

The Trail's Creek

By Zachary Mark

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Cast of Characters

<u>AMELIA:</u>	40-50 year old female, at home mother taking care of Mary, no nonsense, no problem putting husband in his place
<u>HENRY:</u>	40-50 year old male, cement mason, married to Amelia, hardworking salt of the earth, effort doesn't equal results
<u>GENE:</u>	30s year old male, husband of Sara, co-worker of Henry, heart bigger than brain
<u>MARY:</u>	20s, female, severely mentally handicapped, mental capacity of 5 year old, intrigued and open minded
<u>TIM:</u>	20s, male, son, eager to find his purpose, caring brother of Mary
<u>SARA:</u>	30s year old female, long time friend and neighbor of Henry and Amelia, supportive friend, wants to start a family
<u>CAROL:</u>	50+, female, Owner of Trail Creek State School for the Feeble-Minded, hard nosed and stuffy
<u>FRANCIS:</u>	20s, male, resident of Trail Creek, sarcastic and bitter
<u>PATTI:</u>	20s, female, resident of Trail Creek, optimist
<u>BETH:</u>	20s, female, resident of Trail Creek, pessimist

ACT ISCENE ONE

(The scene is set in Amelia and Henry's small house. A round table is set center stage. The entrance to the house is a door upstage center behind the table. A window upstage left is decorated with Christmas lights. It's December 1952 in a small town in Indiana.)

{Amelia is decorating for Christmas. She is in a good mood as she is singing and dancing around. Henry walks through the front door slowly. He is dejected and run down. Amelia doesn't notice him at first. Henry sits down at the table staring out into nothingness. After a moment, his head makes a thud onto the table which startles Amelia}

INTERIOR OF HENRY AND AMELIA'S HOUSE

AMELIA

Henry!? What's wrong sweetie? (Walking towards him quickly with concern)

HENRY

(Groans unintelligibly with his head on the table)

AMELIA

Something happen at work?

HENRY

(Again, mumbles something with his head down)

AMELIA

Something happen AFTER work?

HENRY

(Shrugs his shoulders, still not making eye contact.)

AMELIA

Henry look at me this minute! You are worrying me!

HENRY

(Henry slowly lifts his head and looks out in the distance)

AMELIA

You aren't coming down with anything are ya? (Feels his forehead for a fever)

HENRY

(Stands up out of the chair and walks downstage slowly) No, I don't have a fever Mia. I just don't know..

AMELIA

We've been together since high school Henry, out with it already.

HENRY

(Paces and then stops to notice all the decorations)
The house Mia...it looks, it looks great.

AMELIA

Oh, you know I love Christmas time. I even bought a few more decorations this year. I hope I didn't overdue it did I?

HENRY

No, no you didn't. It looks amazing as always. You spent a lot of time on it to make it perfect.

AMELIA

If it's the money you're worried about, I can take it back. We don't need all this. I'm sorry I didn't ask you first if we had a little extra. I thought we could use a boost of holiday spirit.

HENRY

I could use a boost of "bottled" holiday spirits...

AMELIA

Don't think we have any left from the other night when we were discussing... Your talk! Did you talk with your boss today? What did he say? Oh, crap! You talked with your boss today. Is that why you are down in the dumps?

HENRY

I did talk with him. He said that I am a very knowledgeable employee and he took note of what I thought was important. Nothing to worry about.

AMELIA

That's great! Any raise?

HENRY

Not exactly. But it is all fine. No need to worry at all dear.

{Gene burst through the door without even knocking}

GENE

Henry! Henry! You OK?

AMELIA

Is he OK? I knew something was wrong! What happened Gene??

{Amelia is between Gene and Henry. Henry is giving every non verbal cue he can think of to get Gene to stop talking}

GENE

Um, umm. I..well I can't remember now.

AMELIA

You can't remember? You came through that door like the devil himself was chasing you.

GENE

I uh, I uh..

HENRY

You found it?

GENE

Found it?

HENRY

I was hoping someone would find it.

GENE

Well, you can always count on me to find "It".

{Gene is still confused on what "it" is, while Henry holds out his hand.}

HENRY

Well, I'd like to have the money back I accidentally dropped at work before I left. I'm so glad you were the one to find it.

GENE

{Gene reluctantly gets out his wallet and hands over a couple of dollars}.

HENRY

There were five more dollars there right?

GENE

Of course, of course I found it all. Here ya go.

*{A small tug of war of the bills takes place
between the friends.}*

HENRY

Thanks Gene.

