

TITLE: It's a Big Top World
GENRE: Dark Comedy/Drama
PAGES: 118

LOGLINE: In a world where clowns are a racial minority, a father with amnesia must remember his past before a clown-mafia leader claims his family and puts him six feet under.

SYNOPSIS:

Set in a parallel version of San Francisco, where clowns are a distinct, genetic variation on humans, and have developed their own underground culture, Stitches, an out-of-work clown, struggles to support his family.

A hero to Patches, his biracial son, Stitches falls victim to prejudice and police brutality.

Pagliacci, the "clafia" leader and Stitches' estranged brother, seeks revenge on the police while at the same time moving in on Rhonda, Stitches' wife... but Stitches is starting to remember.

William Bienes
123 4th Street
Belvidere, NJ 07823
WTBNS@COMCAST.NET
908-475-2744 Home
908-283-3890 Cell
WGA1337790

FADE IN:

EXT. OUTSKIRTS OF GOLDEN GATE PARK - DAY

Three juggling balls take turns piercing the blue sky.

MAN'S VOICE (O.S.)
Okay -- toss them up.

Two balls join the procession, speeding the rhythm.

CHILD'S VOICE (O.S.)
Alright, Dad.

MAN'S VOICE (O.S.)
Now... the last two.

CHILD'S VOICE (O.S.)
You sure?

MAN'S VOICE (O.S.)
I'm positive.

The last two join at a breakneck pace -- seven balls kissing the sky.

CHILD'S VOICE (O.S.)
That's awesome --

SIRENS

The balls disappear from the sky.

A rainbow colored Volkswagen Bus comes screaming around the bend. Losing control, it slams against a lamppost.

As if an exploding piñata, CLOWNS spill from the bus like candy. All motionless where they land -- but one, gaunt and rail-thin, he exits the overtuned bus carrying a stuffed canvas sack, embossed with a black money sign.

Shifting his eyes and cocking his head, he's off running -- as best he can with his injuries.

STITCHES, (the juggler), 30's, white faced, a round red nose, hands the juggling balls to PATCHES, 9, half-clown, half-human split vertically down the middle.

STITCHES
Stay right here...

PATCHES
Dad, where are you going?

STITCHES
 Citizen's arrest.

Stitches gives chase, his big red shoes smacking the ground as if walking on hot coals.

Three police cars arrive, sirens and lights in full glory.

OFFICERS exit the first two cars. Following protocol, they make their way to the motionless clowns.

The third car continues toward Stitches, who has gained on the gaunt clown.

Pulling just ahead of Stitches, the OFFICERS exit with guns cocked.

OFFICER 1
 Halt.

Stitches stops dead in his tracks, arms raised.

STITCHES
 He's going to get away...

The trailing officer continues toward the gaunt clown.

Stitches lowers his arms.

OFFICER 1
 Keep them up.

Stitches quickly returns his arms to the surrender position.

OFFICER 1
 Don't test me, clown.

Stitches closes his eyes and bows his head.

INT. LAVISH OUTDOOR ROOM - DAY

Child's birthday party -- the picture of wealth. Balloons, piñatas, candy, cake and endless CHILDREN fill this opulent space.

Stitches stands behind a table making balloon animals. Like blue boomerangs, two bands of cobalt hair stick out from each side of his head.

Patches stands in the distant doorway, one band of cobalt hair and a purple flower in his lapel. He smiles, watching Stitches work.

NATHANIEL, 8, stands.

STITCHES
And what animal does the birthday
boy want? A rhino? A dove?

Nathaniel folds his arms and shakes his head.

Stitches stretches a balloon.

STITCHES
Maybe a car -- or a bicycle?

Nathaniel huffs, tilting his head in anger.

NATHANIEL
I want a carousel.

Stitches raises his eyebrows.

The bustle of children.

STITCHES
A carousel?

NATHANIEL
Not just any carousel. The
Herschell-Spillman carousel at
Golden Gate Park.

STITCHES
I don't think...

NATHANIEL
With the pavilion, of course.

STITCHES
That's an awfully big task. I
don't have enough balloons --

NATHANIEL
My mother ordered several thousand.
Check under there.

Nathaniel points to the table.

Stitches picks up the tablecloth and glances at the boxes of balloons.

STITCHES
Well, it would take far too long,
and --

NATHANIEL
What kind of clown are you?

CHILD VOICE 1 (O.S.)
Yeah --

CHILD VOICE 2 (O.S.)
Come on, clown. Make the carousel.

NATHANIEL
Do it.

STITCHES
I...

A chorus breaks out, "Do it - Do it".

Patches' smile leaves his face as he turns away.

NATHANIEL
Do it, clown. Make the carousel.

Cupcakes and candy rain down on Stitches from all angles.

EXT. LAWN - LATER

Stitches cleans his face with a multi-colored hanky.

MRS. LONGFELLOW, 40's, lean and attractive, hands money to Stitches.

MRS. LONGFELLOW
I'm so sorry.

Stitches continues to wipe the icing and cake from his face, pausing to force out a smile.

MRS. LONGFELLOW
Nathaniel -- he always wants bigger and better.

Stitches nods his head.

MRS. LONGFELLOW
A little spoiled, I'm afraid.

Uncomfortable silence.

MRS. LONGFELLOW
Well, thank you for your time. And again... I apologize.

Stitches places his hanky back into his coat pocket. He and Patches turn around and walk away.

EXT. SAN FRANCISCO STREET - DAY

Stitches and Patches, hand-in-hand, walk down the declining street, The Golden Gate in the distance.

PATCHES

I think you're a great clown, Dad.

STITCHES

Thanks.

PATCHES

And a hero.

STITCHES

Oh, yeah -- why's that?

PATCHES

Your citizen's arrest today.

STITCHES

Well, I didn't actually apprehend the bank robber.

PATCHES

But if the policemen didn't start chasing you, they wouldn't have been able to catch the robber.

Stitches smiles as they continue walking.

PATCHES

Why did those clowns rob the bank?

STITCHES

We're in tough times, Patches. Clowns -- and even men, they become desperate. The difference between right and wrong isn't as clear.

PATCHES

You wouldn't do that, Dad -- would you?

Stitches turns to face Patches.

STITCHES

I'd do anything to make sure you
and your mother have food and
shelter... but I'd never do
something that could separate us.

Stitches puts his arm around Patches and pulls him close as they saunter down the block, disappearing down the decline.

INT. STITCHES' HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

1950's-style kitchen, black and white checkered floor, chrome table and chairs. Stitches sits at the table, head slumped, bills spilling from his hands.

The oversized yellow and green polka-dotted bowtie mimics his slumping head, as does the purple flower sprouting from his lapel.

Hovering above the bills, droplets of water fall from the purple flower as RHONDA (Human), 30's, a beautiful brunette dressed in a business suit, enters the kitchen. Her back is to Stitches.

RHONDA

Patches has a dentist appointment
after school -- don't let him eat
cotton candy.

Stitches looks up from the table, his white face staring straight ahead.

RHONDA

And don't forget to go to the bank
this morning...

Stitches nods his head.

Rhonda fixes a thermos of coffee. Turning around, she focuses on Stitches, placing her hand on her hip.

RHONDA

You can at least acknowledge me...

Stitches rises, his big shiny red shoes knock the table.

STITCHES

I nodded my head -- I'm sorry. I
thought you were looking.

Stitches hugs Rhonda as she lets out a few sobs.

HONK -- a horn goes off as Stitches hugs Rhonda tighter.
Rhonda, halfheartedly smacks Stitches on the arm.

RHONDA
Jerk...

STITCHES
I'm sorry... really, I am.

RHONDA
Maybe you could look for other
work. Something mainstream.

STITCHES
I'm a clown, Rhonda. There's no
mainstream for me. You know that.

Stitches pulls away from Rhonda.

STITCHES
Would you buy insurance from a
clown? Or choose one as your
financial planner?

Rhonda picks up her thermos.

RHONDA
It's not like it used to be.

STITCHES
A few token positions isn't change.

Rhonda exits the kitchen.

RHONDA (O.S.)
Unemployment doesn't pay the
mortgage... don't forget the bank.

EXT. CITY STREET - DAY

Patches holds Stitches' hand -- a bounce in his step.

PATCHES
I want to try five balls today.

STITCHES
You think you can keep them all in
the air?

PATCHES
I think so.

Stitches smiles, looking down at Patches.

STITCHES

Me too.

Stitches musses the one band of cobalt hair on Patches' head which quickly snaps back in place.

PATCHES

Dad -- do you have to work birthday parties again?

STITCHES

I don't know.

PATCHES

You shouldn't.

STITCHES

Sometimes you don't have a choice.

PATCHES

But they don't deserve you.

STITCHES

When you're wealthy, son, you can buy the things you don't deserve.

They continue walking hand-in-hand.

PATCHES

Is the circus ever coming back?

STITCHES

I think so.

PATCHES

That's where you belong, Dad.

STITCHES

Yeah -- that's where we both belong.

PATCHES

You really think they'd take half a clown?

STITCHES

You're all clown, Patches. Don't let anyone tell you different.

Stitches smiles as they arrive in front of the school. He kisses Patches, who hugs him tightly -- two muffled honks.

Patches waves to his father as he skips up the school stairs, both waving until Patches disappears into the school.

Stitches digs into his pockets, satisfied.

EXT. THIRD NATIONAL BANK - DAY

Stepping into the revolving doors, Stitches makes three full cycles before exiting the door into --

INT. THIRD NATIONAL BANK - DAY

-- THE MARBLE LOBBY

He approaches the customer service counter carrying a purple velvet sack.

ETHEL, 50's, simple, plain customer service representative with a "New Employee Badge", looks up from the counter. Her face loses all color as her eyes grow wide, watching Stitches approach.

STITCHES
Good morning, ma'am.

ETHEL
Please, I'll give you want you want
-- just don't hurt anyone.

Stitches raises his eyebrows.

STITCHES
Excuse me?

Ethel looks over Stitches' shoulder, making eye contact with a BANK GUARD, she nods her head.

STITCHES
Ma'am, what are you talking about?

Stitches places the purple sack on the table.

ETHEL
Don't shoot...

Stitches blankly stares.

CLICK of a gun being cocked.

BANK GUARD (O.S.)
Stop right there -- drop to the
floor, spread your arms and legs.

Stitches makes eye contact with Ethel. Disappointed, then angry, he slowly turns around to face the Bank Guard.

BANK GUARD
Don't make any false moves, Pal.

Sensing the time is right, Ethel begins to quietly walk away. Without turning around, Stitches points to Ethel.

STITCHES
You, stay here. I came to you for
help and you've done everything
but.

BANK GUARD
We don't want any trouble.

Stitches reaches for the purple velvet bag.

BANK GUARD
I wouldn't do that.

Police SIRENS.

Stitches' anger boils over. He turns to face Ethel.

STITCHES
I'm here to apply for a loan -- and
you pushed the button?

Enraged, the purple flower in Stitches' lapel stands straight out and squirts a liquid into Ethel's face.

Ethel screams, passes out and hits the floor.

One SHOT fired.

Stitches pats his face, his chest, his arms -- still standing, confused.

STITCHES
Am I hit?

INT. INTERROGATION ROOM - DAY

Typical -- table, chairs, two-way mirror, and a bright overhead lamp. The lamp shines like a spotlight on Stitches, who has his head buried in his hands on the table.

The TURN of the doorknob.

Stitches raises his head, his eyes following the action.

TWO MEN enter -- suits, crew-cuts and mirrored sunglasses.

MAN 1 walks to the far end of the room and leans up against the wall with his arms folded.

MAN 2 tosses the purple sack and manila folder on the table, pulls out a chair, turns it around and straddles it.

Obviously relishing their work, both are over-the-top in every movement and gesture.

DETECTIVE BAILEY (MAN 2)
That's Detective Barnum.

Stitches faintly smiles, glancing at Man 2.

STITCHES
I guess that makes you Bailey.

Detective Barnum and Bailey exchange a surprised glance.

STITCHES
You don't say...

DETECTIVE BAILEY
Have I arrested you before?

STITCHES
I've never been arrested.

Detective Bailey removes a Lucky Strike from his breast pocket, lights it and releases a plume of smoke that travels across the table, hovering around Stitches' head.

Stitches coughs.

DETECTIVE BAILEY
Virtually impossible to recall...

Detective Barnum refolds his arms, slowly walking to another corner of the room.

DETECTIVE BARNUM (MAN 1)
...All you clowns look alike.

Stitches shakes his head.

DETECTIVE BAILEY
 What's the head shake about? We
 don't judge anyone by the size of
 their feet.

DETECTIVE BARNUM
 Or the color of their nose.

Using his index and middle finger in the shape of a V,
 Detective Barnum points to his eyes.

DETECTIVE BARNUM
 We let these be our judge.

EXT. ELEMENTARY SCHOOL - DAY

Patches stands on the brick steps.

SCHOOL CHILDREN scurry down and around Patches, while he
 looks back and forth -- a worried face.

As the last of the children pass, A HAND reaches down and
 grabs a hold of his shoulder. The hand brings Patches closer
 to its BODY, a female body, dressed in a pantsuit.

The body bends down -- it's MRS. BROWN, the school principal.
 She wipes the tear from Patches' face.

MRS. BROWN
 Why don't we go in and call your
 mother...

Patches nods. They turn and enter the building.

INT. INTERROGATION ROOM - DAY

Stitches rubs his face as Detective Bailey leans in.

DETECTIVE BAILEY
 Armed robbery --

DETECTIVE BARNUM
 Attempted murder --

STITCHES
 That's ridiculous.

Detective Bailey reaches into the purple sack, pulling out a
 long-barreled revolver and slamming it on the table.

DETECTIVE BAILEY
Then what is this?

STITCHES
Please, it's a family heirloom.

DETECTIVE BARNUM
It looks like a gun to me.

STITCHES
Collateral -- for the loan.

DETECTIVE BARNUM
Guns as collateral... an everyday
occurrence at the bank.

DETECTIVE BAILEY
What are you, some kind of clown?

STITCHES
Yes. As a matter of fact I am...
(rising with defiance)
a Whiteface Clown and proud of it!

Stitches returns to his seat.

Detective Bailey picks up the revolver, removes his
sunglasses and examines it.

The gun goes off --

Out pops a flag with "BANG" written on it.

Detective Barnum draws his weapon, holding it with great
force - stiff, pointing it in Stitches' face.

STITCHES
It was just a flag -- an heirloom.

INT. OFFICE - DAY

Rhonda, phone in hand, nervous.

RHONDA
It's me.

Rhonda fidgets with her pocketbook, spilling the contents on
the desk, looking for a cigarette.

RHONDA
Can you get Patches from school?

Rhonda lights her cigarette, inhaling deeply. Rubbing her face, Rhonda exhales through her nose.

RHONDA
I don't know where he is.

Rhonda places her head in her hand.

RHONDA
Dad, please -- just pick up Patches
and I'll see you later.

INT. INTERROGATION ROOM - DAY

STITCHES
It wasn't poisonous.

DETECTIVE BAILEY
You tried to kill her.

Stitches' anger boils.

Detective Barnum leans in.

DETECTIVE BARNUM
Come on, we know your type, clown.

The purple flower sprays liquid into Detective Barnum's face.

Stunned, Detective Barnum falls back.

