

Shopping Cart

A radio play by Steven Burton

9709 E. Colonial Trail Highway
Crewe, VA 23930
360-292-2638
Sburton900@gmail.com

Plot summary: Jan takes a fold able shopping cart from a stranger assuming he took it from under her porch. After realizing this mistake, she goes on a quest to find him for a return of his cart. While Jan looks through the community to find this man, the painful memory of her long lost son is triggered with a glimmer of hope that she might also find him. In the late afternoon, she finds the man to return his cart, but the lost son not found continues her upset in front of this stranger. As the day ends, this stranger man provides comfort to Jan for the loss of her son.

Bio: This storyteller is a writer, photographer, and actor. The films *Candu* (2013 Cannes Festival), *Roaming* (2008), and *Look Beyond* (2014), were produced from his screenplays. The acting career began with a recurring part on *General Hospital*. He recently played a lead role in the award winning *Lilac* web series pilot. His stage plays *Fear* (2001), *Rounds* (2003) and *Close Enough* (2017) were produced in New York. Writing combined with acting has happened in the *Roaming*, *Fear*, and *Rounds* productions. New York, Los Angeles, Seattle, and now Virginia have been the home locations.

CAST

Angie A visiting angel narrates.

Jan Clinton #1 Affluent elderly lady.

Stranger Man #2 Disheveled, sensitive, middle aged.

Ellen #3 Elderly friend of Jan.

Female Grocery Checker #4 Friendly any age.

Susan #5 Middle aged daughter of Jan.

Alice #6 Elderly friend of Jan.

Ed #7 Elderly church volunteer.

Walter #8 Elderly church volunteer.

Young Mother #9 With her daughter in the park.

Young Girl #10 Daughter of young mother in the park.

Mystery Man (Kissing Bandit) #11 Weird middle aged man in park.

Bystander #12 Any age or gender.

Bystander #13 Any age or gender.

Bystander #14 Any age or gender.

Man asleep in Park #15 Elderly using a Teddy Bear as a pillow.

Handsome man on bench #16 Possibly Jan's lost son Danny.

Scout Leader #17 Middle aged man.

Boys #18 Boys in scout troop.

Danny #19 Jan's young son before his disappearance.

SCENE 1

MUSIC: ANGELIC AND SPIRITUAL

SOUND: FLUTTER OF ANGEL WINGS

ANGIE

Nice flight! My name is Angie, an angel, here for a new assignment. This must be important because the order came from above. I am to observe a situation that may need attention. So, please join me on this bright spring morning where a row of affluent Brownstones appear with stair steps in front. From the back of one these homes, Jan Clinton, a casually well-dressed elderly woman with purse in hand, exits outside through a kitchen door and then locks it. She goes to a storage space under the front stair steps, and then opens the lattice door to look for something. But, it is missing, so with instant frustration, she rushes away on the path towards the street. She looks around and then focuses on something nearby. On the sidewalk in front of the house, a disheveled man reaches down into a foldable shopping cart.

JAN

That's my shopping cart! Give it back! My cart is gone from behind my steps! You took it. I'll call the police! I'm not afraid of you. You can't come on my property and take. I want it back. It's mine and I need it.

ANGIE

The man stands motionless. From the cart, he takes a blanket, a ragged teddy bear, a small bag of cans, and then stuffs them into a large plastic bag. He walks away with the bag to leave the cart behind. Jan stands near the cart in which a wilted bouquet of flowers remains. She picks up the flowers and then waves them.

JAN

Do you want your flowers? (Louder) Did you hear me? These flowers.

ANGIE

The man continues without response. A confused Jan carefully puts the flowers on a step and then moves away with the cart in the opposite direction. Soon, a preoccupied Jan pushes the cart past Ellen.

ELLEN

Hello Jan.

JAN (Startled.)

Oh hi Ellen. I'm sorry, but I'm in a hurry. I'll talk to you later.

SCENE 2

INT. - GROCERY STORE

ANGIE

In a grocery store a friendly female checker rings up Jan's groceries.

