

Mr. Dobbs

By

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INT. BEDROOM - MORNING

JERRY DOBBS lies in bed next to his wife NORMA DOBBS. A beam of sunlight shines through the curtains to illuminate the room. Jerry stirs gently then reaches towards his bedside table for a pair of large, thick glasses. He puts them to his head and slowly sits up in his bed.

Jerry is a 75-year-old man. Age has gotten the better of him, and he knows it. He has thin gray hair and a clean-shaven wrinkled face. He sits motionless, staring listlessly for a few seconds. Then, with great effort, he slowly stands up.

As he makes his way across the room, we see two framed photographs resting on a wooden dresser. One is a black-and-white picture of Jerry in his twenties. The other is a similar black-and-white picture of a younger Norma, and in its reflection we see the real Norma, still asleep in bed.

INT. BATHROOM - MORNING

CLOSE on the sink faucet as a stream of water comes surging out of it. Jerry turns a knob to ease the flow, then lowers his head to wet his face. His glasses lie next to the sink.

Jerry dries himself off and puts his glasses back on. He examines his face in the mirror above the sink, which doubles as a medicine cabinet.

A pill container, with a slot for each day of the week. Jerry opens the Thursday slot. It is empty. He opens the Friday slot. Empty again. Saturday, empty. Jerry shakes the whole container and hears no rattling, so he puts it back onto the counter.

He slides open the left side of the medicine cabinet to reveal a shrine of pill bottles. Each shelf is lined with little orange prescription bottles.

Jerry quickly scans the bottles with his finger. He selects one and shakes it. Empty, so he puts it back in its place.

Jerry closes the left side of the medicine cabinet and slides open the other side, pausing to glance at himself in the mirror one more time.

The right side of the cabinet is equally stuffed with pill bottles. He removes an empty pill bottle and closes the cabinet.

INT. BEDROOM - MORNING

Jerry places the empty pill bottle on the bedside table next to Norma. She awakens and looks at him.

Norma is 74-years-old and currently bedridden from an illness. A small plastic tube runs from her nostrils to a portable oxygen tank beside the bed. Despite her fragile state, she finds happiness simply from being with her husband, whom she loves dearly. She went deaf years ago, so now she communicates through sign language.

JERRY
(signing, subtitled)
Good morning.

Jerry moves his hand along Norma's forehead.

JERRY
(signing, subtitled)
Feeling any better?

Norma begins to nod but is interrupted by a short coughing spell. She indicates a small amount with her fingers.

JERRY
(signing, subtitled)
We ran out of your pills. I am
going to the pharmacy to get more.

Norma looks to the empty bottle , then back to Jerry.

NORMA
(signing, subtitled)
Don't be gone too long.

JERRY
(signing, subtitled)
I won't, my love. Get some rest.

Jerry kisses Norma on the forehead.

JERRY
(signing, NOT subtitled)
I love you.

NORMA
(signing, NOT subtitled)
I love you.

Jerry turns and heads for the door. Norma makes a quiet noise to get Jerry's attention once more, and Jerry turns back around in the doorway.

(CONTINUED)

NORMA
(signing, subtitled)
When I get better, we should go
dancing.

Jerry gives a delighted smile and nods. He leaves.

EXT. CITY SIDEWALK - MORNING

MONTAGE

Jerry walking through the city of Denver on a buzzing summer day. We see a few cement office buildings tower over the pedestrians beneath them. A chain of electric rail cars sails by on its tracks. At a café table, a man about Jerry's age plays chess against another man in his thirties. Jerry strolls by an alleyway and sees three young girls playing Double Dutch jump rope as a girl in a yellow sundress watches. Next we see him exit a pharmacy holding a small paper bag.

END MONTAGE

EXT. CITY SIDEWALK - MORNING

A city bus pulls up to the stop where Jerry waits, and he steps aboard.

INT. CITY BUS - MORNING

Jerry sits , silently observing the other passengers. The pharmacy bag rests next to him on the seat.

Sitting across from him is a BUSINESS MAN talking loudly into a hidden earpiece so that it looks like he is talking to himself.

Sitting a few feet down on the same bench is a HOMELESS MAN who actually *is* talking to himself.

Jerry watches both men from his seat, then looks towards the bus' rear doors, which are right across from him.

The bus comes to a stop. Right before the doors open:

CLOSE on Jerry.

THERAPIST (FEMALE, O.S.)
Do you ever have delusions Mr.
Dobbs?

INT. THERAPIST'S OFFICE - DAY - TWELVE DAYS LATER

It is a sterile, ordinary room with perhaps too much empty space. A few bookshelves line the walls neatly. There is a window but the blinds are drawn.

Jerry sits in a chaise longue (an elongated armchair used by therapists). He now has a GASH ON HIS FOREHEAD that is in the process of healing.

A bowl of mints sits on the center table. Next to the bowl is a small kitchen timer, which Jerry watches from his seat.

JERRY

Hmm? Oh-- you can call me Jerry.

