

HOW TO GROW YOUR LIFE

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FADE IN:

EXT. SUBURBAN BACKYARD - SCOTTSDALE, ARIZONA - MORNING

A huge expanse of grass, two full acres, dotted with mature trees. To our right is an impressive modernistic style house and patio/swimming pool. We move to the back left of the property, and go up steps to a large raised garden area, barren of plants, but studded with vegetable seed packets attached to stakes.

We examine each packet and see the OPENING CREDITS printed on them. Plants slowly break through the soil. WHIMSICAL MUSIC starts as the plants grow PRETURNATURALLY FAST. We are at ground level as the vegetable stalks and vines grow all around us.

Tomatoes form, swell and instantly ripen. Broccoli heads become enormous. Corn husks appear and sprout soft silk. It's chaotic vitality, abundance, richness—and beauty.

IN REAL TIME, PULL BACK as the MUSIC FADES to reveal a dense, fully grown summer garden. An automatic sprinkler comes to life and SPRAYS the plants with a gentle rhythm.

DAVE (V.O.)

The answers to life's questions
were out there all the time—in
my garden.

CU of a huge, red tomato with a water droplet slowly moving down its unblemished face.

We turn toward the house and MOVE IN toward a bedroom window.

INT. BEDROOM - MORNING

DAVE FIORELLO, 39, is in bed, hands behind his head, wide awake with a morose expression, staring at the slowly rotating ceiling fan. On his night stand is a blue green bottle of stomach medicine. On the opposite side of the huge bed is his wife JOAN, 39, in a cushy nest of frilly pillows. The colors and fabrics in the room are decidedly feminine. Dave's pillow looks flat and hard.

A bedside clock alarm BUZZES annoyingly.

With one quick, practiced movement Dave swats the clock and the noise stops. He groans and sits up in bed. Joan stirs, turning over. She stretches like a happy cat.

DAVE

It can't be morning already.

JOAN

How'd you sleep?

DAVE

Somewhere between poorly and not at all.

Dave reaches for the stomach medicine, gulps some down.

DAVE

Julian's cut my ad budget again. He's doing it just to make sure I won't reach the sales targets. My whole department's dying on the vine.

Joan gets out of bed, turns to Dave. Her hair and make-up are perfect. Her designer nightshirt has a print of 100 golf clubs of different vintages.

JOAN

(cheerleader)

You have to hang in there. It's only a month until Dad retires— and we take over.

INT. THE KITCHEN - SAME

CU OF A CALENDAR, "Great Golf Courses of Scotland" MONTH OF MAY. A large circle is drawn around May 30th, and in red letters "THE BIG REWARD!!!"

DAVE (O.S)

I'm not so sure that's a good thing.

JOAN (O.S.)

Yes you are.

INT. BEDROOM CLOSET - MORNING

As big as most bedrooms, full of beautiful and expensive clothes. Dave and Joan selecting what to wear.

DAVE

The house is so quiet in the morning now.

JOAN

I can't believe our little girl is in college.

DAVE

I can't believe she's gone.

Joan looks at Dave fondly.

JOAN

You should be proud. We raised a wonderful young woman.

DAVE

Yes we did.

Joan kisses Dave on the cheek and walks out.

EXT. GOLF COURSE - MORNING

Dave, in running togs, jogs along to join KENNY GRABOWSKI, 49, a pudgy, happy guy whose maroon Arizona State University t-shirt is already soaked with sweat. Dave is rangy, tanned, and moves with the fluid grace of an ex-athlete. Kenny stretches and flexes in a goofy way, creating an odd series of loud CREAKS AND POPS.

DAVE

(jogging in place)

You wanna keep it down. Some of the neighbors are trying to sleep.

KENNY

Just making certain all the parts still work. I haven't done this in 25 years.

They walk toward the golf course fairway.

DAVE

Tell me again why you talked me into taking up running?

Kenny glances furtively behind.

KENNY

Because someone's gaining on us.

Dave starts to turn his head.

KENNY

Don't let him see you! He's a grotesque monster. And he's coming for us.

(chilling voice)

He's MIDDLE AGE!!

Dave laughs. They have reached the carefully manicured grass.

Kenny takes a deep Yoga-type 'cleansing breath'. Dave comically emulates him. Then coughs.

