

THE HAPPY GUY

Written By

15-DE05-W029

One man's happy life is the envy of many, but perhaps his
life is not so different after all.

EXT. FRONT PORCH - 6:00AM (2015)

We FADE IN to an idyllic suburban middle-class American neighborhood. Early 1900's bungalow style houses with front porches and well manicured yards line the street.

GUS LAWRENCE, a 50 year old man, is saying good-bye to his beautiful wife HELEN on the front porch of his house. He kisses her...

GUS
I love you Helen.

HELEN
I love you too Gus. Have a great day, okay?

Gus spins to step off the porch, while simultaneously tipping his hat toward his wife.

GUS
(With a big smile)
I will!

Dressed in a full suit with a long dark coat, Gus walks down the sidewalk carrying a briefcase with one hand and a folded newspaper with the other.

DISSOLVE TO

EXT. DINER ON MAIN STREET OF SUBURBAN TOWN

Gus walks up to the front door of a colorful 1950's style diner; his usual breakfast spot. He enters.

CUT TO:

INT. DINER

The air is thick with grease from the open kitchen, creating a smoky effect as the morning light streams through the windows. A handful of patrons are scattered through the restaurant, eating breakfast. Gus is greeted by FLORRIE, a female cook behind the counter.

FLORRIE
Mornin' Gus!

GUS
Good morning Florrie!
(Looking around, smiling
and nodding his head)
Good morning indeed.

Gus walks over and takes his spot at a booth, removes his hat, and unfolds his newspaper on the table. CELESTE, a 35 year old waitress and mother of 3 approaches the table. She looks tired and weary eyed.

CELESTE

(Wearily)

Hey Gus, how are you today?

GUS

I'm doing just fine thanks. And how's my favorite waitress?

CELESTE

(Sighs)

Well since you asked... My kids are driving me nuts, not to mention the cost of their day care just went up, which I really don't wanna talk about because their deadbeat dad should be watching them since he's too lazy to get a job.

GUS

(Wide eyed)

Wow Celeste, that's a lot.

CELESTE

I'm sorry, I'm just so tired. I mean do you know what its like to have a five year old climb in bed with you at 2 o'clock every morning and start kicking like a restless mule?

GUS

Actually I do remember those days, but I'll admit it's been a few years since ours were that age.

CELESTE

Oh I can't wait for the day I can say that. Alright Gus, waddya want?

GUS

The usual, thanks.

Gus starts reading the Business section of the newspaper. With Gus in the background, Celeste enters a private conversation with JASMINE, a new waitress.

JASMINE
 (With a hushed voice)
 Who is that guy anyway?

CELESTE
 His name is Gus, he comes in almost every weekday.

JASMINE
 What's his deal? I'm guessing that suit cost more than my car!

CELESTE
 I don't know, I've never asked him directly, but one time he mentioned something about working downtown. I think he's some kind of investment banker or something. And based on the tips he leaves I'd say he's doing pretty darn well!

JASMINE
 I sure wish my man was a banker. I don't know if he's ever gonna get out of that dead end job.

CELESTE
 Hey at least YOUR man HAS a job!

JASMINE
 Yeah, I guess, maybe.

DISSOLVE TO

Gus finishes his breakfast and takes his last sip of coffee. We see the BILL for \$9.50. Gus takes out two \$20 bills and leaves them on the table. He puts on his hat, picks up his briefcase, and stands to leave.

GUS
 Thank you ladies!

FLORRIE
 You're welcome Gus.

CELESTE
 Thank you Gus.

Gus exits through the door.

DISSOLVE TO

EXT. MAIN STREET SIDEWALK

Gus walks down the sidewalk a ways, and then enters a barber shop.

CUT TO:

INT. BARBER SHOP

ENRIQUE the barber looks down at his watch.

ENRIQUE

Right on time as always, Mr. Lawrence. Your usual weekly trim I assume?

GUS

Yes sir.

DISSOLVE TO

In the middle of Gus getting his hair cut.

ENRIQUE

So Mr. Lawrence, have you tried that new Italian place that just opened up on 4th street?

GUS

No, is it any good?

ENRIQUE

Oh yeah. Their lasagna is outta this world. And their cannolis! Oh man, you gotta try their cannolis.

GUS

(Chuckling at first)

Sounds good Enrique. You know, I'll have to take my wife there for our Thursday night date this week.

ENRIQUE

So you take your woman out every week, eh? That's nice.

GUS

We do date nights every Tuesday and Thursday. And that doesn't count our Saturday walks in the park.

ENRIQUE

Wow, that's a lot of quality time.

GUS
Yeah, I guess you could say I'm
living the good life!

ENRIQUE
I'd say so!

DISSOLVE TO

The haircut is finished. Gus pulls out two \$20 bills and hands them to Enrique.

ENRIQUE
Thank you very much, Mr. Lawrence.
Once again you've made my day.

Gus puts his hat on, picks up his briefcase, and tips his head as a farewell gesture as he walks out of the barber shop.

The moment he's out the door, we see the next customer, JOE, getting into the barber chair...

JOE
(Clearly intrigued)
What's that guy do anyway?

ENRIQUE
I'm not sure of his proper job title; never asked him really. But I know he's some kinda bigwig downtown. You wouldn't believe the people he knows. It seems like every week he's telling me about some CEO or somethin'. The guy's got some crazy stories.

JOE
Must be nice.

ENRIQUE
Tell me about it. Here I am stuck cutting hair every day for guys like YOU while he's out rubbing shoulders with VIP's all day long.

JOE
Yeah. Hey--what do you mean guys like ME?

CUT TO:

EXT. MAIN STREET SIDEWALK

Gus hails a cab and gets into the back seat. The taxi driver RAMI recognizes him and respectfully addresses him by name...