THERAPIST

Any delusions Jerry?
Hallucinations? See things that
aren't there?

JERRY

I don't believe I understand the
question.

The therapist looks up from her clipboard, then back down. She looks about 30 years old, prim and professional. She writes something on her notepad.

THERAPIST

In psychiatry, a delusion is
defined as a false belief that is
maintained despite indisputable
evidence against it.

JERRY

All I know is that I was asleep for
five days and when I woke up, my
life was very different. Now if
that is not true, doctor, please
tell me, because if so, I'm afraid
I might be delusional.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY - ONE WEEK EARLIER

CLOSE on Jerry's face as he awakens suddenly, eyes wide, inhaling deeply. He has a thick bandage wrapped around his head where we saw the gash. His glasses are off.

It is a small hospital room, even more sterile. A second patient, an 80-year-old man lies motionless in his bed.

(CONTINUED)

A NURSE on the other side of the room hurries over to a phone on the wall and dials a 3-digit number.

NURSE #1
(into phone)
Code Gray, room 305.

Jerry reaches to the bedside table, but does not find his glasses. He sits up.

Nurse #1 hurries over to his bed, gently coaxing him to lie back down.

NURSE #1
It's okay Mr. Dobbs. You are at
Warner Hills Medical Center. You
were in a traffic accident but you
will be okay.

JERRY
Where are my glasses?

Four other nurses enter the room and surround Jerry's bed. Each one is touching his body in some way, making sure he doesn't get up.

NURSE #2
Easy Mr. Dobbs. Just relax.

JERRY
Where are my glasses!

NURSE #1
You suffered a severe concussion
and major internal bleeding.

Jerry turns to the other patient in the hospital room.

JERRY
Excuse me, do you know where my
glasses are?

The man is unresponsive, gazing blankly at the ceiling, mouth wide open with a bit of dribble coming out.

NURSE #1
Mr. Dobbs you have been in a coma
for five days.

This gets his attention.

(CONTINUED)

JERRY

What did you say?

LUKE DOBBS appears in the doorway. He is the 37-year-old son of Jerry. He is an independent man, healthy and robust, but he appears exhausted.

LUKE

Dad?

JERRY

Luke? What are you doing here?

Luke rushes over to the bed and throws a hug onto Jerry. The nurses begin to file quietly out of the room. Jerry looks surprised but glad to see his son.

JERRY

How are you doing?

LUKE

I'm fine. Who cares? Look at you.
Are you okay?

JERRY

I'm great. Really good. I started
to go on walks every day like you
told me.

LUKE

That's good Dad, but your head. Is
your head okay?

Jerry touches his head with his hands, feeling the bandage.

JERRY

Oh, look at that. Heh. Didn't even
see it.

(beat)

Was I really out for five days?

Luke nods.

Jerry gives a high-pitched whistle.

JERRY

Well it's great to be back, I just
can't for the life of me find my
glasses.

He chuckles softly.

Luke has a distraught look on his face.

(CONTINUED)

JERRY

Gosh, you didn't have to come all the way down here for me.

(beat)

Stop looking at me that way. I told you, I'm fine.

LUKE

Dad it's Mom.

Jerry listens carefully.

LUKE

She's gone.

Jerry looks confused, his mind reeling.

JERRY

No she's not. I just saw her. She-- I was going to the pharmacy and-- all she needs is her medication. That's all she needs is her pills and she'll be fine. I was getting...

LUKE

Dad.

JERRY

(continuing)

... them for her, so you can't tell me that Luke! You can't tell me--

LUKE

Dad!

Jerry breaks down and cannot get out another word. He lowers his head to Luke's shoulder and weeps with the ferocity of a man who hasn't wept in years. He clutches his son with all his might.

Nurses #1 and #2 peer in from the doorway.

Jerry does not let go of Luke.

EXT. CEMETERY - DAY

A funeral service. A small crowd of darkly-dressed individuals, mostly Jerry's age, gather around in a circle. A man speaks to the crowd from some written notes.

Jerry's face, a languid expression. His bandage is still on and now his glasses are too.

Luke stands next to him.

EXT. CEMETERY - DAY - MINUTES LATER

Luke and Jerry walk beside one another, away from the adjourned funeral service.

LUKE

I imagine the house is pretty quiet now.

JERRY

It was always quiet. Now it's just empty.

LUKE

I want you to come up to Granville, live with us for a while, at least until you heal.

JERRY

What? No. Thanks anyways. That won't be necessary.

LUKE

Dad the guest room is ready. It'll be no trouble at all. I don't want you living here by yourself.

JERRY

Luke this is my home. It was yours too at one point, but I guess you've forgotten that.

LUKE

What's home about it now Dad? Your family is in Granville. Camille is Granville.

JERRY

Camille? How is she doing?

LUKE

She's fine. She misses her grandfather.

JERRY

Luke I can't just up and leave right now. There's... boxes that need to be put in the attic...

(beat)

What? Quit looking at me like that.

