

THE MAGIC

Written by

Robert Russo & James Austin McCormick

[jimbostories@hotmail.com](mailto:jimbostories@hotmail.com)

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FADE IN

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

SELENA ADAMS (40's), overworked, blue collar type, bursts through the door and rushes to grab the ringing phone.

SELENA

Hello?

All expression drains from her face as she listens.

EXT. STREET - DAY

HENRY ADAMS (16) brings his skateboard to a screeching halt outside a small, detached house. Gangly, tank top and baseball cap turned sideways, he's a regular kid trying to be a punk.

A couple of others are with him, older, closer to 18, JACE, a meat head with a crew cut and BEGSIE, a stoner and all round waster.

JACE

You going to tell her?

HENRY

That they suspended me?

He shrugs.

HENRY (CONT'D)

She'd only bust my balls.

BEGSIE

I hear you, man.

HENRY

She's a major pain in the ass.  
Probably why my old man split so early.

Jace sniggers.

HENRY (CONT'D)

I'll catch you guys later.

JACE

Later.

BEGSIE

Ok, man.

The three share fist bumps.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

Henry shuffles inside.

Selena's sat motionless on the sofa. She glances up, glassy eyed.

SELENA

Henry.

The boy scowls.

HENRY

Don't start, okay?

He notices the tears on her cheeks, the eyes red from crying.

HENRY (CONT'D)

What's wrong?

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

Selena enters, dressed in black, mourning clothes. Henry follows. An older man is with him, arm interlocked with his. This is THOMAS ADAMS (late 60's). He's frail, ill and sickly but the tough-guy marine he used to be is still in evidence.

He looks around.

THOMAS

Where am I?

SELENA

My home, Dad.

He nods, trying to process the information.

THOMAS

Selena?

The woman smiles.

SELENA

That's right.

She places her hands to the man's face, a delicate, affectionate gesture.

THOMAS

Where's May?

SELENA  
Oh Dad, Mom, she...

For a moment she seems about to fall apart but manages to get control of herself.

SELENA (CONT'D)  
Why don't we get you settled in?

THOMAS  
Do I live here?

SELENA  
You do now. (To Henry) Why don't you show your grandfather to his room?

Henry scowls.

HENRY  
Why me?

SELENA  
Please.

HENRY  
Why's he even here?

The old man doesn't seem to be aware they're talking about him.

HENRY (CONT'D)  
(Sighing, reluctant)  
Okay, but I ain't no baby sitter.

INT. BEDROOM - DAY

Thomas is settling in, suitcase open, things laid out, including an array of old photographs.

The older man sits on his bed, running a somewhat bewildered eye over the bedroom. Suddenly, he notices Henry.

THOMAS  
What's your name, young man?

HENRY  
(Exasperated)  
Henry.

THOMAS  
You don't say. I got a grandson called Henry.

HENRY  
Yeah, that's me.

Thomas looks the youth up and down.

THOMAS  
Impossible.

He holds a hand out, palm downwards.

THOMAS (CONT'D)  
My Henry's four, maybe five, no  
bigger than that.

Henry looks over the pictures. Many show different landscapes, countries. One shows Thomas in full military gear. There's a sad contrast between the powerful, broad shouldered man in the picture, and the ailing, ageing one now.

HENRY  
(Impressed)  
You were in the marines?

THOMAS  
(Confused)  
The marines...

The youth checks out another photo of Thomas with his fellow soldiers, all of them toting serious weaponry.

EXT. SCHOOLYARD - DAY

Henry sits, back against a brick wall smoking a joint. His pals, Jace and Begsie are with him smokin' and jokin'.

JACE  
Getting wasted is the best. (To  
Begsie) You get real good shit,  
man.

BEGSIE  
I can get my hands on anything. All  
depends what you're looking for.

JACE  
What do you mean?

BEGSIE  
Well, want to get mellow?

He takes the joint and holds it up.

BEGSIE (CONT'D)  
This shit will do that, chill you  
right out, man. Or maybe you want  
to get jacked up, that's  
amphetamines.

He takes a long draw of the joint.

BEGSIE (CONT'D)  
Then you got your psychedelics.

HENRY  
What do they do?

BEGSIE  
They open up your mind (miming this  
by spreading his fingers out)  
expand your consciousness, maybe  
even psychic stuff.

