

Angels
(Alt: Angel From Kentucky)
by
Meg Tilly

A STEADY BEEP over a BLACK SCREEN.

CHYRON: *This is a true story.*

FADE UP to...

A HEART MONITOR. A BRIGHT GREEN LINE bouncing across it.

ASHLEY (O.S.)

MOMMY!

ASHLEY SCHMITT (4), boundless energy, wise beyond her years, runs into a HOSPITAL ROOM, followed by...

...her dad, ED SCHMITT (30's), easy-going, rugged good looks, a guy who showers after work, not before. He's dressed in his cleanest short-sleeve button up and a well-worn JOHN DEERE CAP.

ED

Someone's excited to meet her baby sister.

On the bed is TERESA SCHMITT (30), glowing through her exhaustion, cradling newborn daughter MICHELLE, less than an hour old.

TERESA

Ashley, come here sweetie, say hi to Michelle.

Ashley climbs onto the bed to get a look at the new baby.

TERESA

Now you're a big sister, you know what that means? It means you gotta protect her, keep her safe, okay. You promise?

ASHLEY

I promise, mama.

Ed gives Ashley a little squeeze, then leans in, gently kisses baby Michelle on the forehead.

He takes off his BALLCAP and slips it on her head.

ED

There ya go. She might be tiny, but we'll have her drivin' a backhoe in no time...

(to Teresa)

We did good, baby.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

TERESA

She's beautiful, isn't she?

ED

Like her mama.

Ed grins at Teresa. She grins back. In this moment, the whole world is theirs.

VOICE (O.S.)

Mr. Schmitt?

As we cut to the person talking, the **THE SCENE SUDDENLY CHANGES.**

Still a hospital room, but a DIFFERENT one. NIGHT time. The room dim, quiet.

A DOCTOR, 40's, stands in the doorway.

DOCTOR

Mr. Schmitt...?

Ed turns around. 4 years has passed. It might as well be 40. He looks exhausted, ground down by life.

Next to him, Teresa lies in a hospital bed, her skin colorless, very little life left in her.

DOCTOR

(delicately)

Her blood pressure is starting to fall... it'll be any moment now...

Ed nods, understanding.

DOCTOR

We'll give you some privacy.

She looks at him sympathetically, gestures to the NURSE. They quietly exit the room so he can say goodbye.

Ed looks down at Teresa. *How does he do this? Where does he even begin?*

Finally...

ED

Teresa... I will always love you,
for all time.

He pulls her hand up to his face to feel her fingers against his cheek.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ED

You can rest now, baby. I'll take
care of our girls. I promise.

Slowly, the beep of the heart rate monitor falls, giving
way to the SOLID TONE of a flatline.

Ed listens to the tone, the finality of it. It doesn't
seem real.

EXT. ED'S NEIGHBORHOOD - THAT NIGHT

A blue-collar suburb. Quiet and dark, everyone turned in
for the night.

INT. ED'S TRUCK - SAME

Ed rumbles down the road, his mind a million miles away.

EXT. ED'S HOUSE - SAME

He pulls into his driveway, climbs out, heads up the walk
to his SMALL BRICK ONE-STORY. Modest, but well kept.

He puts the key in the lock, and notices the MAILBOX
tacked to the siding is crooked. He straightens it. It
falls again. Needs a new screw.

He steps into --

INT. ED'S HOUSE / LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

His mom and dad wait for him at the dining room table,
BARBARA (60s), salt of the earth, the backbone of the
family, ED SENIOR (60's), quiet, unflappable.

ED

Hey...

They both get up, rush over to him.

BARBARA

Oh Ed.

Barbara wraps her arms around him. Ed Senior gives him a
hug too, then a hardy shoulder squeeze: *Stay strong.*

ED

Do the girls know?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Barbara nods.

BARBARA

Helped a little they've known it
was coming... Fell asleep about
half hour ago.

Ed nods, heading down the hall, into--

INT. ASHLEY AND MICHELLE'S ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Pink walls, two twin beds separated by a nightstand.

He kisses a sleeping Ashley, now 8, on her forehead. Then
crosses the room to check on Michelle, now 4.

There's an OXYGEN TUBE in her nose, MEDICAL EQUIPMENT
near her bed. Ed adjusts the TUBE, checks the levels on
the machine, then kisses her too.

He gently shuts their door, goes back out to--

INT. ED'S HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

He gets a TOOL BOX from the HALL CLOSET, walks out to--

INT. ED'S LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

ED

You're okay to drive?

He walks past them, opens the front door, begins working
to fix the mailbox. Focused. Quiet.

Barbara watches him, concerned.

ED SENIOR

Yeah, just fine.

Ed Senior puts a hand on her back, gesturing for them to
go, let him be. She gathers up her things.

EXT. GOLDEN NUGGET BAR - NIGHT

A local DIVE. Old neon sign blinking above the door.

INT. GOLDEN NUGGET BAR - CONTINUOUS

Packed on a Friday night. Construction workers, cowboys, local drunks. The air thick with cigarette smoke.

At the BAR, SHARON (39), big hoop earrings, too much eye-make-up, a rough-around-the-edges beauty -- gets ready to knock back TEQUILA SHOTS with THREE CRAGGY-FACED BIKER GUYS, and her friend ROSE (late 40's), African-American, warm but no-nonsense.

Sharon sprinkles SALT on the back of everyone's hands, passes out LEMON WEDGES.

SHARON

You know the drill, lick it drink
it suck it. One, two, three and
go!

They all lick the salt, take the shot, suck the lemon. Their faces pucker in unison.