(CONTINUED)

They walk a few paces without saying anything and arrive at Jerry's car.

JERRY

Call me when you get back to North
Dakota.

Jerry hugs Luke, who gives a halfhearted hug back.

JERRY

It was good to see you. I'm just
sorry it had to be for this.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Jerry enters slowly. The room is almost exactly the way he left it. Even the air tank is still by the side of the bed. He just looks at the room silently.

The picture of Norma on the dresser. Jerry crosses the room and in the picture's reflection, we see Jerry lower to his knees and let his body fall onto Norma's side of the bed.

INT. BEDROOM - MORNING

Sunlight shines through the curtains and Jerry is again slow to get out of bed. He puts on his glasses.

Jerry begins to make the bed, whose sheets are left in disarray. He is tucking in the blanket on Norma's side when he notices the empty pill bottle that he left on Norma's bedside table a week earlier.

Jerry picks up the bottle. Rotating it, the words "Norma Dobbs" can be read on it.

INT. BATHROOM - MORNING

Jerry opens one side of the medicine cabinet. He tries to put the empty bottle back in its place in the cabinet but knocks over the others, causing an avalanche of tiny orange bottles onto the sink, countertop, and floor.

Jerry looks around the room at the mess, hardly reacting.

He reaches back to the cabinet, this time deliberately knocking over a few bottles. He knocks a few more over. He opens the other side of the medicine cabinet and in a few violent swoops knocks all of the bottles, scattering them about the room.

(CONTINUED)

Jerry stares at himself in the mirror.

He exits the room and comes back with a telephone. He dials a number and leaves the phone on the counter.

Jerry reaches back and begins to take off his bandage in the mirror. Underneath he has a gash that is still pretty raw. With a new bandage, Jerry begins to wrap his head back up.

LUKE (ON PHONE)

Hello?

JERRY

I decided you're right.

LUKE (ON PHONE)

Dad?

JERRY

I think it's time for a vacation.

LUKE (ON PHONE)

That's great! What changed you're mind?

Jerry looks around the room at the mayhem of pill bottles.

JERRY

I want to see my granddaughter.

EXT. HIGHWAY - DAY

MONTAGE

Jerry driving on an extended road trip. He exits Denver and drives across the countryside. We see wide open plains, miles of flat land stretching to the horizon; fields of corn, wheat, and sunflowers, which Jerry admires as he passes; a wind farm with towering white wind turbines; scattered oil wells pendulating in and out of the ground; a few abandoned and dilapidated farmhouses. Jerry enters North Dakota. The crops become sparser and the earth parched as he travels further into the state. He enters the town of Granville.

END MONTAGE

EXT. RAILROAD CROSSING - NIGHT

Jerry approaches the tracks in his car and slows down.

His headlights illuminate a brown LIMOUSIN COW standing in the middle of the tracks looking directly at him. One of the bull's horns is crooked, bending forwards instead of up, giving the animal a bizarre appearance.

Jerry sits in his car quietly. The cow doesn't move.

JERRY
(to himself)
Come on.

Jerry flashes his lights on and off. The cow doesn't react. Jerry exhales deeply.

The lights on a nearby railroad crossing sign light up and a bell rings. A barrier lowers in front of Jerry's car.

Jerry turns to see the lights of a train approaching in the distance. It lets out a loud train whistle. Jerry looks back to the cow, still looking at him.

JERRY
(to himself)
Hey.

The train is getting closer.

JERRY
Hey!

Jerry starts to honk his horn and flash his lights.

JERRY
MOVE!

When the train is about fifty feet away, the cow saunters off the tracks beside Jerry's car. The train whizzes by the crossing, intensely fast and loud.

Jerry just stares at the cow shaking his head.

The train passes and the barriers come up. The cow saunters back to its post in the middle of the tracks.

Jerry lets out an exasperated exhalation and rests his head on the steering wheel.

EXT. LUKE'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Jerry pulls up into the driveway and gets out with a suitcase. It is a modestly sized farmhouse in a dry rural setting with no houses in sight. There is one other car parked in the dirt driveway. Near the house is a wooden barn with an old tractor beside it.

Luke steps outside onto the porch.

LUKE

I hope it wasn't too much trouble
finding the place.

JERRY

Nope. No trouble. Pretty uneventful
drive. There's nothing in this
state, is there?

Luke and Jerry embrace and Luke takes his bag.

INT. LUKE'S HOUSE

A nostalgic little living room with wooden interior and a very homey feel to it.

LUKE

Cam-Bam! Opa's here!

We hear little footsteps hurrying down the stairs.

CAMILLE (O.S.)

Opa! Opa! Opa!

CAMILLE DOBBS runs over to Jerry. Four years old, brown hair and adorable to the extreme. She is often happy, animated, and loquacious.

CAMILLE

Opa! Opa! Opa! Opa!

JERRY

Ohh, there she is! Come here!

Camille hops into Jerry's arms to give him a hug.

CAMILLE

Opa guess what! I got to stay up
past my bed time!

