

Oh, Messiah Me

By Gary Garrison

Contact:

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CHARACTERS:

TED WILLWRIGHT, M. 34

MADDIE BOYLE, F. 33

ROZ TURNER, F. 51

PLACE:

Ted's high-tech office in
an advertising agency.

TIME:

The day before Christmas
Eve of this year.

*Lights up on TED
WILLWRIGHT's office.*

*MADDIE BOYLE, Ted's
colleague, sits holding a
wax carton of egg nog in
one hand and a bottle of
bourbon in the other.
She's not drunk, but it
won't be long before she
gets that way.*

*She watches and giggles as Ted
paces from wall to wall -- a scene
she's watched played out a hundred
times before. Both of Ted's hands
are bandaged with gauze, and a
spot of blood seeps through each
bandage on the palm side. He
wears a shiny gold, paper crown
from Burger King. He's on the
phone.*

TED

. . . Really? Wow! . . . Fantastic! Absolutely fantastic,
Sister.

(to Maddie)

They've declared today, "Ted Willwright Day." Isn't that
outrageous, Maddie?

(back to phone)

I am honored, Sister, and you're right: my mother would be so
proud. Just carrying on her tradition gives me a sense of, of
. . . something. . . . What? They are? C'mon! Tell me they're
not.

(to Maddie)

Maddie, they're drawing pictures of me in the third grade art
class. Isn't that something? They could either draw me or
Barney, and the majority drew me. How about that? I beat out
Barney.

(back to phone)

You don't say . . . well, I'm really glad to hear that,
Sister. Because everyone should love their first computer and
I'm glad I could do it. And the iPods were just an after-
thought . . . Oh, no, no, no: I'm no saint. Believe you me.
Just an average guy with a few thousand extra bucks on his
hands.

(leaning towards the
phone cradle)

Excuse me? . . . Oh, uhm, well, sure. I'm sure I'll do
something next year . . . make some sort of contribution or
something . . . No, no you're right. We wouldn't want to

TED (cont.)

disappoint the children. The tradition lives on . . . Merry Christmas to you then . . . Bye-bye.

Ted races to slam down the phone.

TED (continued)

Jesus! I thought I'd never get off the phone. Sorry, Maddie, I wasn't going to take the call, but she's phoned, like, twenty times. And I have just enough Catholic guilt left in me from all those years to . . .

MADDIE

What the hell are you doing?

TED

(defensively)

What?

MADDIE

We went through this last year, Ted. Same exact thing. Are you donating again?

Ted impulsively throws both arms wide out away from his body, shoulder height, palms out. The image of Christ on the Cross is intentional. It's a quick gesture.

TED

(interrupting)

It was ten computers, okay? Just ten, small, high-end computers . . .

MADDIE

. . . Honey, what difference does it make? . . .

TED

. . . Loaded with everything, 'cause they need it . . .

MADDIE

. . . A donation's a donation whether it's computers or gym equipment, televisions or crutches, wheelchairs -- all I'm saying is that every year, at this time of year . . .

TED

I got a great deal. Practically cost nothing.

Ted . . .

MADDIE

It's a tax write-off . . .

TED

Ted . . .

MADDIE

. . . and my mother always said, "Ted . . ."

TED

TED!

MADDIE

. . . "Ted" . . .

TED

TED!!!

MADDIE

What?! Look, no one got a full gigabyte hard-drive, alright?
So I didn't go full out and I feel pretty bad about it.

*A group of holiday office carolers
arrives right outside Ted's office
door and begin singing, "Hark the
Her--ald Ang---el Siiiiiiinnng... "
Maddie casually rises and walks to
the door.*

MADDIE

Honey. Ted. Teddy-Bear. Maybe it's just me, but you're not
a trillionaire, sweetheart, and all this giving and sharing
and good-will-towards-men bullshit just gets out of hand.
Alright, it's the holiday season, and I know we should all
generous and nice and good to each other, but . . .

*Maddie sticks her head out the
door and screams in the direction
of the carolers:*

MADDIE (cont.)

SHUT THE FUCK UP, FOR GOD'S SAKE! I CAN'T HEAR MYSELF THINK!
(a change in tone)

MADDIE (cont.)

. . . Oh, you too. Merry Christmas.

(back to Ted and her chair)

Wait a minute, wait a minute. You're telling me you feel bad about not including a gigabyte hard-drive on ten free computers?

TED

Maddie, it's an all-girl catholic school, for God's sake. Do you know how depressing that would be? Do you know how depressing it is to be catholic right now? I mean, all the priest scandals and lawsuits and the Pope dying and the fuckin' Divinci code thing. I mean, just watching the Pope's hands shake and chin bob up and down for three years was enough to put a lot of people over the edge. And if that wasn't depressing enough, have you ever been in a catholic church? They're awful: big and cold with lots of huge pillars and columns and these statues carved out of frigid, white marble with these long, sinewy faces that are all frowning and scowling. Every one of them. Not a happy face in the marble crowd. And they've got these big Latin words at the bottom that nobody understands. So those little girls need some happy faces, damn it, and they need to understand those Latin words, and if giving them ten computers will ease their wretched burden . . .

MADDIE

"Wretched burden?" What are you reading these days, Ted?

TED

That's right. Go ahead, make fun of me if it makes you feel better.

She finds her bourbon, swigs.

MADDIE

Ted, I'm not catholic, you're not catholic, so the guilt thing's not going to work between the two of us. Our history bares that out. Look, sweetheart, I'm just concerned that you are determined to go through your inheritance as quickly as you can. And if that's the case, teddy-bear, just stand on the street corner and give it away. Or give it to me. Hell, I'll take it. I'll take all of it.

*Ted throws his arms out again:
Christ on the Cross.*

TED

This was important, Maddie.

*No response. A stare off. Maddie
throws back a shot of egg nog
followed by a bourbon chaser.*

TED (continued)

Look, we're not going to see eye to eye on this, so let's just drop it, okay, and get back to what we were talking about.

(pacing again)

What were we talking about?

*From the hallway, we hear "And
one, two: 'Joy to the World, the
Lord has come. Let Earth receive
her King . . .'" Maddie rises from
her chair and walks towards the
hall.*

MADDIE

Uhh, let's see. Well, we were talking about, uh-hhm . . . oh, yeah, we were having the brief, boxer or thong talk and you said you didn't wear any of the three and we got into that "what do you wear, then?" business, and you coughed instead of answering the question.

TED

I did not cough.

