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Tidy Endings (Screenplay)

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"TIDY ENDINGS"

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Screenplay written by:
Brian Scott Ferdman

REGISTERED WGAw No. 652669

Shooting Draft: April 5, 1997

FADE IN:

EXT. OLD FASHION BOARDWALK -- DAY

The sun shines down hard on a strip of warped wooden buildings. Tiny fragments of wood and debris lay scattered on the ground. As we MOVE further down the boardwalk we notice that it's deserted - like a ghost town - no one around for miles.

Until suddenly...

ARTHUR, a pleasant looking though sloppily dressed, stocky, slightly over weight man, walks out of the CORNER STORE with a bag of groceries in his hand.

He waves to the CLERK inside, on his way out the door.

ARTHUR
See ya Al.

CLERK (O.S.)
Bye Arthur.

Arthur heads to his car - puts his groceries inside and drives off.

EXT. ROAD -- DAY(51)

He crosses over a pair of train tracks that run through the heart of the deserted town. Immediately after he crosses the tracks he proceeds up a hill that leads him to River Road.

EXT. RIVER ROAD - DAY

With nothing around but farms, trees and grassland for miles it seems very quiet and peaceful.

INT. CAR -- CONTINUOUS

Arthur fumbles through a pile of cassette tapes - finally, he finds what he is looking for.

ARTHUR
(to the cassette)
Oh, there you are.

Arthur places the cassette in the tape deck and pushes play.

A big grin takes over Arthur's face as MOZART'S SYMPHONY NO. 25 IN G MINOR radiates through the speakers.

Arthur looks up as if he is talking to someone.

(CONTINUED)

ARTHUR (CONT'D)
(remembering)
You used to love this music.

Arthur smiles, then snaps out of it.

EXT. RIVER ROAD - DAY

Arthur continues down the road with nothing but farms, trees and grassland still in sight.

EXT. SMALL TOWN -- DAY

Arthur proceeds down the street, to the corner, and turns.

Suddenly, he approaches a gravel driveway and drives up to it.

Arthur is finally home.

EXT. ARTHUR'S APARTMENT -- DAY

The apartment is small - made for two. The white paint is beginning to chip from the outside and wet leaves are scattered all around. Indicating a sign of neglect.

Arthur lives in the second apartment.

Arthur parks his car - takes his groceries out and proceeds up the steps to his apartment.

We HEAR keys begin to rattle as Arthur lets himself into the apartment.

INT. ARTHUR'S APARTMENT -- DAY

Arthur walks through the apartment carrying his load of groceries. Though the apartment is still fully furnished, there are boxes stacked against a wall and several photographs and paintings are on the floor leaving shadows on the walls where they once hung.

Obviously, someone is moving out.

From the way the boxes are neatly labeled and stacked, we know that this is a highly organized person.

Arthur heads to the kitchen and sets his groceries down on the counter.

He opens the cupboard and we SEE rows of cans perfectly aligned. As Arthur begins to put the groceries away he hears a CLANKING noise coming from the next room.

(CONTINUED)

He puts the cans back down and moves into investigate the noise.

Suddenly, he hesitates, and with a worried look on his face he grabs a baseball bat lying on the floor and NOW confidently investigates the noise.

Arthur tiptoes up to the first of two bedroom doors and puts his ear up too it.

CLANK..... CLANK .....

Arthur tightens his fist as he raises the bat.

When unexpectedly.....

The door opens and MARION a beautiful woman of twenty six, casually dressed, comes out of the bedroom carrying a framed picture.

Arthur and Marion JUMP at the sight of each other.

MARION
(surprised)
Daaaaa... Arthur !!

Arthur slowly puts the bat down.

ARTHUR
(shocked, staring at the picture.)
Well hello, Marion.

MARION
(guilty)
I was going to ask if you were thinking of taking this painting because if you're not, then I'll take it. Unless, of course, you want it?

Arthur begins to walk back to the kitchen.

ARTHUR
(pausing)
No. You can have it.

Arthur starts putting away the remainder of the groceries as Marion heads to the family room and sets the picture down by one of many boxes. On top of the box lays a partially wrapped antique tea pot.

MARION
I never really liked it, actually.
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

MARION (CONT'D)
I just needed something for my college dorm room. I was never the rock star poster type. I kept it in the back of my closet for years until Collin moved in here and took it. He said he liked it.

