

SMALLWOOD

"Pilot"

Written by

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4th Network Draft - 3/3/21

COLD OPEN A

FADE IN:

INT. LEGEND LANES BOWLING PLAZA, CUYAHOGA FALLS - DAY
(Tom, Jen, Archie, Graham, Grace, Lewell, Extras)

WE SEE A BANNER THAT READS "PBA CUYAHOGA FALLS CLASSIC BOWLING TOURNAMENT" IN A MIDWEST BOWLING ALLEY WITH A SMALL CROWD OF PEOPLE WATCHING. **TOM SMALLWOOD**, 35, EMBLEMATIC BLUE COLLAR MIDWEST DAD, STARES AT TWO SPLIT PINS AS HE WAITS BY THE BALL RETURN. A SPONSOR ON HIS JERSEY READS "ARCHIE'S LANES: HOME OF THE CURLY FRY". WE HEAR TOM IN V.O.

TOM (V.O.)

The odds of picking up a seven-ten split are zero point seven percent. Now if you stop and think about that, your odds drop to zero.

TOM GLANCES AT THE CROWD WATCHING.

TOM (V.O.)

The guy who taught me to bowl told me bowling is like sex, you have to stay focused. And if people are watching pretend they're not there. Unless that's your thing, then roll with it.

TOM GETS HIS BALL FROM THE RETURN AND WIPES IT DOWN.

ARCHIE (O.C.)

Keep your damn elbow in on your release, son! Beat this fool!

TOM TURNS AND WE SEE **ARCHIE BETTS**, 60, DIRECT, UNEQUIVOCAL, SITTING IN THE CROWD. A SECURITY GUARD TELLS HIM TO BE QUIET.

TOM (V.O.)

That's him. Archie Betts. He owns
an alley in Saginaw. I'd bowl
there everyday after school
waiting for my mom to get off work
from her second job.

NEXT TO ARCHIE WE SEE **GRACE SMALLWOOD**, 60'S, RUGGED, SILENTLY
PRAYING, HANDS TOGETHER, HOLDING A CAN BETWEEN THEM.

TOM (V.O.)

There's Mom. Praying for me. With a
Coors Tall Boy between her hands.

WE SEE **LEWELL JONES**, 30'S, GIVING TOM A "YOU THE MAN" NOD.

TOM

My best friend, Lew.

WE SEE **JEN SMALLWOOD**, 30'S, HOPEFUL SMILE, AND **GRAHAM
SMALLWOOD**, PURPOSEFUL, 12, HOLDING A "GO DAD!" SIGN.

TOM (V.O.)

And that's my wife and son. She
called in sick today and he skipped
school. I've never been more proud.

TOM WALKS TO HIS MARK.

TOM (V.O.)

Fact is, I shouldn't be here. Three
months ago I was a thirty-five-year-
old assembly line worker.

HE RAISES HIS BALL.

TOM (V.O.)

But here's the thing about bowling,
you get two chances. No matter what
you do with the first ball, you get
another one to make it right.

HE STARES AT THE PINS, FOCUSED, WE SEE A MYRIAD OF EMOTIONS
ON HIS FACE AS WE...

SMASH CUT TO:

COLD OPEN B

INT. GENERAL MOTORS HUMAN RESOURCES OFFICE - THREE MONTHS AGO
(Tom, William)

A CHYRON READS "THREE MONTHS EARLIER".

WE SEE TOM'S FACE WITH A SIMILAR MYRIAD OF EMOTIONS AS HE
POKES HIS HEAD IN THE OFFICE OF **WILLIAM**, 50'S, BUSINESS SUIT.

TOM

You wanted to see me?

WILLIAM

Come in, have a seat.

TOM, IN A DIRTY GM WORK SHIRT, SITS ACROSS FROM HIM.

WILLIAM (CONT'D)

How long have you worked the
assembly line here, Smallwood?

TOM

Fifteen years.

WILLIAM

Fifteen? That sucks.

TOM

Not at all, I'm grateful for the
work.

WILLIAM

No, it sucks for me. I gotta lay
you off, Tom.

TOM

(STUNNED) What?!

WILLIAM

Orders from corporate. We're in a
recession, sales are down. I have
to let a hundred line workers go.

TOM

Jesus Bill, I got a family.

WILLIAM

I know, it kills me to see you go.
You're the best bowler on our
league team. (THEN) I'm sorry, Tom.
I wish things could be different.

TOM

They could. What if some of the
upper level execs took a pay cut
to save some line jobs?

WILLIAM

It's funny you say that.

TOM

Because...?

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5.
(CO/B)

WILLIAM

No reason. It's just funny.

AND OFF TOM'S LOOK WE...

END OF COLD OPENING

FADE OUT.

ACT ONE

SCENE C

FADE IN:

INT. SMALLWOOD KITCHEN - MORNING
(Tom, Jen, Graham, Grace)

WE SEE A MODEST, MIDWEST KITCHEN WITH A HORSESHOE HANGING OVER THE DOORWAY AND A SHELF OF BOWLING TROPHIES ON THE WALL. TOM MAKES A PB&J FOR GRAHAM'S LUNCH AT THE COUNTER AS GRAHAM EATS CEREAL AT THE TABLE AND JEN POURS COFFEE.

GRAHAM

This cereal tastes weird.