SOUND: SCANNING GROCERY ITEMS CONTINUES

CHECKER

That's a pretty scarf.

JAN

Thank you.

CHECKER

Is it rayon?

JAN

No, silk.

CHECKER

Well then, don't give it to me. I never want anything that has to be dry-cleaned.

JAN

You can hand wash it.

CHECKER

Not me. If I can't throw it in a machine, with some soap, I'm not interested. I like to relax at home.

JAN

Oh.

CHECKER

In fact, don't tell anybody, but when I'm at home alone, I like to take off all my clothes and lounge around while the laundry is being done. It makes me feel free. Have you ever tried that?

JAN

No.

CHECKER

Well, try it. You might like it.

JAN

Maybe. I've got to get going. How much is it?

CHECKER

Oh, sorry. It's 42.92.

SCENE 3

EXT. - SIDEWALK

SOUND: SQUEAKY WHEEL

ANGIE

On a sidewalk Jan stops for closer look at the squeaky wheel on the cart with groceries, and then she continues with irritation. Later, at the kitchen door, she is surprised to see another cart like hers parked nearby.

JAN

Oh my God! That's my cart. (Pause) Then whose is.....?

SCENE 4

INT. - KITCHEN

ANGIE

A stunned Jan puts a bag of groceries on the kitchen table. She sits in a chair when her daughter Susan walks in.

SUSAN

Hello mother.

JAN

What are you doing here?

SUSAN

To see you. What else?

JAN

Oh, hello dear. Excuse me.

SUSAN

Did you carry this home?

JAN

No.

SUSAN

Delivered?

JAN

No, I used a cart.

SUSAN

But, I had yours.

JAN

Well actually I forgot, so I borrowed one.

SUSAN

Oh, from Lydia next door?

JAN

No, from a man down the street. I'll have to return it.

SUSAN

Who? Come on, are you holding out on me?

JAN

Don't be so nosy!

SUSAN

O.K. Anyway, thanks for the cart. That plant from Jane fit beautifully. Then, all I had to do was wheel it down to my place. You were right. It was too heavy to carry. If I'd known you were going shopping this morning, I would have returned it sooner.

JAN

Don't worry about it. What kind of plant is it?

SUSAN

A big, beautiful jade. You've got to see it.

JAN

Yes, I will.

SUSAN

Do you want me to return the cart for you?

JAN

No, I'll take care of it.

SUSAN

You sure?

JAN

Yes. I'm going to lay down now. I didn't sleep well last night.

SUSAN

Well, this is a rough time of the year when it happened. I'll never forget it either. Thank God, we are still here to support and love each other.

JAN

Yes.

SCENE 5

INT. - BEDROOM

ANGIE

Jan naps on the bed in a dream. In an expansive multi-colored field of spring tulips, a young girl dressed in play clothes runs and jumps playfully down a trail in the tulips with glee and total abandonment. A little boy soon follows with the same spirit. The two children stand together to look in the same direction with eager contentment. They are speechless as they look up at the sky. Then, Jan wakes up to go to the dresser where she looks at a framed photograph of a man with a young girl and boy. Later, Jan wears a pretty spring dress, while she primps in the mirror. Then, she takes a blanket from the shelf in the closet.

SCENE 6

INT. - KITCHEN

ANGIE

In the kitchen Jan puts the blanket on the table, takes money out of her purse, and then puts it in an envelope. The blanket gets wrapped around the envelope.

SCENE 7

EXT. - KITCHEN

ANGIE

Outside Jan puts the blanket into the man's cart, while Jan's cart is in the background. She pushes the cart away, and then stops suddenly to look back at her cart followed by a quick decision.

SCENE 8

EXT. - STORAGE SPACE

ANGIE

The cart is pushed into the storage space, and then the blanket is taken out. Outside, Jan puts the blanket into her cart, and then moves away with new vigor.

SCENE 9

EXT. - SIDEWALK

ANGIE

Jan pushes the cart on a sidewalk, and then sees someone she knows.

