

Magpie Funeral Plot Summary:

Sy McMurphy (DARREN BURROWS) is a bird lover, especially magpies. In fact one of Sy's life-time goals is to witness a magpie funeral. Sy also wants to be a successful screenwriter. But sending his screenplays to famous Hollywood directors over the years has amounted to nothing. In the meantime, he has settled for an unsatisfactory job at a local TV station being picked on by his boss, Randy (DAVID WEISENBERG). Then, one day Sy meets Nancy (MEREDITH SHANK) and her five year old daughter, Lisa (ELIZABETH LEACH). Will Sy persevere at his quest against long odds and muster the will and courage to succeed in life and love?

Magpie Funeral Plot Synopsis:

An exciting James Bond-like chase ends with a gun held point blank by a female spy on her prey, a male spy. But something is strange. Both male and female spies speak with the same voice – the voice of Sy McMurphy, the writer of the chase we just witnessed.

Sy, out of frustration, yanks out the rejected scene from his typewriter when he hears a loud 'thump' from downstairs, followed by a magpie call.

A house finch has hit his patio door and is lying still on the concrete. A magpie looks on from a nearby branch urging Sy to intercede. He takes the cue and gently scoops up the still bird with his cupped hands.

Sy gently blows on the stunned bird. Nothing. Then another gentle blow. Suddenly the house finch comes to life and flies to the treeline while Sy watches in wonder. He's relieved, then chuckles to himself about the miracle he just witnessed.

Meanwhile Randy, Sy's boss at the TV station they both work, is crunching Cocoa Puffs as if they were the enemy. From the TV, an eccentric middle-aged woman dressed as a pirate, is rattling on about kitchen platters she has for sale.

Gladys, Randy's mom, asks why he can't make shows like Sy as she smiles, enjoying the lady pirate's pitch. We find out that Gladys actually owns the TV station they're watching – the TV station where Sy and Randy are employed.

Randy leaves in a huff and heads to a mailbox outside their door. Sy walks up and grabs his mail. Sy, it turns out, lives in the adjacent house - a house he rents from Randy and Gladys.

Randy teases Sy about constantly failing. Sy ignores him and wedges a large envelope for pickup into the fence above the mailbox. The address label is made out to Steven Spielberg.

A TV station van with the same logo as the pirate lady's show, pulls up with Jonnie at the wheel, Sy's co-worker. Just then, a Western Tanager poops on Randy's shoulder. Sy is amused and let's him know it's good luck. Randy gives him a look and runs into the house.

In the van, Sy asks Jonnie while he drives to read a letter he just received. The letter is from Martin Scorsese's office. Jonnie tells Sy that they want him to stop sending scripts, but there is an enclosed business card for an agency that may take his unsolicited screenplay submissions. Sy is excited and wants to know who. The Bentley, McKinsey & Ackerman Agency, Beverly Hills, Jonnie reads. Sy thinks about the possibilities. Maybe this will be his break.

Then Jonnie wonders if Randy is still angry with them after what happened at the Emmy Awards show they all attended last Saturday night. A flashback shows a drunk Randy watching Sy and Jonnie accept an Emmy for the crazy pirate lady's TV show, Cheryl's Chateau. In frustration, Randy leaves his table, drink in hand.

After receiving their Emmys, Sy and Jonnie seek a quiet place to regroup – the men’s room. But they’re met with retching from one of the stalls. It’s Randy. An awkward moment occurs when Randy commands them to be in his office first thing tomorrow.

Met with cheers from their colleagues at the TV station, Sy and Jonnie’s awards jubilation turns to disappointment when Randy accuses them of being late. Then Randy sends them on their way to shoot an exterior with Cheryl for the Cheryl’s Chateau show that he scheduled at the last minute.

Nancy and her 5 year old daughter, Lisa are dressed in black waiting for their ride. The limo driver arrives and takes them on their way to a funeral – Nancy’s husband has tragically passed away.