SHARON

(laughs, slurring)
You forgot the salt!

BIKER GUY

Aw shit, better do another one.
(to Bartender)
5 more.

ROSE

3's fine. We're good for a sec.

SHARON

Make it 4. It's Friday. No fun-
hatin' allowed.

Rose gives Sharon a little look: *Pace yourself*. Sharon grins, used to Rose's mothering-friend routine. She leans in, yelling into her ear over the MUSIC.

SHARON

I'm tryin'a make one of these guys
look pretty.

ROSE

Honey, there ain't enough booze in
this place.

Sharon laughs as she reaches for the next shot. Rose bites her tongue. *Sharon's a big girl*.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

They knock back another round just as Brooks & Dunn's *Boot Scootin' Boogie* comes on. Sharon's face lights up. This is her jam.

SHARON
(sings along)
"OUT IN THE COUNTRY, PAST THE CITY
LIMITS SIGN--"

She takes Rose by the hands, dancing with her.

Sharon's a fun drunk, no doubt about it.

Rose can't help herself. Loosens up a little, joining in.

Sharon climbs onto her chair, then ONTO THE BAR, gestures for Rose to join. Rose wags her finger. *Too far.*

The Bikers CHEER as Sharon makes a spectacle, line-dancing down the bar, stepping over everyone's beers, an impromptu performance...

She gets all the way to the end and does a KICK AND SPIN for a BIG FINISH.

Except, she loses her footing on the turn, SLIPS, TUMBLES OFF THE EDGE, BUSTING HER HEAD on the back of a barstool.

EXT. SHARON'S HOUSE - LATER THAT NIGHT

A tiny sagging pre-fab home.

Sharon's EYEBROW is busted open, blood dripping through her eye make-up.

Rose lugs her to the front door. She's hammered, can barely walk, practically dead weight.

INT. SHARON'S LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Rose gets her inside, dumps her onto her couch, pulls her HIGH HEELS off. Then goes into the kitchen, gets a WET WASH CLOTH, GLASS of WATER, some ASPIRIN.

Rose dabs the wound with the washcloth, places the WATER and ASPIRIN on the coffee table.

EXT. LOUISVILLE - MORNING

The blinding sun. Hotter than hell. Everyone's lawn burnt to a crisp in the summer heat.

INT. SHARON'S HOUSE - SAME

Light streams through the windows, baking the living room like an oven.

Sharon peels open an eye. Very weakly lifts a hand to her head... it's POUNDING. She feels her insides beginning to CHURN.

Suddenly, she can feel it: Everything about to come up.

She wills herself to her feet, rushes to--

INT. SHARON'S BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

Sharon lunges to the toilet, throws the lid up, hurls the contents of her stomach.

She flushes, stumbles over to the sink, cranes her head under the faucet to rinse out her mouth.

Then catches her reflection for the first time: Face CRUSTED WITH BLOOD, a JAGGED WOUND scabbing above her eyebrow, mascara everywhere.

A hazy memory of the night returns.

Then with it, a wave of shame. She presses her eyes shut, embarrassed.

INT. SHARON'S LIVING ROOM - A LITTLE LATER

Sharon sits in a chair, holding the WATER Rose left for her.

The room is excruciatingly quiet.

A FEELING comes. It's one she knows well. An EMPTINESS forming in the center of her, swallowing the rest of her into it...

It gets stronger and stronger, until finally, she bursts to her feet, grabs her CAR KEYS.

INT. LIQUOR/CONVENIENCE STORE - A LITTLE LATER

Sharon pulls a 6-PACK OF BEER out of the FRIDGE CASE.

RELIEF comes the second it's in her hands.

She gets in line at the REGISTER. There's an OLD MAN in line in front of her, taking forever.

She heaves a sigh, impatient. Glances over at the NEWSPAPER RACK. Perusing the headlines of The NY Times, The Wall Street Journal.

Then, in the upper left corner of the LOCAL LOUISVILLE PAPER, something catches her eye--

A PHOTO OF A LITTLE GIRL. Bright sparkling eyes. A sweet, tiny smile. Something in her face instantly seizes Sharon's heart.

Then she reads the headline above her image:

4-YEAR-OLD GIRL LOSES MOTHER, IN FIGHT FOR HER OWN LIFE

She narrows her eyes, leans in, begins to read more.

Michelle Schmitt's mother, Teresa Schmitt, died late Thursday evening after battling a rare condition called Wegener's disease for several months. Now the family fears Michelle will be next.

CLERK

Ma'am?

Sharon looks up, sees it's her turn in line.

But she's not done reading the article, and something in her needs to know the rest.

She grabs the PAPER, puts it down on the counter with the 6-pack.

INT. SHARON'S CAR - A LITTLE LATER

Sharon sits in her PARKED CAR. Cracks open a BEER, picks up the newspaper, keeps reading where she left off.

4-year-old Michelle was recently diagnosed with Biliary Atresia, a rare medical condition for which there is no cure. Without a liver transplant, doctors estimate she has approximately a year to live.

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Finding a donor for young children is an uncertain process, with wait times often averaging 2.5 years.

Sharon unfolds the paper and sees TWO MORE PICTURES below the crease -- The Schmitt family gathered together in front of a Christmas Tree, and a PHOTO of Teresa laughing as Michelle puts eyeshadow on her.

At the bottom of the article, an announcement--

Funeral services for Teresa Schmitt will take place at Hopewell Methodist Church, Saturday Aug 18th, at 2:00pm.

