

FADE IN:

EXT. GREENLOW PARK, GREENWICH, CT. - NIGHT

A BUM (65) in raggedy hat and topcoat with a big long beard trundles through the heavy snow. Carrying a shoebox wrapped in newspapers and rags, he exits the park.

EXT. ANY STREET, GREENWICH, CT.

Fighting cold and wind, he crosses the street and is nearly run down by a car. The driver slides to a halt and rolls down the window.

DRIVER

Hey, you! Ya bum! Watch where you're going.

BUM

Sorry.

The car speeds off. The bum trundles on through the wind and snowdrifts. He stops, wipes the sweat from his brow and, panting, looks up at the swirling sky.

BUM

My God!

VOICE (O.C.)

Yes?

BUM

Very funny.

VOICE (O.C.)

You're almost there. Keep going.

Mumbling to himself, the bum turns a corner. A wind gust nearly knocks him off his feet. He clutches the bundle.

BUM

Always in winter. Why is it always in winter?

VOICE (O.C.)

Don't blow it, Herbert. You know the consequences.

BUM

(burps)

I'm not gonna blow it.

He swerves a bit.

VOICE (O.C.)

Just how much eggnog did you have?

The bum heads into the bushes to take a whiz.

BUM

I'm an angel -- it goes right
through me.
Very unfortunately.

Finished the bum looks up through the wind and snow at a well-appointed home, lights on, Christmas music blaring.

VOICE (O.C)

You're doing good, Herbert. I'm
gonna put you in for a citation.
Golden wings, Herbert. You know
what that means.

BUM

These humans, they don't know how
lucky they are.

The bum leans against a big oak, clutching the shoebox.
Watching the house, he waits in the freezing cold.

FADE OUT:

FADE IN:

EXT. ANY STREET, GREENWICH, CT. - DAY

A fine autumn day breaks over the same street in the quiet suburban town. Pink sun peeks through fluffy clouds. Dogs bark in the distance.

Colorful leaves swirl past the grammar school where crayon pictures of Halloween witches and Thanksgiving turkeys hang in windowpanes.

SUPER: "THREE MONTHS AGO"

Leaves whirl up the makeshift basketball courts in the drives and the covered swimming pools in the backyards.

An alarm clock buzzes, then another with morning news and another with pop music. The lazy town awakes.

INT. SWIFTER HOME

In the master bedroom JACEY FAIRWAY(34), brown-haired, attractive, opens one eye, moans, reaches over and hits the alarm clock. It reads 6:15.

JACEY

Oh, no. It can't be!

She rolls on her side and puts the pillow over her head. A wedding ring glistens on her finger.

A MALE HAND reaches over and tugs the pillow off. Jacey plays dead.

DONALD (O.C)

Oh, come on, now. No cheating!

DONALD SWIFTER (42) handsome businessman, dressed for work, sits at the edge of the bed. He lifts her wrist, drops it.

JACEY

I'm not dead.
 (eyes shut, but
 smiling)
 I'm asleep.

DONALD

You can't hide out here forever
 you know.

He kisses her cheek.

DONALD (CONT'D)

The girls are making breakfast.

He kisses her neck.

JACEY

Oh, no! I was supposed to make
 breakfast.
 (pulls the sheets over her
 head)
 They hate my breakfasts. They hate
 everything about me.

He reaches beneath the sheets.

DONALD

No, they don't.

JACEY

Yes, they do.

The alarm clock erupts again. Jacey slaps it.

JACEY

(laughing)
 OK, all right, I'm up already!

Donald starts to exit.

JACEY

Wait!

She grabs him and kisses him.

DONALD

The girls...

She keeps kissing him. He removes her arms from his neck.

DONALD

Come on, now.

Jacey throws herself back on the bed in mock frustration. She peeks out from the pillows.

JACEY

I'm gonna miss you, you know.

DONALD

You're just terrified to be alone with them, aren't you?

JACEY

NO!

They share a laugh. It's true, she is terrified.

DONALD

You're gonna be great, sweetheart. We're great together, all of us. That's why I married you.

Jacey wraps a leg around him.

JACEY

Is that the only reason?

DONALD

(amused, blushing)

OK, serious talk is done. I'm going now.

He exits. She lies there for a moment, then gets up, heads into the bathroom and turns the shower on.

KITCHEN

SIERRA (16) middle-class, emo teen in a Radio Head T-shirt and black jeans (aka always miserable) works the blender, while TIFFANY (12) wanna-be model in a white sweater, pink-mini and braces presides over a mess.

Orange juice, toast, coffee, jam, and eggs cram the table. Tiffany stares at a delicate gold bracelet around Sierra's wrist amidst plastic and heavy metal arm bands.

TIFFANY

When she comes down, I'm going to tell her.

Sierra flicks her hair out of her eyes. A short asymmetrical cut, always in at least one eye.

SIERRA

Go ahead, see if I care --

She stuffs an egg sandwich into her mouth.

SIERRA

-- see if she cares.

TIFFANY

You're gonna get fat.

Tiffany picks up *Seventeen Magazine* and plops down at the table.

SIERRA

Unlikely. My caloric intake isn't equivalent to my caloric output. Hence, no fat.

Donald enters and sits. The girls rush to place toast, jam, and eggs before him.

TIFFANY AND SIERRA

(overlapping)

Daddy, I made the toast and I made the eggs and I --

DONALD

Whoa! Hold on there! What's all this?