At the same time, Sy and Jonnie are driving to the new Cheryl Chateau’s video taping location. Jonnie spots an eagle and points it out to Sy, knowing his interest in birds.

Then Lisa spots the same bird while they drive to her dad’s funeral.

What? Sy and Jonnie are on gurneys, bloody with oxygen masks covering their faces. EMTs are rushing them to the hospital trauma room. What happened?

An emergency vehicle and EMTs are working at the accident site - the smoldering upside down van in clear view. Nancy and Lisa pass at that moment to see the accident scene and are stricken.

A white sheet is reverently pulled over a body with the defeated ER staff surrounding it. After a moment, they leave one by one.

Sy is standing in a cemetery with a coffin in front of him. His close friend and colleague, Jonnie, died in the van crash.

A magpie call is followed by a little girl running up to Sy and saying hello. It’s Lisa. Nancy, her mom, walks up slowly and apologizes for the intrusion.

Sy welcomes them and shares what he knows about magpies, the bird they are all watching. Nancy and Lisa are intrigued as Sy tells them that magpies have funerals and that they lay pine needles as an offering by the body of their fallen friend. Sy shares that he wants to witness a magpie funeral someday for his father. He continues to explain that his father never had a chance to see one, so he wants to see a magpie funeral for him.

Lisa asks for a hug before they leave the grieving Sy behind. Nancy can’t believe magpies have funerals and gives Sy a smile as they walk away. Lisa runs ahead while Nancy is caught up with nature around her, especially the magpies. The magpies.

Nancy, sitting in her kitchen, pushes the call button on her cellphone. The recorded greeting is her deceased husband’s voice. She stares off, then pushes the button again. Lisa, hearing her dad’s voice, appears and asks if she can talk to Daddy. Nancy tries to explain that that’s not possible but is interrupted by her landline ringing. Lisa thinks it may be her daddy calling. Maybe he can call from heaven, her young mind surmises.

Herb, Nancy’s literary agent, is calling. He knows Nancy’s routine of not picking up so Herb continues with an urgent plea to get going on writing her new children’s book. He explains that the publisher may want their advance back if the deadline is not met. Nancy looks lost and beyond sad now. She asks Lisa for a hug. She scoops her up and holds her with so much love and at the same time, desperation.

Sy, standing at the open door of his office at the TV station, is confused by what he sees. Randy appears and explains he’s losing his office to the station’s new sales guy. Sy is angry and explains he

can't produce Cheryl's Chateau alone and that he needs his office. Randy calmly retorts that Sy is on his own with Cheryl's Chateau. Jonnie will not be replaced.

Then we find out why Randy is always picking on Sy. It seems that back in college, Randy's girlfriend abandoned him for Sy. Randy was understandably destroyed by this and never got over the betrayal - even though Sy was not at fault, the girlfriend was. But Sy is a convenient target of Randy's hostilities.

Sy shows up on the set of Cheryl's Chateau, trying to work through his grief about Jonnie. But it's hard for him. Lilly, Sy's set manager, is empathetic.

The show is underway when Randy barges in. He's shaking some papers at Sy, telling him the show's ratings are at an all time low. Sy calmly alerts Randy that he's on camera and that they're live. Before Randy can think of what to do, Cheryl comes over, plops a silver wig on his head and starts singing to him. Lilly is frozen.

Gladys, Randy's mom, points at the TV and is shocked by what she's seeing. Nancy is watching from home too and has a similar reaction. Then we see the TV station call center buzzing with sudden in-coming orders for Cheryl's wigs.

Randy is escorting Sy to a lower level of the TV station. They walk to a room full of document boxes. Lilly is there to get Sy situated in his new 'office.' Sy is depressed.

