

White Elephant
by
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FADE IN:

INT. JUVENILE HALL - HENRY'S CELL - DAY

Deft fingers grip a broken pencil lead and put finishing touches on an elaborate sketch of a rainforest on the underside of a metal framed bunk bed. Wild-eyed creatures amidst trees and foliage adorn every strip of metal.

A gate CLANGS and hard-soled shoes TAP as someone approaches.

The sketcher's fingers return the lead to its hiding place, a tear beneath a loose button on the mattress.

Clumsy, sausage-like fingers fumble with JANGLING keys, unlocking the cell door which MOANS open.

GUARD #1 (O.S.)
Let's go, Henry.

IN THE HALLWAY

Tennis shoes shuffle along a cement floor, preceded and followed by the TAP, TAP, TAP of hard-soled shoes.

Abruptly, all feet stop. A BUZZER sounds, a lock CLICKS, and a door opens.

The walking party continues through the door and stops at the check-out station. Strong, hard hands hold up an i.d. tag on a black backpack, hoist the bag, and start to shove the bag out the window. A uniformed arm blocks the way.

A GUARD writes the i.d. number on a roster attached to a clipboard, then shoves the clipboard towards the prisoner.

GUARD #1
Sign here to collect your
belongings.

Younger hands, slightly shaking, grasp the clipboard and pen.

HENRY MCALLISTER, 15, scowls as he signs. His dark clothes and unnaturally dark, razor-hacked hair accentuate his paleness and make him look like an extra for a low-budget horror movie.

GUARD #2
Minus your spray paint,
Michelangelo.

Several of the guards SNICKER.

EXT. JUVENILE HALL - DAY

Double doors open. Above them, reflecting the sun's glare, large metal letters spell out "JUVENILE HALL."

A guard steps aside to allow Henry out.

The guard points out an uncomfortable looking cement bench.

GUARD #3

You can wait there to be picked up.

Henry says nothing. He trudges over to the bench and sits. The guard goes back inside.

Henry takes an iPod out of his backpack, places the earbud in his ear, and turns it on.

He removes a ziplock bag. It contains a lip ring and a couple eyebrow rings. He puts on these accessories.

Sandy blond roots betray the authenticity of his jet black hair. He scowls, sits back, and turns up the music.

SEVERAL HOURS LATER

The sun is barely visible above the horizon.

Henry shifts his weight, trying to get comfortable. In the parking lot, several guards head towards their cars. As one guard pulls out of the parking lot, he stops.

The guard rolls down the window.

GUARD #3

There's a bus stop on Magnolia.
It's just a couple blocks over.

Henry grabs his backpack and starts walking.

GUARD #3

(calling after him)
Need a ride?

Henry just shakes his head and keeps going.

ON THE BUS

Henry plops down in a seat by himself. He ignores the stares from other passengers.

The metal back of the seat in front of him is covered in graffiti. He glances around. The other passengers avoid eye contact. Henry smiles to himself.

He shakes up an imaginary can of spray paint. He mimics painting over the graffiti.

HENRY
Shiiish. Shiiish.

EXT. HENRY'S NEIGHBORHOOD - EVENING

Henry walks along the sidewalk of a nice residential neighborhood.

Suddenly, he stops in his tracks. A real estate "For Sale" sign confronts him from the front lawn of a white bungalow.

Henry throws open the front gate and races up the steps.

He POUNDS on the door.

YARD NEXT DOOR

A woman waters her roses. She hears Henry's pounding, puts down the hose, and heads to Henry's door.

FRONT DOOR OF HENRY'S HOUSE

Henry continues POUNDING on the door.

NEIGHBOR LADY
Henry? What are you doing here?

Henry turns to her. He doesn't meet her eye, but addresses his remarks to the area just above her left shoulder.

HENRY
Where is she?

NEIGHBOR LADY
Your mom moved to the East Coast.
She said you'd be going to live
with your dad.

HENRY
Where on the East Coast?

NEIGHBOR LADY

She didn't leave a forwarding address, but she did give me something to give to you.

The neighbor descends the steps. Henry stares after her.

NEIGHBOR LADY

I'll be right back.

The neighbor disappears into her own house. Henry, still in shock, cups his hands and peers in the window.

INT. HENRY'S MOTHER'S HOUSE - EVENING

Even at dusk, the house is clearly empty of any furnishings.

EXT. HENRY'S MOTHER'S HOUSE - EVENING

Henry turns away from the window and sinks to a crouch. He puts his hands on his head and rests his elbows on his knees and remains curled up until the neighbor returns.

She hands Henry an envelope. Henry takes it, but doesn't open it. The neighbor leaves.

