

CIRCUS FREAK

By

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TEASER

FADE IN:

INT. CIRCUS TENT - NIGHT (1987)

SUPER: NEW YORK CITY - 1987

A two acre spectacle. Three sections of bleachers encircle the main stage.

The stands filled with loud, cheering spectators.

Three ENTERTAINERS circle the arena atop elephants.

Clowns of all shapes and sizes harass those in the front rows.

A roaring TIGER stands, ready to pounce at any moment. A TAMER nears it, keeping still.

The RINGLEADER, dressed in a fine black suit with a blood red button down silk jacket and a top hat on his head, steps into the spotlight.

RINGLEADER
Ladies and Gentlemen!

His voice echoes throughout the now silent arena.

RINGLEADER
I welcome you to the most
spectacular and jaw-dropping event
you've ever dreamed of!

Murmurs from the crowd.

RINGLEADER
What you are about to witness are
acts both entertaining and
terrifying. No other performers in
the world would ever try these
death defying acts. Look to the
sky!

He points in the air.

The audience members all look up.

Eighty feet up, an acrobat, SHELLY, beautiful with long legs and long brown hair, steps onto the tight rope.

(CONTINUED)

RINGLEADER (O.S.)

No one would ever dare to try this
at this height! Seventy five feet
high, a world record, I might add,
ladies and gents!

The crowd claps and cheers. The audience holds their
breaths and gasps as Shelly does a back flip and sticks the
landing on the rope.

She slowly walks across, careful with each step. She
handstands on the rope and releases one hand.

RINGLEADER

A big hand for Shell!

The audience goes wild.

Shelly takes a seat on the rope.

INT. OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

TONY BRIGGS, 30s, sits in at his desk filling out paperwork.
A name plate sits on the desk: TONY BRIGGS: FOUNDER

Pictures of him, his performers and celebrities hang on the
wall.

A picture of his family, KAREN, beautiful, blond, a
bombshell of a wife, and RONNY, a toddler in the photo,
chubby in all the cute places, sits on his desk.

Karen barges in, Ronny in her hands. She wears a long black
dress with pearls around her neck.

KAREN

What do you think you're doing?

Tony doesn't look up.

TONY

Seeing how much you're costing me.
You and that wallet burner in your
hands.

KAREN

That's your child you're talking
about. Poorly, I might add. It's
opening night here in New York and
you sit here without a care.

(CONTINUED)

TONY
Just put the kid down and get out
of here.

Karen sets Ronny on a chair in front of her husband's desk.

KAREN
(to Tony)
You're pathetic.

She kisses her son on the cheek.

KAREN
(to Ronny)
Mommy will be back soon.

She exits.

Tony finally looks up at his son. He sets down his pen and walks to Ronny.

TONY
You know I didn't mean what I said
about you, right? I just like
giving your mom a hard time. Come
on...

He picks up Ronny.

TONY
...let's go see the show!

He exits with his son.

INT. HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Tony struts down the hallway with his son. He hears sobs coming from a nearby dressing room.

He puts his ear to the door and then opens it.

INT. DRESSING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Tony heads in to see, LAWRENCE, 30s, scrawny, bruises fill his arms and torso as he stands shirtless in front of a mirror.

Posters that cover the walls are torn and red streaks of paint hide the posters' picture.

Clothes thrown all over the room.

(CONTINUED)

TONY

Larry?

Larry pauses and turns to see Tony behind him.

TONY

Is something wrong?

LARRY

I don't think I can do this again,
sir.

TONY

Excuse me? I don't think you have a
choice.

Tony sets Ronny down on a chair and steps beside Larry.

TONY

Do you want to go back to the
drugs? You told me yourself your
wife won't come home until you're
clean.

LARRY

I don't want them, but I need them.

TONY

And how do you expect to pay for
them? You're a nobody out there,
Larry. But here, here you're a god,
and idol. People come from all
around the country and lay their
eyes on you.

LARRY

There's a lot of them.

Larry chokes up, trying to compose himself.

TONY

There sure is. Now you're going to
do this again, or you'll find
yourself on the street again with
nothing inside you but the needles.

LARRY

I don't want that.

TONY

Of course you don't.

Larry takes a couple of deep breaths and heads out.

(CONTINUED)

Tony looks at Ronny.

Ronny stares back with a big smile on his chubby cheeked face.

Tony smiles back, walks over, picks him up and exits.

INT. CIRCUS TENT - NIGHT

Tony stands, watching his performers from the sidelines.

Larry, the FIRE BREATHER, joins in and blows fire in the face of the tiger. The tiger ROARS and swipes a paw at him.

The crowd gasps but then cheers to root on the brave man.

Shelly continues her dangerous stunts atop the rope. All of a sudden the rope snaps and Shelly begins to fall.

Audience members scream in fright as they point up in her direction.

Shelly grabs hold of the rope but loses her grip and free falls toward the ground beneath her.

