

FREE SPIRITS

An Original Screenplay

by
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FADE IN

SUPER: TWENTY YEARS AGO

EXT. BLUE RIDGE PARKWAY - NORTH CAROLINA - DUSK

A winding road cuts through beautiful, gentle rolling hills. It's fall. A heavy fog combines with the fading light to diffuse what would otherwise be a postcard-worthy view.

EXT. PARKWAY - ESTABLISHING SHOT

A CAR wiggles its way.

INT. CAR - CONTINUOUS (DUSK)

MAN IN CAR drives. WOMAN IN CAR sings to a radio Bluegrass tune. Tippy, they're a 30-something husband and wife, and it's obvious they still enjoy each other's company.

EXT. CAR - CONTINUOUS (DUSK)

Like a magician's act, the CAR appears and disappears as it slips in and out of fog.

EXT. BEND IN ROAD - MOMENTS LATER (DUSK)

The CAR emerges from another wall of fog and heads toward three cars tangled in a car wreck. Innocent fender-benders all. Confused SHRINERS gather around their damaged cars.

The CAR SWERVES and misses the Shriners. But SMASHES over the embankment, and is swallowed by the night.

INT. VICTORIAN HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Two young girls, sisters, ages 10 and 8, sit on the floor, and surround a Ouija Board.

The older girl, YOUNG KIM, dresses to look like a gypsy fortune teller. The other girl, YOUNG ELIZABETH, dresses more conservatively.

Both girls have their fingers on the Ouija Board device and move it around the board.

YOUNG KIM
Let's ask if Bobby kissed Emily?

Young Elizabeth shakes her head No.

YOUNG KIM
Let's ask if Mom and Dad will let
us get a dog?

Young Elizabeth shakes her head and lifts her fingers.

YOUNG ELIZABETH
I don't want to play this anymore.
It's creepy.

YOUNG KIM
Lizzie? What if. What if Mom and
Dad never return and we have to
grow up by ourselves?

YOUNG ELIZABETH
Kim. Stop it. You're scaring me.

Young Kim puts her fingers on the device, closes her eyes.

YOUNG KIM
Oh, Great and Wise Ouija Board,
what does the future hold?

A loud KNOCK on the door. Both girls JUMP and stare at the
sound. The door bell RINGS. It RINGS again.

AUNT MABEL, a plus-sized woman in her fifties, enters the
room from the kitchen. She wipes flour from her hands.

AUNT MABEL
Didn't y'all hear the door?

Mabel opens the door to see TWO HIGHWAY PATROLMEN, hats in
hand, with grim faces. Both girls stare at them.

HIGHWAY PATROLMAN 1
Miss Mabel.

AUNT MABEL
Ross Junior.

Both Patrolmen cast sad frowns at the girls.

HIGHWAY PATROLMAN 1
(to Mabel)
May we have a word in private?

Elizabeth grabs the Ouija Pointer device and jumps up.

YOUNG ELIZABETH
You killed them! It's all your
fault. You wished they wouldn't
come back. I heard you.

You killed Mom and Dad. I'll never
forgive you.

Elizabeth THROWS the Pointer device at Kim and rushes out.

INSERT

Dice fly out of a shaken Yahtzee cup. But it's not a
conventional set of dice. They're Scandinavian runes.

SUPER: PRESENT DAY

INT. KIM'S OFFICE - NIGHT

A shrine to an alternative lifestyle: crystal ball, pyramid,
I Ching, tarot cards, Ouija board, etc.

Fingers separate each rune. The fingers belong to KIM
SINGLETON, 30, wispy, sexy, tough. Kim's tattooed arm picks
up the runes and puts them back in the Yahtzee cup.

She pays bills. Two boxes rest on her desk: Pay Now and Pay
Later. The "Now" box runneth over. She shakes the cup and
rolls out the runes once more time.

KIM

Crap.

She moves another bill to the "Pay Now" box. She stares at
the box for a beat. Then grabs all the bills and plops them
in the "Pay Later" box.

EXT. MAIN STREET - MOUNT ANGEL, NORTH CAROLINA - DAY

Establishing shot. A billboard proclaims: "Welcome to Mount
Angel, North Carolina." Mayberry R.F.D. all over again.

EXT. KIM'S HOUSE AND STUDIO - DAY

A large, dilapidated house whose prime long ago faded. A
neon sign flashes *Kim's Tattoo & Body Piercing* in one of its
large windows.