Sharon pauses a moment, realizing that's today. She glances at the car's clock: 1:51pm. Hopewell Church is not far away.

Suddenly, she feels an impulse to do something completely out of the ordinary.

EXT. HOPEWELL CHURCH - A LITTLE LATER

GUESTS mill around quietly before the service, hugging and offering condolences.

Ed makes his way through the sanctuary, holding Michelle and Ashley by hand. He wears his one rarely-worn suit and tie.

His body here, but his mind is still far away.

They take a seat in the FIRST PEW next to his parents. Barbara squeezes his arm. Ed Sr. gives him a little pat.

Michelle climbs on his lap, peering around the church, looking for something.

MICHELLE

(whispering)

Where's Mommy? Grandma said she'd be here.

Ed isn't sure what to say. Barbara cuts in, pointing to the casket.

BARBARA

She's right in there, honey.

Michelle looks at the closed casket, confused.

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CONTINUED:

MICHELLE

But...how can she breathe in there.

ASHLEY

You don't breathe when you die, I told you that, dummy.

ED

Ashley, shhh, be nice.

Ashley is dealing with the loss by pretending she's grown up, and knows everything her little sister doesn't.

BARBARA

That's her body, sweetheart, not her soul. Her soul is home with God now.

MICHELLE

But why doesn't God want her home with us?

Good question. Ed's been wondering the same thing.

Barbara isn't sure how to answer that, decides to go with a stock platitude.

BARBARA

Well...some things, only He understands.

MINISTER THOMAS (60's) approaches the podium. The whispering quiets down and everyone faces front.

MINISTER THOMAS

Good afternoon and welcome. Before we get started today, I want to thank you on the behalf of the Schmitt Family for the outpouring of love, support, prayers--

EXT. HOPEWELL CHURCH - PARKING LOT - CONTINUOUS

Sharon climbs out of her car, holding a SMALL CHEAP BOUQUET OF FLOWERS she quickly grabbed from the GROCERY STORE.

She smoothes her clothes a little, still in last night's outfit. Not exactly funeral attire: A sparkly BEDAZZLED JEAN SKIRT and LOW-CUT TOP.

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She yanks the skirt as low as it will go, suddenly self-conscious about how short it is.

INT. HOPEWELL CHURCH - CONTINUOUS

Sharon walks in, sees the service has already started.

She feels a sudden rush of nerves, still not sure what she's even doing here.

But pushes past it, tip-toeing into the sanctuary, trying to be inconspicuous.

The CLICK-CLACK of her HEELS echoes anyway, making SEVERAL PEOPLE turn around. Some of them eyeball her attire.

Sharon smiles apologetically, slips into a pew.

MINISTER THOMAS

Today, with the loss of Teresa, we feel real heartache. But in times like these, the Lord asks us to put our faith in Him.

The minister turns his gaze towards Ed.

MINISTER THOMAS

Ed Schmitt has been a man of faith all his life...

Heads turn towards Ed. Salt of the earth in every way.

MINISTER THOMAS

Quiet, humble, never making a show of it. But here at church every Sunday as long as I've known him. Ed & Teresa, married in this very room, their two precious girls baptized just steps from where I stand... So, let us trust that the Lord will see the Schmitt family through this difficult time...

Ed pulls in a breath, trying to steady himself.

INT. HOPEWELL CHURCH - RECEPTION ROOM - AFTERNOON

GUESTS file past the FOOD TABLE. Sharon spoons a clump of HOMEMADE NOODLE SALAD on a paper plate, still feeling out of place here.

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CONTINUED:

She stands awkwardly by a potted plant, eating it.

She spots Ed and the girls across the room, surrounded by people offering condolences. Waits for an opening.

When a few people clear, she dumps the noodle salad, approaches them with the flowers.

SHARON

Uh... hi...I hope I'm not intruding.

Ed looks over at Sharon.

SHARON

You don't know me, I'm Sharon, I read about your family in the paper and I...I just wanted to come by to say, I'm sorry.

ED

Oh. Thank you...

Sharon hands Ed the CHEAP BOUQUET OF FLOWERS.

ED

That's very nice of you.

Michelle points to Sharon's skirt, amazed.

MICHELLE

Your skirt sparkles!

SHARON

Oh. Uh...

She laughs, a little embarrassed to have attention called to it.

MICHELLE

I wish my dress sparkled. Look how it spins!

Michelle TWIRLS, showing her how the dress catches the air and puffs like a balloon. Sharon grins.

SHARON

Wow!

ED

This is Michelle, and this is Ashley.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

Michelle grins. Ashley just looks at her, unsmiling. Slow to warm up.

MICHELLE

I'm 4 years old almost 5!

SHARON

Wow!

(to Ashley)

And you're...let me guess... about 12?

ASHLEY

(shocked, flattered)

I'm only 8!

SHARON

Only 8?!

Sharon plays up her surprise. Ashley instantly loosens, liking this lady.

Barbara cuts in.

BARBARA

Ed...Teresas' Great Aunt and Uncle want just a minute with you.

Barbara gestures towards AUNT LOIS & UNCLE AL (80's), her with pillow white hair, him in suspenders.

BARBARA

(to Sharon)

Sorry to interrupt. I don't think we've met, were you a friend of Teresa's?

SHARON

Oh, no. I...just sort of... wandered in off the street...

Sharon laughs at the absurdity of the truth. Barbara gets a load of her, isn't sure how she feels about someone funeral-crashing her daughter-in-law's service.

BARBARA

Ah...huh.

Sharon senses the weirdness. Clears her throat.