The other performers look and scatter as she collides with the earth. Bones shatter, blood splatters, death takes over.

Tony sets Ronny down tries to push through the crowd, no luck.

The crowd begins to panic, chaos arises. They rush out of their seats for the nearest exit.

Tony squeezes through a few feet but is knocked down.

RINGLEADER

Ladies and gentlemen, please!
Everyone calm down and all will be
controlled!

The tiger lunges at Larry and takes a big bite out of his chest.

His baton, with fire on each end, falls to the dirt and the arena floor catches fire.

The arena begins to blaze.

The tiger goes mad and runs loose.

The elephants rampage. One lifts onto his hind legs and the PERFORMER riding falls to the ground.

(CONTINUED)

Hurt, he struggles to pick himself up.

The elephant comes down and a giant foot stomps on the fallen performer.

The crowd tramples over one another as the tent starts to collapse under the weakened infrastructure.

The ringleader looks up to see a half ton beam fall toward him.

RINGLEADER
(to himself)
Oh shit.

He does the Sign of the Cross for one last prayer until it lands on him.

Tony tries to crawl back to his son.

Ronny stands at the doorway all alone, tears pour from his eyes.

Tony tries to stand up but is trampled and lost under a swarm of people who rush to escape.

A woman, JENNIFER BALDWIN, snatches Ronny and takes him out.

The building, full of fire, completely collapses, trapping hundreds of poor souls as they meet their death.

EXT. PARKING LOT - CONTINUOUS

Jennifer, and others, continue to scatter as what's left of the building continues to burn.

Ronny, held over Jennifer's shoulder, stares at the bright flames.

END TEASER

ACT ONE

INT. BRIGG'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

RONNY BRIGGS, late twenties, slim but toned, shoots up from his bed. Face drenched in sweat, eyes ready to pop out. He breathes heavy.

SUPER: NEW YORK - PRESENT DAY

INT. BRIGG'S BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

Ronny rushes bursts into the bathroom and up to the sink. He opens the cabinets and pulls out a bottle of pills.

He pops it open, and shoves a couple down his throat. His breaths begin to slow and become normal.

Ronny fills his cupped hands with water and splashes it onto his face.

He looks back up into the mirror and gasps in fright as he sees his wife, MARIAM, mid-twenties, beautiful, innocence at first glance.

She stands in the doorway behind him.

Ronny catches his breath as he realizes who it is.

He turns to face his wife.

MARIAM

You haven't taken those in a while.

RONNY

I haven't needed them.

MARIAM

I think you should tell Dr. Platt if it's getting worse-

RONNY

It's not getting worse. It has to get better for it to get worse.

Ronny walks past Mariam and out of the bathroom. She follows after him.

INT. BRIGG'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

The married couple returns to the bedroom, and Ronny sulks into the bed. Mariam joins in on her side.

MARIAM

It frightens me when you have these moments.

RONNY

I promise you, everything is okay.

(CONTINUED)

MARIAM

I just worry something is going to happen like before.

Ronny kisses his wife on the forehead and holds her close.

RONNY

Nothing is going to happen.

MARIAM

I'll believe that when I see it.

She crawls under the covers and turns on her side.

Ronny stares at her, concerned.

INT. BRIGG'S KITCHEN - DAY

BRYAN BRIGGS, one whole hand, and a big ball of energy, with cheeks that everyone old woman wants to pinch. He sits at the kitchen table and waits for his mom to finish preparing his breakfast.

Ronny strolls in, sporting a fancy suit and tie, hair slicked back.

RONNY

Good morning, everyone!

Ronny walks by Mariam, who's busy with the eggs.

He kisses her temple and makes his way to the table.

He pats his son on the back.

RONNY

How's it going, sport?

BRYAN

It's all right.

RONNY

Just all right? What's going on?

BRYAN

Mommy is upset.

RONNY

She is? About what?

Bryan shrugs his shoulders.

(CONTINUED)

RONNY
Where's your breakfast?

BRYAN
It's not ready yet.

RONNY
Mommy's slacking, isn't she?

Ronny smiles as his son laughs at his crack.

Mariam carries the pan, with the cooked eggs, over to the table. She dumps the eggs onto a plate in front of her family.

Bryan's eyes light up. He gives his mother a round of applause.

RONNY
There it is! All for you!

MARIAM
You're not eating?

RONNY
Gotta get to work.

Ronny grabs a slice of bread of a plate, kisses his family and leaves.

Mariam sits down next to Bryan. She sighs, exhausted.

INT. WESTFIELD BANK - DAY

Ronny sits in a corner cubicle, a tag on his desk reads:
BRANCH MANAGER.

He's lost in his paper work.

A knock. Ronny doesn't budge. Another knock. He grows agitated and begins writing furiously.

CARL (O.S.)
Ronny.

Ronny looks up and sees a CLOWN, dressed in an orange suit and blue tie, with a chunk missing from his skull.