GENE

No problem pal. Any way I can help.

AMELIA

Well that was all this was over Henry? Just a few dollars?

GENE

Actually it was 8 dollars to be exact.

HENRY

I know Mia. It was silly of me. Just those small things add up I guess.

AMELIA

I'm going to walk down to the corner store for a couple of things I need for supper. I didn't get them earlier because of Mary's breakdown at the grocery.

*{Mia is walking around the room getting her
purse, keys and coat while Gene is trying to
discreetly get his money back. Henry finally has
had enough fun with Gene and goes to hand the
money back to him when Amelia speaks up.}*

AMELIA

You guys need anything?

GENE

(Under his breath) 8 bucks.

AMELIA

What's that Gene?

GENE

Nope I'm good Amelia, thanks for asking.

HENRY

Mia, before you leave, here's a little extra if you

need it. Maybe even grab some candy for Mary. She's in there sleeping right? (*Hands over the cash to Amelia*)

AMELIA

Yes she is. She was OK for awhile when I took her to get the decorations, but then another meltdown. It's been another tough day but we got through it like we always do.

HENRY

You think it's time to....

AMELIA

We can talk later. I'm still on the fence. I want to do what's best for her. And if we do, I don't want it to be permanent.

HENRY

I know, me too. Be safe, we'll talk later.

{Amelia leaves through the door.}

GENE

Really? You owe me 8 bucks you know.

HENRY

No I don't.

GENE

And why's that?

HENRY

There's an 8 dollar fine for blabbermouths in this house and you just got a ticket!

GENE

Have you flipped your lid? I came here to check on you. You left in such a hurry after we all saw you in Mr. Fischer's office. What gives?

HENRY

I went in there looking to make my case for a raise. I need it if we are going to send Mary to that school we've been talking about.

GENE

You should get a raise Henry. You're a hard worker that knows every aspect of the concrete laying business. Heck, you should be running your own business.

HENRY

That's what Mr. Fischer said.

GENE

That's great!

HENRY

Not great. He said since I have all the answers I should start my own business and leave his.

GENE

What?!

HENRY

Quiet, you'll wake her up.

GENE

Just like that? All you did was tell him about the good things you do to deserve a raise and he treated you like that? How could he do that? I'm going down there and giving him a piece of my mind...(Starts to leave)

HENRY

And I called him (*unintelligible*).

GENE

What's that?

HENRY

And I might have called him a "cold unemotional callous under qualified hack of a human being".

GENE

Huh. That would probably do it.

HENRY

I don't know why I snapped, it just kinda happened. I can't let Mia know about this until I can find another job. She has enough on her mind.

GENE

I understand. I really think you should give owning your own business serious consideration though.

HENRY

I wish. That takes money. Money I don't have right now. And plus that puts a lot of pressure to make all my money in the summer months. Nobody gets those commercial inside jobs in the winter unless you're a big name company.

GENE

You get something going, and I'll be glad to join your team. In the meantime, I can check with my uncle to see if he can get you some work until you're back on your feet.

HENRY

That would be great. What business is your uncle in?

GENE

He's got a couple of hot dog carts downtown. It's not the greatest job in the world, especially in the winter, but it will get you some quick cash and all the dogs you can eat.

HENRY

It's better than nothin'. Plus Mia doesn't head downtown too often so it's likely I won't risk her seeing me.

GENE

You're not going to tell her?

HENRY

I can't. I just can't. I need to fix this though quick.

GENE

I understand. I'll go give him a ring now.

HENRY

Thanks Gene. I'll catch up with you later. I owe you one.

GENE

No, you owe me eight!

{Gene leaves through the door. Henry walks around the house and stops to look at the Christmas decorations. He sighs.}

HENRY

Merry Christmas.

{Mary walks on stage from stage right. She is in her early 20s but her mental capacity is that of a 5 year old. She is severely mentally handicapped. She is wearing pink sweatpants and long sleeve t-shirt. She is hunched over and walks at a slow pace. She doesn't make eye contact and when she sits down she curls up into

a ball.}

MARY

It's gonna rain.

HENRY

Hey, how's my baby girl? Did you have a good time getting all the decorations with mom?

MARY

No.

HENRY

That's too bad. She said she enjoyed being with you. Just the girls you know.

MARY

It's gonna rain.

HENRY

It may rain. But I think it's more likely to snow today. You want to color or need anything to eat?

MARY

(She reveals a big smile and shakes her head yes and points to the table)

HENRY

Coloring it is.

