

My Wall Street Journal

Screenplay by

Gary Gurner

Story by

Gary Gurner and Earl Klasky

WGA Registered

Canyon Literary Management

canyonlit@yahoo.com

310-453-1967

**MY WALL STREET JOURNAL**

FADE IN:

EXT. MANHATTAN - DAWN

Skyscrapers gleam as the sun rises and the city awakens this June morning.

INT. BARNES PENTHOUSE APT. HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

We catch only the briefest glimpse of good-looking mid-thirties CEO STEVEN BARNES as he stops at the closed bedroom door of his thirteen-year-old son HOWIE.

Steven tapes a white envelope reading 'Howie' to the door.

A pj-clad HOWIE yanks the door open expecting to catch his dad in person but it's too late - his father's gone.

                                  HOWIE  
                          (disappointed and  
                                  angry)  
                  Geez.

He notices the envelope and takes it back inside his bedroom.

INT. HOWIE'S BEDROOM

Howie reads the card matter-of-factly:

                                  HOWIE  
                  'Congratulations on finishing sixth  
                  grade at the same school you started  
                  in September.'  
                  (beat)  
                  Very funny.  
                  (continuing)  
                  'Hope to see you at graduation later.  
                  Love, Dad.'  
                  (beat)  
                  How can I love you if you're never  
                  around?

He dumps the card in the trash, an indication of what he thinks of his dad's chances of attending his graduation.

EXT. NYC STREET - MORNING

Steven's at the wheel of his lovingly restored 1955 Mercedes 300SL Gullwing. The chrome sends out blazing supernovas of reflected sunlight; the paint is deep and rich.

Howie peers from his bedroom window, catching a glimpse of his dad. His own wheels turn.

INT. MERCEDES GULLWING - MORNING

Relishing the travel of the clutch as he caresses the gearshift into first, Steven eases into traffic.

EXT. MANHATTAN COURTHOUSE - DAY

NEWS CREWS from "Entertainment Tonight," "Access Hollywood" and "TMZ" wait outside, their satellite trucks nearby.

INT. MANHATTAN COURTROOM - DAY

At the Plaintiff's table are sixteen-year-old APRIL PHILLIPS and her LAWYER. Across from them are her anguished PARENTS, with their LAWYER.

JUDGE

The Court finds that emancipation is in the best interests of the minor, April Phillips. Notice of the petition was duly and timely served on all interested parties including the parents, Joseph and Diana Phillips. The petition is therefore granted. April Phillips is declared to be emancipated for the purposes set forth in Family Code section 7050. Good luck to you. I've signed the order. Petitioner is to serve notice.

April embraces her attorney while her parents' attorney consoles them. Both April and her mother shed tears.

APRIL'S MOM

Please...call me.

But April has left.

EXT. THE HAWTHORNE SCHOOL - DAY

From the main entrance nestled amidst older stately homes, BOYS in distinctive blue blazers, make their way to campus.

Graduation day begins at this exclusive boys' school.

EXT. HAWTHORNE SCHOOL - GRADUATION CEREMONY - MORNING

Howie's mom BEVERLY sits with other parents, beaming at Howie, on stage, in cap and gown. Classy and poised, she's mid thirties and a major looker. She shoots video with her cell.

Her purse rests on the empty chair beside her, Steven's seat. After craning her neck to look for him and checking her watch, she gives up, surrendering the seat.

EXT. HAWTHORNE SCHOOL - LATER

As Beverly approaches, a CLASSMATE returns some cash to Howie.

CLASSMATE

I can't take this. It's too easy.  
Your dad never shows up for anything.

Beverly gives Howie a smooch he quickly wipes off his cheek.

HOWIE

Mom! How old do I have to be before  
you stop doing that?

BEVERLY

You're never too old for a kiss from  
your mom.

They walk towards an outdoor buffet.

HOWIE

So what was his excuse this time?  
Was he original? Did he sound like a  
dad or a CEO?

BEVERLY

Sometimes, he does have a good  
reason...

HOWIE

That's not what you usually say.

BEVERLY

I know. I thought I'd try it out,  
see how it sounds. Doesn't work,  
does it?

(beat)

I'll make sure he gets the message  
tonight since it's our anniversary.

(forcefully)

I don't think he wants to miss that.

The HEADMASTER interrupts them.

HEADMASTER

(shaking their hands)

Howard, congratulations. Mrs. Barnes,  
good to see you again. You know,  
after using footnotes from a graphic  
novel, organizing a mass mooning at  
our sister school, and leaving  
livestock on the roof, I had my doubts  
we'd all see this day.

BEVERLY

We appreciate your flexibility and willingness to forgive.

HEADMASTER

(taking her aside)

Mrs. Barnes, Howie's IQ is off the charts. But when it comes to schoolwork, his mind is so far away, I'd need the Mars Rover to see it.

Beverly's heard this all before, way too many times.