SHARON

Well... I should shove off now, but I'll be thinking of y'all...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

Barbara smiles politely, waves goodbye. Sharon makes her way to the exit.

MEANWHILE--

AUNT LOIS has her hand on Ed's arm--

LOIS

Faith the size of a mustard seed.
That's all you need, son.

She pats him reassuringly, then UNCLE AL steps up, hugging him.

UNCLE AL

We put Michelle on the prayer list
at our church in Arlington. We
know Jesus will get you and them
girls through.

Ed nods and smiles, a rote routine now. More RELATIVES gather, a whole line of them.

ANOTHER RELATIVE

We keep praying for little
Michelle and know God is--

Ed begins to TUNE OUT COMPLETELY, politely nodding and smiling, but hearing absolutely nothing.

INT. CHURCH PARKING LOT - A FEW MINUTES LATER

Sharon walks to her car, still a bit weirded-out by her decision to come here on the fly.

She follows behind TWO WOMEN, talking on their way to their own car.

WOMAN 1

I don't know how he's doing it.

WOMAN 2

You're tellin' me.

WOMAN 1

The grief is enough, but then all
those hospital bills too, and no
insurance...

WOMAN 2

I thought the church helped him
out...?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

WOMAN 1

They did. Emptied the till. Bunch
of friends and family went broke
helping out too... But now
Michelle's surgery is another
200,000 at least...if she can even
get it.

WOMAN 2

How's anybody supposed to come up
with money like that?

WOMAN 1

Gonna take a miracle.

WOMAN 2

(shakes her head)
200,000 miracles...

The women break off to get in their car. Sharon pauses
for a moment before she gets into her own car, thinking.

INT. ED'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT

The house is quiet. The kids in bed. The FAINT BUZZ of
the TV in the living room where Ed Senior watches an old
episode of MASH. Barbara washes dishes at the sink,
glances out the window at Ed, sitting alone on the back
steps, smoking a cigarette.

EXT. ED'S HOUSE - BACKYARD - NIGHT

Ed stares into the darkness, thinking.

Behind him, the screen door swings open. Barbara steps
out onto the porch, taking a seat next to him.

BARBARA

Mind?

He shakes his head. They both stare into the darkness.

Ed takes another drag off his cigarette. Barbara watches
the smoke exit his lungs into the warm night air.

BARBARA

I really wish you wouldn't
smoke...

Ed looks at her.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BARBARA

I know. This isn't the time to get on your case about it, but those girls are gonna need their dad around, Ed...

ED

Ma...

BARBARA

See 'em graduate, walk 'em down the aisle. And you gotta be in good shape if you're gonna live that long.

ED

I know, Ma.

BARBARA

You're already 42 and you're--

ED

Okay, I get it, Ma, *enough!*

Barbara stops abruptly. Ed closes his eyes, heaves a sigh, feeling bad for raising his voice.

ED

Sorry... I'm sorry. You're right. You're right, I just...gotta have a break sometimes.

Beat.

BARBARA

You're a good man, Ed. Ever since you were little, always tried to do the right things.

He isn't sure what to say to that. Barbara looks off, recalling a memory.

BARBARA

I'll never forget when you were 6 and we'd gone out to Myrtle beach, spent the weekend so you could see the ocean. On the car ride back, you realized you accidentally took another boy's sand toy with us... You felt so bad. Wouldn't rest until we turned around and drove all the back to give it to him...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

She looks at her son. Of all people, he doesn't deserve this.

Ed shakes his head, wrestling with something inside himself.

ED

I don't know...

BARBARA

You don't know what...

ED

Any of it... What any of it matters...

There's a long silence between them. Barbara can tell how much is weighing on him. She offers carefully--

BARBARA

I talked with Pa last night... I think you and the kids should move in with us. We'll make it comfortable for you, it'll be tight, but we can make it work. Get this mortgage off your back, free up your paycheck to save for Michelle...

ED

I don't wanna sell the house.

BARBARA

I know you don't.

ED

Teresa worked so hard on this house. To make it nice for the girls.

Ed looks around their backyard at the tiny SECOND HAND SWING-SET, the LITTLE PLASTIC SWIMMING POOL Teresa found.

ED

I don't want to take that away from them, the only thing they have left of their mom. I don't know how to hang on to it, but I've gotta find a way...

Barbara nods, understanding.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

BARBARA

Well...think about it...

INT. INCH BY INCH HAIR SALON - DAY

A small shop jointly owned by Sharon and Rose. They're the only two hairdressers, plus an ASSISTANT in training, JASON (20's), a sweet latino kid with a mohawk.

Sharon and Rose talk while Rose's client sits under the dryer, and Sharon waits on her next haircut to arrive.

SHARON

I don't know what came over me,
but when I saw that little girl's
picture, something inside me said,
you have to go there.

ROSE

To a lady-you've-never-met's
funeral.

SHARON

I know it sounds crazy. The whole
time I was there, I kept thinkin',
why the hell am I doing this, this
is nuts.

Rose nods, agreeing completely.

SHARON

But then, I'm walking back to my
car, and I overhear these ladies
talking--

ROSE

Uh huh--

SHARON

--and I hear them say the family's
gone broke paying all these
hospital bills, and now they gotta
come up with another two hundred
thousand for Michelle's transplant
too--

ROSE

Of course--

SHARON

--and that's when it hit me.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Sharon looks Rose right in the eye.

SHARON

Maybe, I went to the funeral
because I'm supposed to give them
that money.

Beat.

ROSE

Two hundred thousand dollars.

