

Jewish Sports Heroes and Texas Intellectuals

A play by
William Missouri Downs

Agent: Patricia Mclaughlin
Beacon Artist Agency
57 West 57th Street - 4th Floor
New York, NY 10019
212-756-6630
BeaconAgency@hotmail.com

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(1w 2m)

Darla

30

A woman on a mission to find herself in the
United States of Anxiety

Bear

50's

A mountain man and famous author of bullshit
philosophical books loved mostly by men.

Johnny

20

A university football player who has had
one too many concussions.

TIME: A late afternoon and evening in September - The
present.

PLACE: A remote log cabin somewhere high in mountains
outside Boulder, Colorado

SETTING: A rustic kitchen with a small dinette heaped
with paper and an old typewriter. The floor is covered
with books. Above the doors are mounted deer antlers and
fishing poles.

ACT ONE

(THE LIGHTS RISE: HENRY HOFFER enters from the basement with a box and drops it with the others. He's a big-boned, barrel-chested mountain man. He has no pants on, instead his Mickey Mouse boxer shorts reveal thin bare white legs stuffed into faded cowboy boots. He takes a swig of beer. A knock at the back door. From outside a woman's voice calls out.)

DARLA

Daddy, it's me!

(HENRY quickly punches the boxes out of the way and tries to find his pants but no luck.)

HENRY

Who's "me"?

DARLA

Your daughter, ya moron!

HENRY

Then you gotta key!

(Giving up on the pants, HENRY sits at the dinette and nonchalantly types at an old Underwood. There's a struggle at the door and DARLA HOFFER enters. She attempts to juggle her purse, several heavy, disintegrating grocery bags and keys. She makes it to the counter just as the bags rip open.)

After dropping the mess into the sink she turns and glares at HENRY.)

HENRY (CONT'D)

Problem?

DARLA

Some jackass tried to run me off the road!

HENRY

What'd you do to piss him off?

DARLA

Why does it gotta be my fault! Why can't he be a jackass who cut me off for no damn reason?

HENRY

Probably was a jackass - who was pissed off by somethin' you did.

DARLA

I didn't do anything! I'm in some rental I don't know how to drive and this yahoo in a crappy old pickup cuts me off! Couldn't find the horn so I had to give him the finger.

HENRY

Don't give men in crappy old pickups the finger, they don't like that.

DARLA

No kidding! The moron followed me for two miles.

HENRY

That's why you're late. Or did you get lost?

DARLA

I didn't get lost.

HENRY

If you knew which way North was you wouldn't have that problem.

DARLA

I know which way North is.

HENRY

Which way?

DARLA

(She doesn't know)

I didn't get lost!

HENRY

Fine and dandy. Just wanted you to know that you're late. You do that in this business world you feed on and you'll get your ass handed to you in a paper bag.

DARLA

It took three stops to find French Vanilla. You want me here on time or French Vanilla?

HENRY

Whatever.

DARLA

Then shut up!

HENRY

Well 'howdy' to you too.

DARLA

Did you know you're not wearing pants?

HENRY

I know it.

(DARLA starts looking for his pants. HENRY gets up and unpacks the grocery bags. He piles up a dozen tiny packets of cat food, fancy little delicate designer packets. They disgust him.)

DARLA

It's cat food. Or are you going to board her?

HENRY

Haven't thought about it.

DARLA

Where is she?

HENRY

Moonpie? She's out.

DARLA

Wish you wouldn't do that. There are mountain lions and bears out there. How long she been missin'?

HENRY

She's not 'missin'. She killed a warbler two hours ago. Feathers everywhere.

DARLA

(Yelling out the window)

Moonpie! Moonpiiiie!

HENRY

Absolute carnage. So she can't be far.

DARLA

M. Peee! M. Peeeee!

HENRY

If the cat doesn't know its name, what the hell makes you think she'd know her initials?

(DARLA glares at HENRY.)

HENRY (CONT'D)

(looking in the grocery bag)

What, no chew?

(HENRY pulls from the groceries a small box of panty liners. Totally grossed out, he holds them as if they were plutonium. DARLA grabs them away and hands him his pants.)

DARLA

You're feelin' better.

HENRY

I feel like crap.

DARLA

Where the blazes is a double hernia anyway?

HENRY

I'd show you but I'd be arrested.

(DARLA opens the ice cream, grabs a spoon and downs a scoop. It's been a long day, it's her only treat.)

HENRY (CONT'D)

Cancelled the papers and I'm havin' the mail forwarded to you. Your mother will just lose it.

DARLA

I'll be staying a while so I can pick up your mail.

HENRY

I already told that idiot mailman. Told him three times so maybe it'll stick. Last time I was gone, he sent it to your mother. I spelled it out. Whatever you do don't send it to your mother. Sent it to her anyway. And of course she had to come to the hospital and read it to me.

(She notices the boxes.)

DARLA

What you got here? New book?

HENRY

Just junk. Stuff to donate.

(She lightly kicks the boxes with the tip of her shoe.)

DARLA

They're heavy. How'd you get'em up here?

HENRY

I managed.

(She starts to open a box but HENRY stops her.)

HENRY

Your Mama had her cataract surgery.

DARLA

What? When?

HENRY

She wants you to dial up the minute you get in. Like now, Heifer.

DARLA

Why didn't you tell me?

(DARLA grabs her I-phone.)

HENRY

She didn't want me to. Said you'd just fret. That fancy-schmancy I-phone won't work out here. Use the landline.

(DARLA dials the old landline.)

HENRY (CONT'D)

I told her not to dilly dally. Told her, one eye at a time. Did she listen? Course not. Waited too long, so she had to get both eyes done at once. Got some nurse with her twenty-four hours a day.

DARLA

Did you send flowers?

HENRY

Why should I? She can't see'em.

DARLA

You should've told me.

HENRY

She's fine. Blind but fine. Got two huge silver patches on her face. Makes her look like some kinda massive, damn gnat.

DARLA

(On phone)

Hello! Mom? ...I'm sorry.

(MORE)

DARLA (CONT'D)

May I speak with...*(she is interrupted)* Yes this is...*(interrupted)* No no, let her rest. And tell I'll be there as soon I'm done with the old fart. Thank you... *(she hangs up)*

HENRY

Seen your Mama lately?

DARLA

I Skyped her a few weeks ago.

HENRY

Think she's startin' to look like Bozo?

DARLA

Daddy!

(DARLA looks up a number in the phone book and dials)

HENRY

It's true. While she was losin' her sight she just kept pilin' on that Max Factor lipshit and with that big red hairdo, twice the size of a human head, she started lookin' like Bozo. I had to ask her to stop comin' to the hospital cause she was scarin' the hell out of the nurses.

DARLA

She does not look like Bozo!

HENRY

Your mother, a tenth of a ton of thrills and fun.

DARLA

Shhh. *(On phone)* Yes, I'd like to order flowers. "Get well" flowers. Something light. Something fun. Something that has a definite aroma. Daisies!

HENRY

I hate Daisies.

DARLA

They're not for you! *(back on phone)* Make the card for Boz - Barbara! I mean Barbara Jean Hoffer, 243 Mountain Lion Lane.

HENRY

She stopped usin' my name two years ago.

DARLA

Check that, I mean, Rose. Barbara Jean Rose - Got that? Make it say, ah, "Hope you're feeling better, love Darla and Henry."

HENRY

Hold it right there!

DARLA

That's right. Darla and Henry. And put some of those cute little 'X's and 'O's on it for hugs and kisses.

HENRY

God, I hate women.

DARLA

(Glaring at Henry)

And put a big P.S. on it, "I'll be over as soon as I take care of the old fart!" Let me get my card.

HENRY

And make sure it's in braille!

(She puts down the phone and fumbles through her purse for her credit card.)

DARLA

It would be nice if we all got together.

HENRY

She'd just get down on me for somethin'. Last time it was my language. That woman wouldn't say the word "crap" even if she had a spoonful of it in her mouth.

DARLA

It wouldn't hurt you.

(During the following, DARLA goes back to the phone and gives her card number.)

HENRY

Have I ever asked you to choose between your mother and me? Damn right I haven't. You know, I'm one of the happiest people I've ever met. I look at your mother and the rest of'em, it comes down to what happiness is. No one knows anymore. Except me. I know. I'm self-actualized. Did you read that chapter?

DARLA

(On phone)

Expiration date?

HENRY

Did you read that chapter?

DARLA

What chapter?

HENRY (CONT'D)

I sent you a chapter on self-actualization.

DARLA

Thought you said Frank Deeber read it.

HENRY

Who?

DARLA

That guy. The artist. Your best friend.

HENRY

Oh, Frank. He's not my best friend.

DARLA

(Back to the phone)

Yes, I'm still here.

(During the following, DARLA finishes her conversation and hangs up.)

HENRY

He thinks he's so damn smart. Thinks just because he made it to retirement without starvin' to death he knows what he's talkin' about. He used that heart attack as an excuse not to read it. Still doesn't know why he's dying. Two days before it hit, we were having breakfast at the all-night and he's a braggin' about how he 'speed-walks' five miles a day while he jams down the three egg senior platter. He thought eggs were happiness.

DARLA

I'm sorry to hear that. Is he okay?

HENRY

He's down the road, lyin' in bed, with tubes up his nose, makin' up excuses why he can't read the chapter that might make the few months he's got left worth somethin'. Ever try to have an intelligent conversation with someone who has tubes stuck up his nose?

DARLA

Are you packed?

HENRY

You didn't read the chapter.

DARLA

No.

HENRY

You're not on life support, what the hell's your excuse?

DARLA

Daddy, I didn't finish the chapter because it depressed me.

