

Effed Up!

a family saga

pilot script for
limited series
by
russ woody

"Effed Up!"

By

Russ Woody

FADE IN:

RUSSELL NIRTH, mid-30s, handsome, somber, wearing a dark suit. He trudges uphill in the summer heat of Sacramento.

RUSSELL (V.O.)
When one of your parents dies, it
can hit you like a brick in the head.

PULL BACK to see...

EXT. HILLSIDE GRAVE SITE - DAY

FIFTEEN OR TWENTY MOURNERS are gathering. Russell arrives at the side of a casket over an open grave.

RUSSELL (V.O.)
I remember a few days ago seeing my
mother lying in a hospital bed, tubes
running in and out of her like a 30s
switchboard. The next thing I know,
I'm staring into a giant void...

A PRIEST looks over the obsequies he will read, as Russell takes his place and finds himself standing next to a NUN. The Nun and he exchange a look.

NUN
I'm so sorry for your loss, Mr.
Nirth.

RUSSELL
Thank you.

NUN
I hope your family is of great
comfort to you in this difficult
time.

(CONTINUED)

RUSSELL
Oh, well, not, they're... uh, thanks.

A beat.

NUN
My mother passed last year.

RUSSELL
I'm sorry.

NUN
I remember I was tending Monsignor
Sigratto's radishes when Sister
Margaret Rose came out to tell me
the news...
(then)
It's funny how you remember exactly
what you were doing the moment you
get bad news...

RUSSELL
Yes, it's funny.

BECKY (O.C.)
Oh God, Russell, yes, that's so
good... so good...

INT. RUSSELL'S BEDROOM - FLASHBACK

CAMERA TRACKS CLOSE ALONG THE FLOOR beside Russell's bed (we
still don't see anybody).

BECKY (O.C.)
Oh, God ...and there's five of 'em...
EMTs rollin' 'em in... and, oh yeah,
God yes!...

We see CLOTHES STREWN about in a haphazard fashion -- a man's
shirt, his tie, his slacks, wildly intermingled with white
nylons, a white sneaker, a NURSE'S UNIFORM.

BECKY (O.C.) (CONT'D)
...all from the same TA... uh-huh,
that's it, yes... they're all in bad
shape. Bad shape...

CAMERA EMERGES over the crest of the bed, where we finally
see BECKY, just the TOP HALF, her head on a pillow, her arms
bound above to the headboard by surgical tape.

BECKY (CONT'D)
...and one of 'em, his eye hanging
out of socket, his arm on ice... in
other room... Oh God, yes, right
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

BECKY (CONT'D)
 there, right there! Jesus, Russell,
 your tongue is... is amazing... and
 that guy's tongue, he bit it off...
 You're so good! Feels so good! And
 then I realize I'm standing on his
 liver...

(she stops, looks
 down at Russell)
 What's the matter?

Russell crawls into frame.

RUSSELL
 Well... it's just, uh...

BECKY
 You don't like this? 'Cause I've
 never been so turned on. God, I can't
 wait to do this to you.

RUSSELL
 To me? Uh, hmmmph...

Russell rethinks, then edges back out of frame... as Becky
 throws her head back, picks up where she left off.

BECKY
 Oh yeah, baby, that's right, uh-huh...
 (writhing)
 ...so his intestines come rolling
 out, drop on floor... and his pelvic...
 his area, couldn't find... penis...

She stops, realizing Russell has stopped.

BECKY (CONT'D)
 What?

RUSSELL
 Nothing... I just...
 (an idea)
 Hold on!

He tears off some surgical tape, slaps it across her mouth.

RUSSELL (CONT'D)
 Okay.

He smiles, pleased with this, as he disappears again to
 continue his efforts. Becky mumbles her approval.

SFX: PHONE RINGS

ANSWERING MACHINE
 It's Russell. Leave a message.

(CONTINUED)

PAUL'S VOICE (ON ANSWERING MACHINE)
 Russell T.? It's your dad. Yell-ow?
 Russell? Ya there? Russell T.? It's
 your dad. Very important...

Russell sits up, looks apologetically at Becky, picks up.

RUSSELL
 (to phone)
 Dad? What's up?

PAUL (ON PHONE)
 Russell. I'm afraid it's your mother.

Becky moans plaintively to Russell.

PAUL (ON PHONE) (CONT'D)
 What's that noise?

RUSSELL
 Oh, I taped a woman to the bed. What
 about Mom?

PAUL (ON PHONE)
 Well, she's he's very sick. And I'm
 pretty sure it's real this time.

RUSSELL
 Uh-huh...

PAUL (ON PHONE)
 In fact, I think she's dying.

RUSSELL
 Right. Boy, that's no good.

Becky groans loudly and thrusts her pelvis against Russell.