Sharon nods. Rose just stares blankly at her.

ROSE

You've got 200,000 dollars lying
around, and I'm buying your ass
drinks?

SHARON

I don't mean give em the money
from me. I mean, you know, find
it. Get it somehow.

ROSE

Get 200,000 dollars. Just get it.

SHARON

Listen, I know how it sounds--

ROSE

Like you knocked a few screws
loose when you bumped your head
the other night.

SHARON

I know, but I'm dead serious,
Rose. I think I'm meant to help
that little girl. And also...

(meaning this)

I'm gonna stop drinkin'.

Rose looks at her to see if she's for real. Hopes she is.

ROSE

Well the stoppin'-drinkin' I can
get behind.

SHARON

I know. I've needed to. I can't
keep going on like this...

Rose can tell Sharon's serious. Wants to encourage it.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

ROSE
(softening)
Look, it's a nice idea, helping
those people out...

She doesn't think she'll pull it off, but--

ROSE
It's a nice idea...

SHARON
Don't know how I'll do it yet.

ROSE
Well, keep thinkin'. Hey, maybe
you'll find a few hundred for me
too, huh? And Jason, workin' so
hard, sweepin' up all these
hairballs in here...

Rose gestures to Jason.

JASON
Oh, uh, that's okay.

Rose goes to the DRYER to check her client's color. The
door CHIMES, Sharon's next haircut walking in.

EXT. WOODBRIDGE HOUSE, UPPER CLASS SUBURB - DAY

28 A PRETTY TWO-STORY HOME with a wide manicured lawn, and 28
beautiful landscaping.

Ed works out front, digging a LONG SHALLOW TRENCH in the
grass, sweating in the blistering heat, losing himself in
the hard labor.

LATER -- Ed is on his hands and knees, piecing together
pipes for a NEW SPRINKLER SYSTEM.

LATER-- Ed lays NEW SOD where he dug up the grass.

LATER-- Ed, caked in dirt and dried sweat, accepts a
CHECK from the HOMEOWNER (50's), wealthy, crisp golf
shirt.

Ed nods gratefully, slips the check into his wallet as he
heads down to truck.

Just as he's about to climb in, THREE HUGE CONSTRUCTION
TRUCKS rumble past, kicking up a cloud of ROAD DUST. Ed
shields his face, trying not to breathe it in.

INT. ED'S TRUCK - A FEW MINUTES LATER

Ed drives home. With the day's work done, reality returns, and again his thoughts begin to churn.

He turns onto THE MAIN HIGHWAY, and sees he is BEHIND THE BIG CONSTRUCTION TRUCKS. They're going 15 mph.

He drums the steering wheel, impatient.

Finally, they all TURN LEFT into a CONSTRUCTION ZONE.

It's the beginning of a NEW TRACT HOME DEVELOPMENT.

He doesn't think much of it, keeps driving. Then, a few seconds later... an IDEA comes.

The wheels in his head turn.

Suddenly, he punches the breaks, flips a U-turn, goes back to the construction site.

He pulls up, takes a look at the BANNER strung up on the chain-link fence: Soon-to-be GORGEOUS HOMES with BIG BEAUTIFUL YARDS.

It's all mostly still DIRT, the new foundations being poured.

INT. ED'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - SAME

Michelle and Ashley are watching TV. Barbara enters with a SYRINGE.

BARBARA

Alright, here we go, brave girl.
Just the tiniest bee-sting.

Michelle holds out her arm, knowing the drill.

BARBARA

(readying the shot)
Real quick, 1-2-3.

Barbara administers it as quick as she can. Michelle sucks in her breath. It hurts.

MICHELLE

Ehhhhhh.

She fights back tears, trying to be brave.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BARBARA

Breathe, breathe, the sting'll be
gone in a sec.

Michelle breathes out the pain, successfully stops
herself from crying.

BARBARA

Gooooood. So brave! Toughest girl
in the world!

Ashley watches, a little jealous of all the attention
Michelle is getting.

BARBARA

Ashley, clean up your toys and
help me set the table. Dinner's
almost ready.

Ashley rolls her eyes begrudgingly.

ASHLEY

You always make me do the boring
stuff.

INT. ED'S HOUSE - DINING ROOM - A LITTLE LATER

Barbara carries a HOT CASSEROLE and BASKET OF DINNER
ROLLS to the table just as Ed walks through the door from
work. Ed Senior and the girls just taking their seats.

BARBARA

Perfect timing...

Ed enters, puts down his stuff.

ED

Hey. Sorry I'm late. I'll shower
quick.

BARBARA

No, just eat while it's hot, we
don't mind, do we?

Ed senior waves off the need for any manners. Ed goes to
the kitchen, washing his hands and face in the sink.

Ashley notices something on the TV in the other room.

ASHLEY

Star Search is on, can we eat at
the TV?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MICHELLE

Oh yeah! Can we? Please!

Barbara looks at Ed to make the decision. He dries his face with a dish towel.

ED

Go 'head.

They hurry and take their plates into the other room. Barbara serves Ed up some food.

ED

Looks delicious, Ma.

She notices his mood is a tad brighter.

BARBARA

Good day at work?

Ed takes the plate from her, sits down.

ED

I think I figured something out...

BARBARA

Oh yeah?

ED SENIOR

What's that?

ED

A way to keep the house.

Ed and Barbara exchange a look, hopeful.

ED

That new development off
Ridgeline, those new homes they're
building.

ED SENIOR

I read about those. Big homes,
real big.

ED

Yeah, big homes with big yards...
that somebody's gonna have to put
in.