JAN

Hello, Alice.

ALICE

How are you feeling?

JAN

Quite good, thank you. It's spring.

ALICE

I know, it's lovely out.

JAN

Yes, I'm going to get some fresh tulips for the house.

ALICE

Say no more. I have plenty in the backyard. I'll get you some.

JAN

No. Thank you, anyway. I need the exercise.

ALICE

Are you sure?

JAN

Oh yes. Save them for yourself.

ALICE
How about a cup of Tea?

JAN
No, not right now, but maybe on the way back.

ALICE
Well, then I'll come with you.

JAN
No, Alice. Not today.

ALICE
Oh, I see. Well, have a good time. I understand. I need to be alone sometimes too.

JAN
I know. I'll talk to you later.

SCENE 10

EXT. - PARK

ANGIE
Jan walks into a park to sit on a bench to look around.

SOUNDS: VARIOUS NATURE AND PEOPLE INTERACTING.

SCENE 11

INT. - CHURCH COMMUNITY CENTER

ANGIE
Jan enters a church community center with the blanket and envelope, and then looks around the room as elderly people eat, converse, and play games. Ed, an elderly man, sits at a check in table near the entrance as Walter, an elderly man, approaches.

ED
Hello Walter. How are you doing? It's been awhile.

WALTER
Not bad. And yourself?

ED

Good. You look like you've lost some weight.

WALTER

Yes, my doctor wants me to get down to my original weight.

ED

What's that?

WALTER

Seven pounds, six inches.

(They both laugh.)

ED

Good luck.

WALTER

Yeah, I'll need it.

JAN

Excuse me.

ED

Yes miss.

JAN

I would like to make a contribution.

WALTER

This is the man to see.

ED

Yes, may I help you?

JAN

I want to leave this blanket and some money.

ED

Thank you. It's greatly appreciated.

WALTER

Yes.

JAN

You're welcome. I've heard some very good things about this place.

ED

Well, we're working at it.

JAN

I've got to go now. Best of luck with everything.

ED

Likewise, and thanks again.

WALTER

Bye now.

ED

Nice lady.

WALTER

Yes. Do you think...? Oh hell, I'll find out myself.

SOUND: QUICK FOOT STEPS

WALTER

Excuse me. I'm sorry, but what's your name again?

JAN

I don't think I ever told you.

WALTER

Could you tell me for the first time then?

JAN

Jan Clinton.

WALTER

I'm Walter Barton.

JAN

Hello.

WALTER

I don't want to beat around the bush. I'm too old. Are you a widow?

JAN

Yes.

WALTER

Remarried?

JAN

No.

WALTER

Good. Do you like to dance?

JAN

I haven't in years.

WALTER

That doesn't matter. It'll all come back. We have dances here every Thursday. I love to dance, but there aren't too many women around here with much get up and go. You look like you have some spunk, so it would be fun if you could come. How about it?

JAN

Well...

WALTER

Look, I'm not trying to make this lead to something else, unless you want to. I just like to dance. Especially, the slow dances. My wife liked those too. Did your husband like to dance?

JAN

No, not really.

WALTER

Oh, that's too bad. I guess you've been deprived.

JAN

No, I wouldn't say that.

WALTER

Well how about it? Does this sound like a plan?

JAN

I'll think about it.

WALTER

O.K. I hope to see you next Thursday at two. Don't worry, I'm a great dancer.

JAN

I...

WALTER

Nice meeting you Jan.

JAN

Yes.

SCENE 12

EXT. - PARK

SOUND: PARK SOUNDS

ANGIE

While Jan sits on a bench, she watches a mother and a young daughter play nearby. She remembers in a flashback on an ocean beach.

SOUND: OCEAN WAVES

ANGIE

A younger Jan runs with Susan, her young daughter. Then, they approach their things set up on a blanket. Albert, Jan's husband and young son Danny are nearby. Albert reads a book as Danny quietly builds something in the sand. Later, Jan watches Danny still at work in the sand by himself as the flashback ends. Then, Jan looks out at the mother and the daughter who walks towards her.