MADDIE

Okay, but you did *not* answer the question. And then we wondered out loud if Madelyn Albright was really a man, and regardless, couldn't she/he fix the bags under eyes . . . and wait, one more: oh! Defining the male vagina -- which I still don't understand, and frankly, I don't care what the Greeks did, I still think the whole thought of it is gross and wrong.

(to carolers)

Hey! You with the bows in your hair! That's right. All of you. You see that mistle toe hanging over there? I'M GOING TO SLAM DUNK THAT DOWN YOUR THROATS IF YOU DON'T MOVE ON! Now, get outta here before I get really nasty! We're having a really important discussion in here and . . .

(sweetly)

Oh, thank you. Merry Christmas to you too.

She re-enters calm as could be.

MADDIE (continued)

Do you think this dress looks good on me? Red . . . I don't know. I'm afraid it makes me look drunk.

(a beat, then)

Did I say "drunk?" I meant, cheap. Cheap and drunk. That's a bad combination for a girl in here thirties. Look, I have an idea: why don't we both drink so we both talk stupid? No? Alright. But just a warning: girls from the mid-west go bad on liquor and they should never, ever wear red.

TED

(searching his desk)

"Read!" That's it. That's what I wanted to talk to you about. I wanted to tell you what I "read" -- the letter that came with my Christmas bonus. It was horrible, terrible, Maddie. And it went on and on and on about how valuable I am, how dependable and hard-working I am, what a team-player I am and what would they do without me and they hope they never find out and I don't know, Maddie. I can't. I just can't.

MADDIE

(with a shot of egg nog)

Okay.

*Ted throws his arms out again:
Jesus on the Cross.*

TED

I can't do it anymore.

MADDIE

(with a shot of bourbon)

Alright.

TED

Not because I'm not capable.

MADDIE

Of course not.

TED

I'm capable. I just don't *want* to do it. Capability has never, never been an issue. I think you know that. I do the work of three people; four, on a good day. I'm a work horse, that's what I am. Just listen to this:

MADDIE

(on "an issue")

Egg nog's wonnnerful. S'shit's addictive. Who knew?

*She throws back a shot of bourbon.
Ted finds the letter on his desk
and reads it.*

TED

"You're the one we call when there's a problem. You're the one we can depend on in good times and bad. You're the one we have complete, unwavering faith in -- always there, always present, always lending a helping hand."

*He throws the letter down on the
table.*

TED (continued)

They see me -- and I'm embarrassed to even say this -- but they see me as their savior around here. They even say that, quote, "you're our savior," end quote. They're savior, Maddie! I'm not anyone's savior.

MADDIE

(on "our savior")

So true. So, so true, Teddy Bear.

(throws back another shot)

Ooooooooooooooweeeeeeeeeeeeee, this stuff is gooooooooooooood.

TED

They think I'm always right, always productive, that I can always save the day -- that I'm "The One." All that stuff -- it's too much. I don't really enjoy all that praise and adoration. I know some people think I do, but you know me better than anybody, and I don't. I really don't.

MADDIE

(on "enjoy it.")

No, you don't. You just . . . don't, T-Bear. Deep down, that's not who you are.

(holds carton out to see it)

I could marry this shit, it's so good.

*She tilts the carton back and takes
a long swig.*

TED

But, see, they think I do. They think I love my job. And I feel terrible because I've been perpetuating that lie for what--two years? Three? Four?

MADDIE

Who's counting? We just love having you here.
(looking at the egg nog)
'Course, you've got some healthy competition now.

From outside Ted's door we hear the carolers sing, "City sidewalks, busy sidewalks, wrapped in holiday style . . ." Maddie bolts from her chair, grabs a pair of scissors off of Ted's desk, rushes the door. Ted intercepts her:

TED

(to carolers)

Alright, she's tried to be nice. The next one of you who sings so much as a fuckin' quarter note, she's going to drag you by the hair out to one of those "city sidewalks" you're singing about and stab you in the throat. GOT IT? NOW, GET OUTTA HERE!

(slams the door; then, like it was a gift)

Merry Christmas, Maddie.

MADDIE

(touched)

Ahhhh, That's so sweet. Thank you, Teddy Bear.

(finding her chair)

I swear, if those singing assholes are Joan Tipton's idea, I'm going to pee in her private water cooler. I threatened to do it last year.

TED

It wasn't a threat. You did it last year.

MADDIE

Did I? Really?

(a big smile)

Wish I could remember it. Anyway, go on, T-Bear. I'm here to listen to whatever you have to say. What were you saying?

TED

Well, just that this job makes me somebody I'm not.

MADDIE

No, this *month* makes you somebody you're not.

*Ted studies Maddie for a moment,
then dead-seriously:*

TED

I don't know what you're talking about.

MADDIE

(sweetly)

Oh, come on. Honey, it's just that in the month of December . . .

TED

I'm serious, I don't know what you're talking about. But anyway, that article in AdWeek? That article just about did me in around here. It was way over the top. I don't care what it said, I am not, repeat, AM NOT, a "leader in my field." I'm no one's leader.

(towards her)

You're not listening to me. Because if you were listening to me you would understand that if they think I'm a leader, that means I have followers, and you know I don't want followers, or disciples, or anybody thinking I'm something I'm not. I don't want people studying me, trying to figure out what's right and what's wrong, or how to live their lives or anything like that . . .

MADDIE

(on "leader in my field")

But you loved what they said about you in that article. Just last month I know I heard you say, right out there, right out in that hallway . . .

(on "listening to me?")

Yes, I am. Ted, don't you get it? Eleven months of the year you love this job, but in the twelfth month of the year, you freak out like you're bearing the weight of the world on your shoulders.

TED

I'm not worthy. I don't want anybody looking to me for guidance or inspiration, Maddie.

MADDIE

Then tell them that straight out, Ted. Just say, "look, you guys, I don't . . .

TED

They treat me like I'm some special something, that I'm "The One." I am not, "The One," and it's really starting to bother me. They look at me like somebody I'm really not. . .

(standing still)

All I am is just a regular guy that shows up here every morning at 6:15, like my father did every day of his life, ready to work, ready to solve the problems as they come to me. Savior! I'm not anybody's "savior," Maddie, believe you me. But they think so. I mean, just look at this office! On the top, top floor. More top than this and you'd be in heaven. You see nothing but sky from here. It's too high. It's too high up. I don't even understand "sky." But look where they put me, look how they reward me.

MADDIE

(on "solve the problems")

And I'm just a regular ol' girl from Michigan with a high I.Q. and a zero tolerance for alcohol.