HENRY

My chapter on happiness depressed you? Good. It's supposed to. Most people think they're happy. They run around, playin' games, so unhappy they could die and they don't even know it. They think that money'll make'em all jolly, but it doesn't. So they turn to family. Name one person whose family makes'em happy.

DARLA

I know lots of people with children who are happy.

HENRY

They're puttin' on a show. They don't want anyone to know that they've made the biggest mistake of their life by havin' the damn kid and it's too late now.

DARLA

A couple I know, Sue and Bobbie, got a kid and they're thrilled.

HENRY

Sue and Bobbie?

DARLA

They talk about little Ben all the time.

HENRY

You mean Bob, Sue and Bob?

DARLA

No, Sue and Bobbie. It's a same sex marriage.

HENRY

God! What the hell has happened to the world? Suddenly everyone has rights. Everybody has an opinion. Just cause you got an opinion doesn't mean its worth anything!

DARLA

They're good parents and they're happy. So your thesis on happiness is wrong!

(The phone rings.)

DARLA (CONT'D)

That's Mama so hush up. *(On phone)* Hi... No, sorry, you've dialed the wrong number... I'm sure. Same name, different person... I'm sure on philosopher lives here.

(She hangs up.)

HENRY

Oh hell, you gotta call.

DARLA

I did?

HENRY

Some former lover, said he wanted to look you up.

DARLA

(Mouth full of ice cream)

Really? Who?

HENRY

What's-his-face. Dick Fartner. I don't know. Jerry Lartner.
Or maybe it was John.

DARLA

John Johnson?

HENRY

That's it. Knew I was in the ballpark.

DARLA

When did he call?

HENRY

Don't know, 'bout three weeks ago.

DARLA

What did you do with the number?

*(She starts going through the
drawers near the phone.)*

HENRY

Don't remember. Johnson. Why does that name stick?

DARLA

He's the producer I dated.

HENRY

Producer?

DARLA

That television guy. Makes children's cartoons.

(DARLA inspects the four dozen post-it notes stuck around the phone, then goes through every drawer in the kitchen.)

HENRY

This is why our children are so screwed up today. The other mornin', I was watchin' some cartoons. They'd play a minute of a Bugs Bunny and then, in the middle, just fade to a commercial and when they came back they started a new cartoon! They had a minute to fill, so they played a minute. Today's kids got no sense of beginning, middle and end. That this causes that. If Bugs Bunny is tryin' to outwit Yosemite Sam then there must be a result, Yosemite Sam seeks revenge. Yosemite Sam attacks with an insane elephant, which then causes Bugs Bunny to do somethin'. Saw one where they faded to a commercial just as Bugs went off the high dive board into a glass of water. Did he make it? Is he dead? Are there rabbit guts splattered all over the stage? The kids don't know and soon they don't care.

(She can't find the number.)

DARLA

Would've it been too much to pick up the phone and tell me he called?

HENRY

Thought you were datin'.

DARLA

Who?

HENRY

That guy.

DARLA

What guy?

HENRY

What's-his-face. That kid who said he read all my stuff, kissed my ass and then, when pressed, admitted he hadn't read a thing.

DARLA

That was your publisher and it was three years ago.

HENRY

What the hell's the problem? There are a lotta men out there. Ever consider that this guy who cut you off just wanted to meet you?

DARLA

He had no teeth. You're sick. Sick!

HENRY

Hell, you're nice lookin', gotta sort of a head on your shoulders.

(The phone rings.)

DARLA

That's her. *(She answers)* Hello... No. There is not famous philosopher who lives here, you have the wrong number.

(She hangs up.)

HENRY

You're probably right. Did you know that in India there are criminals so obedient that all the jailer has to do is draw a circle in the dirt with a stick and tell them to stand there so many hours or days or years?

DARLA

That's not the type of man I'm looking for.

HENRY

I'm tryin' to agree with you! The world is full of some pretty stupid men.

DARLA

Just keep the messages when the stupid men call and I'll be in business!

HENRY

What about Dead Bob?

DARLA

Dead what?

HENRY

Remember that country/western place, Bob's? Well Bob died so now they call it Dead Bob's.

DARLA

Why would I want to go there?

HENRY

A gal wants to meet a possible husband, a man wants to meet a possible mate and they go to a place where they can possibly meet. I mean, if you're that desperate--.

DARLA

I am not desperate!

HENRY

Hell, everyone's desperate! They just don't admit it.

(DARLA feels a little sick.)

HENRY (CONT'D)

What's wrong?

DARLA

I'm a little sick.

HENRY

You see, you hold it in all your life and that stomach twist will turn into cancer. It's a horrible way to go.

DARLA

Can I start taking things out to the car?

HENRY

Or maybe you're pregnant. Did you read my chapter on over population?

DARLA

I read it.

HENRY

That ass down the road--

DARLA

Frank Deeber, the artist. Your best friend!

(During the following, DARLA takes one of HENRY'S suitcases out the back and returns. HENRY follows her never missing a beat.)

HENRY

He had all sorts of problems with that chapter. Course the world revolves around his four kids and twenty-nine grandkids. How about the chapter on personal freedom?

DARLA

I didn't have time.

HENRY

Know what a lone wolf is?

DARLA

Yeah, you've told me every Thanksgiving--.

HENRY

In a wolf pack, the younger males are kicked out by the dominant male. These younger males circle the pack. Sometimes miles away, sometimes just off in the woods. Waitin' for their chance. Waitin' for a female to stray. Or in the case of Sue and Bobbie it would be another young lesbian wolf and they mate and start their own pack. But while they're circlin', they're alone, and they're happy, because they're not under the dominant hand of the leader. They can think for themselves.

DARLA

Wait wait wait, they're circlin' near the pack, driven by hormones, and you think they're free thinkers?

HENRY

Bein' female, you couldn't understand.

DARLA

If you're going to use an analogy, why wolves? They're carnivores. They kill, eat and screw. How do you know they experience happiness or freedom? I don't mean to shoot holes in your fine lone wolf theory but it's full of it!

HENRY

If you don't want to talk, just say so when you walk in the door!

DARLA

Fine! I don't want to talk!

HENRY

Fine and dandy!

(HENRY tries to ignore her by studying the newspaper. She sits down on the other side of the table and glares at him. After a moment, she becomes interested in an article on the back of the paper he's reading. She gently pulls at the paper so she can read it. They catch eyes.)

DARLA

Miss America. Wyoming won. First time in the state's history.

(He goes back to his side of the paper.)

HENRY

I got one hundred and twenty dead in a plane wreck. I gotta cut it out and send it to your mother so she can send it to you.

DARLA

Says here that she's the first disabled Miss America in pageant history.

HENRY

You know, if every beauty pageant contestant who promised to work with crippled kids really did, the problem would be eradicated. That's the thing, all of society is corrupt. Even to win Miss America you gotta lie through your teeth. Work with cripples, my ass.

DARLA

She doesn't work with the disabled, she is disabled.

HENRY

What ya mean?

DARLA

She's in a wheelchair.

HENRY

Miss America, the woman representin' the United States of America, one of the most screwed up nations on earth, but better then the rest of the namby-pamby crack pots out there, is represented by a wheelchair?!

DARLA

I think it's kind of evolved.

HENRY

What the hell is her talent? Wheelies?

DARLA

(Deeply offended)

She does marathons.

HENRY

What did she do, zoom up and down the ramp for the judges?

DARLA

You are just nasty, did you know that? Nasty!

HENRY

I bet the first runner up feels like crap. Probably blew her brains out. Spend twenty years learnin' how to walk up and down a runway and you lose to a quadriplegic. That can't be good for the psyche.

DARLA

I'm sorry I brought it up.

HENRY

It just proves my point, the world isn't controlled by logical people anymore. She didn't win because she was the smartest, had the best lookin' figure, or was more talented, that'd be discriminatin' against the ones who weren't that smart, were shaped like a board and got no abilities whatsoever.

DARLA

Your point?

HENRY

She won cause she was in a wheelchair.

DARLA

That's not true!

HENRY

Then why?

DARLA

I don't know, I wasn't there. But I'll be glad to catch the next horse to Atlantic City and steal the judges score cards for you!

HENRY

Wait! Now I see the logic! It's perfect. Paralysis does represent the United States. I take it all back!

DARLA

No wonder everyone hates you.

HENRY

That's why I sold a half a million books.

DARLA

So did Hitler! Besides self-publishing doesn't count.

HENRY

I have never self published!

DARLA

You self published "Zen and the Art of Deer Hunting."

HENRY

Drop it!

DARLA

You still got a basement full of leftovers. That's probably what the boxes are, leftovers no one wants.

HENRY

If you don't want my help, just say so when you walk in the door!

DARLA

I don't want your help, I don't want any talk and I don't want to hear about your books. I just want to be a normal father and daughter. Just sit here and hate each other and then I'll take you to the hospital.

HENRY

Fine and dandy.

(HENRY goes back to his paper and ignores her. Pause, DARLA gets uncomfortable with the silence.)

DARLA

Why is it that every time I come here it's all about you?

HENRY

What? You want to talk about yourself?

DARLA

That would be nice.

HENRY

I'm all ears.

DARLA

Well, I've decided that L.A. was a mistake. I'm tired of being around extremely happy people who are miserable all the time.

HENRY

And on top of that they got no sense of distance and no sense of where North is and what is worse, they don't care. Which way is North?

(DARLA takes a stab at it. She points.)

HENRY (CONT'D)

Wrong. But you want to know, right?

DARLA

(Sarcastic)

Deeply.

HENRY

If you don't know where North is, how do you give directions? When I lived in New York everythin' was blocks. Where is the food kitchen? It's ninety-two blocks that way, turn right go five blocks then turn left and go one block and there it was. In L.A. directions are given in miles, but absolutely nobody has any concept of how far a mile is--

DARLA

Daddy--

HENRY

I was lookin' for work, ridin' the boxcars.