MOTHER

Where are you going honey?

GIRL

To say something to this lady.

MOTHER

Maybe, you shouldn't bother her.

JAN

Oh, it's fine. No problem.

GIRL

Hi.

JAN

Hello. How are you?

GIRL

Fine.

JAN

How old are you?

GIRL

Five. (Pause.) I want to be older. Do you want to be older?

JAN

No, not really.

GIRL

Are we inside or outside of the world?

JAN

Outside, or on the world. On earth.

GIRL

But the sky goes around like a ball and we are inside the ball.

JAN

Well, it does sort of look like that. But, I'm pretty sure we are on the outside, at least that's what I've always thought. Because, the way to go to the moon is by going up in the sky.

GIRL

I've been to the moon and I didn't go in the sky.

JAN

Is that right? Maybe there are other ways.

ANGIE

Meanwhile, a mysterious man in sun glasses leans up against a tree nearby, and then looks towards Jan and the girl. Then, he walks towards Jan and the girl as they are not aware of him.

MYSTERY MAN

Excuse me, madam.

JAN (Startled)

Yes.

MYSTERY MAN

Where is State Street from here?

JAN

Well, it's three blocks that way. You can't miss it. It's busy.

MYSTERY MAN

Thank you. You have been most kind. I would like to repay you.

JAN

Oh, no, that's not necessary. If we can't help...

ANGIE

The mystery man lunges towards her, plants a kiss on her lips, and then Jan pushes at him.

SOUND: RUNNING FOOTSTEPS

JAN

Oh my God! What? I don't believe...

MOTHER

Are you all right? What happened?

JAN

That man just came up and kissed me.

BY STANDER #1

It looked like the guy in the news, the kissing bandit.

BY STANDER #2

I didn't get a good look.

BY STANDER #1

I did. I'm sure it's him.

MOTHER (To Jan.)

Can I help you home?

JAN (Laughs.)

No, no. It was just a kiss. I hope he enjoyed it.

SCENE 13

EXT. - PARK

ANGIE

Jan walks as something attracts her attention. On a bench a man lays on his side with his back towards Jan. He uses a Teddy Bear as a pillow.

JAN

Excuse me. (No answer.) Hello? Are you the man I saw at my house this morning?

TEDDY MAN

No, I don't think so.

JAN

Oh, maybe not. No, now that I see you. It's just that the Teddy Bear looks familiar.

TEDDY MAN

Oh, is it yours?

JAN

No.

TEDDY MAN

Wait a minute. I'm a little slow when I first wake up. What was I doing with a Teddy Bear at your place this morning?

JAN

No, you're not him. I saw a man with a Teddy Bear this morning on my street.

TEDDY MAN

What was he doing with a Teddy Bear?

JAN

Oh, I don't know. Maybe, the same thing you're doing. As a pillow.

TEDDY MAN

Yeah, I found it this morning. It was working fine.

JAN

Sorry, I woke you up.

TEDDY MAN

That's O.K. Do you know the time?

JAN

Yes, it's four thirty.

TEDDY MAN

Good, I've got a while before dinner.

JAN

How or where did you find the bear?

TEDDY MAN

Next to a tree on the other side of the park.

JAN

Near state street?

TEDDY MAN

Yes.

JAN

Thanks for the information. Here's something for your trouble.

TEDDY MAN

Oh thanks. No problem. Could I have five more?

JAN

What?

TEDDY MAN

This is the way I figure it. With five more I can buy two 7.95 dinner specials at this coffee shop I like. It's meatloaf today, lasagna tomorrow night. The lasagna is great! Better than the meatloaf, but it ain't bad. Then, with the three bucks left over, I can buy juice, coffee, and a bagel for breakfast. That will take care of today and tomorrow.

JAN

Well sure.