HEADMASTER (CONT'D)

And every psychiatric test we've given him points to the same irrefutable conclusion: this boy needs his father. He was able to make it today, I hope?

Beverly smiles weakly.

EXT. HEIDI'S HEADQUARTERS - MIDTOWN NYC - MORNING

Steven's car pulls into the underground garage.

INT. GULLWING - MORNING

Parked in his primo space, Steven's engrossed in his iPad. He checks the Morningstar report on HEIDI'S, the fast-food company he now heads. Things are good if not stellar.

Gathering up his stuff, he leaves The Wall Street Journal behind. Its first-column story centers on the decade-long search for fugitive investment banker HILTON E. GUNDERSON. His ten-year-old picture shows a clean-cut executive.

INT. HEIDI'S HQ - MORNING

Steven exits the elevator, passing the company's flagship restaurant. It's busy not bustling.

INT. EXECUTIVE OFFICE RECEPTION - MORNING

Steven hustles past his executive assistant BROOKE.

STEVEN

Morning. I know, I know. I'm late. Do me a favor. Buzz the conference room and tell them I'm on my way. Thanks, Brooke.

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM - LATER THAT MORNING

Historical photos from Heidi's adorn the walls as SEVERAL EXECUTIVES await Steven. Most prominent is one of Steven's dad ALEXANDER (aka GRAMPS) in front of the original Heidi's.

EXECUTIVE #1

But they're the biggest, most popular fast food place in the world. Why would they want to merge with us?

EXECUTIVE #2

Their Double-Whammer's the best selling burger by 4-1. Talk about a great flavor profile.

EXECUTIVE #3

And their Mystery Mayo has that certain 'je ne sais quoi' -

Steven arrives, iPad in hand, having overheard.

STEVEN

My apologies.

(beat)

Let me guess. You've been sampling O'Donnell's for 'competitive' reasons.

EXECUTIVE #4

Y'know, I have the entire collection of those little Wakachoo toys. Unopened.

He shows pics on his cell.

EXECUTIVE #5

I've got all the trading cards!

And he shows pics back.

EXECUTIVE #6

Their Super Bowl commercial with the dyslexic kid reading to the quarterback made me weep for days.

Steven scrolls through his iPad.

STEVEN

Aren't you the same person who cried over our Annual Report?

EXECUTIVE #2

Different emotion. Entirely.

STEVEN

Yes, O'Donnell's has us beat in many areas. But this merger will benefit both of us. We can cut costs and increase the bottom line. Plus I think the old lady likes me. If that Ponzi-scheme-of-a-company AOL could get Time/Warner, we can do this.

EXECUTIVE #2

Yeah. That worked out so well.

Steven makes his way out of the room as his iPad beeps. It's a text from Howie: 'Guess who graduated? Hint: HB. Guess who missed it? Hint: SB.'

Another message - it's Brooke: 'They're waiting for you upstairs.'

EXECUTIVE #2 (CONT'D)

(sotto to fellow exec)

I wonder what the old man would say.

STEVEN

(having overheard)

The 'old man' may have started Heidi's but I'm in charge now. My father's way of doing things was rooted in the past. I've got my eye on the future. That's why I'm running the company and my dad agreed to "step aside." So it really doesn't matter what he'd say. Let's refocus and make this merger happen.

Said as much for the exec's benefit as for his own.

Steven's iPad buzzes again. It's Brooke: 'Anniversary 2night! I've got the flowers.' Steven texts 'Thx. I won't forget.'

INT. STEVEN'S OFFICE - DAY

Steven peruses mock-ups of new ads with agency REPS.

STEVEN

We could save millions by sponsoring local news segments instead of always shooting new commercials, right?

INT. TEST KITCHEN - DAY

Steven samples food. The head CHEF is exasperated.

CHEF

Mr. Barnes, there is no such thing  
as an artificial pickle.

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM - AFTERNOON

Steven looks at promotional tie-ins with marketing EXECS.

STEVEN

Instead of all this streaming stuff,  
can't we get some *real* movie tie-  
ins?

Steven's iPad buzzes like a hive. From Brooke: 'Mrs. O wants  
mtng ltr. OK?'

Steven's fingers hover over the keyboard weighing his marital  
life versus his work life; then: 'Yes. Please call Bev.'

INT. HEIDI'S EXECUTIVE RECEPTION AREA - THAT EVENING

MRS. O'DONNELL, late 60s, sits next to a vase. As Brooke  
approaches, Mrs. O'Donnell reads aloud from Forbes.

MRS. O'DONNELL

...exploring other avenues for  
revenue, according to the Federal  
Reserve Chairman.

BROOKE

(extending her hand)  
Mrs. O'Donnell, I'm Brooke Werblin,  
Mr. Barnes' assistant.

MRS. O'DONNELL

Yes, dear. How are you? You're much  
younger than I would have thought.  
Isn't she, Horace?