Once alone, Henry mechanically opens the envelope. He pulls out a folded piece of paper with something inside it.

INSERT - THE PAPER, WHICH READS:

"Henry,
I really think this is for the best.
Love, Mom
P.S. I had all your stuff shipped to your dad's."

BACK TO SCENE

Henry unfolds the paper. Inside is a plane ticket.

Henry folds the note around the ticket and sticks the envelope in his backpack.

A LITTLE WHILE LATER

Streetlights illuminate the house's exterior.

The front door sports a tagger's moniker as do several of the windows, the side walls, and the porch railings.

Even the real estate sign and the mailbox have been hit.

The front gate, left ajar, swings gently in the breeze.

EXT. KING'S PALACE - THAILAND - DAY

From the top of the palace walls, navy blue flags emblazoned with white elephants flap gently in the breeze and gradually become illuminated by the rising sun.

SUPER: "King's Palace - Thailand."

Thai musicians play DRUMS, PIPES, and CYMBALS.

PALACE COURTYARD

The people in the stands wear bright reds, yellows, blues, and oranges, enthralled as musicians and dancers pass.

The KING sits on silken cushions on an ornate gold throne. He looks pleased.

As the dancers and musicians pass the king's throne, the crowd CLAPS and CHEERS.

Then, there is a moment of SILENCE.

The TWO MASSIVE GATES of the courtyard are pulled back by five servants on each side to REVEAL...

HUGE WHITE ELEPHANTS.

The largest and most majestic elephant leads the procession. His rider, VIROTE, 16, the king's youngest son, wears fine red silk trimmed with gold, traditional Thai apparel for this formal occasion.

Virote's eyes shine with pride as he commands the great beast.

VIROTE (V.O.)

The legend of the white elephant
began in Southeast Asia.

The regal beast is fittingly adorned with fine silk sashes.

VIROTE (V.O.)
 In Thailand, all white elephants
 are the property of the king.

Golden pendants hang from the elephant's ears, his forehead is decked with a spray of diamonds to ward off evil spirits, and four spectacular umbrellas shield him from the sun.

The crowd OOHS and AAHS, and then bursts into applause as the magnificent creature nears them.

VIROTE (V.O.)
 In order to be great, a king needs
 seven things: a perfect wife...

The king himself smiles and cheers. His beautiful wife applauds beside him.

VIROTE (V.O.)
 ...an able treasurer and a wise
 chief minister...

The king is so moved as the elephant nears him that he stands to his feet and continues to applaud. All of his ministers stand to their feet as well.

VIROTE (V.O.)
 ...a swift horse, a wheel of law, a
 precious gem to guide his
 actions...

Diamonds, rubies, and sapphires set into each of the white elephant's tusks catch the sunlight and gleam brilliantly.

VIROTE (V.O.)
 ...and the most noble of white
 elephants.

The proud elephant appears to bow slightly as it stops before the king. The king bows back as a sign of mutual respect. The elephant lifts its trunk, and the crowd goes wild.

VIROTE (V.O.)
 When an elephant's trunk is lifted,
 it signifies overcoming obstacles.

The king jots something down on a piece of paper and hands it to one of his attendants.

Virote moves the elephant on, and other elephants follow. Three elephants walk abreast of each other. The outer two carry a drum on a pole. The middle elephant alternately hits the drum with her trunk. BONG, BONG, BONG!

Behind them, the lesser but still spectacular white elephants promenade single-file. They use their trunks to grasp the tail of the elephant in front of them.

INT. THE KING'S LIMOUSINE - LATER THAT DAY

Virote sits stiffly, clearly uncomfortable being in such close proximity to his father, the king.

EXT. THE PALACE DRIVEWAY - DAY

As the king's limousine glides down the long driveway and out the majestic gates, servants stop what they're doing and bow to the king. Inside the palace walls, life is tranquil.

EXT. STREETS OF BANGKOK - DAY

As the limousine gets farther from the palace and enters the heart of the city, the streets become more crowded.

The limousine slows.

KING

Although it is not entirely fitting
for a prince to work under the
chief mahout...

Virote looks wistfully at his father while the king gazes out the window and reaches forward and directs the driver.

KING

...he assures me your assistance
has been invaluable. I am hoping
you help our country's elephants.

Traffic is at a standstill. The limousine stops. The king rolls down his window. He motions to Virote to look.

Virote sees the cause of the traffic jam. Several mahouts try to manoeuver their elephants along the road, but there is simply not enough room for both elephants and cars.

In frustration, one elephant steps onto the hood of a car, flattening the tires and denting the hood.

Smoke billows from the smashed hood. The driver HONKS and YELLS. The mahout merely shakes his head and tries to get his elephant out of the way.