ARTHUR
I do too.

MARION
Well, then you keep it.

ARTHUR
No. Please, take it.

MARION
We've really got no room for it. You keep it.

ARTHUR
I don't want it.

MARION
Well, if you're sure.

Arthur glances across the room and sees the tea pot on top of the box.

ARTHUR
You want the teapot?

MARION
(thinking)
Um, I guess, that is if you don't mind.

ARTHUR
One less thing to pack.

MARION
Funny, but that's exactly what I thought. One less thing to pack. You know, my mother gave it to Collin and me when we moved into our first apartment. Silly sentimental piece of junk, but you know.

ARTHUR
(confessing)
That's not the one.

(CONTINUED)

MARION
(looking it over)
Sure it is.

ARTHUR
We broke the one your mother gave you. That's a reproduction. You can get them almost anywhere in town for eighteen bucks.

MARION
Really? I'll have to pick one up.

Arthur finishes putting away the groceries. He then walks over to the pile of boxes and picks up the tea pot.

ARTHUR
Take this one. I'll get another.

MARION
No, it's yours. You bought it.

ARTHUR
One less thing to pack.

MARION
Don't be silly. I didn't come here to raid the place.

ARTHUR
(joking)
Well, was there anything else of Collin's that you thought you might like.

MARION
(taking him up on his offer)
Now I feel stupid but, I made a list.

Marion takes her purse off and ruffles through it as Arthur stand with a smirk on his face. Marion removes a piece of paper from her purse, and opens it.

MARION (CONT'D)
I started thinking about different people; friends, relatives, you know, that might want something of Collin's to remember him by. I wasn't sure what you were taking and what you were throwing out. I'm sure you thought of a few people yourself.
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

MARION (CONT'D)
But, I figured it couldn't hurt to write it all down. Like I said, I don't know what you were planning on keeping.

Arthur takes the list from Marion and slowly studies it.

ARTHUR
(staring at the list)
I was planning on keeping it all.

MARION
But most of those things are silly. Like his high school yearbooks. What would you want with them?

Arthur picks his head up from staring at the list and gives Marion an unpleasant look.

ARTHUR
(defensive)
Oh, sure. I'm only interested in his gay period.

MARION
I didn't mean it that way. Anyway, you look it over. They're only suggestions. Whatever you decide is fine with me.

Arthur folds the list and sticks it in his shirt pocket.

ARTHUR
It would have to be, wouldn't it. I mean, it's all mine now. He did leave this.
(tapping his shirt pocket)
All to me.

Marion is becoming increasingly nervous, but tries to keep a light approach as she grabs her purse and takes a small bundle of papers out.

MARION
While we're on the subject of what's yours. I brought a batch of condolence cards that were sent to you in care of me. Relatives mostly.

Arthur eagerly takes the cards out of Marion's hands.

(CONTINUED)

ARTHUR
(excited)
More cards! I'm going to have to get another batch of thank you notes made.

Arthur begins to flip through the cards.

MARION
I answered those last week. So, you don't have to bother. Unless - you want to.

ARTHUR
Forge my signature?

MARION
Of course not. They were addressed to both of us and they're mostly distant relatives or friends we haven't seen in years. No one important.

ARTHUR
(furious)
If they've got my name on them, then I'll answer them myself.

Arthur storms over to the kitchen table - sits down and begins to open and read the cards.

MARION
I wasn't telling you not to, I was only saying that you don't have to.

ARTHUR
(not caring)
Whatever.

Marion picks up the teapot - looks at it - then brings it into the kitchen.

MARION
Let me put this back.

ARTHUR
(curious)
So, where's Jimmy?

MARION
He's across the street at Hellen's.

Marion puts the pot back in the cupboard - walks over to Arthur and sits down beside him.

(CONTINUED)

ARTHUR
You know, he still can't bear to look me in the face.

MARION
He's reacting to all of this in strange ways. Give him time. He'll come around. He's really very fond of you.

ARTHUR
I know. But he's at that awkward age. I'm sure in ten years we'll be the best of friends.

MARION
It's not what you think.

ARTHUR
(dumb founded)
What do you mean?

MARION
Well you know.

ARTHUR
(defensive)
No I don't know. Tell me.