{Henry grabs a box of crayons and some paper. He places them on the table for Mary. Mary perches on the chair while she starts to color}.

HENRY

Daddy screwed up today Mary. How could I be so stupid? I've worked long hours and endless back breaking days in order to have what we have. But I want more for us all. I want more for your mom. I want more for you. I just don't know what that is or what that looks like. Would you want to go to school?

MARY

(No reaction, she keeps coloring.)

HENRY

Your mom and I have been talking about sending you to a school of sorts. You'd be around people just like you. You could make friends. Imagine that Mary, you with a bunch of friends.

MARY

No.

HENRY

No?

MARY

No!!

HENRY

Settle down now Mary. We are just talking about it,
nothing has been determined.

MARY

No school! *(She throws one of the crayons)*

HENRY

Stop that.

MARY

No school! *(She throws a couple more)*

HENRY

Alright Mary, that's enough! I'll let mom know how you
feel.

MARY

No! *(She knocks over the remaining crayons and paper
onto the floor)*

HENRY

Dang it Mary! I don't need this right now! Why can't
you understand that?!

MARY

*(She watches as Henry begins to pick up the mess. She
stands up and walks back towards her room.)*

It's gonna rain.

*{Mary is offstage as Tim enters through the
door. He has just come off shift at the local
grocery store Al's}*

TIM

Hey dad.

HENRY

Hey Timmy.

TIM
Mary playing 52 card pick up with crayons again?

HENRY
Yep. Probably my fault. I was asking her about school.

TIM
You and mom aren't still thinking about it are you?

HENRY
We are Tim. With everyone in this house so busy, maybe it's the best for her.

TIM
I'll quit my job to watch her.

HENRY
That's not fair to you. You're working your way up at Al's pretty fast. You weren't bagging groceries very long before he moved you up to the register. Keep it up and someday you could be management.

TIM
Management at Al's? Every little boy's dream.

HENRY
If it puts food on the table for your family, it's worth it. No one is above any job. No one, you hear me?

TIM
I know dad. I would like to think that I've got more to offer the world. A job that really makes a difference you know?

HENRY
You wanna be a cop or a fireman?

TIM
No. I don't know. I'm hoping it just hits me one day right in the face.

HENRY
Well, until you get that smack right in the kisser, stick with it at Al's will ya? No slacking.

TIM
You got it. Where's mom?

HENRY

She ran to the corner store. You must have just missed her. She should be back any minute. When she gets back we'll need a little time before supper to talk about the school. The head woman, or whatever, is stopping by tomorrow at 5 o'clock to talk us through it all. So if you could take Mary out and play or read to her, I'd appreciate it.

TIM

I planned on doing that anyway. I'll take the paper and crayons to her room. She likes drawing in there better. *(Walks to Mary's room offstage right)*

{As Tim leaves the stage, Gene opens the front door quickly}

GENE

Henry! You're all set. Just head down to 27th and Regal and meet with Wally tomorrow at 6 to finalize it all.

HENRY

That's great. Thanks Gene. No wait, tomorrow at 6?

GENE

Yep. Don't be late either. He got rid of a guy once because he was one minute late.

HENRY

Could I reschedule? I have a meeting at 5 and it will take me about 20 minutes to get there in good weather.

GENE

A meeting? With who? Your old boss?

HENRY

Keep it down. Tim's in the other room. No, with the head mistress or head lady deal from the school. I'll be fine. I'll make it work.

GENE

Sounds good. If you can't make it for whatever reason, just let me know. I gotta head back across the street before Sara gets home. If that sidewalk isn't clear of snow, the couch, for bed, is where I'll go.

HENRY

OK Mr. Poet, have a good night.

{Gene leaves and Henry sits back down at the table. Amelia enters the rooms through the door carrying a paper grocery bag.}

AMELIA

Gene running to clear off that sidewalk before Sara get's home?

HENRY

You know it.

AMELIA

He's such a sweetheart. I ran into Sara earlier. She wasn't feeling well. I told her I'd check up on her tomorrow. I hope she isn't coming down with anything. I need my Euchre partner to be in tip top shape when we beat you and Gene again this weekend.

HENRY

Keep dreaming. You got lucky last time that's all.

AMELIA

Is that right? I remember you calling the "trump suit" on numerous occasions only to be "set". Heck, you were our team's most valuable player.

HENRY

Very funny. I was a little off, that's all. It won't happen two weeks in a row so enjoy it now.

AMELIA

Oh I am. Very much so.

HENRY

What's for supper tonight?

