

"THE COLOR OF AGONY"

FADE IN:

EXT. CIRCUS GROUNDS - NIGHT (1965)

Tents, trucks and trailers are spread out across a large, open field.

INT. BIG TOP CENTER RING - NIGHT

Opening parade of animals, JUGGLERS, ACROBATS, AERIALISTS, and CLOWNS.

INT. JAMES' TRAILER - AT THE SAME TIME

A compact, single-room plus bath Airstream. Framed paintings of circus scenes hang on the walls. JAMES BOSWELL (46), haggard, with the heavily lined face and sunken eyes of a much older man, is dressed as a clown. He leans over the vanity table, strewn with clown make-up, studies his made-up image in the mirror.

James coughs up blood, grabs his chest. Doubled over in pain, he clutches feeble at the edge of the table and collapses to the floor.

INT. JAMES' TRAILER - LATER

James lies on the floor, unmoving. Someone bangs the door.

WOMAN'S VOICE (O.S.)
C'mon, James. What's taking
you so long? You're up next

Banging on door increases in tempo and strength.

WOMAN'S VOICE (O.S.)
(a bit panicky)
James? James!

The s opens. GINA BROWN (47) a gypsy with long, untamed hair and wild, untamed eyes, wears a floor-length, low-cut red dress too young for her years, but not her eye-popping figure, and a jewelry-store's worth of gold.

Gina looks in, rushes to James. She kneels down and feels for a pulse, gets up and yells out the door.

GINA
Help! Somebody help!

EXT. CIRCUS GROUNDS - MOMENTS LATER

MARTIN BOSWELL (20), is slender and nice-looking, wears a juggler's costume. He and several CIRCUS ATTENDANTS and PERFORMERS rush to James' trailer.

INT. JAMES' TRAILER - MOMENTS LATER

Martin and the rest burst in.

CIRCUS PERFORMER
Oh, my God!

MARTIN
Dad!

Martin kneels at James' side, tries to rouse him.

GINA
Is he breathing?

Gina shakes Martin's shoulder.

GINA
Check his breathing,
Martin! Do you know how to
do CPR?

She looks around.

GINA
Does anyone?

EXT. CIRCUS GROUNDS - LATER

An ambulance speeds past cages and tents, siren blaring. It stops outside one of the trailers.

INT. JAMES' TRAILER - MOMENTS LATER

Two PARAMEDICS rush to James, who lies unmoving where he fell. Martin motions to the others to stand back.

EXT. CIRCUS GROUNDS - MOMENTS LATER

James is on the gurney, with an oxygen mask over his face. He is loaded into the ambulance, as the circus folk look on, shocked and saddened by his collapse.

Martin, in distress, insists on going along. He gets in and they leave, with siren blaring.

INT. ER CUBICLE - DAY

James lies unconscious, hooked up to oxygen and monitoring devices, with IV lines in both arms.

DR. SPENCER (40s) comes in, scans his chart, checks vital signs and the monitor read-outs. He shakes his head, gives James a "Sorry, son!" look and goes out.

INT. ER WAITING ROOM - LATER

Sick and injured PEOPLE sit in rows of plastic chairs. A TV mounted near the ceiling shows the news with no sound. No one watches.

Martin sits at the end of a row. He stares intently at the floor, twists a tissue in his hands, is unaware that bits of it fall on the floor.

The door to the treatment rooms opens, Dr. Spencer walks out and approaches Martin, who bolts out of the chair and hurries to him.

MARTIN

My father...will he be
okay?

DR. SPENCER

It's too soon to tell for
sure. We'll have to do some
tests. But he's stabilized
for now.

MARTIN

What's wrong with him? He
didn't tell me he was
sick...

DR. SPENCER

He's clearly been ill for
some time. He probably
didn't want you to worry.
Come with me. I'll tell you
what we know so far.

Martin follows him down the hall.

INT. DR. SPENCER'S OFFICE - LATER

Dr. Spencer stands in front of an X-ray display. Martin sits in a chair by the desk,

turned away from the X-rays, which show heavily-shadowed lungs.

DR. SPENCER

I'm sorry, Martin. You can ignore the X-rays, but you can't ignore what's going on in his body. Not after this collapse.

Dr. Spencer turns off the display light, sits down at his desk.

MARTIN

I don't understand...maybe I don't want to.

DR. SPENCER

His lungs are riddled with cancer. And it most likely has spread to other parts of his body, from what I see there.

MARTIN

It's so hard to believe. He didn't act sick. D'you know he's a circus clown? We're going on tour next week. He...

Martin voice breaks.

DR. SPENCER

I know it's hard to accept. I'm terribly sorry, but your father won't be able to-

MARTIN

Do something, please! You can't just let him die.

DR. SPENCER

We'll do what we can to make him comfortable, but you've seen for yourself how far advanced the cancer is, even if it's only in the lungs...which isn't very likely.

MARTIN
He can't die! What will I
do without him?

INT. HOSPITAL BATHROOM - LATER

Martin retches over a sink.

EXT. HOSPITAL - LATER

PEOPLE come in and out of the main entrance. A dejected Martin hurries to a nearby phone booth.

A WOMAN inside the phone booth makes a call. Martin taps his foot, waits impatiently. The woman comes out, glares at him.

INT. PHONE BOOTH - CONTINUOUS

Martin pushes past her and goes in, rummages in his pocket for change and dials a number.

MARTIN
Mr. Aldridge?

MR ALDRIDGE (V.O.)
'Course it's me! Who else
answers my phone? How's
your old man?

MARTIN
He's dying, that's how he
is! The doctor just said he
doesn't think there's
anything can be done. It's
cancer. Why didn't you know
he was so sick?

MR ALDRIDGE (V.O.)
Sorry, kid...you know how
he was. Never told anyone
anythin'. Cancer, huh?
That's a bummer, for sure.
Here's Gina, she wants to
talk t'you.

GINA (V.O.)
I heard, sweetheart. I'm so
sorry. But you can't give
up hope.

MARTIN
There's no hope left, damn
it! Get here as soon as you

can, please? I need you.
Can't handle this...

Martin hangs up the phone, leans against the wall of the booth. He wipes tears away with a sleeve, breaks into quiet sobs.

EXT. HOSPITAL MAIN ENTRANCE - THE NEXT DAY

Vehicles come and go and PEOPLE go in and out.

INT. JAMES' HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

James is asleep. Martin sits at his beside, watches his struggle to breathe, afraid each breath will be his last.

INT. HOSPITAL HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER

Martin bursts out of James' room, not watching where he's going, crashes into JANE PARKER (25-ish), a trim, angelic-looking nurse. Her armful of charts spills onto the floor

MARTIN
I'm so sorry! Let me help
you.
(starts to pick them up)
I'm not always such a
menace to foot
traffic...really.

They take a good look at each other while picking up the charts. Jane returns Martin's timid smile with a big one of her own. A mutual "click" has clearly occurred.

JANE
It's okay, nothing's lost
or broken.

Jane points to James' room.

JANE
Are you related to Mr.
Boswell?

MARTIN
He's my father. I couldn't
stand to see him like that.

JANE
I understand. I'm the
charge nurse on this floor,
so I'll be taking care of
him.

(pats Martin on the shoulder)
I promise I'll do everything possible to keep him comfortable. I'm Jane, by the way. Jane Parker.

Jane shakes Martin's hand. He drops hers reluctantly.

MARTIN
I'm...I'm Martin.
Martin's face and posture show every bit of the pain and sorrow he's feeling.

JANE
Try not to worry, Martin.
Sometimes patients surprise us...get better despite what we expect.

MARTIN
The doctor says there's no hope whatsoever.

JANE
Then, you'll have to be strong for him, won't you?

MARTIN
It's not easy.

JANE
I know. Look, I'll keep a special eye on him for you, okay? And if you need anything, just ask for me.

Martin can't believe this total stranger is being so kind. He takes her free hand in both of his.

MARTIN
Thank you...I can't tell you how much that helps.

INT. JAMES' HOSPITAL ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Jane walks in, sees James struggle to breathe. She checks the respirator, adjusts it to ease his distress, then takes one old hand in her young one and pats it gently.

INT. HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER

Martin leans against the wall, visibly depressed. Jane comes out of the room.

JANE

Why don't you go get some coffee, or something to eat, down in the cafeteria? What your dad needs most now is rest. You can't do him any good moping around out here.

MARTIN

I know, but-

JANE

No "buts"! I'll go check with Dr. Spencer and look for you down there, if I have anything new to tell you, okay?

MARTIN

(brightening up a bit)
Don't know why you're being so kind, when I almost killed you!

JANE

(semi-flirtatiously)
Well, I don't get run into by such attractive tanks all that often.

MARTIN

Thanks for the ego boost and the TLC. I'll be a good boy and do what the doc...nurse says.

Jane smiles at him, he grins back, not so shy now.

JANE

It's my job. Go on, now.

INT. HOSPITAL CAFETERIA - 1 HOUR LATER

The room is crowded with VISITORS, DOCTORS, NURSES, assorted other STAFF. Martin sits alone at a somewhat secluded corner

table. Jane walks in, looks around and spots him. He waves her over and she sits down across from him.

JANE
Feeling better?

MARTIN
Not really. I'll never get over it.

JANE
I've seen some in worse shape come back. And if your dad doesn't, at least he's not in pain. What the doctor ordered for him will keep him from feeling any discomfort.

MARTIN
Really?

JANE
Sometimes the dying process itself saves patients from being aware of what's happening to them.

MARTIN
I don't want to think about that!

Martin puts his hands over his eyes. Jane pulls one down and places it on the table, covers it with her own.

JANE
Be grateful for the years you had together. Lots of people never even have a father in their lives.
(pain crosses her face)
Mine died six years ago. It was hard, but I got over it...so will you.

MARTIN
I'm so sorry to hear that, but I can't help it. He's kind and good...and doesn't deserve this.

JANE

Don't let him see how upset
you are. The most caring
thing you can do for him
now is to just let him go
knowing you love him.

That shocks Martin a bit, but he forces a smile. Jane takes her hand back and Martin looks like he wishes she didn't.

MARTIN

One thing I can be thankful
for is having someone like
you taking care of him...
(manages a shy grin)
...and me.

JANE

(returning the grin)
I'm happy to do it. Have
you and your father always
been close?

MARTIN

I'm a juggler and Dad's a
clown, so we've been close
all our lives, working and
travelling together with
the circus.

JANE

Really? I never met any
circus people before. Your
dad must be proud. And
happy you've followed in
his footsteps...sort of.

MARTIN

(tearing up)
He is, I guess. But I
thought he had lots more
years to go. I didn't even
finish his portrait yet.

JANE

No way! You're an artist,
too?

MARTIN

(embarrassed)
It's just a hobby...and
painting banners for the

circus now and then helps,
when money's short.

JANE
(fascinated)
Have you always been
artistic?

MARTIN
Ever since I was little. I
always loved painting and
juggling. My dad taught me
all I know.

JANE
Did your dad mind that you
didn't want to be a clown,
too?
(hand flies to her mouth)
Oh, I shouldn't be so nosy!
Please don't think I'm
always this rude. I'm not,
really...it's just--

MARTIN
I don't mind...not at all!
No, he always said he was
glad I can work in my own
face. What about you? Did
you always want to be a
nurse? How long have you
worked here?

JANE
I'm pretty new here,
actually. A friend who
works here talked me into
applying...said it was one
of the best hospitals to
work in.

MARTIN
It must be hard to be a
nurse.

JANE
Not easy, but it has its
rewarding moments.
'Specially when a patient
who was terminal surprises
us and pulls through.

Martin's growing interest in Jane turns to sorrow. Jane sees his face fall and reaches across the table to pat his arm.

JANE

(chagrined)

I'm sorry! Look, whatever happens, your dad is in good hands. We'll all do everything we can for him.

MARTIN

Thanks. I don't have many friends to talk to and they're all working, anyway. The old "show must go on" stuff, right? Don't know what I'd have done if I hadn't bumped into you.

INT. HALLWAY - LATER

Martin approaches James's room, stops when he sees a GIRL and a DOCTOR by the door.

DOCTOR

(apologetically)

We did all we could.

GIRL

Not my mom...please!

DOCTOR

I'm sorry.

The doctor pats her on the shoulder and walks off. The girl leans against the wall, sobs uncontrollably. Martin wants to approach and comfort her, but is too shy and backs away.

INT. JAMES' HOSPITAL ROOM - LATER

James wakes up. Jane comes in, sees an untouched breakfast tray on his over-bed tray. James tries to get up.

JANE

Stay where you are, Mr. Boswell, you're not ready to be up and about yet, y'know. And you have to eat, if you want to get better.

Jane tries to feed him a spoonful of mush-like cereal. He resists, the cereal dribbles down his chin and Jane scrapes it off with the spoon.

JANE

C'mon, Mr. B.! If you won't eat, we have to feed you with a tube and that will be no fun for either of us, believe me. Your son wants you better, so be good and eat, okay?

JAMES

(weakly)

Martin?

JANE

I'm sure he'll be here soon.

JAMES

Martin!

Jane puts down the spoon and takes James' hand.

JANE

Don't worry. He's coming.

INT. HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER

Dr. Spencer and Martin walk to James' room.

MARTIN

Is there really nothing you can do?

DR. SPENCER

I wish I could say there was.

MARTIN

There must be something!
What about ...

DR. SPENCER

I'm sorry, Martin. I've explained why nothing will work at this late stage. All we can do is keep him comfortable.

They stop outside James' room. Dr. Spencer's hand is on the doorknob. He rests his other hand on Martin's shoulder.

DR. SPENCER

We're doing all we can for him. The staff here are all very competent and caring. And you can spend as much time with him as you want.

INT. JAMES' HOSPITAL ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Jane puts down the now empty cereal bowl, looks toward the door when Martin and Dr. Spencer walk in.

JANE

(to James)

There he is! I told you he was coming, didn't I?