KENNY

All right. Repeat after me:

(starts jogging)

I'm 28 and I feel great!

Dave exhales a deep sigh and runs behind Kenny.

DAVE

(unenthusiastically)

I'm 28 and...

KENNY

Louder! I'm 28 and I feel great!

Dave pulls even with Kenny.

DAVE AND KENNY

I'm 28 and I feel great!

They start running surprisingly fast.

FIFTEEN MINUTES LATER

With the stately clubhouse in the b.g., Kenny is doubled over, wheezing. Dave has his hands on his hips, appears whipped.

DAVE

Look at me, I'm 83.

Kenny wipes his face with his shirt.

KENNY

Damn this is hard.
 (motions to clubhouse)
 I'm going in for a beer.

Dave tugs him back toward home.

DAVE

No, no. Remember what your
 doctor said. You're going to
 have a nice low cholesterol
 breakfast. Maybe cardboard and
 skim milk.

Kenny protests momentarily, then follows.

KENNY

Stupid guy just overreacted when
 he found my blood was one part
 vodka and two parts butterfat.

APPROACHING DAVE'S HOUSE

A TURQUOISE MINT CONDITION VINTAGE T-BIRD CONVERTIBLE

in the driveway next door. Both Kenny and Dave almost drool
 over the fine machine, as boys are wont to do.

KENNY

Isn't that a gem! It belongs to
 our classy new neighbor. Met her
 yet?

DAVE

Haven't seen her.

KENNY

Well, I have and she is awesome-
 stunning--fabulous. Gotta be an
 actress, or maybe a local TV
 anchor. And my sources tell me-
 single. I'm going to get to know
 her very, very well this summer.

DAVE

So you've talked to her?

KENNY

Ahh...not yet. One step at a
 time.

Dave shakes his head skeptically.

INT. SUNNY KITCHEN ALCOVE - MORNING

Dave, in suit and tie, pours himself a cup of coffee from a carafe on the small breakfast table. Joan rushes in, a stylishly dressed cyclone of drama.

JOAN

I am going to be so late!

DAVE

Relax. They can't start without you.

Joan pours a cup of coffee, goes to the door--spilling the coffee on the way--opens the door then turns back.

JOAN

Remember those errands--the list I gave you. I just won't be able to break away.

DAVE

No problem. I don't need to eat lunch or anything.

JOAN

I am a bundle of nerves. This is such a huge day.

EXT. THE DRIVEWAY - MORNING

The garage door is open, Joan inside, Dave outside in the driveway. An SUV takes up half the garage. The other half is occupied by a golf cart and a jumble of golf equipment. A sedan sits baking in the hot driveway.

JOAN

Wish me luck! And please pick up Boston Market for dinner.

DAVE

What a great idea. We eat there so seldom.

(a three-beat)

Go get 'em, kid.

He walks to the sedan and opens the door, winces from touching the hot handle. Joan gets in the golf cart, and backs out of the driveway.

JOAN

They said I couldn't make it to
the club championship finals.
But they were wrong.

DAVE

I know you'll bring home a
trophy.

She flashes a smile.

INT. DAVE'S CAR - MINUTES LATER

Dave turns on the radio. He's sweating.

ANNOUNCER (V.O.)

Another scorcher in Phoenix
today.

Dave shakes his head, loosens his tie. He arrives at the
exit gate.

EXT. OUTSIDE THE GATE - SAME

An enormous metal plaque is affixed to the wall outside the
gate: Golf clubs and golf balls are arranged in a "skull and
crossbones" pattern. The sign reads: Sussex Country Club. A
Private Golf Community. Trespassers Cheerfully Prosecuted.

THE OTHER SIDE OF THE GATE

Dave is waiting patiently for the geriatric security guard,
ARTHUR, to open the gate. Arthur stabs a long finger at a
control button inside his booth. The gate opens a foot or
so, then quickly closes. He repeats this procedure several
times.

INSIDE THE CAR

Dave is getting unbearably warm.

ARTHUR

Sorry, Dave. Just don't know
what's the matter with this-

DAVE

And of course my air
conditioning went out yesterday.

Dave mops his forehead with a handkerchief.

