station and Convenient Store, an abandoned furniture mart, and near the end of the block, TERRELL'S FUNERAL HOME.

INT. CAR - CONTINUOUS

Plaudit drives glancing over at the cemetery with a sigh. It's another work day.

EXT. ROAD - CONTINUOUS

Plaudit drives by the iron gated entrance to the cemetery and makes a quick turn in the opposite direction pulling into Terrell's Funeral Home, a plain gray brick building with red awnings. Location, location, location!

EXT. TERRELL'S FUNERAL HOME - CONTINUOUS

Plaudit pulls into the gravel parking lot and parks in front of a sign precariously hanging upside down by a single nail on the short wood post. It reads, PLAUDIT JONES, SALES MANAGER.

Plaudit carrying a briefcase, as if routine, unwraps a piece of gum and chews it as he approaches the sign. He leans against the front of the car chewing and staring at the sign and it's rust spots.

Plaudit sticks his thumb and index finger in his mouth and pulls out the wad of gum. He swings the sign up right and places the gum between the sign and post. He presses hard, then dusts his hands on his pants and collects his briefcase.

PLAUDIT

That should hold until tomorrow.

INT. TERRELL'S FUNERAL HOME - CONTINUOUS

Blue plush carpet reaches wall to wall. Brown paneling put up in the 70's covers every inch of wall space. A couple winged back chairs flank one side of the front door, while a desk sits on the other side.

Plaudit enters and is immediately drawn to the out of balance ceiling fan SQUEAKING as it turns.

LEATHA PARKER (54), sits at her desk. She's the funeral home's secretary, receptionist, and make-up artist of the dead. She files her nails and flips pages of a magazine. She doesn't look up when Plaudit enters the room.

LEATHA

Started squeaking last night. I think it's on it's last leg. At least we won't have to bury it.

She throws up her arms in mock celebration.

LEATHA (CONT'D)

Yea! Happy Sunday.

Plaudit doesn't respond and enters a door off the lobby.

INT. PLAUDIT'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Plaudit drops his briefcase on his desk and grabs a stack of phone messages. He thumbs through them as Leatha enters arms crossed.

LEATHA

You hear the news this morning?

PLAUDIT

No. I was listening to my motivational mix. The news is too depressing.

LEATHA

Well, it appears someone filed a noise complaint last night. Seems there was a party going on in the cemetery, of all places.

As she returns to her desk...

LEATHA (O.S.) (CONT'D)

Your customers are waiting for you in the showroom.

PLAUDIT

(yelling)

Maybe, you should have lead with that?

CUT TO:

INT. ARRANGEMENT ROOM - LATER

Coffins of different colors and styles sit in racks along the wall. The racks conveniently display the coffins at an angle, lids up for best viewing.

Plaudit fluffs a pillow in one of the coffins as she speaks. Two CUSTOMERS, a grieving couple, stand near the coffin holding each other.

PLAUDIT

We take care of everything from preparing the body, viewings, flowers, and grave-side. I don't know if you noticed, but we are right across the street from the cemetery. We are the only funeral home with such close proximity to our customers. We watch over them when you can't.

The FEMALE CUSTOMER (40) plain country folk, reaches into her bra and pulls out a Kleenex. The MALE CUSTOMER about the same age is a burly man at least six inches taller than Plaudit. He snarls at Plaudit. He reaches into his jacket pocket and pulls out a folded piece of paper.

MALE CUSTOMER

This is where her Aunt Pauline is waiting, Hillcrest Medical Center.

Leatha walks in. Plaudit takes the paper.

PLAUDIT

Don't worry. We'll take good care of Pauline. Leatha will write up the order for you. We offer financing if you have a need.

MALE CUSTOMER

Hell, we're going to need it. Highway robbery. Whatever happened to the old pine box?

The Female Customer CRIES and SOBS. Leatha grabs a box of Kleenex and walks over and comforts her.

Plaudit grabs the Male Customer and pulls him aside.

PLAUDIT

(whispering)

I understand this can be expensive, but how much is your wife's ease of mind worth in this trying time?

The Male Customer squeezes his eyes shut and wipes tears.

PLAUDIT (CONT'D)

(caving in)

Look. We buried her grandmother here a couple years ago. I say that makes us like family.

Plaudit turns toward the ladies.

PLAUDIT (CONT'D)

Leatha, write this up for our friends here...

Plaudit turns back to the Male Customer and gently grabs his arms. He looks up at the towering man ready to crumble.

PLAUDIT (CONT'D)

...and give them the family discount.

The Male Customer breaks down and moves to his wife. They embrace and comfort each other. Leatha approaches Plaudit.

LEATHA

I'll take care of them. You need to go across the street.

PLAUDIT

What's wrong?

LEATHA

He wants you over there.

PLAUDIT

Teddy? He came in on a Sunday?

LEATHA

Said to meet him at your mother's.

PLAUDIT

Why on earth?

CUT TO:

EXT. EAST OF EDEN CEMETERY - MOMENTS LATER

Plaudit walks at a fast clip. He passes by a backhoe and MARKUS JOHNSON (30), grave digger and landscaper. He's an attractive catch if he would spend some time with the living.

He sees Plaudit, shuts off the motor and calls out to him.

MARKUS

(ready to explode)

You hear about the noise complaint?
You should've seen what they did to my grass.

Plaudit doesn't stop and waves an acknowledgment to Markus.

MARKUS (CONT'D)

If I ever find out who--

Markus starts up the motor.

EXT. MYRTLE MARIE'S GRAVE - CONTINUOUS

THEODORE TERRELL (35), dresses with style and has the attitude of an entrepreneur. He stands behind the headstone thumbing through his messages on the phone.

In the distance, Plaudit sprints toward him and arrives out of breath. Teddy stays on his phone.

PLAUDIT

Hey, Mr. T. How was the conference?

TEDDY

Why do you do what you do?

PLAUDIT

We help people cope with the loss of a loved one.

Teddy CLICKS his phone off and pockets it.

TEDDY

Yes, we do. However, you convince them to spend their money with us so we can do our jobs.

PLAUDIT

I like to think--

TEDDY

Do you have the tools you need to make that happen?

PLAUDIT

Why are we at my mother's grave?

TEDDY

Plaudit, I had an awakening at the convention of funerary leaders. The introduction of...

Teddy rips off the black taffeta that covers the headstone.

TEDDY (CONT'D)

The digi-tomb. When people see this, they'll put all of their dead loved ones with us. They'll keep coming back, buying flowers, maybe popcorn and, introducing friends to this exciting new phenomenon.

Teddy reaches down. The COMMERCIAL PLAYS. He talks over it.

TEDDY (CONT'D)

Of course, this is just a commercial. The real impact will come when we have a sample to show to potential buyers of someone we know. Not actors playing mourners.

Teddy, excited, grabs Plaudit by the back of the neck squeezes and shakes him.

TEDDY (CONT'D)
You excited? I'm excited!

PLAUDIT
(under-whelmed)
Sure, Mr. T. You still haven't answered my question. Are you saying--

TEDDY
I know things were not always great between you and your mother.

PLAUDIT
Let's just say she wasn't the nicest person to anyone.

TEDDY
I'll say it. She was a bitch. But, I want you to tell her story. For you it's personal. It's gotta induce warm and fuzzy feelings.

