

***The Shift*** is a 2023 American Christian science fiction thriller film written and directed by Brock Heasley and starring Kristoffer Polaha, Neal McDonough, Elizabeth Tabish, Rose Reid, John Billingsley, Paras Patel, Jordan Alexandra and Sean Astin. It is a loose adaptation of the Book of Job.<sup>[4]</sup>

The film was released in theaters on December 1, 2023, to mixed reviews from critics.

## Plot

In 2008, hedge fund manager and recovering alcoholic Kevin Garner loses his job following the collapse of Bear Stearns. Devastated and planning to fall off the wagon, Kevin goes to a bar, where he is interrupted right before the first drink by a woman named Molly, who approaches him on a dare from her friends. The two hit it off, Kevin decides to continue his sobriety, asks Molly out on a formal date, and they ultimately get married. Years later, Kevin and Molly are estranged following the disappearance of their son, Daniel. Molly has become an embittered alcoholic and Kevin is unhappy in his job, as his younger boss hates people like him because his parents lost their home in the subprime mortgage crisis. After learning he will be fired, Kevin leaves work and during a drive home ends up in a car accident, apparently pulled from the wreck by a mysterious stranger who identifies himself only as "The Benefactor". The Benefactor tells Kevin that he has actually "shifted" him to another reality following the accident, and that they're now in a parallel universe.

The Benefactor and Kevin go to a café, and Kevin sees that all the staff and patrons inside are terrified of the Benefactor. After a tense conversation at the table, Kevin realizes that the Benefactor is actually Satan. The Benefactor offers Kevin anything he wants so long as he works as one of his "shifters", people who have sold their souls and use "shifting" for transferring other people to alternate universes, thus making the transferees swap places with their doppelgangers in those other universes - all versions of Kevin from other realities already work as his "shifters"; what's more, Kevin's wife has already been "shifted" twice, without anything being noticed. Kevin is skeptical and asks the Benefactor to prove it, suggesting that

The Shift	
<span></span> <div>Theatrical release poster</div>	
Directed by	Brock Heasley
Written by	Brock Heasley
Produced by	Ken Carpenter Brock Heasley
Starring	<u>Kristoffer Polaha</u>
	<u>Neal McDonough</u>
	<u>Elizabeth Tabish</u>
	<u>Rose Reid</u>
	<u>John Billingsley</u>
	<u>Paras Patel</u>
	<u>Jordan Alexandra</u> <u>Sean Astin</u>
Cinematography	Edd Lukas
Edited by	Chris Witt
Music by	<u>Dan Haseltine</u>
	Matthew S. Nelson
Production companies	Nook Lane Entertainment

Tina, a waitress in the café, be "shifted" for demonstration. The Benefactor does just that, then informing Kevin that he's intentionally "shifted" Tina to a universe in which she's never existed, and that such "shifts" are cruel because of deranging effects on the "shifted" person's psyche. Realizing that this action will drive Tina insane, Kevin begins to say under his breath a prayer to God for help. Enraged, the Benefactor snarls that he'll never leave Kevin alone and that he's better than God and certainly better than Kevin, before vanishing abruptly and leaving Kevin trapped in that dystopian universe. Horrified at what he's just done, Kevin apologizes to Tina's family and leaves.

Five years later, Kevin is still in the totalitarian reality, living under an assumed name because of "illicit prayer" at the café by "Kevin who refused". In that universe, most of the planet was destroyed by constant war and anthropogenic activity with deleterious environmental impact. At first the "shifters" operated in secret, moving between alternate universes and exiling anybody regarded as "problematic" by the regime, with the help of small wrist-worn shifting devices called "deviators"; with millions of people vanished without trace, order could be restored in remaining areas of human habitation. After the Benefactor arrived and the surviving world leaders ceded control to him, he made the world over in his image. Majority of people live in squalid, poverty-stricken cities ruled with an iron fist by the Benefactor's secret police. Kevin attempts to write down from memory as many passages from the Bible and as closely to original text as he can remember and distributes the typed pages through his friend Gabriel, despite Scripture being illegal. Kevin also shares the story of Job with his neighbor, Rajit, and his family. Kevin's only solace is going to a movie theater owned by Russo, which plays a live feed from the viewer's direct doppelgangers in alternate realities.

In the theater, Kevin sees several versions of Molly, one of which is a single mother working as a nurse and still wearing a necklace that Kevin bought for her before their estrangement and which only the "original" Molly wore until she was replaced by the Benefactor with her doppelganger. Kevin plans to obtain a deviator from one of the "shifters", but their identities are secret. Kevin hears an announcement on TV that the Benefactor is returning to that reality for the first time in five years, and acquires an illegal firearm from Gabriel, intending to force the Benefactor to take him back to his previous life in the old reality. However, the plan fails and the police open fire during a raid on Rajit's adjacent apartment, wounding Rajit and knocking Gabriel unconscious. Kevin sees a deviator on Gabriel's wrist and realizes that Gabriel has been one of the Benefactor's secret "shifters" all along, shifting himself to another reality with Gabriel's deviator.