VIROTE

Oh, no!

KING

Thailand has changed. We need to find a solution to what the media calls our "elephant problem."

The traffic jam clears and the limo moves forward again.

VIROTE

What can be done?

KING

That is what you must discover...

OUTSKIRTS OF BANGKOK

Virote, stunned, says nothing. The limo speeds away from the city, climbing into Thailand's forest region.

FOREST REGION OF THAILAND

As they round a bend, Virote sees a huge sign which reads, "Government Elephant Authority." The limo slows. The guard raises the gate and waves them through.

INT. ELEPHANT RECOVERY BARN - DAY

The king and Virote peruse huge holding stalls, many occupied by injured elephants. Mahouts clean the elephants' abrasions, bandage wounds, and hover anxiously.

KING

Once these injured elephants are well enough, they will join the forest patrols.

VIROTE

Aren't these patrols effective against poaching and illegal logging?

KING

Yes, but too many elephants and handlers beg in the streets or add to the congestion problems.

VIROTE

There's nowhere for them to go.

The king peers into a stall where a mahout tenderly brushes his elephant's skin while SINGING softly to the animal.

The mahout looks up, stops when he sees the king, and bows slightly. The king nods in acknowledgement, and the mahout resumes his labor of love.

KING

Ambassadors to America tell me that several traveling circuses and petting zoos have expressed an interest in our elephants. That's where you come in.

VIROTE

Me?

With a sweeping gesture, the king references the entirety of the premises.

KING

I want you to take the first delegation of elephants to a Mid-Western circus. You must be my eyes and ears and judge whether or not such a move will truly benefit these citizens of Thailand.

EXT. WICHITA MID-CONTINENT AIRPORT - DAY

As a commercial flight taxis to the gate, a private plane lands, bearing the insignia of the king of Thailand.

INT. COMMERCIAL FLIGHT - DAY

Henry gathers his belongings and waits to deplane.

A FELLOW PASSENGER tries to engage Henry in conversation.

FELLOW PASSENGER

Gonna be here long?

HENRY

Depends on how you define "long."

The line of passengers begins to move towards the exit.

EXT. FRONT DOOR OF THE MCALLISTER HOUSE - DAY

Henry gets out of the taxi. He stands staring at the house's white pillars and marble steps. He grabs his backpack.

HENRY
(to the driver)
Could you wait here a minute...

TAXI DRIVER
Sure, the meter's still runnin'.

Henry musters his courage, mounts the steps, and rings the bell. COLLEEN, a preppy teenage girl opens the door. She eyes Henry's gothic look with disdain.

COLLEEN
May I help you?

HENRY
I'm Henry...McAllister. Is my dad here?

COLLEEN
(jaw dropping in disgust)
Oh my God! I have a goth for a step-brother?

She turns and yells down the hallway.

COLLEEN
Ryan!

INT. RYAN MCALLITER'S STUDY - DAY

Henry's father, RYAN, hears Colleen's voice. He starts to run, then consciously slows himself. Ryan, an ordinary guy whose architectural firm succeeded beyond belief, is still learning to act rich.

FOYER

Ryan strides briskly into the foyer where Colleen and Henry stand. Ryan reaches for Henry as if to hug him, but then stops short, somewhat taken aback at his son's bizarre appearance. He claps Henry on the shoulder.

RYAN
Good to see you, son.

HENRY

Thanks.

RYAN

I see you've met my step-daughter,
Colleen.

Colleen rolls her eyes, and Henry stares at the floor.

RYAN

We've been expecting you, but your
mother didn't know exactly when...

Henry says nothing.

From outside, the taxi driver HONKS.

HENRY

Gotta pay the driver...

Ryan pulls out money from his wallet and hands it to Colleen.

RYAN

(to Colleen)

Take care of that, please.

COLLEEN

You're seriously letting him stay?

RYAN

Colleen, please.

Colleen grabs the money and flounces out, disgusted. Ryan
looks at Henry's lip ring.

RYAN

Airport security give you a hard
time?

Henry shrugs.

RYAN

You'll have to be really careful
around the baby.

HENRY

Afraid I'll break her?

RYAN

No, but Celia's at that stage where
she likes to pull on things...like
hair and shiny jewelry.

Now it's Henry's turn to look uncomfortable.

HENRY

I won't let her get close to me.

RYAN

We'll see.

EXT. WICHITA MID-CONTINENT AIRPORT - DAY

Virote now wears mostly Western garb with the exception of his bamboo hat. He directs the other mahouts and their elephants as they de-plane. The THAI AMBASSADOR and the circus owner, MR. KELLOGG, greet Virote.

THAI AMBASSADOR

Good to have you here at last!