In the cemetery, Sy reverently places pine needles at the base of his father's grave. He does the same with Jonnie's grave nearby when he's surprised by Lisa running into his arms. She explains to Sy that they're there to talk to Daddy. Nancy tells Lisa that Daddy is not there. But Sy points to Lisa's heart then her forehead and says that Daddy is here and here. She is forlorn as Nancy gives her daughter a hug. Sy looks on, grieving for them.

Now Sy is in his home office placing one of his scripts into a bright green envelop addressed to Bentley, McKinsey & Ackerman, seals it and gives it a good luck kiss.

Herb is leaving another message urging Nancy to start on the new children's book she owes her publisher. With a big sigh, she opens the laptop and starts typing. "Magpie Funeral" is the title.

Back at the cemetery, Nancy is watching Lisa play when Sy shows up with a picnic basket. Lisa challenges Sy to try a somersault and he does. Lisa chides him for the bad job while running over to her mom and Sy.

Nancy is interested in what Sy does for a living. He's embarrassed to tell her that he produces Cheryl's Chateau, a local TV show that in his mind, is pretty bad. But Nancy and Lisa are delighted and explain they love watching Cheryl's Chateau.

Sy gives Lisa a stuffed bird and asks her to identify it. If she does, Lisa gets to keep it. To Nancy and Sy's amazement, she successfully identifies it as a towhee.

The next day, Sy shares with Cheryl and Lilly that the show's ratings are through the roof. The three hatch a plan to get Randy back to the studio during a show. Maybe they can push the ratings even higher.

Randy takes the bait and shows up on set. But Cheryl, Lilly and Sy are ready for him this time - with a new twist. While Randy is on camera with a deer-in-the-headlights look and being sung to by Cheryl, three signs are strategically released in the background. They read together, "Hello, Lisa and

Nancy” - a love letter from Sy to Nancy and Lisa knowing they’re watching. And they are. Both are delighted and touched by the message just for them.

But Randy has no sense of humor about what happened. This time, Sy is relegated to the TV station basement where the call center for Cheryl’s show (and other shows) is located. Sy will be taking calls and processing orders now while still producing and directing Cheryl’s Chateau.

It’s a chaotic place when Sy and Randy enter. Sy’s cubicle is next to Robby, another call center employee. Robby is in the midst of a sales call when he sees Sy. He immediately promises the caller she can talk to the director of Cheryl’s Chateau. Sy talks to her, but when the headset is handled back to Robby, Randy is yelling at Robby. The customer thinks the yelling is intended for her and hangs up. A crazy call center first day for Sy.

Herb is calling Nancy at home again. Of course, Nancy doesn’t pick up and Herb is frustrated by that. She’s on pins and needles about what Herb will say about her first draft of Magpie Funeral. Thank heaven. Herb loves it. This calls for a happy dance with Lisa.

While working at the TV station’s call center, Sy decides to phone the Bentley, McKinsey and Ackerman Agency and follow up on the scripts he’s been submitting. But he’s met with an unsympathetic person, Mary, who later turns out to be supportive about what Sy is trying to accomplish. Mary urges him to call back in a week or two – you never know, she says.

But unknown to Sy, Randy has been listening the whole time because the call monitor speaker was accidentally left on. Randy wastes no time berating Sy about his screenwriting career and walks away laughing. Sy is kicking himself that the speaker was left on.

Nancy is at home texting with Herb. He’s saying that the Magpie Funeral book needs to be turned into a movie screenplay as soon as possible. The Herb texts are amusing because he knows Nancy wants to write the screenplay on her own instead of by a professional screenplay writer. So Herb ends up having an argument with himself – a one sided text conversation. He finally says that he’ll be standing by when she gets to the point of complete frustration. But this gives Nancy more reason to take on this new writing challenge and show Herb that she’s up to the task.

Nancy is at the cemetery with Lisa trying to write her Magpie Funeral screenplay. Lisa is having fun blowing bubbles. Then Sy appears with his picnic basket. Nancy receives an unexpected inspiration for her screenplay from a conversation Sy and Lisa are having.

