

THANKSGIVING GHOSTS

Written by

Marc A. Najera-Sanchez

FADE IN:

EXT. HOUSE - NIGHT

A classic looking American home is in frame. The lights are on and the ambient sounds of the night can be heard.

CUT TO:

INT. HOUSE - NIGHT

A dining room with walls littered in certificates, diplomas, and picture frames of a young boy with trophies is seen. A man is sitting at the dining table.

HENRY, 39, an unkept man is seated. He bears a visible 5 o' clock shadow, and a loose tie hangs off his neck. He's beginning to pour himself another glass of whiskey. A woman is walking back and forth behind him, each time carrying something different in hand. She walks behind him with a suitcase and looks at him.

HENRY

You got everything or are you
waiting for me to beg?

This woman scoffs and is taken back.

HENRY (CONT'D)

Or is it money? Because I thought
the settlement was more than
enough.

She starts tearing up.

HENRY (CONT'D)

Ohhhh, you must be waiting for my
tenure. Yeah that's going to be a
fat check... your loss.

EX-WIFE

You are such an asshole.

Wiping tears off her face.

EX-WIFE (CONT'D)

You aren't worth shit. You act all
fucking above it all but you are
literally the worst! Like you're
god's gift to earth or some shit.
Curl up and die on that fucking
pedestal.

HENRY

You done?

EX-WIFE

When you're rolling in bed
wondering what went wrong, just
know, it was all your fault.

She darts to the front door and slams it behind her.

Henry is still sitting on the table emotionless drinking his glass of whiskey. He finishes his glass, then proceeds to pop open the bottle and drinks straight out the bottle.

INT. LECTURE HALL - NOON

Henry is standing in front of a whiteboard with EXISTENTIALISM written across it. He's in a class filled with college students locked onto him.

HENRY

...Kierkegaard's concept of "The paradox of Abraham's faith" showed how Abraham had absurd and utter faith in that god would save his beloved Isaac.

Students begin to write notes.

HENRY (CONT'D)

If only my wife had that same faith, we'd still be married!

Henry begins to chuckle and looks around for a laugh.

The whole class is silent besides a singular cough.

HENRY (CONT'D)

(coughs)

Anyways, this is just an introduction. We'll delve deeper about Kierkegaard next class. Have a great thanksgiving break everyone.

Class ends and the chaos of students bustle and chatter ensues.

Henry packs his materials but starts to eavesdrop on some students.

STUDENT #1

What's the move?

STUDENT #2
Le poison's happy hour menu goes
dumb. Cheap ass app's too.

STUDENT #1
Say less.

HENRY (O.S.)
Count me in!

The students look at Henry then take a quick look at one another.

STUDENT #2
Oh man, I just forgot about.....

He looks to his boy for help.

STUDENT #1

Oh yeah, we have to go... do that
one thing!

STUDENT #2
Oh yeah! Sorry Dr. Smith, we forgot
about this-

HENRY
Oh no worries...
(sarcastically)
You guys think y'all passed that
last test?

EXT. CAMPUS - LATER

Henry is walking towards the parking lot.

MR. DRISCOLL (O.S.)
Henry!

MR. DRISCOLL, 44, a square looking man is walking briskly to Henry.

MR. DRISCOLL (CONT'D)
How are you doing Henry.

Mr. Driscoll puts his hand out. Henry looks down at Mr. Driscoll's hand, then back up at him.

HENRY
It's Dr. Smith.

Mr. Driscoll takes back his hand and straightens his tie.

MR. DRISCOLL

Look "Dr. Smith", lets be professionals here. The boards been talking and administration's been breathing down my neck. Now as the department head, it is my duty to communicate on behalf of the administra-

HENRY

Jesus fucking christ! Get on with it.

MR. DRISCOLL

Ok geez. Basically we need proof that you've been doing your research. You are aware that you need to publish a research paper by the end of the year. It's almost thanksgiving... you need to show something.

HENRY

Is that so? And why couldn't administration come to me first, instead of sending one of their grunts.

MR. DRISCOLL

You told them to suck your dick from the bac-

HENRY

That's besides the point! Look I need yo-

MR. DRISCOLL

Didn't you also play porn during a meeting-

HENRY

I forgot to close the tab! I-

MR. DRISCOLL

Then there was also the "shit incident".