Ronny's attention is grabbed and he jumps, startled.

(CONTINUED)

RONNY
Jesus Christ.

CARL LEWIS, 30s, short and stubby, with a well groomed beard, stands at the entry with ANDERS.

CARL
Are you okay, Mr. Briggs?

Ronny realizes where he's at.

RONNY
Yeah, of course, sorry. Just thought- Never mind. How can I help you?

CARL
This is Mr. Anders, he asked to see you.

RONNY
Sure, yeah, come take a seat.

Anders, a middle aged man, with greasy, long white hair, walks to Ronny's desk.

RONNY
Thanks, Carl.

Carl eyes Anders for a moment, but then heads off.

Anders stands still in front of Ronny's desk.

RONNY
Would you like to take a seat?

ANDERS
We lost everything.

RONNY
I'm sorry?

ANDERS
Ronald Briggs, yes?

RONNY
That's me. I'm who you asked for.

ANDERS
Ronald Briggs, the son of Anthony Briggs?

RONNY

What did you just say?

ANDERS

He took everything me and my family.

RONNY

How do you know my father?

ANDERS

He said it would make us rich. He said it would change our lives forever.

RONNY

Look, I don't know who you think you are, but you have no right to talk about my father-

ANDERS

Your father was a crook! A money pig, and a selfish son of a bitch!

Anders pulls out a small pistol and aims it at Ronny.

RONNY

Hey! Just calm down! Security!

Other PATRONS and EMPLOYEES look over.

Three SECURITY GUARDS rush over and point their guns at Anders.

Customers run a muck and rush out.

GUARD 1

Sir, put the gun down, now!

Anders keeps his aim at Ronny.

RONNY

What did my father do to you?

ANDERS

You're just the same as he is.

RONNY

My dad was a good man.

ANDERS

Son, you've been lied to.

(CONTINUED)

Anders turns the gun on himself and pulls the trigger, blowing a crater out of the back of his skull.

His lifeless body falls to the ground.

Ronny stands still, frozen in shock.

The officers rush to the body.

GUARD 1
(into walkie-talkie)
Get the paramedics down here, now!

The guard places his fingers on Anders' pulse.

He looks up at Ronny with fear.

EXT. BANK PARKING LOT - DAY

Chaos. Ambulances, police cars, fire trucks, surround the lot.

A crowd of people gather around to catch a glimpse.

Ronny stands with a police officer, SARGENT HARDY, 40s, African American with a line backer build.

RONNY
I don't even know who he was.

HARDY
He's not a client here at the bank?

RONNY
Not since I've been working here,
no.

HARDY
How long is that?

RONNY
Six years.

Mariam parks her LINCOLN NAVIGATOR, hops out and rushes over to the scene.

Ronny spots her as she rushes toward him.

She jumps into his arms and he holds her tight.

They separate.

(CONTINUED)

MARIAM

Oh my, God. What happened?

HARDY

Ma'am, will you please go back to your car-?

RONNY

This is my wife, sir. She's staying right here.

HARDY

I'm sorry, but I need to talk to you alone, Mr. Briggs.

RONNY

Well in that case, we can do it another time. I need to go be with my family.

The Briggs walk away from the scene.

MARIAM

Ronny, I'm so glad you're okay.

Ronny looks over to the crowd and sees the same disfigured clown, standing amongst the others.

Ronny looks back at his wife.

RONNY

Mary, I have something to tell you-

He looks back over, no clown in sight.

MARIAM

What?

RONNY

(confused)

Nothing. Forget it.

The couple continues to walk.

INT. BRIGG'S KITCHEN - NIGHT

Ronny sits on the couch, a beer in hand, eyes focused on the television set.

ON THE TV: An episode of the television show, SUPERNATURAL - A killer clown creeps through the house of his victim.

Ronny flips the channel.

(CONTINUED)

ON THE TV: The movie, HAPPY GILMORE - Adam Sandler putts toward a huge METAL CLOWN HEAD. The clown heads spits the ball back out and Adam freaks out.

RONNY

Are you serious?

He shuts the TV off and chucks the remote to the side.

Mariam walks in, Bryan fast asleep in her arms.

MARIAM

What the hell was that?

RONNY

It's all just so damn frustrating.

MARIAM

What is?

RONNY

It's starting again, the visions. I don't know what it is-

MARIAM

Call Dr. Platt tomorrow. I don't think I...we can go through all that again. I mean, the rage, the terror you struck into us. I know Bryan was too young to remember, but if it happens now, you may scar him for the rest of his life.

RONNY

I know you're right.

MARIAM

You'll do the right thing. This family means a lot to you, I know that.

RONNY

That guy today, he knew my father- My real father.

MARIAM

Really? How?

RONNY

I'm not sure, he didn't say. He wasn't really making much sense at all. But he said my dad ruined his life.

MARIAM

I'm sure he was mistaking him for someone else.