PLAUDIT
This may be the hardest thing you have ever asked me to do.

Teddy slaps Plaudit on the back and walks away.

TEDDY
You got this.

Plaudit kneels down and pushes play. The COMMERCIAL PLAYS. In the middle of play, the screen is taken over by STATIC. Plaudit pushes buttons in a panic.

PLAUDIT
(sarcastic)
This is great.

Myrtle's image pushes through, but Plaudit doesn't see it. He's searches the edges of the smart pad for a switch.

Frustrated, Plaudit pulls the smart pad off the headstone and the static stops and screen goes black.

PLAUDIT (CONT'D)
Thanks, Teddy. I just starting to forget the pain. Now you want me to relive my life with her. Great!

FADE OUT:

END OF ACT I

ACT II

EXT. JONES HOME - DAY

Establishing...

INT. JONES HOME - ATTIC - CONTINUOUS

The pitched roof of the house offers room to stand and move. Plaudit shuffles through a stack of boxes.

PLAUDIT

I know I just put you up here.
Where are...

Plaudit finds the box. He sits on the floor and flips it open. He sorts through various photographs of his mother Myrtle Marie, leaning over a six-year old Plaudit at a dining room table. Myrtle holds a birthday cake with a cigarette dangling from her lips. The next shows her lighting the six candles on the cake with her cigarette.

Another photograph shows Myrtle smoking with her sister Sissy and brother Bud. All three scowl at the camera. Then there's Plaudit's high school graduation picture with his cap and gown smiling. Myrtle stands beside him arms crossed and, of course, a cigarette in her mouth.

LYNETTE (O.S.)

Plaudit? Are you up there?

PLAUDIT

Yeah, It's me.

Lynette emerges from the open trap door in the floor.

LYNETTE

What are you doing up here? I
thought you had to be at work?

PLAUDIT

I have to build a video eulogy for
my mother's tombstone. I'm looking
for pictures I can use, but I can't
seem to find anything flattering.

Lynette sits down and digs into the box. She pulls out a handful of pictures and sorts through them.

PLAUDIT (CONT'D)

How was church?

LYNETTE

Fine. Even though your daughter,
Katie, texted through the service.
Drew went up to the minister and
asked for his perspective on death.

PLAUDIT

What did the minister say?

LYNETTE

"Kid, where's your mother?"

PLAUDIT

That's helpful.

Lynette finds the picture of Myrtle, Sissy and Bud.

LYNETTE

This is Uncle Bud, right? Before he
lost his legs to diabetes?

Plaudit hands Lynette a picture of Uncle Bud sitting in a
wheelchair, no legs. Myrtle sits on a couch next to him
giving him a box of candy with a bow on it.

LYNETTE (CONT'D)

God, do you think she did that on
purpose or was just stupid?

Lynette discovers a picture of her in a cheerleader outfit
lovingly leaning on Plaudit who wears a high school letter
jacket. Both, young and happy. She shows it to Plaudit.

LYNETTE (CONT'D)

What ever happened to these two?

Plaudit grabs the picture and smiles.

LYNETTE (CONT'D)

Come downstairs. It's Sunday. I
have pot roast.

Lynette returns downstairs from the attic.

Plaudit continues to look through pictures. He finds one
where Myrtle is smiling. She sits in a hairdresser's chair in
a beauty shop smoking with curlers in her hair.

PLAUDIT

Wow. Interesting, a happy day.

Plaudit picks up the photograph with Sissy and Bud.

INT. CAR - DAY

ON THE RADIO: She's Gone by Hall and Oates

Plaudit drives down an old country road.

KATIE JONES (15), cute and obsessed with her phone, thumbs through her texts. Frustrated, she raises her phone in the air attempting to get a signal.

KATIE

Where are you taking me, the 80s? I can't get a signal.

PLAUDIT

The world won't end if you're not able to use your phone.

KATIE

(adolescent angst)
God, dad, this music is so old.
You're so old.

PLAUDIT

Nice. We're going to my Aunt Sissy's. The country air might do you some good.

Katie pouts and looks out the window at sprawling farmland with rows of corn stalks.

KATIE

This sucks.

EXT. CAR - MOMENTS LATER

Plaudit approaches a dirt drive and turns in. He stops in front of an old FARM HOUSE. He shuts off the car and MUSIC.

PLAUDIT

Let's go say hello to Sissy.

KATIE

No, thanks. I'll stay here.

PLAUDIT

Suit yourself.

EXT. FARM HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Plaudit closes the car trunk holding a video camera. He approaches the front porch of the 100 year-old two-story farm house in need of a paint job.

Plaudit knocks on the front door. He waits. No answer.

Plaudit makes his way around the house to the backyard. There, he finds:

AUNT SISSY (70) wears jeans, cotton blouse, and gardening gloves. She's on her knees weeding a small garden.

PLAUDIT
Hello, Aunt Sissy.

She doesn't hear him. Plaudit walks up to her and taps her on the shoulder.

PLAUDIT (CONT'D)
Aunt Sissy?

Sissy jumps and spins around.

SISSY
Oh, dear god. You could have been death himself coming to take me.

PLAUDIT
Hello, Aunt Sissy. How are things? The nurse practitioner still coming each week?

SISSY
That old bitty. Makes me shower. She counts out my meds like she's afraid I might be selling them on the streets of Broken Arrow.

PLAUDIT
Just doing her job. Speaking of, I have to do something for work and I need your help.

Sissy gets up with Plaudit's help and sits in one of the metal lawn chairs. She takes off her gloves ready to help.

PLAUDIT (CONT'D)
I'm making a video eulogy for momma's grave.

SISSY
What on earth--

PLAUDIT

I know it's crazy. I just need to record you saying something nice about Myrtle.

SISSY

Hells, bells. Something nice about Myrtle Marie? I'm gonna have to think about that for a minute.

Plaudit grabs a chair next to her and sets up his camera.

SISSY (CONT'D)

Do you remember your sixth birthday?

PLAUDIT

Yes. Mom forgot and we celebrated a day later. Another shining moment for her mother of the year award.

SISSY

Is that what you believe?

Plaudit starts recording the camera. He watches her through the display screen pulled out from the side of the camera.

PLAUDIT

You know something different?

SISSY

We celebrated your birthday a day late so your mother could do a double shift at the Petroleum Club.

PLAUDIT

She had to.

SISSY

Do you remember what you got for your birthday?

PLAUDIT

Hot wheels.

SISSY

She worked hard to make sure you, your brother, and sister had everything you needed after your daddy died.

Katie emerges from around the house. Sissy sees her and jumps up to greet her with a big hug.

SISSY (CONT'D)

Oh, my, look at you. You must be making those boys go crazy. You do like boys?

KATIE

(embarrassed)
Aunt Sissy.

SISSY

You're growing up so fast. Here, sit down with us. We're talking about your grandmother.

Katie gives Plaudit a confused look as she takes a seat.

PLAUDIT

Sissy, my hot wheels?

SISSY

That's right. She worked that double knowing she would get enough tips to get you those hot wheels. Early the next morning, she went to the store and paid off the lay away. We celebrated that night.

Plaudit pulls the Polaroid from his pocket. The picture of his 6th birthday. He hands it to Sissy.