Detective Bailey draws his weapon and fires a round at the flower, blowing off a few petals, liquid oozes out.

Stitches grabs the flower, hunches over.

STITCHES
You son-of-a-bitch... that's no
accessory -- it's part of me.

Detective Bailey holsters his gun.

Stitches -- in obvious pain.

Detective Barnum, face dripping, leans back into Stitches and grabs him by his oversized ruffled collar.

DETECTIVE BARNUM
You're lucky I don't have a temper.

Detective Barnum notices the handkerchief sticking out of Stitches' breast pocket. He reaches in and begins pulling it out -- and pulling it out. And pulling it out.

Frustrated, Detective Barnum wipes his face with the multi-colored handkerchief and tosses it on the table.

DETECTIVE BAILEY
Are you okay?

STITCHES
I need a doctor.

DETECTIVE BAILEY
I wasn't talking to you.

DETECTIVE BARNUM
I think so -- it's not burning.

STITCHES
It's water... I can't control it --
emotional extremes.

EXT. CHARLIE'S HOUSE - DAY

Rhonda quickly walks up to the front door, flicks her cigarette, turns the doorknob and enters the house.

INT. CHARLIE'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

CHARLIE, 50's, Rhonda's Dad, sits at the table with Patches. Both eating grilled cheese sandwiches.

Rhonda looks to Charlie, smiles warmly.

CHARLIE
Patches and I had a wonderful time.

Rhonda hugs Patches from behind.

Charlie gazes at Patches, who looks up with a smile. Charlie rises from his chair, plants a kiss on Patches' forehead while cupping his face with his hand.

CHARLIE
You can have the rest of my chips.

Charlie makes eye contact with Rhonda, nodding his head in the direction of the doorway, they exit into --

THE LIVING ROOM

CHARLIE
He's no good.

RHONDA
It's hard for him right now.

CHARLIE
And still making excuses. Clown
fever -- I told you...

Rhonda turns her back on Charlie.

Patches appears, unnoticed at the doorway, face up against
the moulding -- a tear rolling down his cheek.

RHONDA
I love Stitches.

CHARLIE
He refuses to join the real world.

RHONDA
He's not a pawn.

CHARLIE
The circus is dead, for crying out
loud.

RHONDA
He'll find something.

CHARLIE
What, birthday parties? A few
balloon animals? You can barely
make ends meet yet you still send
Patches to juggling school.

Patches wipes his eyes and leaves the doorway, back into the
kitchen and out the back door.

EXT. CHARLIE'S HOUSE - BACKYARD - DAY

Patches sits on a swing in the backyard, slowly twisting
himself in circles.

RHONDA (O.S.)
It's his heritage.

CHARLIE (O.S.)
He's half-human, too. What about
that heritage?

RHONDA (O.S.)
 Why do you always have to give me a
 hard time about this?

Patches continues to twist the chains of the swing until he
 cannot twist anymore.

CHARLIE (O.S.)
 I'm just looking out for your best
 interests.

RHONDA (O.S.)
 Then let me make my own decisions.
 Respect my judgement.

Silence.

CHARLIE (O.S.)
 Come live with me... you and
 Patches.

Patches picks his feet off the ground. The swing untwists,
 gaining speed with each full turn.

INT. INTERROGATION ROOM - DAY

STITCHES
 You can't keep me here -- clowneas
 corpus.

Barnum, leaning in --

DETECTIVE BARNUM
 Attacked a defenseless woman,
 attempted to rob a bank -- and you
 want rights?

Stitches slams his fist on the table.

STITCHES
 For the last time, I did none of
 that.

Detective Bailey opens the manila folder and pulls out a
 photo, tossing it in front of Stitches.

DETECTIVE BAILEY
 Pick it up.

Stitches picks up the photo --

A PAIR OF ASIAN CLOWNS.

DETECTIVE BARNUM
Look familiar?

Stitches places the photo back down on the table.

STITCHES
I've never seen them before.

Detective Bailey places his right hand on his hip.

DETECTIVE BAILEY
Never did business with them?

STITCHES
No.

DETECTIVE BARNUM
Ling Brothers -- doesn't ring a
bell?

Stitches coldly stares at Detective Barnum.

STITCHES
I know nothing of this Ling Ring.

Detective Barnum retrieves the other photo from the manila folder and tosses it in front of Stitches.

Stitches looks at the photo without picking it up.

STITCHES
Don Pagliacci...

The Detectives -- raised eyebrows and coy smiles.

Stitches examines both Detectives.

STITCHES
What?

DETECTIVE BAILEY
A quick and determined recognition.

STITCHES
His face is all over the news. I'd
be an idiot not to know who he is.

DETECTIVE BARNUM
What else do you know about him?

STITCHES
Nothing.

Detective Bailey places his right foot on the seat across from Stitches and rests both forearms on his thigh.

DETECTIVE BAILEY
Come on. Don Pagliacci -- head of
the clafia...

DETECTIVE BARNUM
You two never shared a Volkswagen?

STITCHES
I've never shared anything with
him... or any other criminal clown.

DETECTIVE BARNUM
There's not a lot you do know...
just an out-of-work clown, down on
his luck, huh?

Silence.

DETECTIVE BAILEY
What we have is you, a gun and a
customer representative in a coma.

STITCHES
A coma?

DETECTIVE BARNUM
Unable to breathe on her own.

Stitches, lost in his own shock and sadness, only hears muddled sounds -- the voices of the detectives. Their faces are distorted -- kaleidoscope-like. The sounds overlap each other, growing louder until...

Detective Bailey slaps Stitches across the face and returns to his original position.

Abruptly, Stitches is jarred back to reality.

DETECTIVE BAILEY
Are you working for Pagliacci or
the Ling Ring?

STITCHES
I'm not working for...

Another smack, returning to original position.

STITCHES
Stop hitting me.

DETECTIVE BAILEY
Don Pagliacci or the Lings?

STITCHES
Neither...

Another smack.

Enraged, Stitches rises from his chair, the purple flower squirting Detective Bailey in the face.

Stitches reaches for Detective Bailey...

A SHOT fires.

Stitches falls back over the table and to the ground.

Detective Barnum stands stoically in the firing position, smoke rising from the end of his barrel.

Stitches, on the ground, water gushing from his purple flower, gasps for air. The water turns to blood -- like a ruptured pipe, it shoots straight into the air.

CLOSE ON: Stitches' face -- a tear falls from the corner of his eye.

STITCHES
(whispering)
Help me, Rhonda.

INT. AMBULANCE - DAY

Lights, sirens -- two EMTS work on Stitches.

Barely conscious, he fades in and out --

FLATLINE

EMT 1 leans into Stitches.

EMT 1
He's not breathing -- no pulse.

EMT 2 grabs the cart -- juices the paddles.

EMT 2
Clear --

EMT 1
What setting is that?

EMT 2
I don't know -- how high do I turn
it up?

EMT 1
I've never had a clown flatline
before.

EMT 2 turns the defribillator all the way up.

EMT 2
Clear --

EMT 2 places the paddles on Stitches's chest cavity.

ZAP -- an electric charge, A GUTTURAL HONK follows the
charge.

Stitches' body jolts, colorful confetti like a geyser, exits
his mouth.

EMT 2 backs off.

EMT 2
What the hell is that?

EMT 1 shakes his head.

EMT 1
I -- I don't know.

FLATLINE

EMT 2
Call the EMC. I don't know what to
do --

EMT 2 repeats the ritual with the same action following.

EMT 1 grabs the two-way radio.

EMT 1
I need an EMC -- stat. We have a
flatliner. He isn't responding.

RADIO (V.O.)
Is he Grotesque?

EMT 1 looks at the radio, confused.

EMT 1
Shit was coming out of his mouth...
it wasn't pretty.

EMT 1 looks to EMT 2.

EMT 2 shrugs his shoulders.

RADIO (V.O.)
No, no -- is he white-faced?

EMT 1
Yes, he's got a white face.

RADIO (V.O.)
Help is on the way.

EXT. STREET - DAY

The ambulance, on the side of the road, parked diagonally, emergency lights flashing.

A Volkswagen Beetle, red and white with emergency lights blazing, comes to a screeching halt in front of the ambulance.

The Beetle's door flies open.

A CLOWN in medical attire exits, bent over, walks quickly, a la Groucho Marx to the back of the ambulance. He disappears into it.

Another CLOWN exits the Beetle, followed by ANOTHER -- then ANOTHER.

And ANOTHER.

TWO more exit carrying a gurney, all disappearing into the back of the ambulance.

With each entry, the ambulance sits lower to the ground.

INT. HOSPITAL CORRIDOR - NIGHT

MEDICAL STAFF and VISITORS mill about.

Rhonda, almost running, makes her way down to the end of the corridor -- a sign to her left on the wall, "C.C.U."

Rhonda presses the wall pad underneath the sign. As quickly as the double doors open, she is through them.

The doors close -- sign on door, "Critical Clown Unit".

INT. CRITICAL CLOWN UNIT - NIGHT

Rhonda searches the room numbers. Finally, a match.

ROOM 711

A POLICE OFFICER sits outside the door.

The Officer looks up at Rhonda who returns an angry look.

The Officer quickly turns his eyes to the floor.

Rhonda peeks into the room.

At the foot of the bed, a covered outline shoots up well past the height of the footboard, like a ski jump --

INT. HOSPITAL - ROOM 711 - NIGHT

-- Drastically declining as Rhonda's eyes make their way up to the middle of the bed, then to the head of the bed.

Stitches, hooked up to various medical monitors and IVs, lies motionless.

Rhonda covers her mouth as tears stream down her face. She grabs Stitches' hand, mumbles something about love, when in walks --

DR. JOSEPH GRIMALDI, a White face clown, chart in hand. He extends his free hand to Rhonda.

DR. GRIMALDI
Dr. Joseph Grimaldi.

RHONDA
Rhonda -- Stitches' wife. How is he?

Dr. Grimaldi shakes his head.

DR. GRIMALDI
We have him on one hundred percent helium. He wasn't breathing when he arrived.

RHONDA
Will he live?

Dr. Grimaldi closes the chart.

DR. GRIMALDI
 There's no way to know at this
 point. He's still in grave danger,
 and if he survives...

Silence

RHONDA
 What?

DR. GRIMALDI
 Possible brain damage.

Rhonda weeps in silence.

Dr. Grimaldi reaches out and gently pats her shoulder.

DR. GRIMALDI
 We'll do our best.

Dr. Grimaldi exits.

Rhonda moves toward Stitches, noticing his flower -- wilted,
 slumped over and touching his chest with a bandage around the
 stem.

EXT. STUMPY'S NOVELTY GIFTS & GAGS - DAY

All sorts of CLOWNS sit at cabaret tables for two --
 Whiteface Clowns (European, Straight and Grotesque), Auguste,
 and Character Clowns.

Some juggle, some play card games, others, magic tricks while
 smoking stogies.

Rhonda makes her way up the sidewalk, slowly approaching.
 Several take notice; they stop what they're doing, eyes
 tracking her every step.

Uncomfortable, Rhonda carefully maneuvers through the clowns,
 walking up the door -- guarded by two very large TRAMP
 CLOWNS, BAUBLES and BANGLES(mute).

BAUBLES
 State your business.

Rhonda, eyes straight ahead, stares through the glass door.

RHONDA
 I'm here to see Don Pagliacci.

BAUBLES
Is he expecting you?

RHONDA
It's about his brother.

Baubles nods his head in the direction of Bangles.

Bangles enters the store.

Silence.

BAUBLES
It's so nice to see you, Rhonda.
How have you been?

Rhonda looks up at Baubles.

RHONDA
I've been better... how about
yourself?

BAUBLES
Aside from the gout, life is good.

Rhonda smiles.

Bangles returns and nods his head.

INT. STUMPY'S NOVELTY GIFTS & GAGS - DAY

Juggling balls, pins and bags -- magic hats, cards and boxes, seltzer bottles behind locked gates and everything related to clowns pack the shelves.

Soft circus music plays.

Baubles walks to the end of the aisle, Rhonda closely following.

Arriving at a wood-paneled wall and matching door with eye slot, Baubles grabs the brass doorknob, opens the door while motioning to Rhonda. She enters the room, followed by Baubles who closes the door behind him.

DON PAGLIACCI, Whiteface clown, sits at his desk dressed in a brilliant white satin blouse, pants and cone-shaped hat. Black and red softball-size pom poms split the front of his blouse. He holds a white handkerchief in his right hand.

Baubles stands with arms folded.

Rhonda sits across from Pagliacci.

PAGLIACCI
So good to see you.

She feigns a smile.

PAGLIACCI
It's been a while.

RHONDA
I'm here about Stitches.

PAGLIACCI
Yes... I've heard.

RHONDA
Not true -- none of it.

Pagliacci -- a condescending, disbelieving grin.

PAGLIACCI
Well, we're all innocent of something.

RHONDA
He was applying for a loan.

PAGLIACCI
A gun has different applications.

RHONDA
Not when the "bang" is in words,
written on a flag.

PAGLIACCI
A concealed weapon, all the same.

Pagliacci takes a cigar out of the box on his desk and runs it by his nose, taking in the scent.

RHONDA
He's on life support.

PAGLIACCI
I'm aware of that fact, as well.

RHONDA
How --

Rhonda stops, catching herself.

Pagliacci smiles.

RHONDA
Will you go see him?

PAGLIACCI
No. That will not benefit him,
should he survive.

Rhonda covers her mouth, eyes welling up.

PAGLIACCI
Barnum and Bailey on the other
hand... that is something I can
look into.

Rhonda nods her head, and rises.

PAGLIACCI
How is Patches?

RHONDA
As expected.

PAGLIACCI
Hold him tight. And kiss him for
me.

Rhonda, uncomfortable.

PAGLIACCI
You know I love him like a son.

Rhonda heads for the door, grabbing the doorknob.

PAGLIACCI
Rhonda...

Rhonda pauses, turns her head around.

PAGLIACCI
Do you ever miss me at night?

EXT. CHARLIE'S HOUSE - BACKYARD - DAY

Charlie pushes Patches in the swing.

CHARLIE
How do you like it here?

PATCHES
I love it here.

Charlie smiles.

Another push.

CHARLIE
How would you like to stay?

PATCHES
Sure. But when Dad gets better,
I'll have to go back home.

Charlie, deflated.

CHARLIE
What about you and your mom staying
here... for good?

PATCHES
I can't do that, Grandpa. Dad's
going to need me when he gets out
of the hospital.

CHARLIE
What if --

Patches stops swinging.

PATCHES
What if what?

CHARLIE
Never mind.

PATCHES
Tell me, Grandpa.

CHARLIE
What if he doesn't come home?

Patches gets off the swing.

PATCHES
Don't say that -- he's coming home.
You'll see.

CHARLIE
Patches --

PATCHES
No. And he'll need me.

Patches storms into the house, slamming the screen door.

Charlie sits in the swing. Head slumped, he pulls out a dog-eared photo from his wallet.

A picture of him as a young man, cheek-to-cheek with a young female clown -- both smiling.

INT. STUMPY'S NOVELTY GIFTS AND GAGS - NIGHT

Mr. Petti Fogger and Pagliacci sit with bourbon and cigars.

PAGLIACCI

The outlook's dim. Should a miracle occur, he'll be more like cabbage than a clown.

Pagliacci sniffs the bourbon and drags on the cigar.