VIROTE

I'm glad to be on the ground again.

The ambassador steps back, urging Mr. Kellogg forward.

THAI AMBASSADOR

This is Marvin Kellogg, the circus owner.

Virote and Mr. Kellogg shake hands.

Virote notices a caravan of 18-wheelers and looks questioningly at the ambassador.

THAI AMBASSADOR

Transportation to the circus.

VIROTE

It would be much better for the elephants if they could walk.

MR. KELLOGG

Walk? On public roads? In America?

VIROTE

What an excellent way to introduce them to its sights and smells.

Mr. Kellogg looks perplexed. The ambassador frowns and rubs his forehead.

VIROTE

Please, Ambassador. They've been
penned in for far too long.

THAI AMBASSADOR

This is highly...irregular.

VIROTE

They need the exercise.

MR. KELLOGG

There's no law against it.

THAI AMBASSADOR

Perhaps only because there never
needed to be a law against it.

MR. KELLOGG

I need these animals in tiptop
shape. If your man says they
should walk, let them walk.

EXT. A STRETCH OF KANSAS HIGHWAY - A SHORT TIME LATER - DAY

Virote leads the elephant caravan, riding atop TUKTA, his non-
white royal elephant.

The other seven elephants march single-file behind Tukta, all
laden with their mahouts and their mahouts' belongings.

At the front and rear of the caravan, 18-wheelers crawl along
like motorized guardians. Impatient motorists follow.

INT. CAB OF 18 WHEELER - DAY

A trucker takes a last drag on his cigarette. He tosses it
out the window. Through his side view mirror, he sees the
procession of elephants.

TRUCKER #1

Didn't figure we was hired to baby-
sit.

His buddy is completely turned in his seat, staring at the
elephant caravan.

TRUCKER #2

Get paid the same don't we?

TRUCKER #1

But this is gonna take all day.

TRUCKER #2
What else you got to do, Leroy?

The driver shrugs.

TRUCKER #2
Wish my kids was here. They'd love
this.

INT. MCALLISTER FORMAL DINING ROOM - LATER THAT EVENING

Henry sits awkwardly in a hard-backed chair. His step-mother
CANDACE sits opposite his father at the head of the table.

The baby CELIA in a high chair on Candace's right with
Colleen next to her. Three-year old CARTER sits on her left,
next to Henry.

Henry's dad smiles at him reassuringly.

CANDACE
What are your plans for summer,
Henry?

Henry shrugs.

RYAN
What about a part-time job?

HENRY
Doing what?

Ryan shrugs.

CANDACE
You might get a job at the club...

RYAN
The country club?

Colleen snorts.

CANDACE
Lots of young men work there as
caddies, pool attendants, bus
boys...

COLLEEN
He'll fit right in.

Henry inspects his silverware.

RYAN
Nothing has to be decided now...

EXT. COUNTRY CLUB - A FEW DAYS LATER - MORNING

Henry gets out of his dad's BMW as his dad hands it over to a clean-cut, preppy valet PARKING ATTENDANT. The attendant smiles at Ryan but he barely masks his disdain for Henry.

As they climb the stairs, a CADDIE descends, cut from the same cloth as the parking attendant.

CADDIE #1
Good morning, Mr. McAllister.

RYAN
Morning, Mark. Nice to see you.

After they pass on the stairs, Henry looks back and sees the caddie staring after them, sniggering.

HENRY
(stopping)
This isn't going to work.

RYAN
Don't worry.

Henry remains unconvinced.

RYAN
I want you to meet somebody.

Ryan ascends the stairs. Shaking his head, Henry follows.

INT. COUNTRY CLUB CAFE - A SHORT TIME LATER

Henry, Ryan, and another slightly older man, MR. BIRTELL, sit at a table, their china plates filled with delectable items.

In the buffet area, chefs in toques stand at stations, cooking up omelettes to guests' specifications. Silver-domed warming pans house other breakfast staples.

MR. BIRTELL
Your dad tells me you're looking for a summer job.

HENRY
I'm not the country club type...

RYAN

That's why I've asked Mr. Birtell to join us. Bill and I have known each other for years as we're fellow Rotarians...

Henry wonders whether his dad has just lapsed into Martian. Mr. Birtell picks up on Henry's confusion.

MR. BIRTELL

The Rotary Club sponsors Smiley's Sunny Circus, we wondered if you'd like a part-time job there.

Relief floods Henry's face although he tries not to show it.

HENRY

Sounds okay.

EXT. CIRCUS GROUNDS - DAY

Virote, his mahouts, and the elephants have just arrived. The circus owner, Mr. Kellogg, directs them.