PLAUDIT

My cake had a dusting of cigarette ash all over it.

Sissy bursts out a CHUCKLE.

KATIE

She told me that someday I would be pretty. She said, "Knowing your parents, I'm not very hopeful. Work at it and you never know."

SISSY

Katie, you are beautiful. She believed that if you wanted something in life, then you need to work for it.

(standing up)

Come help me pick some tomatoes. Plaudit, you just need to let her rest in peace.

Sissy moves to the tomatoes dragging Katie with her.

Plaudit directs the camera on Katie and Sissy as they fill a basket with tomatoes.

INT. JONES HOME - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Lynette slices tomatoes on a cutting board.

PLAUDIT

Those are from Sissy, hand picked by your daughter.

LYNETTE

Nice try.

PLAUDIT

No, really. She thinks Aunt Sissy is cool for an old lady. I got some good video of the two together.

LYNETTE

When are you going to be through with this stupid video?

PLAUDIT

I'm off to the nursing home tomorrow to see Uncle Bud. That should be exciting.

LYNETTE

Take a candy bar with you.

PLAUDIT

I'm not my mother.

LYNETTE

She would show up and eat a candy bar in front of him knowing he couldn't have one.

PLAUDIT

I know. She loved kicking people when they were down.

LYNETTE

Do you remember that year you lost your job?

PLAUDIT

Those were desperate times--

LYNETTE

She volunteered to bring us groceries to the house. Remember?

(MORE)

LYNETTE (CONT'D)

She brought beans, rice, and anything else she could find at the dollar store. She said that's what poor people eat. I hated her so much for that.

PLAUDIT

(agreeing)

She had her moments.

LYNETTE

Making Myrtle Marie appear pleasant? You need a miracle.

INT. NURSING HOME - DAY

Plaudit sits on a couch in an open room with other people visiting relatives. There is a slight MURMUR as if in a library, everyone quietly visits.

Plaudit aims his camera at:

UNCLE BUD (75), missing his teeth, sits in a wheelchair in overalls. He's a bulky farmer type without two legs, amputated from the knee down.

UNCLE BUD

I should put my teeth in for this.

He pulls his dentures from his pocket and puts them in.

PLAUDIT

The purpose is to talk about momma.

UNCLE BUD

Spoiled brat. She was the youngest.

PLAUDIT

Sissy had good things to say.

UNCLE BUD

She's making her bed with good thoughts before she dies. She wants to make it to heaven so she can avoid your mother.

PLAUDIT

That means you think she's in--

UNCLE BUD

Did you bring me a candy bar?

PLAUDIT

You're not suppose to each sugar.

UNCLE BUD

Every time Myrtle came by she would have a candy bar--

PLAUDIT

I know what she would do.

UNCLE BUD

She would hide one in my room so I could find it later.

PLAUDIT

She brought it for you?

UNCLE BUD

She would eat one. Then, that sneaky little heifer would leave me one to eat in secret.

Plaudit leans back baffled.

UNCLE BUD (CONT'D)

Always had to be a hard ass. But, those things you didn't see...

INT. PREPARATION ROOM - DAY

Waddell prepares a corpse on the embalming table in the center of the room. Tables and shelves with supplies line the walls.

Leatha enters.

LEATHA

Is that Pauline?

WADDELL

Yes. She'll be ready for you later today. Did you bring your make-up?

LEATHA

I always keep it in the trunk of my car. You never know when you're going to need it for an impromptu Mary Kay sales party.

WADDELL

Fine. You can let me work now.

LEATHA

It's a real shame there was an anonymous call complaining about the noise in the cemetery Saturday night. Good thing they didn't call Mr. T.

Waddell stops his work and looks up at Leatha. He rips off his latex gloves and walks around the table to her.

WADDELL

It was you.

Leatha smiles and walks over to his desk. She flips open an appointment book.

LEATHA

Do you have all of your raves scheduled on the calendar?

WADDELL

No one lives around here. Nobody is ever here on a Saturday night.

Waddell runs over to the table and grabs the calendar from Leatha's hands.

LEATHA

Except the ghouls.

WADDELL

What do you want?

LEATHA

I want a cut at the door. I'll even come and help you put them on.

WADDELL

Don't you have enough side businesses? Keep out of mine.

LEATHA

I'm generous. I'll only take 30%. And, I'll make sure Teddy and the police never hear of it.

WADDELL

Why are you doing this? You don't need the money.

LEATHA

Mary Kay sales aren't what they used to be.

Leatha walks to the door.

LEATHA (CONT'D)
I'll see you Saturday night.

She exits.

EXT. CEMETERY - EVENING

The sun sets displaying vibrant color in the sky. Plaudit's Prius drives along the winding road and stops at a path.

Plaudit, Lynette, Katie and Drew exit the car. Plaudit and Lynette walk along a path. Katie and Drew follow a typical teenager distance from their parents.

They pass Markus digging a new grave.

PLAUDIT
Hey, Markus.

Markus stops digging, but doesn't respond, then back to it.

Drew stops and stares at the newly dug hole. Markus keeps working avoiding a possible conversation.

KATIE
(shouting)
Hey, Drew. Come on.

EXT. MYRTLE MARIE'S GRAVE - MOMENTS LATER

The family looks down at the tombstone. Plaudit turns it on and presses play.

ON THE SCREEN: Images dissolve revealing different perspectives of rolling farmland and farm house. It's Sissy's house -- the family home.

Soothing MUSIC and NARRATION plays in the background.

PLAUDIT (V.O.)
Myrtle Marie grew up in a simple home with a simple life. She graduated high school in 1940 and married her sweetheart, Josh Jones. They had three beautiful children together; Rachel, Ernie, and Plaudit.

Still photos of a young Myrtle and Josh smiling move on the screen in Ken Burns style.

Photos of a six year old Plaudit, Rachel at 4, and Ernie, one, stand with Myrtle and Josh. The photo dissolves into Myrtle and the three children.

PLAUDIT (V.O.)

Unfortunately, at age 28, Josh passed leaving Myrtle Marie alone to raise three young children.

The video starts to get interesting. Video clips of Sissy and Uncle Bud appear on the screen. Jump cuts to create a contrived narrative.

UNCLE BUD (ON SMART PAD)

Josh dying hit Myrtle Marie pretty hard. She never really was happy after that. She was very secretive--

(jump cut)

She hid it--

(jump cut)

Hard as nails. Her personality was like finger nails on--

(jump cut)

Roses. Josh always gave her roses.

Lynette gives Plaudit a 'what the hell was that' look and rolls her eyes. Plaudit, uncomfortable, points to the screen to direct Lynette back to the video.

Images of Sissy and Katie picking vegetables in Sissy's garden.

PLAUDIT

(to Lynette)

See. I told you.

Lynette ignores him and stays focused on the screen.

AUNT SISSY (ON SCREEN)

She was a hard worker.

(jump cut)

She worked a double shift to make extra tips so she could--

(jump cut)

Care for her children, even though she may not always have been around.

(jump cut)

Sometimes difficult, but always my sister.

The video transitions to still images of Myrtle Marie at bowling alleys. She is dressed in a bowling league team shirt with a cigarette in her mouth.

PLAUDIT (V.O.)

Myrtle Marie spent most of her free time playing in a bowling league.