RONNY

He knew his name and everything. All my life I've had people praising my father, hoping I'd be just like him. I don't even know him, but I feel like I'm still not able to fit his shoes.

MARIAM

Don't think like that. I'm sure he'd be very proud of you. You're a kind man, with a successful job and a beautiful family.

RONNY

I just feel like I don't really know him at all, just whatever people tell me about him.

MARIAM

Maybe he was this great leader that everyone built him to be. Doesn't that make you happy to have such an iconic, remarkable father like that?

RONNY

Well, he must've pissed off Anders.

MARIAM

I'm sure he made a few enemies.

RONNY

But for someone to take their own life, and blame it all on him. There's got to be something missing.

MARIAM

I wouldn't look too much into it. Maybe it's better left buried.

The phone rings and Ronny answers it.

RONNY

(into phone)
Hello?

A beat.

(CONTINUED)

RONNY (CONT'D)
(into phone)
Yeah, Mr. Wills told me about that-
I don't think that's necessary at
all... Well, if that's what he
wants.

A moment passes as Ronny grinds his teeth, not happy with what he's hearing.

RONNY (CONT'D)
(into phone)
I understand, and I send my
sincerest apologies. Thank you.

Ronny hangs up.

RONNY (CONT'D)
Huh. How about that.

MARIAM
Who was it?

RONNY
Josh. He said I need to take a
leave of absence after what
happened today. Looks like I've got
plenty of time on my hands to dig
up some information about my dad.

END ACT ONE

ACT TWO

INT. BRIGG'S HOME OFFICE - NIGHT

Ronny sits in his office, spacious with sports memorabilia hanging along the shelving.

The dark room is light from the soft lamp on the desk and the bright laptop screen.

He scrolls through pages of articles.

Headlines read: "CIRCUS FREAK ACCIDENT, 39 DEAD, HUNDREDS INJURED."

"FATAL FIRE BRINGS DOWN AN EMPIRE."

Ronny continues reading.

"...the cause yet to be determined." "...authorities suspect arson."

(CONTINUED)

A METALLIC CLANK from behind catches Ronny's attention.

He spins in his chair, pauses, and goes back to his research.

"...ANTHONY BRIGGS, owner and circus mogul...whereabouts unknown."

Ronny's mouth widens in shock, jaw dropped.

Another THUD. Plates crashing?

Ronny springs from his seat.

The laptop shuts down, the lamp go out.

RONNY

What the shit?

He pulls out his phone and activates the FLASHLIGHT APP to illuminate the room and give him vision.

Ronny walks through the door, into the main hallway.

INT. BRIGG'S HOME/HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Ronny creeps through.

He flips up light switches, no luck, just darkness.

The flashlight on the phone gives no more than a three foot ring of light.

Ronny takes slow, careful steps. A WHITE GLOVED HAND shoots itself into the light, reaching for Ronny's shoulder.

The hand inches closer...closer.

Ronny spins...nothing.

He continues.

INT. BRIGG'S KITCHEN - NIGHT

Ronny rides along the closest wall.

He turns as a EERIE LAUGH alerts him.

Walking backwards ever so slowly.

He gasps as he backs into the fridge.

(CONTINUED)

Ronny uses his free hand to feel around.

He pulls the fridge door open, just a crack- A hand shoots out and flails, desperate to grab hold of Ronny's neck.

Terrified, Ronny slams the door on the arm. The arm rips apart and falls onto the ground.

Ronny, scared out of his mind, stumbles backward, trips and falls on his ass.

He curls up tight. He breathes heavy.

RONNY

It's just in your head, this shit's coming back, that's all. Breathe, breathe. Let it pass.

He takes a couple of more breaths. He stands up. In the open cut out of the wall stands the RINGLEADER, face full of blood, skull bashed in, his silk red coat torn.

Ronny trudges off.

INT. STAIRCASE - CONTINUOUS

Ronny bolts up the wooden stairs, creaking with each step.

He reaches the top and the lights blind him as they turn on simultaneously.

He adjusts his eyes to the brightness as he wanders toward his bedroom.

He opens the door, steps inside, and shuts it behind him.

INT. THERAPIST OFFICE - DAY

A soft lit room. Awards and certificates cover one wall in its entirety.

Ronny lies on a smooth leather chaise. His eyes closed.

DORIAN PLATT, late 40s, combed back salt and pepper hair, spectacles at the base of his large nose.

He studies Ronny with judgmental eyes, as he sits on a mobile desk chair, a note pad in hand.

(CONTINUED)

PLATT

Why do you think it's happening again?

RONNY

To tell you the truth, I don't remember it ever stopping.

PLATT

And you've kept this from me? Your wife?

RONNY

I had it under control.

PLATT

Have you been taking your pills?

RONNY

Yes.

PLATT

At the appropriate times?

RONNY

Only when I really need them.

PLATT

Let's go back to what you said about your father. He's not dead?

RONNY

I don't believe he is. I was told he died in that fire, that he was trampled to death.