Kevin shifts through several universes, in one of them coming across Tina, who is unhinged and in a psychiatric ward. The next shift with the deviator brings him back to his bullet-riddled apartment in the dystopian reality. He runs to Russo's cinema and together they are able to identify the other universe from which the view of Molly with the necklace originates; after feeding the coordinates into the deviator, Kevin is shifted to that universe. Molly in that universe is upset by conversation with Kevin, suggesting that they both should move on and reminding him that break-up of their marriage was initiated by him - but Kevin also feels that their relationship could be still revived. Suddenly the Benefactor returns Kevin to the totalitarian universe, shifts Tina to Russo's cinema and tells Kevin that he should choose between restoring Tina to her family (never to see Molly again) and staying with Molly forever after accepting the

	<u>Pinnacle Peak Pictures</u> Saltshaker Films
<b>Distributed by</b>	<u>Angel Studios</u>
<b>Release dates</b>	November 3, 2023 (168 Film Festival)  December 1, 2023 (United States)
<b>Running time</b>	115 minutes <sup>[1]</sup>
<b>Country</b>	United States
<b>Language</b>	English
<b>Budget</b>	\$6.4 million <sup>[2]</sup>
<b>Box office</b>	\$12.2 million <sup>[3]</sup>

Benefactor's offer to become his shifter. Kevin decides to give Tina her life back, and immediately after that he's suddenly shifted to another reality. In that reality, Molly is the nurse and single mother he saw previously and doesn't recognise him. He strikes up a conversation similar to their first meeting, and the two get married once again. Kevin states that although this is not his universe, it is his home. He's seen playing with his newborn son and his adopted daughter, proving that he was given double what he lost.

In a post-credits scene, Kristoffer Polaha (who portrays Kevin in the film) thanks all viewers for watching the film and briefly mentions the inspirations for its screenplay and behind its production.

## Cast

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- Kristoffer Polaha as Kevin Garner<sup>[5]</sup>
- Neal McDonough as the Benefactor<sup>[5]</sup>
- Elizabeth Tabish as Molly Garner
- Sean Astin as Gabriel
- Rose Reid as Tina
- John Billingsley as Russo
- Paras Patel as Rajit Nadir
- Jordan Alexandra as Priya Nadir
- Jordan Walker Ross as Brendan
- Jason Marsden as Cyrus
- Emily Rose as Tabatha
- Nolan North as Brett

## Production

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Principal photography began on January 30, 2023 in Birmingham, Alabama, and shot for six weeks.<sup>[6][7]</sup> The original plan was to shoot the film in Atlanta, Georgia.<sup>[8]</sup>

## Release

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*The Shift* had an early screening at the 168 Film Festival in Fayetteville, Georgia on November 3, 2023.<sup>[9]</sup> The film was originally scheduled to be released in theatres in January 2024,<sup>[5]</sup> but was moved up to December 1, 2023.<sup>[10]</sup>

## Reception

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### Box office

The film made \$4.4 million from 2,450 theatres in its opening weekend, finishing in eighth place, behind *Animal*.<sup>[11]</sup>

### Critical response

On the review aggregator website Rotten Tomatoes, 37% of 35 critics' reviews are positive, with an average rating of 5.1/10. The website's consensus reads: "*The Shift*'s solid cast and intriguing premise are steadily squandered by its jumbled story's unsuccessful attempt to put a sci-fi spin on the Book of Job."<sup>[12]</sup> Audiences surveyed by CinemaScore gave the film an average grade of "B+" on an A+ to F scale, while those polled by PostTrak gave it an 85% overall positive score, with 69% saying they would definitely recommend the film.<sup>[11]</sup>

Frank Scheck, writing from The Hollywood Reporter, argued *The Shift* "traffics in the same annoying multiverse complications that have made the Marvel films so laborious." He went on to say "As the storyline endlessly and confusingly shifts from one reality to another, it's all too easy to tune out until we encounter one that's interesting. Alas, that never happens."<sup>[13]</sup> The Chicago Reader's Noah Berlatsky was similarly negative, writing "Brock Heasley's *The Shift* is a remarkably incoherent farrago of sci-fi tropes and Christian proselytizing... [The] film slogs ahead in a manner that is both nonsensically erratic and completely predictable, with a heavy-handed voiceover inadequately trying to pull the narrative together and create some vague dramatic tension."<sup>[14]</sup> Variety's Peter Debruge wrote "For believers looking to spend their bucks on films that reflect their values, 'The Shift' does a serviceable job of offering them another genre to explore... Heasley first made 'The Shift' as a 21-minute short, and there's just enough here to support a feature." However, he concluded "It all would have worked better if audiences bought the relationship between Kevin and Molly, but the two leads lack chemistry or a compelling meet-cute (the one Heasley provides is almost painful)."<sup>[4]</sup>

Reviews from faith-based publications were more positive. Christianity Today's Rebecca Cusey called *The Shift* "an entertaining, thoughtful, and cinematically competent retelling of Job", but criticized that "like many faith-based films... [it has] a bit too much telling and too little showing."<sup>[15]</sup>

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## External links

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- [Official website \(https://www.angel.com/movies/the-shift\)](https://www.angel.com/movies/the-shift)
  - *The Shift* (<https://www.imdb.com/title/tt19406606/>) at [IMDb](#)
  - *The Shift* ([https://www.rottentomatoes.com/m/the\\_shift\\_2023](https://www.rottentomatoes.com/m/the_shift_2023)) at [Rotten Tomatoes](#)
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