PAGLIACCI

And that's a financial burden that I won't have.

MR. PETTI FOGGER

Understood.

Mr. Petti Fogger sips his bourbon.

MR. PETTI FOGGER

Do you have a preference?

Pagliacci ponders, tilts his head to the left.

PAGLIACCI

His body suffers the scars of his recent trauma... the choices are many.

Mr. Petti Fogger smiles.

MR. PETTI FOGGER

Shall I send Bangles over?

PAGLIACCI

No, no -- a tramp clown would be suspicious. This calls for a clown with societal stature. A White face clown... a clown such as yourself.

Mr. Petti Fogger chokes on his cigar smoke.

MR. PETTI FOGGER

Me?

PAGLIACCI

An upstanding defender trying to save another victim of human brutality... it just adds to your ever-growing legend, doesn't it?

MR. PETTI FOGGER

I'm a lawyer -- that's not my area of expertise.

PAGLIACCI

No, maybe not. However, it's a simple request without options.

Pagliacci holds up his snifter.

PAGLIACCI

To your success... and my renewed faith in love.

They clink glasses.

INT. POLICE STATION, RECORDING ROOM - NIGHT

Barnum and Bailey watch Stitches' interrogation tape.

Bailey freeze frames the first smack Stitches received, editing it out. He follows the same procedure for the second and third smack.

Bailey rewinds the tape and plays it through without the smacks.

The video meshes in time and appearance, as Bailey retreated to his original position after each smack.

Barnum turns to Bailey, both nodding.

EXT. HOSPITAL - ROOM 711 - NIGHT

Baubles and Bangles approach the room with Mr. Petti Fogger, impeccably dressed, briefcase in tow.

The Police Officer sits upright -- looks up at Mr. Petti Fogger, his face losing its color.

POLICE OFFICER

Can I help you, Mr. Petti Fogger?

Mr. Petti Fogger smiles.

MR. PETTI FOGGER
Do you normally guard innocent
victims?

No response.

MR. PETTI FOGGER
You'd be better served
investigating these charges.

Mr. Petti Fogger hands the officer an envelope.

POLICE OFFICE
I don't know what you're talking
about, sir.

MR. PETTI FOGGER
Sure you do, son. I can tell...
you're no dummy.

Mr. Petti Fogger smiles then enters the room.

Baubles and Bangles remain outside, each on either side of
the Officer.

INT. HOSPITAL - ROOM 711 - NIGHT

Mr. Petti Fogger pulls a bouquet of flowers from thin air,
placing them in an empty vase on the window sill.

MR. PETTI FOGGER
Your brother sends his love...

Mr. Petti Fogger picks up Stitches' head, removes the pillow
from underneath and squeezes it a few times.

MR. PETTI FOGGER
...and well wishes for a speedy
recovery.

Mr. Petti Fogger removes Stitches' helium mask and forcefully
places the pillow over his face.

Stitches' body jolts for a few moments, then --

FLATLINE

Mr. Petti Fogger takes a quick hit of the helium before
returning the mask and pillow to their original positions.

He walks methodically to the door, his smile transforming
into horror with each step.

MR. PETTI FOGGER
Help -- please.

MEDICAL STAFF already rushing the door, enter as Mr. Petti Fogger exits.

INT. HOSPITAL CORRIDOR - DAY

The police officer looks up to Mr. Petti Fogger.

POLICE OFFICER
Will he make it?

A solitary tear rolls down Mr. Petti Fogger's cheek. Deliberately, he shakes his head and begins the trek down the corridor, flanked by Baubles and Bangles.

BANGLES
He's really dead?

Mr. Petti Fogger nods.

The commotion of room 711 fades as they shuffle to the end of the corridor.

INT. HOSPITAL - ROOM 711 - NIGHT

Medical staff disperse as the sheet is pulled up over Stitches' face.

A BLIP -- followed by another. And another -- a slow and steady build.

VOICE (O.S.)
Doctor -- he's alive.

INT. CHARLIE'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

Patches eats his breakfast.

Rhonda stands at the sink, staring out the window, coffee in hand.

PATCHES
Mom, I want to take the picture to Dad today...

Rhonda sips.

PATCHES
The one I drew yesterday.

Rhonda turns around, smiles.

RHONDA
Sure, honey.

PATCHES
And next week, I want to make...

RHONDA
Patches.

PATCHES
...A statue out of clay.

RHONDA
Patches, please.

The smile leaves Patches' face.

PATCHES
What?

Rhonda walks over to the table and sits down across from Patches. She takes his hand.

RHONDA
I don't know if there will be a next week.

PATCHES
What do you mean?

RHONDA
Your father's heart stopped beating last night.

Patches stares at Rhonda.

PATCHES
But it started back up... right?
Tell me it started back up.

RHONDA
Yes, Patches. It started back up.
But he hasn't improved.

PATCHES
Dad just needs more time.

RHONDA
Honey, listen...

Tears fill Patches' eyes.

PATCHES
He's gonna make it, Mom. I know he
is.

RHONDA
Patches --

The tears burst through their invisible barrier, cascading
down Patches' face.

Rhonda rises and places her arms around Patches, her eyes
also filling with tears.

PATCHES
You can't take him off... you
can't. Promise me you won't.

INT. BAILEY'S HOUSE - BATHROOM - DAY

Detective Bailey in trousers, tee shirt and dangling
suspenders, whistles while dunking his razor in the sink.

DOORBELL

About to place the razor to his face, Bailey pauses and cocks
his head.

DOORBELL

Bailey places the razor down and exits the bathroom, walking
through the house, wiping the lather from his face, whistling
as he arrives at the --

FRONT DOOR

-- Bailey opens the door.

EXT. BAILEY'S HOUSE - DAY

INVESTIGATOR GOLIATH, a height-challenged character clown
flashes a badge -- to his right, INVESTIGATOR MURPHY, a
middle-aged man, nondescript.

GOLIATH
Investigator Goliath, O.C.C. Mind
if we ask you a few questions?

Bailey's face tightens.

BAILEY
Regarding?

MURPHY
Stitches -- a recent arrest.

BAILEY
The bank robber?

GOLIATH
Alleged.

Bailey stares down at Goliath, unable to hold back the disdain.

BAILEY
Right -- bank, gun, assault...
alleged.

MURPHY
Conviction isn't for you to
determine.

Bailey slams the door.

Goliath looks up at Murphy -- jots something down.

GOLIATH
Quick temper.

MURPHY
Indeed.

INT. SLAPPY'S LIVE NUDE CLOWNS - DAY

POLE-DANCING CLOWNS in all shapes, sizes and various degrees of nudity, juggle provocatively and dance to circus music.

PATRONS, clown and human males carry on with the crotch-stuffing dollar ritual.

Detective Barnum, three-sheets to the wind, enjoys his lap dance in a private booth.

BARNUM
Shake that clown ass, baby...

Barnum grabs and hugs the ass.

LAP DANCER

Hands off.

BARNUM

No, sweetheart. I paid for this rump, right here.

Baubles and Bangles enter the booth.

Barnum doesn't notice.

Lap Dancer smacks his hands away.

Barnum places his hands on her ass.

Baubles grabs Barnum's hand, lifting him off the couch.

BARNUM

Hey --

BAUBLES

I believe the lady asked you to remove your hands.

Bangles gives Lap Dancer a few bucks to get lost.

BARNUM

And who the fuck are you?

Baubles's fist comes crashing down upon Barnum's face.

BAUBLES

No one you need concern yourself with.

INT. HOSPITAL CORRIDOR - DAY

Dr. Joseph Grimaldi and Rhonda, face-to-face just to the left of the doorway to room 711.

DR. GRIMALDI

If it happens again --

RHONDA

I understand.

DR. GRIMALDI

I just want to be clear.

RHONDA

Do not resuscitate is crystal clear.

DR. GRIMALDI
I meant no offense, Rhonda.

Rhonda smiles.

RHONDA
I know, I'm sorry.

DR. GRIMALDI
Something's got a hold on him -- I
want you to be sure.

RHONDA
Thank you...

Dr. Grimaldi smiles then walks away leaving Rhonda to her thoughts.

Rhonda, her back up against the hallway wall adjusts herself, breathes deeply and enters room 711.

INT. STUMPY'S NOVELTY GIFTS AND GAGS - DAY

Pagliacci, back facing his desk, puffs on his cigar.

He turns around -- stares at a FIGURE tied to a chair with a burlap sack over his head.

Pagliacci nods to Baubles who's standing by the door.

Baubles strides to the chair and removes the burlap sack -- Detective Barnum, bloodied, winded and afraid.

PAGLIACCI
You've certainly got big balls.
Circus-sized balls.

Barnum spits up a bit of blood.

PAGLIACCI
The Department -- stuffing dollars
in the crotch of nude clowns... on
their dime. What would they think?

BARNUM
I uphold the law.

Pagliacci lights his cigar -- smiles.

PAGLIACCI
Yours?

BARNUM
I've done nothing...

Pagliacci crosses his lips with his finger, motioning, "shh".

PAGLIACCI
I didn't bring you here to listen
to false interpretations.

Pagliacci puffs his cigar, relaxed.

BARNUM
Killing a police officer is a
serious offense.

Pagliacci eyes Baubles.

Both laugh.

Pagliacci shakes his head.

PAGLIACCI
An upstanding community figure
deserves a far different fate.

Barnum -- nervous.

PAGLIACCI
Your time to shine will come --
before you can catch your breath,
it'll be upon you.

INT. HOSPITAL - ROOM 711 - DAY

Rhonda sits in the chair at the foot of the bed, red swollen eyes, tissues in hand.

Patches stands by the bed.

A crayon drawing of Stitches and Patches walking hand-in-hand rests on Stitches' mid-section.

PATCHES
You've got to wake up, Dad.

Patches weeps by his father's bedside. A tear escapes his face, landing on Stitches's wilted flower -- followed by another. Then another.

Patches grabs and holds Stitches' hand.

PATCHES

We love you...

Rhonda turns away as the tears well in her eyes.

Stitches' flower moves upward, ever so slightly, as Patches' tears glisten off the petals.

INT. STUMPY'S NOVELTY GIFTS AND GAGS- BACK ROOM - NIGHT

Pagliacci and Mr. Petti Fogger occupy their usual seats.

MR. PETTI FOGGER

He was dead when we left... non-responsive.

PAGLIACCI

So, you're telling me he's Jesus?

MR. PETTI FOGGER

No... it took Jesus three days. Stitches was back in less than an hour.

Pagliacci lights his cigar, leans back in his chair.

PAGLIACCI

Well, we'll just have to build our own cross.

Pagliacci drags on his cigar.

MR. PETTI FOGGER

In the hospital?

PAGLIACCI

No -- they'll only try to take him down.

INT. AIRPORT PARKING DECK - NIGHT

A BLACK VAN sits alone next to a concrete column.

TWO ASIAN MALES, FAI and HE-PING, both lean, twenty-something, naked from the waist up, rifle through a black duffle bag.

He-ping removes a wrapped block. Pulling a knife from his pocket, he stabs the block and draws the knife through, removing it with a smile -- the blade covered with a white clay-like substance.

He-ping holds up the knife, Fai drags his finger across the blade, gathering the substance.

Fai stares at the substance before placing it in his mouth. Closing his eyes, a smile builds.

He-ping nods his head, pleased, clapping his hands. He removes two beige rubberized shirts and face masks, handing a set to Fai.

Putting them on, they tear into the rest of the blocks and smear the substance over their latex torsos and faces.

INT. SLAPPY'S LIVE NUDE CLOWNS - NIGHT

No dancing clowns, no poles -- the joint has been transformed into a cabaret-style nightclub.

Rhonda sits at a far-off table, sipping wine.

Baubles and Bangles stand guard at opposite ends of the club.

CLOWNS and HUMANS mill about, both at tables and the bar, laughing, drinking.

SPOT LIGHT on the stage, house lights down.

Silence.

EMCEE (V.O.)

Ladies and gentlemen, please put
your hands together for the one,
the only, Don Pagliacci.

THE CLOWN ORCHESTRA sounds a Johnny Carson-like intro as Don Pagliacci saunters to the stage, drink and stogie in hand.

Pagliacci picks up the microphone, places his drink on the stool.

PAGLIACCI

How 'bout a nice hand for Slap
Happy and The Harlequins... best
big band in the land.

Applause.

Pagliacci extends his hand, gesturing toward SLAP HAPPY, a Harlequin Clown, who bows his head slightly.

Band plays.

Pagliacci sings.

PAGLIACCI
*See the funny little clown, see him
 laughing as you walk by...*

MONTAGE

A) Rhonda, solemn, sips her wine.

B) Patches holding Stitches' hand in the hospital bed,
 Charlie sitting directly behind.

PAGLIACCI (V.O.)
*Everybody thinks he's happy cause
 you never see a tear in his eye...*

C) Bailey wearing ill-fitted colorful clothes, applies makeup
 to his face.

D) Barnum, knocked out on a gurney, his face being tattooed
 white by a heavily-inked clown.

PAGLIACCI (V.O.)
*No one knows he's crying. No one
 knows he's dying on the inside
 cause he's laughing on the
 outside...*

E) Fai and He-ping, fully dressed as clowns hand tickets to
 the clerk and disappear into boarding tunnel.

PAGLIACCI (V.O.)
*Mmmm, no one knows... Except for
 me...*

F) Patches weeps, tears falling into Stitches' flower.

PAGLIACCI (V.O.)
Cause you see...

G) Rhonda, wiping a tear from her cheek.

PAGLIACCI (V.O.)
I'm that funny little clown.

H) Charlie and Patches leave the hospital room, hand in hand.

I) Stitches' flower rises before falling back down.

INT. SLAPPY'S LIVE NUDE CLOWNS - NIGHT

PAGLIACCI
See the funny little clown.

Applause.

Hooting and hollering.

Pagliacci retrieves his cigar, bowing as he puffs.

PAGLIACCI
Please -- be kind to your bartender
and waitress. Slappy's a cheap
sonofabitch.

Pagliacci exits the stage, makes his way through the crowd
like a campaigning senator.

Baubles and Bangles converge.

The crowd subsides.

Pagliacci arrives at Rhonda's table.

He takes a seat.

RHONDA
You still have the voice.

PAGLIACCI
Scotch and cigars... they've taken
their toll.

Rhonda fiddles with her napkin.

RHONDA
About Stitches...

Pagliacci reaches and places his hand on Rhonda's.

Rhonda, an uneasy look.

PAGLIACCI
He's strong -- he'll pull through.

She removes her hand to her side.

RHONDA
They're taking him off life-support
tomorrow.

Pagliacci stares into Rhonda's eyes.

RHONDA
His brain shows little activity.

Silence.

PAGLIACCI
Would you like me to go with you?

RHONDA
No -- maybe you can go tonight,
after...

Pagliacci smiles.

PAGLIACCI
Unseen -- through the back door.

RHONDA
I'm sorry. It's just...

Pagliacci raises his hand.

PAGLIACCI
No, no -- I understand. A
vocational hazard.

INT. HOSPITAL - ROOM 711 - NIGHT

Empty bed -- disconnected IV tubes swing from the IV pole.

INT. HOSPITAL CORRIDOR - NIGHT

Stitches, disheveled, his hospital gown off one shoulder,
stumbles down the vacant hall -- his big red shoes echo
against the floor in drunk rhythm.