BOWLER (50), wears the same style bowling shirt.

BOWLER (ON SCREEN)

Ruthless, ruthless. No better way to put it. She was about winning at all cost. Great bowler. Most likely cheated. She made you be your best.

The video ends with a Myrtle smiling while sitting in a hairstylist chair at a salon.

PLAUDIT (V.O.)

Good bye, Myrtle Marie Jones, sister, mother, and grandmother.

Then, the picture fades as the MUSIC swells and ends.

The family stares at the blank screen.

PLAUDIT

Well, what do you think?

LYNETTE

That's it?

PLAUDIT

(defeated)

I didn't have much to work with.

DREW

It's like she's in a glass jar.

PLAUDIT

It's a smart pad. She really isn't in there.

KATIE

Aren't you afraid some teenager could rip it off and sell it for drugs or something?

PLAUDIT

No, Katie.

(pause)

What do you mean some teenager?

LYNETTE

(patronizing)

Okay. We saw it. It's a nice job, Plaudit. Now, it's getting dark.

(MORE)

LYNETTE (CONT'D)

Let's go out to eat. I heard the Greenbacks are eating at the country club tonight.

PLAUDIT

Their name is Baumbach.

Lynette and Katie head back to the car. Plaudit and Drew stay. Drew steps a little closer to his dad.

PLAUDIT (CONT'D)

What's on your mind, Drew?

DREW

I'm thinking the video didn't leave anything unsaid.

Plaudit smiles and lovingly grabs Drew's shoulder.

PLAUDIT

Thank you, son. Go on back to the car. I'll be there in just a minute.

Drew leaves. Plaudit kneels down and moves his finger to the screen. Before he shuts the video off, he takes a moment.

PLAUDIT (CONT'D)

I did the best I could mom. I know you would have been proud.

A VOICE comes over the smart pad.

MYRTLE MARIE (V.O.)

My, god! That was awful.

Plaudit, caught off guard, jumps up and takes a few steps back and looks around for anyone who might have said it.

MYRTLE MARIE (V.O.)

I mean, it could have been better. It was a good try, Plaudit.

PLAUDIT

(frightened)

Oh, no, no, no...

STATIC and POPS. Myrtle Marie appears on the screen.

MYRTLE MARIE

Yes, I'm here. Jesus, what a terrible place to be held up.

PLAUDIT
 (wide eyed)
 This isn't real.

MYRTLE MARIE
 Of course it is. I don't have much
 time. Takes a lot of juice to do
 this.

Plaudit fidgets, unsure what to do, stay or run.

PLAUDIT
 Don't move!

Plaudit sprints back to the car.

EXT. PLAUDIT'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

Plaudit rushes up to the car and pounds on the passenger
 window startling everyone in the car.

PLAUDIT
 Lynette, kids, you have to come and
 see this.

LYNETTE
 We've already seen it.

PLAUDIT
 Not this you haven't.

Lynette and the kids get out of the car. Plaudit hurries them
 down the path.

EXT. MYRTLE MARIE'S GRAVE - MOMENTS LATER

Myrtle Marie's hair salon picture is paused on the screen.
 Plaudit waits until they're all back.

PLAUDIT
 Okay, mom. Say hello to the family.

They all stare at the still image. Nothing.

LYNETTE
 (to Plaudit)
 Are you feeling okay?

PLAUDIT
 Just wait.
 (to the smart pad)
 Go head, mom.
 (MORE)

PLAUDIT (CONT'D)

Tell them what you told me. Tell
them you hate the video.

The still image of Myrtle fades and the screen goes black.

PLAUDIT (CONT'D)

No, no, no.

Plaudit jumps down to the pad and pushes buttons to get the
smart pad back on.

LYNETTE

You must be having a blood sugar
drop. I think you need to eat.

Lynette and the kids leave.

PLAUDIT

No. I swear. She was here.

Plaudit struggles to get it back on. He stops, stands and
stares at the blank screen.

PLAUDIT (CONT'D)

Maybe I've been spending too much
time on this video. I'm seeing
video that isn't there.

Plaudit leaves.

Myrtle Marie appears remorseful on the screen as she watches
Plaudit walk down the path.

MYRTLE MARIE

God, I could use a cigarette.

FADE TO BLACK:

END OF ACT II

ACT III

INT. JONES HOME - MASTER BATHROOM - MORNING

Plaudit, hair still wet from a shower, brushes his teeth. Lost in his thoughts, he watches the water spiraling down the drain.

Lynette enters, lowers the lid, and sits on the toilet.

LYNETTE

Plaudit?

Plaudit, spits toothpaste in the sink. He, wipes his mouth as his attention focuses on a post-it note on his bathroom mirror. It reads: "TODAY IS AN OPPORTUNITY TO GET BETTER. DON'T WASTE IT!"

PLAUDIT

Do you think the video was really that bad? I mean consider what I had to work with. I could make it better. Maybe I need more footage.

LYNETTE

I need your focus for a minute. I'm concerned after last night.

PLAUDIT

I'm showing it to Mr. T today. It's going to be a disaster.

LYNETTE

I didn't hate it. You're right. It's difficult to make your mother look like someone she's not.

PLAUDIT

(half-hearted)
Yeah.

LYNETTE

Should I be worried?

PLAUDIT

I was tired and hadn't slept much. I'll be fine.

Plaudit gives Lynette a forced reassuring grin.

LYNETTE
 (reluctantly)
 Okay.

Lynette jumps up and leaves.

Plaudit looks in the mirror upbeat and smiling. He practices.

PLAUDIT
 Mr. T, Teddy, It's raw and real. I
 think that when someone sees this
 they're going to feel like the
 family built it themselves - like a
 home movie.

Plaudit's smile fades. He exhales a big sigh and grabs
 antacid from the medicine cabinet.

PLAUDIT (CONT'D)
 Like a bad home movie.

EXT. MYRTLE MARIE'S GRAVE - DAY

Plaudit and Teddy stand in front of the tombstone as the
 music fades and Myrtle's picture freezes on the screen.

Silence as Teddy, in thought, rubs his mouth and chin.

PLAUDIT
 (in full sales mode)
 When someone sees this, they're
 going to feel like it was made by
 loved ones, not some big agency.

TEDDY
 Like a home video.

PLAUDIT
 Yes! We're on the same page.

TEDDY
 Okay, I can see that. But, can you
 sell it?

PLAUDIT
 I believe so. I think we can make
 it reasonable and ask the family to
 help us by providing all of the
 photographs and video.

TEDDY

That should give us a bigger margin since you'll be doing all the editing.

PLAUDIT

(surprised)

I'm what?

Teddy gives Plaudit a "don't give me shit" look.

PLAUDIT (CONT'D)

(playing along)

Of course, I'm doing the editing. There is some down time between customers.

(sarcastic)

I can always get in the habit of working lunches.

TEDDY

That's the right attitude. We need a name for our production company.

PLAUDIT

Production company?

TEDDY

It's a unique service offering of the funeral home. We need a logo at the beginning of each video.

PLAUDIT

Or at the end. That could be good, less obtrusive.

TEDDY

Fine, fine. But, what's the name?

PLAUDIT

What about Teddy Terrell Pictures?

TEDDY

Something more edgy and exciting. How about T-Rex Productions. You could make the T-Rex roar like the MGM lion.

