

THE LAWN BOY

by

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After the death of their parents,
two adult siblings wrestle with how to
best care for their dependent brother.

FADE IN.

HIGH ANGLE SHOT of young SHERMAN (12) looking up. Green grass beneath him. He squints as SUNLIGHT streams down through the trees.

TODD (V.O.)
He's still just a kid really.

CUT TO:

INT. BETH'S HOUSE KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Sherman's siblings TODD and BETH (both mid-20s) sit at the table. They look stressed. Beth is 7 months pregnant.

BETH
I know. But he's not helpless, Todd.

TODD
I knew this was coming. I need to be the man now and look after him. It's my job.

CUT TO:

EXT. STREET

Sherman looks up at something. SFX: A KITTEN MEWING. He smiles as he spots the animal quivering on a branch above him. He quickly scales the tree.

BETH (V.O.)
Mom and Dad wanted us *both* to take care of him.

Sherman rescues the kitten and climbs effortlessly back down. MRS. SINGLETON and her young daughter BRENDA wait at the bottom. The girl hugs Sherman as he hands her the kitten.

BRENDA
Thank you, Sherman! Thank you so much!

MRS. SINGLETON
That's the second time this week you've come to our rescue, Sherman. You're a regular hero, aren't you?

SHERMAN
(blushing)
You betcha, Mrs. Singleton! I'm the man!

CUT TO:

INT. BETH'S HOUSE KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Beth makes tea. Todd gets out cups, milk and sugar.

TODD

You and Neil have enough on your plate with a baby coming. I know money is tight for you guys. You can't...

BETH

We can manage it. And we've got each other. But you can't handle Sherman by yourself.

TODD

I make a good living, Beth. And I can hire someone to help.

BETH

A stranger? No, Todd. Sherman belongs here.

CUT TO:

EXT. STREET - CONTINUOUS

Sherman walks down the street, pulls a RED WAGON filled with GARDENING TOOLS. He waves at everyone. They all wave back.

BETH (V.O.)

This is his home.

NEIGHBOR

Hey, Sherman! Great job on my hedges, they've never looked better.

SHERMAN

Thanks, Mr. Newman. I can plant those bulbs for ya tomorrow if you want.

NEIGHBOR

Sounds good. You're the man, Sherman!

SHERMAN

You betcha!

TODD (V.O.)

San Francisco will be good for him.

CUT TO:

INT. BETH'S HOUSE KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Beth stands at the sink, looks out the window. Todd moves to her side. Puts his hand on her shoulder.

BETH
No. It's too soon.

He holds out a BROCHURE for a school; The Achiever's Academy.

TODD
Look, Sis, I found a school in the city. It'll be good for him. He'll have more opportunities.

BETH
It's not just about school, Todd. He needs family around. With the hours you work... he misses you enough already.

TODD
And I'll see him every day.

BETH
(pushes the brochure
back in his hands)
Seeing him isn't the point. You need to BE with him.

TODD
I get that. But Beth, neither of us can be there for him forever. Mom and Dad couldn't...

BETH
Please don't...

TODD
I'm sorry. But it's the truth

CUT TO:

EXT. STREET - CONTINUOUS

Sherman pulls his wagon into the driveway of a house with an overgrown lawn. An OLD MAN winks at him from the porch and tosses him a set of KEYS. Sherman smiles and winks back.

TODD (V.O.)
Why do you think they pushed him to be so doggone independent?

Sherman goes to a shed in the back, unlocks it and pulls out a LAWN MOWER. Sherman mows the lawn.

Later the man's WIFE cuts flowers in her garden. Sherman helps her.

CUT TO:

INT. BETH'S HOUSE KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Beth washes dishes. Todd looks through the fridge.

BETH

He has a job. Did you know that?

TODD

A job?

BETH

Gardening. Mowing lawns mostly. He's got quite the client list.

TODD

Gardening? Well, maybe I'm asking too much, but I think it's going to take more than being *the town lawn boy* to establish his independence.

CUT TO:

EXT. LAWN CLIENT'S YARD - LATER

Sherman locks up the shed. We see the lawn. It's perfect. The old man pays him. The wife hands him a bouquet of FLOWERS.

OLD MAN

Back again in two weeks, Sherman?

SHERMAN

You betcha!

BETH (V.O.)

It's something, isn't it?