He taps the side of his head.

BEGSIE (CONT'D)  
Unlock all the shit in here.

HENRY  
(Suddenly very interested)  
What about someone with (beat) I  
dunno, Alzheimer's?

BEGSIE  
Mushrooms man, LSD. That's stuff's  
like a magic fucking key.

Henry considers this.

HENRY  
Can you get any?

Begsie lets out a whistle.

BEGSIE  
I can get you some, but you owe me,  
man.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Henry finishes grinding a finger of mushroom into a powder.  
What's left of it is wrapped inside a plastic bag. He pours  
the contents into a cup of boiling water.

INT. THOMAS' ROOM - DAY

Henry watches eagerly as his grandfather sips his tea.  
His eyes flit to the clock. It reads 2:00pm.

TRANSITION

Clock reads 2:45pm

HENRY  
How you feeling?

Grandpa draws deep breaths.

THOMAS  
I don't know.

He looks around.

THOMAS (CONT'D)  
(Confused)  
This isn't my home.

HENRY  
No, my mom's. Your daughter.

THOMAS  
Who are you?

HENRY  
Henry, your grandson.

Thomas looks at him, disbelieving. He glances down at his hand, at the wrinkled skin.

THOMAS  
Jesus. How many years have...

His expression darkens.

THOMAS (CONT'D)  
And May?

Henry's unable to meet his grandfather's enquiring gaze.

HENRY  
We just came from her service.

The heartbreak on the old face is evident.

THOMAS

(Fearful)  
I don't remember...I don't remember  
anything.

He buries his face in his hands, weeping softly.

HENRY

You have a (shifting eyes)  
condition.

Thomas checks his drink.

THOMAS

You gave me something.

HENRY

Mushrooms. Magic Mushrooms.

THOMAS

Why the hell would you do that? You  
think I'd thank you for bringing me  
back to this; a sick old man who  
just lost his wife?

HENRY

I'm sorry. I wanted to talk a  
little that's all.

THOMAS

How long does this shit last?

HENRY

I don't know. A while.

Thomas looks the youth up and down, displeased.

THOMAS

How old are you?

HENRY

16.

THOMAS

How you doing at school?

HENRY

Lousy. I got suspended.

THOMAS

How?

HENRY

A bunch of stuff, cutting class,  
lates, and (looking away) smoking  
weed.

THOMAS

You stupid ass punk.

Henry stands up.

HENRY

Hey, you can't speak to me like  
that.

THOMAS

Sit your dumb ass back down.

He points a finger at the youth, suddenly paternalistic.  
Henry's posture straightens, like a child scolded.

THOMAS (CONT'D)

You think it makes you cool,  
flunking out? Let me tell you kid,  
you hang out with the wrong people  
that's when you start doing real  
stupid shit.

He gulps the rest of the tea.

THOMAS (CONT'D)

How do you treat your mom?

HENRY

Not so great, I guess.

Thomas lets out a sigh.

THOMAS

I guess I got my work cut out with  
you boy.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

Henry's crashed out on the sofa.

Selena comes through the door.

SELENA

Where's your grandfather?

HENRY

Sleeping.

Selena nods. There's something on her mind.

SELENA  
I got a call today?

HENRY  
(Feigning indifference)  
Really?

SELENA  
From the school.

Henry shrugs.

HENRY  
So?

SELENA  
You promised me.

HENRY  
Mom, please.

SELENA  
Why are you doing this to me?

Henry jumps up.

SELENA (CONT'D)  
Where are you going?

HENRY  
Out.

SELENA  
The Principal told me you're under  
a curfew until a decision's been  
made.

Henry heads for the door.

HENRY  
Don't wait up.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

Henry, Jace and Begsie saunter down a street.

JACE  
I been talking to some wise guys  
about you.

Henry looks at him puzzled.

HENRY  
Wise guys?

Jace and Begsie exchange glances.

JACE  
Yeah, you know, the guys who runs  
the streets.

BEGSIE  
Move the gear, too.

He mimes smoking a joint.

JACE  
I told them you were alright.

HENRY  
Thanks (shrugs) I guess.

JACE  
So, want to make some cash?

HENRY  
How?

BEGSIE  
Ever jacked a car?

HENRY  
You mean steal?

BEGSIE  
Yeah, you chicken?

JACE  
He's not chicken.