SIERRA

Dad, when you get to Germany can you buy me a Heaftling shirt? It's a real prison shirt made by prisoners.

DONALD

What? No!

SIERRA

Please, Dad, it's awesome! In black.

TIFFANY

I like pink.

SIERRA

(rolls her eyes)

Pink prison stripes?

DONALD

I said, no!

TIFFANY AND SIERRA

But Daddy --

Their faces fall.

DONALD

OK, look, we'll see... Relax,
girls. I'll only be gone a week.

Sierra pouts. This is, in fact, the problem.

Jacey enters, dressed for work, still fixing her sleeves.

DONALD

Be back in plenty of time for
Turkey Day.

She kisses Donald on the top of the head, heads to the
fridge.

SIERRA

This year.

DONALD

Yes. This year.

Sierra, not at all happy, watches Jacey.

SIERRA

I am not going down to mom's, in
Florida. Not again.

Jacey takes out the orange juice and pours herself a
glass, standing apart from the family.

DONALD

Your mother loves you.

The girls roll their eyes. Jacey's discomfited but joins
them at the table.

JACEY

He said he'll be back. He'll be
back, girls. Besides, you always
have me.

An uncomfortable silence.

JACEY

Look, I'm sorry about breakfast,
all right? I'll make dinner
tonight. What do you want?
Anything you want, OK?

A bigger silence. Jacey looks at Sierra, at her wrist.

JACEY
Is that my bracelet?

TIFFANY
(to Sierra)
I told you she would care.

JACEY
No, I don't care. I just... It
would be nice to know. That's all.

As they eat, Jacey gets up and goes to the door.

DONALD
Sierra, you shouldn't just take
things.

SIERRA
Fine, all right. She can have it
back.

Sierra tosses the bracelet on the table.

DONALD
That's not the point.

SIERRA
Then what is?

Tiffany elbows Sierra re: Jacey at the door.

SIERRA
She's going to do it again.

TIFFANY
A dollar says she's not.

Sierra pulls two dollars out of her backpack.

SIERRA
Two dollars says she is.

The girls watch her with baited breath.

DONALD
Girls, c'mon. Don't.

EXT. SWIFTER'S STREET

A PAPERBOY rides by, hurling newspapers hard against the
front doors.

PAPERBOY
G'morning!
(thud!)
G'morning!

Another louder thud.

INTERCUT PAPERBOY WITH JACEY AND THE GIRLS

In the parlor, Sierra counts on her watch.

SIERRA
One, two... now!

Jacey opens the front door, just as the paper hurls into it -- or her.

JACEY
(doubles over)
Ow! Hey, watch it!

Sierra pumps her fist up and down.

SIERRA
Yes!

Tiffany frowns. Outside, the paperboy waves back.

BOY
G'morning, Mrs. Swifter.

JACEY
It's Fairway. My name is Fair --
Oh, whatever! Good morning!

Tiffany hands her older sister two dollars.

SIERRA
Some people learn, some people
don't.

Tiffany hands over the money. Donald shakes his head.

EXT. DRIVEWAY - MOMENTS LATER

Tiffany and Sierra, iPods in their ears, are ready for school. Donald carries his luggage.

DONALD
Look, I'm gonna e-mail what I want
and you can get it into that iPod
for me, download it or whatever.

SIERRA
You sure you want all that 80's
crud?

Jacey and Sierra help Donald load his bags into the car.

JACEY

Sierra!

DONALD

It's great music.

SIERRA

There's better stuff. How about punk -- you were alive for punk, right? She wasn't but you were.

Jacey, despite herself, laughs.

DONALD

It's really simple, Sierra.
Either you'll do it or you won't.

SIERRA

OK, OK, I'll do it. So, g'bye.

Donald hugs her but when Jacey comes forward, Sierra keeps her distance, bopping to the music. Tiffany runs up.

TIFFANY

Bye, Dad! Bye, Jacey!

Tiffany kisses them both, then turns to her dad.

TIFFANY

Hurry back.

DONALD

Course I will, pumpkin.

TIFFANY

Daddy, don't call me that!

DONALD

OK, sugar.

TIFFANY

Daddy!

The girls walk off to school. Jacey waves to them. Only Tiffany waves back.

Donald closes the boot.

DONALD

I can't tell anymore -- are they girls or women?

JACEY

Both.

(they laugh)

Don't worry, I can handle it... for a week. You have everything you need?

DONALD

No. I don't.

He means her and the girls.

DONALD

But on short notice this is the best I can do.

He puts his arms around her, kisses her.

DONALD

Sure you won't come? Europe's gorgeous this time of year.

JACEY

I dunno. We'd have to get a sitter for the girls and -- I just -- we just started bonding, you know?

Jacey is upset.

DONALD

What is it?

She shakes her head. She doesn't really know.

DONALD

Is it Sierra? She's not angry at you, sweetheart. She's been this way ever since the divorce, even before. Maybe since she was born.

JACEY

I know.

He takes her chin in his hand, tilts her head up at him.

DONALD

You can help her. You are helping her. You're a role model.

JACEY

(skeptical)
Right.

They kiss one more time, lingering.

JACEY

It's just... I've never been in a family before and I -- I don't wanna blow it.

DONALD

You won't blow it. You couldn't if you tried.