GRAHAM GRABS THE CEREAL BOX, TURNS IT AROUND AND READS IT.

GRAHAM (CONT'D)

These aren't Lucky Charms, they're called Magic Shapes. There's no leprechaun just a creepy wizard.

TOM

Well they were magically cheaper and that was lucky for us.

JEN

We're cutting back for a while, hon.

GRAHAM

It turned my milk black.

TOM

Sounds like that wizard has a couple tricks up his sleeve. Get your backpack, we need to get going.

(MORE)

TOM (CONT'D)

And don't forget your tap shoes.

Your recital's tonight.

GRAHAM

Already wearing 'em. I'll practice in
the garage until it's time to go.

GRAHAM GRABS HIS BACKPACK AND EXITS. WE HEAR THE CLICKETY-
CLACK OF TAP SHOES AS HE GOES.

JEN

That's gonna be loud for seven a.m. but
the neighbors don't like us anyway.

JEN GRABS A PAPER FROM HER PURSE AND CROSSES TO TOM.

JEN (CONT'D)

Can you pick up laundry detergent
today? I have a coupon.

JEN HANDS TOM A COUPON. TOM STARES AT IT.

TOM

I hate coupons. It's like handing
the cashier a note that says, "I
failed my family. Can I borrow
fifty cents for this jug of soap?"

JEN

You didn't fail anybody, you got
laid off. And you've applied at
every plant between here and
Detroit, you'll get something
soon. (THEN) Hey, you okay?

TOM

I'm fine.

JEN

You got in late last night.

TOM

I was at the bowling alley.

JEN

You've gone every night this week.

TOM

Yeah, I've been talking with some other guys who got laid off. It's a support group. Like AA, except for people who used to install seatbelt brackets in Silverados. And you still get to drink.

JEN

Tom, if you have something you need to talk about, I'm here.
What's wrong?

TOM THINKS FOR A FEW BEATS BUT CAN'T SAY IT.

JEN (CONT'D)

When I was nine months pregnant I was crying and you asked me what's wrong. I told you I got stuck in a turnstile at Target. I didn't have to tell you that, but I did.

TOM

Alright. (BEAT) There's no support group at the alley.

JEN

I had a hunch.

TOM

Archie's letting me bowl for free, he's been coaching me. I rolled a two fifty-five last night.

JEN

That's great, babe. Nice score.

TOM

That would put me on the money list at any PBA tournament.

JEN

(CONCERNED) Okay.

TOM

If I was in Reno last night bowling in the Del Taco Open I would've got sixth place. Sixth! I would've made more in one night than two months at the factory.

JEN

What are you saying?

TOM

I'm saying I could make good money in pro tournaments.

(MORE)

TOM (CONT'D)

I'm saying I'm tired of busting my
ass and us barely getting by. And
Graham's right, Magic Shapes suck.
My family deserves Lucky Charms
and full price laundry detergent!

JEN

So... you want to be a pro bowler.

TOM

I'd need to train a hundred games a
week to compete at that level. But
Archie won't charge me a cent.

JEN

So practicing for the tournaments
would be your full-time job.

TOM

I'm thirty-five. I didn't go to
college. There's not a lot of
options for a guy like me. I'm
better at bowling than anything
I've ever done. Maybe now is the
time to take my shot?

JEN JUST STARES AT HIM FOR SEVERAL BEATS.

TOM (CONT'D)

I'm stuck in the Target turnstile
here, honey. Say something.

JEN

It's a lot to throw at me. I'm
thinking...

TOM'S MOM ENTERS THE SIDE DOOR WITH A BAG AND COVERED DISH.

GRACE

Just dropping off a layoff care
package. Tuna casserole with Corn
Flake crust and a six pack. There's
also a gift card in the bag for
Bass Pro Shop. I think they're
having a gun sale this weekend.

JEN

We don't have guns in our house, Grace.

GRACE

Well I wouldn't go around telling
people that.

GRACE HANDS TOM THE CASSEROLE.

TOM

(RE: CASSEROLE) Thanks, Ma.

(TO JEN) Guess we'll talk later.

GRACE

I come at a bad time? (SILENCE)
Good. How can I help?

TOM

I was talking about my job
situation. Maybe it's time for me to
think about doing something else.

GRACE

Something else? Don't go bananas. The factories have been good to our family.

TOM

They just laid me off, Ma.

GRACE

Be patient, stick with what works. Have you been throwing an extra buck in the collection plate at church?

TOM

No. (QUICKLY) I mean, yeah, I have. (CHECKS WATCH) I gotta run Graham to school. Thanks for the casserole, Ma.

GRACE

While I was making it I realized my furnace filters need to be changed.

TOM

Okay, message received. I'll swing by later. (TO JEN) See you tonight.

JEN KISSES TOM, HE EXITS, TAPPING THE HORSESHOE AS HE GOES. JEN PULLS THE SIX PACK FROM THE BAG, WE SEE ONE IS GONE.

JEN

(RE: SIX PACK) There's a beer missing.

GRACE

I got stuck at the railroad crossing on Brockway.

