

"MEND"

Screenplay

by

David Chester and Blake Pinter

davidhalchester@gmail.com  
blakewp@yahoo.com  
1-310-876-8630

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FADE IN:

EXT. CITY STREET - MORNING

On a block of shops stuck midway between blight and gentrification, a small, attractive storefront stands out:

J. HARRISON & CO., CUSTOM DRAPERIES, UPHOLSTERY & MORE

In its display window: an elegant sofa, accented with decorative throw pillows, and a sign: "OPENING SOON!"

INT. J. HARRISON & CO. - CONTINUOUS

Fabrics and curtain samples dazzle the eye in a medium-sized showroom with hints of Asian-influenced artistry throughout.

JOANNE HARRISON, 35, her good looks hidden by a lifetime of self-imposed modesty, sits at a workspace and deftly finishes a handmade centerpiece that features red-crowned Japanese cranes interspersed with bonsai pine trees.

JOANNE

Done.

On the opposite side of the room, ALICE HART, 36, Joanne's best friend and business partner, pauses from transferring colorful silk pillows from boxes to display shelves. She eyes the centerpiece with admiration.

ALICE

Your father will love it.

Joanne eyes her masterpiece critically.

JOANNE

I don't know. I just thought the cranes and pine trees would be a nice touch. They're Asian symbols of long life and good fortune. And Dad is turning sixty-five.

She glances at her watch.

JOANNE (CONT'D)

I really wish you could be there.

ALICE

I'll try to make it later. Just make sure to save me some cake. Meanwhile...

Alice proudly indicates her pillow display. Joanne nods, joins her, artfully rearranges them. Much better.

ALICE (CONT'D)  
 (off the improved display)  
 Guess that's why I'm the "co" in J.  
 Harrison and Co.

JOANNE  
 Without you, there'd be no "J. Harrison  
 and."

They share a deep smile only good friends can. Joanne retrieves the centerpiece. Looks at it. Frowns.

ALICE  
 Hey, c'mon. Your mom will love it, too.

Joanne slips the centerpiece in a bag.

JOANNE  
 She might. But she'd never tell me.

EXT. HARRISON FAMILY HOME - BACKYARD - THAT AFTERNOON

Modest. Suburban. Minimal landscaping. Festive balloons anchored to lawn ornaments shimmer in the summer sun.

Joanne sets out bowls of food on a picnic table now decorated with the new centerpiece, while her sons TOMMY, 15, and EVAN, 7, roughhouse nearby.

JOANNE  
 Guys! Set the table, come on!

They ignore her until a looming shadow catches them off-guard:

JIM HARRISON, 38, his linebacker's build only slightly obscured by a barbecue apron, wields a spatula and gives his sons a look they're not about to question.

JIM  
 Hear what your mom said? 'Cause I did.

The boys nod cautiously and head towards the house.

EVAN  
 (to Tommy)  
 You set the table, I'll supervise.

TOMMY  
 Sure. After I kick your butt.

JOANNE

Hey! Language!

Tommy chases Evan into the house. Joanne shrugs, walks over to Jim, gives him a hot kiss.

JIM

Wow. Is that for not burning the burgers... yet?

JOANNE

No. It's for not thinking I'm crazy to start my own business.

He smiles. She kisses him again.

JOANNE (CONT'D)

Besides, firefighters don't burn burgers, do they?

He moves in for another kiss...

LILLIAN (O.S.)

Joanne!

Jim grimaces. Joanne dutifully walks across the yard to

THE SHADE TREE

... where her parents, LILLIAN and GEORGE BELL, sit. Lillian, 60, still attractive, glances at her phone and fidgets with a dainty cross on her necklace. George, 65, wheelchair-bound, listless, brightens as Joanne nears.

LILLIAN

Joanne, another iced tea, please.

JOANNE

Sure, Mom.

(to George)

How about you, birthday boy?

LILLIAN

No more for Dad. He's had enough.

GEORGE

I certainly have.

(to Joanne)

Jo, I'll take a whiskey. On the rocks.

A withering glance from Lillian. He smiles sheepishly.

LILLIAN

(off her phone)

Trish sent a text to wish Dad a happy birthday. Which is not the same as being here.