FLASHBACK

INT. CIRCUS TENT - NIGHT (1987)

Chaos. Crowds swarm out of the burning arena.

Lying on his stomach, stuck under a sea of people, Anthony reaches his arm out toward toddler Ronny.

END FLASHBACK

INT. THERAPIST OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Ronny opens his eyes.

PLATT

Are you going to try and find him?

RONNY

It crossed my mind. What do you think?

PLATT

I just hope you're ready to handle seeing him again. If you're not, we could always use more sessions to practice and ready yourself-

RONNY

He's my father. I don't need psychological training to see my father.

PLATT

How do you plan on finding him?

RONNY

I'll start from the beginning. The last place he was seen.

PLATT

Don't you think he would've tried to reach out to you by now?

RONNY

What's that supposed to mean?

PLATT

Maybe he had a good reason to stay dead to society.

Ronny sits up, angered.

Ronny looks at the wall of certificates and achievements.

RONNY

One wall? It's gotta be kinda depressing knowing that your whole life could just fit on only one wall.

Ronny storms out.

EXT. HIGHWAY - DAY

Ronny speeds through traffic, weaving in and out of cars on the Brooklyn Bridge.

EXT. FREEWAY - NIGHT

Ronny, alone on the road, cruises down with nothing but a forest of trees on either side of him.

The bright moon guides him through the otherwise pitch black curved road.

EXT. PARKING LOT - NIGHT

Ronny puts the car in park and steps out.

He glares at the ruin in front of him.

A worn down arena. The giant white tent, blackened by age and fire. It stands, stronger than ever, but with the potential to collapse at any moment.

Ronny reaches into the glove box and pulls out a flashlight. He begins to make his way toward the building.

INT. CIRCUS TENT - NIGHT

Ronny peeks his head in. The flashlight illuminates a visible path of no more than ten feet at a time.

Satisfied the coast is clear, Ronny pushes him in.

He wanders through the colossal structure, admiring the architecture that once held the building high.

Ronny passes through, he trips over a metal beam on the ground.

He whips the light over the beam to notice its cracked in half.

FLASHBACK

INT. CIRCUS TENT - NIGHT (1987)

The Ringleader is crushed by the falling beam.

END FLASHBACK

INT. CIRCUS TENT - NIGHT

Ronny shutters in fear at that memory. He carries on with his journey.

A snarl comes from behind. His flashlight flickers as he spins to inspect the sound.

RONNY

Damn it. You piece of shit.

He slaps the flashlight. It shuts off, leaving him complete darkness.

It comes back to life. He has it pointing up into his face. It creates a halo around him. In the beam of light, behind him stands a gruesome man, with blood running down his face.

Ronny takes a step forward. A whole, the size of watermelon, is missing from the man. This man is Larry, the drug addict, the fire breather.

Ronny stops as a growl catches his attention.

He hesitates and then continues.

The growling grows louder and more intense, like a warning to stop.

He does a 360 degree, in the midst of that, a TIGER is briefly visible as the beam of light passes over it.

Ronny takes a deep breath. He squints as a figure appears in front of him.

It inches closer, a tiger appears in the light, growling, ready to pounce.

Ronny stands frozen in shock. He forces himself to move. He takes off running.

Distant growls all around him, he doesn't know from where.

He grows paranoid as the growls become louder, closer.

The massive tiger leaps, out of the darkness and tackles Ronny to the ground.

(CONTINUED)

Ronny screams in fear.

The tiger presses his nose to Ronny's. The tiger's large, sword-like teeth inch close to Ronny's cheeks.

Ronny cowers in fear.

The arena lights spring on and the tiger is nowhere to be found. Ronny, lying on his back, looks around, frantic.

He sees a man in the distance. The man begins to approach him.

Ronny's blurred vision becomes normal again as the man reaches him.

A SECURITY GUARD, 50s, helps Ronny up off the ground.

MASON

You took quite a fall there. You all right?

Ronny composes himself, trying to understand what just happened.

MASON

Son?

Ronny looks at the man.

RONNY

Yeah, I'm okay. Just took a tumble.

A gash on the Ronny's forehead catches the guard's eye.

MASON

That's quite a wound. Let's go get that taken care of.

Mason escorts Ronny from the premises.

INT. WATCH BOOTH - NIGHT

Ronny sits on a table in the tiny room. Enough room for a counter, a fridge and a small television.

Mason works on Ronny's face.

MASON

What brings you here? You don't seem like the type we usually get this late.

(CONTINUED)

RONNY
And what type is that?

MASON
Kids making drug deals, stealing
things, breaking shit.

RONNY
No, I'm not here to take anything.

MASON
So answer my question.

Mason brings up a bottle of rubbing alcohol.

MASON (CONT'D)
Watch yourself, this will sting.

He pours the alcohol onto a cotton ball and presses it to
Ronny's fresh wound.