(CONTINUED)

JERRY

Hey, well that makes two of us.

LUKE

Oh look Dad, she wants to show you her dance.

Camille is now doing a funny-looking dance that involves a lot of hopping and swinging of the arms.

JERRY

Wow. Look at you go! Who taught you that?

CAMILLE

(still dancing)

Dad.

Jerry looks at Luke smiling.

JERRY

Is that right...

INT. GUEST ROOM - NIGHT

Jerry lies awake in a dark, cramped room, the attic of the house, lit only by moonlight.

He gets up and wanders into the bathroom.

CLOSE on the sink faucet as it makes a gurgling sound, struggling to spit out water. No water comes out.

Jerry turns the knob and the sound stops. He looks into the mirror at his reflection.

THERAPIST (O.S.)

What do you remember?

INT. THERAPIST'S OFFICE - DAY - THREE DAYS LATER

THERAPIST

Jerry?

Jerry looks up. His bandage is off.

THERAPIST

What do you remember of the day of your accident?

He takes a few seconds before responding.

(CONTINUED)

JERRY

It was beautiful.

(beat)

The day, not the accident... It was a day not unlike today. One where you would much rather be outside enjoying the weather than inside sitting on a deformed couch.

Jerry looks at the therapist.

JERRY

You know, one of those days.

THERAPIST

Please, continue.

JERRY

I went into the city to fill a prescription for my wife. An antibiotic or something... medicine she needed, you know...

(beat)

I remember seeing a crazy old man talking to himself on the bus. He's the kind of guy that should be talking to you. Anyways, the last thing I can remember is riding the bus home.

We see a quick FLASH of an image of the bus' rear doors right before they open.

THERAPIST

And then?

JERRY

And then I wake up in the hospital with five nurses crowded around trying to help me --or strangle me-- I couldn't tell which. Can I have a mint?

EXT. RIVERBED - DAY - TWO DAYS EARLIER

The riverbed is about fifty feet across, completely dry with cracks running along the soil. The sun beats down, not a cloud in the sky.

On the banks of the riverbed, Luke stands by a water pump holding a round steel pan with dirt and rocks in it. Jerry stands by him watching. Luke pumps the lever several times and water begins to leak out.

(CONTINUED)

LUKE

Normally we wouldn't have to do this. Normally the river would be flowing, so we could just pan on the banks and use the water from there. The problem is that it hasn't rained in four months, so we'll just have to pump our own water.

Luke runs the water over the pan he is holding, then begins to move it in a circular motion.

LUKE

What you want to do is move your pan in a circular motion, see, to wash away the gravel, like this. Here, give it a try.

Jerry takes the pan and awkwardly attempts to mimic Luke's demonstration. He looks through his glasses with intense focus.

LUKE

Now as you get closer to the end, your circles become smaller.

Jerry follows instruction. Now only small dirt particles are left in the pan. As the water washes over, it reveals a few minuscule gold flakes in the bottom.

JERRY

(disappointed)

Is that it?

LUKE

(proudly)

That's it.

Jerry strains his eyes to see gold.

JERRY

Hmm. Have you ever found any bigger pieces?

LUKE

Four years ago I found a nugget 'bout the size of a Tic Tac.

JERRY

Is that big?

(CONTINUED)

LUKE

That's huge. I decided to take the rest of the day off. That was the day Camille was born.

Jerry looks at Luke.

LUKE

(soberly)

That was the first day I saw Camille, the last day I saw Trudi.

Jerry looks back down to the pan.

JERRY

You know, these aren't so bad. We could just melt these down into one big piece anyways.

INT. DINER - NIGHT

An old fashioned diner. A few customers are scattered throughout the restaurant. Jerry and Luke sit in booths.

LUKE

They will actually follow the Sun in the sky throughout the day. It's incredible. Camille loves them. So does her friend Natalie. They always want me to stop the car when we pass a field of sunflowers.

JERRY

That's how I met your mother, you know. I gave her a sunflower.

LUKE

I know Dad.

JERRY

She pulled all the petals off and threw it on the ground. So I asked her to the school dance.

(beat)

Long time ago, but I still remember. 'Course my memory isn't that great nowadays. I can hardly remember anything now.

LUKE

Even the accident?

(CONTINUED)

JERRY

Especially the accident. All I can remember is that I was on a bus. That's all. But the nurse told me that I got hit in the street. Right in the middle of the street! It just doesn't make sense to me. I was going home to see your mother. What was I doing in the middle of the street?

A WAITRESS comes to the table to deliver two plates of food. She is in her mid-40s and has a raspy voice.

LUKE

Don't beat yourself up about it Dad. If you can't remember, you can't remember. I'm just glad you're alright.

WAITRESS

Bad memory, huh? Me too. Used to be I could remember ten customers' orders. Now you order a coffee, I gotta write it down, or else you'll end up with a gin and tonic!

She lets out a spree of loud cackles that is more startling than anything.

WAITRESS

Enjoy your food.