MARTIN

(tries to sound cheerful)
Hi, Dad! Hey, Dr. Spencer says I can visit every day...for as long as you can stand me.

James tries to smile. Dr. Spencer looks him over and checks all of the equipment read-outs.

MARTIN

Are you feeling better?

James attempts a shrug, doesn't quite make it. Dr. Spencer holds the door open for the nurse.

DR. SPENCER

Come along, Miss Parker.

(to Martin; points to call button)

There's the call button, Mr. Boswell. A nurse is only seconds away, if you need anything.

Martin nods and aims a discreet little goodbye wave at Jane. Jane and Dr. Spencer leave. Martin looks his father over carefully, picks up one hand and holds it in both of his.

MARTIN

Why didn't you take care of yourself, man? You know I need you!

Martin sits down in a chair by the bedside, still holding onto the limp hand.

MARTIN

I don't want to lose you,
too, Dad. C'mon, you've
always been so strong
...don't you dare give up
now.

JAMES

(haltingly, with great
effort)
Sorr-y, boy. D-don't want
to be a bur-burden.

MARTIN

I hate seeing you like
this.

James gasps, tries to say something
important.

JAMES

(whispers weakly)
Jour-nal.

MARTIN

What? Journal?
(sees James nod)
What journal, Dad? Where is
it?

JAMES

Bed.

MARTIN

This bed? I don't
understand. What do you
want me to do?

James shakes his head feebly, grips Martin's
hand hard.

MARTIN

You mean your bed in the
trailer?

(another nod)

Do you want me to read
it...is that it?

James nods more strongly this time, manages a full smile.

INT. JAMES' TRAILER - NIGHT

Everything is trim, neatly arranged. Martin searches around
the bed and finds a metal box under it. He sits on the bed,

looks in the box. In it is a photo album. He opens it, sees many shots of a stunning woman trapeze artist and what seem to be family photos.

Under the album is an old film canister. He sets the album and the film aside, rummages through the rest of the box's contents. At the very bottom is a copybook with "Memoirs of a Clown" handwritten on the cover.

Martin flips through the pages, then goes back and reads the first page.

JAMES (V.O.)
Son, if you are reading
this, I want you to know
the truth about me...my
darkest secrets.

Martin is shocked.

JAMES (V.O.)
With my health failing, as
death nears, I want to put
it all down here, to let
you know what I kept from
you all these years. Things
I couldn't tell you, for
fear you would not be able
to forgive me. Sitting
here, writing and looking
at your wonderful
paintings, I can see my
whole life, how obsessed I
was with the circus every
single day since...

Martin stares at a painting of the circus grounds and it comes to life.

VISION

A perfect sunny day. Cotton candy, balloons and souvenirs are bought from VENDORS, by CIRCUSGOERS of all ages.

SERIES OF SHOTS

- A) ACROBATS toss each other around.
- B) TRAPEZE ARTISTS fly back and forth over a net.
- C) LION TAMER makes a lion jump through a flaming hoop.
- D) KNIFE-THROWING act thrills the crowd.
- E) CLOWNS go through their acts to peals of laughter from the audience.

JAMES (V.O.)
It was an obsession I'd
never outgrow.

BACK TO SCENE

A knock on the door startles Martin.

MARTIN
What do you want? Who is it?

GINA (O.S.)
It's me, Gina. Can I come in?

MARTIN
Yeah, sure.

Gina comes in and sees Martin was reading.

GINA
Sorry, didn't mean to
disturb you.

MARTIN
It's okay.

GINA
You look tired...what are
you doing up so late? You
should be resting?

MARTIN
I'm not sick, for God's
sake. I was just reading
this...

Martin hands the book to Gina and she leafs
through it.

GINA
(upset)
I didn't know he kept a
diary.

Martin notices her worried look.

MARTIN
So what if he did. What's
wrong?

GINA
(too quickly)
Nothing.

MARTIN

He wants me to read it.
Says I need to know his
secrets. Do you know what
he meant?

GINA

(evasive)

How would I know? Go to
bed. Can't do him any good
if you get sick.

MARTIN

I can't sleep.

GINA

Don't be stupid. Just look
at yourself and you'll see
what I mean.

MARTIN

I guess you're right. I
can't concentrate...
(rubs his forehead)
...and my head hurts.

GINA

It's no wonder, spending
all day in the hospital and
not getting a wink of
sleep!

MARTIN

I know.

Martin puts the journal on the beside stand. Gina stares at it uneasily.

INT. MR. ALDRIDGE'S TRAILER - LATER

MR. ALDRIDGE (60s), stern-looking, sits at his desk, smokes a fat cigar. He hears a knock on the door.

ALDRIDGE

Who is it?

GINA (O.S.)

It's me, Gina.

He grins, straightens his tie, slicks back his hair.

ALDRIDGE
Come on in, doll!

Gina comes in and flops down in a chair next to the desk.

GINA
I'm not disturbing you, am
I?

ALDRIDGE
You always do.

Aldridge grabs Gina's chin then slides his hand down into her cleavage. Gina pulls away.

GINA
Bad timing, you old goat.
In case you've forgotten...

ALDRIDGE
Yeah, you're right. Poor
James and...Martin.

GINA
Yeah, Martin. That's why
I'm here.

ALDRIDGE
He doin' okay? We need him
on his toes, y'know.

GINA
Just give him some
time...he's not up to
juggling right now. Too
worried about his father.

ALDRIDGE
Better not be for long, or
he'll be jugglin' in
somebody else's circus.

GINA
C'mon, Aldridge. You can't
be that heartless. Besides,
he's the best in the
business.

ALDRIDGE
Well, he is, but-

GINA

No buts! You'll do it for
me, won't you?

ALDRIDGE

What the hell? You do know
how to push my buttons,
baby.

GINA

Enough of that! I just came
to tell you about James'
journal. Martin's reading
it.

MR ALDRIDGE

What journal?

GINA

The one he told Martin he
wrote all his secrets in.

MR. ALDRIDGE

Secrets! You mean
about...the stuff about-

GINA

Don't say it out loud! I
get the shakes just
thinking about it.
(shudders)
It might be in there. Have
to keep Martin from reading
it, if it is.

ALDRIDGE

How're you gonna do that?

GINA

Gotta get rid of it. He
can't read it! James can't
do this to us.

INT. JAMES' ROOM - DAY

Gina and Martin sit at James' beside. Martin
holds the journal and Gina holds James' hand.

GINA

We miss you, sweetie! All
of us.

JAMES
(weakly)
Really?

GINA
Sure. Everybody's pulling
for you.

James tries to smile, doesn't quite make it.

MARTIN
They all want to visit you,
Pop.

James sees the journal in Martin's hand and closes his eyes.

MARTIN
I never knew you were
writing this.

James starts to speak, is wracked by a painful cough.

MARTIN
Are you okay? Should I call
the doctor...or Jane?

Gina raises an eyebrow at the mention of
Jane.

JAMES
(with difficulty)
No. It just comes and goes.

GINA
Are you sure?

James nods and waves a hand at the book, looks agitated.

MARTIN
The journal? Sorry, I
haven't read it yet, but I
promise I will.

JAMES
Please--

GINA
(interrupting)
James, he's got a lot on
his mind. Let it rest.

MARTIN

It's okay, Gina. I'll read it. No problem.

GINA

(to Martin)

Mind if I have a word with your dad...alone. Please?

Martin nods, presses his father's hand.

MARTIN

I'll be back, Dad. Just going for coffee.

Martin leaves. Gina makes sure the door is closed tight.

GINA

James, what'd you write in that damn book?

JAMES

The truth, only the truth.

GINA

Don't you think Martin's suffered enough? Why cause him more pain?

JAMES

I want to die...in peace.

GINA

What will he think of me, huh? Do I deserve this? Does Martin?

INT. HOSPITAL CORRIDOR - AT THE SAME TIME

Jane comes down the hall, stops with her hand on the doorknob when she hears Gina's voice coming from inside. She leans close to the door and listens.

INT. JAMES' ROOM

Gina waits impatiently for James to reply to her questions. He looks troubled.

JAMES

It's time he knew the truth.

GINA

We agreed we'd never tell
him, James! Why now?

JAMES

Secrets have a price.

GINA

A price you want to pay,
not me.

JAMES

Doesn't matter any more.

GINA

(glaring)

It does to me! Maybe you
don't give a damn about
your son, but I do!

Gina starts as the door thuds behind her, turns and sees Jane walk in. Jane notices James is upset.

JANE

Is something wrong?

GINA

No, nothing's wrong.
Nothing.

JANE

Well, Mr. Boswell can't be upset. He needs quiet.
You'd better go.

GINA

I was just leaving, anyway.
(to James)
Good bye, James. You're all Martin has, so do what's best for him. You will, won't you?.

James makes a feeble attempt to nod.

GINA

Better get going, can't miss my performance. Bye, James. I'll come back when you're feeling better.

Gina leaves. Janes checks James and the equipment, makes him more comfortable.

JANE

You can't be arguing...with anyone. It's not good for you. Didn't mean to overhear, but I couldn't let it go on.
 (pats James' hand)
 Whatever you've done, I hope you won't let it hurt your son.

James falls asleep.

INT. JAMES' HOSPITAL ROOM - LATER

James is asleep, Martin comes in with the journal in his hand and gives his father a pitying look. He settles in a chair by the window and opens the book.

EXT. BOSWELL HOUSE - DAY - FLASHBACK (1936)

Mid-sized and nondescript, situated in a middle-class neighborhood with limited green areas

JAMES (V.O.)

It all started in my teen years. The memories are bittersweet. My own father is not someone I can remember fondly.

INT. DINING ROOM - DAY

The room is small, cheaply furnished. JAMES BOSWELL (17) sits at a table set for breakfast. At the head of the table is stern-looking THOMAS BOSWELL (48). FELICIA BOSWELL (46), lovely and a bit detached, sits across from him.

THOMAS

Where have you been? You're almost never home anymore.

James shrugs.

THOMAS

It's the damn circus, isn't it?
 James can't meet his father's eyes.

THOMAS

Isn't it? Answer me, boy!

JAMES

Yeah, the circus. I like it there.

FELICIA

(worried)

More than your own home?

Why?

JAMES

Circus folk are hardworking and I've made some friends there. I admire them... especially the clowns, they make people laugh even when they're sad.

THOMAS

Ridiculous. Can't you hear how childish you sound?

JAMES

Why? What's wrong with liking the circus? Grown-ups go there, too, don't they?

THOMAS

You've been wasting my Hard-earned money on that crap?

FELICIA

Thomas, please!

JAMES

Not yours, Papa. Money I saved up. And why do you call it "crap"? It's not.

THOMAS

It is, if I say it is!

JAMES

(defiantly)

For your information, I decided to join the circus. I'm going to become a clown.

THOMAS

Don't be stupid!

FELICIA

Honey, why must you upset
your father? Tell him
you're only
joking...please.

JAMES

I'm not.

THOMAS

So, you're serious. Well, I
didn't raise you to be a
bloody clown, so I forbid
it.

JAMES

It's just like any other
job. What's wrong with it?
Thomas glares at him and
throws down his napkin,
gets up from the table and
shakes his fist at the boy.

THOMAS

What's wrong with it?
Everything! I'm ashamed to
call you my son.

FELICIA

Don't say that, Thomas! You
don't mean it...I know you
don't.

JAMES

You'd be ashamed of me, no
matter what I wanted to be.
Wouldn't you?

THOMAS

What a loser. How can you
have my
blood in your veins!

FELICIA

Why must you two always
fight? Just listen to him,
Thomas... ask him why he
wants to do this...

THOMAS

Listen? He'll listen to
me... and listen good!

Thomas walks around the table to where his son sits and jabs a finger in his chest, hard enough to hurt. James winces, but he sits still and meets his father's glance without blanking.

THOMAS

I'll see you dead, boy,
before seeing you make a
fool of me like that.

James is shocked. He gets up, pushes Thomas out of his way and runs down the hall to his bedroom, slams the door behind him.

FELICIA

How can you say such a
thing to your own son?

Thomas ignores her, stares at the now empty hall. His face is red, he's breathing hard, seems on the verge of a heart attack.

THOMAS

(shouting - out of control)
Who do you think you are,
leaving the table without
my permission? Come back
here, you little bastard!
I'll tell you what you can
be... and it's no going to be
any stupid bloody clown!

INT. JAMES' BEDROOM - MOMENTS LATER

The room is small, sparsely and inexpensively furnished. James lies sprawled on a narrow bed, face buried in the pillow. Pounding on the door startles him.

THOMAS (O.S.)

(shouting)

No one leaves me talking to
myself. Open the goddamn
door!

JAMES

Leave me alone!

Thomas bursts into the room. James is frightened.

THOMAS

Who do you think you are?

He sweeps everything off the bedside table. He pulls James off the bed, slaps his face, backs him up to the closet door.

THOMAS

You're asking for it!
He takes his belt off,
bends the boy over the bed.

JAMES

(crying)

Papa, please don't!

INT. DINING ROOM - AT THE SAME TIME

Felicia is slumped at the table, her head in her hands. She flinches at the sounds and cries coming from above, looks up at the ceiling. Terror and despair mask her pretty face.

JAMES (V.O.)

My mother never even tried
to stop him. She was as
afraid of him as I was. I
only pretended I wasn't.

END FLASHBACK

Martin sits staring at the words, shocked, then turns the page.

EXT. CIRCUS GROUNDS - DAY - FLASHBACK

James waits in a long queue at the ticket wagon. He stares at a sign on a nearby tent that says: "CLOWNS NEEDED."

JAMES (V.O.)

My dream of being a clown
became a desperate need. I
jumped at the chance to
apply for a job at the
circus. I'd do anything, as
long as I could be there.

James grins, leaves the queue and heads to the sign.