CUT TO:

INT. BETH'S HOUSE KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Todd peels potatoes. Beth preps a chicken for roasting.

TODD

"Something" won't cut it. The life insurance wasn't much, Beth. Look, I'm happy to give Sherm my share but you guys are going to have another mouth to feed soon.

BETH
 (struggles with the
 reality of it)
 We love him. I just can't...

TODD
 Love is all well and good, but it
 ain't money in the bank.

CUT TO:

EXT. MAIN STREET - LATER

Sherman parks his wagon outside the bank and walks inside.
 The BANK MANAGER waves to him.

BANK MANAGER
 Hey, Sherman! Making another big
 deposit today?

SHERMAN
 You betcha!

Sherman at the window. Hands over the cash. The friendly
 TELLER gives him a receipt and smiles at him. As he leaves
 the Bank Manager hands him several pieces of CANDY, which he
 happily pockets.

BANK MANAGER
 You know you're our favorite customer,
 right?

SHERMAN
 (smiles)
 That's cause I'm the man!

The bank manager pats him on the back and laughs.

CUT TO:

EXT. MAIN STREET - LATER

Sherman pulls his wagon down the street. Spots two TEENAGE
 BOYS on the sidewalk ahead of him and slows his pace. He
 looks uneasy.

TODD (V.O.)
 Is he still having trouble with those
 kids bullying him?

BULLY #1
 Hey look! It's the moron!

BETH (V.O.)
 He hasn't mentioned it lately.

The boys quickly encircle him. Sherman keeps his eyes down and tries to move through them.

BULLY #1
What's up, idiot?

SHERMAN
(somewhat meekly)
That's not nice.

BULLY #1
Well the truth hurts sometimes, don't
it?

SHERMAN
(bolder)
'Least I'm smart enough not to be
mean to people.

BULLY #1
(glares at him)
What'd you say to me?

BULLY #2
Whatcha got in the wagon, doofus?
(teasingly)
Oh look, he's been picking *flowers!*

The second bully reaches for the flowers and Sherman grabs his arm forcefully.

SHERMAN
(with authority)
That's not yours!

BULLY MOM (O.S.)
Take your hand off my son!

The BULLIES' MOTHER gets in Sherman's face. She's just run out of a salon and her hair is in ROLLERS. Sherman lets go of the boy and turns to go but looks back the woman distrustfully.

BULLY MOM (CONT'D)
Don't you ever come near my boys
again!

SHERMAN
(pointedly)
Your boys are mean, and you're not
very nice either. AND you have a
bad hairdo!!

The woman looks insulted. She grabs her boys and drags them back into the salon with her.

CUT TO:

INT. BETH'S HOUSE LIVING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Beth brings out a stack of PAPERS. Todd looks at a PHOTO of their parents.

TODD
How's he dealing with it?

BETH
Better than me. Better than you.

Todd looks at her guiltily and then looks away.

TODD
I know I kinda flaked on you after the funeral. I'm sorry. I just...I guess I just threw myself into the job.

BETH
Did it help?

TODD
No....You know I hadn't seen them in months before it happened. Guess I didn't realize how much I actually missed them 'til they were gone.

BETH
Is that why you want him with you?
So you can have a part of them back?

CUT TO:

EXT. CEMETARY - CONTINUOUS

Sherman kneels at his parents GRAVE pulling up weeds. He meticulously trims the grass with his HEDGE CLIPPERS.

TODD (V.O.)
Maybe. I don't know.

He sits down He takes some of the flowers from his wagon and places them on the grave.

SHERMAN
(to the dead)
I've been doing like you said, Dad.
(MORE)

SHERMAN (CONT'D)

I've been working hard, but not too hard. I charge an honest price and show folks respect. I been saving like you taught me. And I stick up for myself. I'm the man, just like you always were. Mom, you'd be proud. I look for the good where I can find it and try to be the good when I can't. I'm taking care of Beth. She misses you a lot. And I'm praying for Todd every night like we used to. I don't hear God yet like you could.

Sherman lifts his face to the sky, his cheeks bathed in sunlight. He breathes deep and smiles.

SHERMAN (CONT'D)

(softly)
But I feel Him.

CUT TO:

INT. BETH'S HOUSE DINING ROOM - LATER

The dining room table is covered with estate paperwork. Todd sifts through it.

