

**A BEAUTIFUL DAY IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD**

Written by

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Inspired by the article  
"Can You Say... Hero?"  
by Tom Junod

**A MINIATURE RESIDENTIAL STREET - DAY**

Colorful BALSAMWOOD HOUSES and PLASTIC TREES pepper the boulevards. MODEL CARS wait for the passing toy TROLLEY.

A familiar VIBRAPHONE chimes in.

Up ahead, a quaint YELLOW HOUSE comes into focus.

We are in the opening credits of MISTER ROGERS' NEIGHBORHOOD.

**INT. MISTER ROGERS' NEIGHBORHOOD HOME - CONTINUOUS**

FRED ROGERS swings open the door, beaming. He sings directly into the camera. His movements are slow -- he's not as young as he once was.

FRED (SINGING)

*It's a beautiful day in this  
neighborhood. A beautiful day for a  
neighbor. Would you be mine? Could  
you be mine?*

At the closet, Fred takes off his sport coat and hangs it up.

FRED (SINGING) (CONT'D)

*It's a neighborly day in this  
beauty wood. A neighborly day for a  
beauty. Would you be mine? Could  
you be mine?*

He plucks a RED CARDIGAN off the hanger.

FRED (SINGING) (CONT'D)

*I've always wanted to have a  
neighbor just like you.*

Fred points right into the camera. You.

FRED (SINGING) (CONT'D)

*I've always wanted to live in a  
neighborhood with you. So, let's  
make the most of this beeeautiful  
day.*

He playfully zips up the sweater before sitting on the bench.

FRED (SINGING) (CONT'D)

*Since we're together we might as  
well say.*

Repeating a ritual he has done for decades, Fred slips off his DRESS SHOE and tosses it to his other hand.

He replaces it with the BLUE BOAT SHOE and ties it tight before moving on to the next foot.

FRED (SINGING) (CONT'D)  
*Would you be mine, could you be  
 mine? Won't you be my neighbor?  
 Won't you please, won't you please?  
 Please won't you be my neighbor?*

He smiles and settles in. Then, that soft warm voice.

FRED (CONT'D)  
 Hello neighbor. So good to see you  
 again today.

Fred pulls out a large WOODEN BOARD checkered with several little patterned DOORS.

FRED (CONT'D)  
 Do you see the special thing that I  
 brought in to show you? It's called  
 a picture board, because behind  
 each one of these little doors is a  
 picture of people. Look who this  
 one is.

Fred opens a door to reveal a soft-focus headshot of LADY ABERLIN, 40s.

FRED (CONT'D)  
 It's Lady Aberlin. Let's see who's  
 behind this door.

He opens another -- this time it's the KING FRIDAY puppet.

FRED (CONT'D)  
 It's King Friday the thirteenth --  
 with his crown and mustache and  
 beard. What's behind here?

Fred opens another door. It's MISTER MCFEELY, 50s, in a white wig, goatee, and hat.

FRED (CONT'D)  
 It's Mister McFeely. He says  
 "speedy delivery," doesn't he?  
 (then)  
 Today, I'd like you to meet a new  
 friend of mine named Lloyd Vogel.

He opens the last door. It's LLOYD VOGEL, 35. He's got a FAT BLOODY LIP.

FRED (CONT'D)

Someone has hurt my friend Lloyd,  
and not just on his face. He is  
having a hard time forgiving the  
person who hurt him. Do you know  
what it means, to forgive?

Fred waits for you to answer.

FRED (CONT'D)

It is a decision we make to release  
a person from the feelings of anger  
we have at them. It's strange, but  
sometimes it's hardest of all to  
forgive someone we love.

Fred smiles.

FRED (CONT'D)

Let's go say hello to my new friend  
Lloyd, shall we?

Fred heads toward the front door, and waves for us to come  
along --

The VIBRAPHONE chimes carry us out the window and into --

### **THE MINIATURE NEIGHBORHOOD**

The same houses, cars, trees, and trolley -- in reverse.

We expand out to reveal much more than just Mister Rogers'  
Neighborhood.

Now we see all of --

### **MINIATURE PITTSBURGH**

And we're over the bridges and rivers, past the Monongahela  
Incline, over the trees and mountains into --

### **MINIATURE NEW YORK CITY**

We stop over NEW YORK CITY as the sun sets.

The city lights flicker on, and the sounds of life in  
Manhattan bring us into --

**MINIATURE PLAZA HOTEL**

The historic art-deco masterpiece glows in the moonlight.

**EXT. PLAZA HOTEL - NIGHT**

We push into the third floor window. Inside --

ANNOUNCER (PRELAP)  
Here to present this year's winner  
for Feature Writing, please welcome  
last year's winner --

**INT. PLAZA HOTEL - BALLROOM - NIGHT**

A lavish black-tie awards dinner, celebrating the NATIONAL  
MAGAZINE AWARDS.

ANNOUNCER (O.C.)  
Lloyd Vogel.

The GLAMOROUS CROWD of journalists applaud as Lloyd gets up  
from his seat and approaches the podium.

ELLEN, 50, his long-time editor, looks on.

LLOYD  
Thank you. It's so wonderful to be  
here tonight with my fellow  
misfits. We clean up good.

Chuckles.

Lloyd looks to the teleprompter, then --

LLOYD (CONT'D)  
So why do we write for magazines  
for a living? Because doing  
anything else doesn't seem quite  
like living at all. We get a front  
row seat to history. We get to  
expose the truth that others cannot  
see. And sometimes, just sometimes,  
we get to change a broken world  
with our words.

APPLAUSE takes us to --

**EXT. LLOYD'S BUILDING - STREET - LATE NIGHT**

Lloyd exits a cab in front of his building.

**INT. LLOYD'S LOFT - THE NEXT MORNING**

Sunlight fills the airy home. Lloyd's wife, ANDREA, 35, takes a huge bite of a brioche.

She's in heaven.

ANDREA

Mmmm.

Lloyd places a handful of diapers on a pile of BABY CLOTHES and GEAR. He's trying to pack. GAVIN, their four-month-old, sleeps in the rocker nearby.

ANDREA (CONT'D)

Thank you. I needed this. I ate a block of cheese for dinner.

Lloyd smiles, then looks at the disorganized pile of clothes.

LLOYD

So what are we forgetting?

ANDREA

We definitely need more diapers.

LLOYD

More than this? We're just going to Jersey for one night.

ANDREA

We go through at least twelve a day.

LLOYD

We do? What are you feeding that kid? Wouldn't it be easier to just leave him with a sitter? We could --

ANDREA

You know I'm not ready to leave him with a stranger. He's too little.

LLOYD

Yeah.

ANDREA

Hey, so your sister called last night.

LLOYD

Uh huh?

ANDREA  
She wanted to make sure you'd  
written your toast.

LLOYD  
Oh, I'm all set. I'm just gonna use  
my speech from her first wedding.  
Or maybe from her second.

ANDREA  
(playing along)  
Okay sure. Just change the names.

They share a smile. She's suddenly serious.

ANDREA (CONT'D)  
And hey. She wanted me to tell you  
something.

LLOYD  
Okay...

ANDREA  
Your father is coming.

Lloyd goes silent.

ANDREA (CONT'D)  
I guess she reached out months ago,  
and didn't think he would respond  
but he called, and he's coming to  
the wedding.

LLOYD  
Oh.

ANDREA  
You okay?

Lloyd pulls it together.

LLOYD  
Yeah! Fine.  
(then, slightly jokey)  
But I don't think we should go?

ANDREA  
Lloyd!

LLOYD  
What? Seriously -- why have a baby  
if you can't use him to get out  
social engagements?

ANDREA

That's what Lorraine's afraid of --  
that you'll back out.

LLOYD

I'm kidding. I would never miss her  
wedding. I look forward to them  
every year.

Andrea laughs.

ANDREA

Okay. Well I think it'll be nice  
for Gavin to meet his grandfather.

LLOYD

Sure.

Lloyd is distracted.

Andrea studies him, worried.

**EXT. STREET - DAY**

A TAXI CAB idles. Andrea bounces Gavin on the sidewalk.

In the back of the car, Lloyd tries to install a baby seat.

Lloyd SHOVES the car seat HARD, seeping stress.

LLOYD

Dammit!

ANDREA

(to Gavin)

Daddy's just being funny.

Lloyd gives the car seat a shake. It's completely unattached.

LLOYD

It's impossible.

ANDREA

Here. Take him. Here.

Andrea offers Gavin to Lloyd. He takes the baby, and Andrea  
climbs into the back seat.

Lloyd bounces Gavin, looking off into space, not connected.

Andrea jams her knee into the seat and CLICKS it into place.

ANDREA (CONT'D)

There.

LLOYD

Great.

The vibraphone takes us to --

**MINIATURE TRI-STATE AREA**

The NEW YORK SKYLINE and the HUDSON RIVER.

We dip down toward I-95, where the TAXI moves North toward New Jersey.

**INT. RADISSON RECEPTION HALL - DAY**

A modest, sparsely attended affair.

TODD, 35, the doughy and blue collar groom, waits by the RENT-A-REVEREND.

Lloyd and Andrea sit near the back. Gavin is asleep on Andrea in a carrier.

ANDREA

(re: Todd)

He looks terrified.

LLOYD

He should be. He's marrying Lorraine.

The music changes.

The small crowd STANDS and TURNS to see LORRAINE VOGEL, 35, in a slinky white dress.

Escorting Lorraine is JERRY VOGEL, 65, tan with pomade in his hair and a flashy blazer.

Jerry waves at Lloyd -- a big ratpack grin.

ANDREA

Breathe.

Lloyd quickly looks away.

**INT. RADISSON BAR - LATER - NIGHT**

Wedding music blasts.

Lorraine and Todd approach Lloyd and Andrea at their table.

ANDREA  
(to Lorraine)  
Oh my, you look so beautiful.

LLOYD  
Absolutely.

LORRAINE  
I'm ten pounds short of my target  
weight, but whatever --

He notices Todd, the groom.

LLOYD  
Hey, I'm Lloyd. The brother.

TODD  
I know, man. I guess I'm Todd, you  
know, the husband.

Todd swallows Lloyd in a bro-hug.

Lorraine squeezes Gavin's foot.

LORRAINE  
And look at you, ya little peanut.  
(then)  
I don't think we're having kids.

Lloyd notices Jerry on the other side of the room. He's  
talking to DOROTHY, 55, wearing heavy make-up and a low-cut  
dress.

LLOYD  
How'd that happen?

LORRAINE  
I invited him and he came.

LLOYD  
To walk you down the aisle? Really?

LORRAINE  
He offered. He missed the first  
two, I thought 'why the hell not?'

LLOYD  
I can think of a few reasons.

LORRAINE  
He's old, and if he's gonna make an  
effort --

Jerry takes the mic at the stage. Lloyd's face falls.

JERRY

Oh, I guess it's time we get this started. So, in lieu of the typical father of the bride speech, I thought I'd -- well, I'd like to sing a little ditty.

The music starts.

JERRY (CONT'D)

This one is for my Lorraine -- and for you too --

Jerry leans over to Dorothy, searching for his name, then --

JERRY (CONT'D)

Todd.

Jerry sings "Somethin' Stupid," while Lorraine and Todd move to the center to slow dance.

Jerry croons, doing his best Sinatra.

JERRY (SINGING) (CONT'D)

*I know I stand in line until you  
think you have the time  
To spend an evening with me  
And if we go some place to dance, I  
know that there's a chance you will  
be leaving with me --*

ANDREA

Admit it. Now you regret eloping.

LLOYD

Of course he's drunk.

ANDREA

He can sing.

JERRY (SINGING)

*Then afterwards we drop into a  
quiet little place-  
And have a drink or two  
And then I go and spoil it all by  
saying something stupid  
Like "I love you"*

Jerry looks at Lorraine.

JERRY (SINGING) (CONT'D)

*I love you.*

Then, he trains his eyes on Lloyd.