Ronny cringes back.

RONNY
My dad used to own this place. I
was just curious to see what it's
become.

MASON
Anthony Briggs was your father?

RONNY
Yeah. Did you know him?

MASON
I met him briefly when I first
started working here.

RONNY
Before the fire?

MASON
No, about ten years after the fire.

Ronny grows silent.

RONNY
So my dad didn't die in the fire?

MASON
Unless the Anthony Briggs I met was
a ghost.

Mason gives a smirk as he places gauze and a bandage on Ronny's forehead.

RONNY

Thanks.

MASON

How long has it been since you've seen him?

RONNY

I don't really remember ever seeing him. Just little bits and pieces.

MASON

Well I'm afraid he's been long gone for fifteen years. No one's seen him since.

RONNY

So coming here was a waste of time?

MASON

There may be someone that can help you; Mr. Watson, he's the keeper of the grounds now that your dad left.

RONNY

Where can I find him?

MASON

There's a house out back that your dad had built. He lives out there. But I wouldn't bother him in his sleep, many people have regretted doing that.

RONNY

I'll just come back tomorrow then.

MASON

I'll be sure to let him know you're coming.

RONNY

Thanks. And thanks for the...

Ronny points to the fixed wound. Ronny hops off the table, gathers his belongings and heads out.

Mason glares at him as he leaves.

INT. FRONT DOOR- NIGHT

Ronny stumbles through the door. A dim lamp at the door frame lights the main hallway.

He trudges up the steps.

INT. BRIGG'S HOME/UPSTAIRS HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Ronny approaches his son's bedroom door, which is slightly cracked.

He puts his eye to the crack and watches his son, fast asleep and innocent.

The CLOWN with the chunk missing from his head steps in front of Ronny's line of sight.

Ronny jumps back, startled, and bursts through the door.

INT. BRYAN'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

He flips on the light. Nothing.

He sighs in relief and throws his face into his hands.

He switches off the light and steps out of the room.

INT. BRIGG'S HOME/UPSTAIRS HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Mariam appears from behind as Ronny shuts the door.

MARIAM

Are you just getting home?

RONNY

Jesus. You scared the shit out of me.

MARIAM

What's wrong?

RONNY

I'm getting rid of Platt.

Ronny heads toward his bedroom.

INT. BRIGG'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

The couple enters the room and flip on the lamps.

Ronny dives into bed. Mariam sits calmly on her side.

MARIAM

Why would you do that?

RONNY

He doesn't know what he's talking about.

MARIAM

Well he's been helping you for years.

RONNY

Not helping.

MARIAM

And you didn't bother telling me?

RONNY

Please, I don't want to get into this right now.

MARIAM

Well we need to talk.

RONNY

I found out my dad might still be alive.

Mariam stops in her tracks, unsure what to say. Ronny stares at the ground.

MARIAM

That's great news.

RONNY

I just don't know what to do.

MARIAM

How are you going to find him?

RONNY

I've been thinking, maybe I don't.

MARIAM

Why would you say that? He's your idol.

(CONTINUED)

RONNY

After what happened at the bank,
maybe he wasn't. Maybe it's better
off just a fantasy in my head that
he was this great guy.

MARIAM

Don't have it end like that. Find
him.

Ronny thinks long and hard.

MARIAM (CONT'D)

But in the end, it's your decision.

She kisses him atop his head, shuts off the lamp on her
bedside table, and tucks herself into bed.

Ronny stares at the ground in deep thought.

INT. WATSON'S OFFICE - DAY

CALVIN WATSON, 60s, gray haired with a white whiskers across
his top lip. His formal Armani suit flows from head to toe
with a crease or wrinkle.

He wipes his glasses as Ronny opens the door.

RONNY

Mr. Watson?

WATSON

Yes, sir. That would be me. Come
in, take a seat.

Ronny takes a seat in the vinyl chair in front of the
mahogany desk.

WATSON (CONT'D)

Well I'll be damned. You look just
like him. Even if you haven't told
me your name, I would have asked if
you were related to him.

RONNY

I take that as a compliment.

WATSON

That's all you should take as a
compliment when being compared to
him.

Ronny's smirk suddenly fades.

(CONTINUED)

RONNY

I don't understand.

WATSON

What do you know about the fire?

RONNY

Not much. I've done my research but it hasn't gotten me far-

WATSON

The media lies, son. There's only a handful of people that know the reality of it. The "behind the scenes", if you will.

FLASHBACK

INT. CIRCUS TENT - NIGHT (1986)

SUPER: 1986

Anthony stands, alone, in the middle of the performing stage. A spotlight shines down on him, and him alone. The rest of the arena, complete darkness.

His hands tucked into his jean pockets.

The ringleader, CRAIG, 30s, slim and scrawny. His smooth skin glows in the soft light, swagger in his step as he moves toward Anthony.

CRAIG

You rang?

TONY

I'm pleased you can make it.