*The silence at the end of Ted's
"reward me" snaps her back to the
conversation.*

MADDIE (continued)

(covering)

RIGHT! Okay. Yes! Absolutely, Ted. You're right about everything you said. And this office? You don't need this office. You could perform your miracles from a janitor's closet, which is what I have if you'd like to have it and I'll take this one.

TED

Maddie, I know this is our ritual, our "help Ted out of his crisis" game, so you're dutifully "listening" and "agreeing" with me . . .

MADDIE

Am I?

TED

. . . but stop "agreeing" with me. It's not working, okay? I mean sometimes it does, but this time it's not. It's really not helping. Okay?

MADDIE

Fine. Okay. Not a problem. Not another word.

Ted finally takes Maddie in. He crosses to her and slowly begins rubbing her shoulders.

TED

(flatly)

Stopped going to A.A., huh?

MADDIE

Oh, yeah. Had to. Can't drink and go there . . . ohhhhhh, that feels good. That feels reaaaaaaaal goooood, T-Bear. Oh, yeah. Uhh-hhhhhhhuuuuuuuh.

(holding out the
carton of egg nog)

You think they put mistle toe in this shit? 'Cause it makes me want to -- I don't know -- breed. It makes me want to kiss something. It makes me want to kiss something hard. That's a lie. It makes me just want to blow somebody. Did I say that? Yes, I did. I said that -- this only child of a Baptist Minister and his adoring wife who worked at Sears selling Maytags all of her life; this young woman who graduated valedictorian from her high school, and sigma cum laude from college, who was a volunteer fire-fighter for the big town of Milan, Michigan; this young girl who worked in a kabutz in Israel for a year even though she wasn't Jewish but wanted to know salt-of-the-earth suffering, who didn't lose her virginity until she was twenty-eight for reasons she still doesn't understand and had to revisit the kabutz just to do it; this young woman wants a big fuckin' cock from Santa. Oh, yeah, that's what she wants.

(lost in a fantasy, then)

You know, that last comment could be considered vulgar by some, but as I see it . . . yeah, it was pretty vulgar, wasn't it? Please. Go on. Don't mind me.

(abruptly sits up)

Why are you doing that?

TED

What?

MADDIE

The rubbing. The rubbing of the shoulders.

TED

Because you're tense.

MADDIE

I'm not tense, Ted. I'm drunk, or getting there. I know the difference. Do you know the difference?

TED

Yes, I know the difference. I just thought it'd feel good to you.

MADDIE

And it does. And I don't want you to stop. But last year, Ted, the rubbing of the shoulders found it's way south . . .

TED

(quickly moving away)

Well, then I'll stop. See? I've stopped. No problem. No more north to go south, or east to go west or south to go east or anything that is, you know, a direction or even a way to get lost. Because it would be easy to get lost, don't you think? I mean, I think so. And maybe . . . that's not a good thing.

MADDIE

I bet I'm one of the few people you know, Teddy Bear, that likes being lost. Makes life interesting, don't you think?

Ted struggles but doesn't respond. Sensing an impasse, Maddie takes a gulp of egg nog, a quick slog of bourbon, puffs her cheeks out and shakes her head from side to side to mix the drink. Ted is silent. Finally:

TED

Maybe I should get back to work.

MADDIE

Oh, c'mon, sweetheart. You asked me to come down to talk, so let's talk. What's a best friend for if you can't lend a drunken ear to a sober friend?

Maddie tilts the egg nog carton straight back and squeezes it to get every last drop. Ted hesitates: should he push on?

TED

Alright, well, I think it's obvious what I should do. I shouldn't continue here. I should quit if I'm so unhappy.

MADDIE

But isn't there a little part of you that actually, you know,
when it comes down to it . . .

TED

No.

MADDIE

. . . gets off on all the attention . .

TED

No!

MADDIE

. . . and the praise and hosannas to the highest . . .

TED

NO! Absolutely not!

MADDIE

Ted! Every year at this time it's the same thing. This.
This sermon. Who's it for? Me? I've heard it. I should
save you the heart ache and do it myself.

(indicating Burger King
crown on his head)

By the way, what's with the crown?

TED

Delouise. Marketing. Brought it to me. She said I saved her
life. It's a Knight-in-Shining-Armor kinda thing.

MADDIE

(suspiciously)

Really.

TED

Only because . . . I helped her move out of her girlfriend's
apartment. In the rain. At two o'clock in the morning, but we
had umbrellas, Maddie. Anyway, I think she was really
thankful that I lent her my car. For a while. A week. A
month. Actually I said she could keep it as long as she
needed it.

MADDIE

Oh, for God's sake.

TED

Maddie, she had to have a car.

*Ted's hands/arms raise again:
Christ on the Cross.*

TED (continued)

And I can walk to work. It's only twenty blocks.

MADDIE

(interrupting)

Stop. Just stop . . . The hands? What's with the hands?

TED

Left hand, bagel-knife accident. Right hand: second bagel-knife accident. But it was a complete accident.

MADDIE

Uh-hhhuh. But didn't you have the exact same "accident" a year ago?

TED

What do you think? I drove a knife into my hands because . . .

MADDIE

Stop, stop. Let me see your feet.

TED

What?

MADDIE

Take you socks and shoes off. I want to see if . . .

TED

No, that's ridiculous, Maddie. I know what you're thinking and I did not . . . Alright, I have a little scratch on my foot. It's so small you can't even see it. When I cut my hand, I dropped the knife and it just plunged right into . . .

MADDIE

Ted, let me put something into a little perspective for you, can I? December. Christmas. Holiday cheer and whooping good times to celebrate the birth of our Lord. Him: good man, good deeds. You: good man, good deeds. Him: Why me? You: Why me? Him: self-doubt, guilt. And you: self-doubt, guilt. Him: died on the cross, people crying and general chaos. You: trying to get UP on that cross and . . .

TED

Okay. Enough. Maddie, stop, stop. This isn't going anywhere.

MADDIE

It is, if you would let it!

TED

Sorry, sweetie. But thanks for trying. It's not you. It's me. It's this job and Christmas . . .

MADDIE

. . . It's the fucking month of December, Ted! Oh, shit! There's the "F" word. Well, we knew it had to come out sooner or later. But I'm not a "F" word kinda girl, honestly. What can I say? I'm a sinner.

TED

I'm just disgusted. I mean, all the ads and giveaways, specials, two-for-ones, buy three get the fourth free. It's shoving things down people's throats that they can't really afford to buy and will be in hock until the next Christmas to pay for. Have you ever stopped to think what we do here? What I do here? I have: it's something between making false promises and creating false gods. It's a fuckin' sin what we do here.