JERRY (SINGING) (CONT'D)  
*I love you.*

**INT. BAR - CONTINUOUS**

Lloyd hides away in a corner with Andrea and Gavin. Jerry bounds up.

JERRY  
Here we are. In the pearl of the  
Garden State --

LLOYD  
Hello, Jerry.

JERRY  
Come on! You don't have to call me  
Jerry. Or call me Jerry. I don't  
care.

Jerry trains his grin on Andrea and Gavin.

JERRY (CONT'D)  
And hello to you.

ANDREA  
Hi -- I'm Andrea. Lloyd's wife.

JERRY  
Andrea! Of course! What a unique  
pleasure.  
(to Gavin)  
Hello, little fella.

ANDREA  
This is Gavin.

JERRY  
What a handsome man. You look just  
like me -- and Lloyd too, I guess,  
but mostly me.

Andrea smiles.

A very long, very awkward beat.

JERRY (CONT'D)  
Let's have a drink?

LLOYD  
No.

JERRY

What is that? A pop? That stuff'll  
kill you.

LLOYD

I'm giving my toast, then we're  
leaving, so --

Jerry turns to Andrea.

JERRY

Doll -- could you give us a moment?

LLOYD

She's not a doll. She's a public  
interest attorney.

JERRY

There money in that?

ANDREA

We're gonna circulate.

Lloyd gives Andrea a hard look. Andrea mouths "breathe."

JERRY

You got a BABY. And a wife?

Lloyd nods. Yep.

JERRY (CONT'D)

You happy?

LLOYD

I'm happy.

JERRY

Well, she seems nice enough.

(then)

But aren't you kinda old to have a  
baby --

LLOYD

I'm not that old.

JERRY

You're smart. Your mom and I hardly  
knew each other when she got  
pregnant. We were babies.

LLOYD

Don't talk about her.

Jerry grabs Lloyd's arm tightly. Lloyd tenses at the constraint.

JERRY  
You don't know the whole story.  
Your mom didn't exactly-

Lloyd pulls himself away, and decks Jerry.

LLOYD  
DON'T TALK ABOUT MY MOM.

Todd grabs Lloyd before he can lunge at Jerry again.

TODD  
Whoa, whoa, whoa!

LLOYD  
Let go of me.

Lloyd shoves Todd hard. He SLAMS into Lorraine, spilling red wine all over her dress.

LORRAINE  
Stop! Stop it!

In the commotion, a GROOMSMAN comes out of nowhere and DECKS Lloyd.

Suddenly, everyone is scrapping.

Dorothy runs in.

DOROTHY  
What the hell!!

Jerry tries to break them up, and gets pushed back, knocking him against the windows.

Blood dumps out onto Lloyd's chin.

Everything stops.

Lloyd looks around the room.

Silence.

Lloyd's eyes land on Andrea, in disbelief. Gavin's screaming.

**EXT. RADISSON - FRONT - MINUTES LATER**

Andrea and Lloyd are mid-argument. Lloyd holds a bloody bar towel to his mouth.

LLOYD  
I shoulda known this would happen.

ANDREA  
It wasn't inevitable! It wasn't like "oh, when these two see each other, somebody's going to get punched."

LLOYD  
You didn't hear him.

ANDREA  
You were out of control.

LLOYD  
He was out of control!

ANDREA  
So you're going to take no responsibility for what happened.

LLOYD  
Of course I am. I offered to pay for Lorraine's dry cleaning.

Andrea stares at him in disbelief.

The VIBRAPHONE floats in with the melody of "What Do You Do With The Mad That You Feel" --

We FREEZE and PUSH IN on Lloyd's face -- his broken nose, swollen eye and split lip.

BACK TO:

**INT. MISTER ROGERS' NEIGHBORHOOD HOME - LIVING ROOM - DAY**

We pull out on the photo of that same face.

Fred sits beside the big Wooden Board with little patterned doors.

He stares at Lloyd's photo.

FRED  
Have you ever felt like Lloyd does?  
So angry you want to hurt someone else, or yourself? I know I have.

Fred smiles.

FRED (CONT'D)

When I was a boy I was very chubby. The other kids would chase me and call me names -- like "Fat Freddy." It made me very sad and I would cry to myself. And other times, it made me very angry.

(then)

There is always something to do with the mad you feel.

There's a knock at the door.

FRED (CONT'D)

Did you hear that?

Another knock.

FRED (CONT'D)

Oh. Someone is at my door. Let's go see who it is.

Fred looks out the window.

FRED (CONT'D)

It's Mr. McFeely.

He opens the door.

MR. MCFEELY

Speedy Delivery.

Mr. McFeely hands Fred the mail.

MR. MCFEELY (CONT'D)

Look. It's a magazine.

In the bundle -- an ESQUIRE MAGAZINE. He picks it up, leafs through it.

FRED

Oh, thank you. Magazines are always filled with all sorts of interesting information.

MR. MCFEELY

They sure are.

FRED

My friend Lloyd works for a magazine. He's a very wonderful writer.

MR. MCFEELY

That reminds me. I have a video I found, and I thought you and your neighbor may like to see it.

FRED

What is it?

MR. MCFEELY

It's about how people make a magazine. It's called "How People Make a Magazine." I know a lot of people like magazines so I thought you might find this interesting.

FRED

I think we would -- do you have time to show it to us now?

MR. MCFEELY

I'd be glad to see it again.

FRED

Let's look at it on Picture Picture.

Mr. McFeely takes the video out of the sleeve.

MR. MCFEELY

Here's the tape.

Fred takes the tape and slides it in the wall by the painting.

FRED

We'll watch it on Picture Picture and see how people make a magazine.

In the painting, a large scale PRINTING FACILITY.

We push INTO the frame --

**INT. PRINTING FACILITY - DAY**

A TECHNICIAN globs yellow ink onto a roller.

MR. MCFEELY (V.O.)

Now this is the ink they use in the printing press that prints the magazines.

FRED (V.O.)

Yellow ink. It looks like mustard.

A forklift moves a giant roll of paper.

MR. MCFEELY (V.O.)

And these are large rolls of blank paper that will get loaded into the machine.

FRED (V.O.)

I wonder how many magazines they can make out of one of those large rolls.

The PRINTING PRESS whirs to life.

The belt spits out an image in blue, then yellow, then green, then red.

MR. MCFEELY (V.O.)

They print the magazines in giant sheets. One color at a time.

The pages are sorted, collated, and stapled, and then --

MR. MCFEELY (V.O.)

This machine assembles the magazine and glues it all together.

The finished magazine flies out.

The cover of ESQUIRE MAGAZINE.

Now we're in --

**INT. ESQUIRE MAGAZINE - DAY**

Slick and bustling. Magazine culture in its 90's heyday.

An EMPLOYEE weaves through cubicles, distributing the new issue to every desk.

FRED (V.O.)

Oh, now who's this?

MR. MCFEELY (V.O.)

These are the people who decide what will be in the magazine. They pick the pictures and design the layout.

FRED (V.O.)

Oh, that's an important job.

MR. MCFEELY (V.O.)

And these are the people who write  
the words that go into a magazine.

FRED (V.O.)

It is a lot of work to make a  
magazine, isn't it?

Lloyd enters the bullpen. His lip is still swollen and his  
black eye looks worse.

He beelines for a corner office.

**INT. ESQUIRE MAGAZINE - ELLEN'S OFFICE - DAY**

Lloyd enters, all smiles.

From her desk, Ellen sees Lloyd's busted nose and raises her  
eyebrows.

LLOYD

Pay no attention to my face.  
Softball injury. Nothing to worry  
about. Good morning, Ellen. How are  
you?

ELLEN

This should be interesting.

LLOYD

What should?

ELLEN

Sending you on an assignment with a  
busted face.

LLOYD

An assignment?

ELLEN

Yep. You're the perfect person for  
it. You just had a baby.

LLOYD

Why are you giving me an  
assignment?

ELLEN

We're doing an issue on heroes.  
We're profiling a number of  
inspirational people -- we just  
need a small piece of copy to  
accompany a pretty photo.

LLOYD

You hired me as an investigative journalist, Ellen. I don't do puff pieces. You know that.

ELLEN

Wait a second, didn't I hire you to do whatever I tell you to do? And right now that's doing a profile on one of our nation's heroes.

LLOYD

Who?

ELLEN

Mister Rogers.

A laugh escapes from Lloyd.

LLOYD

As in, the hokey kid's show guy?

ELLEN

As in the *beloved* children's television host, yes. Look, I think this could be good for you. Start to change your image.

LLOYD

I don't need to change my image.

ELLEN

Okay.

Lloyd absorbs the indignity.

LLOYD

Ellen?

ELLEN

He was the only person on our list willing to be interviewed by you, Lloyd. You're developing a reputation.

LLOYD

A reputation? People love talking to me.

ELLEN

Yes, they do. Until they read what you write about them.

LLOYD

So I'm supposed to go easy on this guy because... what? He plays with puppets for a living?

Ellen sighs, done with him.

ELLEN

400 words. Play nice.

Lloyd can't believe he just lost this battle.

**INT. ESQUIRE MAGAZINE - LLOYD'S CUBICLE - DAY**

A shrine to Lloyd's extensive travel and accomplishments.

Buried in the clutter is a photo of Lloyd and Andrea and a baby announcement for Gavin.

Lloyd sits at his desk, stewing.

He picks up the phone and dials.

LLOYD

(into phone)

Hello, this is Lloyd Vogel with Esquire Magazine calling to schedule an interview with, um --  
(quietly)  
Mister Rogers?

One of Lloyd's peers walks by, and Lloyd slinks down.

**EXT. LLOYD'S BUILDING - DAY**

Lloyd approaches his building.

Jerry is waiting by his gold '93 CADILLAC DEVILLE. His face is swollen and bruised too.

He follows Lloyd to the door.

JERRY

Sorry about your face. I got it good, too.

Lloyd doesn't speak. He just keeps walking.

JERRY (CONT'D)

Look, I messed this up. I just want to talk to you. We have a lot that needs to be said.

LLOYD  
No. I'm not going to be ambushed.

Lloyd opens the door, steps through --

JERRY  
Come on, Lloyd.

-- and locks it behind him.

Jerry lingers on the other side of the door, wounded and embarrassed.

**INT. LLOYD'S LOFT - CONTINUOUS**

Lloyd steps out of the elevator into SCREAMING BABIES and MOMS. It's Andrea's "Mommy and Me" group.

ANDREA  
Hi honey.

LLOYD  
Hi. Hi guys.

The Moms turn, smile politely -- confused by Lloyd's face.

LLOYD (CONT'D)  
Smells in here.

ANDREA  
Yeah, it's the bathroom trash. Nine kinds of diapers.

Lloyd slinks into --

**INT. LLOYD'S LOFT - BATHROOM - MOMENTS LATER**

Lloyd ties off the trash bag.

He makes his way out when the phone RINGS.

LLOYD  
I got it.

**INT. LLOYD'S LOFT - KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER**

Lloyd picks up the cordless phone in the kitchen.

LLOYD  
Hello?

FRED (O.C.)  
Lloyd?

LLOYD  
Who's this?

FRED (O.C.)  
This is Fred Rogers.

That familiar voice.

LLOYD  
Hi. That was quick.

FRED (O.C.)  
Well, I figured if you wanted to talk to me, I should want to talk to you.

LLOYD  
Oh, uh, sure. I just wanted to set a time to sit with you and ask you a few questions.

FRED (O.C.)  
I'm happy to schedule something, except for one thing.

LLOYD  
What's that?

FRED (O.C.)  
You have me here right now.

A beat.

LLOYD  
Yeah, okay.

Lloyd digs out a pen and paper from a drawer.

**INT. LLOYD'S BUILDING - HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER**

Lloyd sits on the floor scribbling his notes, struggling to keep up with Fred.

FRED (O.C.)  
I try to look through the camera,  
into the eyes of each child  
watching, and speak to them, as if  
individually, trying to be fully  
present to their feelings and  
needs.