RUSSELL (CONT'D)
 Listen, Dad, can I call you back in
 a little --

PAUL (ON PHONE)
 We found some blood in her poop this
 morning, so I took her over to the
 hospital. There was some greenish-
 black chunks of somethin' or other
 in there. Kinda spongy. Fell apart
 when I poked it with a pencil 'cause--

RUSSELL
 Right, right, I don't need all the--

PAUL (ON PHONE)
 Dunno what in the hell it was.
 (MORE)

(CONTINUED)

PAUL (ON PHONE) (CONT'D)
 Looked like it mighta been a chunk
 of her spleen or something. Maybe
 tofu.

Russell realizes his lust doesn't stand a chance, sits back,
 reaches over and pulls the tape off Becky's mouth.

RUSSELL
 So, what hospital did you say she's
 at?

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

The small, seemingly harmless woman in the hospital bed is
 HELEN NIRTH. To the untrained eye, she looks like sweet little
 old lady.

PAUL (ON PHONE)
 St. Matthew's over here on Sunrise.

In a chair beside the bed, Russell's father, PAUL NIRTH, a
 nice looking man, mid 60s, sits calmly reading something by
 Louis L'amour.

HELEN
 Paul?

He keeps reading, hoping to continue doing so without having
 to deal with whatever bullshit she wants now.

HELEN (CONT'D)
 Goddamnit, Paul, you're ignoring me!

He looks up from his book, casts a weary eye in her direction.

PAUL
 (with a sigh)
 Yes, Helen...

HELEN
 Listen to that. Do you hear it?

They both listen.

PAUL
 I don't hear anything.

HELEN
 Exactly. My heart thing. The beep,
 beep, beep... It stopped.

PAUL
 Well, I'll be. Must be unplugged.

He goes back to his book. She steams a moment, then,

(CONTINUED)

HELEN

So...

(off his look)

Why don't you get up and plug it
back in?

PAUL

Helen, I don't think the nurses want
us fooling with the machines.

HELEN

Well, there it is, isn't it?

PAUL

There what is?

HELEN

You enjoy the sound of my dead heart.
You can't wait for this to all be
over.

PAUL

Oh, for Pete's sake...

He puts the book down, extracts himself from the chair and crosses to the bank of machines to plug in the monitor, while Russell enters with a bouquet of flowers.

RUSSELL

Mom?

HELEN

(looks up, squints)

Leonard? Is it you, Leonard?

RUSSELL

(irritated)

No, it's your other son. The one
with a job.

PAUL

(from the monitors)

Hiya, Russ.

RUSSELL

Hey, Dad.

Russell leans in to kiss his mother--something he's not comfortable doing.

SFX: HEART MONITOR BEEPS TO LIFE

Paul steps out from behind the monitors.

PAUL

Nice of ya to swing by.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

PAUL (CONT'D)
(sitting down)
Don't see much of you these days.

RUSSELL
Yeah, well, job, career. Work. Job.
(then)
I brought some flowers. For Mom.

HELEN
Well, isn't that thoughtful. Maybe
if your father pulled his nose out
of that stupid Hoot Gibson book,
he'd get up and find something to
put them in.

Paul shoots his wife a look.

RUSSELL
That's all right, Dad, I'll just...
(looks around)
...put 'em somewhere.

Paul extracts himself from the chair.

PAUL
Here, Russ.
(takes flowers, then)
So, Helen, where you want me to stick
'em?

HELEN
See, Russell, there's the hostility
I was telling you about.
(to Paul)
Just go to the Nurses' Station and
ask for a vase.
(to Russell)
You know, he didn't even care this
morning when my heart stopped.

RUSSELL
You're heart stopped?

PAUL
(on his way out)
The monitor was unplugged, Russ!

He exits to get a vase, as Helen turns to Russell.

HELEN
Honey, you mustn't get so upset.

RUSSELL
I'm not upset. But you said your
heart stopped.

(CONTINUED)

HELEN
 (sympathetically)
 So maybe next time you'll listen a
 little more closely.

Russell slow burns, he's familiar with this setup/spike
 routine. She takes his hand and looks into his eyes.

HELEN (CONT'D)
 I don't want to die, Russell.
 (a sigh)
 Not like this...

RUSSELL
 Right...
 (confused)
 You mean... in a hospital?

HELEN
 In a hospital...
 (then)
 ...before my children.

Russell takes this in, then,

RUSSELL
 So, what exactly did the doctors say
 was wrong?

HELEN
 They won't tell me.

RUSSELL
 Okay, but... they have to. It's a
 rule. Or a law.

HELEN
 Whatever it is...
 (looks away, pensive)
 ...childbirth...

RUSSELL
 (waits, then)
 Childbirth?

HELEN
 Childbirth...

RUSSELL
 Childbirth what?

HELEN
 Childbirth weakened my body.

Russell considers this.

(CONTINUED)

RUSSELL
Yeah, well, I hear it's... painful.

Silence. Awkward, deafening silence.

RUSSELL (CONT'D)
(winging it)
So... you look good. At least. You know... not pale. I mean, your color is good. Robust and not pale. So, all good... good, good.