PLAUDIT

It's edgy and exciting.

TEDDY
(dramatic)
Great. Let's sell some digi-tombs
by T-Rex Productions!

Teddy leaves down the path. Plaudit moves closer to the tombstone and kneels down and looks at Myrtle's picture.

PLAUDIT
I figured you would have had
something smart to say after
hearing that conversation.
(pause)
Yeah, didn't think so. You've been
gone a year and I still hear you
criticizing me in my head.

Plaudit turns off the smart pad and leaves. STATIC and POP!
He stops suddenly and turns back to the tombstone. The frozen
image of Myrtle is up on the screen.

Plaudit turns the smart pad off, once again. Within seconds,
STATIC and POP!

PLAUDIT (CONT'D)
Great. A glitch and I have to sell
this thing?

Plaudit turns the smart pad off and a message appears on the
screen, "LOW BATTERY". He pulls it off the tombstone.

INT. PLAUDIT'S OFFICE

Plaudit plays with animation software on his computer. He's
attempting to build a roaring T-Rex.

Leatha steps into his doorway.

LEATHA
There's a priest in the arrangement
room.

PLAUDIT
What are your thoughts about this
whole digi-tomb product?

LEATHA
I like it. You know, my father
split when I was ten. We
reconnected again about five years
back. Then he disappeared, again.

PLAUDIT

Must've been very sad to get your
dad back only to lose him?

LEATHA

Some people may not get one of
those smart pads on a tomb cause
they don't know enough.

Plaudit agrees with a nod. He gives Leatha a comforting tap
on her arm as he passes.

PLAUDIT

I need to see a priest.

INT. ARRANGEMENT ROOM - LATER

Plaudit moves over to the coffin with the lowest price tag.
Father Francis (28), attractive and athletic, follows Plaudit
to the coffin.

PLAUDIT

This is the cheapest we have. Are
you sure you won't consider
cremation?

FATHER FRANCIS

In 1963 the church lifted the ban.
But, The Church requires that the
deceased body be treated with
prayerful reverence and great
dignity in recognition of its
glorious future.

PLAUDIT

That was right out of the handbook.

FATHER FRANCIS

Sometimes if I have different
opinions, it's better to just
recite the...

(using air quotes)
Handbook.

PLAUDIT

Our crematory is not a basement
furnace. We treat the body with
dignity and respect.

FATHER FRANCIS

I believe you. However, our
congregation has decided on burial.
They're paying for it.

(MORE)

FATHER FRANCIS (CONT'D)

(playful)
Just not too much.

PLAUDIT

They decided?

FATHER FRANCIS

The man was homeless. He attended our soup kitchen and our church. He had been coming since before I arrived in service. I think it was about eight years.

PLAUDIT

I'm assuming you'll have the ceremony at the church?

FATHER FRANCIS

No one really knew him. I barely did. He kept to himself.

PLAUDIT

Sad. Must be lonely when no one cares or even gets to know you.

FATHER FRANCIS

I'll speak at the grave side. I did care. A person needs to be willing, and the other person open to it.

Plaudit, embarrassed at his judgement, fidgets with the pillow in the coffin.

FATHER FRANCIS (CONT'D)

We'll take this one. I think Christopher would have liked it. Not too flashy, practical.

PLAUDIT

Of course. I'll have Leatha write it up for you.

Plaudit and Father Francis shake hands. Then, Plaudit is stricken with an idea.

PLAUDIT (CONT'D)

Would you like to see something?

Father Francis hesitates.

PLAUDIT (CONT'D)

I'm not trying to sell you something. It's just... I think you will appreciate it.

EXT. CEMETERY - MOMENTS LATER

Plaudit and Father Francis walk along a road flanked with graves on each side. Plaudit holds the newly charged smart pad next to his chest as he walks.

FATHER FRANCIS

You really do take your job seriously. That's reassuring. You have regrets for not saying something to someone you lost?

PLAUDIT

Don't we all? I'm sure the dead do as well. They just don't get a chance after they're gone.

FATHER FRANCIS

Never leave anything unsaid or done. It might be too late.

Up ahead, Markus plants lavender around a tree.

PLAUDIT

Exactly. I only wish I was in the business of life, not death.

FATHER FRANCIS

And you are. Think about you impact the lives of the loved ones. They're grieving and you help them.

PLAUDIT

I suppose I do.

FATHER FRANCIS

Just fulfilling God's plan.

They approach the tree and Markus. Father Francis stops.

FATHER FRANCIS (CONT'D)

(to Markus)

Lavender is my favorite. Curious, yours as well?

Markus smiles. He stands up and takes off his work gloves while avoiding eye contact.

MARKUS

Yes, and an insect repellent for the people who visit.

FATHER FRANCIS

That's very thoughtful of you.
 (sticks out his hand)
 I'm Father Francis. You can call me
 Frank.

Uncomfortable and awkward, Markus reaches his hand out and shakes Father Francis' hand.

Plaudit watches with surprise.

MARKUS

Markus.

An uncomfortable silence. Markus finally makes eye contact with the smiling Father. He smiles back.

PLAUDIT

(surprised)
 Wow. Not sure what just happened.
 (walks off)
 This way, father.

MARKUS

I best get back to work.

FATHER FRANCIS

It's nice to meet you Markus.

Plaudit and Father Francis continue down the road. Markus watches as they leave.

CUT TO:

EXT. MYRTLE MARIE'S GRAVE - LATER

ON THE SCREEN: Video concludes with the still of Myrtle smiling in the hair salon.

PLAUDIT (V.O.)

Good bye, Myrtle Marie Jones,
 sister, mother, and grandmother.

Video FADES TO BLACK as the MUSIC swells, then ends.

PLAUDIT

I don't think it's for everybody,
 but some family may enjoy coming on
 a Sunday or holiday and reconnect
 with loved ones through the video.

FATHER FRANCIS

What will people think of next? I think it's a fine piece of work.

PLAUDIT

(happy)

Thank you, Father. If you ever learn of your homeless friend's story, I would be happy to do it for free. Then, your congregation can come and learn about Christopher, the man they buried.

FATHER FRANCIS

I believe they would like that.

PLAUDIT

Father, I was wondering if I could ask you a really bizarre question?

FATHER FRANCIS

I've heard it all. Nothing would surprise me and I don't judge.

PLAUDIT

Do you believe spirits can communicate with you from beyond the grave?

FATHER FRANCIS

I do. I believe there are times when spirits help us by giving us warnings and guidance. I also believe they communicate because they have some unfinished business before they can move on.

PLAUDIT

Can they ever get trapped in something?

FATHER FRANCIS

Attachments? Now you're going into territory that I don't know anything about.

PLAUDIT

Thanks. I thought I would ask.

FATHER FRANCIS

I should be getting back to church. I need to lead six o'clock mass.

Plaudit looks at his watch.

PLAUDIT

I had no idea it was so late. Can you find your way back? I'm going to stay for a little bit.

Father Francis reaches out and shakes hands with Plaudit.

FATHER FRANCIS

It's been a very enjoyable afternoon. Not what I expected. Be sure and tell Markus goodbye.

Father Francis leaves.

Plaudit sits on the grass in front of the tombstone. He turns the video on. It plays from the beginning...

