

BLACK OUT

Sounds of dogs barking happily, children playing in a park, happy, normal, everyday conversation.

EXT. DOG PARK. FALL - DAY

We see IMOGENE from behind, early-30's, unmoving staring ahead. She's standing in a park facing a street and holding a dog leash.

SLOW-ZOOM OUT:

EXT. DOG PARK.

IMOGENE remains unmoving as life plays around her. LITTLE GIRL comes skipping over.

LITTLE GIRL
(giggling)
What are you doing? Are you
playing statues?

IMOGENE doesn't move.

LITTLE GIRL (O.C.) (CONT'D)
(poses as the Statue of
Liberty)
Look! I'm the Statue of Liberby!

IMOGENE doesn't move.

LITTLE GIRL (CONT'D)
Look!

Then, turning to look where IMOGENE looks:

LITTLE GIRL (CONT'D)
(High pitched shriek of
innocence shattering)
AAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAH!

IMOGENE and the LITTLE GIRL stand side-by-side, backs to camera. LITTLE GIRL continues to scream, as her father comes running over off-camera.

LITTLE GIRL (CONT'D)
AAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAH!!!
AAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAH!
AAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAH!

LITTLE GIRL'S FATHER (O.C.)
Honey, what is it? Are you
okay? What's wrong? Are you
hurt? Honey, look at me.
What happened?

Little Girl points her finger.

LITTLE GIRL'S FATHER (CONT'D)
Holy Fuck.

We see his arms pull his daughter out of frame into an embrace.

LITTLE GIRL'S FATHER (CONT'D)
Honey, shhhhh - it's okay. Ma'am -
Ma'am? Are you alright?

SLOW-ZOOM OUT:

EXT. PARK

The end of IMOGENE's dog leash is torn and dangles uselessly at her side. As we pan out, we see the little girl and her father. A small horrified, but curious crowd starts to gather around.

LITTLE GIRL'S FATHER
Ma'am? Is that your dog?...Ma'am?
Do you need help?

A WOMAN in the crowd reaches out to put her arm on IMOGENE's shoulder.

WOMAN
Hun? Are you okay?

IMOGENE ignores her, and strides forward dropping the leash. She removes her coat and wraps it around a dog's body lying in the street. It is not graceful.

An upbeat golden-oldies classic slowly fades in. Ideally (maybe Doris Day's "Que Sera, Sera"? Or Sarah Vaughan's "Broken Hearted Melody?") slowly begins to fade in.

LITTLE GIRL'S FATHER jogs over as IMOGENE struggles to stand.

LITTLE GIRL'S FATHER
I'm parked right around the corner,
here -

He reaches out to help her, IMOGENE turns to him. This is the first time we see her face. Which has a smear of dog blood on it.

IMOGENE
(smiling)
We're good. Thanks though!

Still smiling, IMOGENE walks off, struggling to carry the dog.

FADE TO BLACK.

TITLE PAGE

FADE TO BLACK.

DR. WALLACE (O.S.)
(knocking)
MRS. HUNTER?

INT. VET CLINIC. - DAY

IMOGENE sits in a clinic room, there is dirt on her clothes and a small smear of blood on her face. Directly behind her is a poster of a happy woman with a golden retriever with the words "Who Saved Whom?"

DR. WALLACE (O.S.)
MRS. HUNTER.

IMOGENE comes to.

IMOGENE
Yes. Sorry, it's - SMALLWERTH now.

DR. WALLACE, a somber, conservative, middle-aged veterinarian stands over her with a clipboard.

DR. WALLACE
(making a note)
MRS....SMALLWERTH. I didn't know!
I suppose congratulations are in order!

IMOGENE
No.

DR. WALLACE
(confused)
Oh?

DR. WALLACE waits for her to explain. She doesn't. It's awkward.

DR. WALLACE (CONT'D)
Well. I'm sorry to say that BAXTER
has left us.

IMOGENE

(in a shrill sterotypical
1950's Lucy Voice)

Well, all the boys are off to the
Wars these days - what does that
leave for little-ol' me?!

DR. WALLACE

Um...There was nothing we could do.
Unfortunately a canine friend is no
match for a...

(checking clipboard)

Jeep Cherokee?

IMOGENE nods emotionless.

DR. WALLACE (CONT'D)

Hit and runs are sadly all too
common. That's why it's so
important to use a leash.

IMOGENE does not respond.

DR. WALLACE (CONT'D)

Luckily, with these things, the
animal passes instantly. We can be
comforted BAXTER's pain was
minimal.

IMOGENE

We can?

DR. WALLACE

He lived a long life. Honestly? I
was surprised he lasted through the
surgery last month. People don't
usually pay that much for such a
low chance of survival. You gave
him a whole extra season of life.

IMOGENE

Three weeks. But yes.

DR. WALLACE

Which, speaking of - we're still
waiting on your payment...?

IMOGENE does not respond.

