

MY ADVICE

a short film script by Jason Half

NOTE: This script is registered with Writers Guild of America, west (WGAw), with copyright asserted by author JASON HALF. Any public reading, production, performance, adaptation or sale is prohibited unless permission is received from the author.

That said, companies and artists interested in producing or optioning this script are welcome to contact the author through email at Jason@jasonhalf.com .

Jason is often happy to collaborate as long as he is aware his work is being presented in the first place.

Email: Jason@jasonhalf.com

Registered WGAw #1539119

FOURTH DRAFT

MY ADVICE - SHORT FILM SCRIPT BY JASON HALF

A PHOTO of a 14-year old boy, sitting at a picnic table.

MARCUS (V.O.)

That's me. My name's Marcus.

Mom, Dad, and Older Brother appear around Marcus.

MARCUS (V.O.)

That's my family.

Around these four, suddenly two dozen relatives appear, all ages, shapes and sizes.

MARCUS (V.O.)

And that's my extended family. And that's just the ones who showed up for the annual Sullivan-Ramsey picnic. If you want the extended extended family, you're gonna need a second camera.

Dozens more people, many in eclectic outfits for outdoors (nurse's uniform, business suit, ballerina costume), crowd the edges of the photo, spilling off the sides.

MARCUS (V.O.)

So I have a lot of relatives, and all my life someone was always there to give me advice.

A brief montage. Each relative gets a caption.

EXT. PORCH STEPS - DAY

A ponytailed girl and 6-year old Marcus sit on the steps, each licking an Oreo cookie.

SUPER: Cousin Bethany

BETHANY

Then you lick from the outside to the inside, pushing the frosting to the middle. Like this.

Bethany demonstrates. Marcus tries. Bethany slaps his cookie away, sending it flying.

BETHANY (CONT'D)

You're doing it wrong!!

INT. CLASSROOM - DAY

Before class, an excitable boy confides in Marcus sitting behind him.

SUPER: Cousin Todd

TODD

I'm telling you, Cuz, just write what you need on your hands and you can totally ace that test. Look. These got me through the seventh grade.

Todd holds up his palms, a mass of smeared scrawls.

TODD (CONT'D)

Just don't use permanent marker.

EXT. BASEBALL BLEACHERS - DAY

Marcus, in dirty baseball uniform, walks past the bleachers. A pot-bellied man calls out.

SUPER: Uncle Lou

LOU

Hey Marcus! Marcus. You know what gets out grass stains? Cat urine.

Marcus registers this, then keeps walking.

MARCUS (V.O.)

And while a lot of this advice isn't really helpful or practical or even understandable--

A flurry of relatives and captions, offering direct address:

AUNT DOROTHY

Always wait for the phone to ring three times before answering.

COUSIN NATALIE

If you don't have a loofah sponge, you need to get one. Like, now.

COUSIN KEVIN

Never hit on eighteen!

GRANDPA VICTOR

You just can't eat popcorn with dentures.

GREAT-UNCLE PAUL

And when they're empty, you can cut
off the top and use 'em as pencil
cups.

INT. SCHOOL HALLWAY - DAY

Marcus places some books in his locker.

MARCUS (V.O.)

--There are times in life when I
could really use someone to talk
to. Someone to help me figure
things out.

He closes the locker door, revealing REGINA MOORE.

REGINA

Hi Marcus.

MARCUS (V.O.)

Things like this.

MARCUS

Oh, Hi Regina.

REGINA

Theater Club's having auditions
Thursday at five. Will you be
there?

Regina hands Marcus a flyer announcing auditions for the play
"DEADLY JEALOUSY." As Marcus reads it:

MARCUS (V.O.)

Until she handed me this paper, I
wasn't sure if Regina Moore noticed
my existence. In three years she
had only said eleven words to me.
And now today, she doubled it. 22.

REGINA

Well?

MARCUS (V.O.)

23.

MARCUS

Thursday? Five? I, uh, I wish I
could but I'm supposed to be doing
something else.

Regina gives a hint of a pout.

MARCUS (CONT'D)

And besides, I-I don't know how to act. On stage.

MARCUS (V.O.)

But it was words 24 through 28 that got me.

REGINA

I bet you'd be good.

MARCUS

Really? You know what? I'm free. I'll be there.

An accomplished smile, and Regina exits. Marcus watches her go, then looks back down at the flyer: "THURSDAY 5-6"

MARCUS (V.O.)