RAMI
You working downtown today Mr. Lawrence?

GUS
Yes sir.

DISSOLVE TO

Midway through the cab ride, Rami strikes up a conversation...

RAMI
I like your new hat Mr. Lawrence, did you pick that up recently?

GUS
Why thank you, indeed I did. I saw it in a shop window and thought to myself, that hat would look better on me than it does on the mannequin, so I rescued it!

RAMI
(Laughing)
That's really great Mr. Lawrence.
(Shifting to a tinge of resent)
It seems like you're always having fun.

GUS
I suppose I do tend to enjoy life, if that's what you mean.

RAMI
Yeah, I mean you're always doing this or that with your wife, meeting so-and-so, and buying such-and-such. Sometimes it just doesn't seem fair.

GUS
How so, Rami?

RAMI
It's like, I'm trapped here driving this cab all day, six days a week.

(MORE)

RAMI (CONT'D)

When am I supposed to have fun?

GUS

Oh I don't know Rami, it can't be all that bad can it? Weren't you just telling me about the townhouse you bought? And what about that little girl of yours? Don't tell me she's not just a bundle of joy!

RAMI

Yeah but why do I have to work so hard all the time, you know?

GUS

I guess it's just a part of life, Rami. Sometimes it helps to look at the positives.

RAMI

That's easy for you to say.

GUS

You don't even know what I do for a living, do you?

RAMI

Well... not exactly, but I know you've got a great life.

The cab pulls up to the sidewalk to drop Gus off at work.

GUS

That's true, Rami, I do have a great life...

Gus pulls out two \$20 bills and hands them to Rami...

GUS (CONT'D)

And so do you.

Gus opens the door and begins to exit the taxi.

RAMI

Thank you Mr. Lawrence, I really appreciate it.

CUT TO:

EXT. BIG CITY DOWNTOWN IN FRONT OF FINANCIAL BUILDING

Gus has just stepped from the taxi onto the sidewalk in front of an impressive skyscraper. Carrying his briefcase he

walks toward the building.

A few well-dressed important-looking people say hello to him, addressing him by his first name.

As Gus approaches the building he slows down and looks up at it. He pauses and takes a deep breath, as if admiring the place he works.

Then he sets his briefcase on the ground next to a shoe shine station. He stoops down, opens the briefcase, and pulls out his shoe shining supplies. He takes out an empty jar and sets it up to receive money.

He then takes his position, holding a brush and cloth, ready for business.

DISSOLVE TO

Gus is now serving a customer, BUSINESSMAN #1.

BUSINESSMAN #1

Hey did you buy that stock I told you about?

GUS

Yes sir. Gained fifteen percent already!

BUSINESSMAN #1

I told you that was a good one!

DISSOLVE TO

Gus is serving another customer, BUSINESSMAN #2.

BUSINESSMAN #2

So Gus, how's your son?

GUS

Oh he's doing great. Just got into Columbia University.

BUSINESSMAN #2

Columbia huh? Sounds expensive.

GUS

It is.

BUSINESSMAN #2

How can you afford to send him to a school like that?

Gus suddenly stops and holds out his hand, waiting for a

tip. The customer looks down, pulls out his wallet, and hands Gus a \$5 bill.

GUS
That's how!

The two of them laugh together.

GUS
Thankfully he got a scholarship,
but I am paying for his books!

DISSOLVE TO

Gus is serving another regular customer, an old businessman named MR. SOLOMON.

MR. SOLOMON
Just don't forget--

GUS
(Slightly exasperated)
Yes, I know Mr. Solomon, you've
told me a million times. Naked you
came from your mother's womb, and
naked you will depart.

MR. SOLOMON
You just can't take it with you
Gus, you just can't take it with
you.

Gus nods his head in agreement as he continues to polish Mr. Solomon's shoes.

DISSOLVE TO

Several quick shots in sequence, showing Gus working as the day wears on.

He gets progressively more dirty as a smudge appears on his face, and black shoe polish stains his fingers.

Some young people laugh and point at him.

He winces with pain as he stretches and places a hand on his aching back, sore from being hunched over.

Someone walks by and tosses some trash toward him.

At the end of the day, Gus is exhausted.

It is closing time, and a YOUNG BUSINESSMAN walks by looking at Gus with disdain...

YOUNG BUSINESSMAN

Man I'm glad I'm not you.

Gus is taken off guard. In his eyes we see a momentary internal struggle and expect him to react in anger. But just as quickly, a smile returns to his face...

GUS

I'm glad you're not me either.

Gus finishes packing up his briefcase, and begins walking away from the building. He is stiff and sore from a long day of work.

As he reaches the main sidewalk along the street, we see a HOMELESS MAN panhandling. Gus recognizes him and addresses him by name...

GUS

What do you need Vern?

HOMELESS MAN

Hey Gus, I just need a break man. Ya know, I just need someone to give me a break, that's all. I swear I'm close. I had two job interviews yesterday, I just gotta get through the next week.

Gus bends down to open his briefcase...

GUS

The next week, huh?

HOMELESS MAN

Yeah man, that's all, just the next week.

Gus pulls the money-filled jar out of his briefcase. We see him contemplating how much to give to the homeless man. He reaches in and begins to pull out a \$5 bill, then drops it back into the jar as he has a moment of clarity.

Gus hands the entire jar filled with money to the homeless man.

HOMELESS MAN

How can you do this? I seen ya over there shining them shoes all day. This has gotta be everything you brought in. I guess you're just rich ain't ya?

GUS
(Contemplating for a moment)
Come to think of it Vern, I AM
rich.

Gus turns and walks away, smiling.

FADE OUT