DARLA

You're doing it again!

HENRY

Doin' what?

DARLA

I'm trying to talk about me.

HENRY

Who?

DARLA

Me.

HENRY

Ah to hell with it.

(HENRY chucks the paper and exits.)

DARLA

(Under her breath)

Great. Just great.

(DARLA gets up and looks out the window - towards the audience. Moments later, HENRY reenters with a roll of toilet paper and searches through the piles of books for something to read.)

HENRY
What you doin'?

DARLA
Looking at the sunset.

HENRY
No, I don't know.

DARLA
Care to join me?

(Disgusted, HENRY steps over and looks out the window with her.)

DARLA
Isn't this kinda nice? Just you and me watching the sunset.

HENRY
Yeah. *(Beat)* You know not to look right at the sun don't you?

DARLA
Daddy!

HENRY
What?

DARLA
Could you let your parent go for a while?

HENRY
Just bein' the old man, you don't gotta take my advice. Look at the sun all you want! Be my guest, blind yourself!

DARLA
I know not to look right at the sun!

HENRY
It's a little helpful warnin'! What the hell is the harm? Ya goofy or somethin'?

(HENRY starts out.)

DARLA
Wait, don't go. Daddy, there's something I want to tell you.

HENRY

You love me, I know.

DARLA

No. Daddy... Dad, I've done something that has made me...
Well, happy.

HENRY

I got to take you to the re-hab center again?

DARLA

No. I've been... I've been... inseminated. Artificially...
inseminated.

HENRY

What you sayin'?

DARLA

I think I'm pregnant.

*(HENRY lets that sink in for a
moment.)*

HENRY

You're goin' to have a baby, without a father?

DARLA

The baby has a father, I just don't know who it is.

HENRY

Artificial insemination.

DARLA

I paid three thousand. Everything I had.

HENRY

And you don't even know who the father is!

DARLA

Well, not entirely. I read his sperm report. Most of the
donors there are University of Colorado students. This one
was, I think. He's from the Midwest and is a football player
with a 2.89 grade point average.

HENRY

Sperm report?

DARLA

They give you an information card about the donor and you choose what you're looking for. You can find anything.

HENRY

How do you know it's true?

DARLA

The donors only get fifty dollars per donation, the difference is quality control.

HENRY

QUALITY CONTROL! This could be bull sperm they've implanted in you and how would you know?!

DARLA

I guess I don't. But I have confidence in them, they were awfully nice.

HENRY

Of course they were nice, they charged three thousand bucks per ounce! God, that's great! My daughter comes to see me, where she been? In some lab layin' there with her skirt up, legs all akimbo, bein' shot full of bull sperm! I'm such a happy parent!

DARLA

It is a very respected cryo bank in Boulder. Highly recommended.

HENRY

By who? Sue and Bobbie?

DARLA

I don't want your approval! I just want you to know. You're going to be a grandfather.

HENRY

I'm not goin' to be a grandfather. Some stupid football player's farmer father in Des Moines is goin' to be a grandfather!

DARLA

This is a perfectly acceptable way to have a baby today!

HENRY

I'm not upset with the method. Hell, the human race has tried everythin' else, this might be its salvation!

DARLA

Then be happy for me.

HENRY

I can't.

DARLA

Why not?

HENRY

A 2.89 grade point average?

DARLA

That's not that bad.

HENRY

He's a football player! He takes classes like intro to theatre and communication classes!

DARLA

I gave this a lot of thought! I looked at hundreds of dossiers and I thought he was the most well rounded.

HENRY

He couldn't have been much of a football player.

DARLA

How do you know?

HENRY

If he was any good, the school would've offered him a scholarship, and there'd be no need for him to be down at the sperm bank contemplatin' Miss July and masturbatin' into a Petri dish.

DARLA

Of course, one look at a sperm report and you can size someone up.

HENRY

What happened? They offer you a discount? We can shoot you full of stupid football player for less.

DARLA

You're guessing. Maybe he is a wonderful boy who needed the extra money to help his dying father back in Des Moines!

HENRY

What happens when the little pipsqueak is grown and wants to know who his father is?

DARLA

Hopefully I'll meet someone by then.

HENRY

How are you goin' to date? "Yeah, pick me up at six, and oh, by the way, here's my kid. Whose the father? I haven't got the foggiest." Do you realize how hard it is to be a single parent?

DARLA

Yeah, Mama told me.

HENRY

That's different! You had five wonderful years with two parents and they're still talkin'. Admittedly, we say nothin', but what the hell.

DARLA

Can't you for once be happy for me?

HENRY

God heifer, I'm happy for you all the time. I want you to have a better life; I just wonder if this is the way to do it. Look, let me be the old man for a minute. Can you do that?

DARLA

For just about my whole life, I've done that.

HENRY

You watch too much television. Those comedy shows. Sitcoms. I heard them on in the background when you call.

DARLA

So?

HENRY

They tell every woman thirty and over that she'd be happy if she just had a kid. Billboard advertisements. Radio. You're constantly inundated with how you're supposed to act.

DARLA

I want this baby.

HENRY

How do you know? How can anyone know? I'm not accusin' you, I'm just askin' how do you know? Where's the situation comedy about a woman who doesn't have children and is really thrilled about it! Where is it? It doesn't exist!

DARLA

You're on like a major digression.

HENRY

I'm talkin' about this kid.

DARLA

It's a baby and I can't exactly erase it. Unless I have stomach flu, it took. It's done! Daddy, I'm going to have a baby. I'm settling down. Okay?

HENRY

Why?

DARLA

I don't know. Why do I hafta think everything out?

HENRY

Good answer. I went downtown to buy a hat. Couldn't decide so, while I was tryin' to make up my mind, I thought I'd get myself shot full of bull sperm! Logical! We are ridin' down the logic trail now!

DARLA

Sometimes an explanation takes more than two seconds! You don't just ask 'why' and expect a logical, here it-is-laid-out-for-you answer.

HENRY

Just tell me, in your own words, don't flub it up with any of those catch phrases from Ladies' Home Journal that you love to cling to. Just answer why.

(HENRY waits for his answer.)

DARLA

Damn it, this is unfair.

HENRY

Unfair or not you got the floor.

DARLA

Daddy look, I've been a little depressed lately, okay? I mean, ever since the guy who wrote I'm Okay, You're Okay killed himself, I haven't been the same.

HENRY

Just answer why.

DARLA

It's because of my high school reunion!

HENRY

Okay, it doesn't make a damn bit of sense but okay.

DARLA

Everyone was showing off their baby pictures. Homecoming queen's got two. The guy voted most-changed has got three. And then there was Sarah Marks. She went on and on about how hard it had been to have children, especially after they found out that her husband's sperm had two tails. One on each end so they just sort of swam around in circles. You know, if I had a husband and his sperm had two tails I'd really think twice about having kids.

HENRY

So the fact that she seemed happy pissed you off.

DARLA

No. What pissed me off was that I couldn't be happy for her. I had to judge her. Like you do. Why were her children so damned important? That night I went home and it hit me. The children weren't her major achievement. It was simply a celebration. It was a little world she created.. a family.. she created a family. I've lost you haven't I?

HENRY

No, I'm right with you. Sperm with two tails. Go on.

(A knock. They both freeze.)

DARLA
You expecting someone?

HENRY
Oh yeah. Let him in.

DARLA
Who?

HENRY
Some guy. Would you let 'em in?

DARLA
Who?

(Another knock. DARLA doesn't move.)

HENRY
Out of my way, Hef.

(HENRY exits to the back door.)

JOHNNY
(Off stage)
Hey there.

HENRY
(Off stage)
Come on in.

(HENRY returns with JOHNNY, a large 20ish gangling kid wearing a University of Colorado football jersey. He'd be handsome if he lost a few pounds and attended fewer all night frat parties. He carries a Dixie cup which he spits chew into on a regular basis.)

JOHNNY
I saw your ad.

HENRY

"Skeptic's Magazine", right?

JOHNNY

I guess.

(JOHNNY looks at DARLA. He smiles approvingly. DARLA gives a stupid 'stay away from me' smile back.)

JOHNNY (CONT'D)

Hi.

DARLA

Hi.

JOHNNY

Do you come with the place by any chance?

(DARLA looks to HENRY for help.)

HENRY

Why don't you look around?

JOHNNY

Sure.

(The young man takes out a bag of chew and sticks a wad between his cheek and gum, shoots a slightly brown smile at DARLA and lopes into the living room.)

DARLA

One of your followers?

(HENRY grabs a backpack.)

HENRY

Let's move it. We'll stop on the way and tell your Mama you're pregnant. This I've got to see. She'll probably blow her brains out. Course she's blind so we've gotta help her find the gun.

DARLA

You're doing it again.

HENRY

Doin' what?

DARLA

Leaving me in the dark.

HENRY

You're one of the most stubborn heifers I've met.

DARLA

I have the right to know what's going on.

HENRY

It's none of your business but I'm thinkin' of sublettin' the place. Goin' for a walk.

DARLA

You see, that was simple enough, just be honest. What ya going to do? Ride the rails again? Been talking about that for years. *(Growing doubtful)* It makes total sense, you doing this right after a double hernia operation. Total sense. Yeah you're being honest with me. Total bull.

(DARLA steps over to the door.)

DARLA (CONT'D)

(Call off)

Excuse me, would you come in here, please?

(JOHNNY enters spitting.)

JOHNNY

Wow, you got a big library in there. I took one long and thought, Ch-ching, that's one big library.

(Whenever JOHNNY says 'Ch-ching', he points to his head and makes a cash register sound.)