They see what he's thinking.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

ED SENIOR

I know I'm a small shop, but if I
could somehow get that contract.
Hire a crew, manage them. Be set
for a year...

They all brighten at the possibility.

BARBARA

They'd be lucky to have you.

ED SENIOR

Ain't nobody better.

ED

Well...let's see.

Ed feels the tug of hope after going a long time without
it. This could actually work.

EXT. SHARON'S HOUSE - EARLY EVENING

Establishing.

INT. SHARON'S HOUSE / VARIOUS - SAME

Sharon empties a bottle of VODKA into the SINK. Tosses
the empty container in her kitchen trash can. Unscrews
another bottle, begins emptying it.

MONTAGE: Sharon vacuums, dusts, cleans the bathroom, puts
a pair of clean sheets on her bed, drags the TRASH to the
curb.

She stands in her doorway a moment, taking it in. The
house is fresh and clean, a launch pad for a new life.

INT. SHARON'S BEDROOM - LATER

Sharon sits up in bed, staring at Michelle's PHOTO in the
paper, trying to come up with a plan.

She has a LEGAL PAD in front of her, ready to write down
ideas. Except... she has none. She drums the pencil on
the paper, trying to think.

She looks at the time. Midnight already. Decides to put
it to rest for tonight.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

She turns off the light, snuggles into bed, flips on her TV in search of a show to lull her to sleep.

She flips through channels, stops on WAYNE NEWTON singing on TV. She watches a moment. As he finishes the act, JERRY LEWIS joins him on stage. It's the Jerry Lewis Telethon for Muscular Dystrophy...

She sits up a little, thinking.

INT. INCH BY INCH HAIR SALON - DAY

Sharon bursts into the salon.

SHARON

I got it!

Rose startles, looks over from where she's giving a GUY A SHAVE.

ROSE

Jesus. I almost took his nose off.

The guy looks up at Rose, unnerved.

ROSE

Would've given you a discount...

SHARON

Look. Check this out.

Sharon pulls a rolled up BANNER out of her bag, unfurls it to reveal a GIANT POSTER advertising a 24-HOUR HAIR-A-THON.

ROSE

A hair-a-thon?

Sharon points to the PHOTO of MICHELLE she's blown-up and pasted all over the banner.

SHARON

For 24 hours, the money from every haircut and color we do, we donate to Michelle. I mean, I know it won't be anywhere close to 200 thousand, but it's something, and every little bit helps. What do you say, will you do it?

Rose is staring at Michelle's photo, transfixed.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ROSE

This is her?

SHARON

Isn't she something?

Rose clutches her heart, too many feelings.

ROSE

I'm usually so cold-blooded...

SHARON

So you're in then.

ROSE

In? Look at her face, I wanna give
her my own damn liver!

(then)

Wait... can I?

SHARON

Nope, already looked into that.

Sharon holds up some FLIERS.

SHARON

Thanks, Rose. I'm gonna go canvas
the place.

INT. ED'S BATHROOM - DAY

Ed buttons up a DRESS SHIRT, tucks it into some khaki
pants, trying to look professional. He's a blue jeans
guy, and feels a little like he's wearing a costume.

Michelle comes bounding in.

MICHELLE

You wanna play with me?

ED

Ah, I'd love to. I've gotta run
out for a bit.

He picks her up in his arms. She gets a whiff of him.

MICHELLE

What smells so good.

ED

Called aftershave.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MICHELLE

Oooh can I have some?

He laughs. Then notices something. Her eyes. They have the slightest yellow tint. He sets her down, gets a closer look.

ED

You feeling okay? You look a little...

MICHELLE

Funny? It's 'cause I'm a butterfly!

She flaps her arms, runs into the other room, pretending to fly.

MICHELLE

I'm a butterflllyyyyyy!

She seems fine, he's just worrying.

EXT. NEW HOUSING DEVELOPMENT - A LITTLE LATER

A few MEN IN HARDHATS look at BLUEPRINTS, CONSTRUCTION WORKERS beginning the FRAMING.

Behind them, Ed's truck pulls into the lot, comes to a stop near TWO TRAILERS. He climbs out, smiles warmly at the hard-hats.

ED

Hey there... Say, is there a site manager around I might speak to?

HARD HAT GUY

Right in there.

He points Ed towards one of the TRAILERS.

ED

Thanks.

Ed heads up the trailer's metal steps, opens the door into--

INT. CONSTRUCTION TRAILER - CONTINUOUS

Ed finds the construction site manager, BOB GREEN (50's), heavy-set, weather-beaten face, behind a desk stacked with paperwork.

ED
Hello...

BOB GREEN
Hello?

ED
Heard you're the site manager?

BOB GREEN
Heard right. Can I help you?

Ed takes a few steps towards him.

ED
My name's Ed Schmitt, with Schmitt Landscaping. I just came by to introduce myself... We do landscaping, hardscaping, pretty much anything outside the house. I was wondering if you folks had a company yet?

Bob looks him over.

BOB GREEN
Good timing, actually.

Ed loosens a bit.

ED
Great.

BOB GREEN
Yeah, I'm putting together a few options for the investors to look at next week. Get me your stuff and we'll take a look.

Ed unfolds a small piece of paper, on which he's neatly written several names and phone numbers.

ED
I brought my references if you want that now.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BOB GREEN

Nah, just give me everything
together. Line item budget,
schedule, your portfolio...

ED

Portfolio.

BOB GREEN

Photos of your work and what not.

Ed nods. He has nothing that fancy.