Another glaring silence, as Helen comes up with another way to torture her son.

HELEN
And how is Trisha?

RUSSELL
Trish? I haven't talked to Trish since the divorce.

HELEN
(releases his hand)
I thought you two were going to work things out?

RUSSELL
We did. We got a divorce.

HELEN
Such a shame. I'm sure it mustn't have been easy for you, trashing a sacred vow to our Lord and Savior. But I suppose "Till death do us part" means different things to different people...

RUSSELL
Yeah, well, for Trish and me, "till death do us part" woulda meant murder-suicide.

Paul returns with the flowers stuffed in a mason jar. He crosses to set it next to her bed.

HELEN
What is that?

PAUL
What?

HELEN
That, that jar.

(CONTINUED)

PAUL

It's a jar.

HELEN

It's a mason jar.

PAUL

So, it's a mason jar. So what?

HELEN

A mason jar isn't a vase, is it?

PAUL

It is now.

HELEN

One simple thing, Paul. A vase. And you bring back a mason jar.

PAUL

(simmering)

They didn't have a baseball bat. I asked.

HELEN

You see, Russell? You see the way he talks to me?

PAUL

Helen, it's all they had.

HELEN

So, I guess it's too much to ask for a tinge of dignity in death.

PAUL

It's all... they... had.

RUSSELL

You know what, they must have vases in the gift shop. I'll just go down...

Russell starts for the door, but Paul takes his arm.

PAUL

No, Russ. I'll go.

RUSSELL

That's okay. It's no trouble. I'll go. Please, I can go.

PAUL

You stay here with your mom.

RUSSELL

Please, Dad.

(CONTINUED)

HELEN

Russell, really, let him do something around here.

(then to Paul)

And make sure it's nice! That way, in a couple of days, you can chuck the flowers, and use it for my ashes!

PAUL

(heads out, mumbling)

...Keef aflurs... chucka fuggen ashers.

He exits. Russell is again alone with his mother.

HELEN

(shakes her head)

He's such an angry, angry man. So bitter. No wonder your brother and sister despise him.

RUSSELL

They despise him?

HELEN

Well, they never come see us. So what else could it be?

Russell manages not to answer.

HELEN (CONT'D)

Maybe if you go talk to them? Tell them to come see me. Will you do that, Russell?

RUSSELL

What? No, actually, they're not people I'm... comfortable with.

EXT. DARLINGTON HOUSE - DAY

Perfect two story, lawn, white picket fence. RUSSELL'S BMW PULLS UP in front. We see him turn off the engine and contemplate whether to get out, while we still HEAR HELEN from the last scene.

HELEN (V.O.)

Please, Russell. It's the one thing I ask of you. Before I'm gone.

INT. DARLINGTON'S DINING ROOM/KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Jesus smiles down from a framed picture on the wall beside a perfect breakfast table, covered by plates that were moments ago brimming with scrambled eggs, bacon, toast and homemade jelly.

(CONTINUED)

DARLENE DARLINGTON, Russell's sister, 40, sits at one end of the table opposite her husband DARRYL, early forties, white shirt and tie, newspaper in front of his face. They are flanked by two symmetrically perfect children -- A BOY, A GIRL, (ten-ish, twelve-ish; respectively) -- dressed and ready for school.

DARLENE

(to the boy)

Now remember, Danny, you have Bible study at 3:15 sharp, band practice at 4:30 and then I'll pick you up as soon as I drop off your sister's pep squad uniforms.

DANNY

Okay, Mom.

DARLENE

And, Debbie...

DEBBIE

(smiles)

I know, Mom. Bible study, piano practice, pep squad... on top of it.

Darryl checks his watch, folds the newspaper and lays it on the table. As soon as he does, everything is swept away by Darlene and the kids.

SFX: DOORBELL

INT. DARLINGTON ENTRYWAY - A SECOND LATER

Darlene opens the door to reveal Russell.

DARLENE

Russell? Oh, my gosh. What a surprise.

RUSSELL

Hi, Darlene.

He steps in as they manage a perfunctory embrace and kiss.

RUSSELL (CONT'D)

Listen, I just stopped by because --

Darryl appears in the entryway with his briefcase.

DARRYL

Well hello, Russell.

RUSSELL

Hi, Darryl.

Darryl stops and puts an avuncular hand on Russell's shoulder.

(CONTINUED)

DARRYL
Listen, have you given any thought
to what we talked about last time?

RUSSELL
Yes. Yes, I have.

DARRYL
And?

RUSSELL
And... I'll be sure to let you know
as soon as I decide to accept Jesus
Christ as my personal savior.

DARRYL
(a smile)
All I ask.
(turns to Darlene)
Sweetheart, don't forget I've got
the Carlyle account tonight, so I'm
gonna be a little late.

DARLENE
I'll heat up something umptious-
scrumptious.

She kisses him. He exits as Danny and Debbie appear and pass
through the entryway.