Sy, feeling powerful and in charge, is heading towards the TV station studio. Robby has agreed to be in on a plot with Lilly to get Randy back to the studio again when Cheryl’s Chateau is live. Robby and Lilly’s plan works. When Randy enters the studio, he’s called by his mom to sit down immediately. Gladys is already seated enjoying Cheryl’s show. Taken by surprise, Randy follows his mom’s orders but is humiliated when Robby thrusts an electric blue wig on him. Randy just looks down. Sy appears sheepish, feeling that he has gone too far this time.

Nancy is at the cemetery again with Lisa and Sy. Nancy is typing furiously on her laptop. You can see that she is becoming more and more frustrated writing the Magpie Funeral screenplay. Lisa spots a special bird and alerts her mom, but Nancy is too wrapped up in her writing. Sy calls her on it and Nancy apologizes. She is at the end of her rope. Sy feels this and decides to back off, but poor Lisa can’t help but be disappointed.

Then a big blow - Randy replaces Sy with another director for Cheryl’s Chateau. On the spot, Sy decides to quit, but Randy won’t hear of it. Randy’s anger grows as he watches Sy walk out the door.

Randy, now back home, has Sy's typewriter in one arm, and a baseball bat in the other. He throws the typewriter down on the driveway and proceeds to smash it to bits. Sy pulls up and just watches Randy. Randy finishes his deed, then gives Sy a 'look of death' as he tosses the bat aside. Gladys has been watching the whole thing from the front door. She is appalled at what her son just did.

Lisa is pacing, sensing her mom's angst. Herb is leaving a message. And its bad news. Herb announces that the latest screenplay draft of Magpie Funeral is worse than the first. He assures her that he will come visit to discuss this in person. Lisa just keeps pacing.

Herb is at Nancy's front door but Nancy pretends to not be home. Then Herb tricks her into letting him in.

At the cemetery, Nancy, Lisa and Herb are looking for Sy. While Herb and Nancy talk about how Sy inspired her to write the Magpie Funeral book, Lisa runs ahead binoculars in hand looking for birds.

Sy is at the cemetery too, but doesn't see them. He's concentrating on a different feeling in the air. Something magical.

As Sy continues to walk, he hears a magpie. Then two more - followed by a chorus of them. They're signaling Sy that their dead friend is just ahead.

Sy spots the fallen bird and reverently kneels in front of the body. A magpie up in a nearby branch signals the funeral to begin. Sy can't believe it. This is what he's always wanted to see, but he wishes his dad was there to witness this magpie funeral with him.

Then Sy senses something – a presence. His father materializes and steps forward, putting a hand on his son's shoulder. Sy looks up at his father as he hands pine needles to him. Sy places them by the body. He smiles to himself and looks up at his father, who has disappeared. Sy stands up and takes a moment to let everything that has just occurred soak in.

In another part of the same cemetery, Herb is still trying to convince Nancy to accept help with her Magpie Funeral screenplay adaptation. She adamantly tells Herb she can write the screenplay herself with no help.

Lisa spots a towhee. She alerts her mom of this, but Nancy is still wrapped up in a back and forth with Herb and doesn't hear. Lisa sees Sy walking far away and calls to him. He doesn't hear either so she runs in his direction.

Nancy and Herb hear tires squealing. A panic stop. Lisa's binoculars tumble to the pavement. Could it be? They rush to the terrible sound and so does Sy.

Lisa is in surgery. The three wait, hoping for the best. A doctor finally emerges and let's them know that Lisa will be okay, but it will be a long recovery.

While they breathe a collective sigh of relief, Sy finds out that the Herb Ackerman he has been trying to talk to about his scripts is standing before him. But Nancy misunderstands and accuses Sy of using her to gain access to her agent. Sy explains that is not true, but is asked to leave by Nancy and Herb.