CRAIG

Don't flatter yourself.

Craig stops a couple feet from Anthony.

TONY

Where else would you be?

CRAIG

Cut to the point.

TONY

You have no idea how much I despise your kind, do you?

(CONTINUED)

CRAIG
You've made that perfectly clear.

TONY
How is he doing, anyway?

CRAIG
He's in Africa right now, bringing
home our baby.

Anthony scoffs.

TONY
Children need a mother. Not an
effeminate man that's "close
enough."

CRAIG
If you brought me here just to give
me the same shit I've been hearing
my whole life-

TONY
I want you to be part of this,
Craig. This is going to be an
amazing event that everyone in the
world is going want to see.

CRAIG
It didn't work out so well the
first time. It was fun, but nothing
special.

TONY
This time it will be.

CRAIG
How?

TONY
I need to know your answer now, or
get out of my sight.

CRAIG
You're a great businessman, you
definitely have a way about you.
But you're a despicable person.

TONY
I'm getting bored.

CRAIG

Why don't I suck your dick while
you wait?

Anthony grabs hold of Craig by the throat.

TONY

I'm no faggot.

CRAIG

Oh, Tony. This brings back
memories. What your wife doesn't
know won't hurt her.

TONY

You keep your damn mouth shut.

CRAIG

I thought you liked it better open.

Anthony punches him across the face with a hard fist. Craig
falls to the ground, laughing, blood pouring out of his
mouth and nose.

CRAIG

Don't worry, I'm in, because I
believe your skills as an owner out
weigh the shit you bring as a man.

TONY

Get lost.

Craig pulls himself up.

CRAIG

I'll see you tomorrow then.

Craig disappears into the darkness.

Anthony composes himself and slicks his hair back.

END FLASHBACK

INT. WATSON'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Ronny stares blankly at Watson.

RONNY

So he was tough. What's wrong with
that?

(CONTINUED)

WATSON

He was abusive, a tyrant. How anyone worked for him, it astonishes me.

RONNY

But he was successful.

WATSON

Very much so. After.

RONNY

After what?

WATSON

After he was a huge screw up, a failure. He found a new way to run things, he became obsessed with it. Instead of letting it go, cutting his loses and moving on. He kept at it.

RONNY

I'm sorry, it just seems like a guy motivated to do what he loved to do-

WATSON

Everyone lost everything. For some, it cost them their lives. The only one to make it out of the disaster and come out on top, was him.

RONNY

How did you know him?

WATSON

I was assistant for years. Helping him run all the scams and lies that came out of this place. Promising fame and glory to those who were part of this. And they got it, don't get me wrong, they reached it. Just at an outrageous risk every day.

RONNY

And you never thought any of what he was doing was wrong?

WATSON

You never questioned him. Besides, I believed in this, all of it.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

WATSON (cont'd)

That's why I'm still here. I want to bring this back to life, but with decency, with respect. I want to rebuild your father's name and legacy before he went mad.

RONNY

I'm sure he'd like that. Do you know where he is?

WATSON

I wasn't thinking of calling and bringing him back. He wants to be dead, society wants him dead, they want him dead.

RONNY

"They?"

WATSON

There's those who still seek revenge and repayment for what he did.

RONNY

It's been twenty five years. How have they not gotten over it?

WATSON

They have eternity to get what they want, and they won't stop until they do.

RONNY

(unconvinced)

Right. Well, I see this conversation is taking a turn in the wrong direction. So, thank you for meeting with me-

WATSON

What do you do, Mr. Briggs? As a profession.

RONNY

I'm a bank manager.

WATSON

Have you ever thought about getting into the family business?

(CONTINUED)

RONNY

What? Do you mean the circus? God no, I'm terrified of clowns.

WATSON

I assure you there's worse things to be afraid of.

RONNY

I agree completely, but I'm not getting involved with clowns. Thanks again for your time.

Ronny stands up, ready to leave.

WATSON

Do you not want to repair your family's reputation? Your father's name can be back in the hearts and minds of everyone in the world.

RONNY

Easy, pal. No one cares for circuses anymore.

WATSON

It's not just a circus. It's entertainment like never seen before. That's what your father was trying to create, and when he figured out how to do it, after all the obsessing and stressing and abuse, it was beautiful. It was truly magnificent. At least think about it, Mr. Briggs.

RONNY

Okay.

WATSON

It was a pleasure meeting you.

RONNY

Yeah.

Ronny starts to head out, but a picture catches his eye.

The picture on the wall is of ANDERS with a young fan.

RONNY

Who is this?

Watson looks up from his papers.

(CONTINUED)

WATSON

Ah, that's Jim Anders. He was a clown here for many years.

RONNY

He survived the fire then?

WATSON

He wasn't there that night.

RONNY

He wasn't working that night?

WATSON

He died five months before.

Ronny's ears perk up.

RONNY

What did you say?

WATSON

Poor guy had nothing to live for. He took his own life, shot himself through the head.