(MORE)

FRED (O.C.) (CONT'D)  
This is important when people of  
any age speak to one another.

LLOYD  
Uh huh. Right.

He moves to the window and looks out --

ON THE STREET, Jerry leans against his Cadillac reading a newspaper.

He's not leaving.

FRED (O.C.)  
Do you know what the most important  
thing in the world is to me, right  
now?

LLOYD  
Uh, no.

FRED (O.C.)  
Talking on the telephone to Lloyd  
Vogel.

This stops Lloyd.

**INT. LLOYD'S LOFT - NIGHT**

Lloyd lies on the bed, staring at the ceiling.

Andrea approaches.

ANDREA  
Hey.

LLOYD  
Hey.

ANDREA  
You okay?

LLOYD  
I got an assignment.

Andrea inhales, then --

ANDREA  
Where you going this time?

LLOYD  
Pittsburgh, tomorrow.

Andrea absorbs the familiar pain of Lloyd leaving for a story.

ANDREA

Uh-huh.

LLOYD

I'm profiling Mister Rogers.

ANDREA

Really? I love him!

LLOYD

You do?

ANDREA

Yeah. Why?

LLOYD

I don't know.

ANDREA

Wait, Ellen's giving you a profile?

Lloyd shrugs, then --

ANDREA (CONT'D)

She knows that's not what you do.

LLOYD

I think that's her point.

ANDREA

Can you say no? Can you take a break and be with us for a while? You weren't able to take any time off when Gavin was born.

LLOYD

Not really.

Andrea looks at him with genuine compassion.

ANDREA

Well, at least it's someone good.

LLOYD

Yeah, we'll see.

ANDREA

Oh god, Lloyd. Please don't ruin my childhood.

**INT. LLOYD'S BUILDING - HALLWAY - NIGHT**

Lloyd looks out the window. Jerry's Cadillac is still there.

**MINIATURE JFK AIRPORT**

A small plane takes off from the runway.

**MINIATURE PITTSBURGH**

We move over the river, dipping down toward --

**EXT. WOED STUDIOS - PITTSBURGH - DAY**

Lloyd approaches the distinctive concrete building.

**INT. WOED - HALLWAY - MINUTES LATER**

Lloyd spots BILL ISLER, a sharply dressed guy, getting coffee at craft service.

LLOYD  
Hey, I'm looking for Fred Rogers.

BILL  
Who?

LLOYD  
I'm here for an interview with --  
am I in the wrong place? Fred  
Rogers?

Bill shrugs, messing with Lloyd.

LLOYD (CONT'D)  
I'm from Esquire. I'm Lloyd --

BILL  
I know who you are.

Bill extends his hand, a sparkle of mischief in his eye.

BILL (CONT'D)  
Bill Isler.

Lloyd shakes it.

LLOYD  
Oh. You were messing with me.

BILL

In here.

Bill moves toward the door.

BILL (CONT'D)

You'll get about twenty minutes  
with him during the break --

LLOYD

I was told an hour.

Bill gestures at Lloyd's face.

BILL

You're not gonna try to fight him  
are ya?

LLOYD

Oh, uh -- softball league. Play at  
the plate.

BILL

Maybe you shouldn't have led with  
your face.

Bill opens the stage door and suddenly they're in --

**INT. WOED - MISTER ROGERS' NEIGHBORHOOD SET - CONTINUOUS**

The fish tank, the stop light, the closet full of cardigans,  
the boat shoes, and the magical Trolley that bridges Mister  
Rogers' house with the "Neighborhood of Make Believe."

The CAMERA OPERATORS sit behind the cameras, ready.

At the center of all the commotion --

Fred Rogers kneels down, deep in conversation with a young  
BOY who is swinging around a LIGHT-UP PLASTIC SWORD.

A small oxygen tank connects to his nose. His MOM and DAD are  
by his side.

BILL

Sorry guy. Could be a minute.

LLOYD

Is this a Make-a-Wish thing?

Producer MARGY, 40s, in charge, walks by.

The FIRST AD trails her.

BILL  
How we doing Margy?

She points to her watch.

MARGY  
He's ruining my life.

BILL  
How long?

MARGY  
Half-hour already, which puts us...  
seventy three minutes behind.

FIRST AD  
Yikes.

BILL  
I gotta go in. Cover me.

MARGY  
You're on your own.

Bill's face and body language transform from stern to warm as he approaches Fred.

Unlike everybody else, Fred has all the time in the world.

The Boy still swings his sword, fighting something that isn't there.

FRED  
(to the Boy)  
You have the same color sweater as  
I do. I can't see colors very well.  
Isn't that interesting?

The Boy ignores him.

DAD  
(to Fred)  
I'm sorry.  
(to the Boy)  
Son, he's talking to you.

The Boy hits his Dad in the shin with the sword.

FRED  
That sword looks very sharp. And  
heavy too.

The Boy shrugs.

BOY  
Not really.

FRED  
Well you must be very strong to hold it like that. And you know what? I bet you're very strong on the inside, too.

A moment. The Boy stops. Something small shifts inside of him.

He hands the sword to his Mom and --

The Boy hugs Fred.

FRED (CONT'D)  
Oh. Thank you for that.

Mom and Dad watch, tearfully.

BILL  
I'm terribly sorry, Fred, but we need to start.

FRED  
Yes. Of course.  
(to the Mom, Dad, and Boy)  
May I take your picture?

Fred pulls out a small camera.

Dad pulls the Boy close and the family smiles.

FRED (CONT'D)  
Thank you so much for visiting.

BILL  
Folks, if you'll follow me.

Bill leads the family off the set.

Lloyd's not buying the sincerity of the moment.

LLOYD  
How often does this happen?

MARGY  
Every day.

As soon as the family is gone, Fred moves to his mark in the FRONT YARD where a TARP and TENT POLES wait on the Astroturf.

Margy nods to the First AD.

FIRST AD

Okay here we go! Everyone settle.  
Quiet please.

Lloyd follows Margy, well behind the cameras.

FIRST AD (CONT'D)

Roll sound.

SOUND GUY (O.C.)

Speed.

FIRST AD

Mark it.

The LOADER steps in front of the camera and snaps the slate.

FIRST AD (CONT'D)

And, action.

Fred speaks into camera.

FRED

Do you know what this is? It's a --

Fred spots Lloyd.

FRED (CONT'D)

Lloyd!

Fred leaves his mark and marches quickly across the set, tent poles in hand.

He grins with delight.

FIRST AD

Hold please!

MARGY

We can't fire him can we?

FRED

Hello, Lloyd. It's nice to meet  
you.

Everyone turns to Lloyd.

LLOYD

Hi.

Fred notices his black eye.

FRED

Oh, dear. Are you all right?

LLOYD  
Play at the plate.

FRED  
Oh. It looks like it hurts.

Behind Fred, a sea of glares.

LLOYD  
Why don't we chat afterwards?

MARGY  
We *have* to keep moving.

FRED  
Can we have Evan look at him?

LLOYD  
No, no -- I'm good.

MARGY  
I'm sorry, Fred.

Margy claps her hands together, strict.

FRED  
Yes, I know, Sister Margy.  
(to Lloyd)  
Thank you for being here, Lloyd.  
I'm looking forward to talking with  
you. I truly am.

He looks to Margy.

FRED (CONT'D)  
After this. Everyone, this is Lloyd  
Vogel! A wonderful writer.

Silence.

MARGY  
Thank you, Fred.

FIRST AD  
Okay, resetting.

Fred moves to his mark.

MARGY  
(to Lloyd)  
Step over here.

FIRST AD  
Roll sound.

SOUND GUY (O.C.)

Speed.

FIRST AD

Mark it.

The Loader snaps the slate.

FIRST AD (CONT'D)

And action.

FRED

(to camera)

Do you know what this is? It's a tent. It's something you can sleep in when you are camping, or just when you'd like to sleep outdoors. Let's set it up.

Fred takes a couple poles and threads them through the nylon with ease.

As he threads the third pole, the tent COLLAPSES.

Lloyd smiles.

Fred maintains his focus.

FRED (CONT'D)

Let's see.

He tries it again, using his body weight to jam the pole into the right place.

The tent BUCKLES again. Lloyd and Members of the Crew giggle. Margy and Bill look concerned.

FRED (CONT'D)

Mercy.

Fred tries again.

Same result.

Fred's sweaty and frustrated, but smiling.

FRED (CONT'D)

I can't -- I can't do it. It must take two grown-ups to set up a tent.

The tent completely collapses.

FIRST AD

That's a CUT. Let's go again.

FRED

Hold on please, I'd like to watch it.

Fred moves to the monitors. He watches while everyone waits.

Margy comes over to Fred.

MARGY

You know, we can pre-set a tent for you.

FRED

No no, this is fine. I think we're good.

Lloyd's face says it all -- what the hell?

FIRST AD

Okay, that's lunch everybody.

**INT. FRED'S OFFICE - LATER - DAY**

Small and cluttered, with bamboo wallpaper. No desk.

The walls are filled with art and children's drawings sent from all over the world.

Fred settles into his chair as Lloyd flips on his tape recorder and takes out a notebook.

LLOYD

The tent. Why didn't you let them set it up for you?

FRED

Children need to know that even when adults plan things, sometimes they don't turn out the way you've hoped.

LLOYD

Uh-huh.

FRED

You've got to keep trying.

Fred notices the ring on Lloyd's finger.

FRED (CONT'D)  
How long have you been married?

LLOYD  
Uh, eight years.

FRED  
Oh, that's a wonderful accomplishment. Does your spouse have a name?

LLOYD  
Andrea.

FRED  
Andrea. I'd love to meet her one day.

LLOYD  
I'm sure.  
(then)  
You've lived in Pittsburgh your whole life?

FRED  
I grew up not too far from here in a town called Latrobe, but we've lived here for quite some time, and we've raised our boys here.

LLOYD  
Do you think living here makes it easier or more difficult to be a celebrity?

FRED  
A celebrity? Mercy.

LLOYD  
You don't consider yourself famous?

FRED  
Fame is a four letter word, and like tape, or zoom, or face --

Lloyd blinks at Fred.

FRED (CONT'D)  
What ultimately matters is what we do with it.

LLOYD  
And what are you doing with it?

FRED

We're trying to give children positive ways to deal with their feelings.

Lloyd writes that down.

LLOYD

This will be a piece for an issue about heroes. Do you consider yourself a hero?

FRED

I don't think of myself as a hero. No, not at all.

LLOYD

What about "Mister Rogers?" Is he a hero?

FRED

I don't understand the question.

LLOYD

There's you, Fred, and there's the character you play, Mister Rogers.

Fred narrows his eyes, studying Lloyd, really taking him in.

FRED

You said it was a play at the plate. That's what happened to you?

Lloyd forces a polite smile.

FRED (CONT'D)

What did happened to you, Lloyd?

Fred's eyes are locked on Lloyd. Lloyd hesitates, then --

LLOYD

I got into a fight.

FRED

Oh my. Who did you get into a fight with?

LLOYD

It's not important.

Lloyd chuckles. Fred doesn't.

LLOYD (CONT'D)

Jerry.

FRED  
And who is Jerry?

LLOYD  
My father.

FRED  
Oh my.

LLOYD  
I'd rather not talk about it.

FRED  
What were you and your father  
fighting about?

LLOYD  
I'm here to interview you, Mr.  
Rogers.

FRED  
Well, that *is* what we're doing,  
isn't it?

Lloyd and Fred stare at each other for an uncomfortable moment.

Margy knocks on the door frame.

MARGY  
We're ready for you in studio B,  
Fred.

FRED  
Okay, Margy.

LLOYD  
I'm sorry, I thought we had twenty  
minutes.

Fred gets up.

FRED  
May I take your picture, Lloyd? I  
like to take pictures of the people  
I meet so that I can show them to  
my wife Joanne.

Fred takes out a camera and snaps his photo.

FRED (CONT'D)  
Thank you so much. I hope you'll  
stick around.