DANNY
Bye, Mom.
(kisses her)
Love you.

DARLENE
I love you too, honey. You have your
lunch, right?

DANNY
(holding it up)
Right here. Hi, Uncle Russell, bye,
Uncle Russell.

RUSSELL
Hey, Dan.

DEBBIE
(passing them)
Hi, Uncle Russell. Bye, Mom. Love
you.

They kiss.

DARLENE
Love you too, angel.

(CONTINUED)

They're gone. Darlene closes the door, leans back against it and runs a hand through her hair.

RUSSELL

Well, look, I just dropped by to let you know--

DARLENE

God, I want to drink acid.

RUSSELL

Right. So I'm guessing you're off the meds?

Ignoring him, she pushes off the wall and pads into the kitchen. Russell looks at the front door, considers making an escape -- resigns himself to follow her into the kitchen.

INT. KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Darlene enters, opens the cupboard beneath the sink and reaches behind the detergent to pull out a half-empty (half-full?) BOTTLE OF JACK. She grabs one of the near-empty orange juice glasses next to the sink, tosses the juice, pours a hearty shot and quaffs it down. Russell enters to see.

RUSSELL

And the AA thing, not so much these days?

DARLENE

(pours another)
You're here why?

RUSSELL

Mom is sick.

We hear a young man calling out from the back of the house.

YOUNG MAN

(sing-songy)
Olly-olly-oxen-free! Where's my little kitty? Time to get the little kitty wetty-wet! Justin wants to play with his favorite little...

A MUSCULAR YOUNG MAN in shorts and t-shirt enters through the back screen door with a grin -- that disappears when he sees Russell.

YOUNG MAN (CONT'D)

(pitiful)
...kitty.

(CONTINUED)

Darlene, taking a moment to consider her options in this moment of extreme awkwardness -- she finally decides to go with... umbrage.

DARLENE

How dare you, you filthy pervert! My husband and I pay you to clean the goddamn pool and that's it, you sick sonofabitch! Now get out of my fucking house before I call the police! Out! Get out!

The young man, still wide-eyed, backs toward the screen door.

YOUNG MAN

I'm sorry, Darlene. I thought everyone was... I'm sorry.

He's gone. Darlene downs the Jack, turns back to Russell.

DARLENE

So, Mom's sick you said?

RUSSELL

He seems nice. And a cat lover?

DARLENE

You want a drink?

RUSSELL

Poolboy. A classic.

DARLENE

So, you don't want a drink?

RUSSELL

As tempting as it sounds at eight in the morning, thanks, no.

DARLENE

(pouring another shot)
God, you're a stump.

RUSSELL

Right. So, anyway, I think Mom is really dying this time.

DARLENE

(downs the Jack, then)
Well, lemme know when she's dead.

EXT. FUNERAL - AS BEFORE

The Priest is reading from the Catholic Book of the Dead, as CAMERA MOVES SLOWLY ALONG the faces of those attending --

(CONTINUED)

PRIEST

...and the mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear Him. And His righteousness unto the children's children...

We see Russell, the Nun, then Darlene, prim/proper, beside her perfect husband and perfect children. She's crying.

RUSSELL (V.O.)

Sometimes people surprise you...

EXT. LENNY'S HOUSE - DAY

A one-bedroom, dilapidated shithole. Paint peeling off the side, a gutter droops limply from the eave, shingles are missing. Weeds have replaced the lawn. RUSSELL'S CAR DRIVES UP the cracked and grease-stained driveway.

RUSSELL (V.O.)

...and sometimes they don't.

INT. LENNY'S BEDROOM - A MOMENT LATER

TWO BODIES are SNORING beneath a tangle of colorless sheets.

RUSSELL (V.O.)

My brother Lenny is an "artist."

Beside a dirty and cracked window, there's a "Pink Lloyd" POSTER clinging to the wall, one of its corners sagging lifelessly. Russell is still in another part of the house.

RUSSELL (O.C.) (CONT'D)

(calling)

Lenny?

A corner of the sheet comes down, and we see the face of Russell's brother LENNY, 45, balding, long gray hair.

LENNY

Aw, fuck.

Russell appears now at the open doorway and sees his brother is still in bed.

RUSSELL

Lenny?

(checks his watch)

It's two o'clock.

LENNY

Yuh...

Russell looks down on the floor, sees a SCHOOLGIRL'S UNIFORM.

(CONTINUED)

RUSSELL

Aw, fuck.

He picks up the plaid skirt for his brother to see.

LENNY

Aw, fuck.

Lenny quickly flips the sheet back to reveal the open-mouthed sleeping "schoolgirl," who might've been a schoolgirl once, but long, long ago.

RUSSELL/LENNY

Aw, fuck.

Lenny flips the sheet back over her face, sits on the side of the bed to hold his face in his hands.

LENNY

My fucking head.

RUSSELL

(pulling up a chair)

Boy, I'd never get tired of this.