DARLA

You're here to sublet my father's cabin?

JOHNNY

If he'll have me. *(To Henry)* And two of my buddies. If that'd be okay? We never party or nothin'. Really.

HENRY

You read my ad in "Skeptic's Magazine" so you've passed the first test.

JOHNNY

First test I've passed in a while.

(JOHNNY thinks that's pretty darn funny. He laughs so hard he coughs up some of his chew. No one else laughs.)

DARLA

What the hell is going on? Tell me or you can find your own damn ride to the hospital.

HENRY

I told you! He wants to rent my cabin. There's no hidden conspiracy, for god sake. He's a football player, a University of Colorado football player and he wants to...

(HENRY stops, put two and two together.)

HENRY (CONT'D)

Wait a minute. University of Colorado?

JOHNNY

Well, sorta, right now I'm going to the Community College till I get my grades up.

HENRY

What's your grade point average?

(Suddenly it hits DARLA.)

DARLA

Oh my God!

HENRY

It's a logical question.

DARLA

This can't be happening.

HENRY

Gotta job?

JOHNNY

Sure, I'm no bum.

HENRY

Work long hours? I mean, if you're a student and a football player you musn't got much time between classes, studyin' and practice, you'd gotta find a job that you could do fast and get out, know what I mean? Just sort of squirt through it.

DARLA

Drop it! Drop it now!

HENRY

I am interviewin' the boy as a possible tenant! I got the right to know what he does for a living.

JOHNNY

If this ain't a real good time, I could...

DARLA

You're right, it's not, get out!

JOHNNY

Okee-dokee.

HENRY

Stay right there!

(JOHNNY stops.)

DARLA

(To Henry)

You'd better come straight with me on what is going on or I'm out of here!

HENRY

It's none of your business

DARLA

Fine!

(DARLA starts to leave.)

HENRY

One of the highest forms of intelligence is the ability to see somethin' from someone else's point of view. You don't quite got that ability yet and I don't got time to teach you.

(Suddenly JOHNNY is hit by a thought. He starts pointing at HENRY.)

JOHNNY

Wait a minute! I've heard that before. I know you. I know you! You're Hoffer, Henry Hoffer?

(DARLA groans and drops her head in her hands.)

HENRY

Might be.

JOHNNY

Yessir, I took one look at you and I went Ch-ching. I read one of your...uh...uh... thingamabobs... articles! It was part of a class studyin' philosophers.

DARLA

Since when do football players take philosophy classes?

JOHNNY

It's part of a new program. We're all supposed to take one real class per semester. You know, it's college.

HENRY

So what ya doin'? Writin' a paper on me? Perhaps I could answer some questions.

JOHNNY

No. I just wanted you to know that I took one look and went ch-ching.

DARLA

If you'll excuse us, please?

JOHNNY

Oh sure, I'll just look around. Count the bedrooms. From the outside it looks like there's more to the cabin out that way. Is that true?

HENRY

Let's use our deductive reasonin'. Ch-ching, what do you think?

JOHNNY

I think there is. Reckon, I'll try to find it.

(JOHNNY starts to leave but stops.)

JOHNNY (CONT'D)

Well, I do got one question.

DARLA

Ask it and leave.

JOHNNY

(To Henry)

Is it true you went all the way with Ayn Rand?

HENRY

Why do you want to know?

JOHNNY

It was on my philosophy exam last week. My professor hates your guts. Says you're nothin' more than a mountain man that likes to hear himself talk. Said you really weren't that smart but lucky and that you would still be a nobody if you hadn't got Ayn Rand between the ol' sheets.

HENRY

Well, it's true. When I was young man, Ayn and I had an affair.

JOHNNY

Hot Damn! One more question. Who is Ayn Rand?

HENRY

I thought you said you were an skeptic?

JOHNNY

I'm no skeptic.

HENRY

You're not?

JOHNNY

Hell no, skeptics ain't nothin' but a bunch of nerds.

HENRY

What an open-minded point of view. What the hell were you readin' the Skeptics Magazine for!?

JOHNNY

I wasn't.

HENRY

That's the only place I put the ad!

JOHNNY

I saw it down at Dead Bob's. This guy next to me with tubes hangin' out of his nose was readin' it.

HENRY

That son of a bitch! Frank Deeber's down at Dead Bobs! He was too sick to read my chapter but he can drink beer! That man is no friend of mine!

JOHNNY

He said something about you having cancer. I mean if you got cancer the last thing you want to be is a skeptic.

(Beat. DARLA looks to HENRY for an answer.)

JOHNNY (CONT'D)

I think I've said too much. Sorry, your friend up at Dead Bob's told me.

(JOHNNY starts out, then stops.)

JOHNNY (CONT'D)

I'll just take a look around.

(He spits in his Dixie and exits.)

DARLA

Is it true? Is the cancer back?

HENRY

A touch. Nothin' to worry about.

DARLA

Obviously you're not going to the hospital for a hernia!

HENRY

Just some treatment. Then I thought I'd head north. Gold prospectin'.

DARLA

That makes all kinds of sense. Glad I've got a logical father. "We're traveling down the logic trail now!"

HENRY

If you're done, I got some stuff to go over.

(He grabs his old leather satchel and points at the chair near the kitchen table.)

HENRY (CONT'D)

Sit.

(He takes out what legal papers and lays them in front of her.)

HENRY (CONT'D)

Let's do this without bein' all emotional. If nothin' else it'll go faster. Now, I'm leavin' everything to you with a few exceptions. Your mother gets my complete works of prairie dog lore. The cabin isn't worth much but with a tenant you should have an income. My books are yours. The royalties should keep you and this kid comfortable for a few years. You listenin'?

DARLA

I don't want your books.

HENRY

I'm not leavin' them to your mother.

DARLA

I said I don't want your books.

HENRY

Look, the royalty checks are good. Better than I've ever admitted. You just gotta make sure that they stay out there. That they're published as long as anybody respectable'll publish'em.

DARLA

You heard me. If you will them to me, I'll pull'em. I'll do everything in my power to get them off the shelves.

HENRY

You won't do that to your old man.

DARLA

Leave them to someone else.

HENRY

Can we be logical about this?

DARLA

You don't mean logical, you mean unemotional.

HENRY

(Emotional)

I mean logical!

DARLA

Okay, you have cancer again and your logical answer to this is to go gold prospecting?

HENRY

Bein' a woman you couldn't possibly understand.

DARLA

And being a complete craphead, you can? What, you want to brag about it? Like that time that horse broke your leg and you walked around on it for two days? "I came that close to gangrene." Wow, I'm impressed.

HENRY

I would like to get this out of the way. It won't take long and then you can bitch about anythin' you like.

DARLA

Why is it whenever I have a conversation with you, you call it bitching? I'm only trying to get at the truth!

HENRY

I don't mind the truth, Heifer, as long as it's whispered.

*(Beat. HENRY packs up the will.
Pause. DARLA forces herself to calm
down.)*

HENRY

We'll talk about it later.

*(HENRY hands her a paper towel. She
blows her nose. Then she laughs
through her tears.)*

DARLA

Daddy, I want you to know, in spite of it all... I'm naming
it after you.

HENRY

Namin' what?

DARLA

I wasn't going to tell you until it was born, but maybe I
shouldn't wait. I'm naming my baby after you.

HENRY

If you name it after me, you gotta take the books.

DARLA

I can't.

HENRY

Why not?

DARLA

I don't believe in them.

HENRY

Then don't name the kid after me.

DARLA

Thanks Dad, I'll wrap this moment up and put it with all the
others!

HENRY

"Your real worth is what you are, divided by what you think you are."

DARLA

Quoting yourself again?

HENRY

Tolstoy!

DARLA

Someone else, I'm amazed!

HENRY

I don't think my real worth allows me to sit in a hospital dyin'. I'm not goin' to have any tubes stuck up my nose!

DARLA

I see. When were you going to tell me this?

HENRY

I wrote a note. Nor do I think it's appropriate for you to name some stranger's kid after me.

DARLA

Fine. Dandy. You want the truth? I've never read one of your books. Not an article, not a chapter, not hard cover or paper back! Not once! As a matter of fact, two years ago Mama and I had a little book burning party in the back yard and torched everything of yours we could get our hands on!

HENRY

Not even one, Heifer?

DARLA

I've heard all your "philosophies." Your bullshit attacks on religion. My whole life has been listening to you drag in unsuspecting college students and argue about religion and society and corruption! *(Beat)* Daddy, the only proof I have that I love you is that I worry about you. And that's a pretty thin thread to hang a father-daughter relationship on... You know, it just occurred to me. I'm thrilled. I think it's wonderful that my baby isn't going to know who its father is.

HENRY

(Meaning Johnny)

I'm not so sure we don't know.

DARLA

It's not him!

HENRY

The mathematical possibilities are leanin'--

DARLA

You are a shit, Dad, just one, super, stupid bowl of shit!

(The knock. They pay no attention.)

HENRY

Don't start cryin'.

DARLA

I'm not crying!

HENRY

Whatever the hell you're doin', stop it! If you want to do me a favor, do somethin' I need. I don't need some kid named after me.

DARLA

I withdraw the offer!

HENRY

Things die you silly girl! There are only two possibilities. Either there is somethin' or there isn't. To me the worst possibility is that there is nothin'. We simply dump memory, fine, it's a waste but fine. If there is somethin', I figure I can always talk my way out of it. So either way I'm ready!

(Another knock. JOHNNY enters.)

JOHNNY

You gotta caller.

DARLA

(To Henry)

I don't think you are! I don't think you're any more ready than anyone else.

HENRY
(To Darla)

Is that supposed to hurt me?

DARLA
No it's the truth, you're scared.