MR. KELLOGG

Glad you made it. Virote, come with me. Let your workers take care of the elephants for a bit.

Virote motions to the next-in-command and goes with Kellogg.

MR. KELLOGG

I want to introduce you to our circus manager.

EXT. ELEPHANT AREA - DAY

Virote and Mr. Kellogg round the corner and find HAL JACKSON, the circus manager, unsuccessfully attempting to rearrange the circus's elephants who are lined up largest to smallest. But Hal wants them arranged from smallest to largest.

Ready to perform, the elephants wear sparkley headdresses.

Hal's thick unruly hair seems mismatched with his carefully groomed, distinctive handle-bar mustache. Both stand out even more against Hal's flushed, angry face.

TICKLES, the largest of the circus elephants, sits down and refuses to move. Hal angrily pummels her with his fist.

HAL
Come on, you stupid, stubborn...

Tickles turns towards Hal and catches him full in the face with her trunk, knocking him on his butt.

HAL
(winded)
You'll pay for that!

Scrambling to his feet, Hal grabs the elephant hook and wields it like a spear. As he's about to jab Tickles, Virote cries out.

VIROTE
Don't!

Hal, startled, turns to see who has yelled. When he sees Mr. Kellogg, he puts down the hook.

MR. KELLOGG
Ah, Jackson. You'll be glad to meet Virote here. He's taking over the elephants.

Virote nods in Hal's direction. Hal puts a cigarette in his mouth and eyes Virote coldly.

MR. KELLOGG
(to Virote)
Hal's going to implement stricter security measures. In the last nine months, we've had a llama and a tiger mysteriously disappear.

Virote raises his eyebrows. Hal puffs on his cigarette.

MR. KELLOGG
So, Hal, you'll continue to oversee all animal-related matters except for the elephants. Virote, you'll be in charge of the new elephants as well as the four we already have. Is that clear, gentlemen?

HAL
Clear as mud.

VIROTE
Absolutely, Mr. Kellogg.

Dressed in outfits that match the elephants' apparel, circus performers arrive and lead the elephants off in the order they were originally in, with Tickles first in line. The elephants comply without incident.

MR. KELLOGG

I'll let you get on with business.

Mr. Kellogg leaves. Virote turns to Hal.

Hal, still smoking, glares at Virote. Virote stares at Hal, but makes no comment. Hal spits in Virote's direction. The spittle lands on the ground near Virote's foot. Virote unflinchingly meets Jackson's eye but doesn't move.

EXT. CIRCUS GROUNDS NEAR THE BIG TOP - DAY

SUPER: "A Few Days Later."

Henry tries to hide his excitement as Mr. Kellogg shows him and his dad around. Mr. Kellogg leads the way.

MR. KELLOGG

Go knock on the door of Trailer
Number Three over there and ask for
Hal Jackson. He'll tell you where
he wants you to work and when.

HENRY

Thanks.

Henry starts towards the trailers at a run, but then slows to hide his enthusiasm.

RYAN

I really appreciate this, Marvin.

MR. KELLOGG

Glad to help. Pay's not much.
Business's been tough lately.

RYAN

That's okay. The important thing
is that Henry...

Mr. Kellogg claps Ryan on the shoulder.

MR. KELLOGG

Having a job's the best thing for a
kid going through an awkward stage.

EXT. CIRCUS MIDWAY - DAY

Hal shows Henry the various rides. He points at a ride that spins and dives, evoking screams from the riders.

HAL

Make sure you collect the right
number of tickets for each ride.

He points to a sign by "The Octopus" which reads, "This ride
takes 3 tickets."

HAL

Collect the tickets before you let
the people get on. As soon as you
take them, you tear them in half.

Hal demonstrates on some tickets he pulls from his pocket.

HAL

Even if they chicken out or beg the
operator to stop the ride and let
'em off early, you don't give 'em
their tickets back. You won't have
any arguments if you tear 'em like
you're supposed to. Got it?

Henry nods.

EXT. CIRCUS MIDWAY NEAR "THE OCTOPUS" - DAY

Henry takes patrons' tickets and helps them get on the ride.
When the ride is full, the operator starts it up. Henry
steps back and watches the people on the ride.

Another roadie saunters up. He waves at the ride operator
who responds with a nod.

ROADIE #1

I'm your relief for lunch.

HENRY

Okay, great.

ROADIE #1

Be back in half an hour.

EXT. CIRCUS EMPLOYEE EATING AREA - DAY

Henry sits on a metal folding chair at a rickety table.

He dips his fries in ketchup and looks around at his co-
workers: a bald weight-lifter with a pointy goatee, a
tattooed lady, acrobats, and clowns. He doesn't look out of
place here at all.