She leaves for the kitchen.

Luke begins to add salt and pepper to his meal. Jerry just stares at his.

JERRY

(pensive)

I just can't help but think that if I had made it home, I could have given your mom her medicine and maybe--

LUKE

Stop it, Dad. I'm not going to sit here and listen to that shit. What happened is nobody's fault. It's not mine. It's not yours. You were unconscious for Christ's sake, so just... eat your food.

Luke takes an aggressive stab of food.

(CONTINUED)

Jerry slowly cuts a piece of steak with his knife. He stares at the fork for a second, then puts the bite in his mouth.

JERRY

You want to know the last thing she told me?

Luke puts down his fork.

JERRY (CONT'D)

She told me that when she got better, she wanted to go dancing.

Jerry breaks down. His face trembling, he lowers his head into his hands and begins to weep, barely making any noise.

Luke is now struggling to hold back tears. He places a hand on his dad's hunched shoulder.

The waitress approaches the table with a smile on her face. She sees the two men, her smile fades, and she turns around and heads back to the kitchen.

EXT. RAILROAD CROSSING - NIGHT

Jerry comes to a stop at the railroad crossing. The same bull with the crooked horn is standing in the middle of the tracks.

JERRY

(to himself)

Not you again.

Jerry rolls down his window and sticks his head out.

JERRY

Hey! ... Cow! ...Outtatheway!

Jerry rolls up his window with frustration.

JERRY

(to himself)

Stupid... dumb animal.

The lights on the railroad crossing sign light up, the bells sound, and the barrier lowers in front of Jerry's car.

JERRY

(to himself)

Oh perfect. This again.

Jerry honks his horn and flashes his headlights on and off, but the bull doesn't budge.

(CONTINUED)

The train appears in the distance, approaching rapidly.

Jerry is shaking his head, his anxiety clearly showing.

The train gets closer and closer.

JERRY

Come on... Come on!

The train's whistle echoes into the night. The train PLOWS right through the cow going full speed!

JERRY

NOOOOOO!!!

Jerry covers his mouth with his hands, still emitting a panicked cry. His eyes are wide with fear.

The train continues to fly by.

INT. GUEST ROOM - NIGHT

Jerry stumbles into the room in shock and goes straight to the bathroom. He crouches by the toilet to choke out a few dry heaves.

Jerry stands up and looks into the mirror, breathing deeply. He turns the knob on the sink, but nothing comes out.

We see a quick FLASH of an image of the cow standing at the train tracks, lit brightly by headlights.

Jerry spits into the sink.

Another FLASH of the cow, accompanied by a loud train whistle.

EXT. LARGE-SCALE BARBECUE - DAY

A pitchfork, skewered with a dozen slabs of raw meat plunges into a vat of boiling oil.

There are multiple vats with pitchforks in them, which a few men in cowboy hats tend to. Beside them, even more pitchforks with raw meat on them wait to be cooked.

A crowd of around two hundred people attend this event. They sit amongst a network of plastic tables, eating and conversing.

(CONTINUED)

A LIVE COUNTRY BAND is performing on a small stage. These men look like they have never left the state of North Dakota. Each wears a cowboy hat and a handkerchief around his neck, looking happy as hell. They currently play Bob Dylan's "Tangled Up In Blue".

In front of the stage, Camille dances with a SHIRTLESS BOY her age while a GIRL IN A YELLOW SUNDRESS dances around them. What they lack in grace they make up for in cuteness.

Jerry and Luke sit at a table with plates of food, watching the show.

JERRY

If I had known shirts were
optional, I wouldn't have bothered
with this...

He motions to the plaid shirt he is wearing. Luke smiles.

LUKE

Welcome to North Dakota. Are you
sure you don't want any of this
steak? It's delicious.

Jerry looks at the meat on Luke's plate, still red in the middle and a bit bloody.

JERRY

I'm sure it is. It looks very
appetizing...

Jerry trails off when he hears the sound of a train whistle in the distance. He shoots a startled look to the horizon, where we can see a train far in the distance.

LUKE

Well I'm going up to get some more.
I could get you some.

JERRY

No. Thanks.

Luke leaves for the food line. Camille runs over to grab a cookie from the table. The girl in the yellow sundress stands closely behind her.

CAMILLE

Opa did you see me?

JERRY

I saw you Cam-Bam. Who's your
friend you were dancing with?

(CONTINUED)

CAMILLE

Charlie. We're going to get married.

JERRY

(amused)

Is that right? Well I can't wait til the wedding.

With that, Camille scurries back to the dance floor with her cookie. Her friend in the yellow sundress stays where she is, staring at Jerry with enchanting blue eyes.

JERRY

Hi there little lady. What's your name?

The girl just smiles. She sees Luke approaching and runs back to the dance floor after Camille.

JERRY

(to Luke)

Cute kids.

LUKE

Oh yeah. Did she tell you about Charlie?

JERRY

I heard they're getting married.

They both grin.