JOANNE

Well, I'm sure she wanted to be here.

On LILLIAN'S PHONE SCREEN: A beaming Lillian and Joanne stand behind TRISH BELL, 37, at an EXECUTIVE DESK.

JOANNE (CONT'D)

But she'll be home for Thanksgiving.

Lillian tosses her phone in her purse, clearly upset.

LILLIAN

That's five months from now!

George and Joanne share a look.

JOANNE

I'll... go get your iced tea.

She walks off as we hear the sound of a car pulling into the driveway.

EXT. HARRISON FAMILY HOME - DRIVEWAY

Above the garage: a well-worn basketball hoop. In the driveway: a Range Rover, detailed and freshly washed.

INT./EXT. RANGE ROVER - (PARKED)

In the driver's seat: FRANK HARRISON, 34, Jim's younger and better-looking brother. He's on his phone, and his handsome face is troubled.

FRANK

Brad. Please. It was only one time. I swear.

INT. FRANK AND BRAD'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - SAME TIME

Frank's boyfriend, BRADFORD LIN, 36, white-collar, polished, is in the midst of packing moving boxes. He's on his phone, depressed and disillusioned.

BRAD  
I want to believe you, Frank. But I  
can't.

Brad clicks off...

INT./EXT. RANGE ROVER - CONTINUOUS

... as Evan joyfully charges up to the car.

EVAN  
Uncle Frank!

Frank swallows back his pain and puts on a broad smile.  
He exits the car, swoops Evan up, plants him on his  
shoulders.

EVAN (CONT'D)  
Where's Uncle Brad?

FRANK  
He... had to work today.  
(blowing it off)  
Let's go see the birthday boy!

EXT. HARRISON FAMILY HOME - BACKYARD/THE SHADE TREE

Joanne hands Lillian an iced tea as Frank, with Evan on  
his shoulders, enters through the backyard gate. Lillian  
scowls.

LILLIAN  
You said only family was coming.

JOANNE  
Mom. We're not doing this again. Frank is  
family. Jim's, mine. Ours. Forever.

LILLIAN  
And I was looking forward to such a nice  
day.

Joanne bites her tongue, and waves Frank over. He sets  
Evan down and heads towards her.

FRANK  
Hi, guys!  
(to George)  
George, happy birthday, you old rascal.

George smiles broadly. Frank goes to greet Lillian, but  
she looks away. He lets it go, turns to Joanne.

FRANK (CONT'D)

Hey. Grand Opening. Just around the corner.

JOANNE

Can you believe it? And what about you? Did the house loan come through yet?

FRANK

Brad... Brad and I should hear from the bank next week.

JOANNE

Speaking of... where is he?

FRANK

He... sends his apologies. He has to prepare for a big case.

LILLIAN

(insincere)

What a pity.

FRANK

(to Joanne, ignoring Lillian)

Anyway, once we've moved in, we're counting on you and Alice to do all the window treatments.

LILLIAN

Something she could've done from home.

(to George)

I still don't think you should have loaned her the money for the shop.

George rolls his eyes. How many times has he heard this?

JOANNE

Mom. I'm going to pay it all back.

Lillian shrugs as if to say, "I don't see how."

GEORGE

Lilly. Have a little faith in our girl.

LILLIAN

That's about all I have, George. Faith.

Lillian brushes a stray leaf off her lap.

FRANK

Lillian. What a lovely dress. Did Joanne make it for you?

Lillian tosses him a frosty stare. Frank ignores her, turns to George, pulls an envelope from his pocket.

FRANK (CONT'D)  
A little something from me.  
(wanting it be true)  
And Brad.

As he offers it to George, Lillian snatches it from him.

LILLIAN  
I'll put this with the other gifts. We'll open them after we have cake.

A chilly silence. Joanne steps forward.

JOANNE  
Why don't you all take a seat? I'll help the boys bring out the rest of the food.

FRANK  
(his eyes still on Lillian)  
No. I will.

He leaves. Lillian starts to wheel George across the lawn.

JOANNE  
Mom, I'll do that.

LILLIAN  
Fine.

She walks off. Joanne moves to the wheelchair.