He finishes eating, wipes his hands, and gets out his sketchpad. He draws trapeze artists who are practicing a floor routine, focusing especially on a PRETTY GIRL, APRIL, about his own age. He is an excellent artist.

Henry senses a presence behind him. He whirls around to see several mahouts and Virote who points at the drawings.

Henry raises his eyebrows but doesn't speak. He keeps drawing, signing his work with the moniker he uses to tag.

VIROTE
Silp Song Thang.

The mahouts make sounds of agreement which Henry perceives as laughter. Henry slams the sketchpad shut and jumps up.

HENRY
I don't speak Chinese.

Henry shoves Virote; Virote holds his ground, barely moving.

VIROTE
Neither do I.

Virote stands up straighter, imposing on Henry's space.

VIROTE
"Silp Song Thang" is a saying we have in Thailand. It means, "One art form illuminates the way for other art forms."

HENRY
I don't understand it any better in English.

VIROTE
Your drawing captures in their faces the emotions the performers express through their movements.

Henry relaxes somewhat, studies his drawings, and turns away.

VIROTE
(tapping Henry's shoulder)
You possess a rare gift. Too bad you've got such a bad temper.

Virote and the other mahouts meander away, leaving Henry staring after them.

INT. MCALLISTER KITCHEN - NIGHT

Henry enters, exhausted. He unzips his windbreaker and starts to take it off but feels the bulging pockets. He reaches in, takes out the tickets he's collected throughout the day, and throws them into the trash can.

He takes off his jacket and hangs it over a chair. He washes his hands. He opens the fridge, finds some leftovers, and sticks them in the microwave. He pours himself a large glass of milk, grabs his plate, and heads to the family room.

FAMILY ROOM

Henry flops into an easy chair, sets his food on the end table, grabs the remote, and turns on the TV. He eats ravenously at first, but then slows, yawning and sliding deeper into the chair. He pulls an afghan across his knees.

LATER

A pudgy finger touches Henry's eyebrow ring. Not quite awake, Henry brushes the finger like he'd shoo away a fly.

The pudgy finger pokes the eyebrow ring again, moving it.

Henry brushes the finger away again.

The finger returns and wiggles the eyebrow ring up and down.

CELIA

Pretty.

Henry jolts awake and grabs her wrist.

Scared by his reaction, Celia starts to cry. Henry lets go.

HENRY

Crap! Hey, Celia, don't cry.

Celia isn't convinced. Henry lifts her up, but when he puts her on his lap, her leg knocks over his glass of milk.

HENRY

Crap!

Henry stands up, still holding Celia, who CRIES louder.

HENRY

It's okay, it's okay.

Henry soaks up the milk with an afghan, jostling Celia.

HENRY
Crap!

CELIA
Crap.

HENRY
Don't say "crap."

Celia starts fingering his eyebrow ring again.

CELIA
Pretty.

HENRY
You like that, huh?

Celia nods. Henry gathers up the sopping afghan.

HENRY
Let's go find the pretty washing
machine.

LAUNDRY ROOM

Henry finds some detergent and adds it to the machine. Celia perches atop the dryer. Henry turns on the machine.

HENRY
Ready to go back to the other room?

Celia nods. As Henry opens the laundry room door, he hears voices from the hallway.

CANDACE (O.S.)
It's not the sort of job I'd hoped
he'd take on.

Henry freezes.

RYAN (O.S.)
There's nothing wrong with it.

CANDACE (O.S.)
Did I say there was?

Henry looks at Celia and puts his finger to his lips.

RYAN (O.S.)
No, but your attitude says it all.

CANDACE (O.S.)
 What do you expect me to think?

Mechanically, Henry lifts Celia into his arms, his face grim.

RYAN (O.S.)
 Look, sweetheart, I know this is
 hard for you. But we've got to get
 Henry going in the right direction.

An awkward pause follows. When they speak again, the voices seem farther away as though they've moved down the hall.

RYAN (O.S.)
 We've got to support him.

CANDACE (O.S.)
 Just don't ask me to trust him. A
 leopard can't change its spots.

The CLICK CLACK of high heels on the tile gets fainter.

MONTAGE - HENRY ENJOYS HIS JOB AT THE CIRCUS

-- EXT. CIRCUS FERRIS WHEEL - DAY -- Henry takes tickets from a young couple in love and helps them onto the ferris wheel.

-- EXT. CIRCUS EMPLOYEE EATING AREA - DAY -- Henry sips a milkshake as he draws the tattooed lady talking to the fortune teller and the pretty trapeze artist.