CUT TO:

INT. VIEWING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

A coffin sits at the front of the room. There is a bench along one of the walls. In front of the coffin sits a table filled with Mary Kay cosmetics displayed as if in a store.

Leatha BRUSHES rouge on Pauline's cheeks while five ladies stand around the coffin watching Leatha apply make-up.

LEATHA

Now ladies, I have been your beauty consultant for years. I would not steer you wrong.

She picks up an eye brush and compact.

LEATHA (CONT'D)

I'm using the limited-edition Fall Color Collection. It's the rose nudes palette. This luxurious eye color palette lets you move from a subtle smoky daytime look to a dramatic evening effect.

She applies the eye color to Pauline's eyes.

BARBARA JEAN approaches the coffin to get a better look.

BARBARA JEAN

Are you able to get these palettes online?

LEATHA
 No, they're only available
 exclusively from a beauty
 consultant. That's why I have
 several on the table, just in case.

BARBARA JEAN
 Is it hypo-allergenic?

LEATHA
 I haven't seen a bad reaction.

SUSIE (45) matter of fact and no nonsense.

SUSIE
 I hope not. She's dead.

The women CHUCKLE.

LEATHA
 (glaring at Susie)
 On my other clients.

Leatha steps back and looks at her masterpiece.

SUSIE
 Why not give her the illusion of
 full cleavage. I use--

LEATHA
 She's someone's aunt, not mistress.

SUSIE
 You never really know, do you?

LEATHA
 (adamant)
 I believe Pauline is ready for
 evening visitors.

APPLAUSE from all the women, except Susie.

LEATHA (CONT'D)
 Now, let's start buying some
 merchandise. Momma's gotta eat.

CUT TO:

EXT. MYRTLE MARIE'S GRAVE - CONTINUOUS

The video ends.

Plaudit reaches for the play button.

MYRTLE MARIE (V.O.)
 Oh, god. Not again. Aren't you
 tired of it yet?

Plaudit slowly pulls his hand back.

PLAUDIT
 I'm not crazy. You are attached to
 that thing.

Myrtle appears on the screen.

MYRTLE MARIE
 To the cemetery, not that smart
 gadget thing.

PLAUDIT
 Smart pad.

MYRTLE MARIE
 You couldn't bury me with a pack of
 Chesterfield Kings?

PLAUDIT
 What are you doing here? Shouldn't
 you be, I don't know, somewhere
 else?

MYRTLE MARIE
 Where would you have me go? Hell?
 You think I should be in hell?

PLAUDIT
 I didn't say that. But, you are
 obviously not in heaven.

MYRTLE MARIE
 Obviously, or that whole heaven
 thing was one big joke.

PLAUDIT
 Have you seen anyone you know? How
 about dad?

MYRTLE MARIE
 (smiles)
 Your dad is in the light waving me
 on. He's holding a rose.
 (defeated)
 He's just so far away.

PLAUDIT
 Mom, go to him.

MYRTLE MARIE

(back to reality)

I tried. I can't seem to go past the boundaries of this place. I'm trying to find someone who knows what's going on.

PLAUDIT

Why do you show up sometimes and not others? I looked crazy the other night when my family--

MYRTLE MARIE

The last people I want to talk to. Lynette is only out for Lynette. Katie is a mess and Drew... Well, now, I like Drew. Anyway, I need juice. I feed off the battery in order to talk and show myself.

PLAUDIT

I suppose that makes sense.

MYRTLE MARIE

Let's just keep this between us. No need to start a circus. And you know your boss would pitch a tent over my grave and sell tickets.

PLAUDIT

True.

Plaudit gets up and looks around the area.

PLAUDIT (CONT'D)

I'm going to need a power source. Maybe run a line so you always have power. How are you doing now?

MYRTLE MARIE

Just about gone. Don't screw this up, Plaudit. We can't afford for you to over juice the thing and blow it up.

PLAUDIT

I'm actually capable, mom.

MYRTLE MARIE

Why don't you ask Markus to help you. He can run electrical.

PLAUDIT

How do you know Markus?

MYRTLE MARIE

Everyone knows Markus. He'll help.
Some day I'll give you the gossip.

PLAUDIT

So, what's it like?

MYRTLE MARIE

Sorry, son. I'm fading. Get me some
juice! And some cigarettes...

She COUGHS and HACKS. Her image fades as the screen goes
black with a CRACKLE and POP!

FADE TO BLACK:

END OF ACT III

ACT IV

EXT. CEMETERY - DAWN

MUSIC: *Morning has broken*, by Cat Stevens

Light barely breaks in the east with a sky full of stars.

CAR LIGHTS appear down the road and creep slowly to the old rot iron gates of the East of Eden cemetery. The headlights illuminate the chain on the gate.

INT. PLAUDIT'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

ON THE RADIO: The MUSIC continues to play

Plaudit rolls up to the gates and places the car in park. He pulls his hoodie over his head and pulls the strings to make it tight around his face. He slips on his winter gloves.

EXT. PLAUDIT'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

The engine idles.

Car door opens. Plaudit exits and approaches the gate.

Key ring JINGLES as he tries to find the right key in the dark. He uses the headlights and finds it.

The lock slides open and the chain falls to the ground.

Plaudit pushes the gates open and drives his car in.

INT. CEMETERY - LATER

Plaudit carries a large coil of outdoor orange extension chord. As he sneaks through the cemetery, he DROPS the chord along the fence line careful to hide it in the grass.

EXT. MYRTLE MARIE'S GRAVE - MOMENTS LATER

Plaudit lays the extension chord from the fence to the back of Myrtle's tombstone. He pulls an adapter from his hoodie pocket and prepares to connect it to the extension chord.

PLAUDIT
Momma, you asked for juice.

Plaudit plugs in the adapter and connects it to the chord. He waits. Nothing happens. He checks all of the connections.

Plaudit comes to the realization that he needs to turn it on. He slaps himself on the forehead and pushes play.

The sun peeks through the horizon and lights up the cemetery.

STATIC fills the screen and Myrtle appears.

PLAUDIT (CONT'D)

Thank, god.

MYRTLE MARIE

(agitated)

You sure can. That's the reason why I'm stuck here and can't crossover.

PLAUDIT

I don't understand.

MYRTLE MARIE

Keep up with the program, Bug.

PLAUDIT

Don't call me Bug. You know I don't like it.

MYRTLE MARIE

It appears I'm stuck here until I complete enough good deeds to compensate for all my bad.

PLAUDIT

That could take years.

MYRTLE MARIE

Smart ass.

PLAUDIT

How are you suppose to do that when you're dead?

MYRTLE MARIE

You're going to help me.

PLAUDIT

Are you kidding me? After only getting grief from you my whole life? I don't think so.

MYRTLE MARIE

What did I ever do that was so awful.

PLAUDIT
Bug for instance.

MYRTLE MARIE
That was just a nickname.

PLAUDIT
You told me I was weak and that in
life, everyone was going to squash
me like a bug.

MYRTLE MARIE
I was only trying to help you.
Teach you to stand up for yourself.

PLAUDIT
Well, I'm doing it now.

Plaudit reaches for the power chord.

MYRTLE MARIE
Plaudit Jones. Don't you dare!

Plaudit PULLS the plug.