LLOYD  
That's it?

Fred exits.

**INT. WOED - STUDIO - NEIGHBORHOOD OF MAKE BELIEVE - LATER**

The whimsical fantasy land, crafted in cardboard around a flimsy looking CASTLE.

DANIEL STRIPED TIGER sits on the ledge of a large Grandfather CLOCK.

Lady Aberlin practices her lines.

Lloyd finds Bill.

LLOYD  
Hey -- I'm gonna need more time with him.

BILL  
He's a very busy man.

LLOYD  
You said twenty. That wasn't twenty.

BILL  
Sorry, guy.

LLOYD  
Come on, I don't want to have to write that Fred was unwilling to sit through a full interview.

BILL  
You just had a full interview. That's what everyone gets.

The FIRST AD steps behind the monitors.

FIRST AD  
Daniel, you set?

DANIEL  
I'm set.

FIRST AD  
Thank you, Daniel.

LLOYD  
Did she just talk to the puppet?

BILL  
Daniel isn't just a puppet. Daniel  
is Fred. Fred is Daniel.

LLOYD  
Uh... you mean --

BILL  
Please stop talking.

FIRST AD  
Trolley -- Action.

The Trolley comes out of the TUNNEL and into the Neighborhood  
of Make Believe.

TROLLEY  
TOOT TOOT!

It glides by Lady Aberlin, who sprays a VINTAGE PERFUME  
ATOMIZER around the castle and the leafy tree.

She sniffs between sprays as she approaches Daniel's Clock.

DANIEL  
Hello, Lady Aberlin.

LADY ABERLIN  
Oh -- Hi, Daniel.

DANIEL  
Are you making that funny smell?

LADY ABERLIN  
Uh, you mean that *skunk* kinda  
smell?

Lloyd watches as --

Fred crouched under the scenery, his hand reaching up into  
the Daniel Striped Tiger Puppet.

Fred strains to stay crouched. He looks feeble.

LADY ABERLIN (CONT'D)  
No, I'm trying to help that smell  
go away.

DANIEL  
By squirting another smell?

LADY ABERLIN  
That's right. A sweet smelling  
smell. Wanna smell?

DANIEL  
Okay.

She sprays, and Daniel takes a few sniffs.

DANIEL (CONT'D)  
Hmm -- that does smell good.

LADY ABERLIN  
Where did the bad smell come from?

DANIEL  
That was Mister Skunk. He got  
scared and he just sprayed this  
smell -- all over me.

LADY ABERLIN  
Oh no. Did he say he was sorry?

DANIEL  
No, and --

Fred's voice cracks. He teeters, powering through his obvious  
discomfort.

DANIEL (CONT'D)  
-- that makes me so very MAD, and I  
don't know what to do!

Lady Aberlin takes Daniel's little hand.

LADY ABERLIN  
Oh, Daniel.

The band starts in.

LADY ABERLIN (SINGING) (CONT'D)  
*What do you do with the mad that  
you feel? When you feel so mad you  
could bite.*

Lloyd grits his teeth, taking quick and shallow breaths.

DANIEL (SINGING)  
*When the whole wide world seems oh  
so wrong, and nothing you do seems  
very right.*

LADY ABERLIN (SINGING)  
*What do you do? Do you punch a bag?  
 Do you pound some clay or some  
 dough? Do you round up friends for  
 a game of tag or see how fast you  
 go?*

Lloyd watches Fred sing as Daniel.

DANIEL (SINGING)  
*I can stop when I want to. Can stop  
 when I wish. Can stop, stop, stop  
 anytime.*

On Lloyd, overwhelmed.

**INT. ESQUIRE MAGAZINE - ELLEN'S OFFICE - DAY**

Lloyd sits across from Ellen, frustrated.

LLOYD  
 I just don't know if he's for real.

ELLEN  
 That's not for you to say, Lloyd.

LLOYD  
 I think with a few more interviews -  
 -

ELLEN  
 No, no, no. I told you, this isn't  
 an exposé. Just please, put pen to  
 paper. A couple funny anecdotes.  
 Keep it simple --

ELL  
 I can't do that, Ellen. He's a lot  
 more complex than I thought --

ELLEN  
 He's a children's entertainer. This  
 isn't Mikhail Gorbachev we're  
 talking about.

LLOYD  
 I don't think you understand what  
 you're asking of me.

ELLEN  
 I'm asking you to do your job, now  
 get out of here and come back to me  
 when you have your first draft.

Lloyd simmers.

**INT. LLOYD'S LOFT - DAY**

Lloyd sits on the floor close to the TV, one hand on the VCR. A box of tapes is beside him.

The volume is LOW.

**ON SCREEN: THE ARSENIO HALL SHOW**

ARSENIO HALL gives Fred, late 60s, one of his trademarked leather jackets. His house band plays the Neighborhood theme song.

Fred puts on the jacket -- and the audience chants: *WOOF-WOOF-WOOF!*

ARSENIO HALL (ON SCREEN)  
Now, *this* gives new meaning to  
"boys in the hooooood!"

Fred laughs and claps along. The audience is going nuts.

Lloyd chuckles.

ARSENIO HALL (ON SCREEN) (CONT'D)  
We'll be back with Mister Rogers!

Lloyd FAST FORWARDS until --

ARSENIO HALL (ON SCREEN) (CONT'D)  
Can we talk about kids, just for a minute, kids today. Um. Ya know, we all grew up with you. And uh, I see things going on out there, kinda worries me. I wish uh more people would watch Mister Rogers-

Andrea's keys RATTLE and she comes in the front door -- Gavin in a wrap on her chest, groceries in both hands.

ANDREA  
Hey.

LLOYD  
Hey.

Lloyd doesn't budge.

ANDREA  
How'd it go?

LLOYD

He's just about the nicest person  
I've ever met.

ANDREA

When you say that it doesn't sound  
like a compliment.

ARSENIO HALL (ON SCREEN)

There's an attitude out there,  
there's some things going on,  
there's a lot of hopelessness. What  
do we need to do?

FRED (ON SCREEN)

There are no simple answers of  
course, but if we could, through  
television programs, as well as  
every other imaginable program, let  
people know that each one of us is  
precious.

ARSENIO HALL (ON SCREEN)

It all starts in the home. We can  
never underrate how important that  
is.

**MINIATURE LLOYD'S LOFT**

The sun sets over Lloyd's loft.

**INT. LLOYD'S LOFT - LATE NIGHT**

Lloyd stares at the TV. Dark circles under his eyes.

**ON SCREEN: LITTLE CONSUMERS**

Old, black and white footage. A much younger Fred sits at his  
piano, giving an interview right to the camera.

FRED (ON SCREEN)

I don't think that anybody can grow  
unless he really is accepted  
exactly as he is. Because if  
somebody is always saying to a  
child "uh you're going to grow up  
and you're going to be fine." So  
much of that in this country  
anyway.

Andrea brings Gavin to Lloyd.

ANDREA  
It's your turn.

LLOYD  
Yup.

She goes back to bed.

FRED (ON SCREEN)  
You know, that a child is appreciated for what he WILL be not for what he is. He WILL be a great consumer someday. And so, the quicker we can get them to grow up and the quicker we can get them out of the nest, so that they will go out and buy.

Lloyd rocks Gavin.

ON SCREEN: SENATE CHAMBER 1969

Fred, 40, sits behind a microphone at a hearing.

NARRATOR (ON SCREEN) (V.O.)  
In 1969, the US Senate considered a bill that would cut funding for the newly formed Corporation for Public Broadcasting. At stake was a grant for nearly twenty million dollars.

SENATOR PASTORE (ON SCREEN)  
Will it make you happy if you read it?

FRED (ON SCREEN)  
I'd just like to talk about it, if it's all right. On our program, we deal with such things as -- as the inner drama of childhood. We don't have to bop somebody over the head to make drama on the screen. We deal with such things as getting a haircut, or the feelings about brothers and sisters, and the kind of anger that arises in simple family situations. I think that it's much more dramatic that two men could be working out their feelings of anger -- much more dramatic than showing something of gunfire.

SENATOR PASTORE (ON SCREEN)  
Do you narrate it?

FRED (ON SCREEN)  
I'm the host, yes. And I do all the  
puppets and I write all the music,  
and I write all the scripts --

Lloyd bounces Gavin, but he doesn't look at him. He's  
absorbed in the TV.

Gavin fusses.

LLOYD  
(to Gavin)  
Shhh shh. It's okay little guy.

FRED (ON SCREEN)  
Could I tell you the words of one  
of the songs, which I feel is very  
important?

SENATOR PASTORE (ON SCREEN)  
Yes.

FRED (ON SCREEN)  
It starts out: "What do you do with  
the mad that you feel?" And that  
first line came straight from a  
child. "When you feel so mad you  
could bite. When the whole wide  
world seems oh so wrong, and  
nothing you do seems very right.  
What do you do? Do you punch a bag?  
Do you pound some clay or some  
dough? Do you round up friends for  
a game of tag or see how fast you  
go? It's great to be able to stop  
when you've planned the thing  
that's wrong. And be able to do  
something else instead -- and think  
this song."

Fred is impassioned. His voice, clear and strong.

FRED (ON SCREEN) (CONT'D)  
"I can stop when I want to. Can  
stop when I wish. Can stop, stop,  
stop anytime. And what a good  
feeling to feel like this! And know  
that the feeling is really mine.  
Know that there's something deep  
inside that helps us become what we  
can.

(MORE)

FRED (ON SCREEN) (CONT'D)  
For a girl can be someday a lady,  
and a boy can be someday a man."

All the attention turns to Senator Pastore.

SENATOR PASTORE (ON SCREEN)  
Well -- I'm supposed to be a pretty  
tough guy, and this is the first  
time I've had goose bumps for the  
last two days.

The crowd laughs.

FRED (ON SCREEN)  
Well, I'm grateful, not only for  
your goose bumps, but for your  
interest in -- in our kind of  
communication.

SENATOR PASTORE (ON SCREEN)  
I think it's wonderful. It's  
wonderful. Looks like you just  
earned them their twenty million  
dollars.

The crowd applauds.

Lloyd pauses the VCR, capturing Fred, smiling.

CUT TO:

ON SCREEN: THE OPRAH WINFREY SHOW

OPRAH, at her 1980s peak, interviews Fred.

OPRAH  
What do you think is the biggest  
mistake people make in raising  
their children?

FRED  
Uh, not to remember their own  
childhood.

OPRAH  
Yeah.

FRED  
I think that the best thing that we  
can do is to think about what it  
was like for us, and know what our  
children are going through.

OPRAH

But you know what, it's so hard once you get to be a parent, you always say 'I will never do this' when your mother is doing it to you, or your father is doing it to you, you say I will never do this to my child, and then you get to our age and you forget what it was like to be this size. You really do forget.

FRED

But those children can help re-envoke what it was like. And that's why when you're a parent you have a new chance to grow.

OPRAH

You do. Did you ever -- I can't imagine -- I know you are the father of two boys, but I can't imagine you ever having a problem with your children. You ever have any?

FRED

Well, of course. I'm a human being just like everybody else.

Lloyd stares down at Gavin, who is now sound asleep -- something wells within him.

**EXT. LLOYD'S APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS**

Lloyd looks out the window. Jerry's Cadillac is gone.

**MONTAGE**

The research clips continue -- but now they're speeding up and shifting -- as if they're worming into Lloyd's consciousness.

- Daniel the Striped Tiger sits on the Clocktower waving.

DANIEL

Hello, Lloyd

- Fred testifies before Congress in 1969. His voice, clear and strong.

FRED (ON SCREEN)

I can stop when I want to. Can stop when I wish. Can stop, stop, stop anytime. And what a good feeling to feel like this! And know that the feeling is really mine.

- King Friday calls from the castle.

KING FRIDAY

What are you afraid of?

Distorted images float in, menacing and surreal --

- Lloyd slams the door in Jerry's face.

- Fred's crouched down, singing as Daniel. He looks up DIRECTLY AT LLOYD.