THE DOOR OPENS

With great relief, Dave goes through. PULL UP HIGH to reveal A BUZZARD sitting on a light pole, observing Dave as he drives off. The neighborhood is a maze-like series of little streets, surrounded by four high, thick walls.

EXT. DOWN THE STREET - SAME

Tall, stern, silver-haired WEBSTER VONRUDEN is slowly and pompously making his way down the sidewalk, accompanied by equally haughty CECIL MALSBUY, who is burdened with a large clipboard and an enormous binder. Vonruden stops and trains his eyes on each house and each lawn—studying carefully-- then continues on.

Vonruden spies a garbage can on the side of one house, five doors down. He points at it, and Malsbury scribbles on the clipboard. Rotund DR. STEIN comes running out the front door, in only his boxer shorts. He burns his feet on the hot driveway as he gingerly pads toward the garbage can.

DR. STEIN

Ow! Ow! Ow!

VONRUDEN

(yelling)

Too late, Dr. Stein! That's a \$100 violation of the Homeowners' Association rules.

(to Malsbury)

Got that one down?

MALSBUY

We're over \$1500 already this morning. Nice haul!

Dr. Stein starts to form a fist, then just shrugs and painfully hops his way back to the front door.

Vonruden cracks a smile, then abruptly stops in his tracks, in disbelief.

CU OF A PILE OF DOG CRAP ON A LAWN

Malsbury drops his binder and clipboard and takes out a tape measure from his pocket. He and Vonruden approach the pile. Malsbury gets on his knees and unrolls the tape. He measures carefully, from several angles, almost touching the poop.

MALSBURY

Right on the border of 3 and 4
inches, Webster.

VONRUDEN

Round it up to 4.

Malsbury holds up the binder.

MALSBURY

(holds up regulation book)
It's incredible people can't
follow a few simple rules.

EXT. DAVE'S DRIVEWAY - SAME

PULL BACK to take in the house next door. The garage door opens and the T-Bird emerges, driven by CARLY HOLLIDAY. She is striking both from physical beauty and from a tremendous aura of confidence. She turns ROCK MUSIC on and ZOOMS down the street.

EXT. INSIDE THE FRONT GATE - SAME

Carly pulls up, happily SINGING ALONG with the ROCK MUSIC. She has a lovely voice.

ARTHUR PUSHES HIS CONTROL BUTTON

The door opens a crack, then snaps shut. Carly throws up her hands.

CARLY

Are these gates put here to keep
us in or everyone else out?

ARTHUR

It's being temperamental today.

The door opens almost all the way. Then snaps back shut.

CARLY

I've got a plane to catch.

She puts the car in gear and RAMS INTO THE GATE, swinging it wide open.

ARTHUR

You can't do that...get back
here! I'm calling Mr. Vonruden!

CARLY
 (dismissive wave)
 Send me a bill!!!

She ROARS down the street, the ROCK MUSIC now even louder.

EXT./INT. TRUAX COMPANY - DAY

Large glass door stenciled with 'TRUAX COMPANY'.

DAVE OPENS IT AND STEPS INTO THE LOBBY

then walks to an open elevator and steps inside. He hits a button. He looks wilted and despondent.

DAVE
 Remember: The Big Reward. Thirty
 days, The Big Reward.

The elevator closes with the CLANKING SOUND OF PRISON CELL DOORS.

INT. MARKETING DEPARTMENT - DAY

Dave feigns happiness as he gets to the reception desk. Two PRETTY RECEPTIONISTS are there, one on the phone, who waves and a second who smiles brightly at Dave:

RECEPTIONIST
 Good morning, Mr. Fiorello.

DAVE
 (returning the smile)
 My dad is Mr. Fiorello. Call me
 Dave.

He continues on down the hall through another set of doors to a large bullpen room divided into modular partitions with private offices along the side.

This place is a ZOO. ALTERNATIVE MUSIC is blasting through speakers along the walls. The walls are festooned with colorful and politically incorrect posters. The twenty EMPLOYEES are all casually dressed. Three are engaged in a spirited nerf basketball game. Several employees wave at Dave as he comes in.

Youthful, spiky-haired LEO BROOKS, resembling a bass player who got separated from his jazz band, scurries over to intercept Dave.

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For the complete script please contact Jennifer Brooks at
info@filmmakers.com