MADDIE

Well, I told you I was sinner, T-Bear. And I've tried to be so good. Really good. But you know, "good" gets you no where fast. I should know. I'm as good as gold, and where am I? That's such a sad question: where am I?

TED

(on "good as gold")

I give everyone something to want for, wish for, hope for, plan for, go in debt for, sell their souls for. AND, whatever the product, I make it look sexy. Got-to-have-that-sex! It's the old hooker's approach: rub their crotch so you can slip their wallet out of their back pocket while they're blissfully distracted . . .

MADDIE

(on "have-that-sex")

Wait. I'm confused, Ted. So it's not all the praise and adulation that makes you crazy, it's the job and what you do. Is that what you're saying? This is confusing, Ted. One minute your this, one minute your that, one minute your in my bed, one minute your out . . .

(a beat, then)

You know, nothing gets you to stop talking. Nothing. You know, I don't think you hear half of anything I say.

TED

. . . But I don't even do that well, because--unlike the hooker--I never realized the power of my persuasion out there. In here, I know what I do. Out there, forget about it. Kids in the hood are killing each other over a pair of tennis shoes because I've convinced them that they're nothing--fuckin'

TED (cont.)

nothing--without a \$165 dollar pile of bonded leather and cotton stitching and they just follow blindly. Jesus, Maddie, when I was a kid, all I ever wanted was the new G.I. Joe and all the grape gum I could cram in my mouth.

(a beat, then)

Nobody with a fuckin' heart should work here -- nobody with an ounce of consciousness or dignity or humanity belongs here or anywhere near an advertising agency . . . Yeah, yeah, I want out.

Maddie almost sobers. She's more serious than we've seen her.

MADDIE

So get out.

TED

I'm going to.

MADDIE

Good. Leave now.

TED

(awkwardly)

I am. I mean, not at this very moment, but soon enough.

MADDIE

(standing)

Then . . . shut up about it until then, okay? I still have to work here.

TED

You don't!

MADDIE

Yes! I do, Ted! You don't, and shouldn't. Look, I worked hard to get here. I beat odds, statistics, labels and a lot of people at their own games because I always believed in what I was doing. ALWAYS! Then some shit like you comes along who decides in the month of December . . .

TED

. . . That's not true . . .

MADDIE

. . . and *only* in the month of December . . .

TED

. . . That's not true! . . .

MADDIE

. . . that for a variety of fucked-up reasons, what we do here is whore our souls to boost the company profit margin.

TED

I never said that!

MADDIE

You don't have to, Ted. Eleven months of the year you're the self-appointed Good Will Ambassador for this company and then December rolls around -- our most profitable and public month of the year -- and you hate your job and your life and yourself. Then, like clock-work, you flip the page on the calendar and bang! -- it's January -- and boom you're writing memos about "let's start a company volleyball team, whattya say, gang?" That's just messed up, Ted. And you have chosen me, God forbid, to share all of that craziness with in hopes of what? That I'll love you? That I'll support you no matter how whacked you get? That I'll forgive you for something I'm not even sure I need to forgive you for? I've tried that! It doesn't work! Because you can't be miserable just in your own life -- you want to share the wealth. You want me to be miserable too and say, "Yeah, we should all quit! It's the right thing to do." Well, I won't, I won't say it no matter how times you stab yourself in the palms.

(finally, a breath; then)

You may be right about who we are and what we do here, Ted, but allow me the dignity to believe what I believe and to feel fuckin' great about it.

Maddie begins to exit and then swings back to face him.

MADDIE (continued)

And as for this sick ritual we go through every Christmas, hear me well, Ted: history's already had one Christ and they slaughtered him on the cross. Crawl down from there, because it doesn't suit you. And for God's sake, get this shit straightened out. You're too old for make-believe, Ted. We all are! So get this shit straightened out in your head before next Christmas or just leave me alone. On second thought: don't wait. Just leave me the fuck alone. Period.

(lifting the bottle of
bourbon in a toast)

Here's to ya', oh, King of Kings.

*Maddie storms out of Ted's office.
Ted follows her.*

TED

Wait! Maddie! C'mon. I never said anything about whoring our souls. That's not fair. Alright, so maybe I went a little too far this time, but . . .

(louder, to reach her)

Will you call me later?

No response. Ted crosses and sits at his desk, staring blankly at the empty office--hardly moving, breathing. Switching tracks, he arms himself with a pencil and a blank pad of paper. Moments pass-- nothing comes. The carolers begin singing, "Silent Night, Holy Night. All is Calm. All is bright."

TED (continued)

(to himself)

Just say, "I quit." It's that goddamn simple.

He starts to write, stops, starts, stops. His frustration builds. He throws his pencil across the room.

ROSALIND, "Roz", passes the open door dressed in casual clothes with a Christmas ornament dangling from each pierced ear. She stalls for a moment at the entrance, then continues on her way. Ted stands, crosses to the door, and looks down the hallway. Satisfied that no one's there, he closes the door. When the door's closed, and Ted is behind his desk, Roz opens the door and sticks her head in.

ROZ

'Scuse me?

TED

Yeah?

ROZ

Lissun, baby, is this gonna be a long night for you? 'Cause if it's going to be a long night for you, it's going to be a longer night for me, and I didn't get a wink of sleep last night. Ronstadt--that's my cat--spittin' image of Linda herself-- had a hair-ball about the size of a plum lodged a good five-six inches down her throat and was tryin' to give it up all night. And when she finally did give it up, stunk so bad made the whole house smell like dirty feet. Well, I got

ROZ (cont.)

to gaggin' and heavin' myself, 'cause I can't stand the smell of dirty feet. So I didn't shut one eye from sunset to sunrise. But don't let that sway you or nothin'.

She closes the door. Ted looks a little confused, but quickly dismisses the whole scene. Roz opens the door again.

ROZ (cont.)

Look, hon . . .

TED

Do I know you?

ROZ

(entering)

Rosalind Turner. Friends, family and fans call me "Roz."

(offering her hand)

Glad to finally meet you, Mr. Willwright, after all this time. Oh, now say, I bet that's one them names you hear 'bout that means somethin' from way back in the past. You know, wheel-wright? Cart-wright? *Will*-wright? Your ancestors -- they was a makin' last wills and testaments, am I right?

TED

(flatly)

No.

ROZ

Well, that name came from somewhere, baby and you outta find out where. Roots, and all. Can't never know too much about your past. 'Course some people don't want to know anything about their past--'fraid they're gonna find white people married to slaves in it or somethin'. But like I told my kin, I ain't got nothin' to hide 'cept a couple of unpaid bills to Sofa, Sofa, Sofa -- that's a sofa store -- back in Tyler. Tyler, Texas--that's where I'm from.