AMELIA

Just got the stuff for meatballs and pasta.

HENRY

Sounds good, I'm starving.

AMELIA

I ran into Al at the grocery earlier and he said Timmy's doing a fantastic job and we should be so proud.

HENRY

Is that right?

AMELIA

He said that he is such a hard worker and is so good with the customers.

HENRY

I talked to him when he got home about all that. He's got a good thing going there. I really think he can work his way up to a job that will set him up for life.

AMELIA

For life huh?

HENRY

Jobs like that can mean everything. He can put in the years and I know Al will reward him for that. I can see him being management. Or heck, even the owner someday.

AMELIA

I feel that way with your job. You've put in the work and dedication for awhile now. I'm sure your boss appreciates it very much. Maybe you'll be running that place sooner than you think.

HENRY

We can dream can't we?

{Tim walks in from Mary's room}

TIM

Hey mom, whatcha got cookin' tonight?

AMELIA

Meatballs and pasta sound OK?

TIM

Absolutely. If you guys want to eat soon I can wait until Mary wakes up and wants to eat. She was already in bed when I went in.

HENRY

She's asleep again?

AMELIA

You don't have to wait Timmy, you've had a long day at work.

TIM

It's no problem. I know she eats more when someone is at the table with her. And we all know her moods when

she doesn't eat enough.

HENRY

That we do.

AMELIA

All too well unfortunately.

TIM

Is Sara still OK with coming over to watch Mary this Monday since I took that extra shift for Sam? You said you can't because your volunteering at the church.

AMELIA

You are right, I am. I hope she can help. I saw her today though and she wasn't looking too hot. I'm checking in on her tomorrow and I'll let you know for sure. In the meantime maybe you should think of a back up plan.

TIM

I'll do my best but it will be tough.

HENRY

If Sara backs out, I can see if I can swing taking a day off of work.

TIM

You take a day off work? You must not be doing too hot either. Maybe it's contagious!

HENRY

Oh be quiet. You want help or not?

AMELIA

Better take that offer, might not happen again.

TIM

Thanks Dad. See, we can make this all work and keep Mary here.

AMELIA

It's not like we are thinking about this move because we don't love her. I want her to be engaged with other people. Other people like her. Her staying home with me is great sometimes and a real challenge some days. It was the same way with you. But maybe she can grow a little more there.

TIM

I don't know. I think she'll be the same no matter where she's at.

HENRY

We all love her. That will never change. When she was born it was the greatest day of my life. I'll never forget it. I held her and it was like her whole life flashed before my eyes. I thought about her walking and talking. Seeing her go to school. Watching her grow and eventually getting married. Me going to her house and playing with her kids and fixing what her lazy husband couldn't around their house. I thought of all of that the first time I held her. And then...(Struggles to get the words out) a new future was put into place. A new path before us all.

AMELIA

You were my rock Henry. When some of our friends and even family seemed ashamed, you didn't bat an eye.

HENRY

She's my baby girl. My one and only baby girl. She can be a handful, but that's not her fault. I can never truly be mad at her.

TIM

When you tackled Mr. Jenkins at the playground and pummeled him when I was about 10, that put the fear of God in me to make sure I didn't make you mad.

AMELIA

You what?! I don't remember hearing that.

HENRY

Another blabbermouth fine about to be handed out in this home.

TIM

I think he said something about Dad taking Mary somewhere else because she wasn't quite "right" and we should be embarrassed.

AMELIA

Ah, so that's why his wife has always seemed to leave the room when I enter at functions. It's all so clear now.

HENRY

He deserved it.

AMELIA

Sounds like it.

HENRY

But you can't beat the stupidity and ignorance out of all of them. People will not understand what it's like to have someone without the normal mental capacity living in their house. They will never understand the hardships.

AMELIA

And they will never understand the joy as well. She was our first kid so we missed a lot of the danger signs I guess. She missed so many typical benchmarks. We were told to be patient by doctors. Her body was fine, but eventually they came to the conclusion that she would never be mentally fine.

TIM

And they never said why did they?

HENRY

The docs said that somewhere along the line, before birth or shortly thereafter, that her growth had stopped.

AMELIA

One doctor told me something I will never forget. I asked if there was any hope for improvement. He said an emphatic NO and to not let her ruin my life. That I should find a place where she can be happy and leave her. Like to move on as if she never existed.

TIM

As bad as that sounds I can believe it. I see the stares and hear the backhanded comments when I take her to the park or for a walk. People...people just suck.