Except I wasn't free. I was booked. Or rather, my friend and study partner Otto Ettinger was booked.

"THURSDAY 5-6" transitions into the Thursday 5-6 block of a very filled weekly planner. A hand meticulously writes "Study w/Marcus" in the block.

INT. SCHOOL LIBRARY - DAY

OTTO ETTINGER, an overachieving ninth grader, studies his planner. Three different textbooks are opened before him.

OTTO

I tell you, Marcus, I'm booked.

MARCUS

What about after eight?

OTTO

On Thursday? Are you kidding? Eight to nine, Math Club. Nine to nine-thirty Student Senate committee meeting. Nine-thirty to ten, meeting with homecoming liaison to discuss float budget...

MARCUS

Okay, I get it. Thursday at five. That's fine.

OTTO

Is it fine? 'Cause I'm putting it in my planner.

MARCUS

It's fine.

OTTO

And once it goes into my planner,
then it's a commitment.

MARCUS

Put it in. I commit.

OTTO

Thursday, five to six. It's fine?

MARCUS

It's fine.

MARCUS (V.O.)

And it was fine. Yesterday. Before
Regina Moore bet me I'd be a good
actor.

OTTO

Marcus. You're a good friend.
Thanks for taking time to help me
with that English assignment.

MARCUS

We'll figure it out.

OTTO

We always do.

They bump fists affectionately.

INT. MARCUS' BEDROOM - NIGHT

Marcus lies on his bed, studying the wall opposite, thinking.

MARCUS (V.O.)

So now I wonder what I'm going to
do and where I'm going to be at
five o'clock tomorrow. If I choose
my best friend, I'll lose my one
chance to finally get noticed by a
beautiful girl.

A THUMP and the books on the wall-mount bookshelf shake.

MARCUS (V.O.)

I'd call up the best friend and
explain, but if you think it's that
easy, then you don't know Otto.

Another THUMP and book shake, then another one, rhythmic.

MARCUS

I need some advice.

Marcus gets out of bed. THUMP and a book falls off the shelf.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Marcus' DAD paces the room, his cell phone to his ear. A cascade of business papers and spreadsheets covers the coffee table and some of the couch.

DAD

(Into phone)

Yeah, that's what we're waiting on. Theresa's gonna call me back with the last quarter numbers. Once we get those, we'll know how to move forward...

Marcus enters the room. This is a common scene.

SUPER on the pacing figure: Dad

MARCUS

Dad.

DAD

Oh, hey buddy. Just a minute.

(Into phone)

We could project, but why bother if the numbers are available to us? You know what I mean?

MARCUS

Daaaad.

DAD

(Into phone)

Jerry, just a minute.

(To Marcus)

What do you need?

MARCUS

I want to talk to you.

DAD

I'm just tying something up here.

MARCUS

How long does it take to tie?

DAD

Only a minute. Two.

(Into phone)

Yeah, Jerry.

MARCUS

Which is it? One minute or two?

DAD

Marcus. Let me finish this up and then we'll-- Ohp! There's the beep. That's Theresa.

(Into phone)

Jerry, Theresa's on the other line. Hold on, I'll get the figures and then I'll get 'em to you.

MARCUS

Dad, please. I've got a problem.

Dad switches calls.

DAD

(Into phone)

Theresa? How you doin'? You have the last quarter numbers? Let me grab a... Okay, go ahead. Uh-huh. Uh-huh. That's accumulated? Uh-huh. Great, you're a lifesaver. Ohp! There's the beep. That's Jerry.

Dad switches calls.

DAD (CONT'D)

Jer?

PHONE VOICE

(Odd voice from phone)

Mr. Martin Sullivan?

DAD

Speaking. Who's this?

PHONE VOICE

This is Marcus Sullivan's secretary. He wishes to talk to you.

DAD

Secretary?

Dad turns around. Marcus sits in a chair, a cell phone to his ear.

DAD (CONT'D)

(A low growl)

Marcus...

(Realizes, changes tacts)

Look. Give your dad ten minutes?

Will you do that? Just ten minutes.

MARCUS

Ten minutes. That'd be 8:33.

DAD

Fine. Just let me finish up here.

Ten minutes.

MARCUS

8:33.

INT. MARCUS' BEDROOM - NIGHT

Marcus on the bed again, thinking, staring at the wall. Only a few tipped-over books are left on the shelf. THUMP. THUMP.