BOB GREEN

Get it to me no later than next
Friday so I make sure you're in
there.

(hands him a BIG
THICK PACKET)

Here are the front and backyard
measurements for each model,
number of models in the tract,
blueprints for the main
waterlines...

ED

Great.

BOB GREEN

What was your name again?

ED

Ed Schmitt.

BOB GREEN

Bob Green.

They shake hands.

ED

Thanks Bob. I'll be in touch.
Thanks a lot.

Ed Exits.

EXT. TRAILER - MOMENT LATER

Ed walks back to his truck, praying he can pull this off.

INT. LOUISVILLE COFFEE SHOP - DAY

Sharon pins a flier to a BULLETIN BOARD, exits --

EXT. LOUISVILLE COFFEE SHOP - CONTINUOUS

She tacks another to the TELEPHONE POLE, puts several more under WINDSHIELD WIPERS of PARKED CARS.

She rounds a corner, about to go into a NAIL SALON, when she suddenly slows her steps, something across the street catching her eye:

A CEMETERY.

She hovers there a beat, staring at it.

She looks through the cemetery gates, at a spot in the distance between two trees. Swallows.

Then turns, and goes into the nail salon.

EXT. ED'S HOUSE - NIGHT

A half-moon floats over Ed's house.

INT. ASHLEY AND MICHELLE'S BEDROOM - SAME

Ed sits on floor between the girls' beds, reading to them.

ED

*Goodnight stars. Goodnight air.
Goodnight noises everywhere.*

He looks over to see Michelle's already fallen asleep. Ashley is konked out too. He closes the book, gets up, giving them each a kiss.

INT. ED'S HALLWAY - LATER

Ed gently shuts their door.

INT. ED'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Sitting at the dining room table, Ed opens the THICK PACKET. He flips through it. This is going to be a lot of work.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LATER -- the SUN comes up. Ed is still working, punching numbers into a calculator. He gets up, puts on a pot of coffee.

EXT. PLANT NURSERY - NEXT DAY

Ed walks through rows of shrubs and trees, writing down prices for different items.

INT. PUBLIC LIBRARY - A LITTLE LATER

Ed sits at a PUBLIC COMPUTER, TYPING UP his itemized bid and proposed schedule. He flips through a LEGAL PAD where he's written notes. It's filled up to the very last page.

INT. INCH BY INCH HAIR SALON - MORNING

The place has been transformed. There are multi-colored streamers, pictures of Michelle, bobbing balloons attached to a donation jar.

Sharon and Rose set up a coffee station with cookies, donuts, etc.

SHARON

God I hope people show up.

ROSE

Don't worry, I got 42 cousins on my mama's side alone. I called all of 'em.

Sharon flips the OPEN SIGN over on the door, props it open, glances out front. The sidewalk is empty both directions.

A MAN comes jogging towards.

SHARON

Hi! Our first hair-a-thon customer!

The guy has idea what she's talking about. Just a jogger, out for a jog.

JOGGER

Sorry.

Sharon looks at Rose, worried.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ROSE
Just wait. People'll come.

INT. ED'S BEDROOM - DAY

Ed opens his bottom NIGHTSTAND DRAWER, digs around, finds an OLD CHEAP KODAK CAMERA. Nothing fancy, but it'll do.

INT. ED'S TRUCK - A LITTLE LATER

Ed pulls up outside a PRETTY HOME, grabs the CAMERA off his passenger seat, climbs out to shoot some photos.

INT. INCH BY INCH SALON - DAY

The salon is still empty.

SHARON
I can't believe it. It says 9 on
all the fliers.

Just then, a BIG GROUP OF ROSE'S FAMILY - sisters, brothers, cousins - comes walking in.

ROSE'S COUSIN MARCUS (40's), a big teddy bear of a guy, plops himself down in her chair.

ROSE'S COUSIN MARCUS
(drops \$50 in the
jar)
Make me beautiful.

SHARON
Here they are.

Rose's OTHER COUSIN KELVIN (40's), an even bigger teddy bear, sits down in Sharon's chair, drop a \$100 in the her jar.

ROSE'S COUSIN KELVIN
(drops \$100 in the
jar)
Make me twice as beautiful.

Sharon and Rose get to work.

EXT. LOUISVILLE - UPPER CLASS SUBURBS - VARIOUS

Ed drives all around Louisville, shooting his work at VARIOUS UPPER CLASS HOMES. Garden design, lighting, concrete, bricklaying, sod, patio construction...

INT. ED'S HOUSE - SAME DAY

Barbara scoops Mac N Cheese into bowls for the girls.

BARBARA
Ashley. Michelle.

Ashely comes in, sits down, starts to eat.

BARBARA
Where's your sister?

Ashley shrugs.

BARBARA
Michelle?

Barbara goes into the girls room, finds Michelle sitting on the carpet, staring into nowhere, in a fog.

BARBARA
Michelle... Are you okay?

She nods, but looks very tired.

EXT. INCH BY INCH SALON - LATER

A CITY BUS wheezes to a stop, MRS. ALLEN (80's) climbs out with the help of her NURSE CAREGIVER (30's)

She notices a LARGE LINE forming outside the salon, popping with customers now.

MRS. ALLEN
What is this? What's going on?

CAREGIVER
I don't know...

Mrs. Allen marches in to find out.

INT. INCH BY INCH SALON - CONTINUOUS

She makes her way through the crowd of people.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MRS. ALLEN

What's going on in here?

Sharon looks up from doing a haircut, thrilled by the turn-out. She points to the BANNER with all the info.