AMELIA

Not all of them dear.

HENRY

I'd say about 90 percent do though. And I'm low balling it.

TIM

I still don't get it. Why send her away now? We've held it together this long. It's not like they are going to "fix" her at this place.

AMELIA

We aren't trying to "fix" her because she is not broken. She is who she is for a reason. I don't understand it, but somethings aren't made to be understood. I called Trail Creek State School for the Feeble-Minded because Father Mike suggested it might be a good outlet for her. He said he heard good things about the place from Dr. Carol Willowbrook. She goes to our church and is the main...um, person?

HENRY

Head mistress, head lady deal?

AMELIA

Right. And if they can give her something that we can't, I'm all for it. She will we around kids her age.

HENRY

We still call them all kids though some are even in their 30s.

AMELIA

I don't want her to live there but like I said, I'm open to what can be best for her. All of our lives are getting busier and I'm afraid she won't get the attention she needs.

TIM

I guess I understand. It couldn't hurt to check it out.

HENRY

You're right. And if for one second it doesn't pass the smell test, she'll be right back here. I promise.

{From offstage Mary screams and startles them.}

MARY

MY SLIPPERS! WHERE'D YOU GET THEM SLIPPERS?! MINE!

TIM

Well she's up again. I'll check on her.

AMELIA

Sit down, I got it Timmy.

TIM

OK mom.

{Amelia walk offstage right to check on Mary.}

TIM
Sorry dad.

HENRY
About what?

TIM
I thought mom knew about you and Mr. Jenkins.

HENRY
That's OK. You owe me eight bucks though.

LIGHTS FADE TO BLACK/END OF SCENE

SCENE TWO

(Curtains are closed. Gene comes onto stage in front of the drawn curtains. He is carrying a shovel and has just finished clearing off the sidewalk for Sara. There is a small bench downstage left near their front door entrance. Gene comes to center stage when Sara enters carrying one paper grocery bag. She seems to be holding back tears as she approaches.)

EXTERIOR OF GENE AND SARA'S HOUSE

SARA
Hey Gene. Thank you so much for clearing that off.

GENE
Sara! Let me take that for ya.*(Grabs grocery bag)*

SARA
Thanks dear.

GENE
You betcha. Let's get inside and get warmed up.

SARA
I'm already warmed up, I'd rather sit outside for bit if you don't mind.

GENE
Not at all. You feeling OK?

{They sit down on the bench together}

SARA
I felt a little weak at the store. I think I've just been a little stressed out for the holidays.

GENE
Who would be stressed out around the holidays?! It's the best time of the year. Unless your Henry.

SARA
There's plenty to be stressed out...wait what about Henry?

GENE
I better get these groceries in before they melt.

SARA
Nice try. What's going on with Henry?

GENE
I promised him I wouldn't tell anybody.

SARA
He's your friend, right?

GENE
Right.

SARA
He's known you since grammar school, right?

GENE
Right.

SARA
Then he should know by now you can't keep ANY secret, right?

GENE
Why do you have to be right all the time?

SARA
It's a gift.

GENE
Well today Henry got canned.

SARA
Oh no.

GENE
He confronted Fischer about a few things and he let

'em go.

SARA

That's horrible. Poor Mia.

GENE

Don't say a word to Mia. Henry is going to try and get some things turned around before he tells her what happened.

SARA

But she's my best friend Gene. I can't keep that from her. That could cost us our friendship.

GENE

You blabber to her about it and it's gonna cost more than a friendship!

SARA

What?

GENE

Can you try and give him a couple weeks at least? They have a lot on their plate with their big decision with Mary coming up. I can't even imagine what they are going through.

SARA

OK Gene, I understand. How do you think we would handle what they are going through?

GENE

I don't know. I would like to think we would have their strength and patience.

SARA

Agreed. We've been trying to have kids for so long now but it's always been in the back of my mind.

GENE

What's that?

SARA

I hate to say it, but I'm worried about having a child like Mary. She's an amazing kid but let's be truthful about it. Having a kid like that is a lot. You know, a lot.

GENE

I know. I've thought about that too and I feel guilty about thinking that way. But I think we are on the

same page Sara. No matter what, we will have that family we've always wanted.

SARA
You're right.

GENE
Now let's get you inside and you can lay down. I'll take care of supper tonight.

SARA
Ok, but as long as it's not more leftover hot dogs from your uncle.