Marcus turns to look at the alarm clock. It switches from 8:59 to 9:00. THUMP. THUMP.

MARCUS (V.O.)

Time's running out. And desperate times call for desperate measures.

INT. SCOTT'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

A soccer ball hits the middle of a poster where a goalie is frozen in a defensive jump. THUMP. And again, THUMP.

The bedroom door opens and Marcus stands there. Scott keeps throwing the ball against the poster on the wall.

SUPER: Brother Scott

SCOTT

What d'you want?

MARCUS

Can we talk?

SCOTT

This is the closest I can get to playing soccer until I'm ungrounded, and I don't care if it bothers you.

MARCUS

It doesn't bother me. It bothers my books, but it doesn't bother me.

SCOTT

Then what d'you want?

MARCUS

Advice.

SCOTT

About what?

THUMP.

MARCUS

Will you stop with the soccer ball?

SCOTT

(Triumphant)

So it does bother you.

MARCUS

Yeah, okay. It bothers me. Will you help me out here?

SCOTT

Maybe. What's the problem?

MARCUS

Well... I have this friend.

SCOTT

You. You're talking about you.

MARCUS

You don't even know what I'm gonna say!

SCOTT

Doesn't matter. It's you.

MARCUS

Okay, it is. Anyway. I told Otto Ettinger I would help him finish his poetry assignment for English class.

SCOTT

I bet you could help him. You're always scribbling in those notebooks.

MARCUS

And writing's the one subject he's not good at. And it drives him nuts.

SCOTT

So what's the problem?

MARCUS

He can only meet tomorrow at five, and that's the only time I can audition for the school play.

SCOTT

Why would you do that? You hate acting.

MARCUS

Maybe it'll be fun.

SCOTT

It won't be. There's only one reason to be an actor, and it's the same reason for being an athlete.

MARCUS

Personal satisfaction.

SCOTT

Girls. Is it a girl?

MARCUS

No.

SCOTT

Are you doing this for a girl?

MARCUS

No!

Marcus leaves in embarrassment. Scott makes two throws:
THUMP. THUMP.

Marcus re-enters.

MARCUS (CONT'D)

Okay. I have this friend...

MARCUS (V.O.)

And at the time, his advice sounded good. It even sounded wise, which is saying something considering that it's coming from my brother.

Scott talks to Marcus as they sit on his bed.

SCOTT

You need to blow off one thing so you can go do something better, but you don't want to look like a jerk. I've been there, I get it. The trick is to make it look like it's out of your control when it's actually in your control all the time.

MARCUS

Keep going.

INT. SCHOOL HALLWAY - DAY

Marcus and Otto at the lockers. Marcus holds his stomach.

SCOTT (V.O.)

First you need to set up your dominoes...

OTTO

I can never find the inspiration. Poetry's all about flowers and sunsets, but that don't inspire me. What's the matter?

MARCUS

I'm okay. Just been feeling a little sick.

OTTO

But you're okay? I mean, you're still helping me write this poem at five o'clock today?

MARCUS

Sure. Wouldn't miss it...

INT. CLASSROOM - MATH CLASS - DAY

A teacher explaining an equation at the board. Marcus looks to Otto, then to Regina, both in this class. He decides.

SCOTT (V.O.)

Then you need to knock 'em down.

Marcus MOANS and THUMPS his head onto the desk. Everyone turns to look at him.

Marcus stands, holds his stomach.

MARCUS

Mr. Paley? May I be... excused?

Marcus rushes out of the classroom. All are surprised.

REGINA

I hope he's well enough to audition today.

OTTO

And when is this?

INT. NURSE'S OFFICE - DAY

Marcus sits upright on the examining table as a NURSE removes a thermometer from his mouth. He looks very pleased.

NURSE

Temperature's normal.

MARCUS

And I feel better too. It just sort of came and went, like a wave.

NURSE

Maybe you should stay here and rest.

MARCUS

I'm okay. Really.

NURSE

Still. Try to take it easy.

MARCUS

It's twelve minutes until the last class ends. Maybe I could stay another twelve minutes...

INT. HALLWAY - DAY

The school bell RINGS.

From the doorway of the nurse's office, Marcus watches as Otto exits with other students through a far door and goes outside.

MARCUS

Now to bide my time.

Marcus ducks from the doorway into the nearest boy's room.