INT. MAIN TENT - DAY

Several CLOWNS sit a few rows up in the wooden bleacher-type seats. They all watch a HOBO CLOWN audition in the center ring. He finishes to a round of applause and is sent outside to await his judges' decision.

The HEAD CLOWN consults a clipboard.

HEAD CLOWN
(loudly)
James Boswell, you're next.

James comes in, pauses nervously in the center of the ring.
James blows up balloons, dances around and does pratfalls.

JAMES (V.O.)
I was finally able to do in
public what I'd secretly
been doing for years,
hidden away in my bedroom.

The Head Clown gives James an approving nod. The other Clowns
applaud.

HEAD CLOWN
Very good. Will Benett is
next.

On his way out, James passes a MIDGET CLOWN on his way in.

INT. JAMES' BEDROOM - DAYS LATER
James lies on the bed, bored. He looks at a wall calendar.

JAMES (V.O.)
Days passed and I hadn't
heard from them. I thought
I'd failed somehow, or
somebody else got the job.

INT. BOSWELL'S FRONT HALL - DAY

Mail falls through the door slot. James sees one envelope
bears the circus logo. His hands shake as he opens it and
takes out a single sheet of paper.

JAMES (V.O.)
But then, the unexpected
happened.

He scans the letter quickly and anxiety turns to glee. He
does a little jig and salutes himself in the hall mirror.

JAMES (V.O.)
Then it happened. It was
meant to happen. I got the
job! A job that would
become my life.

INT. JAMES' BEDROOM - NEXT DAY

James throws clothes into a suitcase.

JAMES (V.O.)

It gave me a place to live.
I had to share a trailer
with others, but I was
comfortable enough. The pay
wasn't much, either, but
was enough to live on and
allowed me to leave home.
Leave my father, really.
That was what I needed
most.

INT. BOSWELL FRONT DOOR - DAY

Thomas and Felicia stand by the door. Unavoidably close to each other in the small entry hall, they avoid touching. Felicia cries quietly and Thomas scowls.

James comes down the stairs, a duffel bag hanging from one shoulder and a suitcase in each hand. He pushes past his parents, to open the front door.

THOMAS

(to Felicia)
Don't you dare weep over
that poor excuse for a son
you gave birth to.

FELICIA

Stop it, Thomas. Please
stop. He's our son!

THOMAS

(sneering)
Ours? Yours, perhaps. He
can't be mine!

JAMES

Don't be so mean to her,
Dad. She doesn't deserve to
be treated like that.

THOMAS

Don't sass me, lad!

JAMES

Didn't you do what you
wanted to do with your
life? Well, now it's my
turn.

THOMAS

Of course I did what I wanted...it gave you both this home. You never lacked for anything. And I'm not the laughing stock you'll be.

JAMES

When you bring a child into the world, it shouldn't be just to make it a copy of yourself.

THOMAS

I didn't expect a son of mine would turn himself into such a thing of ridicule...a clown! I'd rather see you dead.

FELICIA

(horrified)

Thomas! How can you say such a thing?

Thomas steps close to James, pokes his chest.

THOMAS

Listen to me, boy...if you go off to be a pathetic clown, you can just forget you have a father or a home. You'll not be welcome here ever again.

JAMES

(pushes the finger away)
Won't matter. I'd only come back to see Mother, not you. In fact, you are one of the reasons I'm leaving.

THOMAS

You'll regret it, mark my words! Nothing good will ever come to you.

Thomas seems as shocked by his own words as James and his mother are. Thomas goes into the front room and closes the door firmly. James hugs his mother.

JAMES
Good bye, Mother.

FELICIA
I wish you the best,
son...wherever you go and
whatever you do.

JAMES
Thanks. Just don't let him
be so mean to you.

Felicia kisses him on the forehead.

FELICIA
I'm so sorry for all of
this. One day your father
will understand.

James walks out the front door and closes it firmly behind him.

EXT. BOSWELL HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

James walks towards a waiting taxi. The DRIVER helps him put the suitcase in. Felicia stares at him from a window, as the taxi drives away.

INT. TAXI - LATER

James looks sad, as the radio plays light music.

JAMES (V.O.)
I doubt my father ever
understood. I don't want to
think he despised
me...perhaps he always
thought I wasn't his son,
that I was another
man's...but I want to
believe he did love me,
deep down inside.

INT. CENTER RING - DAYS LATER

James and ALDRIDGE (40s) walk toward a group of circus people, who watch them approach with interest. They are WILSON DANIELS (60), whose pale, badly scarred face is partly hidden under a safari hat's broad, turned-down brim; ALBERT SMITH (35), short, dark, buff-bodied and ugly; BESNA SMITH (20), tall, sultry, with a centerfold body; FAITH (23) sweet and lovely, but mature for her age, in a leotard; and a sultry and attractive GINA (20).

Aldridge claps Wilson on the shoulder.

ALDRIDGE
 Meet our lion-tamer, Wilson
 Daniels. Best cat-handler
 in the business.

James and Wilson shake hands.

JAMES
 How's it going?

WILSON
 Not bad...how 'bout you?
 Joinin' our merry troupe,
 are ya? Watch out for our
 boss, there...
 (winks broadly)
 ...he's tough on raw
 recruits!
 Aldridge feigns a mean
 look.

ALDRIDGE
 (winks at Albert)
 And this is the world's
 best knife-man, if you
 believe his PR. Albert
 Smith.

JAMES
 (pretends to shy away)
 Guess I'd better stay on
 your good side then, huh?

ALDRIDGE
 (caresses Besna's cheek)
 Besna...Albert's
 assistant...
 James takes her hand, gives
 it a long, European-style
 kiss. Aldridge throws him a
 warning look.

ALDRIDGE
 ...and wife.

James drops Besna's hand like a hot rock, looks nervously at
 Albert and turns his attention to Gina. He takes a good
 look, almost gasps, tries hard not to stare.

ALDRIDGE
 Then, there's Gina, the
 sexiest gypsy in the world.

They shake hands. Gina makes sure he can't miss her cleavage.

GINA
(with a wink)
Very nice to meet you!

ALDRIDGE
And here's Faith, our star flyer...

James looks confused.

ALDRIDGE
..."trapeze artist" to gillies.

Aldridge puts an arm around Faith's waist, pulls her close to him and throws a proprietary wink at James. Faith looks very uncomfortable, but doesn't pull away. James holds onto her hand longer than a handshake calls for. He's clearly smitten.

JAMES
(stammers a bit)
Faith? What a beautiful name!
She stifles a laugh,
disengages his hand with her other one.

FAITH
Thanks. I like it well enough.
They exchange interested looks.

JAMES (V.O.)
I never believed in love at first sight, until Faith and I first looked into each other's eyes.

INT. CENTER RING - 1 YEAR LATER (1938)

Faith dances in the air, suspended from the top of the tent by silk streamers. James, dressed as a clown, watches her every move, from below. Each time Faith pauses and waits for the audience to applaud, she looks at James and throws him a kiss with her lips.

JAMES (V.O.)

Faith flew around the top
of the tent like an angel,
on her silk wings. She took
my breath away. We became
good friends and she helped
me get used to life in the
circus. I'd take her out to
dinner whenever I could
afford it.

INT. RESTAURANT - NIGHT

James and Faith are seated at a table. James pulls a bouquet of roses out of his sleeve. She claps her hands in delight.

JAMES (V.O.)

She loved my trick with the
roses. She was everything
I'd ever dreamed of.

INT. JAMES' TRAILER - NIGHT

James and faith rush in and fall into bed.

JAMES

I wanted this from the
first moment I saw you.

FAITH

So did I.

They make love.

INT. JAMES' TRAILER - LATER

James lights a cigarette for each of them.

JAMES

So, how will Aldrige take
this?

FAITH

He won't mind, I've had
nothing to do with him.

JAMES

I've seen how he looks at
you.

FAITH

Yes, but he knows it's you
I want.

JAMES

I'm glad to hear that. I
was afraid we'd both be out
of a job.

FAITH

Personal and business
affairs are totally
separate with him.

JAMES

I hope you're right.

FAITH

I never let him touch me,
so he's got nothing to mind
losing.

INT. CENTER RING - YEARS LATER

CIRCUS PERFORMERS and STAFF sit in the bleachers, which are decorated with flowers. A makeshift altar is set in the middle of the center ring. James (20s) wears a tux, stands before a PRIEST. The wedding march begins.

JAMES (V.O.)

We knew we were meant for
each other. So we decided
to make it official.

Faith (20s) is escorted into the tent by the RINGMASTER. She wears a traditional wedding gown and veil.

JAMES (V.O.)

Our marriage was beautiful,
exotic and original and she
was simply stunning.

The Ringmaster hands Faith off to James. They hold hands before the priest.

PRIEST

Dearly beloved. We are
gathered here in the sight
of God and this circus to
join together this man and
this woman in holy
matrimony...

JAMES (V.O.)

It was the happiest day of
my life. I had the career

I'd always wanted and the woman I adored.

INT. CENTER RING - MINUTES LATER

James and Faith look at each other adoringly.

PRIEST

Now, the groom may kiss the bride.

James and Faith kiss.

JAMES (V.O.)

It was going to be a new chapter in my life, and indeed it was.

END FLASHBACK

INT. JAMES' HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

Martin reads the journal, looks up when the door opens. Jane comes in.

JANE

Oh, you're still here.
Jane checks James' IVs and monitors, as he sleeps.

MARTIN

I really appreciate all you do for him, Jane.
(hand flies to his mouth)
I'm sorry...I mean Miss Parker.

JANE

You can call me Jane. It's my name, after all.

MARTIN

(grinning)
How is he? Any better?

JANE

Well, the medicine is taking effect...
(sighs)
...but relieving his pain a bit is all we can do for him, I'm afraid.

Martin's face drops and Jane pats him on the shoulder.

JANE
Look, you never know.
Sometimes they surprise us.
You can't give up hope.

Martin brightens up a little. Jane notices the journal.

JANE
If you don't mind my being
nosy, what's that you're
always reading?

MARTIN
It's his journal.

JANE
Can I take a peek?

MARTIN
Sure, here.

Martin hands it to Jane. She flips a few pages, stops to read some bits.

JANE
Looks like he's had quite a life.

MARTIN
He has. It's all about how he became a clown and met Mom.

JANE
Really?

MARTIN
I never even knew he'd written it.

Jane hands the book back.

JANE
Writing a memoir can be a catharsis ...it often helps people deal with painful things in their past.

MARTIN
Yes, exactly! When he gave it to me to read, he told

me he was finally able to face his darkest secrets, by writing them down in it.

JANE

No, really? How could such a nice man have "dark secrets"?

MARTIN

For one thing, I didn't know his father...my grandfather... had mistreated him so badly.

JANE

That's sad. Did you know your grandfather?

MARTIN

No, never. My father never told me how embarrassed he was about his son being a clown.

JANE

But, being a clown takes talent. And it's a profession, just like any other.

MARTIN

I know, but not as well thought of as being in business, or having a normal job.

Jane doesn't know what to say, so she fusses with the patient's equipment, adjusts his pillow and blanket.

MARTIN

You've been so caring towards him.

JANE

All our patients deserve the best care and I help see they get it. Besides, there's something about your father...

MARTIN

I didn't think nurses cared about their patients that much.

JANE

I do. And your dad feels special to me, for some reason. I think he reminds me of mine.

Jane carefully avoids eye contact with Martin, a bit embarrassed by what she says and feels.

MARTIN

You can't imagine how much I appreciate it. You're like his guardian angel.

JANE

(blushing)

I wouldn't go that far! Why don't go you home and get some rest? It's late...you've been here for hours. You look tired.

MARTIN

I guess so. I haven't been sleeping well for a while. And then this...

Jane scribbles something hurriedly on a small piece of paper and tucks it in Martin's shirt pocket.

JANE

That's my home number. You can call me there if you need anything while I'm off duty, or just want to talk, okay?

MARTIN

That's very kind of you. If you don't mind my asking, do you do this for all your patients' worried relatives?

JANE
(visibly flustered)
N-no, not really. I have to
make my rounds now. See
you.

Jane hurries out. Martin's face falls, he's perplexed by her sudden departure. He puts the journal aside and watches his father's struggle to breathe, seems to be trying to breathe for him.

INT. JAMES' HOSPITAL ROOM - LATER

Martin's head rests on his arms, on the edge of the bed, fast asleep. He wakes with a start, looks at his dad, fearing the worst.

James snuffles and snorts a bit and opens his eyes.

MARTIN
(relieved)
Did you sleep well?

James shrugs.

JAMES
Who can sleep well in one
of these damned places?

Dr. Spencer bustles in.

DR. SPENCER
Good morning, Martin.

MARTIN
Good morning, doctor.

Dr. Spencer notices his patient is awake.

DR. SPENCER
So, Mr. Boswell, how are we
feeling today?

JAMES
(weak, but cantankerous)
How should I know how you
feel? Or care? As for me, I
just want to get out of
here before I get sick.

DR. SPENCER
Now, now, sir, having a
positive attitude is the

best way to help us to help you, you know.

(to Martin)

Miss Parker told me how close you are to your father and I see you've been at his side constantly. I'm sure it helps his condition to know you're pulling for him.

MARTIN

(under his breath)

If only it could keep him alive.

Dr. Spencer pats Martin on the shoulder.

DR. SPENCER

Mr. Boswell, the nurse will be in shortly to feed you your breakfast, if you're feeling too weak for such a strenuous task.

(to Martin)

You must be hungry, too. I'll order a second meal for you.

MARTIN

Yes, I suppose I am. Haven't really noticed.

DR. SPENCER

Mr. Boswell, be sure you eat everything on the tray. It's vital that we get your strength up and the meal is planned to give your body what it most needs right now.

James glowers and snorts derisively. Dr. Spencer does his best to pretend he didn't see or hear it.

DR. SPENCER

(a bit flustered)

Well...uh, the patient in 202 is waiting, so I'll see you two later.

