

THE HERO TRILOGY- THE HEART OUTRIGHT

Written by

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**INT. BLACK SCREEN**

Music cue: El Talisman - Rosana Arbelo

The Heart Outright is an adaptation of an original play.  
Nothing in this story is true, nor is it false.

FADE IN:

**EXT. PATIO (2013) - DAY**

Stephen (27) sets a plate of food in front of Angel, exits and returns with a plate for himself. He goes back for a drink.

Angel (27), sits at a wooden table, foliage gently caressing the area.

ANGEL

Damn crazies everywhere ya look! I'm so tired a bein scared all the time. Ya wanna try to be sympathetic, ya really do, but ya might as we just go ahead and scream in their crazy and let 'em slit your throat and get it over with.

Stephen walks to the table, places a diet Dr. Pepper down in front of Angel and one in front of himself as he takes a seat.

STEPHEN

Take a hit on that diet Dr. Pepper.

Angel takes a sip of her soda pop.

ANGEL

You're so calm- you on tranquilizers or somethin?

Stephen shakes his head no in disbelief.

STEPHEN

Sleepy Time Herb Tea.

(beat)

Hey, so what was this sudden emergency made ya miss my mom's funeral?

Angel peps up a bit before sulking

ANGEL

Oh, nothin.

STEPHEN

What happened?

ANGEL

Nothin, really.

STEPHEN

Come on.

ANGEL

Are ya sure?

STEPHEN

Sure I'm sure.

Stephen lights up a joint with matches, offers to Angel who declines.

ANGEL

Well, I was just gettin ready to leave for the drive down here and this sweet ole poop I been with nearly a year had a massive M.I.-- heart attack. I accompanied him to the hospital. I didn't want him to regain consciousness and see strangers all around-- his family doesn't care doodly-squat about him. But he didn't.

(beat)

Regain consciousness. He just punched on out.

STEPHEN

I'm sorry.

Angel somberly nods.

ANGEL

Me too. But ya work with old people, one a the main things they do, ya know, is they die.

STEPHEN

Yeah.

ANGEL

Hey, Stephen I'm sorry. I know I shouldn'ta said that.

Stephen looks at Angel and then looks away.

STEPHEN  
No, it's not that.

ANGEL  
What is it?

STEPHEN  
Nothin.  
(beat)  
What?

ANGEL  
So tell me, where ya livin- right  
there in Hollywood or what?

STEPHEN  
Austin.

ANGEL  
Austin, Texas?

STEPHEN  
(sarcastic)  
No- Nicaragua.

ANGEL  
Sorry. Just surprised me that...gee,  
well, here ya are livin practically  
right next door.

STEPHEN  
What can I say? I outta join me one a  
them penitent churches so I can beat  
the hell out of myself once a week  
for not gettin in touch with ya.

ANGEL  
Oh no, I wasn't tryin...I wouldn't  
join one a them churches. My gra'ma  
was into that- ya won't like it.

STEPHEN  
How is your ole gra'ma?

ANGEL  
Well, fact is she beat herself to  
death. No, I'm sorry, that was just a  
little joke, I...(beat) She did die  
last summer.

STEPHEN

Oh, always kinda liked her.

Angel sits back, relaxed.

ANGEL

Amazin what freedom from obligation can do for someone. Hear all your life that you're obliged to care for folks, care about 'em, then ya git shed of 'em or they die and...

STEPHEN

...ya hate your own rotten guts for bein relieved. How do ya handle livin with dyin? I mean whuddu you do for them old folks? Try to reaffirm their hope of heaven, or what?

Angel leans back into the conversation and speaks softly.

ANGEL

I'm afraid I'm not real big on the hope of heaven anymore, Stephen. I just try to let 'em know I care and let 'em know that it's not a crime to be old and loaded down with a buncha parts don't function no more like they're s'posed to. Try 'n make 'em feel loved.

STEPHEN

Yeah, but whuddya put your faith in?

Stephen takes a deep puff and blows out smoke.

ANGEL

Folks. People, I reckon.

STEPHEN

Are you goddamn nuts! Puttin your faith in other human beins don't get it! Don't kid yourself, girl! We're in this alone. I give it a shot. Drilled me one big dry hole.

ANGEL

What happened, Stephen?

STEPHEN

What happened is what I said: Folks' resolve's got limits!

(MORE)

STEPHEN (CONT'D)

And I ain't wastin no more time  
puttin my faith in somethin's got  
human limits.

ANGEL

Love isn't without limits, Stephen,  
or without end neither.

STEPHEN

Tell that to my mom or to Jesus  
Christ. They give their hearts  
outright. Here, take it all. Take  
ever'thin, I'll git more, give ya  
that too ya need it. But the thing  
is, them of us that are specialists  
in the takin, there ain't no way you  
can ever give us enough, we're gonna  
keep chewin it up, emptyin out the  
ole receptacle, wailin for more.

ANGEL

Stephen, you're not like that.

STEPHEN

Whuddu know about me? Don't you be  
givin me nothin; don't give me nothin  
cuz I got nothin to give back!

Angel takes in what he said and is incredulous.

ANGEL

I didn't ask for nothin.

STEPHEN

No?

ANGEL

No!

STEPHEN

You don't want anything from me?

ANGEL

No!