CUT TO:

ACT ONE

SCENE D

INT. TOM'S TRUCK - MINUTES LATER

(Tom, Graham)

WE SEE GRAHAM SITTING BEHIND THE WHEEL OF TOM'S LATE MODEL PICKUP WITH THE DRIVER'S SIDE DOOR OPEN AND TOM'S HAND PUSHING. GRAHAM STEERS AS THE TRUCK STARTS TO ROLL FORWARD THEN QUICKLY SCOOT'S OVER AS TOM HOPS IN. TOM POPS THE CLUTCH, THE ENGINE ROARS TO LIFE, TOM CLOSES THE DOOR AND DRIVES.

TOM

I'm gonna get that starter fixed,
just waiting on a used part.

GRAHAM

It's fine, Dad.

TOM ACCELERATES, THE GLOVEBOX POPS OPEN, A NOTEBOOK FALLS OUT.

TOM

I'm also gonna fix that glove box.

GRAHAM PICKS UP THE NOTEBOOK, IT HAS "JOURNAL" PRINTED ON IT.

GRAHAM

You keep a journal?

TOM

It's for bowling. I log the lane patterns after every game. How much of the lane oil covers is really important. See, the longer the pattern, the less your ball can hook.

(MORE)

TOM (CONT'D)

Knowing the pattern distance
determines where the ball needs to
be when it reacts towards the
pocket. That make sense?

GRAHAM

Not really. But you don't have to
say it again.

AS THEY RIDE, GRAHAM OPENS HIS BACKPACK, TAKES OUT HIS BOOKS,
PUTS HIS TAP SHOES ON THE BOTTOM THEN PUTS HIS BOOKS BACK IN.

TOM

What are you doing?

GRAHAM

Hiding my tap shoes in the bottom
of my back pack.

TOM

Why?

GRAHAM

Because I forgot to yesterday. And
there's already two guys calling me
"Ma'am" instead of "Graham".

TOM

(BEAT) Listen, never be ashamed of
what you want to do, okay? People
who crap on your dream don't have
the guts to follow their own. You
get one life, do what you love.

THEY RIDE FOR A FEW BEATS.

GRAHAM

Hey Dad. (THEN) Never mind.

TOM

What is it?

GRAHAM

Why'd you become an assembly line
worker?

TOM

Well, it's complicated. I got
married, then your mom got
pregnant, I needed a secure job,
that's the one I got. (BEAT) I
guess it's not that complicated.

GRAHAM

I added the months up, Dad. I think
you reversed the got married then
got pregnant part of your story.

TOM

If you're that smart you shouldn't
be getting a B in math.

TOM SLOWS THE TRUCK DOWN TO A CRAWL.

TOM (CONT'D)

Open the door.

GRAHAM

Why?

TOM

Lew needs a ride to the alley.

HE OPENS THE DOOR, WE SEE LEWELL JOGGING NEXT TO THE TRUCK.

LEWELL

You ain't stopping?

TOM

(YELLING) I can't, we're on a hill.

If the engine dies we won't be able
to push. Jump in.

LEWELL HANDS GRAHAM HIS BOWLING BALL, DROPS BACK, JOGS
FASTER, THEN GRABS GRAHAM'S HAND AND CLIMBS IN.

LEWELL

(WINDED) Appreciate you. (TO
GRAHAM) My girlfriend took my car.

GRAHAM

She borrowed it?

LEWELL

No, she took it. Along with my
flatscreen and laptop. Ran off to
Florida after I got laid off.

GRAHAM

I'm sorry.

LEWELL

Thanks, Grammy. I heard she got
car jacked and caught an STD in
Orlando. Don't tell me prayers go
unanswered.

TOM

(GESTURING TOWARDS GRAHAM) Lew!

LEWELL

Sorry. My point is, these are hard
times for all of us.

GRAHAM REACHES IN HIS BACKPACK AND TAKES OUT A LOTTERY
SCRATCHER CARD WITH "EASY MONEY" ON IT AND HANDS IT TO TOM.

GRAHAM

Dad. (RE: CARD) I got this for you.

TOM

A lottery scratcher?!

GRAHAM

It's called "Easy Money". You just
scratch off three horseshoes and
you win fifty thousand dollars.

TOM

How'd you get this? You gotta be
twenty-one to buy these.

GRAHAM

Not if you go to the guy at the
Mini Mart. The kid ahead of me
bought a grape flavored cigar.

LEWELL

Mini mart? That's my cousin, Eli.

TOM SHOOTS LEW A LOOK.

LEWELL (CONT'D)

Don't begrudge the man, he's
trying to make a dollar like the
rest of us.

TOM PULLS UP IN FRONT OF THE SCHOOL.

TOM

Graham, we don't solve our problems
with gambling. Okay?

GRAHAM

But all you need is three
horseshoes. Like the one over our
door and the tattoo on your arm,
it's a sign.

TOM

These things are a scam. You get
ahead in life with hard work. I'm
returning this and giving you your
money back.

GRAHAM

Alright.

GRAHAM OPENS THE DOOR AND STARTS TO EXIT.

TOM

Mom's picking you up, I'll see you
at home. And keep away from Eli and
the Mini Mart.

GRAHAM EXITS. TOM AND LEWELL WATCH HIM GO. LEWELL HANDS TOM A
PENNY AND TOM QUICKLY STARTS SCRATCHING OFF THE LOTTERY CARD.

TOM/LEWELL

Horseshoe... Horseshoe... Pickle.