TED

Do you work here?

ROZ

Well, I guess I do. I clean your office every night of my life and ain't missed a day in four years, hon. Even got me a pin for it.

(showing him the pin)

It says I'm a "Model Employee." 'Course, that's horse shit. I

ROZ (cont.)

ain't a "model" nothin'. They were just trying to make an old woman feel good about cleanin' nasty, dirty offices without so much as a decent "thank you." And at this time of year, do you think the phrase "Christmas bonus" ever crosses their minds? HELL, no. But, HEY! Nobody asked me what I thought, so why don't I just zip this flappin' lip and let you get back to work.

Roz waves a quick good-bye and exits out of the office. Ted returns to his blank pad of paper--expressionless. A beat. Roz sticks her head back in the door.

ROZ (cont.)

I could slap myself backwards for stickin' my old head back in here, but a thought occurred to me. If you're just sittin' there a thankin', and nothin's comin' to ya', why don't you take a walk and clear out your head? By the time you get back, your office'll be cleaner than a turkey's carcass at a Thanksgiving dinner.

TED

I've got too much work to do.

ROZ

And ain't nothing like a clean slate to make your first mark on.

TED

I appreciate you trying to help but it's just not a very good time. I've not had such a great day.

ROZ

Okay, now don't think me thick, but are you askin' me to take my big ass outta here and give you some room?

TED

Uhhhh, well, yeah, pretty much.

ROZ

Fair enough. Well, nice meetin' you, Mr. Willwright. And good luck with ya'.

*Roz begins to exit out the door.
Ted stands quickly and removes
some folded money from his pocket
and offers it out to Roz -- who
never moves to take it.*

TED

Listen, Roz. Thank you for -- you know -- cleaning my office. It always looks nice in the morning. Nice and clean and . . . you know, uhm . . . tidy.

ROZ

(a big smile)

Well, baby, if it ain't ever to your likin', you leave old Roz a note, hear?

*As soon as Roz leaves the office,
Ted pockets the money then pulls
out a bottle of bourbon from his
desk and snatches one of the many
styrofoam cups off his desk. He
pours a shot into the cup and
downs it one gulp. It stings, but
Ted pours himself another. Roz
re-enters.*

ROZ (cont.)

You know, I ain't got the sense God give a turnip. My daddy always said, "Rosalind, you'd forget your own name if it wasn't sewed in your drawers." Forgot my dust rag.

*Roz grabs her rag and starts out
the door. She notices the bourbon
bottle and cup in Ted's hand. She
stalls.*

TED

Did you forget something else?

ROZ

No. No, but honest to St. Pete, I'm lookin' at a real tragedy in the makin' and I can't take my eyes off of it. There. I said it.

TED

Jesus, lady, I don't even know you. Let's leave it like that, okay?

ROZ

Mr. Willwright, look up on these walls. I dust them diplomas and citations every night of my life. Pratt Institute, B.A., Harvard, M.B.A., President--Young Businessman's League -- an Addie Award, Clio Awards 97', 98' and '99. You're right, you don't know this old ignorant woman from Texas, but she knows who you are. And you can't tell me you done all of that up on that wall with a bottle of hooch in your hand.

TED

Wait a minute! Aren't you jumping to a few conclusions?

ROZ

No, sir. I empty that trash can every night, and it don't take a scientist to figure out what's been in them styrofoam cups for the whole month of December.

TED

(harsh)

Some people would call that an invasion of privacy!.

ROZ

(harder)

And some people wouldn't know a good piece of advice if it bit 'em on their goober!

TED

(irritated)

What's your point, lady?

ROZ

(equally irritated)

My point, Mr. Willwright, is that you got something important to do that's keeping you in your office tonight while everybody else in this company's dancin' on their desks and wearin' white Santa beards on their private parts. And you ain't gonna get no where with a head full of whiskey. Now hand over that bottle, hon, and I'll leave you be for the rest of the night.

TED

What?!

ROZ
(firm)
I mean it. Hand over that Lucifier juice.

TED
(standing)
Look, I've been nice up until now . . .

ROZ
. . . No, you hadn't . . .

TED
. . . but you're wasting my time. Now, either you leave, or I'll have you thrown out of here.

ROZ
Now, hon, you know the security guards around here are about as slow as watchin' your mother-in-law die.

TED
Then I'll throw you out myself!

ROZ
You wouldn't dare touch an old Baptist woman that's got God on her shoulders.

TED
(controlled)
Then I'll politely ask you to leave, and lock the door.

ROZ
Mr. Willwright, you're just bein' silly. You know I got a key for every door, for every floor, five floors up and five floors down. See now, that hooch is already workin' on you.

TED
(fatigued)
If I give this to you, will you leave?

ROZ
That would be the deal.

TED
Swear?

ROZ
Old people don't swear, honey. They know better. But I'll give you my hand on it.

They shake hands. Ted

*relinquishes the bottle of
bourbon.*

ROZ (continued)

You're a good man.

TED

The hell I am. Give that back.

Ted takes a swipe at her.

ROZ

(smiling)

You're gonna have to fight me or fuck me for it. And I know you ain't gonna do neither . . . Oh, now, don't look shocked, Mr. Willwright. I know them words. Use 'em, too. But always to get a reaction, and never -- as you could probably tell -- 'cause I'm at a loss for words. Now once and for all accept the fact that you made a big mistake, forgive yourself and move on with your life.

Roz exits quickly.

TED

What?! What are you talking about? What do you mean "forgive myself?" What big mistake?

(louder, to be heard)

Look, I've had enough. I'm really close to calling security. And I will if . . . how the hell do you know what . . . Hello? . . . HELLO?

The carolers return outside Ted's door. They begin singing, "Come, they told me, per-rumpa-bump-bum. A new-born King to see, per-rumpa-bump-bum . . ." Ted leans back in his chair, thinks. He takes out his pad of paper, pencil and writes:

TED (cont.)

"After . . . much thought . . . and serious . . . deliberation . . . I can no . . . longer bear the responsibility . . ."

(scratching it out,
then writing)

"I can . . . no longer . . . bear the weight of . . . WHO FUCKIN' CARES?!"

*He throws the pad across the room.
He quickly grabs another piece of
paper.*

TED (cont.)

I . . . WAS NOT . . . HIRED . . . TO BE . . . A SAINT.

(a beat, then)

TED (cont.)

Jesus, can't you just say, "I quit?" What could be more simple?