MARTIN

Okay, Doc, thanks.

Dr. Spencer can't leave fast enough. Martin goes to the bed and sits on the edge.

MARTIN

I'm so happy that you seem
to be getting better.

JAMES

(whispering/unsteady)
Fools rely on false hopes.

MARTIN

Don't say that.

JAMES

Why not, when I can see
death right over there...
(points to the room's far
corner)
...just waiting for me?

MARTIN

No! That's just a delusion,
Pop... from the drugs they
gave you. You're gonna be
alright. You gotta be
alright!

JAMES

Sorry, son, that's just the
way it goes. Nobody gets
out of life alive, y'know.

Martin gets up and paces around the room, both angry and despairing.

MARTIN

(unsteadily)

I...I've been reading your
journal. Why didn't you
ever tell me your father
was so mean to you?

JAMES

Why should I have? It was
my business. I treated you
okay,
didn't I?

MARTIN

Sure, you did! You were a
good dad. But did you mind
it a lot when I wanted to

be a juggler, instead of a
clown, like you?

JAMES

No. That was for you to
decide. I wasn't gonna be
like my father!

(coughs to hide a sob)
I'm glad you're here, son.

MARTIN

Hey, I'll always be here
for you, Pop. Just like
you've always been there
for me.

JAMES

Okay, thanks. Now where the
hell is that lousy
breakfast I'm supposed to
eat all up, or else?

MARTIN

It'll be along soon, I'm
sure. But if Miss Parker
was on duty, I'll bet we'd
be eating by now. She's
taking awfully good care of
you, isn't she?

JAMES

Yeah. And not bad to look
at, neither!

James gives his son the eye, grins when he sees him turn a bit
red in the face.

MARTIN

She treats you as if you
were a king, doesn't she?

James nods, now grinning widely.

JAMES

I'm guessin' she ain't
treating you all that bad,
either, son.

MARTIN

(desperate to change the
subject)
You know, I like your
journal, so far...well,

except for the bad stuff
you went through with your
dad...specially the part
where you met mom.

(turns his back to James)
I believe in love at first
sight, too. It happened a
lot back then, didn't it?
And...it's...possible even
nowadays, don't you think?

James harrumphs, watches his son's embarrassed fidgeting with a more serious expression now.

MARTIN
I'd like to tell you a
secret, but you gotta
promise you won't laugh.

(hurries on, not waiting
for it)
Whenever I'm around
Jane...Miss Parker, that
is...I just can't stop
looking at her.

JAMES
Well, she is quite a
looker. And you are your
father's son.
Martin turns back to face
his father, who gives him a
broad wink.

MARTIN
Yeah, she sure is pretty.
But it's more than
that...like how good she is
to you. As if you're a
special patient, or
something, not just an
"ordinary" one, y'know?

JAMES
Seems t'me, the only thing
what's special to that
young lady about this sick
mess, is the lad who's
hangin' by his bed day and
night.

(tired, his voice fades)
Read the book, son...it's
all in there.

MARTIN
What'd you say?

JAMES
(with great effort)
Read.

MARTIN
Oh, you want me to read the rest of the journal, right? Don't worry, I will. You'd better stop talking now, it's wearing you out...

An orderly comes in with two trays.

MARTIN
...and you have to eat now.

The trays are set down, one on the bed tray, the other on a stand by the chair. The orderly leaves. James lifts the cover on his tray and sticks his tongue out. Martin looks no less happy with his bowl of mush.

INT. HOSPITAL CAFETERIA - LATER

Martin sits alone at a table, a partly eaten meal of bacon and eggs and a cup of coffee in front of him.

The journal lies open next to the plate. Martin reads it while he eats.

INT. CENTER RING - DAY - FLASHBACK (1940)

Trapeze Artists fly back and forth over a net.

JAMES (V.O.)
Circus life isn't as glamorous and carefree as I thought it would be. We worked eleven months straight, traveling in all directions with the seasons, not a day off. Shut down only around Christmas, to get ready for the next year's "brand new" show.

EXT. CIRCUS GROUNDS - DAY

MONTAGE - THE CIRCUS PACKS UP AND LEAVES TOWN

- Performers and roustabouts bustle around
- The main tent comes down
- Animals are put into traveling cages, loaded on trucks
- Performers hitch their trailers to cars and pickups
- A long line of vehicles of all sizes heads down the road
- Scattered bits of trash look lonely on the bare field

JAMES (V.O.)

It was a lot of work, breaking it down, but I loved hitting the road, heading to a new town, or one we'd done well in before. Life was a big adventure, never boring.

INT. CIRCUS TENT - A FEW DAYS LATER

JAMES plays to an appreciative crowd.

JAMES (V.O.)

The circus is an awesome world. It became my home, the place where I found my wife and making people happy is a wonderful way to earn a living. Everything I'd always dreamed of.
Till...

EXT. CIRCUS GROUNDS - DAY

A DELIVERY BOY hands James an envelope. The delivery boy leaves, he opens and scans the letter.

INT. TENT CORRIDOR - MOMENTS LATER

James hurries along clumsily, in his big shoes and baggy trousers.

INT. MR. ALDRIDGE'S OFFICE - MOMENTS LATER

Aldridge is at his desk with feet up on it, smokes a fat cigar. James rushes in.

JAMES
I'm sorry to disturb you.

ALDRIDGE
Whattaya you want...
(scowls at a photo of
himself and Faith)
...that you haven't already
helped yourself to?

JAMES
I have to leave right away.

ALDRIDGE
Leave! Why?

JAMES
My mother's dying.

ALDRIDGE
Yeah, sure. You got a girl
in town you're hot to see,
or what?

JAMES
Goddammit, why would I lie
about something like this?

James hands him the letter.

ALDRIDGE
Okay, I'm sorry, but you
can't go. The show's about
to start. This ain't a job
you can just up and leave,
y'know. The rubes pay to
see all the acts, not just
the ones who feel like
working that day.

JAMES
But it's my mom! I can't
let her just die without
seeing me again. It's been
a lotta years, y'know?

ALDRIDGE
Sorry, that's your problem.
I can't let you leave when
the show's on, kid. Ain't
you ever heard that old
sayin' "the show must go
on"?

James sags, hangs his head, hands resting on the desk.

JAMES

How can I pretend to be a happy clown, when this is happening? I gotta see her before she dies!

ALDRIDGE

You can go, but your job won't be here for you when you get back ...neither will your wife, maybe. James is shocked, tries hard to not get angry.

JAMES

Aldridge, please! I've worked hard, haven't I? And I love it...being a clown is all I ever wanted to do.

ALDRIDGE

It's up to you. Leave now and you'll be a clown in somebody else's circus...if they'll have one who walks out on his performances, that is.

JAMES

For heaven's sake man,
she's dying!

Aldridge chews on his cigar for a long few seconds, shrugs, throws up his hands and points the cigar at the door.

INT. HOSPITAL CORRIDOR - DAY

James runs along the corridor.

JAMES (V.O.)

Aldridge finally let me go, but said I had to return right away, or I'd lose my job. But he wouldn't let Faith come with me. Said the act couldn't do without her.

INT. FELICIA'S HOSPITAL ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Felicia lies motionless on the bed, in an oxygen tent.

Thomas stands at her bedside, looks angry more than grieving. Martin rushes in and Thomas glares at him.

THOMAS

What do you think you're
doing here?

JAMES

I came as soon as I could.

THOMAS

Who told you?

JAMES

It was the doctor. My mom
told him to make sure I
knew.

THOMAS

I want you to leave...now!

JAMES

Father, please.

THOMAS

Don't call me "Father!"

JAMES

I'm sorry.

THOMAS

You made your choice.
You're no longer my son.

JAMES

Why...why have you always
treated me as if you hated
me?

Thomas looks away from him, glares at his dying wife.

JAMES

Answer me, you never
answer!

THOMAS

You want to know why? Well,
the truth is I never could
bear the sight of you!

JAMES

But, I'm happy in the
circus...and with my wife.
And we want to have
children...your
grandchildren.

THOMAS

I don't care if you never
have children.

JAMES

Please don't say that. Look
at my mother lying there?
Do you want her to hear you
say such things?

THOMAS

She's unconscious, you
fool. She can't hear
anything...not anymore.

James goes a few steps closer to his mother.

THOMAS

Get out of here! I don't
want you here. She's my
wife. Go on back to yours.

JAMES

Oh, God! Please just let me
hold her hand one more
time.

THOMAS

Did you expect to just come
in here and be applauded
for what you did? You broke
her heart. Ruined my
marriage!

James makes an effort to hold back his tears.

JAMES

I just want to be with her.
Please let me stay.

THOMAS

Don't you dare cry in front
of me!

JAMES

She's my mother, damn you!
I'll bet you don't shed a
single tear for her. You
never loved either
of us.

THOMAS

I never want to see you
again. Get out of here,
before I have the guards
drag you out. You're not
worthy of seeing her!

INT. HOSPITAL CORRIDOR - MOMENTS LATER

James walks out of the room, leans his head against the wall.
He covers his face with his hands, sobs quietly.

JAMES (V.O.)

She had a second stroke and
died two days later. I
couldn't stay long enough
to go to her funeral.

INT. CENTER RING - DAYS LATER

James does pratfalls.

JAMES (V.O.)

I could still make people
laugh, while my own heart
was in agony.

James blows up balloons that keep exploding in his face and
does acrobatic tricks that fail, each one landing him flat on
his back. The crowd roars with laughter.

JAMES (V.O.)

But the show always had to
go on, of course...with me
making everyone happy,
while I was dead inside.

INT. JAMES' DRESSING ROOM - LATER

Water runs in a sink off-camera.

INT. ADJACENT BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

James looks at his exaggerated smile in the mirror. He scrubs
off the make-up furiously, with wads of cotton, rinses it. An
oily rainbow swirls its way down the drain.

He looks at his naked face in the mirror, punches it with one fist. The mirror splits into a sunburst of cracks.

INT. TRAILER BEDROOM - THAT NIGHT

James lies on the bed and watches Faith look at herself in the mirror.

JAMES (V.O.)
With the sad end of an old
chapter in my life, a new
one miraculously began.

Faith grins at her husband in the bedroom mirror, blows him a kiss.

FAITH
There's something I must
tell you.

JAMES
What?

FAITH
I don't know if you'll like
it.

JAMES
You'll never know, if you
don't tell me.

FAITH
(takes a deep breath)
I'm pregnant.

James opens his mouth to speak, but nothing comes out.

FAITH
I only knew for sure just
this morning. I didn't know
if I should tell you...you
know, after your...

James jumps up from the bed and wraps her in his arms.

JAMES
That's wonderful!

FAITH
I don't know.

He drops his arms, studies his wife's face, a worried frown on his own.

JAMES

Why? Why shouldn't it be wonderful?

FAITH

We can't afford a child on what little they pay us here.

JAMES

Don't worry. As long as we have work, it doesn't matter. We'll get by one way or another.

FAITH

(wailing)

But, now that I'm pregnant I can't work!

JAMES

So? I'll be working. It'll be enough.

James lovingly pats her belly, pulls her to him for a kiss.

INT. HOSPITAL MATERNITY WARD - 8 MONTHS LATER

A haggard-looking James walks quickly to Faith's beside, with a bedraggled bunch of flowers clutched in one hand. Faith is worn out, but radiant, has a blue-blanket-wrapped, slightly wriggling little bundle lying in her arms.

JAMES (V.O.)

So, my beloved mother had been taken from me, but God gave me the second most precious gift to heal my heart...my Martin. Our son.

INT. CIRCUS DINING ROOM - 2 YEARS LATER (1941)

A huge birthday cake with two candles on it sits on a table that is surrounded by all the circus people. James and Faith hold MARTIN (2) between them, as he blows out the candles.

EVERYONE
(singing)
Happy Birthday to you/
happy birthday to you/
happy birthday dear Martin,
happy birthday to you.

JAMES (V.O.)
Times goes by so fast, you
don't even notice it. I was
happy enough at the circus
despite all the
adversities...that was
until the unexpected
changed our lives.

INT. JAMES' TRAILER - NIGHT (1941)

Faith breastfeeds Martin. She is startled as James bursts in, holding a newspaper.

FAITH
What's the matter?

JAMES
Look!

James shows Faith the newspaper. The front page displays photos of battle scenes with headline reading, "AMERICA ENTERS WWII AFTER PEARL HARBOR ATTACK"

FAITH
Oh, no!

James puts his arms around Faith and the baby. Their faces are frozen in fear.

INT. CIRCUS TENT - DAY

PERFORMERS go through their routines, for only a handful of PEOPLE in the audience.

JAMES (V.O.)
We had to go on with the
show no matter what. Even
with a near-empty house and
with little pay, thanks to
the war...

INT. CIRCUS TENT - DAYS LATER

James, Faith, all the performers and workers sit in the stands. Mr. Aldridge paces back and forth in front of them.

JAMES (V.O.)

Then things went really bad
for all of us.

ALDRIDGE

(haltingly/downcast)

You know what I have to
say. None of us can pretend
we haven't seen near-empty
stands for weeks.

(takes out a handkerchief,
wipes his brow and eyes)

And the concessions have
taken in less and less in
the past month...

Groans, mutterings, some crying from the stands accompany his words. Faith and James hug each other tightly.

ALDRIDGE

I'm sorry, my friends. I've
done all I could, but we're
already behind on loans, so
till things get better,
we're all going to have to
take a pay cut.

A hush falls over the crowd of circus folk, then suddenly there's a babble of angry voices. The manager holds up his arms, pleading for silence, so he can go on.

ALDRIDGE

(takes a deep breath)

It's that, or close. I know
it'll be hard to take a
cut. So, if you want to try
your luck somewhere else,
there'll be no hard
feelings.

A few stand up, throw questions at Aldridge, most sit in despairing silence, accepting what all knew was inevitable.