INT. HOSPITAL ENTRANCE - NIGHT

The NIGHT GUARD leans over the security desk, schmoozing an
ATTRACTIVE NURSE, paying no mind to Stitches, who staggers
around, out the door, and into the night.

EXT. SAN FRANCISCO PIERS - NIGHT

Stitches ties his hospital gown tight, his cobalt hair
flutters in the cold bay breeze.

Staring up at the full moon, illuminating the dock, the light sparkles from each ripple.

He glances down to the hospital bracelet. Confused, he concentrates on each letter.

Shaking his head, he rips the bracelet off in frustration and tosses it into the bay.

Stitches wraps his arms around his chest.

INT. HOSPITAL - ROOM 711 - DAY

CLOWN ORDERLY, a tramp clown, enters the room.

CLOWN ORDERLY
Okay, Stitches...

Looking to the empty bed, hie eyes widen, mouth agape.

Clown Orderly quickly exits to the --

CRITICAL CLOWN UNIT NURSES STATION

CLOWN NURSES write, type and chat.

NURSE CLARABELL, colorful, blazing red hair, heavy-set, holds court.

NURSE CLARABELL
So I told him, "I don't care how many balls you can keep in the air, your two ain't..."

CLOWN ORDERLY
Excuse me.

Nurse Clarabell holds up her hand.

NURSE CLARABELL
In a minute, honey.

CLOWN ORDERLY
Room 711.

NURSE CLARABELL
I'll be with you...

CLOWN ORDERLY
It's empty.

Nurse Clarabell looks up.

CLOWN ORDERLY
No one's in the bed.

EXT. STUMPY'S NOVELTY GIFTS AND GAGS - DAY

Bookended by Baubles and Bangles, Don Pagliacci turns the corner, finding Stitches slumped up against the building.

PAGLIACCI
See if he's breathing.

Baubles and Bangles grab Stitches, pulling him to his feet.

Groggy, empty-eyed, Stitches coughs, sniffles and stares into Pagliacci's face.

Pagliacci smiles, cupping Stitches' face in his right hand.

PAGLIACCI
So good to see you, my friend.

Eyes glazed over, Stitches winces --

STITCHES
Who are you?

Baubles and Bangles glance at each other before turning to Pagliacci -- a pained look, before smiling wide.

PAGLIACCI
Your guardian angel.

Stitches' head slumps down in concert with his purple flower -
- he pukes on Pagliacci's elfin-like black shoes, as his
flower also oozes.

PAGLIACCI
Get him inside...

INT. CRITICAL CLOWN UNIT NURSES STATION - DAY

Nurse Clarabell rifles through charts and orders.

CLARABELL
There's no order here -- he should
be in his bed.

CLOWN ORDERLY
But he's not.

Clarabell -- sarcastic smirk, cocks her head toward the large whiteboard, focusing on the night shift names.

She grabs the telephone, dialing.

A few beats and a shake of the head.

Slams the phone down.

Dials again.

Clarabell eyes the clock.

Clown Orderly follows her stare.

CLARABELL

We've got an hour to find that body.

CLOWN ORDERLY

I'll check the morgue...

Clown Orderly quickly exits, running into Mr. Petti Fogger, approaching in the opposite direction.

CLOWN ORDERLY

Please -- excuse me.

Mr. Petti Fogger smiles.

MR. PETTI FOGGER

I'm sure it's rather important.

Mr. Petti Fogger continues to the nurses station, impeccably dressed in his navy blue pinstripe suit.

Clarabell, doom in her eyes.

CLARABELL

Can I help you?

MR. PETTI FOGGER

I'm here to pay my respects...
(pause for effect)
...Stitches.

The doomed look turns to horror.

CLARABELL

Um... Okay. Well, you do know that he is being removed from life-support?

Mr. Petti Fogger, a knowing smile.

MR. PETTI FOGGER
Why else would I be here?

CLARABELL
Right -- of course. But I can only
allow family to see him.

Mr. Petti Fogger pulls a piece of paper from his breast pocket, unfolds it and places it in front of Clarabell.

MR. PETTI FOGGER
Legal counsel, power of attorney,
medical proxy.

CLARABELL
I see.

MR. PETTI FOGGER
Now, if you'd be so kind... room
711, correct?

Mr. Petti Fogger turns --

CLARABELL
Eh -- he's not there right now.

MR. PETTI FOGGER
Excuse me?

Clarabell slumps her shoulders, defeated.

CLARABELL
We don't know where he is.

MR. PETTI FOGGER
Then we have a problem. What do
you plan on telling the wife when
she arrives?

No response.

MR. PETTI FOGGER
Taking your husband off life-
support, preparing for his death is
a very emotional experience -- one
that certainly needs a body.

A DOCTOR, a White face clown, looks up from his chart.

CLARABELL
I understand.

MR. PETTI FOGGER
Litigation, bad press, suspensions -
- maybe jail time. Very messy.

The doctor quickly returns to his chart.

CLARABELL
We're looking for the body, sir --
doing everything we can.

MR. PETTI FOGGER
I have a car picking up the lovely
wife. The driver will take her
here, as instructed, where you will
have the papers ready.

CLARABELL
What papers?

MR. PETTI FOGGER
Death certificate -- Stitches died
peacefully in his sleep, very early
this morning with his brother by
his side. All of the arrangements
have been made, down to the last
detail.

CLARABELL
I need a doctor to sign...

The doctor and Mr. Petti Fogger's eyes meet.

MR. PETTI FOGGER
I'm sure that won't be a problem.

CLARABELL
But what if he's not dead?

MR. PETTI FOGGER
There will be a body in the casket.

Mr. Petti Fogger turns away, takes one step before turning
back. Reaching into his breast pocket, he pulls out a purple
flower and gives it a big sniff.

MR. PETTI FOGGER
And give her this.

He hands Clarabell a purple flower.

INT. STUMPY'S NOVELTY GIFTS AND GAGS - BASEMENT - DAY

Dark, a bare lightbulb hangs down in the middle of the room from an old cloth-insulated electrical wire, cinder block walls, a dirty cot, slop sink with a cracked mirror above.

A FIGURE, dead to the world, sleeps on and off the cot, dressed in blue satin pants, big red shoes and a white ruffled shirt.

The slop sink drips.

The lightbulb flickers.

A Figure stirs -- it's Barnum, his face, fully "clowned", red putty nose, blood stained, white face with rosy cheeks. He tries to rise from the cot, falling back, then off.

THUD.

He hits the floor, coughs into the dirt and slowly rises to his feet.

Bloodshot eyes, he drags himself across the floor and over to the slop sink. Barnum turns on the water, dribbling out, rusty and brown, he cups his hands and splashes his face.

He looks up to the mirror, smears the rusty water across his face. He reaches out to the mirror with his right hand, the cracked and dirty reflection stares back at him, blue cobalt hair, his eyes widen -- looking like Stitches.

INT. INTERROGATION ROOM - DAY

Bailey sits at the table, hands folded, staring into the two-way mirror --

INT. OTHER SIDE OF MIRROR - DAY

-- Goliath and Murphy watch Bailey.

MURPHY

We can't hold him -- he wasn't the shooter.

GOLIATH

Maybe we can rattle him.

Murphy shakes his head.

MURPHY

He's a cop, Goliath. He knows the deal.

Bailey smiles and waves into the mirror.

INT. INTEROGATION ROOM - DAY

Goliath and Murphy enter.

Murphy places a cup of coffee in front of Bailey.

GOLIATH

The clown's dead.

Bailey looks up from his coffee.

BAILEY

I'm sorry to hear that.

Murphy straddles the chair opposite Bailey.

Bailey sips his coffee.

MURPHY

Yeah... well -- that and two bits will get you on the crosstown cable car.

BAILEY

We went by the book... check the tape.

Goliath pulls two tapes out of inner breast pocket and tosses them on the table.

GOLIATH

Which one?

Bailey stares at both tapes.

MURPHY

Your award winning director's cut...

GOLIATH

Or the other?

BAILEY

I want my lawyer.

INT. RHONDA'S BEDROOM - DAY

Rhonda dresses. Looking into the mirror, trying to hold back tears, she looks down at the purple flower on the dresser. She finishes buttoning her black blouse.

Patches enters, dressed in a dark suit and tie. He pauses at the bed and plops in, hugging Stitches' pillow.

Rhonda looks over her shoulder at Patches, not able to keep in all the tears, a few escape her eyes.

Rhonda again looks down at the purple flower. She picks it up, examines it and walks over to Patches.

Rhonda places the flower on the pillow.

Patches looks to the flower, reaches for it and pulls the pillow and flower tighter to his body.

INT. STUMPY'S NOVELTY GIFTS AND GAGS - BACK ROOM - DAY

Fai and He-ping sit and wait, fully "clowned".

Baubles and Bangles guard the door.

Pagliacci enters, sits at his desk.

PAGLIACCI

Gentlemen...

Both nod their heads.

PAGLIACCI

Well -- show me this "nurse" I've been hearing so much about.

He-ping reaches for the suitcase beside his chair, flips the latches and opens the suitcase.

Fai grabs a brick and tosses it to Pagliacci.

Pagliacci removes a switchblade from his desk drawer, cuts into the brick and tastes the product.

HE-PING

Odorless, non-detectable. Will make you millions.

PAGLIACCI

What about the helium?

HE-PING

We don't import. No specialties.
Product for everyone -- both clowns
and humans need the medicine the
white nurse bring.

Fai and He-ping rise.

FAI

There are other distributors we
could put you in contact with...
but again, the money is not there.

HE-PING

Why continue the interest in old
world product?

PAGLIACCI

It's tried and true... our
constituents don't believe the lies
the new world is selling.

HE-PING

Ah -- but they always believe in
better dream. And white nurse, she
put you to sleep on the back of a
unicorn.

Fai and He-ping bow.

FAI

Don Pagliacci...

PAGLIACCI

Gentlemen.

Baubles opens the door, Fai and He-ping walk through.

Baubles shuts the door.

PAGLIACCI

Go grab Barnum -- he's got a coffin
to fill.

INT. LIMOUSINE - DAY

Rhonda, Patches and Charlie ride.

Silence.

Patches stares and fiddles with the purple flower -- a
strange look on his face.

He sniffs the flower.

PATCHES
Mom -- this isn't Dad's flower.

Rhonda puts her arm around Patches.

RHONDA
I'm sure it is, son.

PATCHES
It's different.

CHARLIE
Patches... it seems like it, I'm
sure. But when things --

Charlie searches for words.

CHARLIE
-- change, it doesn't always feel
like they did before.

PATCHES
This flower is different.

Rhonda pulls Patches closer.

INT. FUNERAL HOME - DAY

Typical -- flowers, sitting room and open casket. Soft music
plays.

Barnum lies in the casket -- deader than a door nail.

An impeccably dressed CLOWN MORTICIAN enters, adjusts some
flowers and stops by the casket, moving the head ever so
slightly.

EXT. FUNERAL HOME - DAY

Black limousine pulls up.

DRIVER exits, opens rear sidewalk-side door.

Charlie, Rhonda and Patches exit and enter the funeral home.

Driver closes the door as several colorful Volkswagens, Buses
and Beetles pull up behind the limousine.

A parade of head-slumped CLOWNS exit the autos.

INT. FUNERAL HOME - DAY

MOURNERS, clowns and humans alike pay respects to Rhonda and Patches, occupying the front row.

TWO CLOWNS festoon the coffin, one juggling, the other, a mime.

Murphy and Goliath enter.

Approaching Rhonda, they offer their condolences.

Patches walks up to the coffin.

Charlie follows behind.

Patches smells the purple flower before placing it into the coffin.

Patches, whispering --

PATCHES
I'll find you, Dad.

Charlie meets Patches at the coffin, placing his arm around him. They walk to the back of the parlour.

Rhonda, slowly makes her way to the coffin, tissues in hand.

She leans over, plants a kiss on Barnum's forehead --

--Startled, finding Don Pagliacci standing right behind her.

Pagliacci offers his sympathy and takes her hand in his.

Murphy and Goliath take notice of this encounter.

INT. STUMPY'S NOVELTY GIFTS AND GAGS - BACK ROOM - DAY

Stitches, looking far better, sits with Baubles, playing cards.

STITCHES
I guess you have a familiar face.

BAUBLES
All us tramp clowns look alike, you know. You seen one --

Stitches discards.

STITCHES
Where is Don Pagliacci?

BAUBLES
Funeral.

STITCHES
Anyone close?

BAUBLES
Nope -- just some poor chap. He's footing the bill, taking care of the family.

Card game continues.

STITCHES
Why is he so nice?

BAUBLES
He just supports clowns. Looks out for them.

STITCHES
There's got to be some other reason... I mean, why do that for nothing?

BAUBLES
Humans got Robin Hood, we have Pagliacci.

Stitches discards his hand.

STITCHES
Gin -- you know, I kind of like this game.

INT. FUNERAL HOME - DAY

Pagliacci and Mr. Petti Fogger mill about in the lobby.

Goliath and Murphy stroll over.

MURPHY
Friend of the family?

PAGLIACCI
A simple clown advocate.

Murphy smiles.

MR. PETTI FOGGER
Gentlemen, this is a funeral. Have
some respect. I trust you are
vigilant in your search for the
killers.

Goliath grins.

GOLIATH
The killers have vanished... oddly
enough.

PAGLIACCI
Criminals do tend to run.

MR. PETTI FOGGER
Mr. Pagliacci does not keep company
with fellows such as yourself.

MURPHY
Not for long, he doesn't.

A Clown Dirge, a la "Blues For A Sad Clown", plays.

Lobby doors to viewing room swing open.

Pagliacci and Mr. Petti Fogger move to the right, Goliath and
Murphy to the left.

The funeral procession exits the viewing room and through the
lobby. The casket, carried by CLOWN PALLBEARERS slowly
passes the men, followed by Rhonda, then other mourners.

Her eyes meet Pagliacci's as she comforts Patches. Pagliacci
nods, catching Patches looking up at him.

The procession sways to and fro to the rhythm of the music,
the pallbearers moving Chaplinesque --

EXT. FUNERAL HOME - DAY

-- Proceeding down the steps, passing rows of clowns lined up
on each side.

Bailey, in full clown disguise, raises his head, making eye
contact with Pagliacci as he passes.

Bailey returns his head to the bowed, mourning position.

INT. CHARLIE'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Rhonda, still dressed in mourning attire.

CHARLIE
This isn't a good idea.

RHONDA
It's just dinner.

CHARLIE
It's trouble.

Patches appears at the doorway.

RHONDA
What do you want me to do?

Silence.

RHONDA
It's not like I have a choice. He
paid for everything, for Christ's
sake.

CHARLIE
Blood money --

RHONDA
It buried my husband.

PATCHES
That wasn't Dad.

RHONDA
Oh, Patches.

Rhonda exits.

Patches turns to his mother's path.

PATCHES
It wasn't. And I'm going to prove
it.

Patches looks at Charlie.

PATCHES
You watch -- I'll prove it,
Grandpa.

INT. CHARLIE'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Charlie and Patches watch home movies, Patches up against Charlie's side on the sofa.

THE TV --

A young Patches learning to walk, Stitches a few steps away seated on the ground with arms open -- Rhonda behind Patches, steadying his stance.

Charlie chokes up, brings Patches closer.

Patches smiles.