MARION
I thought that you were intimating something about his blaming you for Collin's illness and I wanted to assure you that it's not true.
(beat)
We discussed it a lot and ..... uh ..... he understands that his father was sick before you two ever met.

Arthur looks up to the ceiling as if he is speaking to someone.

ARTHUR
I don't believe this!

MARION
I'm just trying to say that he doesn't blame you.

ARTHUR
First of all, who asked you? Second of all, that's between him and me.
(MORE)

ARTHUR (CONT'D)
And third and most importantly, of course he blames me Marion. He's seven years old. You can discuss all you want but the fact is that his father died of a "fag" disease and I'm the only fag around to blame.

Marion starts to become angry.

MARION
My son doesn't use that kind of language.

Arthur bolts up from his seat dominating over Marion.

ARTHUR
Forget the language. I'm talking about what he's been through. Can you imagine the kind of crap he's taken from his friends? He's got to have someone to blame in order to survive. He can't blame you, you're all he's got.
(condescending)
He can't blame his father; he's dead. So, Arthur gets the shaft. Fine, I can handle it!

Marion darts up from her seat and TOPS Arthur.

MARION
You are so wrong, Arthur. I know my son and that is not the way his mind works.

ARTHUR
I don't know what you know. I only know what I see and hear.
(mimicking)
The snide remarks, the little smirks and it's not just the illness. He's been looking for a scapegoat since the day you and Collin first split up. Finally, he has one.

Marion's blood begins to boil and she starts to become extremely angry.

MARION
Wait. Are you saying that if he's going to blame someone it should be me?

(CONTINUED)

ARTHUR
I think you should try and see things from his point of view.

MARION
Oh, and where do you get off thinking you're privy to my son's point of view?

Arthur moves to the family room where there is more space. He begins to act out/over exaggerate the events he describes. Marion stands in rage, watching.

ARTHUR
It's not that hard to imagine. There you are with life strolling right along, living a happy little childhood. Then suddenly - one day - your father is moving out.
(placing hand over his ear)
Oh what's that? Na, no explanations, no reasons, none of the fights that usually accompany such things.
(addressing Marion)
Divorce is hard enough for a kid to understand, but yours?

MARION
He's seven years old. How the hell do you tell a seven - year - old that his father is moving out to sleep with other men!

ARTHUR
Well, not like that.

Marion gets up from the table - struts over to Arthur and gets right in his face.

MARION
For the life of me, I don't know what I did, or what you think I did, for you to treat me like this. But you're not going to get away with it.
(beat)
I know you've been hurting, but your not the only one who lost someone here.

ARTHUR
(topping Marion)
Yes I am! You didn't just loose him.
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

ARTHUR (CONT'D)
I did! You lost him when he divorced you. This is not your moment of grief and loss, it's mine!

Arthur takes the list that Marion gave him out from his shirt pocket and flings it at her feet.

ARTHUR (CONT'D)
His things are not yours to give away, they're mine! This death does not belong to you, it's mine! I was the one who kept him alive for two years longer than any doctor thought was possible, and when it was time.
(beat)
I was the one who prepared him for death.

Arthur takes a brief moment to let his rage pass. He looks at Marion who is completely blown away. Arthur walks back over to the kitchen table and sits down.

Marion wavers, then slowly bends down and picks up the list by her feet. She glances at it in disbelief. With caution, Marion proceeds to the table and sits down beside Arthur.

Arthur looks down at the table and collects his thoughts, he then faces Marion.

ARTHUR (CONT'D)
(calmly)
We are not the two widows of Collin Redding. Your husband didn't just die. You've got a son and a husband somewhere else wondering, as I am, what the hell are you doing here, and why can't you let go?

Silence.....

Marion slowly inches her hand towards Arthur's and gently places it on top of his.

Arthur and Marion stare deep into each others eyes as they share a moment of thought and understanding.

Arthur pauses - then nods his head.