JAMES

This is our life. This our
home! We can't leave.

ALDRIDGE

It's mine, too...but I
can't make audiences appear
like magic. I hope you'll
all stick it out with me.
All who do will get your
back pay as soon as the
funding I'm working on gets
us back in the black.

Aldridge breaks down and rushes out of the tent.

INT. JAMES AND FAITH'S TRAILER - LATER

Faith sits on an old sofa, Martin on her lap. She is thin, worn down from worry. James lies on the bed in costume, nurses a beer.

FAITH

How are we going to manage,
James?

James throws his clown nose on the floor.

JAMES

Damn it, he was right. This
is the worst life I
could've picked.

FAITH

What are you saying?

JAMES

I should've listened to my
father, is what I'm saying.
I work like a slave in
front of empty seats, for
slave wages. I hate this.

FAITH

You seem to be an entirely
different person now. I
hear you and I don't
believe you.

JAMES

It's hopeless. The money's
not enough to live on.
There's nothing for me
here!

FAITH

You have me...and our
little boy...

Faith cries silently. James drops the now empty beer on the floor and motions to her to get him another.

FAITH

You never used to treat me
this way...don't look at me
the way you always did.
What's happened to you?
Sometimes I think...no, I
can't say it. I don't want
to believe that.

JAMES

Nothing's happened. I just
made a huge mistake, is
all.

FAITH

So, Martin and I are...a
mistake?

JAMES

Don't be ridiculous, I
didn't say that.

FAITH

Our marriage can't be a
mistake, not now...
(rubs her belly)
...when I'm...

JAMES

You're what?

FAITH

Nothing, forget it.

JAMES

You're pregnant, again,
damn it! I'm not stupid,
y'know.

FAITH

A lot you'd care. The whole
crowd knows what you've
been doing.

JAMES
(glaring)
Are you pregnant?

Faith looks away.

FAITH
Found out last week.

James gets up and bangs around the trailer, throwing things on the floor.

JAMES
Damn! Damn it! Is it even
mine?

Faith's quiet tears turn into sobs.

FAITH
How dare you even ask!

JAMES
Don't think I haven't seen
how cozy you and Aldrige
are these days.

FAITH
Are you crazy? You know he
had no chance once I'd met
you. I gave up everything
for you.

James grabs her by the arm. She pulls away, protects the boy.

JAMES
Gave up what? Or should I
say, who? Don't play games
with me, if you know what's
good for you.

FAITH
I never thought you'd sink
this low. You complained
about your mean
father...now you're just
like him.

JAMES
Leave my father out of
this! You're not gonna make
a fool out of me. It is
Aldrige's, isn't it?

FAITH

Who put that stupid idea in
your head? You're not so
secret lover? I'm not that
stupid, either.

JAMES

Shut up! I'm sick of you
and this whole place. I'm
sick of seeing you with
Aldridge.

FAITH

It's just business talk,
you know that!

JAMES

I don't believe you. We're
not having it!

FAITH

What?

JAMES

Just what I said. You're
getting rid of it tomorrow,
and that's that.

FAITH

I won't do it. It's my
little girl.

JAMES

I don't care what it is.
You'll do as I say, or see
just how mean my father
was.

FAITH

James, you can't make me do
it! Please. I want my James
back, where did he go? What
made you get this way? We
were so happy together...

JAMES

People change. Look at you!
You sure have. You're a
mess.

Faith doubles over in pain.

FAITH

I can't believe this! Can't
believe this monster is
really you.

The baby cries.

FAITH

Look what've you done.

JAMES

Get him out of here. I
can't stand his wailing all
the time.

Faith comforts the little boy.

FAITH

My poor little Martin...you
don't deserve this.

JAMES

He doesn't deserve this
miserable life we're living
any more than I do. Neither
does any other kid, no
matter who put it in you.
Tomorrow, I'll tell you
where to go.

FAITH

No! No! I won't. You can't
make me.

Faith sobs and the boy wails.

JAMES

Tomorrow, Faith. You'll go,
or I'll get it out of you
myself.

INT. SEEDY TENEMENT HALLWAY - NIGHT

James stands slumped against a graffiti-covered wall. Loud sobs come from a closed door at the end of the hall. He presses his palms tightly over his ears.

JAMES (V.O.)

I took her the next day. It
was one of those filthy
places where they did
illegal abortions back

then. She did what I said.
I knew she would. She loved
me that much.

The door opens and a WOMAN comes out. She wears an old kitchen apron stained with both old and fresh blood smears. She waves him over with one bloody dishwashing glove-encased hand.

WOMAN
(coldly)
Done.

James pushes off from the wall and shuffles down the hall. He pulls a rumpled wad of bills from his pocket and throws it at her.

INT. KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Small and filthy. Dirty dishes and cockroaches are in the sink and on the counters, food scraps and bloody paper towels litter the floor.

James walks in and blanches at the sight of Faith, who lies on a scarred and dirty old kitchen table. She is in pain and turns her head away from him. Blood pools on table and floor beneath her.

FAITH
You killed my baby!

JAMES
We couldn't afford it...and
it was yours, not mine.

FAITH
You'll pay for what you've
done.

Faith glares at him. James is suddenly
afraid.

JAMES (V.O.)
Faith became deeply
depressed after the
abortion. Because of what I
had made happen to her and
our child in that dirty
back room. The lovely,
vital woman I'd loved was
gone. The joy we'd found in
our life together was gone.
Nothing good remained. That
was a day I'd never

forget...a secret I've kept
all these years.

END FLASHBACK

INT. HOSPITAL CAFETERIA

Martin wipes away tears with a paper napkin, looks around to see if anyone noticed and continues to read.

INSERT - JOURNAL PAGE

Tear-stained, contains one sentence. Some words are blurred:
"That was a day I'd never forget. A secret I've kept all these years."

BACK TO SCENE

Martin flips through the rest of the pages. They are all blank.

INT. JAMES' HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

Jane stands at James' bedside, takes his pulse.

JANE
How are you feeling?

JAMES
Better.

JANE
That's good.

James struggles to smile. There is a knock on the door.

JANE
I'll bet that's Martin.

Jane opens the door. Martin stands there, reluctant to enter.

JANE
Hello, Martin. Why are you standing out here? And you never knock. Is something wrong?

Martin's eyes are on his father. They are no longer loving.

MARTIN
Can I have a word with my father?

JANE

Sure, the medication has
been having a positive
effect on him.

Martin walks slowly towards the bed. James looks up and stares at him, sees the anger in his eyes and shrinks back beneath his covers, as if for protection.

MARTIN

Why didn't you tell me?

JAMES

So, you read it all.

MARTIN

(seething)

Why didn't you?

JANE

I think I should go.

MARTIN

(snaps)

No, you don't have to.

JANE

(clearly uncomfortable)

But...

MARTIN

(to James)

I never knew my mother had
an abortion...let alone the
way she had it.

JANE

Martin, I really should
go...this is not something
I should be...

MARTIN

(interrupts harshly)

Sorry, but you should know
what this patient of
yours...who you think is so
sweet and wonderful, really
is!

JAMES

Let the girl go, boy! It's
nothing to do with

her...between you and me
only.

MARTIN

Why didn't you ever say
anything?

JANE

Please, Martin, don't...

MARTIN

He has to tell me.

JAMES

You don't even know all of
it yet.

MARTIN

What?

JAMES

I couldn't finish.

MARTIN

Writing the journal?

JAMES

Yes.

MARTIN

What else do I have to
know?

JAMES

More.

MARTIN

More of what?

Jane moves to the door, opens it a bit.

JANE

Martin, you should let him
rest. He's not able to
answer all these questions.
Just look at him. You're
only making his condition
worse.

Martin ignores her as if she's already left the room.

MARTIN

What do I have to know,
father?

JAMES

(short of breath)
I'm tired, son.

MARTIN

What else do I have to
know? Damn it!

JAMES

Please....I--

MARTIN

What is it? Tell me!

JAMES

With my...things.

MARTIN

What? What things?

JAMES

A...a film. In box. The box
in my trailer.

MARTIN

A film? What kind of film?

James is upset, shakes his head. Jane pulls
Martin away from the bed.

JANE

Martin, please don't
disturb him
any more. I'll have to call
the
doctor, if he's not allowed
to
calm down.

Jane whispers into Martin's ear.

JANE

Can I have a word with you
outside, please? He's a
dying man...have some pity,
won't you?

INT. CORRIDOR - MOMENTS LATER

Jane and Martin stand outside James' room.

JANE

You must not go on with
this. He's feeling a bit
better, but can die at any
moment. Don't you care?

MARTIN

I didn't know it was that
bad!

JANE

The present is what
matters...you must forget
the painful past.

MARTIN

But didn't you hear what I
said?

JANE

I understand it's a shock
for you, but can't you try
to make him happy before,
it's too late? Do you want
him to go knowing you hate
him?

MARTIN

I don't, really! I love
him, but I can't believe he
made my mother suffer so
much. And there could be
more bad stuff in that film
he mentioned. I dread
seeing what's in it, after
reading the journal.

JANE

I understand how hard it
must be for you.

MARTIN

I don't know what to do.

JANE

If you want, I can watch it
with you. I'm staying at my
aunt's house for a few days

while she's traveling. She has a projector, if you'd like to do it at her place. Mine at home is a wreck, never bothered to fix it.

MARTIN

Really?

JANE

Yeah, no problem.

MARTIN

You're so kind...that would help a lot.

JANE

It would really be best to just put it all behind you. Learn to forgive and forget.

MARTIN

I can't.

JANE

It's not an easy option, but it's the best one.

Martin rubs his head, as if trying to erase the words he'd read.

MARTIN

Thank you, Jane. I know you're right, but it's so hard to learn that my father wasn't the good person I always thought he was.

JANE

None of us really are...are we? Just try and remember what I said.

Jane goes back into James' room. Martin watches her go, guilt and sorrow competing in his face.

INT. JAMES' TRAILER - LATER

Martin comes in, takes the metaln box from under the bed. He looks at the family photos, holds one of Faith up to the light and strokes her face.

MARTIN

I'm so sorry. You were so
beautiful and
delicate...just like Jane.

At the bottom of the box is a small film cannister. He shakes nervously, as he studies it carefully.

Martin gives the photo of his mother another look and picks up the phone. He hesitates, then dials a number.

MARTIN

(shyly)

Hi, Jane, this is Martin.
Martin

Boswell. I hope you don't
mind my calling you...Yes,
I found it, just as he
said, in a box under his
bed. No, I haven't seen it
yet, I don't think I can...
Oh, really? It's not too
much of a bother?...Thank
you! You can't imagine how
much it helps...Yeah, sure,
seven is fine. ...Where--
?...Let me get a pen....

INT. TAXI - LATER

Martin holds the film can tightly, in both hands and looks out the window.

INT. JANE'S AUNT'S LIVING ROOM - LATER

Small, but nicely decorated. Jane opens the door and beckons Martin in.

JANE

Well, this is my aunt's
place.

MARTIN

It's nice. And pretty. Just
like you.

Jane blushes.

JANE

Are you okay?

MARTIN

Not really. It's hard to have to deal with all this, on top of my father's condition.

JANE

Don't worry so much. I'm sure these other things will turn out okay... and we're doing all we can for your dad.

MARTIN

I doubt it. I really doubt it. I don't know what to expect now, after reading the things he wrote.

JANE

I can't believe he did anything really bad. He seems such a nice person.

MARTIN

I didn't want to believe it either. But he did. I don't even want to visit him any more.

JANE

I'm sorry.

Martin hands her the film can.

MARTIN

Well, this is it.

JANE

What's on it?

MARTIN

We'll soon find out.

Jane pulls Martin over to the sofa.

JANE

Sit down, the projector's ready to go. I'll just put this on.

MARTIN

Okay

Jane threads the film in and starts it up.

JANE

Got it! It's working.

She sits down next to Martin. He grips her hand tightly.

MARTIN

I have a bad feeling about
this. I'll probably regret
it.

JANE

Maybe it's just some silly
family stuff.

MARTIN

Watching it with you helps
a lot. Thanks for offering.
They watch the film.

ON THE SCREEN

Date on bottom of picture is not clear. The black and white image is a bit blurry at the beginning, then gets better. Sound is scratchy, but background noises are audible.

Faith performs high above the ring. James and Gina watch nervously below. Faith sees them together, smiles and lets go of the trapeze.

She plunges to the ground. A shocked hush continues for a second or two, before the screams begin. James is frozen in place.

Almost as one, the other performers look at the body of his wife and then at him and his lover. Gina breaks, runs out of the tent.

ALDRIDGE

(to the audience)

Is there a doctor here?

James sees Gina has gone, rushes to Faith. He kneels down, afraid to touch her. She lies in a crumpled heap, limbs all at odd angles. Blood runs from the corners of her mouth. James touches a finger to a line of it, looks at his hand in horror. Faith, is barely conscious, does not look at him.

JAMES

I'm sorry, my love. I'm so
sorry!
Faith's faint breathing
stops.

Her eyes are wide open and blank.

JAMES

No! No!

Some of the performers pull him away, walk him out of the tent, as her flyer partner covers her body with his cape. The film ends.

BACK TO SCENE

Martin and Jane are stunned at what they have seen. Martin puts his hands over his eyes, wants to forget what they saw.

JANE

(holding him tight)
I'm so sorry, Martin. I'm
so sorry.

MARTIN

Jesus Christ! He lied to me
my whole life! He said she
died from conumction...not
suicide!

JANE

Didn't you ever hear any
rumors?

MARTIN

Yeah, about a few who died
during a rehearsal, or a
performance...but never a
word about this.

JANE

I don't know what to say.

MARTIN

I've been so stupid all
these years. I never
questioned what he told me.
Never. I trusted him.

JANE

We shouldn't have watched
it. We shouldn't have.

Martin gets up and takes the film off the projector. Jane grabs his arm.

JANE
Don't do anything you might
regret! Remember your
father's condition.