HENRY  
No way. Don't say that.

JACE  
Right, and he can prove it.

He slides something out of his jacket, a metal pipe. He presses it into Henry's hand.

He indicates a Lincoln just a little ahead.

HENRY  
What? You want me to...

JACE  
It's easy.

BEGSIE  
Besides, you owe me, remember?

The trio draw closer to the vehicle.

Jace looks one way, Begsie the other.

JACE  
Do it.

Henry swallows hard.

He lifts the pipe, ready to swing.

ANGRY GUY (O.S.)  
Hey!

Henry turns.

Across the street, a big guy in a denim jacket and dockers hat glares at them, large fists curled in anger.

ANGRY GUY (CONT'D)  
You punks are dead.

He sprints across the road.

The trio scatter.

The Angry Guy focuses on Henry, the one with the pipe.

The youth bolts. The vehicle owner is after him.

Henry races down the streets, fear giving him the speed he needs to stay just ahead.

But his pursuer is just behind. He reaches out, snatching at Henry. His fingers brush his shoulder.

ANGRY GUY (CONT'D)  
(Breathing hard)  
You're mine, punk.

Henry pulls ahead and opens up space between them.

As he does, he chances a look behind.

The man's face is purple, teeth bared in a snarl.

He stops, hands on knees, gasping.

ANGRY GUY (CONT'D)  
I see you again, you're dead. You  
hear me?

Henry, not looking where he's going, stumbles and trips. He hurts himself but is on his feet again, sprinting away into the night.

The Angry Guy watches with murderous eyes.

The pipe drops from Henry's hand. It hits the ground, the metallic clang echoes through the night air.

EXT. PARK - DAY

Thomas, slow and frail, walks with the aid of a cane.

Henry tries to support him but he's having none of it.

THOMAS

You really are one dumb son of a bitch, you know that?

He sips on a flask of something hot. We can guess it's another batch of 'special' tea.

HENRY

I know, but they're my friends. My only ones, I guess.

THOMAS

The hell they are.

HENRY

So, what do I do?

THOMAS

Be a man.

HENRY

I'm 16, Grandpa.

THOMAS

Being a man ain't about age.

They pass overhanging trees.

The older man takes it all in, breathing deeply and watching the birds fluttering between the branches.

THOMAS (CONT'D)

It's about taking responsibility for your actions. Doing what you know is right.

He bangs his chest with a fist.

THOMAS (CONT'D)  
And this, this is what will tell  
you that.

He breaks into a fit of coughing. It's so bad he takes out a handkerchief. Gradually the attack subsides. He takes the handkerchief away. It's flecked with blood.

THOMAS (CONT'D)  
Let's get back to your Mom's.

He stretches out a shaking hand and puts it on his grandson's shoulder.

INT. LIVING ROOM - EVENING

Selena enters. It takes her a moment to realize the place has been cleaned and tidied.

SELENA  
Henry?

She throws off her coat and heads for the kitchen. She has a large paper bag in one hand.

SELENA (CONT'D)  
I got us Chinese.

INT. KITCHEN - EVENING

Selena opens the kitchen door.

Henry's stood at the sink, drying dishes.

SELENA  
My goodness.

Henry looks up, smiles.

HENRY  
Hi, Mom.

SELENA  
What's all this?

HENRY  
You needed a hand. I know how hard  
you work.

Selena's so happy she almost breaks into tears.

SELENA  
I don't know what to say.

Henry shrugs.

HENRY  
It's cool.

SELENA  
Have you eaten?

HENRY  
Not yet.

SELENA  
Grandpa?

HENRY  
Still in bed. Mom, he's really  
sick. What's wrong with him?

Sadness clouds her face.

SELENA  
Let's talk.

CUT TO:

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

Henry and his mother sit opposite one another at the dining table.

The youth's fork hovers over a plate of noodles.

SELENA  
Cancer's eating through him like  
wildfire.

HENRY  
How long?

SELENA  
A couple of weeks, no more than  
that. I never knew just how bad it  
was until Mom...

She can't finish the sentence.

Henry lays a hand on her forearm.

HENRY  
I'm sorry.

SELENA

I just want to make him comfortable  
until he goes. I'll be damned if I  
put him into a home.

The phone rings.

HENRY

I'll get it.

He goes into the living room.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

He answers the phone.

HENRY

Hello.