JOHNNY
Hell, I'll get it.

(JOHNNY exits to the back door.)

HENRY
You know what I'm thinkin'? I'm thinkin', you shouldn't have this kid. I don't know if you're old enough. You know, emotionally mature enough.

DARLA
You son-of-a-bitch.

HENRY
I call'em as I see'em. Now you want to drive me to the hospital, that's just dandy. If not, I can do it myself. But if you're lookin' for some last moment of forgiveness, some brief father daughter encounter before I kick off, then I'm sorry to disappoint you. I will not betray my life by whimperin' about my demise. I'm not goin' to panic. I'm not goin' to convert. And there shall be no deathbed enlightenment where you unscramble our relationship! *(Beat)* Now sweetheart, I think it's time you realize that if there's been nothin' between us for twenty years, then that's the way it is, so cut the tears and saddle up.

(Johnny re-enters.)

JOHNNY
You got company.

HENRY
Who?

JOHNNY
Jehovah witnesses.

HENRY
You are jokin'!

JOHNNY

They gave me an earful, now they want to talk to you.

HENRY

Quick, run into garage and get me some marbles, a can of motor oil and a really big rubber band.

DARLA

What're you going to do?

HENRY

Talk to'em. That's all. I've lived here for thirty years and the old Jay-Witnesses have never come by. *(To Johnny)* Kid, my garage, now!

JOHNNY

Yes sir.

(Johnny exits.)

DARLA

Daddy, can we just go to the hospital. Call it a day. Please.

HENRY

For you, my sweet, anythin', but right after this. *(calling off)* Hi there! So nice of you to come. Let's talk.

(HENRY exits. DARLA is left alone. She sits. Beat. JOHNNY enters with a bag of marbles and a huge rubber band.)

JOHNNY

I gotta rubber band and marbles but no luck on the motor oil.

DARLA

Forget it. Just forget it.

HENRY

(Off stage)

Ladies, are you ready for a free exchange of ideas!

(DARLA gently cries.)

JOHNNY

You all right? I mean, you need a beer? Some chew?

(He offers her some chew.)

JOHNNY (CONT'D)

Look lady, if he's goin' to bean the Jehovahs with marbles and motor oil, I just got to see it.

(Still no answer.)

JOHNNY (CONT'D)

Lady?

DARLA

I'm fine.

JOHNNY

You sure?

DARLA

I'm going to have a baby. Sorry. A total stranger and I'm crying. *(Beat)* You know, Miss America was last night. Miss Wyoming won. She's handicapped and she won...What do you bet her father's proud.

(Johnny doesn't really know what to say. He tries to extend a comforting hand but comes up short. The phone starts ringing, they don't answer it and the lights fade.)

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

An Hour Later

(THE LIGHTS RISE: JOHNNY and HENRY drink beer. HENRY sits like a Buddha on the kitchen table. Johnny sits at his feet. We come in on the middle of a conversation...)

HENRY

...Did you know that in India there are criminals so obedient that all the jailer has to do is draw a circle in the dirt with a stick and tell them to stand there for so many hours or days or years?

JOHNNY

You're kiddin'. Wait a minute, Ch-ching, this means my philosophy professor was just full of it.

HENRY

Most professors are. Most of the world is. We've screwed up the thought process. We don't solve problems anymore. If millions of people are starvin' to death we blame it on lack of food. The television tells us what horrible people we are for not sendin' more food and we believe it. They don't need food! They need condoms, millions of condoms and classes in how to use them!

JOHNNY

Interestin'. Ch-ching!

HENRY

Johnny my boy, I think it's time in your intellectual development to stop pointin' at your head and makin' a cash register sound every time you think.

JOHNNY

What do you mean?

HENRY

You got a nauseatin' habit of pointin' at your head and goin' 'Ch-ching'.

JOHNNY

I do?

HENRY

Yes, very obnoxious.

JOHNNY

Wow. Somethin' is happenin' here. I'm growin'. I'm takin' one look at you and I'm goin' ch-ch...

(JOHNNY stops and realizes what he's done.)

JOHNNY (CONT'D)

Boy, I'm stupid.

(JOHNNY pulls at a rubber band wrapped around his wrist. He stretches it out about fifteen inches and whacks himself good.)

JOHNNY (CONT'D)

God that hurt!

HENRY

What's that about?

JOHNNY

I'm tryin' to train myself not to think negative thoughts. If I do, I let myself have it.

HENRY

Tell you what, lets start with the 'ch-ching' thing and then we'll work on the rubber band problem.

(DARLA storms in.)

DARLA

There you are! We gotta get to the hospital! What're you doin'?

HENRY

Been havin' a wonderful conversation with Johnny here. Where you been?

DARLA

I went outside and you were gone! Went to Dead Bob's - found Deeber's cabin - Do you realize how hard it is to have a conversation with a man who has tubes stuck in his nose? Where did you go?

HENRY

Sensin' that they were losin' the debate, the Jehovahs took me into the woods to perform their own peculiar version of exorcism - It failed. Came back refreshed, ready to go, but you weren't around, so Johnny and I got to know each other. Guess what his last name is? Guess.

DARLA

I wouldn't know.

HENRY

Galt. Johnny Galt. Who is John Galt? He's in our kitchen.

JOHNNY

It's been expandin'. Your father is a wonderful dude. Set me right on a few things that confused me. Now I know I believe in a "timeworn book of rules" rather than decidin' for myself.

DARLA

What have you done!?

HENRY

The boy is just seein' the world with new eyes.

DARLA

You've polluted his mind too!

HENRY

He's just thinkin' a little freer than he thought before.

JOHNNY

Boy, that's so true, Henry.

HENRY

What did you just call me?

JOHNNY

...Henry.

HENRY

Son, you don't call an older man by his first name, I'm 'mister' or 'sir'. Call me 'asshole' before you call me 'Henry'.

JOHNNY

Yes, mister sir.

HENRY

Better yet, call me Sensei.

JOHNNY

Sensei?

HENRY

It's Japanese for teacher.

JOHNNY

Cool. Hey Sensei, could I borrow your phone, I wanna call my minster and tell him to go to hell.

DARLA

Wait a minute! *(To Henry)* We're late for the hospital.

HENRY

I've decided I'm not goin'.

DARLA

You have to.

HENRY

There are very few things in life you gotta do.

JOHNNY

How true.

DARLA

Johnny, I don't know what poison my father has put in your head, but you're not to believe it.

JOHNNY

He makes a lotta sense. Have you ever listened to his lone dolphin theory?

DARLA

It's 'lone wolf'.

HENRY

No. I changed it. Dolphins, they're smarter.

DARLA

Yes, I've heard his lone dolphin theory and I'm sick of it. Most of what he says sounds great but it doesn't work. It doesn't fit with the real world. He just a nut who got lucky. The cultural elite stamped him 'brilliant' and everyone else blindly followed.

JOHNNY

Now wait a minute, he was head of philosophy at University of Colorado.

DARLA

He was a part-time lecturer and he was fired!

HENRY

Sometimes bein' fired is a compliment.

DARLA

Not when you're asked to leave by every member of the staff and faculty. The grounds crew was the only organization on campus who did not call for your immediate dismissal. (*To Johnny*) He depressed two students so bad they attempted hari-kiri in the commons.

HENRY

Here it comes - The mean old father. Always comes back to that. Hell, why don't I just tell you the truth, I'm the missin' gunman from the grassy knoll.

DARLA

I'm not sayin' you are some sort of evil communist. I'm just trying to protect this dense-headed football player.

JOHNNY

What's a "knoll?"

DARLA

Johnny, when I was a sophomore in high school a woman driver cut him off. He hates female drivers. Hell, he hates all females!

HENRY

Not true.

DARLA

His testosterone level goes critical. What does he do? In front of the entire town, my Dad is out screaming at this woman. She puts the window down and says, "why don't you go to college."

HENRY

I don't remember this.

DARLA

You should, she was my high school guidance counselor.

HENRY

You're makin' this up.

DARLA

We were in that damn International. That piss green International you took me to my prom in when my date didn't show up.

HENRY

Oh yeah, the piss green one - Good truck.

DARLA

So my Daddy, who was kicked out of Yale for riding a horse into this his Philosophy of Religion class goes critical.

HENRY

College is unimportant. If you really want to learn you don't need college.

DARLA

What does he do? My deep, intellectual father, he spits on her windshield - A nice big juicy hawker. Then comes back to the truck and begins telling me that there is really nothing wrong with spitting on your enemies.

(MORE)

That the ancient Romans always spit on their enemies and that it's only modern society that says it's wrong.

JOHNNY

I didn't know the Romans lugied on each other.

HENRY

All the time.

JOHNNY

Bitchin'.

DARLA

That's your hero.

JOHNNY

Doesn't seem like a reason to hate him.

DARLA

No? Comin' over here this afternoon, this s.o.b. in a pickup cuts me off. A male driver. I hate male drivers. So I caught up to him, forces him to the side of the road began telling him what kinda jackass he is. He didn't even acknowledge my existence. And suddenly I knew what I hadda do. The old glands in my mouth started churning. And I did it, I spit on the s.o.b.'s windshield. It's twenty years later and my worst fear has come true. I've become you. A powerless, female version of a bitter old, life-hating fart. He was going to leave me a note, Johnny, what do you think about that? *(To Henry)* I'm not five years old, you don't have to hide the fact that grandpa is dying. I'm old enough to be part of your life. I'm part of mama's life. We talk about things. She asks my opinion. Sometimes goes so far as to take my advice, God forbid.

HENRY

I respect you. There I said it. Can we move on?

DARLA

Then why are you so unapproachable? You never talk to me about your thoughts, your feelings.