JERRY (CONT'D)

I'll have to get him a shirt for the wedding.

The band on stage, still playing "Tangled Up In Blue". Instead of the line "drifted down to New Orleans," the lead singer says "drifted up to North Dakota."

The audience lets out a cheer. Luke puts his hand to his mouth and whistles.

The three kids, still dancing.

INT./EXT. LUKE'S CAR - SUNSET

The car travels through a hilly countryside with the sun directly behind it.

(CONTINUED)

Luke is driving, Camille in the rear seat behind him. Jerry is in the passenger's seat and Camille's friend, the girl in the yellow sundress, sits behind him. A radio talk show plays quietly in the background.

LUKE

Almost there.

Camille and her friend are glued to their windows.

The car drives over one last hill to be met with the sight of two brilliant fields of bright yellow sunflowers on either side of the road. The passengers of the car gaze in collective awe.

When the sunflower fields come to an end, standing right behind the last flowers on Jerry's side, is the bull with the crooked horn. It passes by so quickly that Jerry reels around in disbelief to try to get another look at it.

JERRY

Did you see that?

LUKE

Thank God for irrigation.

JERRY

No, the cow. Did you see that cow on the side of the road?

Jerry looks into the side mirror but only sees road and sky.

LUKE

Oh, no I didn't see it. Yeah, there are a lot of cows around here.

JERRY

But I have seen that cow before...
I've seen A LOT of that cow before...

LUKE

Shhh. Be quiet! Be quiet!

Luke turns up the volume dial on the radio.

RADIO HOST (V.O)

...could be the day we've all been waiting for. That's right, experts are saying there is an 80% chance of rain tomorrow, and a lot of it!

(CONTINUED)

LUKE
YEEEEEEHAAAWWW!!!

Luke shakes his father's shoulder with excitement.

LUKE
Did you hear that Cam-Bam? It's
going to rain tomorrow!

Jerry gives a convincing smile, but then looks back into the side mirror. He still sees nothing.

INT. GUEST ROOM - NIGHT

Jerry enters the bathroom and begins to take off his bandage in the mirror. As he is halfway done unwrapping the bandage, he looks out the bathroom window.

Outside on the moonlit lawn, standing next to a large tree with a tire swing, is the bull with the crooked horn.

Jerry leaps away from the window, hiding his body behind the entrance to the bathroom. Half of the unraveled bandage hangs down from his head.

He sinks down to the floor, breathing heavily, with his knees tucked to his chest. From where he sits, Jerry grabs the blanket off the bed and pulls it over his body. He finishes taking off the bandage and tosses it on the bedroom floor.

INT. GUEST ROOM - MORNING

Jerry lies in bed without a blanket (the blanket still lies on the floor where he sat the night before). He gets out of bed slowly and enters the bathroom.

He peers out the window into the yard and sees nothing but the tree and the tire swing.

In the mirror, Jerry examines the gash on his head that has begun to heal. He turns the knob on the sink.

CLOSE on the faucet. It makes a gurgling noise, but no water comes out.

LUKE (O.S.)
Dad! Can you come down here?

Jerry walks out, leaving the sink faucet coughing out air.

INT. KITCHEN - MORNING

As Jerry sits down, the kitchen table wobbles slightly. He gives the table a shake to test its sturdiness, and it wobbles some more. Jerry looks down at the legs of the table to find that an umbrella has been nailed into the bottom to serve as a makeshift fourth leg.

Jerry begins to skim the front page of a newspaper.

Luke enters and washes a coffee mug in the sink. He sits at the table.

LUKE

Dad I have been thinking a lot about what you were saying the other day in the diner, so this morning I called a friend of mine. I thought she would be a good person for you to talk to.

JERRY

(skeptically)

Talk to?

LUKE

Yeah. She is a doctor. She helps people get through difficult times in their lives.

JERRY

You mean a therapist?

LUKE

Yes.

Jerry folds the newspaper, stands up from the table, and begins to leave.

JERRY

No. Thanks anyways. That won't be necessary. Where is Camille?

LUKE

She's in the backyard with her friend Natalie. Dad I already scheduled an appointment for you today.

Jerry looks back at Luke.

(CONTINUED)

JERRY

Oh? And when were you going to tell me about this?

LUKE

I'm telling you right now. She's a very nice lady.

Jerry chuckles loudly.

LUKE (CONT'D)

I want you to go today, and then decide if you want to go back.

Jerry hears a faint train whistle outside, startling him slightly. He focuses his attention back to Luke.

JERRY

Luke I'm a grown man. I can take care of myself.

Jerry peers out the window above the sink but sees nothing.

JERRY

I'll go today... and then decide if I want to go back.

INT. THERAPIST'S OFFICE - DAY

THERAPIST

Hello Mr. Dobbs, I am Doctor Mosley. You can call me Janet. It's very nice to meet you. Why don't you go ahead and have a seat.

Jerry looks at the chaise longue, then sits awkwardly in the unfamiliar piece of furniture.