- Fred takes picture and picture after picture.

- Jerry appears dressed as Mr. McFeely

JERRY

Speedy Delivery!

- Daniel the Striped Tiger sleeps. As he rolls over, he BECOMES Lloyd.

A ringing PHONE brings us to --

**INT. LLOYD'S LOFT - EARLY MORNING**

Lloyd and Andrea are asleep.

The house phone RINGS, waking them. Andrea answers.

ANDREA

Hello?

FRED (O.C.)

Oh my, I woke you up. Is this Andrea?

ANDREA

Yes?

FRED (O.C.)

This is Fred Rogers.

Andrea smiles, star-struck.

ANDREA

Oh hi!

LLOYD

Who is it?

ANDREA

Uh, Lloyd's right here.

INTERCUT:

**INT. FRED'S APARTMENT - KITCHEN - MORNING**

Fred's dressed for the day.

FRED

Andrea, while I have you, I just wanted to thank you so much for sharing Lloyd with us.

ANDREA

Um. You're welcome?

FRED

It can't be easy -- with him traveling, what with Gavin at home.

ANDREA

Thank you for saying that. I'll give you to Lloyd now.

(to Lloyd)

Mister Rogers knows my name!

She hands Lloyd the phone.

LLOYD

This is Lloyd.

FRED

You left without getting to say goodbye so I'm glad we get to continue to talk. I'm going to New York City today to film and Joanne is coming with me, so we thought you might like to come down and say hello.

LLOYD

Uh --

The sound of a STRING QUARTET takes us to --

**INT. CONCERT HALL - DAY**

A CREW films the Quartet as they play beautifully. Fred sits on a stool nearby, listening with abandon. A bright smile on his face.

All the seats are empty except for Bill and Lloyd, in the back row.

LLOYD

How much time will I get with him today?

Bill shrugs.

BILL

You're here because Fred wants you here.

LLOYD

Honored.

BILL

He likes everybody, but he loves people like you.

LLOYD

People like me?

BILL

I've read your work. You don't really care for humanity, do you?

LLOYD

I'm just doing my job.

BILL

I insisted he read you before we agreed.

LLOYD

And did he?

BILL

Every article we could find.

The song ends and Fred claps.

FRED

Oh thank you. That made me wanna get up and do a little dance.

**EXT. NEW YORK STREET - MOMENTS LATER**

A crowd has gathered around the theater doors.

Lloyd watches as Fred patiently meets everyone, listening deeply to each person.

Bill is by his side.

FRED

Hello everybody. Nice to see you.

JOANNE, an older WOMAN with short gray hair sidles up next to Lloyd.

JOANNE

I call this move the handshake handoff.

A WOMAN talks to Fred as he shakes her hand.

Bill puts *his* hand on both of their hands and shakes in rhythm -- and then suddenly the Woman is shaking Bill's hand, as Fred moves on to the next person.

LLOYD

Quite a skill.

JOANNE

We stole Bill from the governor's office fourteen years ago. Have you got to know him yet?

LLOYD

Love Bill. Big fan.

JOANNE

He's very protective of Roge.

LLOYD

You call him Roge?

JOANNE

We don't call him Mister Rogers at home, dear.

She puts out her hand.

JOANNE (CONT'D)

Joanne Rogers.

LLOYD

Oh, nice to meet you.

JOANNE  
You as well, dear.

                  LLOYD  
How does it feel to be married to a  
living saint?

Joanne's smile drops.

                  JOANNE  
I'm not fond of that term.

                  LLOYD  
Uh huh.

                  JOANNE  
If you think of him as a saint,  
then his way of being is  
unattainable. He works at it all  
the time. It's a practice. He's not  
a perfect person. He has a temper.  
He chooses how he responds to that  
anger.

                  LLOYD  
That must take a lot of effort.

                  JOANNE  
Well, he does things every day that  
help ground him. He reads  
scripture, he swims laps. He prays  
for people by name. Writes letters -  
- hundreds of them. He's been doing  
that since I met him.

Fred walks up.

                  FRED  
                  (to Joanne)  
My love.

He kisses her on the cheek.

                  JOANNE  
Bye, my love.

                  FRED  
We'll see you in just a few hours.

Fred turns his attention to Lloyd.

                  FRED (CONT'D)  
I thought we might spend some time  
together, Lloyd.

Lloyd follows Fred down the street.

**INT. SUBWAY CAR - DAY**

The doors slide open.

The car is filled with SCHOOL KIDS of all kinds.

Fred gets on. Lloyd follows.

LLOYD

Do you always take the subway?

FRED

Joanne and I have a small apartment here. It's just a few stops away. It's the easiest way to get around sometimes.

Fred sits down, and Lloyd dives in.

LLOYD

So -- you've covered some heavy stuff, especially for a show aimed at children.

FRED

I'm glad you had a chance to view our program.

LLOYD

Death, divorce, war. It gets dark.

Pause.

FRED

You know, Lloyd -- Maggie Stewart taught me the most beautiful piece of sign language.

Fred interlocks his index fingers.

FRED (CONT'D)

It means "friend." Isn't that perfect?

LLOYD

Who's Maggie Stewart?

The School Kids have recognized Fred.

They WHISPER. Lloyd notices, uncomfortable.

One KID starts to sing.

KID (SINGING)  
*It's a beautiful day in the  
neighborhood.*

Then a few more join in.

STUDENTS (SINGING)  
*A beautiful day for a neighbor.  
Would you be mine? Could you be  
mine?*

Fred laughs and sings along. The entire car joins in.

EVERYONE (SINGING)  
*It's a neighborly day in this  
beauty wood. A neighborly day for a  
beauty. Would you be mine? Could  
you be mine?*

On Lloyd, frustrated, notebook out and empty.

**INT. FRED'S NYC APARTMENT - DAY**

Cramped and dusty.

Fred and Lloyd sit uncomfortably close together -- for Lloyd. Lloyd's recorder is out and running.

A suitcase rests at Fred's feet.

Fred smiles.

LLOYD  
Seems like all these people line up  
to tell you their problems.

FRED  
Isn't it wonderful? Such bravery.

LLOYD  
Seems like that would be an  
incredible burden on you.

FRED  
I'm grateful that you would say  
that, Lloyd. I'm grateful for your  
compassion.

LLOYD  
Is it a burden on you?

Pause.

LLOYD (CONT'D)

Okay. Let's assume it is a burden on you.

FRED

There's no normal life that's free from pain.

LLOYD

How do you deal with it?

FRED

Oh, there are many things you can do with your feelings that don't hurt yourself or anybody else.

LLOYD

Yeah, like what?

FRED

Why, you can pound a lump of clay. Or swim as fast as you can swim. Or play the lowest keys on the piano all together.

(then)

BOOM BOOM-BOOM

LLOYD

Do you ever talk to anyone about the burden you carry?

Fred pretends to slam the keys.

FRED

*BOOM.*

Lloyd blinks, startled.

The recorder runs with a faint electronic hiss.

Fred looks up, deliberate.

FRED (CONT'D)

Would you like to meet my friends from The Neighborhood of Make Believe?

Fred opens the suitcase, revealing several PUPPETS.

LLOYD

They look like they've seen better days.

FRED  
They've been with me quite a long  
time.

LLOYD  
You ever think of swapping them out  
or getting new ones?

FRED  
Didn't you have any special friends  
when you were very young, Lloyd?

LLOYD  
Special friends?

FRED  
Maybe a special toy, or a stuffed  
animal you loved very much? Even  
when it got ratty and well-worn,  
you just loved it all the more?

LLOYD  
I don't know, I'm sure I did.

FRED  
Can you tell me about your special  
friend?

LLOYD  
Uh -- I think I had a rabbit.

FRED  
Did your rabbit friend have a name?

LLOYD  
It was just rabbit --

A real memory rushes in, dislodged from somewhere deep.

LLOYD (CONT'D)  
It was Old Rabbit.

Fred leans in.

FRED  
Who gave you Old Rabbit?

Lloyd glares at Fred.

LLOYD  
My mom.

FRED  
She must love you very much.

LLOYD

That she did. She died when I was young.

FRED

I'm sure that if she saw you today, saw the person you have become, she'd be proud of you.

LLOYD

I wanna get back to my questions.

FRED

You wanted to meet my special friends from the Neighborhood of Make Believe.

LLOYD

No. I asked about the burden you carry.

FRED

Let's see --

Fred scans his puppets one by one, choosing his weapon carefully. First is the King Friday puppet.

Fred does his voice, deep and majestic.

KING FRIDAY

I am King Friday the thirteenth. Lloyd Vogel the journalist, I presume.

Lloyd stares blankly at the puppet.

Fred picks up Daniel Striped Tiger.

FRED

(in his own voice)

And here's Daniel Striped Tiger. He's often too shy to talk.

(to Daniel)

But that's all right Daniel.

(to Lloyd)

Have you met Daniel?

Fred moves closer to Lloyd, sitting right next to him.

LLOYD

No. Not officially.

Daniel turns to Lloyd.

Fred speaks in Daniel's high, sweet voice.

DANIEL  
I'd like to meet Old Rabbit.

LLOYD  
(to Fred)  
I don't want to talk about Old  
Rabbit, I gotta say.

FRED  
(to Daniel)  
Maybe Lloyd doesn't want to talk  
right now, Daniel. And that's okay.

Daniel hangs his head.

LLOYD  
Can you put the puppet down?

Fred obliges.

FRED  
What else would you like to  
discuss, Lloyd?

LLOYD  
You stopped making the show for  
three years in the mid-seventies.  
Why did you quit?

FRED  
At the time, I felt like the  
program had covered the main facets  
of childhood.

LLOYD  
And what brought you back? Money?  
Boredom?

FRED  
My sons had grown into teenagers.  
And were struggling. We all were. I  
realized there was still much more  
to talk about.

Lloyd leans in. Finally something he can use.

LLOYD  
I can't imagine it was easy to grow  
up with you as a father.

FRED

Until recently, my eldest never told people about me. He's very private, and that's okay. My younger son -- he genuinely tested me -- but eventually we found our way. I'm so proud of them both.

(then)

But you're right, Lloyd -- it couldn't have been easy on them. Thank you. Thank you for that perspective.

Lloyd sighs, frustrated.

LLOYD

You're welcome.

Fred waits patiently for the next question.

Lloyd burns.

FRED

Was that not the answer you were looking for? Being a parent doesn't mean being a perfect parent. You might be experiencing some of that now, with your son?

Lloyd and Fred stare at each other for an uncomfortable moment.

FRED (CONT'D)

And, I've been thinking a great deal about you and your father. Were you able to work through your disagreement?

LLOYD

This is ridiculous.

Lloyd gets up.

FRED

Where are you going, Lloyd?

LLOYD

We're done. Thanks. It's been a real pleasure.

Lloyd walks out.

FRED

Mercy.

**EXT. STREET - DAY**

Lloyd walks home, a mess.

He scans the street for Jerry's car, doesn't see it.

What a relief.

**INT. LLOYD'S LOFT - DAY**

Lloyd enters.

Jerry sits at the table next to Andrea.

Behind them stands DOROTHY, holding Gavin. We recognize her from the wedding, but now she's dressed down, natural.

There's food on the table.

JERRY

Hey hey.

Lloyd drops his bag and keys, furious.

JERRY (CONT'D)

C'mon, sit down. We cooked you some take-out.

ANDREA

They brought pizza.

Andrea pleads to Lloyd with her eyes. *Just sit down.*

JERRY

Lloyd, this is Dorothy.

DOROTHY

Hello.

Lloyd won't look at Dorothy.

JERRY

Can't you just say hello? Where's your manners?

DOROTHY

I'm sorry. We should just go.

Dorothy hands Gavin to Andrea.

JERRY

(to Lloyd)

I had an idea, okay?

(MORE)

JERRY (CONT'D)

We'd eat some food, and we'd talk like people. I messed things up at the wedding --

Lloyd says nothing.