TEDDY MAN

Thanks a lot. I got to get going on order to get that early bird special before six. You come on by anytime. I'm usually around that area where you found me.

JAN

All right. Good luck to you.

TEDDY MAN

Thanks, you too. I hope you find what you want.

JAN

Yes.

SCENE 14

EXT. - PARK

ANGIE

While Jan continues to walk in the park, something catches her attention. A handsome well-dressed man in his thirties sits on a bench in profile.

JAN
Danny? Is that you? Oh no.....

HANDSOME MAN
What?

JAN
I thought you were someone else.

HANDSOME MAN
Oh sure, I've heard that before. That's
an old line.

JAN
No, I....

HANDSOME MAN
Oh, I know. It's just an excuse to meet me, and take
advantage of my good looks, money, and charm.

JAN
No, I thought. I'm sorry.

HANDSOME MAN
It's O.K. It's an honest mistake. Who is this person you
thought I was?

JAN
His name is Danny. You sort of look like him, or what he
could have looked like.

HANDSOME MAN
Could have looked like?

JAN
Well, it's been a while since I've seen him. It's a long
story.

HANDSOME MAN
Oh, maybe I'm his double.

JAN
Could be.

HANDSOME MAN

Was he family or a friend?

JAN (Confused.)

Family, but didn't get a chance to know him that well....

HANDSOME MAN

I hope you find him if that's what you want.

JAN

Thank you.

SCENE 15

EXT. - PARK

ANGIE

Jan is more worried and intense as she walks away with a flashback memory. In a school auditorium, Danny, Jan's son, is with a group of Cub Scouts at a pack meeting. They get a pep talk from the den leader.

DEN LEADER

All right boys, it's our turn to carry the flag around for the opening ceremony. I want you all to go out there and make your selves proud. So, let's line up like we practiced. Ready?

BOYS (In unison.)

Yes.

DEN LEADER

Now, get out there and march!

SOUND: GROUP FOOT MARCHING CONTINUES

ANGIE

Following, the boys circle the auditorium with the flag. Danny stands out somewhat, because he marches in a high step military style. He has taken the den leader's march orders literally. The other boys march in a much more subtle manner. The spectators react with humor at Danny's high step march. Jan, with her husband, is uneasy and embarrassed. The boy next to Danny nudges him with disapproval. This breaks his concentration. Danny stops, slows down, and then he meekly gets in step with the other boys. The boys continue to move around the court more in synch as the flashback ends.

SCENE 16

EXT. - SIDEWALK

ANGIE

Jan leaves a flower shop with a small plant in the shopping cart and then goes to an outdoor café to sit at a table with a cup of tea deep in thought. After she opens her purse to look at a picture of her teenage son Danny, a memory flashback begins. On a school stage, a twelve year old Danny dressed in costume takes a bow center stage with other kids in a play.

SOUND: CLAPPING APLAUSE

ANGIE

Jan and Albert applaud with enthusiasm among others which ends the flashback when Jan, is interrupted by a waitress.

WAITRESS

Would you like something else?

JAN

Yes... Oh no, thank you.

ANGIE

Jan walks in a daze with the cart and then sits on a bench near a street.

SOUND: CAR TRAFFIC

ANGIE

In a flashback memory Jan drives with twelve-year-old Danny as a passenger.

JAN

You didn't eat much of your lunch. Did you like that restaurant?

DANNY

It was all right. I just wasn't that hungry.

JAN

Maybe it's those new braces. It's hard to eat with them, isn't it?

DANNY

No, because I take them out before eating.

JAN

Every time?

DANNY

Yes.

JAN

Are they in now?

DANNY

Why all the questions? What's the big deal?

JAN

Just answer the question.

DANNY

No!

JAN

Then, put them in. The dentist said to wear them as much as possible.

DANNY

All right, I know.

JAN

I was just trying to help you. Did you find them?

DANNY

No, I thought they were in my pocket. Maybe, they fell out.

JAN

Fell out?

SOUND: CAR SCREECHING TO A HALT

JAN

Did you find them?