--EXT. CIRCUS FIRESTORM RIDE - DAY -- Henry takes tickets from two girls before they board the ride, and he watches as they get in and the ride starts up. The riders SCREAM with delight as the ride spins faster and faster. Henry smiles.

--INT. CIRCUS BIG TOP - NIGHT -- Henry pets an elephant as Virote lines them up before a performance.

--INT. CIRCUS BIG TOP - NIGHT -- From the wings, Henry watches the trapeze artist's flawless performance. As they take their bows, the pretty girl Henry likes to draw catches his eye and smiles. Henry quickly looks away.

END MONTAGE

EXT. CIRCUS GROUNDS - ANIMAL AREA - DAY

Hal Jackson leads a camel out of a stall towards a waiting trailer. The camel balks at the idea of going up the ramp.

Hal jerks her harshly and when she still doesn't want to go, he slaps her in the face. She bolts up the ramp in fear.

The driver of the pickup pulling the trailer, SKIP JACKSON, leans out. He looks an awful lot like his brother Hal.

SKIP

Don't damage the merchandise.

HAL

Shut up! I don't see you out here loading her.

The man in the passenger seat, KEVIN JACKSON, reaches out and hangs on to the cab of the pickup, pulling himself up to sit in the open window. The family resemblance is unmistakable.

KEVIN

Quit arguing. We're gonna miss our connection if we don't get going.

HAL

Don't be an idiot. He wants the camel, so he'll wait.

Henry rounds the corner and sees the camel inside the trailer just as Hal slams shut the door. The pickup hauling the trailer drives off.

Hal turns around, startled to see Henry.

HAL

What do you want?

HENRY

Joe sent me to find out what station you want me at.

HAL

The zipper. Do I have to think of everything?

EXT. CIRCUS MIDWAY NEAR "THE ZIPPER" RIDE - DAY

After taking their tickets, Henry helps eager patrons onto the ride. He's pleasant enough, but his mind is elsewhere.

The crowds throng the midway, and the lines for the rides are long. Henry hears impatient GRUMBLING from those in line.

CIRCUS PATRON #1

(to his friend)

This is taking forever!

CIRCUS PATRON #2

The workers here sure don't hurry.

Henry signals for the next riders to come forward.

HENRY

Tickets?

The circus patrons thrust their tickets at Henry who starts to tear them in half.

CIRCUS PATRON #1

C'mon, let us on already.

Henry shoves the untorn tickets in his pocket and helps the guys onto the ride.

Henry omits the ticket tearing step as he boards the next set of riders. And the next. And so on.

INT. CIRCUS BIG TOP - NIGHT

In the wings, Henry watches the show. Henry's attention is riveted to the pretty girl, APRIL, he's always sketching.

April and the other trapeze artists climb to the trapeze platforms. Their costumes catch the light as they ascend.

The lead performer swings out, executes a mid-air somersault, and catches her partner's outstretched hands. The crowd APPLAUDS wildly. The next artist does the same.

Now it's April's turn. She signals her partner, holding up three fingers. He shakes his head and holds up two fingers.

April waves to the crowd and swings out on her trapeze. The music cues her to execute her jump, but she hesitates. The musical cue repeats, and her partner swings towards her again, his hands outstretched.

April takes a deep breath, holds up three fingers to her partner, swings high, and does a triple somersault.

She finishes the third flip and flies towards her partner, but the timing is off. They reach for each other, but their hands don't connect, and April falls into the net. She lands safely and flips out onto the floor.

A sympathetic OOOOH rises from the crowd. The other trapeze artists jump into the net. They leave the ring, followed by the RINGMASTER, smiling and waving at the crowd. Clowns run in and delight the audience with their antics.

IN THE WINGS

As soon as they're out of view of the audience, the ringmaster's smile fades. He grabs April's arm. They stop fairly close to Henry who steps back into the shadows.

RINGMASTER
What were you thinking?

PRETTY GIRL/APRIL
I've been doing triples in practice for a couple weeks now.

RINGMASTER
You know I've got to clear new stunts with management! We'll both be in trouble.

APRIL
Once we work out the timing...

The ringmaster opens his mouth to speak as Hal steps in.

HAL
Another stunt like that and you're out of the act. You'll be lucky if I let you march in the parade.

Hal storms off. The ringmaster drops April's arm and leaves without a word. April hangs her head, but senses someone's presence. She looks up and sees Henry staring at her.

APRIL
What're you looking at?

HENRY
I...thought you were great.

Before April can respond, Henry rushes out.

EXT. CIRCUS PARKING AREA - LATER THAT NIGHT

Henry shuffles towards the bus stop through the mostly deserted parking lot. The patrons have all gone home, and the employees who live offsite leave as their shifts end.

Several yards behind Henry, his boss strides purposefully in Henry's direction.