Hand-drawn signs in other windows indicate stretched attempts
to make ends meet in a small town: *Consignment Shop. Fax
Service. Healing Crystals. Fortunes by Edgar!*

INT. KIM'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

Kim carries a cup of coffee and approaches a huge birdcage. It houses EDGAR, a pigeon.

KIM
Okay, Edgar. What's the good word
this morning?

On cue, Edgar uses his beak and selects a small, rolled message from a pigeon-hole shelving unit. Rolled messages stick out from other holes.

Kim takes the message and sits. She unfolds it.

KIM
(reads aloud)
**Don't worry about money. The best
things in life are free.**

Kim RIPS it.

KIM
You're one sick bird.

Edgar COOS.

INT. KIM'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Kim's son, TYLER, a seventh grader, walks through the room, and wipes sleep from his eyes. He hugs his skateboard like a teddy bear. Notices a man asleep on the couch and enters

KIM'S KITCHEN

Kim sips coffee, struggles to wake up.

TYLER
Did what's his name crash here?

KIM
You know his name's Randy and he's
having a tough time, losing his job
and all. Guess what? Be nice.

TYLER
Nice? He's an asshole.

KIM
What'd I say about judging people?

TYLER
Not to.

KIM

And why?

Tyler ponders before he answers.

TYLER

Because I don't know what it's like
to be them?

KIM

Close enough.

TYLER

Can't I have my own opinion?

KIM

Yes, you can. I just want you to
think before sharing it with
others, that's all.

TYLER

Okay, then, I think he's a jerk.

(pause)

Why do you need another man anyway?
I'm a man.

Kim gives Tyler a proud look and HUGS him.

KIM

Thought I'd visit Aunt Mabel and go
to the bank this morning. Might as
well walk in together. What do ya
say?

TYLER

(to himself)

Great. Now she walks me to school.

EXT. STREET - ESTABLISHING SHOT - DAY

Elizabeth's car, a modest 4-door American model, pokes
through residential streets, with TWO RIDERS in the front.

INT. ELIZABETH'S CAR - DAY

ELIZABETH MARTIN (Kim's sister), early 30s, prudish, hair in
a bun, drives. RACHEL, her seventh grade daughter, sits next
to her. Rachel dresses to please her mother.

Elizabeth turns on the radio.

DISC JOCKEY 1 (ON RADIO)

The thing about cleavage is when
it's out it's in and when it's in
it's out.

The SOUND of a KLAXON HORN interrupts the DJs.

DISC JOCKEY 1 (ON RADIO)
 Women have these things called
 "Lifties." They put them under
 their breasts to lift them.

DISC JOCKEY 2 (ON RADIO)
 Yeah?

DISC JOCKEY 1 (ON RADIO)
 Yeah. So they make droopy breasts
 look perky.

DISC JOCKEY 2 (ON RADIO)
 Why would they want to be something
 they're not?

DISC JOCKEY 1 (ON RADIO)
 Like you wearing that codpiece.

DISC JOCKEY 2 (ON RADIO)
 That's no codpiece. I'm just glad
 to see you.

The SOUND of a KLAXON HORN interrupts the DJs.

EXT. SCHOOL - FRONT STEPS - DAY

Kim and Tyler stand together near the school's entrance. Kim
 hugs her son. Embarrassed, he pulls away and rushes into
 school.

EXT. SCHOOL - CONTINUOUS

Elizabeth's car pulls up.

INT. ELIZABETH'S CAR - DAY

Elizabeth studies the radio, confused.

DISC JOCKEY 1 (ON RADIO)
 That's not all. They put these
 Band-Aid like things on their
 nipples. So guys can't see 'em.

ELIZABETH
 Oh, my gosh!

DISC JOCKEY 2 (ON RADIO)
 What's the point of starrng if you
 can't see nipples?

ELIZABETH

Oh, dear.

Rachel smiles and looks out the window.

INT. ELIZABETH'S CAR - SAME

With the car stopped, Elizabeth PRESSES the preset button on the radio. A RAP SONG blasts out.

Elizabeth listens to the words for a beat. She PRESSES once more and it's HEAVY METAL. PRESSES again and it's an all-GOTH station.

She PRESSES still another button and it's back to the moronic Disc Jockeys. Elizabeth CLICKS off the radio.

RACHEL

Bye, Mom.

Rachel opens the door and sprints out to join other students. Elizabeth rolls down the passenger side window.