INT. BOY'S RESTROOM - DAY

Inside a closed stall, Marcus sits cross legged and writes in a notebook. He is caught up in his story.

His watch BEEPS a quick alarm. He looks at the time, smiles.

INT. SCHOOL AUDITORIUM - DAY

Marcus enters, moves to the front where students are preparing.

Regina sees Marcus and goes to him. She carries script sides.

REGINA

Marcus! I'm so glad you're here.
How are you feeling?

MARCUS

Much better now. Thanks for asking.

REGINA

Well, here's a list of the
characters and copies of the
scenes.

MARCUS

"Deadly Jealousy." I don't know
this play.

REGINA

It was written as a group project
by the English class one year.

MARCUS

Oh yeah? Which year?

REGINA

1962.

MARCUS

Oh. Okay. "Constable Carruthers."
Good name.

REGINA

Oh, don't read Constable
Carruthers. Try out for Giles
Masterson. He's the lead, and he
has lots of scenes with Christine
Stone.

(a loud whisper)

And I'm trying out for Christine.

MARCUS

Really.

REGINA

And I need a passionate Giles.

MARCUS

Aahhh... Okay.

Mrs. Steen, the play's DIRECTOR, takes charge.

DIRECTOR

All right, everybody. Let's get organized. Can I have everyone sit in the house.

All take seats. As they settle, Regina shoots Marcus another smile. Marcus returns it.

DIRECTOR (CONT'D)

First I want to see who's interested in what. Show of hands: who's going to read for Christine Stone?

Regina confidently raises her hand, along with a couple other less decisive girls.

DIRECTOR (CONT'D)

Good. Thank you. Let's see hands for Giles Masterson.

Three boys raise their hands. Marcus smiles back at Regina, raises his hand.

Behind Marcus, Otto stands up:

OTTO

And me. I'll be reading for Giles Masterson.

Regina sees Otto, smiles. Marcus is shocked at Otto's presence. Otto seems uncharacteristically confident.

OTTO (CONT'D)

I've just found some free time in my schedule.

Otto sits behind Marcus, who turns around. The two start an urgently whispered conversation.

MARCUS

What are you doing here?

OTTO

Auditioning. Same as you. Feeling better, buddy?

MARCUS

I am, actually. The sickness passed and then I saw a sign for auditions today--

OTTO

I hope you're a better actor than that.

MARCUS

Listen: if it wasn't for you and your impossible schedule...

OTTO

You leave my impossible schedule out of this. You committed.

MARCUS

This is exactly why I didn't bother telling you. I knew you'd take it personally.

OTTO

I am not taking it personally.

MARCUS

And then you'd get all competitive.

OTTO

I am not competitive!

DIRECTOR

Who's auditioning for Giles Masterson?

MARCUS

I am!

OTTO

I am!

CUT TO:

On stage, both Marcus and Otto perform the same scene with Regina. The montage switches between the two.

Where Otto uses his indignation to fire his performance, Marcus becomes more and more uneasy with his portrayal. The difference in approach is apparent side by side.

REGINA

Giles! What are you doing here?

MARCUS

I couldn't resist you, Christine.

REGINA

But it's dangerous for you to return. You're wanted by the police.

MARCUS

You think I care for my safety? Ha, I say.

Otto now plays Giles.

OTTO

HA! Christine, look in my eyes.

REGINA

Giles, please.

OTTO

They're the windows to the soul, my dear. What do you see?

REGINA

What do I see?

Marcus struggles as Giles.

MARCUS

What do you see?

REGINA

I see fire. Passion. A man who doesn't know the meaning of compromise.

MARCUS

You see all that?

Otto plays Giles, with Regina matching his intensity.

REGINA

I see all that and more!

Otto grabs Regina in an embrace.

OTTO

I was a fool to ever let you go. I should have held onto you with all my might--

Marcus holds Regina awkwardly by one arm.

MARCUS

Held on and never let you go.

REGINA

But Giles, the police.

MARCUS

Um. Damn the police.

DIRECTOR

Okay. I think we've seen enough.
Next audition pair: Constable
Carruthers and Lady Fairfax.

Regina pulls her arm away and walks off.

INT. SCHOOL HALLWAY - DAY

A bunch of students surround a bulletin board, chattering and studying a posted paper. Marcus walks up.

MARCUS (V.O.)

The next day the bad news was confirmed. It was worse than not getting cast opposite Regina: I lost the role to a selfish ex-friend.