Damn!

CUT TO:

ACT ONE

SCENE E

INT. UPTOWN BEAUTY SALON - LATER
(Jen, Sydney, Darlene, Patty, Nan)

JEN CUTS THE HAIR OF **PATTY**, 60'S. **SYDNEY**, 30'S, CUTS THE HAIR OF, **NAN**, 60'S, IN THE NEXT CHAIR AS **DARLENE**, 40'S, SWEEPS UP.

SYDNEY

Has Tom ever mentioned that he wanted to be a pro bowler?

JEN

Yeah, but I never thought he was serious. I mean, we all say things. Sometimes I say, "I'm gonna open my own salon." But I never say, (SERIOUS) "I'm gonna open my own salon."

PATTY

Well if you do open one, make it a spa. And hire a male masseuse with a Latin accent. I'll be there.

NAN

Why? To watch him quit on his first day?

DARLENE

Tom's got a wicked shot, no denying that. He's got a four-fifty rev rate on his ball.

NAN

Speak English.

DARLENE

He's frickin' good. His team crushed mine in league finals last year. I egged his truck, don't say anything.

SYDNEY

Maybe the whole idea will pass. He's probably just going through some unemployment depression.

NAN

When men lose their jobs they lose their minds. After my husband got canned he claimed he wanted to move out and start a new life.

JEN

I thought he did move out.

NAN

Three years ago. We'll see how long that lasts.

JEN

I don't think it's gonna pass. It's something he's always wanted to do and he feels like now is the time.

SYDNEY

(TO JEN) How do you feel about it?

JEN

I love Tom. And I believe in him.
But bowling would be his full-time
job. We have a twelve-year-old, we
barely get by...

DARLENE

In other words, you don't believe
in him.

JEN

I just don't know if now is the
time to take a chance like this.

SYDNEY

I hate to say it, but you need to
be honest and tell him that, hon.

JEN

I know. It's just gonna be hard.

DARLENE

At least you can say you were almost
married to a professional athlete.

NAN

I had sex with a minor league
baseball player.

PATTY

I think you meant to say baseball
team.

CUT TO:

ACT ONE

SCENE H

INT. ARCHIE'S LANES - LATER
(Tom, Archie, Lewell, Randall, Extras)

WE SEE TOM IN A LANE, TRYING TO FOCUS. HE ROLLS, LEAVES A PIN STANDING, THEN GOES BACK AND SITS WITH ARCHIE, AND LEWELL.

ARCHIE

For the last time, keep your elbow
in on your release, or I'll sew it
to your damn body. Your choice.

TOM

I got a lot on my mind. (BEAT) I
told Jen this morning.

ARCHIE

How'd it go?

TOM

She stared at me and didn't say
anything. As if I had just told her I
wanted to be a professional bowler.

LEWELL

She didn't say no. Which is yes
adjacent. You're good. Congrats.

LEWELL CROSSES TO THE LANE AND BOWLS, DURING:

ARCHIE

Listen, I've been married a few
times over the years.

TOM

I know. I worked my way up from
ring bearer to best man.

ARCHIE

What I learned is, you gotta put
your wife first. And that's exactly
what you're doing. Your bowling can
give Jen a life she's never had.

TOM

I think that's what she's afraid
of. (CHECKS WATCH) I need to cut
out early today, Arch. I've got to
swing by Mom's.

TOM STARTS TO TAKE OFF HIS SHOES AND PACK HIS BALL.

ARCHIE

Hold up, I got you something.

LEWELL RETURNS AND SITS AS ARCHIE HANDS TOM A BAG. TOM OPENS
IT AND TAKES OUT A PRO BOWLING JERSEY.

TOM

A pro jersey?

ARCHIE

Look at the back.

TOM FLIPS THE JERSEY OVER. WE SEE A SPONSOR PATCH SEWN ON.

TOM

(READING) "Archie's Lanes. Home of
the Curly Fry." (TOUCHED) Thanks,
Arch.

LEWELL

You're gonna need a manager. But
I'm your best friend, I ain't
taking twenty percent. Let's meet
in the middle at eighteen.

TOM

How is eighteen meeting in the
middle?

LEWELL

See, that's why you need me.
Someone who understands business.

RANDALL, 40'S, A BOWLER IN THE NEXT LANE CHIMES IN.

RANDALL

Am I hearing this right?
Smallwood's going pro?

TOM

No. I mean, maybe. I'm thinking
about it. Don't say anything.

RANDALL STARTS LAUGHING.

RANDALL

(YELLS) Yo! Smallwood's going pro!

RANDALL EXITS, STILL LAUGHING.

ARCHIE

Don't listen to that fool. You're
gonna wear that jersey on ESPN some
day.

(MORE)

ARCHIE (CONT'D)

Make sure that Archie's patch faces
the camera as often as possible.

TOM

If that ever happens, I will.

ARCHIE

Not if, when. I coached you since
you were a boy, this ain't just
your dream. So lose the negativity.

TOM

I'm not trying to be negative, I'm
just being realistic.

ARCHIE

You want to be realistic? You have
the same average as pros on the
tour. A natural gift for breaking
to the pocket on every shot. And an
arm that God himself attached to
your body and said, "Thou shalt
bowl." Realistic? Please. I ever
tell you the story about when I
wanted to open my own alley?