Martin nods. Jane puts her arms around him.

MARTIN
(takes a deep breath)
I'm going to call a cab.
Thank you Jane...thanks for
everything.

INT. CENTER RING - THAT NIGHT

Gina is strapped to a large wooden wheel that rotates. Albert throws knives and axes at her that barely miss. The act ends, Gina is released, she and Albert take their bows. The audience applauds and cheers.

INT. GINA'S TRAILER - MOMENTS LATER

Martin stands rigidly by the door, taps his fingers against the side of his leg. Gina comes in.

MARTIN
Gina.

Gina is startled to find him there.

GINA
What? What are you doing in
here? Is it...

She grabs his arms, worried it's bad news about James.

MARTIN
(waves film can at her)
Does this look familiar?

Gina reacts with shock and fear.

MARTIN
I read what my father wrote
in his journal and then I
found this...
(shakes it in her face)
...where he'd hidden it.

GINA

I know nothing about any of
that. I don't know what
you're talking about. I
didn't even know he had...

(points at the can)
...such a thing. What's on
it?

MARTIN

You're in there, along with
my father...

(shouting)
...and my mother!

Gina looks away from him.

MARTIN

Tell me all about it. I
have a right to know.

GINA

Know what?

MARTIN

In the journal, my father
wrote he made my mom have
an abortion.

Gina is nervous.

MARTIN

You knew her. You were her
friend,
right? Did you know that?

Gina looks at the floor.

MARTIN

Did you know? You did,
didn't you!

GINA

(defiantly)

Yes!

MARTIN

And you never told me.

GINA

What for? You were a baby
back then. I don't
understand why your father

wants you to know all of
this now.

MARTIN

There's something else,
too, isn't there? Something
he couldn't put in
writing. What? Is it
something to explain what I
saw in this?

GINA

I don't know.

MARTIN

You're lying, I can tell.

GINA

I don't know what you're
talking
about. Just leave me alone.

MARTIN

Stop it! What is it?

GINA

All right, if your father
wants
you to know what happened,
I'll
tell you. We had an
affair...it started soon
after you were born. I'd
wanted him ever since I
first saw him, but she got
him.

MARTIN

What? My poor mother!

GINA

Aldridge and I planned to
break up their marriage.
Aldridge was crazy for
Faith and James was
easy...so we were lovers.
Your mother made it easy.

MARTIN

How could you do that?

GINA

I was always jealous of
her.

Flyers are the damn stars,
always looking down on us
gypsies. And ...I loved
your father. More than she
did!

MARTIN

Didn't you care what it
made her do? It was murder!
I would've had a nice
sister and still had a
loving a mother. But you
all drove her...

He breaks down, collapses onto the sofa.

GINA

I'm sorry, okay? I couldn't
help myself. I was so in
love with him, I told him
it was Aldridge's kid, not
his...and he was happy
enough to believe it. Made
him feel okay about having
me for a mistress.

MARTIN

You're heartless!

GINA

I was in love! Don't you
have any idea what that's
like? After the abortion,
when she found out about
us, she just gave up.
Didn't care about anything
or anyone...just sat and
stared when she wasn't on.
They were going to replace
her in the act, but before-

MARTIN

You were all guilty.

GINA

I know. I've been sorry for
what I'd done, ever since.
I know I had a lot to do
with what she did. I just

wanted James. Didn't care what it did to Faith.

Gina turns away from Martin's menacing look.

MARTIN

This is unbelievable. I've been so blind all along.

GINA

She'd take all kinds of pills. I knew they were killing her.

MARTIN

It was so unfair! I can't imagine what she went through.

GINA

She was naive, thought pills could make everything better.

MARTIN

(very upset)

Is that why she committed suicide...the fall?

Martin waves film can again in her face.

GINA

Oh God!

(covers her face)

That day, she insisted the act be filmed. Made sure you were in one of tents, with the gypsy who took care of you while they performed.

MARTIN

How could everyone keep this from me for so many years?

GINA

James was always good at keeping secrets. Most of the performers who were there then, left soon after, thanks to the bad publicity. And James made

the rest of us promise to never mention any of this to you.

MARTIN

I've always believed in my father and you. What an idiot!

GINA

We were all sure she'd let go on purpose. It couldn't have been an accident. She was the best flyer in the business.

(shudders)

I don't ever want to remember that day. It was the one time the show didn't go on...the police cleared the tent, so there was no one to go on for.

MARTIN

So, those are my father's dirty little secrets.

GINA

Your father felt so guilty, he couldn't bear for you to know the truth. He said it would be better if you thought she just got sick and died.

MARTIN

That's the worst lie I've ever been told and been stupid enough to believe.

GINA

He loved you. He didn't want you to hate him, or circus life like his father did.

MARTIN

I never thought he'd do this to me. Why the hell couldn't he have taken his secret to the grave? Why make me have to know all this...and hate him?

GINA

He's not a bad man. He
loved you and your mother.
He just made a mistake.

MARTIN

I don't care what you call
it, I can't love him any
more.

GINA

Don't judge him. He loved
you, took good care of you.
He never married again,
always worked only for you,
to give you all you needed.

(a sob escapes)

He even gave me up, never
touched me again.

Martin turns away, can't bear to see her.

MARTIN

But why does he tell me
this now?

GINA

When he knew he was dying,
he told me he wanted you to
know the truth, no matter
what. I told him to let it
be. But you know how
stubborn he can be-

MARTIN

I don't care what happens
to him any more.

GINA

Don't say that, please!
He's dying, needs you to
know...needs you to forgive
him. Because she died
before she could.

Gina grabs Martin's hand.

GINA

You have to forgive him!
He's not been a bad father
and you know it. He never
mistreated you, like his

father did to him. And I can't help still loving him. I want him to die in peace.

Martin pulls his hand away and turns on her, with fury and despair etched in his face.

MARTIN

I don't believe it. I don't bloody believe it. How can you ask me to do that? You, of all people! It was you who helped kill my mother, too, y'know. I can't forgive either of you!

Gina takes both of Martin's hands in hers, has to struggle for them.

GINA

(beaten)

Forgive us, Martin, please.
At least forgive your father. At least him.

INT. JAMES' HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

James is asleep. Martin sits at his bedside, his back to the door, with a bitter expression on his face, as he watches the old man struggle to breathe.

The door thuds shut, startles him. Jane comes in.

JANE

(slightly guiltily)
Hello, Martin. Feeling better?

Martin jumps up, pushes past her and almost runs out. Jane follows him.

INT. CORRIDOR - CONTINUOUS

Martin leans against the wall, trembling. Jane faces him, one hand rests lightly on his arm.

MARTIN

I found out my dad had an affair with a gypsy in the circus...Gina. And my mother knew about it. You know the rest!

JANE
(flustered)
I don't know what to say.

MARTIN
Gina has always been like a
mother to me. I was so
little when--

Jane moves her hand up to Martin's shoulder.

JANE
I hate to see you so upset.

MARTIN
My father made her kill her
own child, Jane...I would
have had a sister!

(he pulls away, angrily)
I always wished for a
sibling to grow up with.
And you can't imagine how
it hurt to lose my mother
when I was so little. Now
all this!

JANE
Martin, that was all long
ago in the past. Right now
you have to think of the
present. Whatever your
father did, he'd always
loved you.

MARTIN
I don't know what to think
or feel. I never thought he
could be such a stranger.

JANE
Martin, you're the only one
who can ease his pain by
forgiving him.

MARTIN
I never could have imagined
any of this. I was so happy
working with him in the
circus, and now I know all
these terrible things and
have to see
him...here...every day.

JANE

Everyone's life is full of the unexpected. You must think of your future. Don't let your father's past keep you from making the best of it. Your mother wouldn't want that for you, would she?

MARTIN

If you only knew what little difference that makes to me now. But I know you're right. I don't know what I'd have done if you weren't--

Martin and Jane exchange deep looks. It's clear they realize they've reached a major change in their relationship. She's no longer just his father's patient and he's no longer just her patient's son.

INT. HOSPITAL CAFETERIA - LATER

Martin and Jane sit at a table. They don't seem to notice all the hustle and bustle going on around them.

MARTIN

I couldn't believe my father lied to me all these years.

JANE

Some things are better not talked about. Maybe he thought you'd judge him.

MARTIN

I want to hate him and Gina. Want to believe his disease is what he deserved.

JANE

Don't say that! Your dad may have made a mistake, but he never meant to hurt you.

MARTIN

Well, thanks to him, now my life doesn't make any sense anymore.

JANE

You are intelligent and talented and I'm sure you're forgiving, despite how you feel right now. Your father is dying, Martin. You may never see him alive again.

MARTIN

I don't want to think about that. I'm not sure I even care one way or the other.

JANE

He talked to me about you, one day. He said you're all that'll survive of him. In you, he sees his whole life as having been worthwhile.

MARTIN

What else has he told you?

JANE

He sees you as a successful person, someone who can do anything he sets his sights on. Who can get through anything.

MARTIN

I don't think so. I feel so weak, devastated.

JANE

You're not weak. You are strong enough to forgive and forget, I'm sure of it...especially given your dad's condition.

INT. JAMES' HOSPITAL ROOM - LATER

James opens his eyes, looks around, desperately afraid of being alone. Martin walks in and looks down at him.

MARTIN

I know everything now. I
watched the film and Gina
told me what really caused
my mother's death.

JAMES

Son—

MARTIN

No, don't ask...I can't
forgive you for that.

JAMES

Please, son? I was
young...and so stupid--

MARTIN

If people love each other,
they shouldn't have
affairs. It's unforgivable.
I'll never forgive you for
what you did...for what you
caused...you and Gina.
First you ruined my
mother's life, then you
killed her baby, my
sister...and then you
killed her!

JAMES

I'm sorry. So sorry.

Martin tries not to notice his father is
crying.

MARTIN

You can't imagine how bad I
felt when I saw other kids
with their mothers. I can't
forget what you did. Why
did you have to make me
know the truth?

JAMES

Sorry, sorry.

James closes his eyes, too weak to speak.
Martin stares at him coldly and leaves the
room.

INT. MARTIN'S TRAILER - NIGHT

Martin lies sprawled on the bed, stares at all the paintings on the wall. A vision of his mother falling from the trapeze appears over the paintings and startles him.

BACK TO SCENE

Martin shudders, as he hears voices.

DR. SPENCER (V.O.)
His lungs are riddled with
cancer.

JANE (V.O.)
You're all that'll survive
of him. In you, he sees his
life as having been
worthwhile.

Martin holds the pillows tightly against his ears.

INT. HOSPITAL CORRIDOR - DAY

Martin walks along dispiritedly, sees other patients in their rooms with loved ones by their beds. A buzzer sounds briefly and a voice over the loudspeaker announces a "Code Blue." DOCTORS and NURSES rush to the room he's standing in front of. He's brushed aside as the resuscitation team hurries in.

Martin sees dark colors swirl around his father's bed and the crash team. The colors darken further, as they surround his father.

INT. JAMES' ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Martin rushes back in, kneels down by the bed and hugs his father. James is hardly aware of anything.

MARTIN
I do forgive you, Dad. I
don't care what happened in
the past. I don't want you
to die. Please don't!

James makes a feeble attempt to hug his son.

EXT. HOSPITAL - LATER

It's raining. Jane stands under an overhang near the entrance. Martin comes out and spots her.

JANE

Hi, Martin. I've just finished my shift. I think your dad is okay for tonight, at least.

MARTIN

I was looking for you. I wanted to tell you that I forgave him. It wasn't easy, but I couldn't stand seeing him like that.

JANE

I knew you would. You couldn't let him go thinking you hated him. You're too good a person for that.

MARTIN

Jane, you know you've changed my life, don't you? I'm so happy I met somebody like you. You've given me hope when I thought I wouldn't ever find it.

JANE

Being able to help others is what makes my job so rewarding. I'm glad you're one of them.

MARTIN

Listen, would you like to go get a good cup of coffee, for a change? Better yet, would you'd like to come and see the circus tonight? I've been to your place...it's time you came to mine.

(flashes a shy grin)
Then we'll be even.

JANE

(hesitates, then grins)
Sure! Why not? It'll be a welcome change.

INT. MARTIN'S TRAILER - NIGHT

Sparingly and cheaply furnished, but with beautiful paintings hung side by side on every wall. Most are portraits of circus folk, some of the tents and side shows, a few are landscapes.

Martin and Jane come in, laughing and out of breath. He's in his spangled juggling costume.

MARTIN
How'd you like the show?

JANE
It was wonderful. Loved it.

MARTIN
(shyly)
This is...well...where I
live.
Jane looks around. Martin
points to the paintings.

MARTIN
Those are my paintings.

JANE
They're beautiful.

MARTIN
Here's some more.

Martin takes a stack of paintings from the closet. He and Jane sit on the bed. He shows her the paintings, one at a time. The first is just a wild splash of colors.

MARTIN
This is one of my
favorites. Too abstract,
but that's what art is
about...getting past mere
reality.

JANE
I see. I like the colors
you used.

He holds up another. It's a beautiful snowy landscape.

MARTIN
I loved how the trees bare
it all in winter.

The next is of the circus grounds.

MARTIN

This is "Dreams and Illusions"... and my everyday reality. My dad's, too, for most of his life.

Two more are portraits, one of Gina and one of a clown.

JANE

I like them. I like them a lot. I'd love it if you'd paint me.

MARTIN

I certainly will. You'd be a great model.

JANE

Enough with painting, Martin. Now show me how to juggle.

Martin picks up several oddly assorted items and juggles them. At first he is awkward, embarrassed, but quickly regains his skill.

MARTIN

I've been better. But I've been under a lot of stress lately.

JANE

It seems to relax you, though.

MARTIN

Sometimes I'm so nervous I'm afraid I'll drop them. I was even more nervous with you watching. And I can't stop thinking about—

JANE

Let's not talk about it. At least, not tonight.