HAL
Hey, Henry!

Henry stops and turns at the sound of Hal's voice.

HENRY
Yes, Mr. Jackson?

Hal closes the distance between himself and Henry quickly. Hal's beet-red face darkens as he SNORTS.

HAL
Why is it that no-good punks like you always seem to think that the rest of us are stupid?

Henry bristles at the insult.

HENRY
What are you talking about?

HAL
Empty out your pockets.

Henry does as he's instructed, taking out all the tickets he's collected throughout the day, most of them intact.

Hal snatches them out of Henry's hands.

HAL
There's always some little entrepreneur who thinks ol' Hal won't notice.

HENRY
What do you think I was gonna do?

HAL
Pocketing tickets in order to resell them isn't new. You're fired!

HENRY
I wasn't...

HAL
What part of "You're fired" don't you understand?

HENRY
Mr. Jackson, please listen...

HAL
Get outta my sight!

Hal stares Henry down. Unable to speak, Henry runs off. Hal stares after him until Henry disappears into the darkness.

EXT. CIRCUS GROUNDS - LATER THAT NIGHT

A hand dangles a black backpack over a rickety wooden plank fence. Henry hoists himself to the top of the fence and slides off, landing soundlessly.

Henry unzips the backpack and takes out a can of spray paint.

SERIES OF SHOTS - HENRY GETS EVEN

A) Henry covers the fence with his moniker.

B) Henry tags the sides of tents and concession stands.

C) Henry paints his logo on circus wagons and signage.

END OF SERIES OF SHOTS.

EXT. CIRCUS GROUNDS ANIMAL AREA - NIGHT

Henry peers around the corner of a tent. Seeing no-one, he creeps out, intent on making his escape.

CHAINS RATTLE. Henry freezes.

He finds Tickle's fettered away from the other animals.

Henry looks around and spies a barrel of apples across the way, well out of the elephant's reach. He gets several apples and gives one to the grateful pachyderm.

While Tickle's munches, Henry reaches into his backpack and takes out a can of spray paint. He sprays the top of Tickle's head, recreating Hal Jackson's mop of unruly hair.

When Tickle's looks up at him, he gives her another apple.

Henry continues his caricature of Jackson, complete with handle-bar mustache. He completes Tickle's flushed look with some red spray paint.

EXT. ELEPHANT AREA CIRCUS - THE NEXT MORNING

Outside the elephant area, Virote gives Tukta a pedicure. As he rubs her foot with a huge file, she affectionately pats him with her trunk.

A crowd of circus workers mills about near the entrance to the elephant area as Hal Jackson marches up. Without a word, he enters the animal area. Braver workers peer in after him.

INSIDE THE ANIMAL AREA

Hal Jackson stares at his elephant twin, his own face getting redder and redder.

HAL

That kid is gonna pay...

OUTSIDE THE ANIMAL AREA

People scatter as Hal bursts through the tent flap. Unconcealed LAUGHTER breaks out from the group as Hal storms off. Virote pats Tukta soothingly.

INT. COURTROOM - DAY

Henry stands nervously as the judge reads his sentence. His father and step-mother watch from the public area.

JUDGE

Henry McAllister, I hereby sentence you to 500 hours of community service.

Henry looks at his feet.

JUDGE

Furthermore, this court has determined that those hours are to be worked off in service to the party you have offended, as determined by the circus owner.

Henry looks at the judge, looks back at his feet, scowls.

JUDGE

Take my advice, son. As this is your second offense, it had better be your last. You won't get such a lenient sentence again.

EXT. COURTHOUSE - DAY

Henry shuffles along next to his father while Candace and the family attorney bring up the rear.

RYAN

It could've been a lot worse, son.

Henry says nothing and keeps walking.

RYAN

I'll take you to meet with the circus owner in the morning.

HENRY

I've already met him, remember?

RYAN

This time's going to be different.

EXT. CIRCUS GROUNDS - ANIMAL AREA - DAY

Henry, Ryan, and Mr. Kellogg make their way to the elephant area. They stop outside the entrance. Henry scowls and looks at the ground.

MR. KELLOGG

I've decided that you should be responsible for cleaning up after the elephant you tagged.

Henry grinds the dirt under his toe.

MR. KELLOGG

Not only that, but you'll be responsible for cleaning up after several elephants, no small task.

Henry kicks a rock.

RYAN

(to Mr. Kellogg)

That should keep him busy.

MR. KELLOGG

I wasn't sure that putting Henry around the elephants was a good idea. But the young man in charge of them asked to oversee Henry's community service hours.

The tent flap of the animal area opens and Virote steps out. Henry looks up, surprised at who it is.