Ronny stares back at Watson, jaw dropped.

Watson looks at him, confused.

WATSON

Is something wrong?

RONNY

Not at all, it's just... Sad to hear that.

WATSON

It was hard on your father, especially when he found the body, and the note.

RONNY

Note?

WATSON

Have a good day, Mr. Briggs. Let me know if you change your mind. It would be nice to have the Briggs name restored.

(CONTINUED)

RONNY
Yeah, I'll get back to you.

Ronny rushes out of the room.

END ACT TWO

ACT THREE

EXT. DRIVEWAY - DAY

The bright sun reflects harshly off the black surface of Ronny's slick Jaguar.

Ronny shoots water at it through a hose.

Bryan sprints to the car holding a soapy sponge. He begins to scrub the base of the car.

Ronny laughs and applauds his son's efforts.

RONNY
Hang on there, Bryan. I need to spray it first.

BRYAN
I wanna wash it.

RONNY
I realize that. We'll get there.

Ronny shuts down the hose.

RONNY (CONT'D)
Okay, go for it.

Ronny pulls a second sponge from the bucket and squats down to Bryan's height.

They rub and scrub.

Ronny lifts up to the window, Shellie, face bloody and gashed, body torn apart, sits in the driver's seat staring back at Ronny.

Ronny falls back onto his ass.

Bryan waddles over to his dad.

BRYAN
Stop messing around!

Ronny gives a nervous chuckle.

(CONTINUED)

Mariam comes over holding a couple glasses of lemonade.

MARIAM

Well I brought these out here
because I thought you guys were
hard at work. But now I see you're
just sitting on your butts.

Bryan laughs as he sips his glass.

Mariam hands Ronny the glass, but Ronny doesn't make a move
for it.

MARIAM

Ronny, what's going on?

He snaps back to reality.

INT. BRIGG'S KITCHEN - DAY

The family is gathered in the kitchen, Bryan munches on a
sandwich.

MARIAM

So he is alive?

RONNY

I really don't know anymore.

MARIAM

I don't know about this whole
circus thing. Do you even know
where to begin?

RONNY

I'm going tell him I'll have to
pass. I know nothing about running
a circus.

BRYAN

Who's going to a circus?

RONNY

No one, buddy. Your dad just has a
chance to own a circus.

BRYAN

Oh my gosh! You should do it,
daddy! Please?!?!?

The parents laugh.

(CONTINUED)

RONNY
I don't think so.

BRYAN
It would be so awesome though! I love the circus. Do it, dad.

RONNY
We'll see, okay?

BRYAN
I'm going to tell my friends!

Bryan dashes out of the room.

MARIAM
Are you really thinking of doing it?

RONNY
It could be fun. I'm gonna go to work for a couple hours.

He kisses his wife.

MARIAM
Okay, see you tonight.

INT. WESTFIELD BANK - DAY

Ronny walks through the door. Everyone turns and stares at him.

HARRY, 40s, dressed in a shirt and tie, bony cheeked and small tense shoulders, approaches him.

RONNY
What?

HARRY
What- what are you doing here, Ron?
I thought you were on LOA.

RONNY
It's been long enough and I have shit I need to get done.

Ronny tries to walk around him, but Harry steps over and blocks him.

(CONTINUED)

HARRY

Where would you like to go?
Anywhere in the world, you name it.

RONNY

What's your problem?

HARRY

Take a vacation, you need it.

RONNY

Why?

HARRY

You're really going to question
having a vacation?

RONNY

I'll take it. Now tell me why
you're tweaking out.

HARRY

The police are doing an intense
investigation about what happened.
The guy who shot himself, Mr., uh,
Anders. I guess he disappeared, he
never made it to the hospital.

Ronny chokes a bit.

RONNY

How is that possible? He was
clearly dead.

Harry remains silent.

RONNY (CONT'D)

What? You think I had something to
do with it? Are you shitting me?
Like what?

HARRY

Ron, look, it's not us that don't
want you here, it's just better
that you let this thing run its
course, a couple weeks, maybe a
month. Just take a breather, and
then come back.

Ronny looks over Harry's shoulder at his other co-workers.

Some stare him down, others shy away and turn their
attention elsewhere.

(CONTINUED)

RONNY
All right.

HARRY
Yeah? Good. We'll be in touch.

Ronny backs out of the bank.

INT. RONNY'S CAR - DAY

Ronny sits and ponders.

He turns on the ignition and speeds off.

INT. WATSON'S OFFICE - DAY

Watson hangs pictures on his wall.

Ronny barges in.

RONNY
Watson?

Watson jumps, startled, back relaxes when he sees it's Ronny.

WATSON
Oh my, you got me there for a moment, son. What can I help you with?

Ronny walks over to him.

RONNY
I'm in.

Watson holds out his hand and Ronny grabs and shakes it.

They smile back at each other.

FADE OUT.

END OF SHOW