MARTIN

Seeing my father in pain is the hardest thing for me.

JANE

I see people in pain every day.

MARTIN

I guess you get used to it.
Enough of that. I have a surprise for you.

Martin pulls a bouquet of red roses from his sleeve and presents it to her.

JANE

That's amazing!
(takes the roses)
Oh, Martin, they're beautiful. I love them!

MARTIN

My dad taught me this trick. My mother loved it, too.

Martin and Jane look at each other, both wanting the same thing. Martin moves first, leans in to kiss Jane. She pulls back a bit, reluctantly.

JANE

It's too soon, don't you think?

MARTIN

There's nothing to think about. I'm sure the time is right, now...so are you.

JANE

Damn! Why do you have to be right?

MARTIN

Because I know we're right for each other, that's why.

She gives him a "Go-for-it!" look and they clinch.

INT. JAMES' HOSPITAL ROOM - THE NEXT DAY

James is awake, Jane stands at his bedside.

JANE

Mr. Boswell, you've raised
a wonderful person. I
congratulate you.

Jane fusses with his blanket and pillow.

JANE

He has the gentlest,
kindest, lightest spirit.

JAMES

I know.

JANE

I wish I had a magic wand
and could make you well
again, just like in the
fairy tales. Your son
really needs you, you know.
He's still so like a little
boy in some ways.

Martin walks in.

JANE

We were just now talking
about you.

Martin and Jane look at each other lovingly.

MARTIN

Favorably, I hope.

JANE

Of course.

Martin sits down at James' bedside.

MARTIN

How have you been, Dad? Had
a good night?

JAMES

Better. And not too bad.

MARTIN

You sure?

JAMES

Yes.

Jane opens the door.

JANE

I have things to do, you
two. Don't tire him out,
Martin.

MARTIN

I wish you could stay.

JANE

I was just leaving. 202 is
not that patient a patient.
Gotta go before he wears
out the buzzer. I'll see
you later...

(with 'a look' to Martin)
...if you're still here.

Martin starts to get up, to see her out, looks guiltily at his father and sits back down. She walks out.

MARTIN

In case you haven't
noticed, I'm happy today,
Pop.

James grins and nods.

MARTIN

I've found the perfect one
for me. Jane is so
wonderful...she listens to
me, she cares about you and
she feels the same way
about me. She's even made
me forget the past,
somehow.

JAMES

Yes, I can see that.

MARTIN

Some other nurses are cold
towards their patients, but
she's an exception, isn't
she?

JAMES

She reminds me of your
mother, so beautiful and
kind.

Martin's scowls at the mention of his mother.

JAMES

Sorry.

MARTIN

(forces a smile)

It's Okay, Dad. It's okay

JAMES

Don't do what I did to—

MARTIN

(interrupting)

Of course I won't! I'd
never cheat on her...never.

JAMES

Sorry. I just don't want
you to be like me...or your
grandfather. We weren't
good husbands.

MARTIN

There's no chance of that.
To me, the woman I love and
marry deserves my total
loyalty. I'll never break
my vows.

James winces and looks away from his son.

MARTIN

Never mind what you did.
That's the past. My future
doesn't have to be the
same...I won't let it.

James manages a smile.

JAMES

You've inherited my good
taste in women, at least.

MARTIN

(chuckles)

Yeah.

(gets serious)

She's not only beautiful to
look at. Her inner beauty
got to me, from the first.

INT. JAMES' HOSPITAL ROOM - LATER

James is asleep, Martin sits and stares at him.

INT. JAMES' HOSPITAL ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Martin falls asleep in his chair.

INT. JAMES' HOSPITAL ROOM - LATER

James is jolted awake by a sudden sharp pain. He groans and Martin wakes with a jerk.

MARTIN
(worried)
Are you all right? Where
does it hurt?

Martin presses the call button. James is in obvious distress.
Martin strokes his father's forehead.

MARTIN
Don't worry, they're
coming.
James continues to groan.

MARTIN
Where does it hurt? Is it
your chest?

James nods.

MARTIN
Oh, God!

Jane rushes in.

JANE
What's wrong?

MARTIN
Jesus, look at him!

JANE
Calm down, Martin.

She checks James quickly, pushes a button on the intercom.

JANE
(into intercom)
Page Dr. Spencer, stat. Mr.
Boswell's having a
seizure...No, not a code
blue, yet.

MARTIN

Don't worry, Dad, you'll be all right. I promise.

JANE

(to both men)
The doctor is on his way.

James looks up at Martin and Jane, struggles to speak, can't get a word out.

MARTIN

It's all right, don't leave me please. We can start a new life! But don't leave me, okay?

Dr. Spencer rushes in, checks the readouts on the monitors and pulls down the front of James' hospital gown.

DR. SPENCER

Martin, you have to leave now. Now!

MARTIN

No.

DR. SPENCER

You're in the way, son. If you don't want to jeopardize your father's life, leave!

Martin backs out of the room. Dr. Spencer checks James' heart. The patient's labored breathing slows, then stops. Dr. Spencer uses the intercom.

DR. SPENCER

(calmly)

Code blue, room 203.

INT. JAMES' HOSPITAL ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

A CRASH TEAM rushes in with the equipment. They administer epinephrine and defibrillate three times, with no result. The doctor calls the time of death.

SERIES OF SHOTS

- A blur of dark-hued colors surround
- Felicia who lies dead in her hospital bed, under an oxygen tent.
- Same blurred color effect surrounds Faith's body in the center ring.

- Same for James' body on his bed, as the crash team packs up to leave.

BACK TO SCENE

INT. HOSPITAL CORRIDOR - MOMENTS LATER

Martin waits outside James' room. The door opens, the doctor and Jane walk out.

MARTIN

How is he?

DR. SPENCER

(apologetically)

We did all we could.

MARTIN

Oh, no!

DR. SPENCER

I'm sorry.

Dr. Spencer leaves. Jane touches Martin's hand surreptitiously, as she lets the crash team pass out of the room.

INT. JAMES' HOSPITAL ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Jane stands to one side of the doorway. Martin walks in and stares down at his father's lifeless body.

Jane is teary-eyed as Martin sobs at his father's bedside.

EXT. FUNERAL CHAPEL - DAY

Jane, Martin and Gina walk behind several performers who carry the coffin. All the other circus folk file out behind them.

EXT. CEMETERY - LATER

Jane, Martin and Gina sit by the coffin.

A MINISTER stands at the head of the grave.

MINISTER

And so, to his final rest,
do we commit this man, this
father, this friend. We
entrust his soul unto Our
Lord, amen.

EXT. CEMETERY - LATER

Martin and Jane wander among the winter-naked trees.

MARTIN

I wish I had died first.

JANE

Don't say that! Parents
aren't meant to outlive
their children.

They sit down on a bench in front of a huge old tree.

MARTIN

He was all I had.

Martin tries to hold back his tears. He puts his arms around her.

JANE

Oh, Martin, sweet
Martin...it's
alright...it's alright.
She kisses his cheek, his
neck, his hair.

JANE

You have me. I love you,
Martin. I really love you.

MARTIN

You do?

JANE

Yes! As much as your father
did.

EXT. CIRCUS GROUNDS - NIGHT

A WATCHMAN makes his rounds.

INT. CENTER RING - AT THE SAME TIME

Martin walks aimlessly around the ring. Faint sounds of his father's routine music and audience laughter echo in the empty tent.

INT. MARTIN'S TRAILER - LATER

The place is littered with used brushes, paint tubes, fresh and partly painted canvases, all seeming to be various parts of the same clown face. Martin sits in a chair, picks up an unfinished one. It's his father, as the clown he played.

MONTAGE

- A portrait sits on an easel. The face of his father in clown make-up is nearly finished. The sorrow on Martin's face as he paints is in stark contrast to the clown's broad smile.
- Martin puts the finishing touches on his father's bright red, tousled clown wig.
- The face of a clown in agony is complete. Martin fills in the background with heavy, indistinct dark shadows.
- The painting is finished. Martin signs it.

INT. MARTIN'S TRAILER - DAY

Martin sits on his bed and writes in a journal.

MARTIN (V.O.)

I think of my father almost every day, but as time goes by, the sadness fades. Life in the circus has taught me that the show must go on. And that's what I'll do. Go on.

EXT. CIRCUS GROUNDS - NIGHT

Martin and Jane stand alone by a small bonfire. Martin holds a log in one hand, the other clutches the film reel. He adds the log and some twigs to the fire. It blazes up.

JANE

So, do you also juggle with fire?

MARTIN

Yeah. I've had a few burns, though.

JANE

I've seen lots of those at work. Even people who don't juggle can get careless with fire.

MARTIN

I got a pretty bad one, here.

Martin rolls up his sleeve
to show a burn scar above
the wrist.

JANE
That must have hurt.

MARTIN
It was so long ago. My dad
was teaching me how...
(looks a bit sad)
...but I finally learned to
get the hang of it without
burning myself.

Martin takes one last look at the film and reaches out to put it on the bonfire. Jane grabs his arm.

JANE
Are you sure you want to do
this?
Martin hesitates, then
nods.

MARTIN
Yes...no more living in the
past. Just the present,
living every day to its
fullest.

Martin tosses the film on the bonfire and they sit down. Jane rests her head on his shoulder and they watch the film go up in flames.

INT. MARTIN'S TRAILER - DAY

Martin and Jane walk in. The portrait of Martin's father, with a title plate on the frame reading "The Color of Agony" rests on top of a dresser. Jane looks at all the paintings and points to the one of James as a clown.

JANE
What's that?

MARTIN
It's my dad, as I last saw
him.

JANE
It's good, I guess, but it
gives me the creeps.

MARTIN

Yeah, art is meant to stir
the emotions. But, enough
about that one. Let's get
started.

JANE

Of course.

Martin arranges Jane in a pose then begins to outline her head
and shoulders.

MARTIN

You're the perfect model.

JANE

I never thought I'd be
doing this, when I first
saw you. Life is strange,
huh?

MARTIN

It will take several
sittings for me to get it
blocked in. Then a while
more to get it just right.
I want it to be perfect.

JANE

I can't wait to find out
how you see me.

INT. MARTIN'S TRAILER - DAY

A cloth-draped canvas stands on an easel in corner of the
room. Martin and Jane come in.

MARTIN

Okay, here's what you've
been waiting for.

Martin whips off the cloth, as if performing a magic act.

MARTIN

Ta-da!

Jane's head and shoulders fill the canvas, with red roses in
the background. Jane stares at it, delighted.

JANE

Oh, it was definitely worth
the wait, Martin! It's

amazing...and red roses are
my favorite flowers.

MARTIN
(suddenly sad)
Like my mom.

Jane puts her hand to her mouth. Martin shakes his head.

MARTIN
It's okay. I'm glad you
like it.

JANE
Like it? I love it!

EXT. CEMETERY - DAY

Jane and Martin walk amid the tombstones.

MARTIN
How I miss him. The circus
isn't the same for me
without him.

JANE
You'll get used to it,
Martin. It's difficult, but
not impossible.

They approach James' grave. Jane places some
flowers in front of the granite cross.

EXT. CEMETERY - MOMENTS LATER

Jane and Martin walk towards the exit, holding hands.

EXT./INT. HOSPITAL - DAY

An ambulance pulls up to the emergency entrance. Jane, another
NURSE and a YOUNG DOCTOR rush to the door.

A MAN is wheeled in on a gurney. He has blood all over his
head and body and a big wound on the side of his head.

JANE
Thanks, boys, we'll take it
from here!

Jane and the Doctor push the gurney into an ER cubicle.

INT. HOSPITAL LOBBY - DAY

Martin rushes in, carrying a huge bouquet of red roses, goes to the RECEPTIONIST and lays the bouquet on the counter.

RECEPTIONIST

Oh, red roses. How romantic! Who are they for?

MARTIN

Jane Parker, one of your nurses.

The receptionist strokes the petals and studies the card. It says "to the love of my life"

RECEPTIONIST

From Gary, huh? That's funny...I thought their anniversary was last month. Maybe he's getting more romantic. It's about time!

MARTIN

Gary?

RECEPTIONIST

She's so lucky. My husband never sends me anything at work. Not even on my birthday.

Martin is schocked, the receptionist notices.

RECEPTIONIST

What's wrong? Didn't he tell you to bring them up here, as a surprise or something?

Martin stares blankly at the roses and stalks off down a corridor.

INT. HOSPITAL CORRIDOR - MOMENTS LATER

Martin bumps into the Doctor who was with Jane earlier.

YOUNG DOCTOR

Watch where you're going, man!

MARTIN

Excuse me! Have you seen
Jane Parker...one of the
nurses?

DOCTOR

Jane...Parker?

MARTIN

Yes.

DOCTOR

She's still working on a
patient. Might be a while.
But you can't be back here,
you'll have to wait in the
lobby.

INT. LOBBY - TEN MINUTES LATER

Jane comes out of the ER. Martin confronts her.

JANE

Martin? What are you doing
here?

Martin just glares.

MARTIN

Who the hell is Gary?

JANE

(shocked/guilty)

What?

MARTIN

Who is he?

Jane fidgets, looks everywhere but at him.

MARTIN

Tell me, please. Don't lie
to me.

Jane can't look at him. She shakes her head.

MARTIN

You're married? You're
married!

JANE

Martin, please, It's not what you think. It's just a typical unhappy, childless marriage that neither of us had any reason to call off. That is...until-

Martin cuts her off with an angry wave of his hand.

MARTIN

I can't believe this.

Jane looks down at the floor.

JANE

I didn't want to ruin things. Then, when it had gone too far to tell you without hurting you...

MARTIN

You think this doesn't hurt?

JANE

When I look at you, you remind me of all he isn't. I couldn't let go of that...couldn't face losing you.

MARTIN

What a disappointment you turned out to be. You're just like my lying, cheating old man. I never want to see you again!