LENNY

Hey, I had a gig last night, dickweed.

RUSSELL

(nods to woman)

Where, a nursing home?

LENNY

Fuck you. And, in my defense, I have no idea who that woman is.

RUSSELL

Stunning defense.

Lenny stands, naked, looks around for his clothes, while he absently reaches beneath his sagging belly to scratch his testicles.

RUSSELL (CONT'D)

(winces)

Jesus, Lenny...

LENNY

You got no fuckin' idea 'bout the world of rock 'n' roll, man.

(sees some socks)

Ah...

He bends to pick them up, giving Russell a clinical view of his naked ass.

(CONTINUED)

RUSSELL
 Mother of God, Lenny...
 (turns away)
 Could you just please...

LENNY
 For your information, turdbrain, the
 band's starting to take off. This
 could really be it, man.

RUSSELL
 Oh? Well, good.
 (trying)
 So, you've got some gigs? Where you
 playing?

LENNY
 You know what, I don't need the
 fuckin' third degree from some piss-
 ant lawyer! I'm not lying, okay.

RUSSELL
 Right. And you do know I'm not a
 lawyer, right?

LENNY
 (jabbing a finger)
 People love Pink Floyd, man! Pink
 Floyd's perennial, man! Pink Floyd
 speaks to the fuckin' ages!

RUSSELL
 Right. Anyway--

LENNY
 Fuckin' ay, right! Pink Floyd is for-
 fucking-ever, man!

RUSSELL
 Okay...
 (cautiously)
 But, Lenny... you do realize you're
 not actually in Pink Floyd. You're
 in Pink Lloyd.

LENNY
 Is there a reason you're here?

RUSSELL
 (a beat)
 I think Mom is dying.

Lenny stops, looks incredulous at his brother, like the wind
 has been knocked out of him. He sits back down on the bed.
 Russell is surprised to see his response.

(CONTINUED)

RUSSELL (CONT'D)

Lenny, I'm sorry. I didn't know you'd take it like--

LENNY

You fuckin' woke me up for that?

EXT. FUNERAL - AS BEFORE

Russell standing at the grave beside the Nun, feels someone pushing into the crowd and then nudge his way in between Russell and the Nun. Lenny. He's cleaned up... for him. The Nun smiles politely. Lenny returns the smile, then leans back to check out her ass.

LENNY

(smiles)

You enjoy music, Sister?

She smiles politely, edges away, as mourners toss handfuls of dirt onto the casket.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

START CLOSE on a CD of "Pink Lloyd's Greatest Hits" being clutched to Helen's sheet-covered bosom as an ATTRACTIVE NURSE hangs an IV drip and laughs at something Helen has said.

NURSE

Oh my God, Helen, you are the funniest thing! You're an absolute hoot!

(finishes the IV drip)

Now, you just let me know if there's anything else I can do.

HELEN

Carla, thank you so much.

Russell enters as the Nurse is exiting -- they are close in the doorway.

NURSE

(sexy)

Well... you must be the rock-n-roll star.

RUSSELL

Uh, no.

HELEN

(calls out)

No, Carla, that's just Russell.

(CONTINUED)

NURSE
 (with disdain)
 Russell...
 (a whisper)
 Let me tell you something, mister.
 That sweet woman over there is super.
 And you have no idea how much she's
 done for you in your miserable
 lifetime.

RUSSELL
 Actually, I do...

The Nurse turns abruptly, exits. Russell watches her go,
 turns to his mother.

RUSSELL (CONT'D)
 Why was that nurse mad at me?

HELEN
 Well, honey, she's young. The young
 people are angry about carbon
 footprints.

RUSSELL
 (confused, then)
 So... where's Dad?

SFX: TOILET FLUSHES

HELEN
 Where else?

Paul enters from the bathroom, Louis L'amour novel under his
 arm.

PAUL
 Hello there, Russell T.

RUSSELL
 Hi, Dad.

HELEN
 Would you be a dear, Russell, and
 open that window? I asked your father
 to do it an hour ago, but I guess
 he'd rather see me suffer in this
 stifling room.

PAUL
 Helen, an hour ago you weren't
 speaking to me.

He puts down the book and moves to the window (where we'll
 ONLY HEAR him).

(CONTINUED)

HELEN

You see, Russell. You see how he treats me? How he tries to belittle me?

RUSSELL

So... did Darlene come by?

PAUL (O.C.)

(re: unseen window)

Looks like they painted the darn thing shut.

HELEN

Oh, she came by all right. Honestly, Russell, I wish you hadn't told her I was here.

RUSSELL

You're welcome.

PAUL (O.C.)

(grunting)

Geeza criminy! Window's stuck like a mother hen. Come on, you ol' so-an'-so!

HELEN

(to Russell)

After all, your sister was the one who abandoned the Catholic church. But now all of a sudden, I'm the bad guy just because I mention that her children will burn in hell.

RUSSELL

Boy, try to help someone.