He leans against the tombstone and fights back tears pounding
himself on the leg in hopes he wouldn't cry. It doesn't work.

INT. CEMETERY - CONTINUOUS

Markus stands staring off with his hands in his pockets. He
has a puzzled look on his face.

We see what he watches. In the distance Plaudit sobs.

Markus wipes a tear from his eye and walks away.

FADE TO BLACK:

EXT. JONES HOME - LATER THAT MORNING

The morning sun shines on the house. Plaudit's CAR sits in
the drive.

INT. DREW'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Drew in bed stares at the ceiling.

Plaudit opens the door. Drew brings the covers over his head.
Plaudit approaches the bed and sits.

PLAUDIT

Your mom says you're not feeling well. This wouldn't happen to have anything to do with Mr. Grasshopper, would it?

DREW

I let him go.

PLAUDIT

Good for you.

DREW

I thought you would be mad?

PLAUDIT

It's okay to stand up for your beliefs as long as it doesn't do harm to anyone else. You go in and tell Mrs. Roberts that you are a conscientious objector, and want an alternative assignment.

DREW

What's a conscious objection?

PLAUDIT

(correcting and
clarifying)

A conscientious objector is someone who wouldn't go to war on the grounds of thought, conscience, or religion.

DREW

So, what do I do?

PLAUDIT

Stand up for beliefs. Tell your teacher that you don't believe in killing insects for the sake of a school project.

DREW

I can do that.

PLAUDIT

To really sell her on your position, let her know you are open to doing something different for the grade. That will go a long way.

DREW

Whatever it takes.

PLAUDIT

Feeling better? Can you get ready
for school?

DREW

Thanks, dad.

Plaudit smiles from his success. Teasingly, he rips the
blankets off Drew and leaves the room.

PLAUDIT

(to himself)

That's how you do it, mom.

INT. ARRANGEMENT ROOM - DAY

Leatha stacks BROCHURES on a small table. A standing PLACARD
promotes the new digi-tombs.

Plaudit enters carrying a small PLASTIC BOX.

PLAUDIT

I found the push pins for the
posters. I think just a couple on
the walls is sufficient. The real
sell comes at the tombstone.

Waddell charges in wearing his embalming apron and gloves.

WADDELL

(angry)

Plaudit, what the hell? You have a
homeless man brought in who's
filthy and stinks to high heaven.

PLAUDIT

Yes, he's a client.

WADDELL

We are now picking dead bodies off
the street? I can't believe the
hospital would send him over like
this.

PLAUDIT

I'll call them. By the way, his
name is Christopher.

LEATHA

Waddell, what is this really about?

WADDELL

I have one on the table, they bring
in this homeless guy--

PLAUDIT

Christopher.

WADDELL

(near tears)

Christopher, and I have an eighteen
year old in the cooler and I don't
know if I can...

Waddell chokes up.

WADDELL (CONT'D)

You know? Nevermind.

Waddell charges out of the room.

LEATHA

What the hell was that all about?

PLAUDIT

I'll go talk to him.

CUT TO:

INT. COOLER - MOMENTS LATER

Plaudit enters.

He notices CHRISTOPHER on a rolling table under a sheet. He's
dirty with long hair and full beard. Jesus like.

Plaudit approaches a second table. Randy, Waddell's friend
from the rave, lies naked under a sheet.

On his chest is PAPERWORK. Plaudit reads.

PLAUDIT

Randy Davis, eighteen...

(pause)

Suicide--

WADDELL (O.S.)

That's bullshit!

Plaudit looks around the room and finds Waddell sitting on
the floor in a corner. His hands are on his head as his
forehead rests on this knees.

WADDELL (CONT'D)
Randy would never kill himself.

PLAUDIT
(reading the paperwork)
Drug overdose. It could be a
mistake.

WADDELL
Damn right.

PLAUDIT
How did he show up here? I haven't
talked with his parents.

WADDELL
(wiping his eyes)
He's a friend. We hung out on the
weekends. He's a good kid.

Waddell stands and walks to the body. He leans on the table.

PLAUDIT
I'll reach out to his parents, if
you want.

WADDELL
Yeah, that would be great. See if
they buy that bullshit.

PLAUDIT
I'll do my best.

WADDELL
Thanks.
(heavy sigh)
I need to deal with this.

Plaudit hands the paperwork to Waddell and leaves.

EXT. MYRTLE MARIE'S GRAVE - LATER

Plaudit plugs Myrtle's smart pad back in. The screen begins
to glow.

The back of Myrtle's head appears on the screen.

PLAUDIT
(sarcastic)
Very mature.

MYRTLE MARIE

You're the one who pulled the plug on me.

PLAUDIT

I'm here to make a bargain. I'm willing to help you do good so you can crossover. But, I have two conditions.

Myrtle turns around and faces Plaudit.

MYRTLE MARIE

Alright, what are they?

PLAUDIT

First, you're going to be nice to me. You've got a lot of making up to do.

MYRTLE MARIE

Fine. There were only good intentions--

PLAUDIT

Second, occasionally, you help me find out things from your side.

MYRTLE MARIE

I can live with that. Keep in mind, I'm limited to what's here.

PLAUDIT

What's that suppose to mean?

MYRTLE MARIE

It means, I can only talk to people who are in this cemetery. I can't step foot out of this place. At least for now.

PLAUDIT

Fair enough. I need you to find out what happened to a kid named Randy Davis. His death certificate says suicide. We think otherwise.

MYRTLE MARIE

Is he in the ground?

PLAUDIT

No. Waddell is prepping him for burial.

MYRTLE MARIE

There you go. I can't help you until he's in the ground. When he is, I'll see if I can catch him before he moves on.

PLAUDIT

Have all of the others moved on?

MYRTLE MARIE

Lordy, no. There's several of us here waiting on one thing or another. A few of us have started up a bridge game.

PLAUDIT

I'm glad to hear your not bored.

MYRTLE MARIE

Hell, yes I am. Now if we had a bowling alley down here, that would be a very different situation.

PLAUDIT

Okay. That's it for now.

Plaudit reaches for the power button.

MYRTLE MARIE

(stern)

Whoa, hold your horses. You're not going to unplug me again.

PLAUDIT

Just off.

MYRTLE MARIE

Wait. I have some--

Plaudit hits the power button and Myrtle vanishes.

INT. CEMETERY - DAY

An open grave. A coffin sits at the bottom. Father Francis holds a bible and stands at one end of the grave. Plaudit wears a black suit and stands beside the grave.

Behind a pile of dirt, Markus stands, head bowed.

FATHER FRANCIS

(in mid reading)

A highway will be there, called the holy way;

(MORE)

FATHER FRANCIS (CONT'D)

no one unclean may pass over it,
but it will be for his people; no
traveler, not even fools, shall go
astray on it.

No lion shall be there, nor any
beast of prey approach, nor be
found.

But there the redeemed shall walk,
and the ransomed of the LORD shall
return, and enter Zion singing,
crowned with everlasting joy;
they meet with joy and gladness,
sorrow and mourning flee away.

The Word of the Lord

PLAUDIT

Amen

MARKUS

Amen

Father Frances closes his bible.

FATHER FRANCIS

I would really like to thank you
both for being here.

Plaudit acknowledges with a smile. Markus grabs a shovel and
approaches the grave and the mound of dirt.