HENRY

Warnin', enterin' female logic zone. Grab a beer and take cover!

(DARLA heaves a roll of toilet paper at HENRY.)

DARLA

That's not fair!

HENRY

Then admit it, I talk to you all the time!

DARLA

You do not talk to me, you lecture me!

HENRY

Think so? I don't know, Johnny, do I lecture her?

DARLA

There, you're doing it!

HENRY

Doin' what?

DARLA

You value the opinion of a complete stranger more than mine!

HENRY

I'm just askin' him!

DARLA

He's a football player! He takes courses like advanced sandbox.

HENRY

I don't think that's a very good way to treat my new tenant.

JOHNNY

Really? Sensei, thank you.

(They shake on it.)

DARLA

You can't be serious?

HENRY

He's not that smart but he's learnin'. *(To Johnny)* Hope you don't mind me sayin'.

JOHNNY

I don't mind, really I am quite stupid. Wait a minute. Was that negative?

(JOHNNY takes his rubber band and whacks himself on the wrist.)

DARLA

Daddy, he's a idiot!

JOHNNY

I wouldn't say a idiot. I had a difficult birth. Doctor dropped me. Whacko, right here on the head. I comb it over cause no hair grows there. But no brain damage. *(To Henry)* Can I get another beer?

HENRY

That's what it's there for.

DARLA

It's not just him, Daddy, it's anyone and everyone who will listen. You're always ready to sit up all night talking to a bum at the bus station or a stupid football player, but you wouldn't spend an afternoon with your own daughter.

HENRY

Do you need to talk to your mother? Is that it? Why don't you call her and me and Johnny here will head down to Dead Bob's for a bucket.

JOHNNY

Hell that's even better.

(JOHNNY puts the beer back.)

DARLA

I don't need to talk to Mama!

HENRY

Wouldn't it be best? There, I just asked your opinion.

DARLA

It's like you're sending me to your second-in-command. Like I have to work my way up through your subordinates?

HENRY

If that's what makes you clear on this then fine. Because when it's bad enough, you come to me. I'm the one who bails you out of jail. Loans you money. Hell, I give you money. Have you ever been denied? Name the time. You can't because I'm there and that's the mark of a good man. In combat, you can count on me. Now if you want to join John Galt and me for some suds that'd be dandy. Call your mother, that's fine too. But we're goin' to move on. *(To Johnny)* Come on Johnny. Johnny Galt - Wait'll we tell old Deeber.

(HENRY STARTS OUT.)

JOHNNY

Henry//

HENRY

What the hell did I tell you, son?

JOHNNY

Sorry, Sensei. Maybe you shouldn't leave her like this. I just got this feelin'.

HENRY

It's okay. She just needs to talk to a woman right now.

(HENRY holds the door for JOHNNY and they exit. DARLA is left alone. She starts to cry but stops herself.)

DARLA

No, I'm not going to do that.

(She digs through the bag of cat food until she finds one that looks tasty. She opens it, dumps it in a bowl and takes it outside.)

DARLA (CONT'D)

(Off stage)

Moonpie! Dinner! M. Peee? *(beat)* Come here you blessed cat. I see you.... Yes I do.... Don't you be cute with me.

(MORE)

Come here... Come'on... Good girl. What've you got there? Let mommy see it. What you got in your mouth? That's right give it here. (beat) Holy Crap!

(She runs back in. She stumbles to the sink and washes her hands with Ajax.)

DARLA
MOONPIE, YOU'RE A SICK CAT! A SICKO! A SADISTIC KILLER!

(JOHNNY walks in.)

DARLA (CONT'D)
Hi.

JOHNNY
What'ya yellin' about?

DARLA
My father's cat just put a dead, headless mole in my hand.

JOHNNY
That's a good sign. It means she respects you. I once had a cat brin' me another dead cat. That means they worship you as a god.

DARLA
Can I help you?

JOHNNY
I told Sensei to go on without me. I thought Ch-ch...Damn, I'm not supposed to do that anymore.

(He takes his rubber band and thwacks himself.)

JOHNNY
God that hurts.

DARLA
What do you want?

JOHNNY
I just wanted to say, I don't think you understand men.

DARLA

Oh really.

JOHNNY

Real men are supposed to be that way. I mean, if fathers were kind and gentle and supportive, hell they'd be your mother.

DARLA

Look, you don't want to get hooked up with my father. He was asked to leave Berkeley because he was too radical.

JOHNNY

I still like him.

DARLA

You're not the only one. This phone rings all the time. Strange, melancholic people, college students, anyone who reads the gospel according to Henry and 'finds' themselves. They want to talk to their messiah. The phone up in his office, that's his real number, it's unlisted. This one, he never answers. This phone is there only to feed his massive ego. Every time it rings he knows he's got someone. Now you tell me, if you were his only child, how would you deal with it?

JOHNNY

Well lady, I'd say you gotta problem. Personally, I think what you got here is a 'passover.'

DARLA

Say what?

JOHNNY

We sometimes lose games by so much we just pass it over. Forget it. We play it to the end but we stop tryin', just make sure you don't get hurt. No one wants to get hurt in a lost cause. Well, I think your relationship with your father is like that, a passover.

DARLA

Like another father is going to come along next week and I might have a meaningful relationship with him?

JOHNNY

I don't follow.

DARLA

How do you call it a lost cause if you have only one father?

JOHNNY

You're leavin' me behind.

DARLA

It's the Pac 12 Championship, the last game of the season. Do you still call it a passover?

JOHNNY

Oh no, that'd be different.

DARLA

Look, if the only way we can even have a conversation is to use football analogies, I'm not really interested.

JOHNNY

I understand, bein' a girl and all, football is probably pretty borin'. How bout field hockey?

(DARLA beats her head against the cabinets. JOHNNY hands her the rubber band.)

JOHNNY (CONT'D)

Try this, it doesn't hurt as much.

DARLA

Johnny, try to understand, my father, how can I tell you... he's french vanilla. All the time I was growin' up, that was the only flavor of ice cream we had. I didn't know chocolate 'til I was in college.

JOHNNY

That must've been pretty borin'.

DARLA

He'd come back from a ride, a 'fact finding mission' as he called them, go to bed with mama and then make a 'special' trip to the Winn Dixie to get me a pint of french vanilla.

(MORE)

DARLA (CONT'D)

As if, with that pint, he had met his total obligation of being a father.

JOHNNY

At least your father took you fishin'.

DARLA

Wait a minute, how do you know about fishing. He spoke about me?

JOHNNY

He said he tried to take you along with him but you never appreciated it.

DARLA

Yeah, he took me, once. I was nine. He cut it short because I was a crybaby. You know what I cried about? Ducks.

JOHNNY

He didn't mention nothin' about no ducks.

DARLA

Of course not. He never asked me why I was crying! (beat) We were having a wonderful time when two ducks swam by. Mergansers. Red-breasted Mergansers--

JOHNNY

And he took out a gun and killed them in front of you.

DARLA

No. They just swam by.

JOHNNY

Oh.

DARLA

And I said, "Look Daddy at the pretty little girl duck" and I pointed at the glossy, green head and white collar set against bright gray feathers. And he said, "What the hell are you talkin' about. That's the male duck. That's the female," and he pointed at the other duck. This crap brown, generic duck. And he said, "That's the way it is in the animal kingdom. The male of the species is almost always prettier than the female."

JOHNNY

And then he took out a gun and blew their heads off.

DARLA

No!

JOHNNY

Then why were you crying?

DARLA

Because the female duck was so plain. I'd always been taught that women were supposed to be pretty and it hurt to find out they weren't. I don't know why it affected me so.

JOHNNY

Well, some of us are just not meant to be fathers. Some men just don't got what it takes. Unlike me, I think I'd make a great father--.

(DARLA shudders at the thought.)

JOHNNY

What's wrong?

DARLA

Nothing.

JOHNNY

As I was sayin', I think I'd make a good father. You think I'd make a good father?

(DARLA waves him off. Beat.)

JOHNNY (CONT'D)

What? Did I say somethin' wrong?

DARLA

No no, just be quiet for a sec.

JOHNNY

Darn, I've gone and done somethin' to make you sick. Must have said somethin' negative.

(JOHNNY cracks himself with the rubber band. DARLA takes a swig of beer.)

JONNY

Thought you weren't supposed to drink.

DARLA

Yeah well, for some reason it doesn't seem to matter now.

(She starts to take another swig but stops. She pushes the beer away.)

DARLA (CONT'D)

You want to know something about my father? Come here, I'll show you the truth.

JOHNNY

What?

DARLA

Come on!

(DARLA leads JOHNNY downstairs. Moments later.)

HENRY

(Off stage)

Moonpie! Moonpie! There you are. Come'on. What you got there? For me? Why, thank you. Good girl. Thank you very much!

(HENRY enters holding a dead headless mole. Just then DARLA runs up from the basement.)

DARLA

OH MY GOD!

HENRY

What's wrong, it's dead.

(She grabs a trashcan.)

DARLA

Throw it away! Throw it away!

(He drops the mole in the can.)

HENRY

It's good to be loved.

DARLA

What the hell are you doin'? I thought you were drinkin'!

HENRY

What the hell am I doin'? What are you doin'?

DARLA

I was showing him--

HENRY

The basement? You was showin' him the basement!

(JOHNNY enters carrying one of HENRY'S self-published books.)

JOHNNY

God, there's a lotta books down there.

(HENRY grabs the book.)

HENRY

The basement is off limits! Is that understood! Off limits!

JOHNNY

Sorry Sensei. She made me do it.

HENRY

Now it's no fun drinkin' alone. One of you has gotta come down or both of you gotta leave.