TOM

Yes.

LEWELL

You've told everyone that damn
story.

ARCHIE

Nineteen seventy-nine. Everybody
kept telling me a black man would
never get a business loan. And
guess what?

TOM

(MILLIONTH TIME) They were right.

ARCHIE

They were right. Sons of bitches.
But then my uncle died, left me
some money and here I am. You gotta
believe, son!

AND OFF TOM'S LOOK, WE...

CUT TO:

ACT ONE

SCENE J

INT. GRACE'S HOUSE - LATER

(Tom, Grace)

TOM STANDS ON A STEP LADDER INSTALLING A FURNACE FILTER IN GRACE'S WALL AS SHE WATCHES.

TOM

I've seen you replace the transmission in a Buick and gut a deer all by yourself. I don't know why you always want me to do this.

GRACE

Excuse me for wanting a little quality time with my son. (RE: FILTER) You got that in backwards.

TOM

No I don't. (LOOKS AT FILTER) Oh.

TOM TAKES OUT THE FILTER AND STARTS REINSTALLING IT.

GRACE

I got some good news today. I pulled a string at the Dayco plant. Got you an interview for the assembly line.

TOM

What?! I applied there. The guy said they weren't hiring.

GRACE

You didn't walk in on him and the sales lady doing the four legged fox trot years ago. You'll get the job.

TOM

(CLEARLY DISAPPOINTED) Oh.

TOM FINISHES AND STEPS OFF THE LADDER.

GRACE

I was all set to say you're welcome. I don't know what the hell to say now.

TOM

I appreciate it, Ma. I was just thinking... maybe it's time to finally take my shot at bowling in the PBA.

GRACE

Bowling again. (THEN) If you lose how are you gonna pay your bills?

TOM

When I played this dream out in my head I didn't picture myself losing.

GRACE

Look, you're a great bowler, Tommy. Highest league average every year.

(MORE)

GRACE (CONT'D)

But you got a family, you need a
guaranteed paycheck. You really
want to put Jenny and Graham at
risk so you can bowl?

THIS STRIKES A CHORD WITH HIM.

TOM

(SOBER) No.

TOM GRABS HIS KEYS TO LEAVE.

GRACE

Don't get all sideways.

TOM

(SHORT) I'm not. You're right. If I
have a real job offer I gotta take
it. Now thanks to you, I have one.

GRACE

I'm just trying to be realistic.

TOM

Yeah, we're both always trying to
be realistic, I got that from you.
Maybe that's our problem.

GRACE

What are you talking about?

TOM

I'm talking about taking a chance
for a better life once in a while,
Ma.

GRACE

I take chances.

TOM

You go to the same places every
day. You drink the same beer, you
make the same tuna casserole.

(QUICKLY) I'm not saying change
that.

GRACE

Well what are you saying?

TOM

(BEAT) I'm saying ever since Dad
died you've been frozen in time.
Have you even been on a date?

GRACE

Where the hell is this coming from?

TOM

It's been thirty years. Have you?

GRACE

I'm an old woman, it's a little
late to dust off home plate.

TOM

No you're not! What about the
neighbor who mows your lawn and
brings you tomatoes?

GRACE

He's got sideburns and drives a Fiat. If I wanna spend time with a hoodlum I'll visit someone on death row.

TOM

See? Another excuse to not do something. This is why you're... who you are.

GRACE

Who am I exactly?

TOM

Someone who always said to play it safe. Stay in the middle of the herd. The cows in the front of the pack are the first ones to get slaughtered. You took me to Uncle Al's farm so I could see for myself.

GRACE

You lost your father. I didn't want to see you get hurt again.

TOM

I know.

TOM GRABS HIS COAT.

GRACE

I was trying to protect you, I still am.

TOM

I know!

HE HEADS FOR THE DOOR.

GRACE

The same way you need to protect
your family.

TOM

I know!

TOM EXITS. GRACE GOES TO THE DOOR.

GRACE

(CALLING OUT) Speaking of which,
there's a gun hidden in your house.
If you ever hear an intruder call
me and I'll tell you where it is!

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

SCENE K

FADE IN:

INT. SMALLWOOD KITCHEN - LATER
(Tom, Jen, Graham)

JEN IS DRESSED UP FOR THE RECITAL AS TOM ENTERS. WE HEAR THE SOUND OF LOUD TAP DANCING COMING FROM A NEARBY ROOM.

TOM

Hey.

SHE CAN'T HEAR OVER THE TAPPING.

JEN

What?

TOM

(LOUDER) Nothing. I said hey.

JEN

(LOUD) Oh.

TOM CAN'T HEAR OVER THE TAPPING.

TOM

(LOUD) What?

JEN

(YELLING) Graham!

THE TAPPING STOPS.

JEN (CONT'D)

He's excited for the recital.

TOM

I'll go get changed.

JEN

Wait. I want to talk to you about
this morning.

TOM

(PEEVED) There's no point, I'm not
bowling. Mom got me a job at the
Dayco plant.

JEN

Oh.

TOM

Why? What were you gonna say?

JEN

(COVERING) Nothing. Doesn't matter.
Like you said, there's no point.

GRAHAM ENTERS WEARING HIS TAP SHOES. HE SENSES THE TENSION.