{Gene walks Sara to their front door offstage left}

LIGHTS FADE TO BLACK/END OF SCENE

SCENE THREE

INTERIOR OF HENRY AND AMELIA'S HOUSE

{Amelia is seen cleaning up the house for her guest. Henry walks in from off stage looking at his watch.}

HENRY
When did she say she was coming?

AMELIA
She said she would be here around 5.

HENRY
Around 5? Around 5? What does around 5 mean!?

AMELIA
It means it's only 5:20 and she's still in the parameters of "around 5". You got somewhere more important to be?

HENRY
No. I've gone back and forth with this Mia. I just want to finally go with a decision and move on.

AMELIA

Move on? Is this some big inconvenience for you?
Don't you care?

HENRY

I do care. That's why it's been weighing on me so much. Does this head mistress, head lady deal care? If she did she would have been on time.

AMELIA

She is on time.

HENRY

I'll remember this "around time" stuff when I'm out at the pub with the boys.

{There is a knock at the door. Amelia and Henry stop and look at each other and utter a heartfelt message they have used ever since dating in high school.}

AMELIA

We're in this together.

HENRY

Always and forever.

{Amelia opens the door to reveal Carol in the doorway}

AMELIA

Welcome Miss Willowbrook, do come in.

CAROL

Thank you dear. You can call me Carol.

AMELIA

Carol this is my husband Henry.

CAROL

Hello Henry.

HENRY

Hi. Traffic busy this evening?

CAROL

No, not at all.

HENRY

Were the streets a little rough with snow?

CAROL

No, clear as can be. I even decided to drive down by the lake and check out the Christmas decorations in Washington Park. They did a great job this year. They looked lovely.

AMELIA

They are lovely aren't they Henry?

HENRY

Yep. I could spend all day down there especially if I didn't have anywhere else to be.

AMELIA

Please have a seat Carol. Is there anything I can get you?

CAROL

No dear, I'm fine thank you.

{All three sit down at the kitchen table}

AMELIA

We appreciate you coming out to talk with us. It is something we've talked about doing but put off time and time again.

CAROL

Understandable. You both have been through a lot. Working with the feeble minded can put such a strain on a life and a marriage.

HENRY

Our marriage is just fine Miss Willowbrook I can assure you of that.

CAROL

I didn't mean any malice Mr. Allen. Having children at a young age is an incredible challenge. But having one that will never grow up, one that will remain a child even in an adult body forever, can bring many to a life of mental difficulty. I have seen it all too often. What do you do for a living Mr. Allen?

HENRY

I'm a cement mason.

CAROL

Are they understanding of your situation? If you didn't show up for work tomorrow because you had to tend to your daughter would they take issue with

that?

HENRY

Oh, I think they would be OK with me not showing up.

AMELIA

His boss has gotten on him a few times but for the most part Mr. Fischer has been understanding.

CAROL

For the most part? No matter what he says, a business man is always thinking about his pocket, not his heart. Have you ever felt your job was in jeopardy?

HENRY

I guess you could say that.

AMELIA

I didn't know it had gotten that bad Henry. I'm so sorry.

CAROL

And how about you dear? Besides taking care of the house, do you have much to tend to?

AMELIA

I do. I help out at St. Mark's church as well as the school.

CAROL

St. Mark's is a busy parish. They always have some fundraiser going on.

HENRY

Yep, always fundraising for some of that evil money they preach we all don't need.

CAROL

Obviously you've both had time to look over the material I left you awhile back. What questions do you still have? Is it the cost? The location? What question can I answer for you to make your decision an easier one?

AMELIA

Ms. Willowbrook, there is a very simple reason for my hesitancy. This is my child. I should be able to take care of her and everything she needs. I believe we have done so her whole life. I don't want her to think we have given up on her and left her to strangers. She has taught us so many things. We are

the strong family we are because of her.

CAROL

You have done so much for her. Many parents I have talked with couldn't have done what you both have done for her. It is so much work. As a parent you work to get the reward of seeing your child progress. And I'm sure Mary showed progress in the earlier years. But now it has stalled. It has stalled forever I'm afraid. There's nothing more you can do to change that.

HENRY

Then why even send her to Trail Creek if there's nothing in it for her?

CAROL

I'm saying there is nothing more you can do, but we can do more at the school. We use the latest exercises and techniques proven by doctors to bring extraordinary results. Though common folk may see them as small advances, we at the school understand that every little step towards some normalcy is a giant gift to their parents.

AMELIA

How long does one typically stay at the school?