STEPHEN

Then what're you doing here? No,  
course not, you never ask for nothin!  
Cause you can't let anybody give  
anything to you! That'd scare the  
crap outta you! You can only give it!  
Well, give it to somebody else!

(MORE)

STEPHEN (CONT'D)

Don't ya have some worthy soul to give it to? Huh? Sure! Huh- ya got a fella?

Angel rolls her eyes.

ANGEL

What?

STEPHEN

You heard me! Fella, fella, don't ya have a fella?

ANGEL

Well, you know I date around but nothin' serious.

STEPHEN

You outta get serious with one of 'em. These are your child-bearin years.

ANGEL

I know that Stephen- God, ya don't hafta tell me that; I am a nurse, for Godsakes, ya know. Just how am I supposed to get serious with some gink you're not serious with? - Why would you say somethin mean like that?

STEPHEN

Cuz I'm a mean S.O.B., okay!  
Sorry...Hey, you're a nice person.

Angel stands, walks to a tree before returning. Stephen watches in curiosity.

ANGEL

You think a lot about that boy who captured us?

STEPHEN

He wasn't no boy, Angel.

ANGEL

That man, then. Huh- ya think about him?

STEPHEN

Was a time. You?

ANGEL

Me? Oh, no I rarely think about the gentleman. Just had to go to a head shrinker for two years to get some room in my head to think about anything else.

STEPHEN

Na- hey, don't do that- you handled the whole thing better'n anybody.

ANGEL

Why do you think that, Stephen?

STEPHEN

Tryin so hard to keep him from doing anymore damage 'n he'd already done, you were the best of us.

ANGEL

You really think that, Stephen?

STEPHEN

Wasn't easy for me to accept for a long time, but yeah, I do.

ANGEL

Why wasn't it easy for ya to accept?

STEPHEN

Who knows- I don't know. Gonna git me another cola here. You want one?

Stephen gets up, Angel declines.

ANGEL

Why ya gotta keep ever'thin inside Stephen? Why can't ya ever just say what you're thinkin'?

STEPHEN

I told ya I'd give it a shot.

ANGEL

You know what it feels like- to never just be able to speak the truth with somebody?

STEPHEN

I spoke the truth with some good church folks some years back they nailed me good and permanent.



ANGEL  
What'd they do to ya?

STEPHEN  
You got one nickel?

ANGEL  
Oh sure- I usually got about forty  
dollars in change in my purse.

STEPHEN  
Tell me bout goin to the head  
shrinker.

ANGEL  
Well, I couldn't stop havin  
nightmares bout it- humiliatin  
ever'body like he did. And then I'd  
wake up screamin when he had you on  
the floor, that gun in your mouth  
after you come at him with that  
knife. Destroyin my mom's beauty  
rest, ya know, so she made me go. I  
got about twenty dimes but not one  
nickel.

STEPHEN  
Gimme a dime. What'd he say- the  
shrink?

ANGEL  
Well, Stephen...he said my problem is  
I was a little bit in love with that  
man and I felt sorry for him and I  
was punishin myself for not hatin him  
like I thought I was s'posed to by  
relinvin what happened.

STEPHEN  
How come ya felt sorry for him?

ANGEL  
I guess all that stuff at the inquest  
and in the papers after the highway  
police had killed him- I wished I  
didn't hafta know all that. I mean,  
he had children.

STEPHEN  
Abandoned 'em. He didn't give a hoot  
about those babies.

ANGEL

Oh, Stephen, I just know he did. And he was a war hero.

Stephen surprised at these words.

STEPHEN

He wasn't no war hero.

ANGEL

They said he was a captain in one of the most decorated divisions-

STEPHEN

That don't mean he was decorated.

ANGEL

How d'you know, Stephen Ryder? You're just jealous!

(beat)

I didn't mean that.

Stephen starts to get up and head out.

ANGEL (cont'd)

Don't go Stephen, please don't go!

He turns abruptly and slams his hands down on the table.

STEPHEN

I checked the son of a bitch out, okay? When I went into the service in my country, I asked around till I found out.

ANGEL

What'd ya find out?

STEPHEN

Hey, I wouldn't wanna destroy no great romance 'tween folks.

ANGEL

I didn't wanna feel what I did, Stephen!

STEPHEN

Yeah, well it seems he shorted his toaster one day, killed a water buffalo...along with the farmer that owned the buffalo, the farmer's wife and three kids. They psycho'd him out.

A long pause.

ANGEL

Was he a nice man before that? Before he...shorted his toaster?

STEPHEN

Nobody said nothin one way or another where those notions were concerned, Angel...but I bet maybe he was prob'ly.

ANGEL

We were all sure surprised when ya joined up- havin such a fine draft number 'n all.

STEPHEN

Didn't have much of a choice.

ANGEL

Cuz ya hadda find out about that fella?

Stephen takes another deep puff.

STEPHEN

Hadda find out about young Steve Ryder.

ANGEL

Course. That was stupid of me. What'd ya find out?

STEPHEN

Found out men hate. And they fill their women up with it and together they poison their children. Lord God-men. Keep tellin myself we gotta quit hatin, we gotta give it up; but then I think, gotta hate somebody, don'cha? And if not your own self, who?

Click

CUT TO: BLACK

Music cue: Bahia Coco - Saragossa Band