HENRY

I was framed and I will die on that hill.

Mr. Driscoll is about to speak.

HENRY (CONT'D)

LOOK! You'll get something by the end of the break.

MR. DRISCOLL

Good... because I've heard some rumors about your chance at tenure... and it's not looking too good. I don't know why you of all people would get tenure anyways.

An intense stare down goes down.

HENRY

Huh, interesting. Do you know why you're Mr. And I'm Dr.?

(slight pause)

Because I'm better than you.

Eye contact is held for enough time to make Mr. Driscoll visibly uncomfortable. Henry jolts at Mr. Driscoll forcing a shriek. Henry is grabbing at his stomach, laughing hysterically whilst walking away.

CUT TO:

INT. HENRY'S STUDY - DUSK

Henry is sleeping at his desk with a handle of liquor at his side. He's in his study that has bookcases filled to the brim. He is awoken to a call coming from his home phone. Henry lets the call go to voicemail.

HOME PHONE

Hey Henry, it's John. I wanted to ask if you'd like to come over for thanksgiving dinner tonight. The kids would love to see their favorite uncle... and so would me and Ana. The divorce has to be hard on you and you shouldn't have to face this alone; especially tonight. Call me back if you're coming so we'll save you a plate... Alright goodbye.

Henry, still thrown over his desk begins to pick himself up and grabs the handle of liquor.

HENRY

Oh great, now John's pitying me. He got married at 22 and he's pitying me!

He takes a giant swig.

HENRY (CONT'D)

I pity him! I got rid of the ole' ball and chain. I'm freer than I've ever been. Nothings holding me back anymore!

After another giant gulp, he slams the handle on the desk. He looks down and see's a blank notebook with "IMPORTANT RESEARCH NOTES" written at the top. He stares at the notebook.

HENRY (CONT'D)

FUCK I FORGOT!

Out of frustration, he throws this notebook to one of the many bookcases, causing a few books to fall out.

He sucks his teeth getting more frustrated. He starts to put back the books when one titled "The Existentialist Experience" catches his eye.

He takes the book and the previously tossed notebook back to his desk.

HENRY (CONT'D)

I need that tenure.

MONTAGE OF HENRY READING, DRINKING, AND NOTE TAKING

Henry sits down to read and take some notes.

He stands up with the book in one hand and the handle of liquor in the other. He takes some swigs.

He paces around the study, book in hand, pondering until it comes to him so he writes it in his notebook. Takes another sip to celebrate.

He rips a page from the book to make a paper airplane.

He gets too drunk to stand and stumbles back in his chair. He continues to read.

It appears that he is writing notes diligently but when he moves his body, his notebook has been filled with doodles.

CUT TO:

INT HENRY'S STUDY - LATER

Henry is sprawled over his desk. The rest of the liquor spilt on the floor and his notebook filled with a mix of words, doodles, and illegible writing resembling wing ding characters.

VOICE (O.S.)

Wake up Dr.Smith. Come on, wake up
Henry!

Henry looks up in a daze. He sees 3 shapes.

VOICE (CONT'D)

Wake your sorry ass up damn!

Henry jolts up and sees the ghost like apparitions of the famous existentialist philosophers SOREN KIERKEGAARD, JEAN-PAUL SARTRE, and SIMONE BEAUVOIR.

He falls back in his chair causing the chair to fall back. Henry is on the ground crawling away from the philosophers.

HENRY

Holy shit, what the fuck did I
drink?

SARTRE

Calm down cupcake, we don't bite.

Henry stands up trying to get his shit together but is still panicked.

HENRY

This doesn't make any sense. Why
are you guys here?

SIMONE

With it being the American
celebration known as Thanksgiving,
Your heavy drinking, your research
on us, and the all around bad vibe,
we appeared.

HENRY

So what are you guys, the ghosts of
thanksgiving? You're all here to
save me from myself? Ha! Don't make
me laugh. I'm letting you know
right now I've done nothing wrong
in my life. So leave me alone so I
can get this shit published and get
my tenure.

All the philosophers look at each other for a moment, then start laughing hysterically.