GRAHAM

What's wrong?

TOM

(NOT OKAY) Nothing. Everything's
great. Fantastic. I'm happy.

TOM CROSSES UPSTAIRS. GRAHAM WATCHES HIM GO, THEN:

GRAHAM

He's not happy.

JEN

I know, honey.

AND WE...

CUT TO:

ACT TWO

SCENE L

INT. SMALLWOOD KITCHEN - LATER THAT NIGHT

(Tom, Jen, Graham)

TOM, SHIRT AND TIE, ENTERS WITH A DRESSED UP JEN AND GRAHAM FROM THE RECITAL. THE MOOD IS UPBEAT, JEN HOLDS A PLAYBILL, GRAHAM CARRIES HIS TAP SHOES.

JEN

Graham... you were amazing.

TOM

Look, I don't know much about
dance, but I know you won.

GRAHAM

It was a recital not a competition.

TOM

Graham, you kicked everyone's ass
and I'm proud of you. (THEN) You're
really good, son.

GRAHAM

Thanks, Dad.

JEN

Get ready for bed, hon, it's a
school night.

GRAHAM STARTS TO GO THEN STOPS.

GRAHAM

Hey Dad, you know how we were
talking in the truck this morning?
I think this is what I want to do.

TOM

Put in the hours, hard work, you'll
get there.

GRAHAM EXITS.

JEN

What'd you talk about in the truck?

TOM

Life, dreams, tap dancing. Guy
stuff.

JEN

Tom, I can tell you're not thrilled
about taking that job at the plant.

TOM

I'm fine, I'm good.

JEN

You're fine, you're good, you're
lying.

TOM

Look, I figured something out
tonight. When we got to the
recital, I was all pissed.

JEN

I know. But I think that guy had
the parking space first.

TOM

Not that and no he didn't. I was
pissed about not bowling.

(MORE)

TOM (CONT'D)

I always thought it was what I was supposed to do in life. I was sitting in that theatre thinking this was my last chance and it's gone. Then my kid takes the stage. I got my arm around my wife. And I realize, I'm not a pro bowler, I'm a dad and a husband. That's what I am. I don't need to be anything else.

JEN

To be honest, I was gonna tell you I was against it. I feel bad.

TOM

Don't. I'm good. (BEAT) You know, everyone thinks the hardest thing to do in bowling is to pick up the seven-ten split. But it's not. It's the four-six-seven-nine-ten split. It's called The Greek Church. You got a zero point two percent chance. A handful of people can pick that up on their best day. I did it one night. Then I go to this bar, feeling pretty good about myself. And I see this girl, way out of my league.

(MORE)

TOM (CONT'D)

Any other night, wouldn't have had the guts. But that night, I had this confidence. So I ask her to dance. Month later, she's pregnant. Week after that, we're married at the courthouse. Later that night, we're in the honeymoon suite at the Super Eight.

JEN

You knew how to treat a girl.

TOM

The way I see it, bowling isn't what I'm supposed to do with my life, it's what led me to my life.

JEN THINKS FOR A BEAT. SHE STANDS AND STARTS TO EXIT.

TOM (CONT'D)

Did I say something wrong?

JEN

No.

TOM

Where you going?

JEN

Bedroom. You've got one minute to be up there with your pants off.

TOM JUMPS UP AND RUSHES UPSTAIRS AS WE...

CUT TO:

ACT TWO

SCENE M

INT. DAYCO PLANT HUMAN RESOURCES OFFICE - MORNING, DAYS LATER
(Tom, Earl)

TOM SITS ACROSS THE DESK FROM **EARL**, 60'S.

EARL

Your mother used to work here.

TOM

I know.

EARL

She ever talk about anything that
happened?

TOM

You're good.

EARL

Right, okay. So the job is on the
assembly line. It pays a fourth
less than what they were giving you
at GM. And it's third shift.

TOM

I'm working nights?

EARL

You sleep during the day. I think
you'll find your family appreciates
you more when they see you less.

CUT TO:

ACT TWO

SCENE P

INT. ARCHIE'S LANES - LATER THAT AFTERNOON

(Tom, Archie, Lewell, Extras)

WE SEE A TV SCREEN WITH A PRO BOWLING TOURNAMENT UNDERWAY. A TALL, IMPOSING BOWLER, "THE BIG NASTY", STARTS HIS APPROACH. WE WIDEN TO REVEAL THE TV IS HANGING OVER A LANE WHERE TOM STANDS HOLDING HIS CHIPPED UP BALL. TOM ROLLS A STRIKE THEN SITS WITH ARCHIE AND LEWELL BY THE SCORER'S CHAIR.

ARCHIE

(RE: SCORE) Two-sixty. I see you finally decided to start keeping your elbow in now that you're not going pro and it doesn't matter.

LEWELL

You gotta do right by your family, Smalls. I understand.

TOM

I appreciate that.

ARCHIE

It's a damn waste of talent. It's like telling Nicki Minaj to wear an overcoat.

LEWELL

My offer to be your manager came from my love of bowling and you. But I respect your decision.

TOM

Thanks, Lew.

LEWELL UNFOLDS A PIECE OF PAPER FROM HIS POCKET.

LEWELL

In case you change your mind, you
want to sign this informal
agreement I wrote up? It really
protects both of us.