TODD

Well this is going to take a while to figure out.

BETH

Thank God you're the executor and not me.

TODD

(chuckles)
Thanks for the support.

BETH

(after a beat)
You ever think about moving back?

TODD

Huh? Oh, I don't know.

BETH

You still with that girl?

TODD

Nooo. She dumped me because I'm a *work-a-holic*.

BETH
Maybe it's a sign.

TODD
(deflecting)
This conversation is a sign that you
are turning into mom.

Beth swats him on the back of the head and walks into the kitchen. Todd laughs.

BETH (O.S.)
Sherman's got a girlfriend!

TODD
(eyes wide)
He's got a *girlfriend*? Is that a
good idea?

CUT TO:

EXT. STREET - CONTINUOUS

Sherman approaches a HOUSE. KELLY, a girl his age, sits on the porch with her FATHER. She jumps up and runs to him. Her father waves to him.

KELLY
Sherman!

SHERMAN
Hi Kelly.

Sherman greets her with a kiss on the cheek. He gives her the rest of the flowers a piece of candy from his pocket. Kelly kisses Sherman on the cheek. Sherman blushes deeply.

FATHER
Keep it clean, Sherman, keep it clean!

SHERMAN
(grins)
Yes sir.

FATHER
Have fun sweetie. Call me after
dinner and I'll come pick you up.

KELLY
Okay, Dad.

FATHER
Look after our girl, Sherman!

SHERMAN

You betcha!

They each grab hold of the wagon handle and pull it together. Sherman tells her about his day.

SHERMAN (CONT'D)

Mrs. Singleton's kitten was stuck in the tree again. I climbed up and got him. Brenda was soooo happy!

KELLY

(awe struck)

Weren't you scared?

SHERMAN

(proudly)

Naw! A man's gotta do, what a man's gotta do.

CUT TO:

INT. BETH'S HOUSE LIVING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Beth stands at the front window. Todd walks up beside her.

TODD

I don't know how I feel about this girlfriend situation.

BETH

Leave it alone. He's happy. He earns his own money and he has someone who loves him. If he can count his blessings and be grateful for 'em, why can't you?

TODD

(dryly)

I guess that's God's special gift just for Sherman. Being happy with his lot in life...however small that may be.

BETH

Stick around. It might rub off on you.

TODD

Shouldn't he be back by now?

Sherman and Kelly round the hedges and start up the driveway.

BETH

There they are!

She goes to the front door and opens it.

BETH (CONT'D)
Sherman, look who's here!

Todd steps into view. Sherman's eyes go wide.

SHERMAN
Todd!!

He lets go of the wagon, grabs Kelly's hand and pulls her along with him.

SHERMAN (CONT'D)
It's my brother! Todd! Todd!

Sherman and Kelly run into the house. As they cross the threshold they transform and we see them AS THEY REALLY ARE: two adults in their 30's with Down Syndrome.

TODD
Hey, big brother!

Sherman grabs Todd in a bear hug. He's so happy he's almost crying.

ADULT SHERMAN
Todd! Where have you been? I missed you so much!

TODD
Sorry buddy. I've been working too much I guess. Long hours.

ADULT SHERMAN
(shocked)
What kind of job is that to have?

TODD
Not a good one apparently.

ADULT SHERMAN
(serious)
You should quit that job.
(thinks of something
and gets excited)
You can come work with me! We'll be outside all day. It'll be so cool!

Todd looks at him. Sherman is radiant with joy. Todd smiles.

TODD
I'll think about it. Who's this?

ADULT SHERMAN

(remembering)

Oh! This is Kelly!
(whisperS to Todd)
She's my girl.

TODD

(shaking her hand)

Nice to meet you, Sherman's Girl.

ADULT KELLY

(shyly)

Nice to meet you, ...Sherman's Brother.

BETH

You joining us for dinner, Kelly?

ADULT KELLY

Yes, Ma'am.

BETH

Well, come on. It's almost ready.
Neil will be home any minute. Hey
Sherm, will you set the table for
me?

ADULT SHERMAN

Oh, you betcha!

Sherman excitedly grabs Kelly and pulls her along with him
to the kitchen. Beth and Todd watch them.

BETH

Still worried about him being a lawn
boy?

TODD

(looks at Beth)

No. He's the man.

BETH

(smiles)

You betcha.

FADE OUT.