*He tries to write, stops, tries
again, stops and almost begins to
convulse with conflict. He shoves
the paper and pen away from him.*

TED (cont.)

I CAN'T DO IT. IT'S TOO COMPLICATED.

*He pulls himself from his desk,
walks a few step, then slowly
sinks to the floor.*

TED (cont.)

It's me. I'm too complicated.

*Roz enters. At first, she doesn't
see Ted on the floor.*

ROZ

Mr. Willwright, who the hell did I think I was? Pat Robertson? I got no business takin' your hooch away. So, darlin', if you want a drink . . .

*She sees Ted on the floor. She
takes a styrofoam cup and pours
him a drink.*

ROZ (continued)

Here.

Ted takes the bourbon and throws it back in one shot. Roz pours him another one.

TED

re you showing me mercy?

ROZ

If that's what you want to call it.

Ted turns to her. He studies her face for a good long while.

ROZ (continued)

What you looking for, Mr. Willwright?

TED

"At." Don't you mean, "what are you looking at?"

ROZ

No, I mean, "for." What are you looking "for," so deep down in my face?

A long beat, then.

TED

Has anybody ever told you that you've got the face of an angel?

ROZ

Uh-huh, the same fellah that told me I had the prettiest ass he'd ever seen. 'Course he was as blind as Stevie Wonder, but I took the compliment.

TED

Pretty up front, aren't you?

ROZ

Only way to be, 'cause I want you to know what I'm sayin'.

TED

I see your point.

ROZ

Most people do.

TED

Listen, Roz--can I call you Roz?

ROZ

Unless my names changed since I walked through that door.

TED

Roz, I've got a problem.

ROZ

Well, I figured as much. I didn't think you were down there on the floor 'cause it was more comfortable, hon.

She closes her eyes, like she's receiving something...a signal, a sign.

ROZ (continued)

(a beat, then)

I don't know about you, but ain't Christmas just silly? I swear, there's so much shit that flies around you at this time, it's a wonder anybody can see.

TED

Right?! Exactly. It's overwhelming. All of it. The lights and the music and the colors and Christmas trees. I don't know about anyone else, but I look at a Christmas tree and break out into a sweat because it looks so claustrophobic. There's so much stuff in one small space. And you know, one container, one vessel can only hold so much stuff before it breaks. And there's just a lot of people to give to. I mean, everyone needs something. It's exhausting. Really! I'm so tired. Sorry. I think I'm just a little wound up . . . because of the holidays.

ROZ

(walking to the door)

Then maybe you need a little time alone. So I'll just mosey on down the hall and . . .

TED

(a step in)

No, no, no, don't go! Stay. Please. Look, I know it's a little weird, but from the moment you walked in my door, I had this feeling that you could help me somehow. And maybe we if just talk for a few minutes, I'll understand something about all of this, this . . . this! Make sense?

ROZ

Uh-uh. But, hell, I'm game. Go on.

*Roz sits on the floor beside him.
They lean against his desk.*

TED

(thinking)

Well, uhm . . . uhm, do you . . . let's see. God, I don't even know where to start. Where's a good place to start?

ROZ

Roz Turner. 51 years old. Born in Tyler, Texas to Eugene and Macy Louise Turner. You?

TED

(caught off-guard)

Oh, uh, well, Theodore Manson Willwright, 34 years old, born in Scarsdale to, uhm, my parents.

ROZ

Uhhhh-huh. Oooooo-kay. "Parents," hmmmmm. Well, like I said, I had a set of 'em. My daddy sold lawn mowers. My momma's job was to try to keep Daddy outta trouble -- which wasn't easy since Daddy had a knack for gettin' in it. Whole marriage came to a quick end when I found Daddy with a girl half his age in a tool shed. Said he was a repairin' a lawn mower with his underpants around his ankles. When he seen me see him, he picked up a wrench off the table saw and said he was doin' some adjustments to a motor. Then I seen her, and "motor" took on a whole new meanin'. You? What about your parents?

TED

(really caught off-guard)

Oh. Uh, well, you know. Pretty standard stuff.

ROZ

Honey, it's a good thing you ain't no child of mine because if you ever called me "pretty standard stuff," I'd have to plow a field with your head, face down.

TED

Oh, I didn't mean, you know, I just -- I mean, they just . . . see, we . . . we should be talking about you, huh?

ROZ

Sure! Okay, well, my mother never got over the "motor" incident. Put Daddy out of the house that day. Cried for months on end. Said she never knew a moment in her life that she felt as let down as that. Well, I don't know about you, but to see a mother's broken heart . . .

TED
(abruptly)

Do you have any children?

ROZ

Nope. I'm virginal that way. 'Course all those folks I work with at the Meals On Wheels think they're all my family, and I just let 'em. Why not?

TED

Sure.

ROZ

And I got my girl scout troupe, and they're just as much family as anybody else. You got brothers and sisters?

TED

Uh, no, no. There was just me. And a dog. We had a dog for a lot of years when I was growing up.

ROZ

Mama had a dog. Called it Prunes 'cause it was always on the run. Had three and a half legs. Damndest thing you ever seen. Born that way. Three full legs and a nub. But you'd a never know'd it 'cause Prunes would tree a squirrel quicker than you could blink an eye. Oh, she looooooved Prunes, and that dog loved her. Said Prunes was as devoted to her as a lung. Dog wouldn't move away from her if you threw a sirloin steak at it.

*Ted's fallen silent, almost lost.
Roz studies his quietness.*

ROZ (continued)

Not what you're lookin' for? Huh? Is this helpin' you out, or is this keepin' you from what you're really suppose to be doin'?

TED

I think this is what I'm supposed to be doing.

ROZ

Well, then, let's go. I'm an open book, so read me.

TED

Look, I don't know what to ask because I don't know exactly what I'm looking for. I'm just following a, you know, uhm--

ROZ

A hunch? That's good. Hunches are good. Followed every hunch ever put in my head and it was always a good thing -- so go on. Ask me anything. Anything at all.

TED

Okay, well, uhm, what do you do in your spare time?

ROZ

Write to the President.

TED

The President of . . . what? You mean, like, the President of the country? Really? You write to him and . . . what?

ROZ

Give him advice. He's only got the one head -- which is pretty thick. He's got them advisors, but they got agendas from here to California. All I got is a real desire to see things right.

TED

And does he, you know, write you back?