PATCHES

Don't worry, Grandpa. We'll find him.

Charlie closes his eyes, squeezing them shut, shaking his head.

PATCHES

How come you aren't in any of these?

CHARLIE

Someone had to record history.

INT. RESTAURANTE - NIGHT

Rhonda sits with Pagliacci -- soft music, romantic setting, she fidgets, trying to find comfort on a bed of nails.

RHONDA

I want to thank you for taking care of everything -- the funeral... the money.

Pagliacci takes Rhonda's hand, holding it between both of his.

PAGLIACCI

He's my brother. I should have done more. How are you holding up?

RHONDA

We're going to stay with my father.

PAGLIACCI

You can always go home, you know.

RHONDA
They're foreclosing.

PAGLIACCI
I'm not talking about a structure.

Rhonda removes her hand.

GARCON, a handlebar moustached clown waiter in a black tux, enters.

GARCON
My name is Garcon, I will be your server this evening. May I interest you in a cocktail, perhaps an appetizer?

PAGLIACCI
A bottle of your best chianti... and the zuppa de roasted peanuts with a dash of sea salt.

GARCON
And the missus?

Rhonda squirms, notices Pagliacci's smiling face, retreats to the menu.

RHONDA
Caramelized popcorn fritters, please.

GARCON
Right away.

Garcon exits with menus.

PAGLIACCI
What about Patches?

RHONDA
Handling it better than I am.

PAGLIACCI
He needs a man in his life.

RHONDA
My father's a good man.

PAGLIACCI
He's human.

Rhonda adjusts her seat, folds her napkin.

PAGLIACCI
 You know, that band of cobalt hair -
 - it wasn't unique...

EXT. STUMPY'S NOVELTY GIFTS AND GAGS - NIGHT

Pagliacci sits with Stitches, both facing the street, enjoying a nightcap and cigar. A few other tables are occupied by a smattering of clowns -- giving Pagliacci plenty of privacy.

CUT TO:

INT. CHARLIE'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Patches gets up from the bed.

PAGLIACCCI (V.O.)
 Not a bad way to go through life.

STITCHES (V.O.)
 Certainly isn't.

Patches removes his pajamas, folds them and places them in the top drawer. He opens the bottom drawer -- a beautiful satin red and white jumpsuit with blue pom poms.

Patches removes the jumpsuit, puts it on.

STITCHES (V.O.)
 It'd be better if I knew...

PAGLIACCI (V.O.)
 Knew what?

STITCHES (V.O.)
 Who I was.

PAGLIACCI (V.O.)
 Who are any of us?

Patches places pillows under his blanket. He steps back to examine them before pulling the blanket up over them.

Patches grabs the Bozo knapsack hanging off the back of his chair. He places his arms through each shoulder harness.

STITCHES (V.O.)
 I mean a family -- a history.
 Maybe they're depending on me.

Patches opens the window, climbs out and jumps down.

CLOSE ON: Note on desk -- "Went to find Dad. Love Patches."

Patches heads off down the street.

BACK TO:

EXT. STUMPY'S NOVELTY GIFTS AND GAGS - NIGHT

PAGLIACCI

Maybe you were homeless, lucky
enough to walk through the right
door.

STITCHES

Yeah... but something ain't right.
I just feel funny.

PAGLIACCI

You're a clown... all clowns feel
funny.

INT. CHARLIE'S HOUSE - DAY

Charlie knocks on Patches' closed door.

CHARLIE

Let's go, Kiddo...

Charlie continues walking down the hallway and into --

THE KITCHEN

Preparing breakfast, he looks up at the clock over the sink.

CHARLIE

You don't want to be late -- it's
assembly day.

Charlie finishes cooking. He fixes two plates, pours two
glasses of juice and brings them to the table.

Charlie sits down, begins to dig in.

He looks up at the clock.

CHARLIE

Jesus, Patches.

Charlie wipes his mouth, rises from the table and heads for Patches' room.

He raps on the door a few times.

CHARLIE

Patches --

Charlie enters the room -- wide open window, curtain blowing in the breeze. He walks to the bed and pulls down the covers revealing the pillows.

Charlie turns around. He moves to the right, to the left -- confused.

CHARLIE

Patches!

EXT. AMUSEMENT PARK - DAY

CLOWNS populate the broken down, neglected remains of a once vibrant pier amusement park.

Hall of Mirrors, cracked and shattered.

Center arcade with CLOWNS in various states of helium-induced stupors litter the ground, leaning against decaying walls and rusted-out rides.

Some shake, trying to squeeze another hit of helium from their metal containers, while others scrape a white paste onto their tongues, closing their eyes and bobbing their heads.

Patches, off in the distance, makes his way down the boardwalk carrying the drawing of Stitches.

INT. STUMPY'S NOVELTY GIFTS AND GAGS - BACK ROOM - DAY

Stitches shuffles the deck, his dexterity returning to the point where he can cut and shuffle with one hand.

STITCHES

What's La Noza Costra?

Baubles quickly snaps his head up from the pile of chips.

BAUBLES

Where did you hear that?

Stitches pulls back, examining Baubles.

STITCHES
Don't know, really.

Stitches deals.

BAUBLES
More myth than anything else.

Baubles examines his cards.

STITCHES
About?

BAUBLES
About what?

STITCHES
The myth --

BAUBLES
Just a secret society of clowns, is
all it's supposed to be.

STITCHES
Do you believe it?

BAUBLES
Never gave it much thought.

STITCHES
Why not?

BAUBLES
I don't get paid to think... I'm a
tramp clown.

The card game continues.

STITCHES
What do you get paid to do?

BAUBLES
Keep things in order -- a valet of
sorts.

STITCHES
What about the store? Haven't seen
a sale since I've been here.

BAUBLES
Stumpy doesn't do much retail
business.

STITCHES
Haven't see him either.

Baubles smiles.

STITCHES
Gin...

Baubles tosses his cards.

BAUBLES
Jesus --

EXT. AMUSEMENT PARK - DAY

BUSTER, a rail-thin, gaunt clown, leans up against, "Topple the Clowns", a dilapidated carnival booth game. He scratches his left arm as sweat pours from his brow.

Buster coughs to the point of puking. He rises to his feet, stumbles away, passing other seemingly comatose clowns.

The ocean breeze fans Buster's long, stringy gold hair as he tries to warm himself by crossing his arms.

Buster turns quickly, eyes bulge, shakes his head, puts up his hands in the surrender position --

BUSTER
No -- please... next week.

Powerful streams -- a barrage of effervescent water from all angles knocks Buster to the ground. Soaked and wailing, he melts away into a pile of rainbow colors.

VOICE (O.S.)
It's always another week with you clowns.

SEVERAL CLOWNS on disparate unicycles pedal down the boardwalk, carrying an assortment of seltzer bottles of various sizes and shapes.

The junkie clowns scatter, a mass exodus from the park as if the cavalcade of unicycles were fire ripping through cotton.

Bailey, in full clown regalia stands behind the Tilt-A-Whirl, watching the unicycle-riding clowns fade out of sight.

EXT. BOARDWALK - DAY

The band of unicycles approach Patches, stopping as they arrive.

Patches holds up the crayon drawing of his father.

PATCHES

Excuse me, have you seen this clown?

The Lead Clown, fiendish-looking, white face with electric green hair and black eyes, smiles. A deep, resonate voice --

LEAD CLOWN

This ain't no place for a half-breed.

Cat calls and laughter.

LEAD CLOWN

Plenty of clowns would have no trouble taking you out.

PATCHES

Out where?

More hooting and hollering.

PATCHES

Please, tell me if you've seen him.

LEAD CLOWN

If he's here, you don't want to find him.

The unicycle-riding clowns ride off -- Patches, transfixed, holding his picture.

INT. SLAPPY'S LIVE NUDE CLOWNS - NIGHT

Bailey sits at the bar dressed as a clown, sipping his drink.

Lap Dancer does her thing, shaking her ass a few feet from his face.

Bailey looks up at Lap Dancer, makes eye contact, sticks a bill in her g-string then motions to a private booth.

Bailey grabs his drink and makes his way to the booth.

He takes a seat.

Lap Dancer watches, dancing almost as an afterthought.

She steps down and walks toward the booth, her high heels clicking against the ground.

Lap Dancer enters the booth and slowly begins the ritual, erotically moving about as Bailey quietly welcomes the dance.

Bailey suddenly grabs Lap Dancer's arm, takes a photo of Barnum from his pocket and places it in her hand.

BAILEY

When's the last time you've seen him?

LAP DANCER

I don't recognize him.

BAILEY

I'm not here for games, sweetheart. He was a daily of yours.

LAP DANCER

I told you, I don't...

Bailey pulls Lap Dancer closer to him.

BAILEY

I've got no patience, and nothing to lose. You want to keep shaking this ass?

Lap Dancer looks around.

BAILEY

They're not here. You're going to have to fend for yourself -- now, when was he in last?

LAP DANCER

A few weeks ago.

BAILEY

Who'd he leave with?

LAP DANCER

No one.

Bailey twists Lap Dancer's arm.

BAILEY

He'd still be around if he left
without company.

Lap Dancer breaks free.

LAP DANCER

Listen, fuck face -- I make men
hard. I don't tuck them in. He
grabbed my ass one too many times
and was tossed out of here. Where
does a horny drunk go after that?
I'm sure you're smart enough to
figure it out.

Lap Dancer tosses the picture at Bailey, walking off with a
rhythmical hip-sway.

EXT. GOLDEN GATE PARK - DAY

Stitches shuffles around the park, eating popcorn, enjoying
the weather and sights.

PEOPLE mill about.

Whistling, in good spirits, Stitches stops at the Herschell-
Spillman carousel. The smile leave his face as he stares at
the carousel.

As calliope music sounds --

FLASHBACK

Fuzzy, dream-like -- Stitches stands in a lavish outdoor room
inflating balloons.

VOICE (O.S.)

Do it, clown -- Do it.

A cascade of voices, "Herschell-Spillman -- carousel, do it,
clown". Stitches spins around, almost floating as the voices
cut off.

END FLASHBACK

EXT. GOLDEN GATE PARK - DAY

Stitches drops the popcorn, shakes his head before rubbing
his face and heading off.

EXT. STREET - DAY

Goliath and Murphy approach "Slappy's Live Nude Clowns".

MURPHY

The same routine -- not gonna say a word.

GOLIATH

Do it enough times, something's bound to shake loose.

Murphy reaches for the door, opens it.

MURPHY

Yeah -- your sanity.

They enter.

INT. SLAPPY'S LIVE NUDE CLOWNS - DAY

Pagliacci and Baubles sit at the bar, gazing up at pole-dancing clowns.

Goliath and Murphy pull out stools and sit next to Pagliacci, who doesn't avert his eyes from the dancing clowns.

PAGLIACCI

Gentlemen.

GOLIATH

Don Pagliacci.

Pagliacci points up to a clown ass that's strutting around the pole nearest to him.

PAGLIACCI

If sunshine had an ass...

Pagliacci peels back a few bills from the stack on the bar, placing them in the clown's g-string.

Goliath turns away -- Murphy stares at the ass, obviously taken.

GOLIATH

Detective Barnum...

PAGLIACCI

Not here -- there's a room in back.

Baubles escorts them to a --

BACK ROOM

-- followed by Pagliacci and Baubles.

Pagliacci takes a seat, lights a cigar.

Goliath and Murphy sit, Baubles remains at the door.

GOLIATH

Detective Barnum -- he was last
seen here getting a lap dance.

PAGLIACCI

It's possible. A great many law
enforcement officials tend to enjoy
decadence... and clown flesh.

MURPHY

There was an altercation.

PAGLIACCI

Nude clowns, liquor... hormones --
men. It happens.

MURPHY

A good source says that...

Murphy looks to Baubles.

BAUBLES

...Baubles

MURPHY

That Baubles assaulted Barnum.

Pagliacci puffs his cigar.

PAGLIACCI

Do you have a photo of this
Detective Barnum?

Goliath digs into his breast pocket, pulling out a photo of
Barnum. He places it on the desk.

Pagliacci looks and nods at Baubles, who walks over to the
photo.

BAUBLES

The man I told you about last week,
Boss. Assaulted the dancer.

Baubles returns to the door.

PAGLIACCI

Yes -- that's right. It seems your Detective Barnum was the touchy-feely type.

GOLIATH

Was?

Pagliacci smiles.

PAGLIACCI

When a daily doesn't return in over a week -- yes, was, is the proper term. An ass junkie doesn't come once a week, pardon the pun. Maybe he found another haunt.

GOLIATH

He never left through the front door.

PAGLIACCI

Is that directly from this source of yours?

Silence.

PAGLIACCI

We don't condone violence. Our patrons need to know they're safe. Troublemakers exit through the back door... never the front.

All exchange looks.

PAGLIACCI

And with that, I'd like to bid you gentlemen good day.

Goliath and Murphy rise, Baubles opens the door.

GOLIATH

Funny thing is... his partner disappeared several days later.

PAGLIACCI

Really?

MURPHY

Any ideas?

PAGLIACCI
I haven't a clue -- Baubles?

BAUBLES
Barnum was always alone.

GOLIATH
I see -- well, good day.

Goliath and Murphy exit, Baubles closing the door behind them.

PAGLIACCI
Tricky dicks, dropping the line,
waiting for the nibble...

Pagliacci shakes his head.

PAGLIACCI
We've got to find this Bailey
before they do.

BAUBLES
We're looking, Boss.

PAGLIACCI
Good soldiers like you, Baubles,
are getting harder to find today.
It's a shame you'll never be made.

Baubles tips his hat.

PAGLIACCI
Now, what about Stitches?

BAUBLES
He's asking questions, Boss...
about La Noza Costra.

Pagliacci snaps to attention.

PAGLIACCI
Your response?

BAUBLES
More myth than anything else.

PAGLIACCI
Good.

BAUBLES
If I could be so bold -- what are
you going to do with him?

PAGLIACCI

What any loving brother would do.
Make him a clapo -- mold the
soldier, Baubles.

BAUBLES

What if he starts to remember?

PAGLIACCI

Then he becomes fertilizer....

EXT. SAN FRANCISCO STREET - DAY

Rough and tumble area -- furthest end of the boardwalk.

Fires in garbage cans, "shanty" homes scattered here and there.

Patches makes his way to the first can of fire.

TWO TRAMP CLOWNS, SULLY and RITA warm their hands over the can.

Patches holds up the crayon drawing of Stitches.

PATCHES

Excuse me, ma'am...

RITA

You hear that, Sully? He called me
ma'am --

Laughter

RITA

Can't remember the last time
someone called me ma'am.

SULLY

Cause you a tramp --

POP -- Sully hits the ground.

Rita spits on her clenched fist.

RITA

I know what I am -- and I don't
need no good-for-nothing clown
reminding me.

Patches hands the drawing to Rita.

PATCHES

Have you seen this clown, ma'am?

Sully rises, rubbing his eye.

RITA

Seen lots a clowns. Too many to count. They all run into another.

Rita hands the picture to Sully.

RITA

What makes this one so special?

PATCHES

He's my Dad.

RITA

Skipped out on you, did he, now? No good sonofa...

PATCHES

No, ma'am. He'd never leave me.

Rita cups her hand around Patches' face.

RITA

How sweet -- life ain't left its scars on your soul... yet.

Rita turns to Sully.

