

OH, MY DARLIN': PROJECT BRIEF

Format

Feature Film

Genre / Tone

Coming of Age Dramedy / Family Drama

Lady Bird meets *The Meyerowitz Stories*.

Credit Note

Written by Ryan Clarke

Story by Ryan Clarke and John Salcido

Budget / Buyer Lane

Low budget / contained, actor driven indie drama

Searchlight, Focus Features, Bleecker Street, FilmNation, Topic lane

Core Hook

A brilliant working class teen gets a full ride to Stanford, and her fiercely dependent father keeps finding excuses to stay near campus because he does not know who he is without her.

One Sentence Pitch

When a brilliant working class teenager earns a full ride to Stanford, her fiercely dependent father follows her into a world built for the wealthy, forcing her to survive without the safety net her classmates take for granted while he confronts the grief he has mistaken for protection.

Why It's Timely

It speaks to class pressure in elite education, the hidden costs of a "full ride," parent child dependence, grief, financial precarity, and the painful moment when love has to become distance.

Main Characters

Henry Baker: A funny, overeducated copywriter and widowed father whose wit has become both his charm and his hiding place. He loves Clementine completely, but his need to be needed keeps him from letting her leave.

Clementine Baker: A brilliant, working class seventeen year old who has spent her life being exceptional in a small town. At Stanford, she learns that raw intelligence is not the same as access, preparation, or belonging.

Nora Baker: Henry's late wife and Clementine's mother. Though gone, she remains the emotional absence both Henry and Clementine are still organizing their lives around.

Madison Whitney: Clementine's wealthy roommate, polished and casually privileged, but not simply cruel. She represents a world Clementine resents, studies, and eventually learns to navigate without surrendering herself.

The Chair: The key visual symbol. Henry receives an oversized ergonomic chair as payment for writing ad copy and turns it into Clementine's graduation present, the one impressive thing he can give her. When it does not fit in her Stanford dorm, he is stuck with it. The chair becomes a physical reminder of his love, his failure, his need to feel useful, and the fact that Clementine's new life no longer has room for the version of fatherhood he is trying to hold onto.

Story Snapshot

1. Henry and Clementine live in a leaky, book cluttered rental house in Guerneville, using movies, books, jokes, and shared intelligence to survive poverty and the grief of losing Clementine's mother.

2. Clementine wins a full ride QuestBridge scholarship to Stanford. Henry drives her to Palo Alto, where they immediately collide with wealth, polish, designer dorm rooms, and a campus that seems built for everyone but them.
3. Henry tries to give Clementine a twelve hundred dollar ergonomic chair he received for writing furniture ad copy, but it will not fit in her tiny dorm room. The gift becomes a humiliation, and Henry leaves campus with the chair still in his car.
4. A DUI gives Henry the excuse he needs to stay near campus. He rents a cheap month to month apartment and calls it a writer's retreat, but he spends his days avoiding his novel, reliving his old college self, and dragging the failed gift of the chair around with him.
5. Clementine struggles with the hidden costs and academic pressure of Stanford, while Henry crashes her study session, loses his housing, abandons the chair by a dumpster, and ends up sleeping in his Subaru.

Ending / Final Image

Clementine finds Henry sleeping in his car and finally tells him the truth. He is not staying to protect her. He is waiting for her to need him so he does not have to face the empty house back home. Henry drives back to Guerneville and begins the practical work of living again. At Stanford, Clementine switches to a track she can actually survive, talks to Henry on their weekly Sunday call, then heads out with friends. For the first time, they are still connected, but no longer collapsed into each other.

Theme in One Line

Love cannot be the chair you drag into someone else's room because you are afraid to leave.

Positioning

It's a grounded father daughter drama about class, grief, and the quiet heartbreak of realizing that the person you love most cannot become fully alive until you stop needing them to need you.

Materials Available

One-pager and full screenplay available upon request or through the private script library.

RYAN CLARKE

Screenwriter & Playwright | Albuquerque, NM

Dark Comedy | Satire | Character Drama | Social Thriller

Ryan Clarke is an Albuquerque-based screenwriter and playwright whose work blends dark comedy, social satire, and intimate character drama, across a slate of 20+ feature scripts. His screenwriting recognition includes Grand Prize Winner, 30th Annual Fade In Awards Comedy Competition (*#FightForNoah*); Semifinalist, 30th Annual Fade In Awards Comedy Competition (*The Trencherman*); 2026 Top 10 Finalist, ISA Table Read My Screenplay at Cannes (*A Walking Shadow*); 2026 Quarterfinalist, Finish Line Script Competition (*#FightForNoah*); two-time Semifinalist, ISA Emerging Screenwriters Competition (*Flashbang* and *Ghost of the Highway*); and four additional 2026 Honorable Mentions from Finish Line (*The Finalists*, *How to Be a Human: A Musical with No Songs*, *Ghost of the Highway*, and *Dead Signals*).

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