ARCHIE POINTS TO THE TV SCREEN. THE BIG NASTY IS ROLLING.

ARCHIE

(RE: SCREEN) Look at that, you're
twenty pins ahead of The Big Nasty
and he's in the ninth frame.

WE SEE THE BIG NASTY PICK UP A SPARE AND DO HIS SIGNATURE
"SWINGING LASSO" CELEBRATION, TWIRLING AN INVISIBLE ROPE AT
THE PINS, THEN PULLING THEM IN. THE CROWD CHEERS.

LEWELL

Big Nasty. I hate that dude.

ARCHIE

Number one ranked bowler in the
country, about to win a major with
a lower score than what my boy just
put up.

TOM

Good for him. He's probably single,
no family and miserable.

ARCHIE

He married a panty model. He's got
five kids.

LEWELL

I heard he drives a Maserati
Quattroporte.

ARCHIE

(IMPRESSED) Damn. (TO TOM) How's
your truck running?

TOM PACKS HIS BALL, ZIPS HIS BAG AND STANDS TO LEAVE.

TOM

Look, I know who I am. I like who
I am, and I'm happy. See you
tomorrow at league night.

ARCHIE

It's the tenth frame. Don't you
want to see if you beat him?

TOM

Nope. Don't care.

TOM EXITS. LEWELL AND SOME OTHER BOWLERS FROM THE NEXT LANE
GATHER AROUND ARCHIE AND STARE AT THE TV SCREEN TO WATCH THE
BIG NASTY BOWL THE TENTH. AFTER A FEW BEATS...

ARCHIE

(CALLING OUT) We can see you in
the screen reflection, Thomas.
Just come sit with us, you're
making a fool of yourself hiding
behind that ball rack.

WE SEE TOM PEEKING AT THE TV SCREEN BEHIND A RACK OF BALLS.
HE JOINS THE OTHERS, AND AS THEY WATCH THE BIG NASTY BOWL THE
TENTH, WE...

CUT TO:

ACT TWO

SCENE R

INT. UPTOWN BEAUTY SALON - LATER

(Jen, Grace)

JEN PUTS A SALON CAPE AROUND GRACE AS SHE SITS IN HER CHAIR.
GRACE IS THE ONLY CUSTOMER, THE OTHER CHAIRS ARE EMPTY.

JEN

Well, this is quite a surprise.

GRACE

You told me to come by.

JEN

I did?

GRACE

...the night Tom brought you home
to meet me.

JEN

That was fifteen years ago.

GRACE

Well here I am.

JEN

I'm glad you made it, I was getting
worried. And you came at a good
time, everyone's at lunch. Except
for me. Didn't know I had an
appointment. Guess I'll eat later.

JEN STANDS BEHIND GRACE, THEY LOOK IN THE MIRROR.

JEN (CONT'D)

So, what do we want to do?

GRACE

I've had the same perm for thirty years. I'm not a fan of change.

JEN

I understand.

GRACE

You stick with what works in life.

JEN

There's an argument to be made for that.

GRACE

Ask the people on the Hindenburg how they feel about taking unnecessary chances.

JEN

I hear what you're saying.

GRACE

(BEAT) Does Tom hate me?

JEN

What? Of course not, he loves you.

GRACE

I know he loves me, I'm asking if he hates me. I had a mother, I know how it goes.

JEN

If you're talking about getting him the job and what you said, he knows it was because you care. By the way, I found a pistol taped under our table, you can come get that.

GRACE

(BEAT) I always told Tommy to play it safe in life. Now I'm wondering if I wasn't just a scared widow saying it to myself and he got caught in the crossfire.

JEN

Grace, it was your job to keep him safe, you did it. And it's my job to make him happy, that's what I need to do. So, what about your hair?

GRACE

Let's try something different.
(THEN) Don't tell anyone this, but a man asked me out to dinner.

JEN

That's great! When did this happen?

GRACE

Seven and a half years ago.

OFF JEN'S LOOK, WE...

CUT TO:

ACT TWO

SCENE T

INT. SMALLWOOD KITCHEN - LATER THAT NIGHT

(Tom, Jen, Graham)

TOM COOKS DINNER AS JEN ENTERS CARRYING A BOX AND LAPTOP.

JEN

Hey, how'd it go?

TOM

I've got good news and bad news. I
got the job at the Dayco plant.

(THEN) That's both of the news.

JEN SETS THE BOX AND LAPTOP ON THE TABLE.

JEN

Sit. I want to ask you something.

TOM CROSSES AND SITS NEXT TO HER.

JEN (CONT'D)

Why are you taking a job you don't
want?

TOM

What do you mean "don't want"? I
get to drive one thousand forty-six
bolts into brake drums every day.

JEN

You're doing it because it's the
right thing to do for your family.

TOM

Yeah, we talked about this.

JEN

I agree, you should do the right thing for your family. So here's the plan.

SHE OPENS HER LAPTOP AND SHOWS TOM THE SCREEN.

JEN (CONT'D)

You have a two-ten bowling average in your last thirty-six games of league play. This qualifies you for PBA membership. You'll start doing regional tournaments, the first one is in three months at Cuyahoga Falls. Horrible town, enjoy.

WE SEE TOM WITH A "JESUS I LOVE THIS WOMAN" LOOK ON HIS FACE.