RITA

You been eyeballin' that picture for nearly ever -- you seen that clown, or not?

SULLY

Maybe I have -- maybe I haven't. What you got in the knapsack?

POP -- Sully hits the ground.

SULLY (O.S.)

Why did you go and do that for?

Rita spits on her fist.

RITA

He called me ma'am... and you don't hassle a gentleman. Or take something from him that he didn't rightfully offer.

Rita steps out into the middle of the thoroughfare, and at the top of her lungs --

RITA

This boy here, is looking for his Dad. He's going to walk through and you're gonna look at his picture. Be polite and take nothing from him.

CLOWNS enter the thoroughfare from behind fiery cans.

Patches smiles wide.

PATCHES

Thank you, ma'am.

RITA

No, no -- I'm much obliged to you. I'd forgotten what it feels like to be a lady...

Patches hugs Rita, who squeezes him tight to her body, misty-eyed.

Patches continues down the thoroughfare.

EXT. AMUSEMENT PARK - NIGHT

The ocean breaks on the shore -- the moon, full, ripples off the returning surf. A black Volkswagen stretch bus limo rides across the boardwalk, causing the planks to rise up and clickety-clack.

The limo pulls up behind the Fun House, Bangles, the driver, steps out and opens the back door.

Baubles and Mr. Petti Fogger exit, followed by Pagliacci, who breathes in deeply, the salty air.

PAGLIACCI

I'll never get tired of that smell -
- the scent of heaven.

Bangles shuts the door, all walk to the Fun House entrance, Pagliacci flanked by Baubles and Bangles, Mr. Petti Fogger ahead.

Bangles assumes the ride operator position. Lever in hand, he turns the key, presses the red plunger -- the Fun House lights up.

Calliope music and the cranking sound of a track chain.

A track car swings around. Baubles opens the back door, Pagliacci steps in. He closes the door, opens the front for Mr. Petti Fogger and himself.

Baubles nods to Bangles who starts the car moving, as clown laughter emanates from the Fun House, lights blinking.

The Fun House doors swing open, they disappear into the blackness.

INT. FUN HOUSE - NIGHT

Carnival mirrors, disproportionate furniture and vibrant colors, muted in darkness fill the space.

A long, tall and narrow table sits in the middle of the room. A centered light fixture hangs down, off-kilter, just above a bowl of salt water taffy. Six chairs around the table, low to the ground, with high backs.

Pagliacci takes his seat at the head of the table, his face, barely poking above the table line. Mr. Petti Fogger sits to his left while Baubles stands off to the side.

BUZZER sounds.

Silence.

Pagliacci turns to Baubles.

PAGLIACCI
Send in the clowns...

Doors swing open, FOUR CLOWNS in two separate track cars roll to a stop behind Pagliacci's car.

PSEUDO FUGAZI, a tall, lean and self-assured White face clown, exits the first track car.

FUGAZI
...Don't bother, we're here.

ZAFTIG, a short, stout character clown with a constant look of despair, follows Fugazi out of the first car.

TONIO, a tramp clown with an allergy problem, exits the second car carrying his bundle, followed by BEPPE, a White face clown, well-dressed in thick vertical earth-tone pinstripes.

Fugazi, with majestic flair, dusts the remaining end chair with his green and black polka-dotted handkerchief before settling in.

Zaftig sits to Fugazi's right, only his hair above the table line.

Tonio and Beppe fill the two remaining seats.

One at a time, six distinct honks -- each the following note to "Entry of the Gladiators". The sixth, flat, out of tune.

All eyes fall on Tonio.

Tonio's lips quiver. He shuts his eyes, squinting, he clenches his jaw and pushes.

HONK, again flat, out of tune.

BEPPE

You fool...

Tonio rips open his shirt.

TONIO

No -- no... I'm clean.

CLOSE ON: head of the table, underside, Pagliacci's finger presses a red button with a black "6" etched into it.

Tonio's chair rises, metal bands shoot out from the sides, securing Tonio in place.

TONIO

It's allergies -- no wire. I'm clean.

Electronic sound of an automatic door -- a cream pie launches from the opened wall opposite Tonio, hitting him square in the face.

Metal skeletal hands come down from the top of Tonio's chair, insert in his mouth, opening it wide.

From the wall opening opposite his seat, a black gun pops out, releasing a jet stream of water, filling Tonio's mouth.

Tonio's head swells and swells, until finally it bursts, spraying water, cream and colored confetti everywhere.

Bells and whistles -- swirling lights.

VOICE (V.O.)
Ladies and gentlemen, we have a
winner -- seat number six.

The floor behind him opens, his chair tilts back, the metal bands release and Tonio slides into the pit. Carnival glass, distorting his figure, rolls into place, covering the hole.

"Entry of the Gladiators" plays.

The crank of a chain under the floor, Tonio's body vibrates before jolting, then moving out of sight.

EXT. FUN HOUSE - SAME

A big, cartoonish red cannon appears from underground.

Bangles takes notice and heads for it.

Pulling a very large match from his inner breast pocket, Bangles swipes it across the cannon's base.

The fiery match head kisses the cannon's fuse.

The fuse sparkles, running up to --

EXPLOSION

Tonio's body shoots high across the sky, silhouetted against the full moon, he descends and plops into the sea, well past the shoreline.

EXT. AMUSEMENT PARK - FERRIS WHEEL - NIGHT

Patches lays back in the car closest to the ground. Startled by the explosion, he watches Tonio fly through the sky.

INT. FUN HOUSE - NIGHT

Tonio's seat back in place, empty.

FUZZAZI
Why this urgency?

PAGLIACCI
Black market helium.

BEPPE
Skyrocketing prices.

PAGLIACCI
The Asians won't import it.

FUGAZI
What?

MR. PETTI FOGGER
Permit me, Don Pagliacci.

Pagliacci nods.

MR. PETTI FOGGER
The Asians see it as a specific market. Not enough margin to offset the cost and danger in smuggling.

FUGAZI
It has served us well for decades. A consistent money grab.

MR. PETTI FOGGER
The new restrictions placed on seltzer and helium have gashed our coffers.

Silence.

Pagliacci looks around the table.

PAGLIACCI
Beppe --

BEPPE
There's been talk about the Russian carnies moving the helium.

FUGAZI
They're east coast.

BEPPE
Expanding.

MR. PETTI FOGGER
The Asians are cutting us out of the supply line.

PAGLIACCI
Nobody outbids La Noza Costra.

Pagliacci slams the table; taffy jumps out of the bowl.

Zaftig takes a piece.

ZAFTIG
I love blue taffy.

A glance to Zaftig, they continue --

MR. PETTI FOGGER
They're pushing the white nurse.
They grow it, harvest it and
control it.

BEPPE
What about the Mexicans?

PAGLIACCI
Fugazi?

FUGAZI
Too raw and dangerous. Can't
compete logistically.

MR. PETTI FOGGER
Tighter borders, easier detection.
A partnership affords us no
advantage.

BEPPE
Squeeze the Asians?

PAGLIACCI
With stronger considerations.

FUGAZI
Whatever it takes.

INT. STUMPY'S NOVELTY GIFTS AND GAGS - BACK ROOM - DAY

Pagliacci rises with Stitches, walking out of the room, to
the back door.

Pagliacci opens the back door into --

THE ALLEY

Music plays.

EXT. THE ALLEY - DAY

PAGLIACCI
The Festival of Leoncavallo...

They walk through the alley to the street.

PAGLIACCI
Without him, I would be nothing.

EXT. STUMPY'S NOVELTY GIFTS AND GAGS - DAY

CLOWNS of all shapes, sizes and colors meander -- balloons, cotton candy, roasted peanuts and booth games crowd the city street.

Music plays.

A dunking booth, with a sign, "Dunk the Fool".

A YOUNG CLOWN throws the bean bag, hits the bull's-eye, the HUMAN splashes into the water to the roaring sound of clown laughter and applause.

Stitches looks around, overwhelmed by the commotion -- CLOWNS parting, allowing Pagliacci to pass through as if he were Moses and they, the Red Sea.

ELDERLY CLOWN WOMEN kneel down and kiss Pagliacci's hand, endlessly thanking him. His name sounds from every direction.

VOICE (O.S.)
The great Don Pagliacci -- hip,
hip, hooray -- hip, hip, hooray.

Stitches takes it all in, amazed by the grand parade of Pagliacci.

Pagliacci turns around.

PAGLIACCI
This could be yours.

Pagliacci disappears into the crowd.

Stitches slowly spins around and around, drunk with the good vibrations.

EXT. STUMPY'S NOVELTY GIFTS AND GAGS - SAME

FUNNEL CAKE TRUCK

Baubles cranes his neck, turning his head in all directions, eyes darting about.

He takes a few steps to an empty table, takes a seat and bites into the funnel cake.

GOLIATH (O.S.)
One funnel cake --

Goliath slaps his money up on the counter. He pockets the change, grabbing the funnel cake, joining Baubles.

GOLIATH
Beautiful day for a feast.

BAUBLES
Leoncavallo's knows nothing but...

GOLIATH
And these cakes. A year is too long to wait.

They continue eating cakes.

GOLIATH
Sounded like a bit of trouble the other night.

BAUBLES
Boring administration.

GOLIATH
Your wire picked up more than that... sounded a lot like a clown getting whacked.

Baubles laughs

BAUBLES
Really? Smacked around, sure. But whacked? We only whack moles.

GOLIATH
When are the Asians moving the bricks?

BAUBLES
You're ahead of yourself.

Pagliacci glides over to the table.

PAGLIACCI
Investigator Goliath, so glad you could join our festivities.

GOLIATH
Haven't missed a year.

PAGLIACCI

And for that, I am very grateful.
Remember -- your contributions go
directly to clowns in need. Your
generosity will come back to you.

Pagliacci stares down at Baubles.

PAGLIACCI

Any luck with your detective
search?

GOLIATH

Not hide nor hair.

PAGLIACCI

That's too bad. I'm sure they'll
turn up... do enjoy your funnel
cake.

Pagliacci saunters away, not a care in the world, mingling
with his admirers.

BACKSIDE OF FUNNEL CAKE TRUCK

Bailey peeks out from behind the truck, dressed as a clown,
holding popcorn, his eyes following Pagliacci's disappearance
into the crowd.

Bailey turns his gaze to Baubles and Goliath, crunching on a
handful of popcorn.

INT. SLAPPY'S LIVE NUDE CLOWNS - DAY

A sparse crowd, early in the day.

Pagliacci, entertained by two pole-dancing clowns.

Charlie enters, sits down beside Pagliacci.

Pagliacci slowly turns his head to Charlie and back to the
dancing clowns.

PAGLIACCI

You're bold. Stepping foot in here
isn't something I'd be doing if I
were you.

CHARLIE

I need your help -- we need your
help.

PAGLIACCI
Haven't seen you in here since the
night your old lady died. Ain't
that right?

Charlie fidgets.

PAGLIACCI
You got the clown-fever back?

CHARLIE
It's Patches.

Pagliacci snaps to --

PAGLIACCI
What about him?

CHARLIE
He's gone.

Pagliacci rises.

CHARLIE
He's convinced Stitches is still
alive. Told me it wasn't him in
the coffin. He's gone out to look
for him.

Pagliacci shakes his head.

PAGLIACCI
The boy's got grief in his heart
and denial in his head -- Rhonda
sent you instead of coming herself?

CHARLIE
She doesn't know I'm here.

PAGLIACCI
I see. So she doesn't approve of
you being here?

CHARLIE
She needs her son... more than
anything else. And I need him.

PAGLIACCI
Well, I'll see what I can do.

Pagliacci throws a couple of bills on the bar.

PAGLIACCI
In the meantime, enjoy the dance.

Charlie rises.

CHARLIE
No -- I've got to keep looking.

EXT. STREET - DAY

Baubles, carrying a briefcase, walks with Stitches.

STITCHES
Why do they need protection?

BAUBLES
Dangerous world.

STITCHES
He looked afraid of you.

BAUBLES
Just relieved to see me.

They pass in front of Third National Bank.

Patches stops, looks at the revolving door.

FLASHBACK

Fuzzy, dream-like -- Stitches makes three passes in the revolving door, carrying a purple sack.

Customer Service Representative

"New Employee" badge.

Bank Guard in the firing position.

SHOT

END FLASHBACK

Baubles grabs Stitches.

BAUBLES
Stitches...

STITCHES
Eh --

BAUBLES

You okay?

Stitches gathers himself.

STITCHES

What happened?

BAUBLES

You weren't here.

STITCHES

Strange...

They continue walking.

STITCHES

What did you call me?

Baubles looks down at Stitches, searching for words.

INT. CIRCUS TENT - CENTER RING - DAY

BIM and BOM, Russian White face clowns sit at a table in the center of the Big Top tent with Fai and He-ping, as clowns.

HE-PING

They expect another supplier.

BIM

Rates?

HE-PING

For you to decide. You want it, you come and get it. Your risk, your reward.

BIM

No interference.

FAI

We're out of the business. No middle man, you deal one-to-one.

BOM

This sounds like a price increase.

HE-PING

No way of knowing... but you want to make real money, this is the future.

He-ping reaches in his breast pocket and tosses Bim a packet of white.

FAI

White nurse... and she take good care of you.

HE-PING

Why deal with product only clowns use? White nurse love everyone.

He-ping and Fai rise, bow their heads before exiting.

BIM

(in Russian)

There will be adjustments in our relationships -- very soon.

Bom nods accordingly.

EXT. SAN FRANCISCO STREET - DAY

Charlie walks, steadfast, his eyes scanning every direction. He approaches the end of the boardwalk -- "shanty-town".

Sully watches Charlie approach, warming his hand over the fiery garbage can.

CHARLIE

I'm looking for a small boy.

SULLY

The small boy wasn't looking for you.

Charlie snaps to, hands a photo of Patches to Sully.

CHARLIE

Have you seen this boy?

Rita approaches --

RITA

What's the commotion all about?

Rita's eyes meet Charlie's -- shock.

CHARLIE

Rita?

RITA

Charlie?

Sully's eyes move back and forth to Charlie and Rita.

RITA
Is it... is it really you?

CHARLIE
You're -- as beautiful...

SULLY
Hey --

Rita blushes, tries to fix her hair.

CHARLIE
My grandson. He's missing.

Rita takes the photo from Sully.

RITA
He came through here a day or so ago -- looking for his father. He was safe. I made sure of it.

Rita's eyes meet Charlie's as she hands him back the photo -- both sullen.

RITA
I'll keep my eyes... open.

Charlie hands her a card.

CHARLIE
Please call if you see him.

RITA
Of course.

Charlie turns and walks away.

Rita's eyes follow him.

SULLY
Who's that?

Rita bows her head, turns around and walks back to the cardboard house.

SULLY
Who was that?

Rita continues to the house.

Sully turns his glance toward Charlie.

Charlie stops, looks over his shoulder at Rita as she disappears into the shanty house.

INT. CHARLIE'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Rhonda paces, smoking. Her hand shakes, she picks at her lips with her free hand.

Door opens and closes.

Charlie walks in from the archway.

Rhonda turns around, looks upon him -- alone.

She shakes her head --

RHONDA
Anything?

CHARLIE
He was down by the boardwalk. He
was safe when he passed through.

Rhonda turns her back to Charlie.

RHONDA
You have to find him... I can't
lose both.

Charlie moves closer.