DARLA

Do you realize how hard it is for you to acknowledge any sign of weakness. You see those books downstairs as weakness. You weren't perfect. You had to self publish one book. Dad, isn't the purpose of a family to be the one place you can be weak?

HENRY

Maybe for a woman it is.

DARLA

When you say things like that, when you send me to Mama with my problems, you devalue me. You let me know that you consider my femininity to be less than your masculinity.

HENRY

Where the hell is this comin' from? You seein' a shrink?

DARLA

I did in L.A. Not anymore.

HENRY

It was a female shrink wasn't it?

DARLA

You're doing it right now! Who cares what gender she was! Do you have any hope for people, for me? Or are you so far gone you believe in nothing.

HENRY

I still believe in people. I just think they gotta be watched.

DARLA

Then watch me.

HENRY

Suppose you're right. If I had watched you like a hawk you wouldn't have got yourself shot full of bull sperm!

(JOHNNY, who has never heard this before, steps away from Darla.)

HENRY (CONT'D)

That's what it's about. You want this child suppress your sense of worthlessness but it won't. It's only a stopgap, twenty years later, the child moves on and your life is still meaningless.

DARLA

Not if I do it right.

HENRY

Do what right?

DARLA

Raise it right. I want to give it confidence. Teach it how to love. How to value herself. I want to give it all those things I don't have.

HENRY

If you don't got it, how can you give it?

DARLA

By undoing all the things you did to me!

HENRY

Ah hell...

(HENRY starts to leave.)

DARLA

Wait, I'll leave. I've had enough of the testosterone poison in here. I need air.

(DARLA grabs her purse crosses to the door and stops.)

DARLA (CONT'D)

Do you love me?

HENRY

...What do you mean my love?

DARLA

It's a simple question.

HENRY

No it isn't. First we need to agree on the definition of the word.

DARLA

What's this? Some sort of fatherly love crap?

HENRY

Fatherly love crap as opposed to motherly love crap?

DARLA

(Angry)

Love without conditions, without rejection is motherly.

(MORE)

DARLA (CONT'D)

Love based on conditions is fatherly love. If I help myself, you will love me. If I measure up, you'll love me. I'm your daughter and I'm drowning and I see you on the shore watching me. Not lifting a finger. All I know for sure is that if I should somehow manage to struggle to the shore, if by some miracle I save myself, then and only then, will you tell me how proud you are!

HENRY

Go talk to your mother!

DARLA

Get in touch with your emotions so son of a bitch!

(Beat. HENRY and DARLA become aware of JOHNNY. He's been listening quietly all this time. JOHNNY suddenly feels uncomfortable.)

JOHNNY

You know, I was just thinkin'. Maybe my bein' here is holdin' you two back. Maybe if I left, you'd be able to tell each other how you really feel.

(JOHNNY grabs his beer and heads into the next room. A second later he comes back.)

JOHNNY (CONT'D)

Forgot my cup.

(JOHNNY grabs his Dixie cup and exits. Pause. HENRY and DARLA look at each other. The wind is out of their sails.)

DARLA

We just can't seem to function without makin' scenes.

HENRY

Maybe we're just loco.

DARLA

Never can talk. You know just plain talk.

HENRY

Nothin' personal, but I just thought we'd said everythin' we needed to say.

DARLA

Maybe so.

(HENRY grabs his satchel and pulls out two copies of the will. He hands one to DARLA.)

HENRY

If you're calm, there are few things we need to go over. I think it's pretty clear. You got to sign this, it gives you power of attorney. You don't ride so I'm leavin' my saddle to Jacob, the guy who takes care of Paradise.

DARLA

How is Paradise?

HENRY

Enjoyin' retirement. Screwin' everything that walks.

DARLA

(Reading the will)

What's a 'Ja-Tor'?

HENRY

Oh that. That's a Tibetan air burial. You bear the body to a desolate spot where it is torn apart and eaten by wild animals. Now my books, it's very important and spelled out here so any two year old can--

DARLA

Hold on. Tibetan air burial?

HENRY

That's pretty clear there.

DARLA

You want me to leave your body somewhere where it will be eaten by wild animals?

HENRY

Now the county might fight you a little on that one.

DARLA

Daddy, I'm not going to do it!

HENRY

You don't gotta, there're Himalayan priests that'll do it for free.

DARLA

You're a nut case.

HENRY

You goin' do it or not?

DARLA

Daddy, I can't.

HENRY

Hell, I knew you'd give me trouble on that. Okay, forget the air burial. Just don't lay me out in some damn casket so your mother can make a public display and Deeber can laugh because I went first. Now, my books--

DARLA

Your books are full of male-sexist-egoistical-shit - You know that don't you?

HENRY

Sure I do. It sells. Now, I'm tryin' to have this last one published, so far no luck. If I should succeed, not one word is to be changed. That damn publisher wants me to self-censor myself. He's not goin' to do any end run, okay? You're to stand strong. You got it?

(Beat. DARLA doesn't answer.)

HENRY (CONT'D)

Are we clear on this, Heifer? This editor is a hard nose. He'll try to push you around because you're a woman. *(Beat)* Heifer?

DARLA

Daddy, would you stop bein' the old man for a moment.

HENRY

Oh god, don't say it.

DARLA

What?

HENRY

You want me to be your 'friend'. Your grade school teacher told me that. "I'm not Darla's teacher, I'm her friend." I asked her, who the hell was bein' her teacher? She's got plenty of friends, what she needs is a teacher. I wanted a resolution statin' that teachers couldn't be students friends and they kicked me out of the PTA.

DARLA

Daddy, I think what we got here is a passover.

HENRY

Oh yes, Johnny said that to me, too. Is that what you expect? Some deus ex machina to magically resolve problems? Some flimsy kinda melodrama where a stupid football player comes up with a little bit of homespun advice that saves the day.

(DARLA glares at him.)

DARLA

As long as I'm your daughter I have to take the books.

HENRY

As you should.

(Beat, DARLA considers her next words very carefully.)

DARLA

Daddy, if you can't stop being the old man... then you got to disown me.

HENRY

I don't understand what the hell this is about. Sure you don't want to talk to your mother?

DARLA

Damnit! You gotta disown me!

HENRY

I didn't know how screwed up you were! Okay, I did it, I admit it. I was an absent father, so there.

DARLA

Absent fathers are never really absent. That's why you have to disown me. *(Beat)* Daddy, I need an answer.

HENRY

Okay. I'm sorry I brought you into this world. Not because you aren't a delightful girl. I just don't know why you're here. Don't know what your purpose is. I suspect most people never know. And I don't think you can look to me for that answer. There are only a few things, after one hell of a ride, that I know to be true. One: the surest way to accomplish nothin' is to put two or more people in a room and ask them to work together. Second: the level of truth in a room goes down proportionately as the number of people increase. And lastly: all answers must come from within.

DARLA

And so I know my answer. As long as I'm your daughter we will never get along. It's that word 'daughter' that stands in the way of any understanding or friendship. It's a word that gives you the right to keep me at an arm's distance.

HENRY

Maybe so.

DARLA

So, you're goin' to have to disown me.

HENRY

Fine. You can't call. Can't ask for money. No bitch sessions at two o'clock in the mornin' when you know I'm the only one in the world awake.

DARLA

Then I'm disowned?

HENRY

Call it what you like!

DARLA

I'm out of your will?

HENRY

That's fine! Just dandy!

DARLA

Say it!

HENRY

I'll call my lawyer in the mornin'! Now get the hell out of here, you silly fem--

DARLA

DON'T SAY IT!

(DARLA starts for the door but can't leave. Beat.)

DARLA (CONT'D)

Goodbye Daddy.

(She exits. Beat. HENRY walks to the window and watches her leave. JOHNNY appears at the kitchen door.)

JOHNNY

Wow, she left.

HENRY

Johnny, let me tell you somethin' about women.

JOHNNY

Yes, Sensei.

HENRY

They're not like us men.

JOHNNY

I think you're right.

HENRY

I believe that they are not of this earth.

JOHNNY

That would explain a lotta things.

HENRY

I believe that they were deposited on this planet by an alien life form that just got tired of'em.

(HENRY grabs a beer from the refrigerator. He sits back and rubs the cold can on his forehead.)

JOHNNY

She seems really confused. You don't want confused people around, they take too much time.

HENRY

Exactly.

JOHNNY

Waste valuable thought power.

HENRY

You got it.

JOHNNY

They mess up the fundamental view of life.

HENRY

Johnny?

JOHNNY

Yes, Sensei?

HENRY

Shut up.

(Beat.)

JOHNNY

Can I take you to the hospital?

HENRY

No. I'm goin' to sleep. 'Perchance to dream'. Know where that's from Johnny?

JOHNNY

Richard Nixon?

HENRY

No, Johnny.

(HENRY downs half the beer in one gulp.)

HENRY (CONT'D)

Do you dream John Galt?

JOHNNY

Sure. I dream about football.

HENRY

I dream I'm a gunfighter.

JOHNNY

In color?

HENRY

Always. Last night I dreamt I was a hired gun held in a Cheyenne jail. It was an hour before my execution. The lynch mobs had been driven off. Sheriff said this was goin' to be a proper hangin'. And then I got my last visitor, my daughter, and even though I'm scared shitless, I had to show her I was goin' to be okay. That she didn't have to worry about me. So when the guards came and said, "You're goin' to make our jobs easy aren't you, no trouble, okay"? I said, "yes." They were goin' to talk about me. Years from now they were goin' to say, "Boy, that Henry Hoffer, there was one who gave us no problem. He made it easy. That night, we got home to our family right on time". *(Beat)* Henry Hoffer! "The great Rocky Mountain philosopher." Gore Vidal said that about me.

JOHNNY

Wow.

HENRY

Always liked that one.

JOHNNY

One question.