CLOSE-UP of the CAST LIST for "Deadly Jealousy" reads
CHRISTINE STONE: REGINA MOORE and GILES MASTERSON: OTTO
ETTINGER at the top.

Marcus scans down the page. At bottom: CONSTABLE CARRUTHERS:
MARCUS SULLIVAN.

MARCUS (V.O.)

And for three weeks of nightly rehearsal and four performances I'll be forced to wait for my cue and watch these two declare their undying love for each other.

INT. SCHOOL AUDITORIUM - STAGE SET - DAY

Marcus, his face half-hidden behind a heavy mustache, opens a stage door to find Regina and Otto in an embrace.

REGINA

Oh, Constable Carruthers!

OTTO

I say, don't you flatfoots ever knock?

Marcus glowers.

INT. MARCUS' BEDROOM - DAY

Marcus takes out a shoebox, opens it, rifles through pictures.

MARCUS (V.O.)

My situation was as irritating as Constable Carruthers' fake moustache. I needed someone who could help me figure out a game plan, show me my options.

Marcus pulls out the panoramic photo of the family reunion. Along with it comes a picture of six-year old Marcus on a porch swing with Mom, both beaming. He looks at this.

The spell breaks, and he tosses the picture back in the box. He studies the picnic group, trying to find the right face.

MARCUS (V.O.)

Nope. This was a job for a tactician. The most ruthless woman I know. My Aunt Lorraine.

EXT. LORRAINE'S HOUSE - DAY

LORRAINE opens the door wide, delighted to see her nephew. In appearance, she is the opposite of ruthless.

SUPER: Aunt Lorraine

LORRAINE

Marky! What a lovely surprise!

MARCUS

Can I leave my bike out here?

LORRAINE

Bike outside, you inside. I've got cookies for you.

INT. LORRAINE'S HOUSE - DAY

Lorraine brings a tray of milk and cookies into the living room. There are six chess sets of various sizes on different surfaces, all in play. Marcus studies one.

LORRAINE

This is so nice. I haven't seen you in so long.

(MORE)

LORRAINE (CONT'D)

It's been months, probably not since-- Well. Not since then. Sorry.

MARCUS

It's okay. Whose game is this?

LORRAINE

That one is my friend Beryl who lives in New Zealand. Then you've got, left to right, Tammy Severson, your Uncle Carl, John from the DMV, Carla from my book group, and someone online named Captain Rook 44.

MARCUS

Impressive.

LORRAINE

How's school going?

MARCUS (V.O.)

That was my Aunt's opening gambit, and I happily met it. I told her about my unfaithful friend, my fair-weather romantic interest, and my miserable experience on stage.

MARCUS

So should I quit?

LORRAINE

Never give up in the middle of a game. You've got a few more moves before checkmate.

MARCUS

But I'm not happy sitting backstage just listening for my cue.

LORRAINE

All right. Then you alter the playing field to your advantage.

MARCUS

How do I do that?

LORRAINE

You look at the pieces you have to work with, and you bring the strongest ones into play. Be bold. Go on the offensive.

MARCUS

I don't know where to begin.

LORRAINE

What's your greatest strength?

MARCUS

It's not acting.

LORRAINE

Maybe not. You were such a creative kid. So Marcus: do you still write?

Something clicks.

MARCUS

I do.

EXT. NEIGHBORHOOD STREET - DAY

Marcus pedals his bike -- and thinks -- furiously. He talks to himself.

MARCUS

If Giles turns out to be guilty, not just falsely accused... He's really a murderer. Then Carruthers would be a true threat, not comic relief. Turn up the tension. Tragedy, not melodrama.

INT. MARCUS' BEDROOM - DAY

Excited, Marcus tosses onto his desk a composition notebook, a couple pens, and the battered photocopy pages of the script reading "DEADLY JEALOUSY: written by Jefferson High School creative writing workshop, Class of '62." Marcus picks up a pen and underlines the writing credit in triumph.

INT. SCHOOL AUDITORIUM - DAY

The Director addresses cast and crew. Marcus stands confidently at her side, holding a stack of scripts.

DIRECTOR

Turns out, we have a very creative writer in our midst. Marcus took it upon himself to make some changes to the script.

Otto and Regina look surprised.

OTTO
Can he do that?

DIRECTOR
He can.

MARCUS
And he did.