JEN (CONT'D)

Now, if you don't place in the top third, you get nothing and we lose the entry fee, which is bad. But if you can win just one regional, it covers all your bowling expenses till the end of the year. And keeps you in the running to win a major.

TOM

Jen...

JEN

Don't interrupt, babe. The ultimate goal of course is to win a major.

(MORE)

JEN (CONT'D)

You'll earn exemption so you can enter any PBA event you want and ideally bowl in the PBA Championship.

TOM

Honey, stop. I'm fine. I don't need to do this.

JEN

Actually, you do. You're not the only one in this family with a dream. Graham wants to dance on Broadway, you need to show him what's possible. I want to open my own blow out salon. I'm gonna need you to finish in the top ten at a major for me to do that. I mapped out the driving routes, budgeted motel costs, gas money. With your unemployment, me picking up extra shifts, cancelling cable, we can go for six months. After that we can reassess.

TOM

Sweetie, I appreciate all you've done here. But... I can't do it.

JEN

I thought you'd say that. So I
stopped off at the bowling alley on
my way home tonight.

TOM

Why?

JEN

To talk to Archie. He helped me
pick this out.

JEN OPENS THE BOX AND TAKES OUT A NEW BOWLING BALL.

JEN (CONT'D)

If you're gonna be a pro bowler you
can't be using that crappy, chipped
up ball you've had for ten years.

JEN HANDS TOM THE BALL. HE STARES AT IT, STUNNED.

JEN (CONT'D)

We're selling the snow blower to
pay for it. You'll be scooping this
winter but Archie says you could
lose a few pounds.

TOM

Archie shouldn't talk.

JEN

Try the holes, babe.

TOM PUTS HIS FINGERS IN THE HOLES.

JEN (CONT'D)

It's already drilled. No returns.

TOM

(THINKS) What if I lose?

JEN

What if you win? You and your mom had a tough life, you lost some important things. But you married me. And I say why can't we be the family who wins?

TOM THINKS FOR A FEW BEATS, SHE WAITS, THEN JUMPS IN.

JEN (CONT'D)

Do you know how many wives there are who'd say, "Don't take the paying job, just bowl and see what happens?" One! There is one and you married her. You won the lottery, I suggest you cash in your ticket.

TOM CONSIDERS HIS SITUATION AS GRAHAM ENTERS, SENSING TENSION.

GRAHAM

What's wrong?

TOM

I have to scoop this winter.

GRAHAM

Why?

TOM

Because I got my third horseshoe.

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT TWO

TAG

FADE IN:

EXT. FRONT PORCH - EVENING

(Grace, Archie)

WE SEE GRACE WITH A NEW HAIRSTYLE AND NEW BLOUSE, CAUTIOUSLY WALKING UP TO THE FRONT PORCH OF A HOUSE.

TOM (V.O.)

To bowl a perfect strike consistently, your ball has to hit the pocket of the pins. That's between the one and three if you're a righty. And your entry angle should be at six degrees, which is really frickin' hard to do.

GRACE STOPS, UNZIPS HER PURSE AND PULLS OUT A COMPACT. SHE NERVOUSLY CHECKS HER MAKE-UP AND HAIR IN THE MIRROR.

TOM (V.O.)

A bowling lane is sixty feet long and only forty-one and a half inches wide. A lot can go wrong.

SHE MAKES A FACE, PUTS THE COMPACT BACK IN HER PURSE, PULLS OUT A BEER, POPS IT OPEN, TAKES A FEW HEARTY CHUGS.

TOM (V.O.)

Your odds of bowling a perfect game are eleven thousand five hundred to one. Not good.

GRACE CHUCKS THE CAN IN SOME BUSHES AND WALKS UP TO THE DOOR.

TOM (V.O.)

Here's the thing about bowling. You have to realize you're not gonna be perfect every time. But you gotta try.

GRACE GATHERS HERSELF, KNOCKS ON THE DOOR. ARCHIE ANSWERS IN PAJAMA BOTTOMS AND A T-SHIRT.

ARCHIE

Grace? What are you doing here?

GRACE

You asked me to dinner.

ARCHIE

That was ten years ago.

GRACE

Seven and a half.

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. LEGEND LANES CUYAHOGA FALLS - BACK TO PRESENT TIME
(Tom, Jen, Archie, Graham, Grace, Extras)

WE SEE THE SAME MOMENT AT THE END OF THE FIRST SCENE, A BANNER READING "PBA CUYAHOGA FALLS CLASSIC" AND TOM STANDING IN THE LANE, HOLDING HIS BALL, FOCUSED ON THE PINS.

TOM (V.O.)

I bowl for a living. I pick up this split and I earn more money in a day than I've made in a month. If I miss it I have a long, quiet drive home with my family wondering if we've made a huge mistake.

HE TAKES A BREATH THEN START HIS APPROACH.

TOM (V.O.)

But this is my life now. And this
is my second shot.

HE ROLLS HIS BALL, IT HEADS FOR THE SEVEN PIN IN THE SPLIT.

TOM (V.O.)

And in the words of the great
Archie Betts, second shots only
work when you take them.

WE'RE TIGHT ON TOM'S FACE WITH A LOOK OF ANTICIPATION AS
WE...

FADE OUT.

END OF SHOW