ROZ

Nope. Calls me, though. Middle of the night. Guess it's more of a secret that way. He's takin' to callin' me "hon," which is sweet, but I don't trust it. 'Course now his butt's in a sling what with the war and all, and those two children he got that can't keep their mouths off the nipple of a beer bottle, and that wife that looks like she hadn't gotten the man's good parts in twenty years, so things are really shaky and he's a callin' all the time. Mornin', noon and night. Wanted to give me a cell phone to carry around. I said, "Dubya, you're more nuts than the country already thinks you are if you think Roz is gonna carry a cell phone."

TED

(dumb-founded)

Wow. That's . . . that . . . God, that's a little hard to believe.

ROZ

Uh-huh. And most people don't. But, HEY! That ain't my problem. Besides, I like talkin' to him and he likes talkin' to me, so whatta I care if people believe if I do or I don't. I'm happy talkin' to all of the rich and famous, 'cept when I talk to Babs, 'cause she's a real mess.

TED

"Babs?" As in Barbara Walters?

ROZ

Oh, hell no. I hung up on her silly ass when she called. No, Barbra Streisand. That "Babs." See, she knows that her career ain't worth a big shit. But she don't know what to do with it. I had to get hard with her--I said, Babby -- that's my name for her, I said, "Babby, get your big thumb outta your butt and learn how to work with other people. That's your problem. You scare everyone half to death, and if you scare the chickens, they won't lay a hard fart for you." I said,

ROZ (cont.)

"as far as I can see, the only thing you've got to prove now in your life is that you're a human being." She didn't want to hear that, hon, so she called me a "ignorant bitch" and hung up. Hadn't heard from her in a while.

TED

(cautiously)

Do you mind if I ask . . . I mean, you don't have to tell me, but who . . . who else do you talk to?

ROZ

Famous? Lots of 'em. I got a roster from here to the moon 'cause ol' Roz is very popular among that jet-settin' crowd. But I get tired of talkin' about 'em. Nobody believes it anyway. Am I right?

TED

Well, you know . . . I mean, sure, it sounds . . . it's a little fantastic, you have to admit.

ROZ

So's Wonder Bread, but I eat it.

TED

Okay, so you talk to these famous people and give them advice and . . .

ROZ

Or give 'em recipes, or read 'em scriptures or send 'em a care-package every now and then, so they know somebody's a thinkin' of 'em. Oh, and they love that better than gold. That Mr. Greenspan, he practically broke down and cried first time I sent him a Rescue From Roz. That's what I call it -- "Rescue from Roz." Kinda catchy, don't you think?

(a long beat, then)

Hon, none of this is what you wanted to hear. It's all over your face.

TED

(exasperated)

I don't know what I want to hear. I don't even know why I'm

TED (cont.)

talking to you except that you just look so sweet and kind and like you know something I should know . . . Look, let's just forget it. Why would you even care?

ROZ

'Cause you're sad on Christmas Eve and I guess that's just about the saddest thing I can think of. So now, tell me what you're looking for and maybe mama will help.

TED

(startled)

What did you say?

ROZ

I said, "tell me what you're looking for and maybe mama . . .

Maddie breaks into the room, anxious, enraged. She slings her briefcase to the floor and walks straight for Ted. She's still loaded, but lucid enough to make her point.

MADDIE

(seeing Roz)

Oh . . . Excuse me, but . . . never mind. Just sit there. This won't take long.

(straight to Ted)

You scare me! And not because of the little mind-fuckin', manipulative bullshit you do for the holiday season each year.

TED

Maddie, Maddie, watch your mouth. In case you haven't noticed, there's a . . .

MADDIE

I'm sitting in the john, and I'm puking, then drinking, then puking, then drinking. And those obnoxious carolers come in the john because they like the echo from the tiles and how their voices sound in there. And they start harmonizing and singing the *finale* to Handel's fuckin' "*Messiah*," and believe me, the irony's not lost on me. And while I want to choke the breath out of each and every one of them, I realize I want to choke you worse. Because you're like a bad Christmas present that keeps showing up under my tree each year. Looks pretty. Nice package. Big bow. Gets in my eye and all I want to do is rip that paper open and get inside . . . so I do. I did last year, and I wanted to do it this year. Until I realized there's nothing in the fuckin' box, Maddie! There's nothing

MADDIE (cont.)

there. There's not a slip that says it's been back-ordered, or a picture of what it's going to be when it arrives or even a box within a box within a box, because in the end, you can't deliver it. You can't fill the box, Ted, because you don't have the goods. All you have is the need to be close to something, anything that will hold you and make you feel better this time of year. So you'll wrap that up in whatever package you think will catch my eye, and you'll put it ten feet from the tree, then five feet from the tree, then two feet from the tree, then right under my tree. And when I can't stand it any longer, and I'll explode from the anticipation if something doesn't happen, I tear the box wide open . . . and it's just . . . empty.

(sadder than she can control)

And I'm a seven years old again, looking deeper and deeper into the box, wondering why I didn't get what I wanted. Was I a bad girl this year? Did I do something wrong? And what's really fucked up is I think, that's okay, Maddie, maybe you'll get it for your birthday! And if not you're birthday, maybe you'll get it for Easter because that's when the dead man's supposed to rise up and if not Easter, there's always Christmas again. And then I think, I have to wait until Christmas again? And then I have an even worse thought: *I'd wait for Christmas again.* And an even worse thought after that: you'd make me wait for Christmas again.

(harsh)

No more holidays with you, Ted. They're too hard on me. Because you give to everyone who needs you, except the one who needs you the most. And why is that? Because I'm the least, the least visible to the rest of the world . . .

(quietly)

. . . and that's really painful to say. But always true.

TED

I'm sorry, Maddie. Really I am.

Maddie exits full force. The door slamming shut echoes down the hall. Ted races for the door and opens it.

TED (continued)

Will you call me later?

No response. He slowly closes the door, and turns to Roz.

TED (continued)

I'm sorry you had to see that.

ROZ

That's okay. She's a little love-sick. That's all. I clean her office too. Well, I'll be on my way.

Roz prepares to exit.

TED

Thanks again, Roz.

ROZ

My pleasure, but one of these days, I want to know what it was that you were lookin' for from me.

TED

I don't know. Maybe some kind of inspiration?

ROZ

Oh, now, honey, that's where you went wrong. Inspiration comes from joy -- not from some problem that makes you desperate to talk to an old woman that smells like EndDust and moves like washin' machine on a agitatin' cycle. Inspiration comes from the joy of doin', the joy of bein'. "In the beginnin', God created the Heavens and Earth." That wasn't a problem he was trying to solve. Just pure joy.

TED

Can we leave God out of the conversation, please?

Roz smiles, nods yes. Ted's mood darkens. Roz walks for the door, turns back to Ted -- she's got a cell phone in her hand.