HELEN

And Lenny's so thoughtful. He had someone from his record company drop off his new CD.

RUSSELL

Okay, Mom, it's the same CD he gives you every Christmas. He just puts a new cover on it.

HELEN

(shakes her head)

Honey, you make yourself sound so small, so petty. I know it can't be easy seeing your brother's band on posters and magazines. It's all very glamorous. But there's no shame in being an lawyer.

(CONTINUED)

RUSSELL
I'm not a lawyer.

PAUL (O.C.)
(struggling at window)
Doggone it to heck and back!

HELEN
(to Russell)
Well, whatever you are, there's no
shame in it.

RUSSELL
I've told you a hundred times. I'm a
Claims Adjuster! And Lenny's not in
Pink Floyd! He's in Pink Lloyd! It's
a goddamn tribute band! It's fake!
They pretend they're Pink Floyd!

PAUL (O.C.)
Russell, don't yell at your mother!
She could still be very sick.

Helen takes Russell's hand.

HELEN
(sincerely)
Maybe if you saw someone about this
destructive jealousy of yours. I
know therapy hasn't helped your
sister, but that's no reason it
couldn't help you.

We STAY ON RUSSELL stifling himself, as WE HEAR PAUL GRUNTING
at the window, then,

PAUL (O.C.)
Ah-hah, here we go!

Now we HEAR THE WINDOW SLIDE OPEN: *Whoosh!*

Then HEAR:

PAUL (O.C.) (CONT'D)
Whah-whoop...

Russell and Helen look over now.

ANGLE ON: THE WINDOW

Where we see the opened window -- but Paul has disappeared.

EXT. FUNERAL - DAY

From a LONG SHOT, we see the gathering at the graveside, as
we HEAR THE PRIEST reading from *Book of the Dead*.

(CONTINUED)

PRIEST

...in company with Christ, who died
and now lives in peace...

RUSSELL (V.O.)

I'm still in shock, I guess. Numb
maybe.

CAMERA MOVES ALONG THE FACES OF THE MOURNERS -- Darlene and
family, the Nun, Lenny, Russell...

RUSSELL (CONT'D)

Suddenly I wish I'd known my dad
better. Certainly I loved him. I
even liked him. But I didn't know
him...

PRIEST

May they rejoice in Your Kingdom,
where all our tears are wiped away...

RUSSELL (V.O.)

...maybe I didn't know him because I
only saw him in the shadow of my
mother.

Finally, CAMERA COMES ACROSS Helen, regal/stately in her
grief, decked out in black and purple -- Mary Todd Lincoln.

RUSSELL (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Curiously, the funeral was just the
antidote my mother needed to rebound
from death's door. The doctors were,
of course, flabbergasted. The truth
is, "Martyred Widow" was a role she
was born to play.

As the Priest puts the book down, and clears his throat,
Lenny turns and digs his guitar out of its case.

PRIEST

And... now, uh... Paul's loving
son Lloyd...

LENNY

Lenny.

PRIEST

What?

LENNY

Lenny. My name's Lenny. Not Lloyd.

PRIEST

Lenny... has written a song.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

PRIEST (CONT'D)
A loving tribute to his father...
that he'd like to sing now...

LENNY
(latching the strap)
Thanks, man.
(to mourners)
S'cool you're here, man. 'Cause a
my dad, ya know. Paul Nirth. This
is for you, Dad...

HE PLAYS A FEW CHORDS, as we see people sweating in the
afternoon sun, barely hanging on.

LENNY (CONT'D)
(sings)
*What courage it took. What mattered
the cost?/When Dad battled that window
and lost.*

The CAMERA PANS across a few baffled faces.

LENNY (CONT'D)
(sings)
*With a final heave-ho,
He took to the air
And flew to the sidewalk below
Like a giant ripe pear.*

Now many faces look fairly astonished.

LENNY (CONT'D)
(sings)
*So you're dead weight now,
And they've shoved you in a box.
They'll drop you in a hole, Dad,
And leave you like some rotting lox.*

Helen listens blithely oblivious, somehow extending a
wide margin of artistic latitude here.

LENNY (CONT'D)
(sings)
*Goddamn, goddamn that window, man!
Goddamn, that thing was stuck!
Stupid window ate my dad,
And now I miss him like fuck!*

A beat. Some HESITANT/AWKWARD APPLAUSE, while the Priest
looks like he might actually be on the verge of a stroke.

EXT. GRAVEYARD PARKING LOT - MOMENTS LATER

As CARS PULL OUT of the adjacent parking lot, MOURNERS
APPROACH THEIR CARS.

(CONTINUED)

Russell accepts a hug from a mourner. The mourner moves off, Darlene approaches.

DARLENE

You'd think by now Lenny woulda choked
on his vomit and died?

But Russell is distracted by something -- he sees a BOAT-LIKE '99 CADILLAC parked askew across two parking spaces.

RUSSELL

(watching it)
Darlene? How did Mom get here?