ELIZABETH

Did you change my presets?

EXT. SCHOOL - CONTINUOUS (DAY)

Kim digs inside her purse, and enters the crosswalk. She passes in front of Elizabeth's car as...

Elizabeth lets her foot off the brake pedal. Her car lunges forward and BUMPS Kim.

INT. ELIZABETH'S CAR - CONTINUOUS (DAY)

Elizabeth can't believe it.

ELIZABETH

Shoot!

EXT. SCHOOL - CROSSWALK - CONTINUOUS

Kim looks up and sees her sister. Kim glares at Elizabeth, who stares back.

KIM

Shit!

INT. ELIZABETH'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

Elizabeth puts the car in park.

EXT. CROSSWALK

Kim marches to the open window.

INT. ELIZABETH'S CAR

Elizabeth presses a button and rolls up the window. She stares at her big sister, mortified.

EXT. ELIZABETH'S CAR

Kim POUNDS on the closed window.

KIM
You trying to kill me now. Is that
it, Lizzie? Open your window and
talk to me for once. Coward!

EXT. CROSSWALK

Seconds later, Kim storms off.

INT. BANK - PRESIDENT'S DESK - LATER

Old fashioned looking bank.

Kim's across from ORVILLE BANKS, middle-aged man in charge.
Kim's "file" is open and on his desk.

ORVILLE
The land's worth more than the
house. It's basically a tear-down.

KIM
Then give me a loan on the land.

ORVILLE
We already did. Part of the second
you took out.

KIM
If you won't give me another loan,
will you hire me?

ORVILLE
We don't have any openings and
don't expect any.

KIM

I finished top ten percent of my high school class, Orville. Took community college at night.

ORVILLE

Times being what they are this town's lucky to still have a bank. I can't make jobs out of thin air.

KIM

I'm a Vet. Must count for something, times being what they are.

ORVILLE

We honor your service. We do.

Kim waves her hand toward the teller counter at RAE DALLAS WALKER, a bank teller and a mouse of a woman.

KIM

You hired Rae Dallas Walker and she flunked math.

ORVILLE

Don't take this the wrong way, Kimberly, 'cause I believe in different strokes for different folks. But Rae Dallas there, well, she's kinda simple and don't scare folks much.

INT. BANK COUNTER - MOMENTS LATER

On her way out, Kim walks up to Rae's teller slot. Rae assists an Elderly Bank Customer.

KIM

(to Elderly Bank Customer)
Watch your money. It's always the quiet ones.

INT. BANK PRESIDENT'S DESK - CONTINUOUS

Orville puts Kim's file in a folder marked "Pending Foreclosures."

INT. KIM'S STUDIO - DAY

Kim inks a new tat on the arm of a huge biker type, HACKETT. It's hard to see where Hackett has room left for tattoos, but for Kim, he'll always find room.

RANDY, a good-looking scratch-post, strolls in and kisses Kim on the lips. He stares at Hackett. Kim pulls away.

KIM
Randy! I'm working!

RANDY
Hackett.

HACKETT
Randy.

Randy continues to give Hackett the eye.

RANDY
(to Kim)
I need some smokes.

KIM
Okay. Leave me some will ya?

RANDY
You got it.

INT. KIM'S OFFICE - DAY

Randy pushes his way through the wall of colored beads used to separate Kim's private office, her inner sanctum, from the studio.

He rifles through her purse, removes a \$20 bill and what's left of a pack of cigarettes.

INT. KIM'S STUDIO - MOMENTS LATER

Randy scoots out the front.

RANDY
Catch ya later.

Randy leaves. Hackett twists his head to look at Kim.

HACKETT
You can do better.

KIM
What I can do is ruin your tat if you don't hold still.

HACKETT
Marry me, Kim?

KIM
Couldn't afford to keep you in girlie magazines, Hackett.

HACKETT

If I was married to you I wouldn't need no magazines... Ouch!

KIM

Told you not to move.

INT. KIM'S HOUSE - BASEMENT - DAY

Kim and CONSIGNMENT WOMAN, nervous and tired, sort through worn, cheap clothes in big trash bags. Tyler helps.

CONSIGNMENT WOMAN

Could I get the cash now?

KIM

That's not how consignment works. It sells, we both get paid.

CONSIGNMENT WOMAN

Thought so. No harm asking.

KIM

You speak to the bank about your bills?

CONSIGNMENT WOMAN

They're the ones kicking us out.