JANE

Martin, please.

Martin slams out of the hospital. Jane stands there, motionless.

EXT. HOSPITAL - MOMENTS LATER

It's pouring down rain. Martins walks through it as if it's not there.

EXT. STREET - LATER

The rain is heavier than ever. Martin sits on a bus bench, totally drenched and dejected.

INT. MARTIN'S TRAILER - LATER

Martin storms in, slams the door behind him. In a fit of anger, he throws some of his paintings on the floor and stomps on them.

INT. BIGTOP CENTER RING - DAYS LATER

Seats are almost all full, performers are finishing up the opening parade.

THE RINGMASTER

Now, folks, it's my great honor to introduce one of the world's finest jugglers...Ladies and gentlemen... the one, the only...Martin!

The audience claps. Martin performs. His timing is off. He drops some of the balls and plates.

He gives it another try and doesn't make it. The audience boos.

Aldridge and Gina watch his poor performance. He frowns, she flinches. Martin bows his way out of the ring in shame.

Gina and Aldrige shake their heads, as Martin leaves the tent.

EXT. CIRCUS GROUNDS - NIGHT

Martin sits slumped in despair, by a bonfire. The audience's boos at his fumbling echo through the night, startling him.

Gina comes out of a tent and approaches him hesitantly.

GINA

Martin, what's going on? We can't afford to let personal issues affect our work, y'know.

MARTIN

Leave me alone! You're the last person I want to speak to now.

GINA

I can't leave you alone. I
can't. You need someone.

MARTIN

I don't need anybody. Least
of all, you. Go away!

GINA

It hurts to see you like
this. Where's the Martin
the audience comes to see?

MARTIN

He's dead, just like my
mother... and my father.

Gina is shocked.

MARTIN

Now I know what my mom went
through.

GINA

Don't remind me of that.

MARTIN

I feel like doing the same
thing. If I was a flyer,
I'd jump, too.

Gina can't believe what she hears.

MARTIN

I feel so empty...so
betrayed. Nothing, nobody
is worth going on for,
anymore. I've been a fool
all these years and now...

GINA

I can't let you give up on
life.

MARTIN

(angry)

You're worried about me?
You? Let me remind you
who's the cause of it all.

GINA

Don't keep blaming me. I've
paid a price for my
mistakes...a high one. But

I don't let them ruin my life.

Martin is near tears. Gina can't look at him.

GINA
I can't let you ruin yours.

MARTIN
My life isn't worth shit.
Neither is this damn circus.

GINA
How can you say that?

MARTIN
This is the place I've been lied to my entire life.
The place that caused my mom's death, the place I don't want to be in, anymore. You can tell your pal Aldridge I quit.

GINA
This circus has given you a good life. Don't throw it away just because--

MARTIN
Forget it! My mind's made up. I'm getting out of here first thing in the morning.

GINA
I can't let you go. With James gone, you have to stay.

MARTIN
There's nothing to stay for.

GINA
I understand how you feel. I do understand, but think about what you're doing. You were meant for this circus life, like we all were. Like your father and your mother were. It's your home.

MARTIN
I'm going.

GINA
Mart--

MARTIN
(shouts)
It's over! Get out of here.

GINA
Please...

MARTIN
Scram!

Gina walks off, looks back a few times. Martin stares into the bonfire.

INT. ALDRIDGE'S OFFICE - DAY

Aldridge is at his desk. He hears a knock at the door.

ALDRIDGE
Who is it?

MARTIN (O.S.)
It's Martin, sir.

ALDRIDGE
Come on in.

Martin walks in. He looks determined.

ALDRIDGE
Take a seat.

Martin shakes his head, stands by the desk.

MARTIN
No, thanks. I guess you
know why I'm here.

ALDRIDGE
Yeah. Gina told me.

Martin glares at him.

MARTIN
What was my mother like?
Aldridge is annoyed by the
question.

MARTIN

You and Gina helped to make
her--

ALDRIDGE

(interrupting)

It's no use going over all
that. All I can tell you is
that your mom loved James.
No matter how hard I tried
to get her and how many
times I hit on her, she'd
always turn me down.

He punches the desk.

ALDRIDGE

It was always only James
for her. Always, always
James. I knew her long
before she met him, but she
goes for him, instead. Go
figure.

MARTIN

That's no reason to wreck
their
marriage, is it?

ALDRIDGE

I guess not. But I didn't
want to lose her.

MARTIN

You and my dad...and
me...lost her for good,
thanks to what you did.

Aldridge opens a drawer and takes out a photo of Faith in costume. He looks at it lovingly.

ALDRIDGE

This is all I have left of
her.

Martin takes a good look at it.

MARTIN

She was so beautiful.

ALDRIDGE

It's no use my keeping it.
You can have it.

MARTIN

Really?

ALDRIDGE

Yeah. She told me to take
this picture and give it to
James. Of course, I didn't.
It was all I had left.

Aldridge hands the photo to Martin.

ALDRIDGE

Take it. Maybe you can make
a painting out of it?

MARTIN

I'm still thinking of
quitting.

ALDRIDGE

Quitting? I coulda kicked
you out long ago, kid...I
and never did. Now you want
to walk out on me?

MARTIN

I don't feel like I belong
here now.

ALDRIDGE

Your father'd never have
said that.

MARTIN

I'm no good...lost my
touch.

ALDRIDGE

Not with the banners. They
pull in the crowd, y'know.

MARTIN

I just want to give up.
Nothing comes out right for
me.

ALDRIDGE

Poor old James never gave
up, not even when his wife
died.

MARTIN

Well, I'm not him, am I?

ALDRIDGE
I don't buy that.

MARTIN
You can start looking for
another juggler. I'm
hitting the road.

ALDRIDGE
Okay, suit yourself.

Martin walks toward the door.

ALDRIDGE
Don't go, Marty. C'mon,
give us the old Martin
back.

INT. CIRCUS - LATER

Martin watches the acrobats' act and studies the audience. The act finishes and the audience erupts in applause.

INT. MARTIN'S TRAILER - DAY

Martin lies on the bed, stares at the painting of his father as if it's speaking to him. There's a knock at the door.

GINA (O.S.)
Martin, can I come in?

MARTIN
What do you want?

GINA
I need to talk to you. It's
urgent.

MARTIN
(sighs)
Come on in.

Gina walks in. Martin ignores her.

GINA
Aldridge just told me
you're really quitting.
It's the first time I've
ever known him to try to
convince somebody to stay,

when they bailed out on him.

MARTIN

He just pities me. Like everybody does.

GINA

Damn it, stop feeling sorry for yourself! We only want what's best for you.

MARTIN

I wish I could believe that! I can't trust anybody.

GINA

You know it's true. Not everybody is deceitful. I do understand why you'd want to leave. James wanted to several times, too, but he never did, no matter what. He knew he was meant for this life...wouldn't be any good anywhere else.

MARTIN

I'm not meant for it. Not any more.

GINA

That's a lie. Besides, what'll I do without you? I know I'll die childless.

(wipes away a tear)

And you've been like a son to me.

MARTIN

I know, but I feel this is the end of my life here. I need to live one of my own, not my father's...and not yours.

Gina takes his hand and pats it lovingly.

GINA

Whatever you do, wherever you go, just know I'll always be here for you. I'm

sorry things turned out
 they way they did

 MARTIN

Life can't be any worse for
me, now. I need to see if
it can be better away from
the circus.

 GINA

Well, your dad's life
insurance will help you to
find out, I guess. He left
you everything he had,
didn't he?

 MARTIN

So, he thought that with
his money I could forget
everything? And forgive all
of you?

 GINA

You can either take it and
leave, or keep it and stay
where you belong.

Martin looks deeply into Gina's eyes, then studies the painting of his father.

 MARTIN

I've been wanting to
die...or leave the circus
and never come back, but I
keep hearing his
voice...and he says it's
not my time to go, yet.

EXT. CIRCUS GROUNDS - DAYS LATER

A DELIVERY BOY hands the Lion Tamer an envelope.

INT. MARTIN'S TRAILER - MINUTES LATER

Martin paints a landscape. The Lion Tamer knocks, sticks his arm in the door and hands Martin the envelope.

 LION TAMER

This came for you.

 MARTIN

Thanks.

Martin opens the envelope, takes out the single sheet of paper and scans it.

He looks surprised turns to the painting of his father, as if he'd spoken to him.

INT. TAXI - THE NEXT DAY

Martin sits in the back. A painting-sized package wrapped in black paper lies next to him, on the seat. He hands the CAB DRIVER a piece of paper.

MARTIN

Take me to that address
please?
Wait, take me to the
cemetary first.

EXT. CEMETERY - LATER

The taxi pulls up, Martin gets out.

MARTIN

Wait for me please.
The driver nods.

EXT. CEMETERY - MOMENTS LATER

Martin walks to his father's grave. He sees a heavily-veiled woman standing there, holding a bunch of flowers. He is shocked to see it's Jane, when she raises her veil.

JANE

(faltering)

You're surprised to find me here. It's not my daddy's grave, it's your dad's. Well, it's Sunday and I had thoughts about us, so I came because I was home alone.

Martin flinches at the sound of Jane's voice. It steadies, and she goes on.

JANE

Gary is always away on business. I hope he never comes back. I miss Mr. Boswell...James. He was such a nice patient. I thought he might need some company and I owed him an apology. Silly, huh?

Jane places the flowers on the grave and hurries away. Martin watches her go. She doesn't look back.

EXT. CEMETERY - MOMENTS LATER

Martin looks down at the grave and the flowers.

MARTIN

Ah, what's the use! The past just won't stay dead, will it? Does it really matter, Dad? Maybe I'll just do what you did and leave it all in my journal, pretend it's a story... just a piece of fiction that can't hurt.

EXT. CEMETERY - MINUTES LATER

Martin is about to get in the taxi, Jane comes up behind him and grabs his arm.

JANE

I wanted to see you one more time. Maybe our last time.

MARTIN

You, again?

Martin stands there calmly, waits for a response.

JANE

I didn't lie when I said I loved you, y'know?

MARTIN

(sharply)

I'm sure your husband would be happy to hear that.

JANE

I don't love him.

Martin opens the door, then turns back to face her.

MARTIN

You should've thought about that before.

JANE

Can't I be forgiven?

Martin's pain battles his love for her. It shows in his face and keeps him from replying during a long, awkward pause.

MARTIN

How can I? It was an affair
that killed my mother,
remember? I can't be part
of one.

Jane slumps in defeat and turns away to go. Martin grabs her by an arm, turns her back to him and puts a hand gently to her cheek.

MARTIN

Good-bye Jane.

JANE

I'll be back in the
audience, whenever the
circus is here. I won't
give you up.

Jane kisses his hand and lets it drop.

MARTIN

Good-bye.

Martin gets in the cab, closes the door and the taxi speeds off. Jane shivers in the cold air. She watches the taxi until it's out of sight.

INT. TAXI - MOMENTS LATER

Martin stares out the window.

EXT. NURSING HOME - LATER

The taxi stops in front of a large, old run-down building. Martin gets out of the taxi with the painting.

MARTIN

Driver, please wait for me
again. I won't take long.

DRIVER

Whatever you say, buddy.

EXT. NURSING HOME HALLWAY - MINUTES LATER

A NURSE leads Martin to the second floor. He looks at all the elderly people who sit around like vegetables in wheel chairs and on beds in the rooms they pass.

They stop outside a room. The nurse opens the door.

MARTIN
Can you leave us alone,
please?

NURSE
Of course. I'll be right
down the hall, if you need
me.

Martin walks in, the nurse leaves.

INT. THOMAS' ROOM - CONTINUOUS

A cheap picture hangs on the wall facing THOMAS (70s), who sits in a wheelchair facing away from the door. He is very frail-looking. Martin is shocked at his condition.

MARTIN
Hello, I'm Martin, Martin
Boswell...your grandson.

Thomas turns his head slowly.

MARTIN
I got a letter saying that
the money my father paid
for your stay here is used
up. Well, he won't pay it
any more...he's dead.
Cancer got him.

Thomas gasps, chokes slightly.

MARTIN
Don't worry, I'll go on
paying it for you. I'm a
juggler in the circus. I
guess you hate hearing
that.
(his voice breaks a bit)
Well, sometimes I sell my
paintings and my father's
life insurance also helps,
so I can afford it okay, if
you even care.

He goes closer to him and puts his hand on his shoulder.

MARTIN

I remember when I was
little, I used to ask my
father where you were and
he said you were away
somewhere, helping
refugees.

Martin chuckles ruefully.

MARTIN

And I believed him.

THOMAS

James.

Thomas stares at the floor. Martin unwraps the painting he titled "The Color of Agony."

MARTIN

By the way, I brought a
present for you.

He takes down the painting on the wall, sets it on the floor and hangs the portrait of his father, Thomas' son, in its place.

MARTIN

I don't know when your
birthday is, but call it a
birthday gift.

Martin stares at his grandfather, sees no reaction.

MARTIN

Good bye, Grandpa.

Thomas watches Martin walk out the door. A single tear slides slowly down one cheek.

INT. HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

On his way to the stairs, Martin studies patients he sees. Some lie there listlessly and others are being helped to eat, or clean up. Martin sees a nurse caring gently for a patient. As he watches them, her face becomes Jane's, for a moment.

He stops suddenly, turns to go back to his grandfather. After only a couple of steps, he stops again, shakes his head as if

shaking off a thought, and walks swiftly down the stairs and out of the rest home.

INT. TAXI - MOMENTS LATER

The driver turns to Martin who stares out the window at the rundown rest home.

DRIVER

Where to now? Back to the circus?

Martin gives him a quick, determined smile.

MARTIN

Yes. No more stops!

The taxi speeds off.

INT. THOMAS' ROOM - AT THE SAME TIME

Thomas raises his head slowly. Tears well up and spill over, as he stares at the painting of his son, the clown.

FADE OUT.