DIRECTOR
And because those changes are very compelling-- and because the script is still royalty-free-- I'd like to try out the new material. Let's see what happens.

Marcus passes out the scripts.

MARCUS
Thank you, Mrs. Steen. Okay, everybody: new text is highlighted in brackets. Your character might be a little different now, but my advice? Embrace the change.

ON STAGE

Otto embraces Regina in the scene.

OTTO
Christine, don't you see that I love you?

REGINA
(Reading)
"Christine pushes Giles away."

Regina shoves Otto away. Otto grunts.

REGINA (CONT'D)
No, Giles. You're just a common murderer. You'll never have my trust again.

OTTO
But I'm not a murderer!

Marcus, as mustached Carruthers, makes a dramatic entrance.

MARCUS
Yes you are! Quite right to stay away from him, Christine. He's a bad egg.

(MORE)

MARCUS (CONT'D)

He betrayed his best friend, then
took over his place at the company.
He's a traitor of the worst kind.

OTTO

(Confused; clarifying)

Wait. So I did kill him?

MARCUS

Don't play innocent. You're a cold-
hearted, ruthless villain,
Masterson! Don't you know how to
value a friendship?

(Explaining)

Now come here so I can arrest you.

OTTO

No. This is stupid! This is a
stupid rewrite.

MARCUS

It is not! You're a traitor and
you're getting what's coming to
you! Right, Regina?

REGINA

Marcus, if Giles is guilty and he
lies to Christine and she believes
it... Well, now she's an idiot.

MARCUS

Okay, I can rewrite. The point is--

REGINA

And you've cut 30 of my lines.

OTTO

You're just jealous that I got the
bigger role. That's why you're
changing things! You're petty.

MARCUS

You're petty! The only reason you
auditioned is to get back at me.

OTTO

Because you lied to me and you
ditched me as soon as you found
something better! You made a
commitment, Marcus!

MARCUS

(With contempt)

Oh right. Your schedule.

(MORE)

MARCUS (CONT'D)

Your precious schedule, to work on
your precious poem.

Otto pushes the new script at Marcus.

OTTO

Keep your precious script. And I'm
tired of sharing the same time
block with you. I QUIT! Hear that,
Marcus? I--

(Turning out)

Sorry, Mrs. Steen. Sorry Regina.

(To Marcus, bold)

QUIT!

Otto storms off. Everyone stares at Marcus.

MARCUS

Well.

(Awkward)

Sorry, Mrs. Steen. Sorry Regina.

Regina walks off in disgust.

INT. MARCUS' BEDROOM - NIGHT

Marcus, still in his school clothes, lies on his bed facing
the wall. His head is buried under his pillow.

MARCUS (V.O.)

Suddenly the director wasn't so
supportive of my new script. But
with Otto leaving the show, his
role would have to be recast. And I
might get my chance to be on stage
with Regina after all. Except now,
I don't know if she'll agree to be
on stage with me. Everything should
be fixed by now, but now it feels
more broken than ever.

MARCUS

(To himself)

Why doesn't anyone give me good
advice?

MOM

You just need to know who to listen
to.

MOM stands in the room. Marcus is turned away from her, and
will remain so as he talks to her. (No caption for Mom.)

MOM (CONT'D)

What's wrong?

MARCUS

Nothing. Everything's fine.

MOM

Will you tell me about it?

MARCUS

What good will that do?

MOM

Marky. Talk to me.

MARCUS

I don't want to. I don't want you to be... ashamed of me.

MOM

I've never, ever been ashamed of you.

MARCUS

I messed up. First I chose something for myself instead of helping my best friend, and then I tried to push others out of the way just so I could be in the spotlight.

MOM

Why did you do those things?

MARCUS

I thought by doing that, I'd get what I wanted.

MOM

Marky, that doesn't sound like you.

MARCUS

It's not me. But it also was. 'Cause even though people told me how I should look at things-- like Scott and Aunt Lorraine-- I was the one who came up with the plans.

MOM

So you make your choices in life, and you learn from them.

MARCUS

I haven't learned anything.

MOM

I don't believe that.

MARCUS

I don't know who to ask anymore.
Why can't you tell me what to do?
Just tell me. Please. What should I
do?

Marcus is near tears, still facing away from Mom.

MOM

Marky. I believe in you, and I
believe in your judgement. And now
you need to believe in yourself
too. You're a good boy, the best I
know. If you really listen to
yourself, you'll find the advice
you need. Just make me proud.