THERAPIST

Now I am going to set this for an hour. When it rings, the session is over.

She turns the dial on the timer and sets it on the glass center table beside a bowl of mints. Jerry stares at the timer.

EXT. BACKYARD - DAY

Camille runs out to the tire swing and hops on. She looks back to someone, but we do not see who.

INT. THERAPIST'S OFFICE - DAY

THERAPIST
Any delusions Jerry?
Hallucinations? See things that
aren't there?

Jerry stares at the timer for another second before answering.

JERRY
I don't believe I understand the
question.

The therapist looks up from her clipboard at Jerry.

EXT. BACKYARD - DAY

Camille swings on the tire swing, giggling. Someone is pushing her on the swing, but we do not see who.

INT. THERAPIST'S OFFICE - DAY

THERAPIST
And then?

JERRY
And then I wake up in the hospital
with five nurses crowded around
trying to help me --or strangle
me-- I couldn't tell which. Can I
have a mint?

EXT. BACKYARD - DAY

Camille is swinging higher this time. Again, we do not see who is pushing her.

INT. THERAPIST'S OFFICE - DAY

THERAPIST

Maybe it was a different cow. There are a lot of cows in this state.

JERRY

(shaking his head)

No. No it was the same one.

THERAPIST

And how do you know that?

JERRY

Its horn. It has a crooked horn. It points forwards instead of up. The spawn of Satan if you ask me.

THERAPIST

Let me ask you something Jerry. Have you ever seen this cow when you're with anyone else?

JERRY

(amused)

Oh I see what this is about. As a matter of fact, I DID. Yesterday. Coming back from the hillbilly barbecue. Luke was driving.

THERAPIST

So Luke saw the bull too?

Jerry is hesitant to respond.

The timer on the center table. The second hand is on its last revolution.

JERRY

Actually, no, Luke didn't see it. We went by pretty fast. But there were four of us in the car. Camille's friend must have seen it. It was on her side.

THERAPIST

Camille's friend?

JERRY

That's what I said.

(CONTINUED)

THERAPIST

Who?

The timer again, this time even closer to reaching zero.

JERRY

Oh a little blonde girl. They're together all the time.

THERAPIST

Does this girl have a name?

The timer is almost out of time.

JERRY

Yes, if I could just remember it--

THERAPIST

What is it?

JERRY

Natalie!

The timer chimes loudly. Janet doesn't react. She is left sitting with a wondering look on her face.

Jerry stands up from his seat and opens the door to leave.

JERRY

The girl's name is Natalie.

EXT. BACKYARD - DAY

Camille on the tire swing. This time we get to see who is pushing: a little REDHEADED GIRL whom we have never seen before. Raindrops begin to sprinkle down from the sky. The girls abandon the tire swing and dash around the yard.

INT. THERAPIST'S OFFICE - DAY

The therapist dials a number on her office phone as she stares at a framed picture on her desk. The picture is of the redheaded girl we just saw.

THERAPIST

(into phone)

Hi Luke, it's Janet. Is Natalie still over at your house?

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

LUKE

(into phone)

Hi Janet. Yeah, Natalie is playing with Camille in the backyard right now. It just started to rain over here.

We see Camille running around the yard with the redheaded girl as rain sprinkles down lightly.

LUKE (CONT'D)

How did the meeting go?

INTERCUT between Luke and Janet

THERAPIST

It was... interesting. Let me ask you something. Did you go to the pitchfork fondue yesterday in Minot?

LUKE

Yes, we did.

THERAPIST

Okay, and who did you go with?

LUKE

We just went as a family.

THERAPIST

You didn't go with anyone else?

LUKE

... No.

THERAPIST

Did you give anyone a ride home after?

LUKE

No. It was just the three of us. Janet what's this about?

THERAPIST

Well, your father told me that there was a fourth person in the car yesterday. A little girl.

(CONTINUED)

LUKE

That's not right... What does that mean?

THERAPIST

It means I should have never let him leave my office. Is he with you right now?

LUKE

No. He won't be back for hours. What should I do?

THERAPIST

You listen to me very carefully. You need to find him.

EXT. RIVERBED - DAY

Water streams out of the pump over a steel pan of dirt and gravel. It has not yet began to rain.

Jerry begins to sift the pan in a circular motion. He stares in concentration as a bead of sweat drips down his cheek.

EXT. TWO-LANE ROAD - DAY

Luke driving his car recklessly through a downpour. His windshield wipers operate at full-bore as he shows utter disregard for the speed limit.

EXT. RIVERBED - DAY

Still no rain.

Jerry rotates his pan. He is getting closer to uncovering the contents in the bottom. Dark soot in the water washes away to reveal: a GOLD NUGGET, the size of a golf ball!

Not quite believing his eyes, Jerry takes off his glasses to wipe them on his shirt. When he puts them back on, he reaches into the pan to pick up the gold. He holds the enormous piece in front of his astonished face with a trembling hand.