Beat. Kim takes \$40 out of her own purse and gives it to the Woman.

KIM

Consider it an advance. I'll let you know when your things sell.

Woman nods, smiles weakly, and turns to walk up the stairs. They watch her leave.

Beat.

TYLER

This stuff's never gonna sell.

KIM

That's not the point.

INT. KIM'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT

A drunken, out-of-control Randy shouts at Kim. He pins her against a wall.

RANDY

Give me the GOD DAMN money!

KIM
No way. It's money you gave me
'cause you owed me.

RANDY
Give it to me.

KIM
No.

RANDY
Give it up, bitch.

Randy POUNDS the wall next to Kim's head with his fist.

Randy walks over to the bird cage. He opens the cage, grabs Edgar, and sticks the bird's head in his mouth.

RANDY
(garbled)
Give me the money or I'll bite his
fuggin' head off.

EXT. KIM'S HOUSE - DRIVEWAY - LATER

Kim and Tyler stand next to each other, as Randy drives off, peeling out in a beater pick-up.

KIM
You come near my house again and
I'll shoot you!

TYLER
We have a gun?

KIM
Yes.
(Pause)
A staple gun.

TYLER
I told you that guy's a real jerk.

KIM
He's not a jerk. He's an asshole.

INT. KIM'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Kim sips whiskey. She grabs an old family photo with Kim, Elizabeth, and their parents in happier times.

KIM
We had a perfect family and I
ruined everything. It's all my
fault. Mom, Dad...

I miss you so much. I'd give
anything to hear your voices again.
I never even had a chance to say
goodbye.

She sets the photo back and knocks over a tattoo magazine.
She picks up the magazine and spots a small ad:

INSERT BOX AD

*Own a Bridge to the Departed
Free Assembly Provided. Guaranteed Results May Vary. Order
your Channel Room today. And visit loved ones from
yesterday, tomorrow. Call Now.*

BACK TO SCENE

Kim grabs her cell phone and places a call.

KIM

Hi, yah, uh, hmm, this is Kim
Singleton. I saw your ad for a,
uh, a Channel Room. You know to
contact the dead. I would like to
contact my, uh, my dead parents.

(pause)

You know. Never mind. This is
stupid. Forget it. Sorry.

Kim hangs up. She downs her drink and turns out the light.

INT. KIM'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

Kim holds her morning cup of coffee, wanders over to Edgar.

KIM

I need a little T.L.C. this
morning, Edgar. Pick me a winner.

Edgar picks out a message, Kim grabs it. She shuffles to the
table, sits, sips coffee, and unrolls the message.

KIM

(reads aloud)

**Magic time created when
unconventional person comes.**

Kim sets the message down, takes a sip.

KIM

(to herself)

Between the sheets.

Doorbell RINGS. Kim dashes and jerks it open.

KIM
Randy, get your scuzzy butt off --

EXT./INT. KIM'S HOUSE - FRONT PORCH - CONTINUOUS (DAY)

Not Randy. It's MAGUS, a uniformed man with a cheerful face, who looks a lot like the Maytag Repairman.

There's a white, generic van, with the words "The Channel" on its side, in the driveway.

MAGUS
Good morning, Ma'am. Hope I'm not too early. Name's Magus.

KIM
Who are you?

Kim stares at him, speechless.

MAGUS
I'm here to build your Channel Room. Some people prefer its more formal name. A Psychomanteum Chamber.

KIM
A what?

MAGUS
The Channel Room. You ordered it last night.

KIM
Didn't order it. I cancelled.

MAGUS
Your order was processed.

KIM
Thought I only left my name.

Magus smiles. Kim moves to shut the door.

KIM
I can't afford to buy anything.

TYLER (O.S.)
Mom. Who is it?

Kim swivels her head to answer.

KIM
A salesman. Finish your breakfast.

She turns back around and presto -- Magus is inside.

KIM
Get out of my house.

MAGUS
All I need's a minute.

KIM
I'm not buying anything.

MAGUS
Don't need to. You're getting a
free trial.

KIM
Free? Yeah, right. What's the
catch?

MAGUS
No catch, no Ma'am. Although
guaranteed results do vary.

KIM
What results?

MAGUS
Can't say, 'cause they vary.
Take me awhile to set up the room.
Mind if I get started?

Beat as Kim considers the offer.

KIM
Talk to the dead, right?

MAGUS
That's the plan.