KIERKEGAARD

You think we care about you?

SARTRE

Mother fucker you study us!

They all start laughing again.

SIMONE

Alright guys, lets settle down.

She looks over at Henry.

SIMONE (CONT'D)

To me, it looks like you aren't doing to well, what has you wound up so tight. And don't give us another one of those bullshit tantrums.

Henry looks at them and sighs.

HENRY

Oh what the hell, you guys aren't real and I'm just drunk so it's like I'm talking to myself right?

He picks up the chair and takes a seat.

HENRY (CONT'D)

It's just that... I can't stop being an asshole. I can't help it.

SIMONE

Your wife must've loved that.

HENRY

(chuckles)

Yeah, she loved it so much she left me.

SIMONE

Good for her!

Henry looks down a bit depressed.

HENRY

Oh Kierkegaard, I made a joke about how my wife lacked faith unlike Abraham in class and nobody laughed, can you believe it?

KIERKEGAARD

I wouldn't have laughed too.

HENRY

Fuck You.

Henry looks even more bummed.

SARTRE

Hey kid.

HENRY

I'm 39.

SARTRE

Look, you chose to study existentialism for a reason. Some philosophers study it because they've gone through some horrible shit. It's the way their brain's wired after it all. You appear to have lived a pretty sweet life. Why did you choose existentialism?

Henry is taken back.

HENRY

I went my whole life being told I was a genius. Eventually it stops because you grow up and it's kind of arrogant to proclaim yourself as a genius. So I would make people know through conversation. If someone mispronounces something, I'll correct them. If someone's wrong, I'll make sure they know it. It's the only way I feel good about myself; as if I'm transcending past everyone else.

KIERKEGAARD

Your beloved wife has left you and now you are all alone in the world. Your need to transcend has been your downfall, your Achilles heel.

(MORE)

KIERKEGAARD (CONT'D)

In this existential dread that you're feeling, you must build a relationship with god and he will save you.

HENRY

You think so?

SIMONE

Life is all about the ambiguity of it all. We are all free to do what we want with obstacles along the way. You have fallen victim to my concept of the serious man. You give up that freedom in attempt to be god-like in your adherence to your own set of standards and values. Your need of validation for being a genius has held you back. What are you going to do about it?

Henry begins to panic and starts to breathe heavy.

HENRY

(in between breathes)

You guys are right! What the hell have I been doing all this time!

KIERKEGAARD

You're feeling the anxiety from the existential dread.

HENRY

Get the fuck away from me!

KIERKEGAARD

Existential dread!

HENRY

Seriously stop.

SARTRE

Existential dread!

HENRY

Shut the fuck up!

SIMONE

Existential dread!

Existential dread rings continuously in Henry's ears.

HENRY
Stop!... Please!... Please! I'll
change!... I promise! I'll change!

CUT TO:

INT. JOHN'S DINING ROOM - NIGHT

At the head of the table, JOHN, Henry's older brother is about to lead his family into prayer.

JOHN
Our father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy na-

The door swings open and a drunk, bloody, and bruised Henry falls to the ground. He picks himself up and stumbles towards John.

JOHN (CONT'D)
Jesus Christ henry, what the hell
happened to you.
(sniffs)
You reek of booze, did you drive
here?

HENRY
(slurring)
That's besides the point Johnnn.

He burps

HENRY (CONT'D)
I learned tonight.

He spits up a little throw-up to the side. John is getting angry.

JOHN
You're fucking disgusting. You're
dripping blood and drunk. My family
shouldn't have to see you like
this; especially on Thanksg-

HENRY
I learned that I want to chaaange
Johnnn. I-I-I was talking to these
old guys and they said I need to
change. Can you help me change huh?

Henry begins to tear up a little and John's tense face relaxes.

JOHN
Let me help you then.

EXT. JOHN'S HOME - NIGHT

John has Henry's arm over his shoulder while walking him to John's car.

John looks across the street and sees his neighbors standing around Henry's car crashed into a tree.

JOHN'S WIFE
Where are you going to take him
John?

JOHN
To the hospital and from there
we'll figure everything out. I
gotta go before they see us.

John rushes Henry into his passenger seat and then drives away.

FADE OUT.