We now SEE HELEN opening the car door, getting in and virtually disappearing behind the wheel. Russell's eyes widen when he hears the ENGINE FIRE UP.

RUSSELL (CONT'D)

Shit.
(yells)
Mom!
(starts running)
Mom!

He gets to the car and bangs on the window. The window rolls down and Helen's little face looks up at him.

RUSSELL (CONT'D)

Mom, what are you doing?

HELEN

I'm going home.

RUSSELL

But this is dad's car. You can't
drive this.

HELEN

Russell, he's dead. I don't think
he'll mind.

RUSSELL

No, I mean you can't drive it. You
don't even have a driver's license.

HELEN

(looks at him)
Where did you learn to be so hurtful?

RUSSELL

I'm sorry, but... Listen, why don't
you scoot over? I'll drive you home.

(CONTINUED)

HELEN

I just buried my blessed husband of 50 years, and this is how you treat me?

RUSSELL

But you can't even see the road.

HELEN

I drove here, didn't I?

RUSSELL

(looks at the haphazard parking job)

Well, yes... in a manner of speaking.

HELEN

And now you're determined to take away the only thing in life that matters to me now?

RUSSELL

(thinks about it)

Dad's car?

HELEN

(you moron)

My in-dependence.

RUSSELL

Oh. Okay, look, just let me get you something to sit on. Something to lift you up a little.

HELEN

(pointedly)

A booster seat?

RUSSELL

A box or something. Something so you can see the road.

HELEN

(exhales)

Fine. Get it.

Russell smiles apologetically and hurries off. Helen grips the top of the steering wheel and pulls herself up to see. Then, while she clutches the steering wheel with one hand, she reaches for the gear shift with the other, throws the car in gear and hits the gas pedal. THE CAR FLIES OUT OF FRAME... BUT BACKWARD -- hurtling at breakneck speed past SEVERAL DIVING AND SCRAMBLING MOURNERS, PLOWING INTO AND OVER A PARKED MOTORCYCLE, crumbling it, rolling it under its belly and then finally THE CAR SMACKS INTO one of Sacramento's MAJESTIC OAKS.

(CONTINUED)

For a brief moment, people are, of course, stunned -- Russell being not the least of them. Then, suddenly, FROM THE GRAVE SITE, WE HEAR A MAN SCREAM and see a Hispanic man RUNNING DOWN THE HILL, THROWING A SHOVEL ASIDE AS HE DOES. The man HURLS HIMSELF ONTO HIS MOTORCYCLE... now little more than a METAL DOOBIE.

JESUS

Esa es motocicleta! Tu chocastes mi motocicleta! Oh, Dios Mio! Tu chocastes mi motocicleta!

He tries in futility to piece the bike together like a delirious madman beside a fallen comrade.

JESUS (CONT'D)

Que boy hacer sin mi motocicleta?
Como boy atrabajar? Como boy darle de comer a mi familia? Estoy jodido!

Everyone watches him, including Helen who has pulled herself up to see. After a moment, he stands and yells at Helen -- who quickly locks the car door.

JESUS (CONT'D)

Tu! Tu hicistes esto!

WOMAN STANDING NEARBY

(to her husband)
What did he say?

MAN STANDING NEARBY

I don't know.
(to Jesus)
What did you say?

JESUS

(to man)
Que?

MAN STANDING NEARBY

What?

JESUS

Yo, no hablo Ingles! Pero esa mujer choco mi motocicleta!

MAN STANDING NEARBY

(quietly to wife)
He's an illegal.

Helen's eyes widen at Jesus's points at her. She then opts for the only alternative to being raped and killed by an angry and dirty illegal Mexican -- SHE PUTS THE CAR IN DRIVE AND FLOORS IT, ZIPPING PAST THE HISPANIC MAN AND OVER HIS FOOT.

(CONTINUED)

Jesus grabs his crushed foot and falls over, and as various mourners again scramble and dive out of the way, Russell chases after his mother.

EXT. NIRTH HOUSE - LATER

This is the house where Russell, Darlene and Lenny grew up. It's small, a lawn, a large living room window looks out.

INT. NIRTH LIVING ROOM - SAME TIME

A knock-off painting of horses running in a meadow, a knock-off Hummel on the side table next to a floral couch. There are doilies, framed pictures, knickknacks -- it's, well, the living room of an elderly couple.

A modest spread of food is on the dining room table, where THREE OR FOUR MOURNERS MILL ABOUT (including some MEN PAUL'S AGE). Darlene's husband and kids are there somewhere. Lenny, on the couch, has the Nun cornered.

LENNY

No, seriously, I love the way you guys help those little hairlip kids.

Russell enters. Lenny sees him.

LENNY (CONT'D)

(to Nun)

Gotta talk to my brother.

Lenny struggles to get up with his drink. The Nun finally gives him a shove to help him stand.

LENNY (CONT'D)

Russell, ya got a minute?