JERRY (CONT'D)

Of course, you didn't help, but I get it.

Jerry's anger's burbling up, getting the better of him.

JERRY (CONT'D)

And then you let me sit out there in my car on the street. For two nights. Like I'm homeless, like I'm a bum --

DOROTHY

(to Jerry)

You're not helping.

JERRY

What's the point? He won't say a word.

Finally, Lloyd looks at Jerry.

LLOYD

You came here to introduce me to her, right?

JERRY

Dorothy.

Lloyd turns to Dorothy.

LLOYD

Hi, Dorothy.

DOROTHY

Hello, Lloyd.

Dorothy says nothing. Lloyd turns back to Jerry.

LLOYD

Okay, you did what you came here to do. Now I want you to leave.

ANDREA

Lloyd --

JERRY

I might never come back here, so please listen to me. Dorothy and I have been together and in love for fifteen years.

LLOYD

(to Dorothy)

He left as soon as Mom got sick. Did you know that? He couldn't even wait for her to die.

JERRY

She really didn't want me there.

LLOYD

Because you were sleeping around while she was dying.

JERRY

I know. It took me years to get myself together. Dorothy is why I'm standing here. She helped me grow the hell up.

Andrea's eyes well. Lloyd just stares, then turns to Dorothy.

LLOYD

You know what they tell you about people dying? They tell you it's peaceful. They just slip away. Mom screamed as she went. You know that? She screamed until she passed out and then they came in and revived her and she went right back to it.

Jerry's hand goes to his face -- he massages his jaw --

JERRY

Lloyd --

LLOYD

It was me and Lorraine and the nurses! Sign the paperwork. Put her in the ground. Pack up the house.

JERRY

Hang on -- can we --

Jerry kneads his thumb into his jaw. Beads of sweat form on his forehead.

JERRY (CONT'D)

My jaw --

Jerry SLUMPS forward in his chair, head HITTING the table. Plates CRASH.

DOROTHY

Jerry. JERRY!

Dorothy grabs Jerry.

Andrea's at the phone, dialing 911.

Lloyd stands there, staring at Jerry, eyes wide. Completely frozen.

He looks over at Andrea, talking hurriedly into the phone.

He looks at Dorothy, pushing Jerry upright, slapping his face.

ANDREA

Lloyd, do something!

Jerry crumples to the floor, unconscious.

**INT. HOSPITAL - INTENSIVE CARE UNIT - HALLWAY - NIGHT**

Lloyd waits just outside Jerry's room. He hears the DOCTOR talking to Jerry and Dorothy, who's crying. It's a blur of words.

DOCTOR (O.C.)

The cardiac MRI revealed more extensive stenosis than we thought... An operation at this time... The risk of infection alone... At your age... It's not much of a conversation anymore... we knew we'd be here...

JERRY (O.C.)

I'm just supposed to go home?

DOCTOR (O.C.)

There are many options. Your home is one of them... I'll have someone from hospice come in to walk you through it...

Lloyd walks down the hall, emotionally crumbling. He PUSHES through the door and into the --

**INT. HOSPITAL - WAITING ROOM - CONTINUOUS - NIGHT**

Empty, except for Andrea and Gavin, asleep in his car seat.

ANDREA  
You know anything?

Lloyd sits down, unable to answer. His heart is racing. He's sweating.

LLOYD  
I hate hospitals.

Andrea puts her hand on the back of his neck.

LLOYD (CONT'D)  
You should go home. Get him to bed.

ANDREA  
I don't want to leave you here.

Lloyd tries to calm himself, but something's not right. Panic is growing, clouding his thoughts.

LLOYD  
I'm not staying here.

ANDREA  
Okay. Let's all go together.

LLOYD  
No. I have to go to Pittsburgh.

ANDREA  
Right now?

LLOYD  
I have to work.

ANDREA  
With your dad like this?

LLOYD  
I have a deadline.

ANDREA  
I'm pretty sure Ellen will understand if you tell her what's happening.

LLOYD  
I don't want to. I want to go to Pittsburgh. I want to do my job.  
(MORE)

LLOYD (CONT'D)

This shouldn't be a surprise to you.

Lloyd walks toward the door. Andrea moves to block him.

ANDREA

Don't talk to me like that.

LLOYD

You seem to think that now that we have a kid, I shouldn't care about things I have *always* cared about, just because you don't anymore. Well, I still care about my work.

ANDREA

I never asked you to stop caring about your work.

LLOYD

I have to go.

ANDREA

Why? Everyone who is important is in this hospital right now.

LLOYD

Can't you be on my side for once? You used to be on my side.

ANDREA

I'm telling you -- because I *am* on your side, because I love you -- NOW is not the time to go work.

A MAN passes in front of Lloyd.

He looks like Fred -- and he's carrying a bag with DANIEL TIGER peeking out.

Lloyd blinks. Was that Fred? Was that real?

LLOYD

I -- I need to go -- if I'm going to make it to Pittsburgh by the morning.

Lloyd leaves, following the Man.

ANDREA

Fine. I'm gonna go sit with *your* family, while you go.

**EXT. HOSPITAL - NIGHT**

Lloyd rushes out of the hospital, avoiding an ambulance and stretcher on his way, his heart beating quickly, looking --

**INT. NEW YORK PORT AUTHORITY - NIGHT**

Lloyd spots the Man with Daniel Tiger in his bag and follows him through the crowd -- through the maze of the bus terminal -- up escalators, and finally outside.

**EXT. NEW YORK PORT AUTHORITY - NIGHT**

Busses idle. Lloyd scans until --

He SPOTS the Man getting on a bus --

The destination: PITTSBURGH.

**INT. GREYHOUND BUS - CONTINUOUS**

Lloyd races onto the bus, looking at the PASSENGERS.

No Fred.

The bus pulls away.

**MINIATURE PITTSBURGH**

The sun rises behind the skyline of Pittsburgh, the light reflecting off the buildings, the river.

A BUS zooms over a bridge as the sun rises behind the skyline.

**EXT. WQED - STREET - DAY**

Lloyd hurries up to a WQED -- everything looks normal but the clouds might be made of COTTON. And -- is the building made of BALSAWOOD?

**INT. WQED - STAGE - DAY**

Lloyd rushes into the stage to find Margy and the rest of the crew setting up for an episode.

MARGY

Lloyd. There you are.

LLOYD  
I need to talk to Fred.

MARGY  
Very funny, mister. Get over there.  
We're ready to shoot.

The First AD pushes Lloyd toward the lit set.

FIRST AD  
Right this way.

LLOYD  
What am I doing here?

FIRST AD  
You're in this episode, of course.  
Wait over there.

Vibraphone music chimes in.

The First AD points Lloyd toward the front door of the set.

FIRST AD (CONT'D)  
Sound speed.

SOUND GUY  
Speed.

FIRST AD  
And.... Action.

Lloyd stands outside of the door.

The First AD signals for him to KNOCK.

He does.

Fred opens the door, to a shell-shocked Lloyd.

FRED  
Why, it's my good friend, Lloyd  
Vogel.  
(to the camera)  
You remember Lloyd.

Lloyd steps onto the familiar landing of the familiar set.

LLOYD  
Fred -- I don't understand.  
(then, looking out)  
Can we stop?

FRED  
Are you feeling unwell, Lloyd?

LLOYD  
Stop. Stop asking me questions. I  
ask you the questions.

FRED  
On today's program I thought we  
would talk about hospitals.

Fred looks out to the cameras.

FRED (CONT'D)  
Sometimes when someone is sick,  
they have to visit the hospital.

LLOYD  
I hate hospitals.

FRED  
A hospital is a place where doctors  
and nurses work together to take  
special care of people who are sick  
or hurt.

LLOYD  
Stop it.

FRED  
Would you like to pretend we're at  
a hospital, Lloyd?

LLOYD  
What?

And we --

CUT TO:

**INT. THE NEIGHBORHOOD OF MAKE BELIEVE - DAY**

Lloyd pulls back a curtain and peeks out.

He's on the CASTLE SET and he's SMALL. The size of a puppet.

He takes a step out.

The Trolley comes ROARING up to him.

*TOOT TOOT!*

X The Owl appears in his tree.

X THE OWL  
Hello, Old Rabbit.

Suddenly, Lloyd has TWO RABBIT EARS. He tugs at them. They're firmly attached to his skull.

King Friday appears in a parapet.

KING FRIDAY  
Old Rabbit, I presume.

LLOYD  
I'm not -- I don't -- Where's Fred?

Lloyd starts breathing hard. Daniel appears next to Lloyd.

DANIEL  
I've been waiting to meet you, Old Rabbit. I'm so happy you came for a visit.

Lloyd looks down and sees Fred down below the set, his hand in the puppet.

DANIEL (CONT'D)  
Hello, Lady Aberlin.

Andrea appears, dressed as Lady Aberlin.

ANDREA  
Well hello. Hello, Old Rabbit.

LLOYD  
Oh my god.

KING FRIDAY  
We were discussing hospitals.

ANDREA  
Well, a hospital is where you go when your body is hurt, but what do you do when your *feelings* are hurt?

A piano riff wafts in...

DANIEL  
Well, you talk about them.

EVERYONE  
You talk about them.

ANDREA (SINGING)  
*It's good to talk. It's good to say the things we feel.*

LLOYD  
What's happening to me?

ANDREA (SINGING)  
*It's good to talk. We're much more  
real without the lock.*

Fred steps out from behind the set.

FRED (SINGING)  
*It's good to talk.*

He looks at Lloyd.

FRED (SINGING) (CONT'D)  
*Go ahead. Try saying "I like you."*

They all look at Lloyd.

We hold for a painfully long beat, until --

LLOYD  
(to Andrea)  
I like you.

FRED (SINGING)  
*I'm sad.*

LLOYD  
I'm sad.

FRED (SINGING)  
*I'm angry.*

The music stops. Lloyd pauses. He can't.

FRED (CONT'D)  
You're angry. When did you become  
angry? Do you remember? Did  
something happen?

CUT TO:

**INT. DARK STAGE - CONTINUOUS**

Lloyd steps towards a pool of light.

At its center, Lloyd's mother, LILA VOGEL, 45, lying in a  
hospital bed.

She smiles when she sees him.

LILA  
Hey peanut.

LLOYD  
Hi, Mom.

LILA  
I know you think you're doing this  
for me. Holding onto this anger. I  
don't need it.

Lloyd begins to cry.

FRED (O.C.)  
Lloyd?

**INT. WOED - MISTER ROGERS' NEIGHBORHOOD SET - DAY**

Lloyd lies on his back, unconscious, Fred and the Crew  
standing over him.

FRED  
Lloyd?

BILL  
What happened?

MARGY  
I don't know. He just collapsed.

A Schumann PIANO DUET starts with a jolt --

**INT. FRED'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM - PITTSBURGH - DAY**

Lloyd springs up from a deep sleep, disoriented.

The piano is coming from the other room.

**INT. FRED'S APARTMENT - HALLWAY - PITTSBURGH - MOMENTS LATER**

Lloyd ambles through slowly.

He notices pictures hanging along walls. REAL PEOPLE, all  
races, genders, ages, abilities.

All smiling.

These are Fred's friends.

INT. FRED'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - PITTSBURGH - DAY

Spacious and well appointed, but not showy in the least. The room is dominated by two GRAND PIANOS.

Joanne sits at the piano closest to the window playing effortlessly, her fingers light on the keys.

Fred, sits at the other, not quite as good, but heartfelt, and keeping up.

Lloyd wanders in. Listens.

JOANNE

Turn.

They both turn their sheet music and continue, until --

Fred spots Lloyd.

FRED

(to Lloyd)

Oh good, you're awake.

JOANNE

Goodness, if I knew you were there,  
I would have stopped all the  
racket.

LLOYD

No, no. That was beautiful.

FRED

You must be very hungry. Let me get  
my jacket, and we'll go out.

LLOYD

I should go.

FRED

Nonsense.

Fred walks down the hallway.