ROZ

Take this.

TED

But I thought you didn't have a cell phone.

ROZ

No, I said I wouldn't let Dubya give me one. And if you ever tell him I've got this, I'll skin you alive.

TED

I don't think you have to worry about that. We don't run in the same circles.

(looking at the phone)

What am I supposed to do with it?

ROZ

Call me. I'm going to be right here cleaning your office.

Ted doesn't fully understand.

ROZ (continued)

Look, if it's good enough for Babby, it'll be good enough for you. Go on, try it. I think you've got some things you need some help with and we ain't gettin' to it talkin' face to face.

Roz starts to clean Ted's office. Ted disappears out the door. A few moments. His phone rings on his desk. Roz picks it up and keeps cleaning.

ROZ (continued)

Mr. Willwright's office . . . yep, this is her. Who am I speakin' to? . . . Hello? You there?

Ted walks back in the room, on the phone.

TED

I feel a little foolish about this. I mean, you're right there.

ROZ

Uh-huh, but it wasn't workin' one on one, in person. So use the damn phone.

Ted doesn't move. Roz presses harder.

ROZ (continued)

Look, hon, it's not a nun you're talkin' to about computers this time; should be a piece of cake.

TED

How do you know about that stuff? Look, this is starting to creep me out.

ROZ

(impatient)

Mr. Willright, just talk on the phone.

(putting phone to her ear)

Now, then. Who am I talkin' to? Is that you Maggie Thatcher? Girl, what I tell you about speaking up? You got that damn accent anyway, which makes it hard as hell to understand you in the first place . . . Are you there?

Ted mumbles something.

ROZ (continued)

I'm sorry, hon, you're gonna have to speak up.

TED

Sorry. I heard you . . . you talk to some pretty famous people, so I was wondering . . . if you'd talk to me?

ROZ

(still cleaning)

I sure will. Now, who am I talking to?

TED

(with great difficulty)

I don't know . . . I mean, I think . . . I think sometimes, I think . . . I'm so confused. I know I'm not . . . but then I act like . . . and I do things like -- he would -- and I'm . . . I think I'm . . .

ROZ

Just say it, sweetheart.

TED

Jesus. This is Jesus.

ROZ

Well, I haven't heard from you in a while! How you been, baby?

TED

(uncomfortable)

Uhm, well, not so good. I, uh, I . . . it's that time of year. And I always feel a little weird around this time. The celebrations and pretty lights and gift-giving and all the praising and calling up my name: none of it makes me feel very good.

ROZ

Okay . . . well, why do you think, sweetheart?

TED

Oh, well I know why. It just may sound a little weird, but I . . . I think, I miss my mother.

ROZ

Well, of course you do.

TED

See, I think a lot of people thought when I was up on that cross and taking my last breaths that I thinking about, you know, the world and, you know, the people in the world, but

TED (cont.)

really I was thinking, "I'm going to miss my mother."

(breaking)

I miss my mother, Roz. I really miss her.

Roz pulls a chair around from Ted's desk and sits.

ROZ

Well, honey, where is she?

A long pause.

ROZ (continued)

(a beat, then)

Did something happen between you two?

TED

Well, she . . . yeah, you could say that. I mean, she, she, uhm . . .

(weaker)

She . . . died. Four years ago. Four years today. I was busy doing things that I thought were important and I was supposed to go home for Christmas because she was so . . . she was sick. But I didn't go, and then she wasn't here anymore . . . for me to see. She believed in me, and it was real. It was honest. She loved me and I wasn't there for her.

Ted crosses to Roz, stands right beside her.

TED (continued)

She . . . she was home, and in bed and was very, very weak, they said. Her nurse had gone out just for an hour to get one last present for her mother. Anyway, they said she got

TED (cont.)

dehydrated and wanted to get up for some water because there was no one there to do that for her . . . to get her the smallest drink of water. So she tried to crawl out of her bed and she did that okay. But then she wasn't strong enough to make the four feet across the room to the water pitcher and she fainted and hit her head on the floor and blacked out. And her head swelled, and she formed a blood clot in the brain and died.

ROZ

Awwwww, honey. I am so sorry to hear that.

TED

I should have saved her. I should have been the one. She needed me . . . but a lot of people needed me and . . . and I didn't see - I couldn't see that . . . She was the least visible.

Roz reaches over her shoulder and takes his hand.

TED (continued)

Just one simple thing could have made all the difference.

ROZ

There's no such thing, sweetheart. There's nothing "simple" about this life. You know that. There's an order to things and that was all in that order. Nothing else.

TED

(whispering)

I can't live with the guilt. I wasn't there. I wasn't the one.

ROZ

Oh, now, come her, honey.

Roz pulls Ted towards her. He sits in her lap. Roz is on her phone, Ted is on the cell.

ROZ (continued)

Mamas love their children, even when they don't do what they should. Mamas hurt, and they hurt hard, but they don't hurt forever. She's in the forever place, now. And she's long since forgotten that day, honey. There are so many other things to remember. Right now she's thinking about when you

were seven . . .

TED

Seven?

ROZ

. . . and it was Christmas day, and you and the brat of a cousin of yours, Jimmy, raced around the neighborhood for hours on those new Schwinn bikes . . .

TED

How do you know about that?

ROZ

. . . yours was fire engine red and his was black, and you were glad 'cause you hated the color black. Anyway, you rode and rode and rode and come supper time, you came back in the house and mama cooked a goose!

TED

I hated goose!

ROZ

That's right. So she cooked you some Spaghetti-O's just for you and hid 'em under the goose on your plate so your daddy wouldn't see 'em.

TED

How do you know about that?

ROZ

And you loved her for that. Oooh, you loved her deep for that. And when dinner was over and she cleaned up the mess, you took her to the couch in the living room, crawled up on the sofa and told her . . .

*Ted relaxes in Roz's arms. Roz
drapes her arms around him.*

TED

I love you, mom. I love you more than anybody in this whole world. And I always will.

ROZ

And you were so tired from ridin' that Schwinn all over the neighborhood, you fell asleep right there in her arms. You needed the rest, poor baby.

Ted begins to fall asleep.

ROZ (continued)

That's what moms do, sweetheart, they give you the arms to rest in. Nothing will do like a mother's arms.

TED

(softly)

I miss you, mom.

ROZ

I miss you, too, sweetheart. Now let it go, baby boy. Just let it all go.

Roz gently hangs up her phone. She gently takes the cell phone from Ted. She wraps her arms around him. He melts into the frame of her body.

Tableau: One of Michelangelo's The Pieta.

Lights dim, then fade out.