Brooke smiles politely, looking around for Horace. But Mrs.  
O'Donnell is definitely alone.

MRS. O'DONNELL (CONT'D)

He agrees. And likes your smile.

Brooke, clearly confused, does her best not to appear rude.

BROOKE

Horace...?

MRS. O'DONNELL

(picking up the "vase")  
My late husband.

(MORE)



MRS. O'DONNELL (CONT'D)  
 Before he went over to the other side, he told me he'd prefer this to a more conventional after-life arrangement.

Brooke's pallor lightens and she hesitates for a beat.

BROOKE  
 Well then, Mr. O'Donnell, pleased to meet you as well...um, if you'll 'both' wait here one moment?

Brooke arrives at Steven's door.

BROOKE (CONT'D)  
*She's* here.

STEVEN  
 Show her in. No, wait. I'll come out there.

BROOKE  
 I hope you liked "The Sixth Sense."

Steven nods, perplexed.

INT. EXECUTIVE OFFICE RECEPTION - EVENING

Steven greets his eagerly awaited appointment.

STEVEN  
 Mrs. O'Donnell, welcome to Heidi's. I trust you've been well taken care of by Brooke.

MRS. O'DONNELL  
 Yes. She's a little awkward around dead people but who isn't?

Steven gives Brooke a look of "huh?" Brooke's subtle gesture to the urn doesn't register.

INT. STEVEN'S OFFICE - EVENING

Mrs. O'Donnell and Horace take in the spectacular view.

MRS. O'DONNELL  
 (to Horace)  
 Isn't this something!

STEVEN  
 Can I get you anything? Water, soda...?

MRS. O'DONNELL  
 No thank you, Mr. Barnes. We're just  
 looking around.

Steven wonders at her plural reference.

STEVEN  
 Please accept my condolences on your  
 husband's passing. I was so sorry to  
 hear about it.

MRS. O'DONNELL  
 No need to tell me, Mr. Barnes.  
 (foisting the urn on  
 him)  
 You can tell him directly.

Now Steven gets what Brooke was trying to tell him.

STEVEN  
 If I'd known he was going to be in  
 on the meeting, I would have made  
 arrangements...

MRS. O'DONNELL  
 Nice recovery, Mr. Barnes.  
 (to urn)  
 Horace, speak up. I can't hear you  
 through all that pottery.  
 (beat)  
 Yes, Horace liked it too. Says you  
 may be our kind of people.

STEVEN  
 Mrs. O'Donnell, thank you. I think  
 so too. And I think this merger --

MRS. O'DONNELL  
*Proposed* merger, Mr. Barnes. As you  
 know, you're one of several suitors.  
 We have miles to go before we sleep...

STEVEN  
 Yes, of course. Robert Frost. Miles  
 to go.

Mrs. O'Donnell moves to Steven's desk.

MRS. O'DONNELL  
 But we're on the right path. So Horace  
 says lay off the b.s.

She picks up a family photo. Howie's got a devilish grin  
 since he's holding up two fingers behind Steven's head.

MRS. O'DONNELL (CONT'D)  
Looks like someone in the family has  
a sense of humor.

STEVEN  
Yes, that's my son's way of keeping  
me grounded.

MRS. O'DONNELL  
Horace thinks we all need that now  
and again.

STEVEN  
Yes.  
(speaking louder for  
Horace's sake)  
Yes, we do.

MRS. O'DONNELL  
(covers urn)  
No need to shout. He's dead, not  
deaf.

Steven follows Mrs. O'Donnell to the couch.

MRS. O'DONNELL (CONT'D)  
As you know, I've expressed some  
concerns about whether O'Donnell's  
and Heidi's would be a good fit not  
just on a corporate level but on a  
family values level.

STEVEN  
Mrs. O'Donnell, I assure you that --

MRS. O'DONNELL  
Let me finish. Your company has  
promotional tie-ins with which movies?

Steven uncovers a display of Heidi's recent promotional items.

STEVEN  
Well, this year we have the adorable  
stuffed maggots from King Tut's Tomb  
and the hooker-with-a-heart-of-gold  
coin purse from I Know Who You Did  
Last Summer...

MRS. O'DONNELL  
I'm shaking my head. Horace is shaking  
*his* head. Do I have to remind you of  
*our* promotional giveaways?

STEVEN  
(reluctantly)  
Mrs. O'Donnell, I'll admit we settled  
for less-than-first-rate choices.

MRS. O'DONNELL  
Alright. We'll be in touch.

And with that, the O'Donnells leave, followed by Steven.

INT. EXECUTIVE OFFICE RECEPTION - NIGHT

Steven escorts them out to Brooke's desk.

STEVEN  
Thank you again. Brooke, would you  
show Mr. and Mrs. O'Donnell to the  
elevators?

MRS. O'DONNELL  
That's quite alright, dear. We may  
be old but we're not lost.