He lowers the nugget, and we see a figure standing a distance behind him. Jerry sees it out of the corner of his eye, and he turns to look.

Standing there, in the middle of the dry riverbed, is the girl in the yellow sundress.

(CONTINUED)

Seeing this, Jerry drops the gold piece back into his pan from where he stands. Jerry cocks his head as if to examine the curious sight, and he takes a few tentative steps forward. He is now in the riverbed, a few feet from the girl.

Jerry steps closer and crouches in front of the girl.

JERRY
Hi there little lady. What on earth
are you doing out here?

Behind them, about a quarter mile up the riverbed, we see a rush of water turn a bend in the river: a FLASH FLOOD. The flood is headed straight for them, and neither notice.

JERRY
You thirsty? Here.

Jerry grabs a metal canteen from his belt and unscrews the cap torturously slowly. He brings the canteen to the girl's lips to let her drink, then returns it to his belt.

JERRY
There you go. Can't get enough
water on a day like this.

We can see the wall of floodwater getting closer by the second.

The girl smiles. Out from behind her back she reveals a SUNFLOWER, extending it to Jerry. He looks at the flower in wonderment.

INT./EXT. CITY BUS - DAY - TWELVE DAY EARLIER

The bus' rear doors open to reveal the girl in the yellow sundress standing outside on the sidewalk. She looks directly at us with her precious blue eyes and smiles. She holds up a sunflower in Jerry's direction.

Jerry watches, entranced.

Something catches her attention elsewhere, and the girl turns to run away in a hurry, dropping the sunflower on the sidewalk.

Jerry sees this and stands up frantically. He shoots a look towards the front of the bus, not sure what to do. He steps off the bus and picks up the flower, leaving his pharmacy bag on the bus.

(CONTINUED)

JERRY

Hey!

The girl has already crossed the street in front of the parked bus.

Jerry follows. The bus closes its doors. Jerry hesitates, looking back at the bus, then continues for the little girl.

He crosses the street in front of the bus, which has not yet begun to move. The traffic light is green.

A car passes in the lane left of the parked bus, accelerating towards the intersection.

Jerry crosses in front of the car.

The last thing we see is the girl running away down the sidewalk.

EXT. RIVERBED - DAY - TWELVE DAYS LATER

Jerry is still crouched in front of the girl offering him a sunflower.

Luke drives his car to a screeching halt next to Jerry's car and hops out. He runs over to the riverbank.

LUKE

Dad!

Jerry does not respond to the call. He reaches out to grasp the sunflower.

The girl's eyes drift down to the ground, and Jerry's follow. A tiny trickle of water drifts by over the cracked earth.

Jerry looks back to the girl's face as Luke arrives beside him. Jerry drops the sunflower to his feet and Luke drags his father to the bank of the river. Jerry struggles against his son, shouting in horror and reaching his hands out in an attempt to grab the girl. The whole time, she stands there calmly looking at Jerry.

JERRY

NOOOO!!!

Luke reaches the bank and the two men collapse on the ground just in time to escape the flood. Jerry watches as the girl is about to be washed away by the flood.

INT. GUEST ROOM - DAY

CLOSE on the bathroom sink faucet as a jet of water shoots out of it violently.

EXT. RIVERBED - DAY

Jerry lies in shock on the riverbank, facing the sky. Tears fill his eyes. Beads of rainwater land on his glasses.

Luke lies next to him on the bank, out of breath.

Now the rain picks up. The river surges by forcefully.

The steel pan lies on the ground a few feet away from Jerry. Raindrops create ripples on the surface of the water pooled inside it. There is no gold in the pan at all.

THERAPIST (O.S.)
Tell me about your wife.

INT. THERAPIST'S OFFICE - DAY - ONE MONTH LATER

Jerry sits in the same spot. The gash on his head has healed significantly. Jerry contemplates.

JERRY
She was too weak to breathe without an oxygen tank, but she was the strongest person I knew... She couldn't hear a thing, but she could listen... And you better believe she could dance. My only regret is that I didn't get to share one last dance with her.

THERAPIST
That's good, Jerry. It is okay to miss someone you loved dearly. You must accept that what happened is not your fault. The healing process begins by confronting these issues. By confronting what happened to your wife...
(beat)
...and by confronting what happened at the river last month.

This makes Jerry uneasy, but he avoids eye contact.

(CONTINUED)

THERAPIST

Jerry?

Jerry looks up.

THERAPIST

Do you ever have delusions, Jerry?

Jerry looks away from the therapist without responding. He slowly takes a mint from the dish on the center table and brings it to his mouth.

THERAPIST

Jerry?

We here the sound of a live country band begin to play Bob Dylan's "Tangled Up In Blue".

EXT. LARGE-SCALE BARBECUE - DAY

The same band is playing on stage for a similar crowd. Smoke from the cooked meat drifts into the air.

In front of the stage, Jerry is holding hands with Camille, dancing away happily.

A short distance away, in the midst of other spectators, the little girl in the yellow sundress watches with a smile on her face.

THE END