DANNY

No, not yet, but they've got to be here.

JAN

Get out of the car a minute and let me look.

SOUND: DOOR OPENS

JAN

Check your pockets again.

DANNY

I did. I think I left them back at the restaurant.

JAN

What? Where?

DANNY

In a napkin on the table. I forgot to pick it up, when we left.

JAN

Are you sure?

DANNY

Yeah.

JAN

What a dumb thing to do! They cost a lot of money! I told you to be careful with them. Well, get in the car. We're going back to that restaurant and search through the garbage if we have to.

SCENE 17

EXT. - SIDEWALK

ANGIE

After this flashback ends, Jan is deep in thought as she walks on a sidewalk. Then, she notices the man from that morning as he walks with a bag on the other side of the street.

SOUND: FAST FOOTSTEPS

JAN

Please sir, I have been trying to find you. I'm sorry about this morning. I just assumed. They looked alike.

MAN

Oh, all right.

JAN

Why didn't you tell me it wasn't mine?

MAN

It could be yours, because I found it. And I thought you needed it more than me.

JAN

No, I have one. I forgot this morning that it was being borrowed. So, I'll just empty out these things and then it's yours again. Please?

MAN

OK.

SCENE 18

EXT. - JAN'S HOME

ANGIE

Jan leads the man on the path to the stairs, stops to take the plant out and then puts them on the bench. She points towards her empty cart.

JAN

Now go ahead and take mine. We'll trade. The wheels are going bad on yours which is in the storage room.

MAN

No, mine is fine.

JAN

Look, I can always get another one. It's no problem. I don't use it that much anyway.

MAN

I can always get another one too.

JAN

Please, just take it. I've caused you a lot of trouble.

MAN

You don't have to pay for this. It's just a mistake. It's O.K. now. I don't want yours. Unless of course, you really want mine.

JAN

All right, I want yours.

MAN

No you don't. You're just trying to feel better.

JAN

No, I'm not!

MAN

Yes, you are.

JAN

No, I can't feel better! I haven't felt better in a long time. So, it doesn't matter. Why are you doing this? Take my cart! Take your cart! Both of them!

MAN

O.k., I'll take this one.

JAN

Good! And don't come back here again!

SOUND: SOBBING AND FOOTSTEPS THAT SOON STOP

MAN

I forgot my things.

ANGIE

He picks up the bag off the ground. After he looks at the upset Jan for a moment, he fumbles around in the bag until a small package of Kleenex is found. He sits next to Jan on the bench, and then offers some tissue.

MAN

Here you go.

SOUND: HER SOBBING CONTINUES

JAN

Come back.

MAN

You want me back?

JAN

No, my son Danny.

MAN

What happened?

JAN (With difficulty.)

He disappeared many years ago when he was a teen.

MAN

I'm sorry about that.

JAN

We tried everything to find him. My husband passed away a few years ago. I understood that. I don't understand what happened to Danny. He could still be alive, dead, crazy, sick, happy, sad...I don't know. I didn't get to know him. And maybe I caused this!

MAN

But, you don't know that. Maybe, it's just one of those bad things that life throws at you. No rhyme or reason.

JAN

But, how and why?

MAN

There is no answer, so maybe it would be better to let all these feelings go.

JAN

Where?

MAN

I don't know, but it ain't doing any good here. (Pause.)
Throw it up in the sky. Let it fly away.

JAN

Sometimes, I want to just fly away.

MAN

I think we all do.

SOUND: RUSSLING IN A BAG

MAN

This is all I have to offer right now. Why don't you have a good swallow? Clear your throat.

SOUND: A SODA BOTTLE OPENS

JAN

Thank you.

ANGIE

As the sun sets it is time for my departure. We leave things unresolved, but the beauty of two strangers from different walks of life helping one another is a new direction of hope. Fare well, with thoughts of peace and love.

SOUND: FLUTTER OF ANGEL WINGS

MUSIC: ANGELIC AND SPIRITUAL

THE END