RUSSELL

Oh God no.

LENNY

Need to talk to you 'bout some stuff...

Russell stops impatiently.

LENNY (CONT'D)

(confidentially)

What'd ya think this house is worth? Ballpark.

Russell just stares at him.

LENNY (CONT'D)

I'm guessin' around 500-k. Now, lemme ask you this...

(CONTINUED)

RUSSELL

No.

LENNY

'Cause this is where all your law school crap is gonna come in handy.

RUSSELL

Didn't go to law school.

LENNY

There's a legal thing, y'know, that you can do legally, so as to have a person of obvious mental incontinence locked up in a nut house.

RUSSELL

A nut house?

LENNY

Yeah, okay, Mr. PC -- an "insane asylum." The point is, what judge is gonna look at her an' say, "Whoah yeah, she's not fuckin' crackers"?
(off Russell's look)
State pays for everything.

Darlene has entered from the bathroom with tissues.

DARLENE

(wiping tears)

Oh God, Russell. What happened? What happened here?

RUSSELL

I don't know, Darlene. He slipped is all. Although, some of his friends think he may have jumped.

DARLENE

No, no. How did this happen? You said she was dying.

RUSSELL

She said she was dying.

LENNY

Darlene, there's still half a bottle of gin over there. Better hurry.

DARLENE

Fuck off, Lenny.

LENNY

Him and me were talking here.

(CONTINUED)

DARLENE
 (ignores Lenny, takes
 out pills)
 So, Russell, how long is this shit
 gonna go on?

RUSSELL
 Go on? You mean, when is she gonna
 die?

DARLENE
 I'm askin'.

She gobbles the pills.

LENNY
 (to Russell)
 Okay, another thought, and don't say
 no right away--

RUSSELL
 No.

LENNY
 What if there was an accident of
 some sort?

Russell looks off, shakes his head.

LENNY (CONT'D)
 Not talkin' 'bout nothin' elaborate.
 A brake fluid situation, for instance.
 She can barely drive as it is.

DARLENE
 You're an idiot, Lenny.

RUSSELL
 Wait a minute. Mom. Where is she?

DARLENE
 Ask Lenny. He was supposed to go
 down and post bail.

RUSSELL
 Darlene, you were supposed to do it.

LENNY
 How'm I supposed to post bail,
 Darlene? I don't even have a credit
 card.

(then)
 Next time, think.

RUSSELL
 Shit!

(CONTINUED)

As Russell scrambles for the door,

INT. POLICE ADMITTING DESK - CONTINUOUS

This is a BULLETPROOF GLASS ENCLOSED AREA just down from the holding cells. One side faces the lobby where civilians can enter and post bail, the other side is a security door where A COP HAS BEEN BUZZED IN. The Cop crosses to TWO OTHER COPS.

COP #1
Eighty-one-twenty, Nirth... I thought
someone was coming in to post?

COP #2
(checks an overhead
greaseboard)
Nope. Nothin' yet.

COP #1
Well, here...

Cop #1 pulls a DIRTY SOCK out of his pocket, and dumps its contents on a table -- CRUMPLED DOLLAR BILLS AND CHANGE.

COP #2
What's this?

COP #1
The other inmates took up a collection
for bail.

EXT. POLICE STATION - LATER

Russell is walking his mother out to the car. She is silently fuming.

RUSSELL (V.O.)
They say that a mother is the glue
that binds a family.

He opens the door for her. She slides in, silently. He closes the door, walks around.

RUSSELL (V.O.) (CONT'D)
My mother is more than glue, she's
an ancient tar pit. Her children,
the hapless egrets and wildebeests
struggling in futility to escape,
certain only of a slow suffocating
death.

He gets in the car, smiles apologetically his mother. Chilly.

(CONTINUED)

RUSSELL (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 My brother, my sister, yeah, they're
 messed up. So how did I turn out so
 unscathed?

INT. RUSSELL'S BEDROOM - EVENING

Dark. Russell is propped up against the headboard, torso exposed... thinking out loud, a trail of cigarette smoke wafts up beside him.

RUSSELL (V.O.)
 Okay, I might have a few issues.

He brings the cigarette up, takes a drag. Now we see a woman next to him -- the Nun. She stares straight ahead. They talk, but not to each other.

NUN
 My God, what've I done?

RUSSELL
 Here's the thing -- this family,
 they keep fucking up their lives.
 Over and over and over.

NUN
 Please don't swear.

RUSSELL
 My dad... the one decent human being
 in the whole goddamn bunch. He was
 always there to fix things...
 (takes a drag)
 But not anymore... Not anymore.

NUN
 I'm a whore.

RUSSELL
 Guess who's gonna fix things now?

NUN
 My life is ruined.

RUSSELL
 (considers this)
 You and me both, Sister. You and me
 both.

They both stare ahead, contemplating their lives. The Nun elbows him, nods at the cigarette. As he hands it to her...

FADE OUT.

THE END

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