CAROL

That's all up to you. Some parents have come back after a couple months and take them home, others stop by on weekends. Parents feel a sense of relief that they can focus on their lives while their children are taken care of by professionals. It's not a prison. You can stop by anytime and you can take her home anytime.

HENRY

I don't have to sign a long term contract or anything like that?

CAROL

No. That would just be another thing to worry about now wouldn't it? Our goal is to take some of your burden and worry off your shoulders.

AMELIA

I'm more concerned with her needs than mine.

CAROL

Understandable. You are a good mother Mrs. Allen. You

are good people. I tell you what, why don't you drop Mary off for a couple weeks and see how it goes. No pressure to stay.

HENRY

And how much would..

CAROL

(Cutting Henry off) Absolutely no charge.

AMELIA

I guess that will be the only way to find out if it will work for her and us.

HENRY

A trial run?

AMELIA

Couldn't hurt to try. It will be hard though.

HENRY

It will be. But if there is even a sliver of a chance she can be happier, hell even learn something new, I think we give it a shot.

AMELIA

In this together?

HENRY

Always and forever.

LIGHTS FADE/END OF SCENE

SCENE FOUR

EXTERIOR OF TRAIL CREEK

{Curtains are closed. Henry, Amelia, Tim and Mary are walking to the school in front of the drawn curtain. Mary has a small suitcase. They walk from offstage left to center stage to take in the view of the large school towards the audience.}

HENRY

Well, here we are.

TIM

This place is huge. How can they care for so many people? I can tell you, they don't.

AMELIA

Enough Tim. We are giving it a shot. We are here to be supportive on Mary's big day.

HENRY

Big day for my baby girl. And what a beautiful day outside with the sun shining. Must be a sign.

MARY

It's gonna rain.

AMELIA

Well I packed your favorite rain jacket if it does Mary. You have all your favorite things in your suitcase. I made sure of it.

MARY

Alright. OK. Alright.

TIM

Mary, this is a little vacation for you. You'll get to go to school and meet some new friends. I'll come and see you OK? I have to see you, you're my best friend.

MARY

Alright.

TIM

Take care Mary. (*Hugs Mary goodbye.*)

HENRY

You're not going in with us?

TIM

I'd rather not. I'll go for a walk around until you are done if you don't mind.

AMELIA

Don't mind at all.

(Tim walks offstage left as Henry, Mary and Amelia continue on to the school offstage right.)

CURTAINS OPEN TO INTERIOR OF TRAIL CREEK

{The common room of the school is where students can sit and color, do puzzles to pass the time. There is one table center stage with 3 chairs. The table has dominoes spread out. Francis is sitting at the table with Patti. Beth is standing in the corner pacing. Henry, Mia and Mary are led into the room from offstage by Ms. Willowbrook.}

CAROL

And this is our common room. The majority of Mary's day will be in here. We would rather have everyone out of their rooms and interacting with each other as much as possible.

AMELIA

So they do activities in here all day?

CAROL

Yes. Everything from painting, games and even singing.

HENRY

Sounds like a lot of fun eh Mary? You love coloring and painting.

AMELIA

Besides arts and crafts, you said there would be some educational development opportunities correct?

CAROL

Yes, that is done on an individual basis. We will have one on one time with everyone during the day so we can devote all the attention to their specific needs.

AMELIA

That sounds great doesn't it Henry.

HENRY

It does Mia. I think Mary will surprise some of your help around here on how smart she really is when given a chance.

CAROL

You both have nothing to worry about here. We will take great care of her. I promise. Mary why don't you have a seat here next to Francis and Patti.

{Mary is guided by Carol to the table. She sits down not making eye contact with Francis nor Patti}

HENRY

I don't think she's much into dominoes.

CAROL

{Carol walks to the side of the room and grabs a coloring book with a box of crayons out of a toy box}
How about this for now Mary?

AMELIA

Can you say thank you Mary?

{Mary shakes her head "no" and begins to color. Carol takes Henry and Mia towards the exit of the room.}

CAROL

I think we need to give her a little time to get comfortable and used to her new surroundings.

AMELIA

OK. I understand. We will be back tomorrow to check in on you Mary.

CAROL

I'd rather you try to wait at least a week before coming back in. We find it much easier for our guests to settle in once we get a good round of therapy in without any family disruption.

HENRY

I don't know about doing that do you Mia?

AMELIA

I don't like it but if that's what is recommended. If it may complicate her therapy schedule than I don't want to disrupt any progress there may be. That's what we are here for after all.

CAROL

If you try to wait out the week and simply just can't do it, give me a call and I'll let you know how everything is going. If you still feel the need to come down after our talk, you are more than welcome to.