Lloyd stares at Joanne -- not sure what to say.

JOANNE

You're really in it, mister.

Fred walks back in with his jacket.

FRED

How about some Chinese food? I love  
those spring rolls.

LLOYD

Sure.

As they go --

JOANNE

Tell Andrea and Gavin I say hello.

**INT. CHINESE RESTAURANT - LATER - DAY**

A hole in the wall.

TWO COUPLES and a SMALL FAMILY eat beside Fred and Lloyd.

The WAITRESS sets down their food.

Fred's plate is piled high with vegetables.

FRED

Oh, look at that. Thank you so much.

LLOYD

You a vegetarian?

Lloyd bites into an egg roll.

FRED

I just can't imagine eating anything with a mother.

Lloyd laughs.

LLOYD

Bill was right. You love people like me.

FRED

What are people like you?

Lloyd is quiet.

FRED (CONT'D)

I've never met anyone like you in my entire life.

LLOYD

Broken people.

FRED

I don't think you are broken.

A long beat.

FRED (CONT'D)

I know you are a man of conviction,  
a person who knows what is wrong  
and what is right.

(then)

Try to remember that your  
relationship with your father also  
helped to shape those parts. He  
helped you become who you are.

Lloyd shifts uncomfortably.

FRED (CONT'D)

Would you do something with me,  
Lloyd? A little exercise I like to  
do sometimes.

Lloyd glances around -- everyone's staring and leaning in.

Fred notices, but rather than whisper, he speaks a little  
louder.

FRED (CONT'D)

We'll take a minute and think about  
all the people who... loved us into  
being.

LLOYD

I can't do that.

FRED

They will come to you.

Lloyd takes a deep breath.

FRED (CONT'D)

Just one minute of silence.

Fred looks at his watch.

FRED (CONT'D)

Let's begin.

As the minute passes --

Lloyd sniffs.

He sniffs again.

We realize that the whole restaurant is quiet. They're all  
doing it.

And suddenly, Fred is looking DIRECTLY INTO CAMERA and holds  
his gaze, effortlessly.

Now Lloyd's eyes are welling.

His face contorts as the emotions build.

For once, finally, Lloyd experiences a brief moment of clarity.

FRED (CONT'D)

Thank you for doing that with me. I  
feel so much better.

Lloyd smiles through his tears. He knows what he has to do.

**MINIATURE NYC AIRPORT**

A tiny plane touches down.

**EXT. THOMPKINS SQUARE PARK - NIGHT**

Lloyd walks with Andrea, who holds a sleeping Gavin in a wrap. She's still angry with him.

LLOYD

So the way I left --

ANDREA

Was messed up.

LLOYD

Yes. I should've called you.

ANDREA

You shouldn't have left.

(then)

The doctor came out looking for you  
and I didn't know what to tell her --  
I didn't know what to tell your dad.  
And of course I couldn't get a cab,  
so I took a train. At midnight. The  
way people were looking at me with  
Gavin. I was like 'somebody's  
calling child services.'

Lloyd looks down.

ANDREA (CONT'D)

I know you're trying to apologize,  
but that doesn't mean it gets to be  
easy.

They both smile. Andrea exhales.

LLOYD  
I realize now -- that I need to  
deal with my -- feelings.

On Andrea, did he say feelings?

LLOYD (CONT'D)  
When I'm scared -- which I was in  
the hospital and have been for a  
long time, I guess -- I just get  
really angry.

ANDREA  
Mmhmm.

Lloyd fights for the words, struggling.

LLOYD  
And -- I know, it's a way of saying  
I can't deal with this -- leave me  
alone. And that's not what I want.

Lloyd holds back tears.

LLOYD (CONT'D)  
It's the opposite of what I  
actually want. You and Gavin are --  
I don't want to push you away.  
You're what I want.

Andrea tears up. Lloyd holds her. They both cry.

LLOYD (CONT'D)  
I'm sorry.  
(then)  
I need to go see Jerry. He's...  
dying.

Saying it is hard.

ANDREA  
I know.

**INT. FRED'S HOME - BEDROOM - EARLY MORNING**

Fred kneels, praying beside his bed.

FRED  
Celia Sherman. Colby Dickerson --

**INT. PITTSBURGH JCC - MORNING**

Church-like silence hangs over the Olympic sized pool.

The water is completely still, like glass.

Fred steps to the edge, in his Speed-o and swim cap. He fits his goggles into place.

FRED (O.C.)  
Justin Cook.

He dives in.

His movements are smooth. His arms knife through the water, feet churning behind him.

He reaches the edge and then kicks off -- WHOOSH -- gliding back to where he started.

**EXT. JERRY AND DOROTHY'S HOUSE - ELIZABETH, NJ - DAY**

In the back of a taxi, Lloyd eyes the small house with Jerry's Cadillac parked in the driveway.

FRED (O.C.)  
Lloyd Vogel. Andrea Vogel. Gavin Vogel. Jerry Vogel.

Lloyd gets out, walks up the path, and rings the bell.

He waits a moment.

FRED (O.C.) (CONT'D)  
Thank you, God.

Dorothy answers. She's in a housecoat, no make up.

After a long silence --

DOROTHY  
Come in.

**INT. JERRY AND DOROTHY'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY**

Jerry's lying in a hospital bed, asleep.

Lloyd takes a long look. Like this, Jerry looks so small and old.

Dorothy whispers.

DOROTHY  
He'll be so happy you're here.

LLOYD  
No, don't wake him up.

**INT. JERRY AND DOROTHY'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY**

Lloyd and Dorothy sip tea and poke at a plate of cheese and crackers.

DOROTHY  
He still eats like a teenager. Cold cuts and sugar cereal. Stubborn goat. Least you come by it honestly.

LLOYD  
Did you know about me and my sister?

DOROTHY  
Not until very recently.

LLOYD  
What about my mom?

DOROTHY  
When he got sick last year -- after the first episode -- he started to talk -- to tell me things I wish he'd told me a long time ago.

A beat.

DOROTHY (CONT'D)  
Don't budge.

She steps out, then comes back with a scrap book.

LLOYD  
What's this?

DOROTHY  
Everything you ever wrote. He kept it in his trunk so I wouldn't see it. When they towed the car here, I found it.

He turns the pages. Article after article. Cut out and filed.

**INT. JERRY AND DOROTHY'S HOUSE - GUEST ROOM - NIGHT**

Lloyd sits in the sofa bed, laptop out. He's typing furiously.

**INT. JERRY AND DOROTHY'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - LATER**

The TV's on.

Jerry sits up, watching, sipping OJ through a straw. Lloyd's beside him.

JERRY

We got bourbon, you know. Someone should drink it.

LLOYD

No thanks.

JERRY

Not even beer?

LLOYD

Do you have a beer? Yeah, I'd drink a beer if it made you happy.

JERRY

No. I don't have a beer. And don't do it because it'd make me happy. Do it cause you wanna do it.

LLOYD

You don't have a beer and I don't want a beer.

JERRY

So don't drink anything. Dehydrate.

After a long beat.

JERRY (CONT'D)

I'm trying.

LLOYD

No, I'm trying.

A beat.

LLOYD (CONT'D)

I don't like alcohol.

JERRY

Because I drink?

LLOYD  
Probably.  
(then)  
Yes.

JERRY  
Oh, you are some pain in the ass.

LLOYD  
I don't like Cadillacs either.

JERRY  
You're gonna give me another heart  
attack.

Both men crack a smile.

**EXT. JERRY AND DOROTHY'S HOUSE - FRONT YARD - NIGHT**

Lloyd lifts luggage out of the trunk while Andrea waits with Gavin.

ANDREA  
I definitely broke the pack n'  
play. It just snapped like a  
chicken bone.  
(then)  
How is he?

LLOYD  
He seems fine, but I don't know.  
They don't put a hospital bed in  
your living room if you're fine.  
(then)  
Thank you for coming.

He kisses her.

LLOYD (CONT'D)  
You're gonna love the sofa bed.

ANDREA  
Yeah?

LLOYD  
No.

**INT. JERRY AND DOROTHY'S HOUSE - GUEST BEDROOM - LATE NIGHT**

Lloyd and Andrea are asleep.

Gavin cries.

Lloyd gets up, and takes Gavin into --

**INT. JERRY AND DOROTHY'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - LATE NIGHT**

Lloyd holds Gavin in one arm while he pulls a bottle from the fridge.

He puts it in a pot with water and sets it on the stove.

The only light comes from the burner.

LLOYD  
Shhh. Shhh.

As the bottle heats, Lloyd sits down with Gavin. He sways him side to side.

LLOYD (CONT'D)  
I know, you wish it was your mom  
who was awake right now. But we're  
gonna let her sleep, okay? I'm  
gonna get better at this. And we're  
going to have to get used to each  
other.

Slowly, quietly, only for Gavin --

Lloyd stumbles his way through the Mister Rogers song --

LLOYD (SINGING) (CONT'D)  
*I like you as you are  
Exactly and precisely  
I think you turned out nicely*

Gavin begins to settle.

LLOYD (CONT'D)  
*I like you as you are  
Without a doubt or question --*

Suddenly Lloyd realizes -- Gavin is looking right at him.

JERRY (O.C)  
Who's that? Dorothy?

**INT. JERRY AND DOROTHY'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS**

Lloyd emerges with Gavin holding his bottle to find his father awake in his hospital bed.

LLOYD  
What? Are you okay?

JERRY

I'm fine.

LLOYD

It's four in the morning.

JERRY

I don't sleep much these days.

Jerry nods at Gavin.

JERRY (CONT'D)

You don't sleep either, do ya?

(then)

I never did this with you. Up in the middle of the night, doing the mom thing.

LLOYD

It's not a mom thing.

JERRY

You know what I mean.

The moment hangs.

LLOYD

You should rest.

JERRY

No, stay.

Lloyd puts Gavin in the car seat, and sits next to Jerry.

JERRY (CONT'D)

Hey, right back there.

LLOYD

What?

Jerry nods toward a side table.

JERRY

Grab two glasses.

LLOYD

I don't think that's the best idea.

JERRY

How do you know? You don't drink.

(then)

Come on.

LLOYD

Fine.

Lloyd pours two glasses -- a thimble in his own.

JERRY

Now we're talking.

LLOYD

Cheers.

They clink. Lloyd takes a drink and coughs. Jerry laughs.

The moment hangs, then --

JERRY

Lloyd --

Jerry inhales.

JERRY (CONT'D)

I'm sorry I left you and your  
sister. It was selfish. And it was -  
- cruel.

Lloyd looks at his feet.

JERRY (CONT'D)

Will you look at me?

Lloyd looks at Jerry.

JERRY (CONT'D)

I am so sorry, son.

Lloyd and Jerry sit in silence, until --

JERRY (CONT'D)

It's not fair, you know? I think  
I'm just now starting to figure out  
how to live my life.

Jerry's eyes pool with tears.

JERRY (CONT'D)

I've always loved you.

Lloyd smiles through his tears, takes his father's hand.

LLOYD

I love you too, Dad.

Lloyd looks directly at his father, really seeing him.

Gavin stirs.

Lloyd picks him up and brings him to Jerry.

Jerry grabs Gavin's toe.

**INT. JERRY AND DOROTHY'S HOUSE - SUN ROOM - DAY**

Lloyd paces, bouncing Gavin, while Andrea reads a draft of Lloyd's article.

She makes a noise.

LLOYD  
What?

ANDREA  
Shhh.

LLOYD  
It's stupid.

ANDREA  
Shhhh!

Finally, Andrea finishes.

ANDREA (CONT'D)  
It's like ten thousand words.

LLOYD  
Yeah.

ANDREA  
And it's not really about Mister Rogers.

LLOYD  
I know.

ANDREA  
I mean it is, but it's -- so YOU.  
You never talk about this stuff.

LLOYD  
No.

Andrea smiles.

ANDREA  
It's good.

LLOYD  
Yeah?

ANDREA  
Yeah.

