

1 EXT. DINER - MORNING**1**

WE OPEN on a busy diner in the early morning. The sun reflects brightly off of big windows which show the full counter and bustling kitchen inside. We see a nondescript MAN walking towards the entrance, hands in his pockets and shoulders scrunched against the wind.

CUT TO:

2 INT. DINER - ENTRANCE - MORNING**2**

ROBERT (38) enters the diner and approaches the HOSTESS, a young woman in an apron and paper hat. He keeps his hands in his pockets and avoids eye contact with her.

ROBERT
(TO HOSTESS)
For one, please.

The HOSTESS smiles and grabs a menu, waving for ROBERT to follow her.

HOSTESS
Right this way, sir.

She takes him to a small table near the window with two chairs. There is a stack of napkins, a salt shaker, a pepper shaker, and a bottle of ketchup on the table.

ROBERT
Oh, perfect, this is the table I
always sit at. Thank you.

ROBERT sits down and waits as the HOSTESS puts the menu down in front of him. She also gives him a set of silverware and a glass of water.

The HOSTESS leaves. ROBERT does not pick up the menu. He removes one hand from his pocket and reaches out for the SALT SHAKER. He touches it with one finger.

The waitress (21) walks up, but ROBERT does not see her. She is wearing a blue dress with an apron over it, mostly clean. She has a nametag pinned to her chest that says EMMA.

EMMA
Mornin', you.

ROBERT jumps and snatches his hand back from the SALT SHAKER.

ROBERT
Good morning.

EMMA
Can I get you some coffee to start?
Some pancakes?

ROBERT shakes his head and taps at the corner of his menu anxiously.

ROBERT
That's alright, thank you. Just a
plate of scrambled eggs please.

EMMA
(while writing in her
notebook)
One order of eggs, scrambled, you
got it. Holler if you need anything
else!

ROBERT relaxes when EMMA walks away. He doesn't reach for the SALT SHAKER again, but he stares at it until his food arrives.

Once the eggs are placed in front of him, ROBERT picks up the SALT SHAKER. He shakes it a couple of times over his eggs. He glances over his shoulder. EMMA is across the room talking to another table. ROBERT takes a deep breath and slips the salt shaker into his pocket.

He finishes his eggs in a couple of bites and leaves a fifty dollar bill on the table before slipping out the front door with a half hearted wave at the HOSTESS.

ROBERT walks briskly back the way he came.

CUT TO:

3 CEMETARY - NOON

3

ROBERT sits in front of a large headstone. The headstone reads 'WILLIAM HOWARDS 1954 - 2021'. ROBERT pulls the SALT SHAKER from his pocket.

ROBERT
Hi, DAD.

He strokes his thumb over a dent in the SALT SHAKER's cap absentmindedly.

ROBERT

Do you remember the diner we always went to together? On 4th Street? I ate there this morning.

ROBERT sighs heavily, spinning the SALT SHAKER in his hands.

ROBERT

I took this salt shaker.

ROBERT lifts the SALT SHAKER, as if to show it to his DAD.

ROBERT

There's nothing special about it, I guess. There are probably a thousand other salt shakers exactly like this one. Hexagonal glass body with a hole-filled chrome top that's slightly dented on one side, half full of coarse table salt. (Laugh) I had to take it anyway, DAD.

ROBERT pauses, tearing up.

ROBERT

The diner could have any old salt shaker, but I need this one. This is the salt shaker you used every time we went to that diner together. How many times did you pick up this shaker to salt your eggs or to demonstrate where someone was standing in a story?

(WHISPERING)

It's just a salt shaker.

ROBERT shakes his head and puts the SALT SHAKER on the edge of the headstone.

ROBERT

I don't have a lot of things that belonged to you. No picture frames or clothes or a lifetime of mementos to sort through when you died. You can forgive me stealing just this once, right DAD?