HENRY

Very well. You can expect a phone call no matter what to check in on her.

CAROL

Completely understandable Mr. Allen.

HENRY

And what do you mean by therapy?

CAROL

We only use the latest proven therapy techniques approved by doctors from around the world Mr. Allen. No two people are the same. Therefore every person may respond differently. We will find out what works best for Mary I am sure of it. It will only be about 15 minutes of her day but we have seen some small and great changes that we believe make it worth while.

HENRY

OK. I guess the only thing left to do is for us to say goodbye.

{Mia and Henry walk over slowly to Mary. They stand behind her while she continues to color. They still have reservations about leaving her and struggle with saying goodbye.}

AMELIA

Looks great Mary and it seems there are plenty of empty pages in there to keep you busy.

HENRY

We are so proud of you baby girl. Your mom and I are going to go home but you are going to stay here with your new friends for awhile.

AMELIA

We will be back soon Mary. I promise. And I promise I will miss you like crazy too.

HENRY

That's for sure. We love you.

MARY

{Showing no emotion and without looking up} Alright bye.

{Henry reaches out his hand for Mia to hold for

strength as they walk towards Ms. Willowbrook and out the door. Once they walk out the door, the click of the door is heard at the same time the room goes dark and then back to full lights quickly. This signifies the transition that has taken place in Mary's world. She continues to color and then stops to get up and speak her inner thoughts aloud. She no longer is in her mentally handicapped mind or body. She speaks clearly and moves around with ease. The others in the room are still seen as they were previously.}

MARY

I can't believe they actually left me alone here. I mean not completely alone. Look at this company. Got Beth over there in the corner probably plays hide and seek by herself and sometimes gives up because she's just that good at hiding. Patti and Francis is it? Playing dominoes and none of the numbers are even matching up. Probably ate half of them.

{Francis, Patti and Beth all are now able to speak and walk without disability except for Francis. His right hand stays in a clench fist all the time}

FRANCIS

Well I was a little hungry OK?!

MARY

(Startled) Ah!

PATTI

Francis! Why'd you have to do that?

BETH

That's just the way he is Patti. Always looking for a reaction.

FRANCIS

Oh come on, sorry you're so allergic to a little F-U-N fun.

MARY

Am I dreaming or hallucinating?

FRANCIS

If you are and can control it, would you do me a favor and open this dang hand of mine? Just once I'd like to...

PATTI

Just once Francis?

FRANCIS

Just need one time to give my friend in the white coat a one finger salute for his help in guiding me through therapy.

BETH

You know you have another hand right?

FRANCIS

I know but I think I'm right handed. It means more coming from my most powerful hand.

PATTI

Powerful hand?

FRANCIS

You know what Patti? You know what you can do that would be powerful for all of us?.....

MARY

Stop! What is happening? You guys can actually understand me and..and see me as I see myself? Or in my head? Or how I hear myself in my head and....

FRANCIS

(Cutting Mary off) Yeah, yeah yeah sort of like that. Don't worry though it's not like you're cured of that hand you were dealt by the Almighty.

BETH

Is this the first time you've ever been around someone like you?

MARY

I think so. I don't believe there is anyone like me in my town.

FRANCIS

That's because families in your town probably have their slow kids locked up in the basement to avoid embarrassment.

PATTI

Well you're here now so you don't have to worry about your family pretending to care about you.

MARY

My family cares about me! But can we get back to

explaining how you all our communicating with me like we are all...we're all...

FRANCIS

Normal?

MARY

Yes!

PATTI

If someone were to walk in here right now all they would see is us as they are used to seeing us.

BETH

The outer world will always see that. We are interacting now through non verbal cues mostly. A look or touch can say so much. What others hear as mumbling, our brains are able to decipher those codes and we are able to interact in a way other people can't understand.

MARY

It's a miracle!

FRANCIS

Yes. What a great superhuman power we have. I have to be fed every day by a non deodorant wearing neanderthal that misses my mouth half the time but yeah it's yet another gift from the Almighty.

PATTI

Well it's better than nothing.

FRANCIS

Slightly better than nothing but you are right Patti.

PATTI

What's that Francis? I couldn't hear you. I was what?

FRANCIS

Don't push it. I must have short circuited for a second from all the therapy.

MARY

What is the therapy you are talking about? Like stretching out or exercising?

BETH

Not exactly. It's different for everyone. They think they can make us better with everything from long warm showers for relaxation to...um..