The speech comforts Marcus. He closes his eyes.

MARCUS

I'll try.

Marcus falls asleep, the lights on and alone in his bedroom.

INT. SCHOOL AUDITORIUM - DAY

MARCUS (V.O.)

So I spent the next two days
cleaning up the mess I made.

Marcus talks to the play cast, crew and director.

MARCUS

After much thought, I have decided
to withdraw my new version of the
script and suggest that we keep the
old one.

CHEERS and CLAPPING from the group.

MARCUS (CONT'D)

You don't have to be that happy
about it.

DIRECTOR

Thank you, Marcus. There's also the
matter of casting a new actor...

BACK STAGE

Marcus smiles contentedly, waiting for his cue.

MARCUS (V.O.)

After all that happened, the group
voted unanimously that Giles
Masterson should be played by...
anyone other than me.

Marcus slaps on his mustache, opens the stage door.

REGINA

Oh, Constable Carruthers!

MARCUS (V.O.)

That role went to Reed Trembley,
our assistant director. He did a
nice job with it, too.

REED TREMBLEY, standing be Regina, whirls around.

REED

I say, don't you flatfoots ever
knock?

Under the mustache, Marcus smiles in admiration.

INT. SCHOOL LIBRARY - DAY

At a study table, Marcus apologizes to a skeptical Otto.

MARCUS (V.O.)

And it took some negotiating, but
Otto finally agreed to give me one
of his time blocks.

MARCUS

I'm sorry if I forgot how important
you are as a friend, and I'm sorry
if I made you leave the play.

OTTO

Oh. Well. To tell you the truth,
those rehearsals were really
causing problems with my schedule.
I mean, every night for three
weeks? I had to cancel half of my
extracurriculars just to keep up.

MARCUS

I'm saying I'm sorry.

OTTO

I hear you.

MARCUS

So are we friends again?

OTTO

Yeah. I guess.

MARCUS

Great. So now what?

OTTO

I don't know. We've got 25 minutes left.

MARCUS

Can I help you write your poem for English class?

OTTO

I already wrote it. Finally found the inspiration.

INT. CLASSROOM - DAY

Otto stands and recites his poem in front of Mrs. Steen's English class. Marcus is in attendance.

OTTO

"Fuzzy mustache and funny hat, the viper strikes. Causing chaos, wanting to rewrite story with snake as hero. Whither the friendship, snake? Whither the commitment? Finally, finally! Viper gets defanged, comes around. Spell is broken, venom is spent. And I am happy. I recognize my friend again."

Sporadic CLAPS. Marcus CLAPS in support and recognition.

INT. SCHOOL AUDITORIUM - NIGHT

APPLAUSE as the cast of "Deadly Jealousy" takes its bow.

MARCUS (V.O.)

And opening night went well. Better than well. Great. Mainly because of what happened right after.

BACKSTAGE

Regina finds Marcus and hands him a program. Marcus looks at it: lots of signatures.

REGINA

Everyone in the cast signed it.
Even though we didn't use your
script, we wanted to find a way to
say thanks.

MARCUS

Really? Thanks!

Regina smiles and exits.

Marcus opens the program. On the cast page Marcus reads an
inscription: "I was right. You are a good actor. - Regina."

INT. MARCUS' BEDROOM - DAY

On his bed, Marcus takes out a stack of photos and places the
signed program at the bottom of the shoe box.

MARCUS (V.O.)

So it all worked out. As Mom said,
I just needed to take my own
advice.

Marcus starts to put the photos away, then stops and decides
to go through them, placing each on the bed.

The first is the picnic group photo, and then a picture of
his mother. And another of his mother. And another. And
another.

Marcus spreads out the photos of Mom on his bed, some with
Marcus as a boy, many of her alone, all smiling. He gets to
the last one, studies it.

PHOTO: Mom in a hospital bed, smiling, Marcus at her side. He
holds a cupcake with a candle; balloons in the back.

Marcus traces Mom's face in the picture with his finger, then
puts the photo on the bed with the rest.

In an overhead view, Marcus gently lays down on the bed.
Photos of Mom surround him. He is in a good place.

MARCUS (V.O.)

Even though you're gone, I'm so
glad you're here for me. I miss
you, Mom.

One last caption:

SUPER: Marcus Sullivan

FADE OUT.

END OF SCRIPT