PRINCIPAL STEIN (O.S.)

Am I speaking with Henry?

HENRY

Yes, you are.

PRINCIPAL STEIN (O.S.)

Henry, I'd like you to come in  
tomorrow, to my office.

HENRY

(Anxious)

Okay.

PRINCIPAL STEIN (O.S.)

9:30 if that's convenient. Do you  
think your mother could accompany  
you?

HENRY

(Keeping his voice quiet)

I'll tell her.

PRINCIPAL STEIN

Please do. It's better if a parent  
is at these things. Until tomorrow.

The connection goes dead.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

Henry sits down.

SELENA  
Who was that?

HENRY  
Nothing, stupid sales call.

INT. PRINCIPAL STEIN'S OFFICE - DAY

PRINCIPAL STEIN is a bald, late middle aged individual, not a bad guy, but humourless, grim and inflexible.

He leans back, interlocking his fingers.

HENRY  
Expelled?

PRINCIPAL STEIN  
Rules regarding illegal substances  
on school grounds are quite clear.

Henry collapses back in his chair.

HENRY  
So, what now?

PRINCIPAL STEIN  
That Henry, is up to you.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

A downcast Henry shuffles through the door.

Selena comes to the kitchen doorway.

SELENA  
How could you?

She holds up the bag of mushrooms then disappears inside the kitchen again.

We hear the sound of the waste disposal whirring.

Henry rushes towards it.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

And finds his Mom, holding the bag over the waste disposal.

HENRY  
No! You don't understand!

Selena turns round, leaning back against the sink, arms folded.

She's daring him to explain.

HENRY (CONT'D)  
It's not for me. It's for Grandpa.

His mother's eyes widen in horror.

HENRY (CONT'D)  
It helps him remember, be who he used to be. At least for a short time.

Selena's expression softens.

HENRY (CONT'D)  
I swear to you.

SELENA  
But how? The doctors have tried...

HENRY  
Doctors are shills for Big Pharma.  
Fuck them. Let me show you.

He waves an arm at the bag poised precariously over the sink.

HENRY (CONT'D)  
Please Mom, don't throw that away.  
It's our last chance to talk to him.

INT. BEDROOM - DAY

Selena holds her father's hands. Her eyes are full of tears.

THOMAS  
Hey, I brought you up to be tougher than that.

SELENA  
Oh Dad.

She falls into his arms.

Thomas makes a comical face at Henry.

THOMAS  
(Joking)  
Women, huh?

Henry manages a small laugh.

THOMAS (CONT'D)  
At least we get to say goodbye.

Henry's eyes dripping tears, lip trembling.

THOMAS (CONT'D)  
I got to know this punk as well.

He slaps him playfully across the head.

HENRY  
Ouch.

THOMAS  
(To Selena)  
He's going to make you proud. (To  
Henry) Right?

The youth nods.

THOMAS (CONT'D)  
Then tell your Mom.

HENRY  
I'll make you proud, Mom. I  
promise.

SELENA  
And school?

Henry looks sheepish.

HENRY  
I kind of got expelled.

SELENA  
What!

She glares at him.

Thomas laughs, breaking the tension.

He waves Henry over and the old man wraps his arm him,  
bringing his grandson and his daughter closer.

THOMAS  
(Affectionately)  
Forget about what's gone. Let the  
past go. You both got to look to  
the future.

He grabs Henry's ear.

THOMAS (CONT'D)  
And don't forget, what type of man  
do you want to be?

Henry's eyes flit towards the photo of Thomas as a young marine.

CUT TO:

INT. OLD FORD - DAY

The same picture, resting on Henry's lap. His eyes are reflected in the glass, looking back at us.

His mother gets into the driver's seat, next to him.

SELANA  
That's it, all packed.

She glances at the house.

SELENA  
Gonna miss this place?

HENRY  
No way.

SELENA  
Me neither. New state, new start.

HENRY  
Sounds good.

Selena glances at the back seat. An urn is held in place by a seat belt strapped across it.

SELENA  
We're going to the lake, Dad. Just  
like you wanted.

She fires the engine into life.

SELENA (CONT'D)  
Mom's waiting for you.

EXT. STREET -DAY

Jace and Begsie watch from the other side of the street. Henry doesn't acknowledge them.

The Ford drives off, disappearing into the distance.

FADE OUT.