Rhonda collapses in his arms.

RHONDA
Dad, I need him. He can't go away.
Promise me you'll find him --
please.

CHARLIE
I'll find him.

EXT. AMUSEMENT PARK - DAY

Patches walks through the broken down Amusement Park, stopping at various booths --

RING TOSS - Patches tosses a few rings that bounce around the broken glass jugs.

TOPPLE THE CLOWNS - Patches lines and stacks up the torn and dirty cloth clowns on each pedestal.

Making his way to the surf, he peeks down at a cardboard house on the edge of the boardwalk. Big tattered sneakers stick out from one end of the house. Patches follows the box to the other end -- a slumbering head sticks out.

Patches examines the face, removes his backpack and looks at the embroidered Bozo the Clown, and back to the face.

PATCHES

Bozo...

BOZO snores.

PATCHES

I can't believe it -- it's you.
Hey, Bozo.

Bozo's eyes open wide. He quickly grabs Patches, pulling him into the makeshift home.

BOZO

Who sent you?

PATCHES

No one.

BOZO

It was the record company.

PATCHES

Really -- no one.

Patches takes out the picture of Stitches, holding it up.

PATCHES

Have you seen him?

BOZO

Is he looking for me?

PATCHES

No, I'm looking for him.

BOZO

Does he owe you money? Did he
steal your wife? Does he like
candy?

Patches stares at Bozo, dumbfounded. He places the drawing of Stitches back into his Bozo knapsack.

PATCHES

Mr. Bozo, I think you need some help.

A HAND reaches in and pulls Patches from the makeshift home -- it's Bangles.

PATCHES

Hey -- put me down.

Bangles tucks Patches under his arm and begins to walk away.

Bozo pops up to his feet.

BOZO

Unhand him, you scoundrel.

Bangles turns around, smiling.

Bozo -- over-sized boxing gloves, red satin trunks and headband, shadow boxes.

Bangles places Patches down and puts up his dukes.

Bozo's right glove springs forward several feet catching Bangles square on the nose, laying him out cold.

BOZO

We've got to go. It's too dangerous here.

PATCHES

I have to keep looking.

Bozo grabs Patches' hand and walks toward the water.

BOZO

They're after us. We aren't safe here right now -- I knew this would happen.

PATCHES

What?

BOZO

The network... TV -- executives. They want me back. I'm not going. No, not going to do it.

PATCHES

Mr. Bozo, I don't think that's so... that clown wanted me.

Under the boardwalk, a paddle boat, purple with big white wheels. Bozo and Patches push it toward the sea. Getting in, they paddle away.

PATCHES
Where are we going?

BOZO
It's safer in New York.

PATCHES
Mr. Bozo, we can't paddle to New York -- that's crazy.

Patches looks back to the shore, Bangles still laid out on the boardwalk, barely visible.

EXT. BOARDWALK - DAY

Stitches and Baubles help Bangles to his feet.

BAUBLES
What happened here?

Bangles motions with hands and facial gestures.

EXT. PADDLE BOAT - DAY

Patches stands in the boat, his eyes wide.

BOZO
Sit down... you're going to tip the boat over.

PATCHES
That's my father back there --

BOZO
Don't rock the boat.

PATCHES
I knew it. I knew he was alive.
Mr. Bozo, we have to go back.

BOZO
No, no -- I am not going back there.

Patches dives into the sea.

Bozo stands.

BOZO
You crazy?

PATCHES
I've got to reach him.

Patches swims toward the shore.

Bozo perches on the back of the boat, clasps his hands together in prayer position, then belly-flops into the sea.

Bozo, bobbing up and down in the water, screams for help.

Patches stops, wades in the water, looks to the shore and back to Bozo, struggling.

Patches swims back to Bozo, pulling him toward the paddle boat.

INT. STUMPY'S NOVELTY GIFTS AND GAGS - BACK ROOM - DAY

Pagliacci and Mr. Petti Fogger sit, Bangles by the door.

MR. PETTI FOGGER
If you bring the boy back to his mother, she will open her arms.

PAGLIACCI
I can force her arms open... it's her heart.

MR. PETTI FOGGER
If he never returns, neither shall you.

Pagliacci ponders.

PAGLIACCI
Gratefulness is temporary.

MR. PETTI FOGGER
Well -- sorrow is not.

Pagliacci nods, looks to Bangles.

PAGLIACCI
Get the car.

EXT. THE AMUSEMENT PARK - BOARDWALK - DAY

Patches, assisting Bozo in his makeshift home.

Bozo sleeps.

Baubles appears at the opening.

BAUBLES

A lot of folks are looking for you,
young man.

PATCHES

I'm not leaving here until I find
my father.

BAUBLES

What makes you think he's here?

PATCHES

I saw him.

BAUBLES

You come with me and I'll help you
find him.

PATCHES

I don't know who you are. How can
I believe you?

BAUBLES

If you stay here, well -- just look
around. How long do you think
you'll be safe?

Patches rises, Baubles places him up on his shoulders.

PATCHES

What about Bozo?

BAUBLES

He's been here for years. He'll be
just fine.

Baubles waltzes across the boardwalk to the waiting black
Volkswagen. The back door opens -- Pagliacci extends his
hand.

Baubles releases Patches from his careful grip. Patches
looks up at Baubles who nods his head.

Patches gets in the car.

Baubles closes the door and climbs into the drivers seat.

INT. BLACK VOLKSWAGEN - DAY

PATCHES

You were at the funeral.

PAGLIACCI

Yes -- I knew your father well.

PATCHES

That wasn't my father. I saw him,
today.

PAGLIACCI

Patches, sometimes when tragedy
strikes, we don't want to believe
it.

PATCHES

And sometimes when it strikes, it
strikes someone else.

Pagliacci laughs -- turns to a cough.

PAGLIACCI

And what of your mother? Not
knowing the whereabouts of her only
child.

PATCHES

She doesn't know what it's like
being a clown.

PAGLIACCI

It doesn't mean she loves you less.

INT. STUMPY'S NOVELTY GIFTS AND GAGS - DAY

Stitches wanders about the store, checking on various gags,
juggling balls and magic tricks.

He walks each aisle, muttering to himself as he examines the
items on the shelves. He picks up a set of colorful juggling
balls.

Holding two in his left hand and one in his right, Stitches
mimes the juggling motion before releasing the balls, missing
all of them as they drop to the floor. He picks them up and
repeats this futility a handful of times.

STITCHES

What kind of clown can't juggle...

Stitches attempts to kick one of the balls down the aisle.
He loses his balance, landing on his duff.

Spread eagle, he lies there, staring at the ceiling.

INT. CHARLIE'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Rhonda sits, flicking through the television stations, one after the other, not watching any of it.

DOORBELL

Rhonda quickly makes her way to the door, reaches for the knob, twists and opens.

Her eyes meet Pagliacci's, then down to Patches.

Rhonda grabs Patches in her arms, holding and squeezing him tightly.

RHONDA

Oh, Patches...

Rhonda continues holding him, kissing his head.

All retreat to the living room, Rhonda and Patches to the sofa, Pagliacci settles into the loveseat.

PAGLIACCI

We had a good long talk.

Rhonda looks up at Pagliacci, thankful, but cautious.

PATCHES

Mr. Pagliacci said he'd help me find Dad.

RHONDA

You can't ever leave me without telling me first.

PATCHES

You wouldn't have let me go.

RHONDA

Whether or not you get the answer you want to hear, you always talk to me first -- always.

She holds him close.

PAGLIACCI

I'm here... for anything clown related.

EXT. CHARLIE'S HOUSE - DAY

Investigator Goliath and Murphy sit across the street in an unmarked car, parked in a neighbor's driveway.

INT. CAR - DAY

GOLIATH

I'm not saying it's written in stone. But death follows this guy.

MURPHY

He's a hero in the community.

GOLIATH

Come on, Murph, he pays the widow's rent after he makes her a widow.

MURPHY

If he's moving a drug we can't detect, how do we pin it on him? Death follows him but never points its finger at him...

GOLIATH

Baubles will come through.

MURPHY

I don't know... I feel like this is one tree we ain't gonna climb.

GOLIATH

Yeah, well... at least we can keep shaking it.

INT. STITCHES' HOUSE - RHONDA'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Rhonda, naked, under the covers -- the bed squeaking in sexual rhythm.

On top of Rhonda, Pagliacci, half-dressed, singing an aria, "Arlecchino e Colombina".

Rhonda turns her head, her eyes catching the photograph on the nightstand of her and Stitches -- a happier time.

Sadness fills her face as she turns down the photo and closes her eyes.

EXT. STITCHES' HOUSE - NIGHT

Baubles looks up toward the bedroom window from the --

BLACK LIMOUSINE

Uneasy, Baubles shakes his head in disgust, before looking straight ahead, his eyes blankly staring through the windshield.

INT. BARBER SHOP - DAY

Rhonda sits, uncomfortable, thumbing through a magazine for a brief moment. She places it down and fixes her eyes on the barber's chair.

Patches, propped up in the chair, stares at himself in the mirror. A sad face stares back.

Rhonda glances at Patches, her eyes, empty, filling with tears.

The BARBER moves in --

CLICK, and the buzzers BUZZ.

CLOSE ON: The floor around the barber's chair. Puffs of blue hair fall to the floor, looking like wisps of cotton candy.

EXT. BARBER SHOP - DAY

Stitches, enjoying his roasted peanuts, saunters along.

He stops by the window and peeks in. Looking at Patches, he smiles as the blue wisps of hair fall to the ground.

MONTAGE

A) Stitches stuffs a handful of peanuts in his mouth and continues down the block.

B) Charlie pounds a "FOR SALE" sign on the edge of his lawn.

C) Mr. Petti Fogger hands two chrome attache cases to an OMINOUS-LOOKING CLOWN in a trenchcoat and fedora.

D) Murphy and Goliath in a car across the street from Slappy's

E) Bim hanging up a phone, nodding to Bom.

F) Bangles, working and inspecting the Fun House.

G) He-ping and Fai boarding a plane.

H) Rhonda and Patches leave the barber shop.

I) Stitches passes his mirrored reflection.

END OF MONTAGE

EXT. STREET - DAY

Stitches stares at his reflection, feeling his blue hair.

FLASHBACK

Fuzzy, dream-like -- Stitches juggling with Patches.

Stitches holding Patches.

Stitches and Patches walking down a declining street.

END OF FLASHBACK

EXT. STREET - DAY

Stitches stares at his reflection, whispers --

STITCHES
Patches...

He drops his peanuts and runs as fast as his big feet allow.

Out of breath, Stitches reaches the barber shop, barges in.

INT. BARBER SHOP - DAY

He rushes up to the barber, an elderly gentleman.

STITCHES
There was a boy here a little while ago -- blue hair.

BARBER

Yes.

STITCHES

His name... did he say his name?

BARBER

Could have.

STITCHES

Patches -- his name is Patches.

BARBER

Okay...

STITCHES

Was his mother here? Did she say his name? Or her name.

BARBER

A lovely woman.

STITCHES

Rhonda -- did she say it? For God's sake, they were just here.

BARBER

On the side, over the ear -- I don't get into names, son.

A few quick turns of the head and Stitches is gone.

INT. VAN - NIGHT

Goliath and Murphy, headphones on in the back of the van.

INT. STUMPY'S NOVELTY GIFTS AND GAGS - BACK ROOM - NIGHT

PAGLIACCI

The Ling Ring will make their proposition.

BAUBLES

And the Russians?

PAGLIACCI

They have agreed to a sit-down. A full house at the Fun House.

BAUBLES

What about the white nurse?

PAGLIACCI
The main attraction...

INT. VAN - NIGHT

GOLIATH
Bingo --

INT. STUMPY'S NOVELTY GIFTS AND GAGS - BACK ROOM - NIGHT

PAGLIACCI
Tomorrow night, eleven o'clock. I
want Bangles there early.

BAUBLES
Right, boss.

PAGLIACCI
Spread the word.

Baubles leaves.

Pagliacci picks up the headset of his rotary phone and dials.

RINGING -- then click, connected but no voice.

PAGLIACCI
Take everyone out...

CLICK --

Pagliacci lights up his cigar, hangs up the phone and puffs
like a proud new parent.

Stitches bursts into the room.

STITCHES
Patches -- my son.

PAGLIACCI
You have a son?

Stitches grabs Pagliacci's arms.

STITCHES
His name is Patches... do you know
such a name?

Pagliacci thinks for moment. He shakes his head, breaking
away from Stitches.

PAGLIACCI
How can you be sure?

STITCHES
I saw it -- it came to me, all of a sudden. I've got to find him... and Rhonda

Pagliacci's smile leaves his face.

PAGLIACCI
Rhonda?

STITCHES
My wife. You have to help me, Don Pagliacci... you must help me find them.

Pagliacci grabs Stitches by both arms.

PAGLIACCI
Tomorrow night we're going to the Fun House. You drive Mr. Petti Fogger down, and when we return, we will find your family.

INT. CHARLIE'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

Charlie and Rhonda sit over coffee.

Packed moving boxes are neatly stacked.

RHONDA
It's the last time.

CHARLIE
I don't like the smell of it.

RHONDA
Without explanation, we'll never get away from him.

CHARLIE
Even with explanation...

RHONDA
He found my son, Dad... I owe him at least that much.

CHARLIE
Okay --

Rhonda moves in to hug Charlie.

RHONDA
It ends tomorrow night... I
promise.

INT. SLAPPY'S LIVE NUDE CLOWNS - BACK ROOM - DAY

Baubles sits with Mr. Petti Fogger and Pagliacci.

PAGLIACCI
Is everything in order?

MR. PETTI FOGGER
Attache cases delivered. He'll be
perched in the Ferris wheel.

PAGLIACCI
What about Bangles?

BAUBLES
He's down there... and ready.

Pagliacci turns to Mr. Petti Fogger.

PAGLIACCI
Stitches dies tomorrow.

Mr. Petti Fogger -- surprised.

Baubles turns away.

MR. PETTI FOGGER
His memory?

PAGLIACCI
Is storming back...

INT. CIRCUS TENT - DAY

Bim and Bom sit with vodka.

BIM
Godonov is prepared. Do nothing
until he has fulfilled his
contract... and if Pagliacci should
make it to the Fun House.

Bim sips his vodka.

BIM
He is the first to go. Only then
do you concern yourself with the
others.

Bom nods.

BIM
Cut the head off...

Bim finishes his vodka, slamming the glass down.

BIM
...and the body dies.

INT. VAN - DAY

Goliath and Murphy, dressed in SWAT-like gear, sit in the back of the van, monitoring the Amusement Park with high-tech gadgetry.

Goliath's helmet is fitted with a clear shield that is upright, like a welder's mask.

The van, parked on Amusement Park grounds, appears abandoned from the outside -- no wheels or hood.

INT. STUMPY'S NOVELTY GIFTS AND GAGS - BACK ROOM - NIGHT

Pagliacci, dressing in his best white and black satin outfit, whistles. He examines himself in the mirror.

Baubles stands at the door, with Stitches and Mr. Petti Fogger sitting across from Pagliacci's desk.

Pagliacci looks over his left shoulder.

PAGLIACCI
Did you kill the bug?

Baubles nods.

PAGLIACCI
Excellent -- what a grand evening,
gents. And by its end, we will
have all gotten what we deserve.

Pagliacci focuses on Stitches.