**INT. JERRY AND DOROTHY'S HOUSE - GUEST ROOM - DAY**

Lloyd picks up the telephone.

ELLEN (O.C.)  
Lloyd.

INTERCUT:

**INT. ESQUIRE MAGAZINE - ELLEN'S OFFICE - DAY**

Ellen talks at her desk, almost annoyed.

ELLEN  
I love it.

Lloyd's face brightens.

LLOYD (O.C.)  
You do?

ELLEN  
Yes. It's going to be the cover.  
Don't tell anyone I told you.

LLOYD  
I don't deserve you.

ELLEN  
No you don't.

She hangs up.

**INT. PRINTING PRESS - DAY**

Esquire Magazine gets printed.

The cover -- a disarming, smiling portrait of Fred in his red cardigan.

The title reads -- CAN YOU SAY... HERO?

The magazines are boxed and loaded onto trucks.

**INT. JERRY AND DOROTHY'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY**

Jerry reads Lloyd's article in *Esquire*, a stack of them are by the front door.

Lloyd sits beside him, looking on nervously.

Jerry snorts.

Lloyd smiles.

**INT. JERRY AND DOROTHY'S HOUSE - DAY**

Lloyd hugs Lorraine and Todd by the front door.

LLOYD

Okay right off the bat -- about the wedding --

LORRAINE

Whatever. It was the most entertaining one yet.

(then)

I'm just glad you're here.

Lorraine heads inside, leaving Todd and Lloyd facing off.

Lloyd puts his hand out. A peace offering.

Todd slaps him on the shoulder and enters.

**INT. JERRY AND DOROTHY'S HOUSE - DAY**

Lloyd, Andrea, Lorraine, Todd, and Dorothy have gathered around Jerry's bed. He's more gaunt now, and his color has changed. He's not eating anymore.

LLOYD

(to Lorraine)

Don't go to Martha's Vineyard.

LORRAINE

Why not? It's my honeymoon. I deserve it.

TODD

Absolutely you do.

LLOYD

It's not a question of entitlement. You're not gonna like it.

(MORE)

LLOYD (CONT'D)

It's a buncha rich jerks and it'll be freezing. You're gonna freeze to death with rich jerks.

There's a knock on the door. Lloyd springs up.

LLOYD (CONT'D)

I'll get it.

JERRY

Who's here?

Lloyd opens the door.

FRED

Ah, I'm in the right place. Lloyd.

Lloyd returns with Fred carrying a pie, everyone freezes.

DOROTHY

Holy crap.

Fred laughs.

Andrea rises, receives the pie.

FRED

Andrea?

ANDREA

Hello Fred.

FRED

Its such a pleasure to finally see you.

ANDREA

(re: pie)

Can I take this for you?

FRED

Oh, thank you.

Everyone is wide eyed, frozen, taking in the celebrity in their house.

TODD

Hello, Mister Rogers.

FRED

Hello.

Lorraine nudges him.

Fred leans over to Gavin.

FRED (CONT'D)  
And hello Gavin, I hope you and I  
can be friends someday.

Fred approaches Jerry.

FRED (CONT'D)  
Mister Vogel, may I call you Jerry?

JERRY  
Yes sir, you certainly may.

He reaches out and shakes Jerry's hand, who is touched.

**INT. JERRY AND DOROTHY'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - LATER**

Fred and the Vogels eat pie. They sit on couches and chairs around Jerry.

FRED  
Lloyd, Joanne adored your article.  
As did I.

LLOYD  
I'm so glad.

FRED  
Andrea, are you feeling more ready  
about daycare?

ANDREA  
A little. Maybe.

Lloyd gives Andrea a look.

ANDREA (CONT'D)  
What? You're not the only one who  
talks to Fred.

TODD  
Hey Mister Rogers, is it true you  
were a sharp shooter?

JERRY  
A Navy Seal!

FRED  
No, I'm afraid not.

LORRAINE

What kind of an insane question is that?

TODD

I heard it.

DOROTHY

(to Andrea)

Where did you guys go on your honeymoon?

ANDREA

We eloped in Maui, so we were kinda already on our honeymoon.

LORRAINE

I woulda gone.

LLOYD

You weren't invited.

JERRY

Lloyd's embarrassed by us.

Lloyd bristles a bit.

JERRY (CONT'D)

I'm kidding.

LLOYD

I know.

LORRAINE

Maybe we do a family vacation instead. What do you think, Dad? Should we dip our toes in the ocean together?

DOROTHY

I like the sound of that.

JERRY

Crash your honeymoon? Count me in. If I'm still here.

Lloyd, Andrea, and Todd look at their plates, uncomfortable.

Nobody is saying what they're actually thinking.

Fred smiles.

FRED  
 You know, death is something that many of us are uncomfortable speaking about. But, to die is to be human. And anything human is mentionable, and anything that is mentionable is manageable.

Lorraine looks at Jerry, tears forming.

FRED (CONT'D)  
 Anything mentionable is manageable.

**INT. JERRY AND DOROTHY'S HOUSE - LATER - CONTINUOUS**

Fred's got his camera out, and the family is standing together around Jerry's bed.

JERRY  
 You gotta send me a copy.

FRED  
 Joanne will be so happy to see this.

TODD  
 It'd be so much cooler if he were in it.

LORRAINE  
 Shhh.

Fred snaps the photo.

FRED  
 Thank you.  
 (then)  
 I should be going.

LLOYD  
 I'll walk you out.

Fred kneels down, incredibly close to Jerry, and whispers something to him.

JERRY  
 You can count on it.

FRED  
 Thank you.

**EXT. JERRY AND DOROTHY'S HOUSE - STREET - DUSK**

Fred and Lloyd walk to the curb where Bill waits with a TOWN CAR.

LLOYD  
Hey -- what did you say to Jerry?

FRED  
I asked him to pray for me.

LLOYD  
For you?

FRED  
I figure anyone who's going through what he's going through must be awfully close to God.

Fred gets into his seat. Bill shuts the door.

BILL  
Lloyd.

LLOYD  
Bill.

BILL  
Read the article.

LLOYD  
And?

Bill makes the faintest possible approving nod.

Lloyd looks at Fred who is sitting in the passenger seat.

As they start to drive off Fred makes the sign for "friend". Lloyd, despite himself, gives it back.

Fred and Bill drive off.

The VIBRAPHONE takes us to --

**EXT. MISTER ROGERS' NEIGHBORHOOD - YARD - DAY**

Fred sits on a grassy patch next to a house. He talks to camera, slow and introspective.

FRED  
When I was very young I had a dog that I loved very much. Her name was Mitzi.

(MORE)

FRED (CONT'D)

And she got to be old, and she died. I was very sad when she died, because she and I were good pals. And when she died, I cried. And my grandmother heard me crying, I remember, and she came and just put her arm around me, because she knew I was sad. She knew how much I loved that dog. And my dad said we'd have to bury Mitzi, and I didn't want to. I didn't want to bury her because I thought I'd just pretend that she was still alive. But my dad said that her body was dead and we'd have to bury her. So we did.

Soft music starts.

FRED (V.O.)(SINGING) (CONT'D)

*Sometimes people get sad and they really do feel bad, but the very same people who are sad sometimes are the very same people who are glad sometimes.*

### MINIATURE NEW JERSEY

A TOY HEARSE drives slowly through the town, eventually pulling up to a wooded CEMETARY.

FRED (SINGING)(V.O.)

*It's funny but it's true  
It's the same, isn't it for me and -*

-

We push into --

### EXT. CEMETARY - DAY

Lloyd, Andrea, Dorothy, Lorraine and Todd are gathered around Jerry's casket, as the PRIEST prays.

FRED (SINGING)(V.O.)

*Sometimes people are good  
And they do just what they should  
But the very same people who are good sometimes  
Are the very same people who are bad sometimes*

The prayer ends. Everyone stands, sharing a hug or a supportive arm.

**EXT. CEMETERY - LATER**

As the guests trickle off, Andrea finds Lloyd with Gavin in a wrap on his chest. She holds a bouquet of flowers.

FRED (SINGING) (V.O.)  
*It's funny, but it's true  
 It's the same isn't it, for me  
 Isn't it the same for you?*

Lloyd and Andrea walk together, through the stones.

LLOYD  
 You know -- maybe I can slow down  
 for a few months.

ANDREA  
 What do you mean?

LLOYD  
 Stay home with Gavin. Let you get  
 back to work, without worrying  
 about daycare. I want to.

Andrea folds into Lloyd as they walk.

ANDREA  
 Really? You?

Lloyd nods.

LLOYD  
 Gavin and I already discussed and  
 we both agree.

Andrea takes Lloyd's arm. They walk down the path, together.

A PIANO TRILL takes us back to --

**MINIATURE NEIGHBORHOOD**

We move through the blue sky and dip down to the little yellow house -- one last time.

**INT. WOED - MISTER ROGERS' NEIGHBORHOOD SET - DAY**

Fred sits with his wooden board with a patterned door for each of his friends.

He looks at Lloyd's photo -- bruised and bloodied

FRED

Welcome back, neighbor. I hope you know that you've made this day a special day, by just your being you. There's no person in the whole world like you, and I like you, just the way you are.

(then)

I'm glad I had the opportunity to tell you about my friend Lloyd, and his family. I have a new picture of Lloyd and his family. Would you like to see it?

Fred waits.

FRED (CONT'D)

I'll show it to you.

Fred takes out a PHOTO.

On a SUNNY BEACH -- Lloyd, Andrea, Lorraine and Todd huddle around Dorothy, smiling big. She holds Gavin, who clutches OLD RABBIT in his tiny hands.

FRED (CONT'D)

That's a nice picture.

TROLLEY (O.C.)

Toot toot.

The Trolley passes by, then stops and comes back.

FRED

What's that?

TROLLEY

Toot. Toot. Toot.

Fred chuckles -- Trolley is such a kidder.

FRED

Oh, I will, thank you.

The Trolley speeds away as the pianist noodles on the vibes.

FRED (SINGING) (CONT'D)

*It's such a good feeling to know  
you're alive. It's such a happy  
feeling.*

Fred takes off his blue boat shoes, one at a time.

FRED (SINGING) (CONT'D)  
*You're growing inside. And when you  
wake up ready to say...*

He stands and unzips his Red Cardigan, then moves to the closet and opens the door.

FRED (SINGING) (CONT'D)  
*"I think I'll make a snappy new  
day."*

Fred snaps twice, once with each hand.

FRED (SINGING) (CONT'D)  
*It's such a good feeling, a very  
good feeling, the feeling you know  
that I'll be back when the week is  
new.*

He carefully hangs up the sweater, then pulls his gray sport coat off a hanger.

FRED (SINGING) (CONT'D)  
*And I'll have more ideas for you.  
And you'll have things you'll want  
to talk about. I will too.*

He grabs the board with windows on it from the bench.

FRED (CONT'D)  
Be back next time.

He waves and moves toward the front door.

FRED (CONT'D)  
Bye bye.

He goes, smiling.

FIRST AD  
That's a CUT!

CREW  
Cutting.

We PULL BACK to reveal the set and the Crew, who adjust lights and reset the props.

Fred walks over to the monitors and watches playback with Margy.

Fred nods approvingly -- then walks over to the PIANO.

He sits down, places his hands on the keys, and begins to play a light melody.

MARGY

That's a wrap. We're on location tomorrow at Mister Wagner's shoe store. Call time is eight AM. ADs have the call sheet.

The band clears out.

As the last of Crew exit, the sound grows darker, heavier. More emotional.

The stage lights shut off, leaving Fred -- alone -- in the ghostly light.

Fred finds the lowest keys and CRESCENDOS.

Emotion pours out of him.

*BOOM BOOM BOOM.*

He strikes them one last time, letting the sound fill the space.

*BOOM.*

He sighs, content.

Then his fingers play across the keys, morphing into something brighter, more hopeful --

The closing theme of Mister Rogers' Neighborhood.

As Fred plays us off, we --

POP TO BLACK:

**THE END**