FADE OUT:

THE END

Ferdman, Brian

STORY BOARD SHOOTING DRAFT

"TIDY ENDINGS"

1) WIDE ANGEL Girl sipping tea on top of porch - gets up and walks across pourch out of frame.
2a)WIDE RIGHT ANGLE Pick up on Girl walking down steps towards the camera (static camera)
2b) Follow girl then pick up on extra walking down narrow stair way as girl walks out of frame.
2c) Follow extra as they walk into shop and Aurthor walks out.
2d) Arthor walks down boardwalk to car .
3) Arthor crosses train tracks in his car
4) exterior into car (i.e. camera mount?) seeing Arthur
5) scenery POV
6) static camera w/ car drive by
7) interior of Arthur fumbling for the tape
8) Arthur finds tape {"there your are"}
9) closeup of inserting tape
10) Principal Music: Arthur looks up and smiles {"love this music"} ...snaps out of it
11) Title Music: Exterior of car driving away out of frame (tri-dissolve)
12) Exterior of Arthur's car on Poplar S/ w. Oak. turning towards apt. Have camera on left side of road turn with car down the street.
13) Pick up on Arthor getting closer to apt and turning into his driveway.
14) Arthur parking his car and takes grocries out and procceds up steps.
---
15) interior shot (back of door) door w/ keys rattling prior to entering; opens/closes door
16) facing Arthur and closed door;
17) sets down keys near picture;
18) Arthur sets down groceries
19) POV opening cupboard of perfectly aligned cans
20) behind Arthur placing can in cupboard; but then puts it back on counter because he hears noise
20a) pans Arthur as he steps out of kitchen
21) POV looking at boxes and bat
22) picking up bat
23) pacing down hallway to outside room while raising bat
24) puts hand on outside door as if to open
25) Marion beats him to opening door from inside
26) Marion's POV of Arthur
27) Two-shot Marion and Arthur's surprise
28) Over-shoulder of Marion (Well hello....)
29) Arthur walks towards camera near table, Marion in backround, Arthur Busy

30) Arthur POV: "I just needed something for my college..."
31) Arthur: "I do to" - Arthur glances across room
32) closeup of Arthurs POV of teapot
33) screen left facing (kitchen table) Marion ... "You want the teapot" - Arthur enters frame "That's not the one" - "Really, I'll have to pick one up"
34) MCU "take this one..."
35) Medium (change >30 degrees) two-shot... "No, it's yours" - "Don't be silly"
36) Over-shoulder.. "Well, was there anything else..."
37) Marion ... "I started thinking" - Arthur eventually steps into frame to take list
38) Medium Low Angle ... "I was planning on keeping..." - Arthur picks his head up - "in his gay period"
39) Marion steps into frame "I didn't mean...." -
40) screen right two-shot Arthur walking towards camera (facing door) - Arthur puts list into pocket
41) Camera facing hallway, Arthur turns for more confrontation (Arthur & Marion at opposite ends of frame) ... "It would have to be, wouldn't it" - pans on Arthur as he sits down at table - "Whatever"

Brian: you must closely analyze page 6+7 and figure what we've shot and haven't shot. Your 'system' is too confusing for us to figure out.

Note: you called two shots with arbitrary numbers...decide where they go
43? .."I answered those"
..."forged my signature"
44? .."Oh sure, I'm only interested in his gay period"

Part Two: started with "So, where's Jimmy" (be sure to figure out the other stuff preceeding this that we left out.

50) Perpendicular/Square to Arthur sitting at tabe "So, where's Jimmy-camera stays on Arthur, "He's across the street...."
51) Two shot, Marion sitting down at table "You know, he still..." - "He's reacting to all..."
52) CU reaction of Marions in middle of Arthur's line "I'm sure in ten years..."-"It's not what you think"
53) Two shot "What do you mean"- (see 'beat' marked in script)
54) Side profile Marion "We discussed it...."
55) ECU Arthur "I don't believe this!"
56) ECU Marion "I'm jsut trying to say...."
57) Over Marion's shoulder, low anlge of Arthur bolting up from seat
58) Two-shot side profile when Marion darts up from her seat
59) Medium Shot Marion "Wait. Are you saying..." - "my son's point of view"
60) Arthur monologue "It's not that hard" - "Well, not like that"
61) Two-shot from kitchen, Marion enters the frame, (stay put till mid page 11)
61) Cut to close-up of Marion picking up list (shoot shot to connect with existing)

62) Medium from hallway on Marion looking at list, pan to her at the table
63) Two-shot with Arthur looking down at table "We are not the two widows..." - "and why can't you let go"
64) Hallmark shot of hands!