Sy is understandably sullen as he approaches his front door. But the key doesn't work. Randy shows up and slaps an eviction notice on the front door in front of Sy. Why is this happening to him now?

In the hospital recovery room, Nancy is tortured by worry. Lisa is still unconscious. It's morning now so Nancy decides to open the blinds. With her back to Lisa, she hears her daughter call to her for the first time since the accident. Nancy is crying for joy.

Sy is despondent, stuck in a cheap motel on the edge of town. Mary calls and tells him that Lisa is okay and has gone home. Mary also wants him to open his email and read what she's sent him. It's a Magpie Funeral screenplay. The title page has his name as the writer. What? Mary has a plan and explains.

Nancy picks up a package from her front stoop. It's from Mary. She brings it into the living room where Lisa is still recovering. What Mary sent is proof that Sy had contact with Herb Ackerman's office long before he met Nancy.

Nancy and Lisa go to Sy's address. Randy is in front pounding a 'For Rent' sign into the ground. Nancy inquires if Sy still lives there and gets the whole story from Randy.

But Lisa recognizes Randy from Cheryl's Chateau. She starts singing what Cheryl was singing to Randy while wearing the silly wig. Randy is embarrassed at first, but is touched when Lisa asks for his autograph. As Randy watches them leave, he seems to be a transformed man.

Sy is at the cemetery working on the Magpie Funeral screenplay. Later, Lisa's voice echoes across the gravestones. Sy doesn't hear her at first, but hears her second call and looks up. He can't believe his eyes. Nancy and Lisa are running towards him.

Lisa and Sy hug. Nancy apologizes for her false accusation. Sy assures Nancy that they'll always be good. Then Lisa and Sy run off to find birds to watch before the sun goes down. Nancy watches them with a relieved laugh.

As rain hits the sill, Randy is pondering life. How could he be so mean to Sy? He's also remembering what Lisa did that day when she and her mom came by the house.

Sy finishes his version of the Magpie Funeral screenplay adaptation and emails it to Mary. She prints it out and places the script on Herb's desk. The 'written by' has been blacked out with a Sharpie. Herb is wondering what's going on while Mary locks him in his office. She makes it clear that he's going to sit down right now and read it cover to cover. He's not going anywhere until he does.

Randy, Lilly, Gladys and Cheryl go to the cheap motel where Sy is staying. Randy has something to say to Sy, but he won't let them in. Lilly and Cheryl take matters into their own hands and break the door down.

Herb calls Nancy while she serves breakfast to Lisa. Herb leaves a message that Mary has an adaptation of the Magpie Funeral screenplay he loves and Nancy has to read it. Lisa picks up the phone and tells Herb that she will.

Back in Sy's cheap hotel, Randy presents a long overdue apology to Sy as the others look on. It ends with Randy extending his hand to Sy.

Nancy finishes reading the new Magpie Funeral screenplay adaptation and loves it. Herb let's her know that Sy is the writer, but the screenplay is missing her spirit. After the initial surprise about Sy, Nancy agrees to join forces with him on the next draft.

Sy explains through narration that he and Nancy work together to achieve a great draft. Then Herb finds a studio to back the film.

The resulting film is a huge success, garnering a big award nomination. Did they win? Well, Sy explains, it is after all an honor to be nominated. In the limo on their way to the after-parties, Sy and Nancy decide to go home instead. They really want to be with Lisa and their friends on this special night.

During the celebration at home, Sy finally meets Mary face to face. She makes quite an impression on Sy and vice versa.

Nancy, Lisa and Sy are walking across a bridge and stop to look at the rushing water below. Nancy is talking to Lisa about Mary being so pretty. Lisa retorts that Mary is out of Sy's league. Then Nancy suggests she and Sy work on a 'love story' next as she scoops up Lisa. Sy, flustered, follows them but leaves the picnic basket behind. A magpie call out. Sy quickly comes back for the picnic basket then catches up with Nancy and Lisa.