HENRY & JOHNNY

Who is Gore Vidal?

HENRY

No, she's never comin' back. No sir. And I'm damn proud of her for walking out. Damn proud! Yep. Today she became a...she became...

JOHNNY

A son?

(A knock at the door.)

HENRY

Crazy as a circus around here.

(Henry goes off to answer the door.)

DARLA

(Off stage)

Hi, I saw your ad in the Sceptic Magazine. May I come in?

HENRY

(Off stage)

What do you want?

(DARLA enters, followed by HENRY. She let her hair down, looks different.)

DARLA

I'm looking for a place to rent.

(HENRY sizes her up for a second. He doesn't understand the game.)

HENRY

Already gotta tenant.

DARLA

Signed a lease?

JOHNNY

Well, no but... What's goin' on?

DARLA

Then I still have a chance.

JOHNNY

You're goin' to let her do that?

HENRY

Hell, I don't understand a thing.

DARLA

You're looking to lease the place, furniture and all? You need someone responsible to take care of it.

HENRY

So?

DARLA

Interview me, interview him and decide.

(HENRY senses the challenge.)

HENRY

All right. I'm allowed to ask anythin' I want?

DARLA

Anything.

HENRY

Okay. What's your religion?

DARLA

...My father raised me to be an sceptic but I'm not.

HENRY

John Galt?

JOHNNY

I'm a pure atheist. I mean, I'm an absolutely atheist. Like I'm a devout atheist.

HENRY

Can I trust you?

JOHNNY

Damn straight you can.

HENRY

And you?

DARLA

You'd have to get to know me better, but I think you can.

HENRY

There's a library of work in there: books, manuscripts, a life-time. Hate to see them go to waste.

DARLA

I'll take care of your library. As long as I don't have to believe.

HENRY

I think I know my answer.

DARLA

I don't think you know enough about me.

HENRY

I think I do.

DARLA

Not nearly enough.

HENRY

What do you want to tell me about yourself, that I haven't asked?

DARLA

I travel a lot.

HENRY

You do?

DARLA

I didn't hang around Haight Asbury or prospect for gold but it seems that I have been travelling all my life. Can't seem to settle down. I got this tourist tendency from my father.

HENRY

Every search is a search for somethin' missin'. There must be a lot missin' from your life?

DARLA

There is. Mostly, I'm looking for a man I once knew. A man who helped shape my opinion of men. The search has taken me back to mountains. A place where men are men, or so they say.

JOHNNY

Another man hater.

DARLA

I don't hate men. I just think they're stupid, that's all. Until a year ago, I was living with a man.

HENRY

Oh really? Did you tell your parents?

DARLA

No, my parents are separated. He was nothing like the mountain men. He was sweet. He cared. His ego didn't seem directly related to the size of his belt buckle. And he didn't treat my femininity as something to be associated with youth, as if it were something to grow out of.

HENRY

Why didn't you marry him?

DARLA

I came home one day, unexpectedly, to find him--

JOHNNY

In bed with another woman and so all men are jackasses!

HENRY

I saw that one comin' too.

DARLA

No. He was cryin'. He had lost his job. He just sat there whimpering about how horrible his life was.

JOHNNY

He was a crybaby.

DARLA

That's right, he was a crybaby. So I left him. I was laid off a short time later. Everyone was. And I cried too, but I never called him. My father would have been proud. And so I came back to the place where the seeds of self-doubt were planted. I'm haunted by this feeling that if only I had my father's approval everything would be fine.

HENRY

Sorry to hear that.

DARLA

He disowned me.

HENRY

Your relationship, it must've been a passover.

DARLA

Must've been. But I know now that what is missing is my father's endorsement. I need to hear, from him, that being a woman is okay.

HENRY

Don't see why it's so important.

DARLA

If another man called you one hell of a man, would it mean anything?

HENRY

Depends.

DARLA

If a woman calls you one hell of a man it'd mean more doesn't it?

HENRY

You mean like a lady? Yes, I guess it does.

DARLA

That's because men don't train boys to be men, mothers do. And whether you like it or not, a father trains a girl to be a woman, but they seldom finish. They leave us incomplete. Why? Maybe they're scared of us. Maybe the minute we start growin' boobs they back off. Or maybe they need us and if they finished the job we'd be too independent. Strange how they never set us free and yet fault us for our dependence. All I know is that if my father would allow this one bit of weakness, this so called failin', this need for family, then I could be as strong as he needs me to be. *(Beat)* I'm no longer a child, I'm pregnant and I have a long walk head of me. I don't want to take the first few steps alone.

(HENRY mulls this over.)

HENRY

If that's all you need then why didn't you ask?

DARLA

I'm askin'.

HENRY

(Beat)

Okay.

(DARLA stands there a little confused.)

HENRY (CONT'D)

But you gotta answer one last question.

DARLA

Oh no.

HENRY

(To Darla)

Do you know which way North is?

JOHNNY

I do!

(JOHNNY points.)

HENRY

Is he right?

DARLA

I don't know.

HENRY

That's okay. Better not to know somethin' then be totally sure of yourself and full of crap. Johnny, North is that way.

(HENRY points the opposite direction.)

JOHNNY

You're kiddin'! I must have got turned around when I came in. Does that count against me?

(HENRY walks over to JOHNNY and puts out his hand. JOHNNY shakes it.)

HENRY

Thank you for comin' by Johnny.

JOHNNY

What? You mean I didn't get it?

HENRY

Sorry, son.

JOHNNY

Well, crap.

HENRY

Tell ya what, you get the consolation prize, I'll sign a book for you.

(HENRY opens one of the boxes and takes out a large thin, colorful book. He signs a copy for JOHNNY.)

DARLA

What? A new book? You didn't tell me.

(DARLA pulls out a copy for herself.)

DARLA

Oh my God! It's a children's book! *(Reading the cover)* "Tony The Skeptical Turtle."

HENRY

My publisher wasn't thrilled. I had to self-publish.

(HENRY hands the book to JOHNNY, who reads the cover.)

JOHNNY

"May you have many brief moments of insight, Henry Ephraim Hoffer."

DARLA

Before you go, I have to ask you something. It's kinda personal.

JOHNNY

Okay.

DARLA

Where do you work?

JOHNNY

You mean, like my job?

DARLA

Tell the truth.

JOHNNY

Okay, but you can't tell anyone. If my coach found out, I'd be off the team.

DARLA

I won't tell anyone, believe me, not a soul.

JOHNNY

I work at the local Sp--. SportMax.

DARLA

Sportwhats?

JOHNNY

It's a Sports equipment store. I stock the shelves after hours.

DARLA

But you have never done anything like, say, donate sperm?

JOHNNY

Hell no. People who do that are nothin' but a bunch of nerds.

DARLA

You've just made me the happiest woman in the world!!!!

JOHNNY

Really? Well, if you ever need a field hockey stick or a joggin' bra come on by, I can get discounts.

(JOHNNY exits. Beat. DARLA picks up the book.)

DARLA

"Tony The Skeptical Turtle", what dark part of your mind did this come from?

HENRY

Oh, a few months ago, I was lookin' out my office window at Moonpie. She had caught a mouse and was suckin' its brains out, when suddenly I had a thought. I wondered, Moonpie bein' such a happy cat, what if she was dead. What if she'd lived her life in some dark Chicago apartment. Lived twenty years as a companion for an old lady who never let her out of the flat. Existin' on a diet of canned food and starin' at the birds outside the window. Then one day the old bag breathed her last, the family came and looked at this fat old cat and said, "Put her to sleep, it's for the best. She's had a good life." And so they snuck her down the back stairs so the grandchildren wouldn't see her and become attached as grandchildren always do. And Moonpie saw the sky and the world for the first time as she was bein' driven to the vet's office to die.

DARLA

Kinda depressin'.

HENRY

And then I thought, what if this was her heaven. Her reward for all those dark winters. She gets to stalk and catch everythin' in sight. She gets to chase butterflies, hang from limbs and sleep out under the stars. It's nice to find bits of heaven in your backyard. Maybe that's how we should live. As if this was all the better heaven gets. *(Beat)* Frank Deeber did the artwork. I changed it from a cat to a turtle. There aren't enough turtles in children's stories nowadays.

(DARLA hugs her Daddy. He kind of hugs her back. There is an awkward pause between them.)

HENRY (CONT'D)

You takin' me to my chemo.

DARLA

Yes. But maybe on the way we could stop and say hello to mom. Just for a minute. Just the three of us... Just my family.

HENRY

...If it'll make you happy.

DARLA

It would.

(DARLA picks up his hospital luggage and starts for the door. HENRY doesn't move.)

DARLA (CONT'D)

What's the matter? You scared?

HENRY

Me? No. I've just never been good at makin' an exit.

DARLA

Then, lets have some ice cream. Sit.

(DARLA opens the refrigerator.)

DARLA (CONT'D)

I can't help but feelin' like maybe we made a little progress here today.

HENRY

Maybe so.

DARLA

(Serving the ice cream)

So, I was kinda wonderin', next Monday at the University of Colorado there's an all-day workshop to help troubled father-daughter relationships. A panel of experts will be there. So I was thinkin', maybe next Monday, all-day, you and me could, instead of that, do some fishin'.

HENRY

You know, for a stranger, you make a pretty good daughter.

(They eat. After a moment.)

HENRY (CONT'D)
(Almost to himself)

Love ya, Heifer.

DARLA

What?

HENRY

Huh? Didn't say anything.

(Tears come to Darla. After a moment.)

DARLA

I love you too.

HENRY

What?

DARLA

...Didn't say anything.

(DARLA smiles through her tears. It's quiet. The long day has ended. It's just two people eating ice cream as the lights fade.)

The End