GEORGE  
Your mother's in full form today. Jo, honey... any chance of that whiskey?

THE PICNIC TABLE - LATER

George is now positioned at the head of the table, with Lillian at the opposite end.

Evan sets silverware and napkins on colorful place mats. Tommy centers a huge relish tray and Frank sets down pitchers of lemonade.

FRANK  
(to Tommy)  
So, champ. How's summer wrestling camp?

TOMMY

Good. Our team will probably go to the state tournament again in the fall.

Joanne returns with a bowl of potato salad, sets it down.

JOANNE

(to Tommy)

With you as their star wrestler? Of course it will.

Tommy beams as George reaches to touch the centerpiece.

JOANNE (CONT'D)

Do you like it, Dad?

GEORGE

To be honest, no.

(off Joanne's surprise)

I love it.

FRANK

I keep telling her, she's an artist.

Lillian stifles a laugh. Evan taps Joanne's arm.

EVAN

Mom. For my birthday, can you make a centerpiece with the whole Crab Nebula?

JOANNE

That's a pretty tall order, mister. If you continue to help out around the house, I'll see what I can do.

Evan nods, straightens Joanne's place setting, sits near Tommy and George. Frank sits next to Lillian... who scoots her chair away. Jim, who's just arrived with a plate of burgers, notices.

JIM

If you're uncomfortable, Lillian, I can set up a TV tray for you. In the garage.

Lillian forces a smile, adjusts her necklace.

LILLIAN

(to everyone)

I'll say grace now.

Frank immediately folds his hands, lowers his head; all follow. Lillian eyes Frank suspiciously.

LILLIAN (CONT'D)

Dear Father, we thank thee for this  
food...

She can't help it. She looks at Frank. He glances up,  
shoots her an innocent smile. She instantly looks away.

LATER

Candles flicker atop a cake decorated the same way as the  
tablecloth. George, supported by the boys, blows out the  
candles in one breath. Lillian looks on, surprised.

GEORGE

(laughs, to Lillian)  
Didn't think I could, did ya?

As everyone sings "Happy Birthday," Lillian holds  
George's hand, suddenly wistful for the man he once was.

LATER

Half the cake is gone and gifts have been opened. George  
has already dozed off. Lillian drags her fork across the  
crumbs on her plate as Joanne starts cleaning the table.

Jim glances at his watch, motions to Frank. Evan rushes  
to Jim, basketball in hand.

EVAN

Dad, wait! You said you and Uncle Frank  
would teach me some hoop tricks.

JIM

I did, son, but we've got to get to the  
station. New day, new shift, remember?

Evan's disappointed face makes it's clear he doesn't.

JIM (CONT'D)

Next day off. I promise. For now, watch  
Tommy. He's got some great moves.

Jim ruffles Evan's hair, then turns to Joanne. He pulls  
her aside. They share a look.

JOANNE

I know, I know. Mom needs to lay off  
Frank. I'm kind of running out of ideas.

JIM

I was hoping she'd go for the TV tray in  
the garage.

A smile creeps across her face.

JIM (CONT'D)

Keep my side of the bed warm.

JOANNE

Come home safe.

They share a kiss. She returns to the table. Jim signals Frank and heads towards the back gate. Tommy follows him.

TOMMY

(shouting back to Evan)

Come on, Evan. Let's shoot some hoop.

Evan stands alone, holding his basketball, fighting an angry tear. Frank notices, stoops down to Evan's height.

FRANK

Hey. It's okay to cry. But wouldn't it be better to practice with Tommy so you can beat the crap out of me and your Dad next time?

Evan nods... then glances over at Joanne, smiles mischievously.

EVAN

(quoting Joanne)

"Hey, language!"

FRANK

C'mon. I'll race you out front.

They charge out. Joanne watches them.

JOANNE

He's so good with the boys.

Lillian starts digging in her purse.

JOANNE (CONT'D)

So, Mom. What did you think of the centerpiece--

LILLIAN

(ignoring her)

Dear. You didn't take any pictures. What am I going to send Trish?

JOANNE

Oh. Right. I was so busy, I didn't --

Lillian finds her phone, pulls it from the purse.