DR. WALLACE (CONT'D)

...which we can discuss later.
Take this time to reflect on your
time with BAXTER.

(MORE)

DR. WALLACE (CONT'D)
I'll send someone in to make
arrangements for the body.

IMOGENE
Thank you.

DR. WALLACE gives a solemn little bow, places a box of tissues near IMOGENE, awkwardly goes to pat her hand. Which is in her lap, so he pats her shoulder instead. He exits to the hallway.

DR. WALLACE
(Shouting down the hall)
RHONDA!!!!!!

IMOGENE is left staring at a poster with a dog on it that reads "Whoever said that diamonds are a girls best friend...never owned a dog." Another one reads "Love is a four-legged word."

RHONDA, kind but all-business comes in.

RHONDA
Hi. IMOGENE HUNTER?

IMOGENE
IMOGENE SMALLWORTH.

RHONDA
(Not catching it)
Congratulations Sweetie!

IMOGENE gives a blank stare.

RHONDA (CONT'D)
(kindly)
I have a little paperwork for you
to fill out. You ready to do it
now, or do you need a little more
time?

IMOGENE
I'm fine.

RHONDA
Alright.

RHONDA exits to the hall and returns pushing a cart stocked full of files, pamphlets, folders, stacks of paper, and of course, a tissue box. Throughout this, she piles the forms, clipboards, and pamphlets onto IMOGENE's lap.

RHONDA (CONT'D)
 (jumping into business
 mode)

We're very sorry for your loss.
 Here's the remains - dog collar and
 such. Here's the Incident Report.
 You need to fill out the cause of
 death as the canine was deceased
 before entering the clinic. You'll
 need to submit this form along with
 copies of your ownership
 registration, adoption licenses -
 You are an adopter, aren't you?

IMOGENE nods.

RHONDA (CONT'D)
 Good girl. Here's the death
 certificate remit this with all
 vaccine reports. This cannot, I
 repeat, *cannot* be mailed or faxed
 under any circumstances. Got that?

IMOGENE doesn't, but she nods.

RHONDA (CONT'D)
 (pulling out a huge stack
 of legal documents, with
 many tabs)
 This is just a simple liability
 document - sign anywhere there's a
 tab, initial where there's an X.
 This ensures we're all in agreed
 that the clinic is not responsible
 for the pet's passing. Right?

RHONDA gives IMOGENE a steely smile until she nods.

RHONDA (CONT'D)
 (jumping back into
 business)

We are, of course, very sorry for
 your loss. Here is a complimentary
 pamphlet of POG meetings -

IMOGENE
 POG?

RHONDA
 Pet Owners in Grief. Bones for
 the Broken Hearts is a great one.
 Oh! And Ready-to-Roll-Over meets
 just across the street.
 (Leaning in)
 (MORE)

RHONDA (CONT'D)

Don't bother with Final Flushes.
Those people are way too attached
to their fish.

IMOGENE

Thanks.

RHONDA

Now. The body.

IMOGENE

The body?

RHONDA

(checking her clipboard)

I see you don't have a Disposal
Plan in place yet. Which is okay.
We don't always have arrangements
in place when we need them, do we?

IMOGENE

I guess we don't.

RHONDA

Here's a pamphlet detailing
different options. We recommend
Peaceful Passages - they have a
lovely viewing room the Cremation.

IMOGENE

Thank you.

RHONDA

While you're deciding, Virginia law
let's you store the body here for
up to five business days. We'll
keep it in the freezer to keep from
decomposing. Sound good?

IMOGENE

Thanks.

RHONDA

Great. We'll add the storage fee
to your bill -
(she makes a note on a
bill)
Which is here.

IMOGENE

(looking at the bill)

I owe this much to be told my dog
is dead?

RHONDA

No, you owe that much for the intake evaluation, storage fee, and grief consultation. Your pet insurance should cover the medical exam - assuming you don't have any outstanding balances.

IMOGENE

What if, I don't store the body?

RHONDA

(really?)

Then you have to take the body with you or it's considered abandonment.

IMOGENE

Right. And there's no storage fee.

RHONDA.

Correct. Any questions?

IMOGENE shakes her head no.

RHONDA

Take your time, and you can pay on the way out.

RHONDA goes to exits, stops, and returns with a box of tissues. She places it on the stack of paperwork on IMOGENE's lap.

RHONDA (CONT'D)

There.

RHONDA exits. IMOGENE sits.

INT. IMOGENE'S TRUNK. - LATE AFTERNOON.

SHOT: Looking out the back of the trunk window.

Sounds of panting and swear words. IMOGENE comes into view carrying her dead dog now wrapped in a white sheet. She puts the body down. Opens the trunk, and struggles to roll it in. Closes the trunk with a slam - and it immediately pops open. She slams it shut until it stays closed.

EXT. IMOGENE'S CAR - LATE AFTERNOON.

IMOGENE leans against the car and takes a breath. Before she fully exhales her cellphone rings.