PAGLIACCI

And then -- we shall find your family.

Baubles and Mr. Petti Fogger exchange glances.

PAGLIACCI

Thanks to Mr. Petti Fogger, and his affinity for cutting out the middle man, our enterprises will be far reaching... and clean.

Mr. Petti Fogger smiles.

Stitches fidgets.

MR. PETTI FOGGER

Thank you, Don Pagliacci.

PAGLIACCI

The Ominous-Looking Clown will take care of our other concerns.

Stitches looks around, confused.

STITCHES

What other concerns?

Pagliacci turns around and pats Stitches on the shoulder, smiling.

PAGLIACCI

In due time, dear boy... all of your questions will find answers.

Pagliacci checks his watch.

PAGLIACCI

Right now it's time for you and Mr. Petti Fogger to shake a leg.

Mr. Petti Fogger and Stitches rise and exit.

Baubles closes the door.

INT. APARTMENT - NIGHT

Somber, Mussorgsky-like music.

The bedroom window looks down upon Stumpy's, directly across the street.

The room, dark -- a sleek, SILHOUETTED FIGURE, perched by the window.

Stitches and Mr. Petti Fogger exit Stumpy's front door.

POV: SCOPE -- follows Stitches and Mr. Petti Fogger.

The Silhouetted Figure disarms.

INT. STUMPY'S NOVELTY GIFTS AND GAGS - BACK ROOM - NIGHT

Baubles, standing by the door. Pagliacci sits behind his desk.

PAGLIACCI

You done well, Baubles.

BAUBLES

What if someone survives?

PAGLIACCI

With all the mayhem... it could happen. I'm sure the seltzer barrels will eventually find them.

Pagliacci rises.

BAUBLES

Why everyone?

PAGLIACCI

Once in a while, Baubles, you need to burn the forest to the ground. It promotes growth -- new strength. Now, let's go make some music.

Pagliacci and Baubles leave through the back door into the alley.

INT. SLAPPY'S LIVE NUDE CLOWNS - NIGHT

No dancing clowns, no poles -- the joint has been transformed into a cabaret-style nightclub.

Rhonda sits at her own table.

Slap Happy and The Harlequins play -- the place, alive and hopping.

Lights down, spotlight on stage.

EMCEE (V.O.)
 Ladies and gentlemen, please put
 your hands together, for the one,
 the only, Don Pagliacci.

Spotlight on Don Pagliacci.

Pagliacci bows his head, basking in the moment.

Spotlight on Rhonda.

Rhonda, startled.

PAGLIACCI
 I'd like to call on an old friend
 to come up and sing with me.

The crowd applauds.

Rhonda forces a grin, embarrassed -- shakes her head.

PAGLIACCI
 Come on up.

The crowd stands -- a crescendo of applause.

Rhonda, sensing it will not end, rises and heads for the
 stage.

Pagliacci hands her a microphone.

The crowd returns to their seats -- silence.

Pagliacci smiles.

Off mic --

PAGLIACCI
 Send in the Clowns?

Rhonda shakes her head.

Silence.

Rhonda brings the microphone to her mouth.

RHONDA
Con Te Partiro...
(With You I Will Leave)

Pagliacci's smile grows wider.

RHONDA
Dedicated to my husband, Stitches.

With difficulty, Pagliacci masks his anger.

Rhonda turns to Pagliacci and whispers --

RHONDA
Time to say goodbye...

The band sounds.

Pagliacci and Rhonda sing.

As the song continues --

EXT. AMUSEMENT PARK - NIGHT

FERRIS WHEEL

Ominous-Looking Clown opens the first chrome attache case. Three metallic purple tubes, affixed in the gray foam. The shortest with a bright yellow trigger, the longest with a large opening, surrounded by a bright yellow cuff.

He attaches the tubes, a bazooka-looking weapon. He checks the scope and trigger before opening the second chrome attache case -- fifteen colored balloons the size of softballs, each with a platinum "S".

Ominous-Looking Clown loads the balloon launcher.

FUN HOUSE

Limos pull up.

FERRIS WHEEL

Ominous-Looking Clown takes aim.

FUN HOUSE

Clowns exit the limos -- Ling Ring, Bim, Fugazi, the rest of the clafia along with Stitches and Mr. Petti Fogger.

BIM
Where's Pagliacci?

MR. PETTI FOGGER
Inside, as always.

Bim squints -- glancing over toward the Teacups, where Bom hides in the blue cup.

FUGAZI

Shall we?

Bangles, ride operating position, sets the wheels in motion.

The track cars pull around.

All enter cars, two at a time.

FERRIS WHEEL -- the first seltzer balloon launches.

Clowns look up to the Wheel.

The balloon explodes in Zaftig's face -- he melts away in muted screams.

FUGAZI

It's an ambush!

Mayhem ensues.

Balloons rain down from the Ferris Wheel.

Clowns try to scatter, but cannot get out of the track cars.

He-ping and Fai get hit, their white faces drip the drug away, but they do not melt away.

BIM

They're humans --

Bim whistles.

Bom rises from the teacups, firing smaller balloons from two large revolvers.

INT. VAN - NIGHT

GOLIATH

Call for backup --

Murphy calls it in -- dead air.

MURPHY

I got nothing.

They cock their weapons.

GOLIATH

Let's move.

They cannot exit the van -- both stare at each other, dumbfounded.

EXT. AMUSEMENT PARK - NIGHT

Melting clowns, balloons firing -- a hand comes down and rips Stitches from the track car. It's Baubles. He carries Stitches into the Fun House.

INT. FUN HOUSE - NIGHT

STITCHES

What's going on?

BAUBLES

You need to leave.

STITCHES

Who--

BAUBLES

There is no time for questions.

Baubles hands Stitches a piece of paper.

BAUBLES

Rhonda is at the first address and Patches is at the second.

Baubles presses a button under the table, a floor door opens.

BAUBLES

This will take you under the boardwalk.

STITCHES

Out by the sea?

BAUBLES

No -- not that way. There's a unicycle down there.

STITCHES

I don't know how to ride that thing... I can't even juggle.

BAUBLES

Trust your inner clown. It won't fail you.

STITCHES

Why are you doing this?

BAUBLES

No more clowning around...

EXT. UNDER THE BOARDWALK - NIGHT

Stitches grabs the unicycle, trying to pedal through the sand.

Realizing it's an impossible task, he picks it up and runs.

INT. SLAPPY'S LIVE NUDE CLOWNS - NIGHT

Song ends.

Great applause -- a standing ovation.

Pagliacci takes Rhonda's hand. They bow.

PAGLIACCI

Follow me --

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

Furiously pedaling, Stitches sways in and out, up and down, barely able to keep his balance.

INT. SLAPPY'S LIVE NUDE CLOWNS - BACK ROOM - NIGHT

Pagliacci and Rhonda enter abruptly, Pagliacci releasing Rhonda's hand as he swings her in.

He slams the door.

PAGLIACCI

Why can't it be like it used to be?

RHONDA

I don't love you, Pagliacci.

PAGLIACCI

I have given you everything -- I gave our son back to you.

RHONDA
You were properly thanked for that.

PAGLIACCI
So thank me some more --

Pagliacci forces himself on Rhonda, kissing her as she tries to break away.

Rhonda turns her head.

RHONDA
He's my son -- and Stitches'.

PAGLIACCI
No -- that can't be.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

Losing his breath, Stitches pedals furiously, gasping.

INT. SLAPPY'S LIVE NUDE CLOWNS - BACK ROOM - NIGHT

Pagliacci grabs Rhonda.

PAGLIACCI
You were two-timing me -- with my own brother?

Rhonda turns her head down.

RHONDA
Stitches loved me -- I wasn't a trophy... he was faithful.

Enraged, Pagliacci pulls out a dagger --

EXT. SLAPPY'S LIVE NUDE CLOWNS - BACK DOOR

Stitches jumps off the unicycle, grabs the door and kicks it in --

INT. SLAPPY'S LIVE NUDE CLOWNS - BACK ROOM - NIGHT

STITCHES
Rhonda --

Rhonda and Pagliacci -- shocked, cast their eyes upon Stitches.

STITCHES

Look out --

Rhonda turns around, facing Pagliacci's blade.

Stitches runs and leaps across the room, tackling Pagliacci.

The dagger CLANGS against the floor, sliding away.

Stitches and Pagliacci wrestle.

RHONDA

Stitches -- be careful!

Rhonda hurries to the dagger.

Pagliacci grabs Rhonda's leg, pulling her down, the dagger just out of reach from her grasping hand.

Pagliacci, gaining the upper hand on Stitches.

Rhonda kicks her foot, connecting with Pagliacci's face.

Pagliacci, though bleeding, does not release his grasp from Stitches' neck.

Stitches -- eyes bulging, about to lose consciousness.

Rhonda beats on Pagliacci.

RHONDA

He's your brother, for Christ's sake.

Stitches face twists -- his eyes, red with fire, his pupils dilate.

He mumbles --

STITCHES

My brother?

Somewhere, Stitches summons great strength. Rage exudes from every pore. He gains the upper hand, his hands squeezing Pagliacci's neck, choking off the oxygen supply.

Rhonda looks on, fear in her eyes.

RHONDA

Stitches -- you'll kill him. You can't. You can't be like him.

Stitches squeezes and squeezes, his face far off --

STITCHES

He knew it all along -- all this
time he knew I was looking for my
family... for you and Patches.

Pagliacci loses consciousness.

RHONDA

You can't -- no!

Rhonda places her hands on Stitches' face, turning it to meet
hers.

RHONDA

I'm here...

Stitches, tenderness in his eyes, releases his grasp from
Pagliacci's neck.

Rhonda and Stitches rise, embrace -- a long and passionate
kiss.

Pagliacci, his left eye opens, witnessing the rapture.

Rhonda gasps -- horror in her face, she stares at Stitches
while sliding through his embrace. Collapsing to the ground,
revealing Pagliacci standing behind her, bloody dagger in
hand.

Pagliacci wipes the dagger with his white satin handkerchief.

PAGLIACCI

If I cannot have her... neither
shall you.

Stitches kneels down to Rhonda.

Pagliacci turns and walks from the room.

Stitches begins to give chase -- stops, looks down to Rhonda.

INT. SLAPPY'S LIVE NUDE CLOWNS - STAGE - NIGHT

With his bloody handkerchief in hand, Pagliacci nods to Slap
Happy -- *Vesti la Giubba*, begins.

Pagliacci sings --

PAGLIACCI

*Recitar! Mentre preso dal delirio,
non so più quel che dico,
e quel che faccio!*

INT. SLAPPY'S LIVE NUDE CLOWNS - BACK ROOM - NIGHT

Stitches kneels down, holding Rhonda in his arms.

PAGLIACCI (V.O.)
Eppur è d'uopo, sforzati!
Bah! sei tu forse un uom?
Tu se' Pagliaccio!

Stitches kneels down, holding Rhonda in his arms.

Rhonda smiles.

RHONDA
 Stitches...

Stitches picks Rhonda up in his arms.

PAGLIACCI (V.O.)
Vesti la giubba,
e la faccia infarina.

STITCHES
 I've got to get you to a hospital.

RHONDA
 I'm not going to make it.

STITCHES
 Don't say that -- you will.

PAGLIACCI (V.O.)
La gente paga, e rider vuole qua.
E se Arlecchin t'invola Colombina,
ridi, Pagliaccio, e ognun
applaudirà!

EXT. SLAPPY'S LIVE NUDE CLOWNS - BACK DOOR - NIGHT

Stitches mounts the unicycle with Rhonda in his arms, finding the inner strength to pedal away.

RHONDA
 I never stopped loving you...

STITCHES
 I know --

RHONDA

And Patches -- he'll be so
happy... he knew you were alive.
He knew it.

STITCHES

Shh -- save your strength.

INT. SLAPPY'S LIVE NUDE CLOWNS - STAGE - NIGHT

Pagliacci, clutching the blood soaked handkerchief.

PAGLIACCI

*Tramuta in lazzi lo spasmo ed il
pianto
in una smorfia il singhiozzo e 'l
dolor, Ah!*

The crowd, weeping.

PAGLIACCI

*Ridi, Pagliaccio,
sul tuo amore infranto!
Ridi del duol, che t'avvelena il
cor!*

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

Stitches continues pedaling with Rhonda in his arms.

Rhonda, limp.

Stitches looks down.

STITCHES

No... you can't. You cannot leave
me.

INT. SLAPPY'S LIVE NUDE CLOWNS - STAGE - NIGHT

Standing ovation -- Bailey, clapping, moves toward the stage.

Goliath and Murphy burst through the doors, guns cocked.

Bailey pulls his gun on Pagliacci -- who smiles as a solitary
tear rolls down his face.

SEVERAL GUNSHOTS

INT. PRISON - DAY

General population -- Bailey, escorted by TWO GUARDS, one clown, one human.

Bailey's orange jumpsuit, sweat-stained around the collar, chest and back; his eyes dart about the cells to his left and right.

PRISONER (O.S.)
It's the Clown Killer Cop!

Ankle chains rattle, PRISONERS holler and threaten Bailey.

Bailey, drenched, passes out.

The guards keep him from hitting the floor.

Clown Guard slaps his face.

CLOWN GUARD
You don't want to pass out before
the party.

Bailey, in and out -- Human Guard administers smelling salts, his head shakes and Bailey snaps to.

BAILEY
I'm supposed to be in isolation.

HUMAN GUARD
Yeah, well -- you ain't.

CLOWN GUARD
Some high level dude got paid. And
he wants you here.

BAILEY
I can't go in general. They'll --
kill me.

They continue down the corridor, reaching a set of gates.

CLOWN GUARD
It ain't difficult to get into
isolation.

BUZZ -- they pass through the gates, entering the cell block.

They arrive at a cell to a crescendo of threats.

All look up at TINY, behind bars -- seven foot, a solar eclipse of a clown, muscular, with HOWL tattooed across the fingers of his right fist and BAWL across the left. His skull long and white with deep purple hair and black eyes.

HUMAN GUARD

But you've got to get there...
through him.

CLOWN GUARD

Back of the cell, Tiny.

Tiny paces backward to the far wall, smiling as the cell door unlocks -- his teeth, like sharp fangs sparkle as Bailey, petrified, is forced into the cell.

Tiny moves slowly toward Bailey, casting a shadow that engulfs him, as the sound of the closing cell reverberates.

TINY

Clown killer...

Bailey faints.

EXT. SAN FRANCISCO STREET - DAY

Charlie, with photo in hand, searches this rough and tumble area of town.

As he reaches each fiery garbage pail, he questions the clowns and shows the picture. They all point to the third pail in line.

Upon reaching the third fiery pail, Charlie looks up, his eyes meeting Rita's. They smile lovingly, each with tears.

They embrace.

EXT. SAN FRANCISCO STREET - DAY

Stitches and Patches, bindles over their right shoulders stare at The Golden Gate in the distance.

Stitches pulls Patches close.

PATCHES

Dad, doesn't the outline of The
Golden Gate look like the Big Top?

STITCHES

Yeah... it's a big top world,
Patches. Right, Mom?

Stitches turns to head to his left.

Rhonda, a bindle over her right shoulder, smiles.

RHONDA

It's certainly mine...

Stitches, Rhonda and Patches waltz away, hand in hand,
disappearing down the decline.

FADE OUT.