Father Francis takes off his coat and lays it with his bible
on the backhoe. He rolls up his sleeves as he approaches
Markus.

FATHER FRANCIS (CONT'D)

Markus, I would like to do this.

Markus holds tight to the shovel.

FATHER FRANCIS (CONT'D)

Please.

Markus releases the shovel and walks behind the backhoe.

Plaudit and Father Frances exchange a look of concern.

FATHER FRANCIS (CONT'D)

(to Plaudit)

I hope I didn't offend him.

Markus emerges from the back of the backhoe with a second shovel. He begins throwing dirt on the coffin. Father Francis digs in as well.

FATHER FRANCIS (CONT'D)

Thank you, Markus.

Plaudit slips away as the men continue to work.

INT. TERRELL'S FUNERAL HOME - LATER

Leatha types at her desk.

Plaudit enters.

LEATHA

How was the grave-side service? Did anyone from the parish show up?

PLAUDIT

It was fine. I guess they believe they did all they had to do by paying for the funeral. It was just me, Father Francis, and Markus.

LEATHA

Markus?

PLAUDIT

Yeah. He and Father Francis have this interesting connection.

LEATHA

Who would have thunk it. Markus stays to himself. I don't think he has one living friend on this earth. If you ask me, hanging out with the dead is no way to live.

PLAUDIT

Maybe he has a friend now. Do you have the schedule?

LEATHA

What do you need to know?

PLAUDIT

Randy Davis' funeral this week?

LEATHA

Today. Started fifteen minutes ago.

PLAUDIT
 (panicked)
 What?

Plaudit charges for the front door.

LEATHA
 If you see Markus, get him over
 there. He'll need to fill'er in as
 soon as he's done with Christopher.

CUT TO:

EXT. MYRTLE MARIE'S GRAVE - MOMENTS LATER

Plaudit scrambles to get to the tombstone and power up the
 smart pad.

PLAUDIT
 Come on, come on.

The smart pad lights up. The MUSIC starts. The video is
 playing.

PLAUDIT (CONT'D)
 Oh, no. Mom? Can you hear me?

MARKUS (O.S.)
 I don't think she can.

Plaudit screams and turns around. Markus stands over him.

PLAUDIT
 Oh, dear god. You scared the shit
 out of me.

Plaudit hits the pause button on the smart pad.

MARKUS
 What's the name of Frank's church?

PLAUDIT
 (caught off guard)
 What? Who?

MARKUS
 Father Francis.

PLAUDIT
 Oh. It's All Saints in South Tulsa.
 Been to the Davis grave side yet?

MARKUS

The family is still over there. I should git. Gotta be done by now.

PLAUDIT

Sure. Yes. You need to be there.

Markus walks away.

Plaudit hits PLAY.

PLAUDIT (CONT'D)

Come on, mom!

The screen turns to STATIC and POPS! Myrtle appears on the screen in a cloud of cigarette smoke waving her hands.

MYRTLE MARIE

(coughing)

You know I'm not going to show myself when there is anyone else around. What's so urgent anyway?

PLAUDIT

They're wrapping up the Randy Davis funeral right now. Get over there and talk with him before he leaves this earth.

MYRTLE MARIE

Alright.

Myrtle doesn't leave she stares at Plaudit.

PLAUDIT

What? Why haven't you left?

MYRTLE MARIE

Go ahead and say it. I taught you better than that.

PLAUDIT

(angry)

Please!

MYRTLE MARIE

That's better.

She disappears.

PLAUDIT

(to himself)

You didn't teach me that.

Myrtle appears again.

PLAUDIT (CONT'D)

What's wrong?

MYRTLE MARIE

Nothing. The dead have a different sense of time. What feels normal to us feels really fast for you.

PLAUDIT

What did you find out?

MYRTLE MARIE

It was an accident. He took some oxy, then a hit of coke, and some more oxy. He forgot he had taken some before the coke.

PLAUDIT

Stupid kids.

MYRTLE MARIE

He's not the only one to blame. He was a football kid and had a couple bad breaks with his collar bone, blew his knee, and suffered with migraines from the concussions.

PLAUDIT

Who else is to blame?

MYRTLE MARIE

Something fishy about the doc who took care of him. Someone needs to do something. Randy says there are other kids just like him.

Plaudit let's the news sink in and goes inside his head.

PLAUDIT

Not sure...

MYRTLE MARIE

Now it's my turn. That guy, Christopher, you and that priest just buried? It seems you know his daughter.

Plaudit snaps out of his thoughts.

PLAUDIT

What? He was homeless.

MYRTLE MARIE

Don't much matter. He still had family.

PLAUDIT

This is all too much.

MYRTLE MARIE

You're a messenger for the dead. Like a medium, but you're not.

PLAUDIT

Yeah, this is harder to explain.

MYRTLE MARIE

Wanna know who she is? It appears--

The smart pad goes black and Myrtle is gone.

PLAUDIT

No, no, no.

Plaudit checks the connection. All appears good. He traces the extension chord.

INT. CEMETERY - MOMENTS LATER

Plaudit follows the chord to the outlet. Holding the unplugged chord is HARROLD DAVIS, Randy Davis' father.

PLAUDIT

Mr. Davis? I'm sorry for your loss, sir. How was the service?

MARKUS

Mr. Davis works for the City of Tulsa Code Enforcement.

HARROLD DAVIS

This is a violation. Since I'm burying my son, I'm not going to write this up. But, I will be back.

PLAUDIT

Yes, Mr. Davis. We are trying out a new tombstone. Maybe you would like to see it?

Harrold doesn't respond and gives Plaudit a cold stare.

PLAUDIT (CONT'D)

(off Harrold's look)

Maybe now isn't the time.

(MORE)

PLAUDIT (CONT'D)

Anyway, this new digi-tomb requires power. The batteries--

HARROLD DAVIS

I really don't give a rats ass.

Harrold hands the chord to Plaudit and leaves.

MARKUS

I'll get a line laid for you.

Plaudit is deep in thought. Markus walks away.

PLAUDIT

When would that be?

MARKUS (O.S.)

A couple of days.

PLAUDIT

(yelling)

Thank you!

(under his breath)

Sooner would be better.

CUT TO:

INT. PLAUDIT'S OFFICE - EVENING

Plaudit stares out his office window as the sun sets. He's mindlessly flipping a pen.

PLAUDIT

(to himself)

The dead have a different sense of time. Two days will feel like an eternity. I gotta move this up.

WADDELL (O.S.)

Still hard to believe.

Plaudit turns around to find Waddell standing in his doorway ready to leave for the day.

PLAUDIT

I saw Mr. Davis after the service. I have some news. It seems the overdose was an accident. He was mixing drugs and took too much oxy.

WADDELL

Randy's dad told you that?

PLAUDIT

Not exactly. But, what's important is it seems Randy's doctor wasn't managing his meds. He was recklessly feeding his habit.

WADDELL

That actually makes a lot of sense.

PLAUDIT

I'm going to do some checking into this doctor, before others end up like Randy. You willing to help?

Waddell gives an affirmative nod and leaves.

Plaudit opens his desk drawer and pulls out a calendar. He makes a check mark on today's date.

PLAUDIT (CONT'D)

That's one, momma.

FADE TO BLACK:

END OF SHOW