SHARON

Raising money for that little girl. All you have to do is choose a hairdresser and sit on down.

MRS. ALLEN

How much?

SHARON

Donate whatever you can. About an hour wait. It's just the two of us.

Mrs. Allen looks over at their assistant Jason, whose folding hair foils.

MRS. ALLEN

What about him?

SHARON

Oh, he's still in training.

MRS. ALLEN

How long you been training?

JASON

Few months...

MRS. ALLEN

Good enough. We'll each take a haircut.

(to caregiver)

Give me my wallet.

CAREGIVER

Uh...Mrs. Allen, I really don't know if--

MRS. ALLEN

Shush, it's for a good cause.

The caregiver can't protest.

CAREGIVER

Maybe just a tiny trim...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

Jason looks a little nervous to be thrown in the deep end. Mrs. Allen plops down in the chair.

MRS. ALLEN

And I want what you've got.

She points to his rainbow mohawk.

CAREGIVER

Ha ha ha... your son would kill me.

(to Jason)

Obviously she's kidding.

MRS. ALLEN

(To Jason, dead
serious)

Do I look like I'm kidding?

Jason raises an eyebrow. Okay then. This is happening.

EXT. ED'S HOUSE - EARLY EVENING

The sun is going down. Ed pulls into the driveway, the camera and half a dozen ROLLS OF SHOT FILM on the passenger seat.

He cuts the engine. Ed Senior rushes out the front door to meet him, a concerned look on his face.

ED

What's going on?

ED SENIOR

It's Michelle. Something's off.

Ed hurries towards the house.

INT. ED'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Ed rushes down the hallway, into--

INT. THE GIRLS ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Michelle lies on her bed now, limp, Barbara kneeling next to her.

BARBARA

She just got so tired suddenly.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Ed kneels down, looks into Michelle's eyes. They look even more yellow than they did the other day.

He makes a quick decision, picking her up in his arms.

ED

I'm taking her to the hospital.

Barbara gets up, worried. They follow after him through the house.

ED SENIOR

You want us to follow you?

ED

No, you and Ma stay with Ashley.

Ashley suddenly looks very worried for her little sister, the "grown-up" act gone. Barbara sees her distress, hugs her.

BARBARA

It's alright, honey.

EXT. ED'S HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

Ed hurries to open the passenger door to load Michelle in the car. But the CAMERA and ROLLS OF FILM are on the seat. He grabs them up with one hand, moves them the BED OF HIS TRUCK, then slides her in.

Barbara watches anxiously from the porch.

BARBARA

Call us.

ED

I will.

INT. CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL - DUSK

Ed rushes through the EMERGENCY DOORS, carrying Michelle up to the admitting desk.

INT. CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL PATIENT ROOM - DUSK

MEDICAL PERSONNEL check Michelle's vital signs, insert an I.V, try to get a read on things.

INT. CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL - CORRIDOR - EVENING

Ed is at a BANK OF PAY PHONES.

ED

She needed another blood
transfusion. They are giving it to
her now.

BARBARA

Lord have mercy...

Then, hating what he has to say next...

ED

She's getting worse faster than
they thought... They're moving her
up to 6 on the transplant list.

Barbara sinks at this news. Then, trying to find a ray of
light somewhere in it--

BARBARA

Number 6... well that's some good
news, right? Means we'll get a
donor faster...

Ed can't see the bright side right now. Answers simply--

ED

I've gotta go, Ma.

INT. CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL / BILLING DESK - LATER

Michelle plays with a STUFFED ANIMAL the children's ward
gave to her, her energy coming back.

Ed stands at the BILLING DESK, talking to the CLERK.

BILLING CLERK

Insurance card?

ED

No.

BILLING CLERK

No health insurance?

Ed shakes his head. That's correct. The Clerk makes a
face indicating this will be painful then.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BILLING CLERK

Okay... then the total for this
visit is \$2,130.50

Ed takes the punch. Swallows it. Takes out his DEBIT
CARD, praying he has enough in the account.

INT. INCH BY INCH SALON - NIGHT

Sharon and Rose eat take-out Chinese food in the back of
the CLOSED SALON, counting the CASH from the event.

SHARON

Over \$3,000...

ROSE

Damn. That's a lotta haircuts.

They high-five.

SHARON

I'd say let's get a drink to
celebrate, but...

Rose nods. Yeah, probably not a great idea.

ROSE

I got another idea...

Sharon raises an eyebrow.

EXT. STRIP MALL PARKING LOT - NIGHT

Sharon and Rose clink together TWO MASSIVE ICE-CREAM
CONES.

ROSE

Cheers.

SHARON

Cheers.

They're sitting on the hood of Sharon's car, looking at
the city lights.

SHARON

I'm trading drunk for fat.

ROSE

Ain't a bad place to live, honey.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Rose smacks her a round hip.

SHARON

Hey that ain't fat, it's curves.

ROSE

Tomato, tomahto. Just don't make
me eat neither!

They laugh, grin at each other. Then Rose's expression
changes.

ROSE

Hey...

SHARON

Yeah?

ROSE

You wanna know something?

Rose pauses a sec, then, very honestly--

ROSE

I was about give up on you.

Sharon cocks her head, not sure what she means exactly.

ROSE

The way you were headed... I was
this close to telling you, I just
can't do it anymore. Was even
thinking about selling my half of
the shop...

Sharon realizes just how bad she'd gotten. Doesn't know
what to say.

SHARON

(exhales)

Jesus... I'm sorry...

ROSE

It's only been a couple
weeks...but I like this Sharon.

Sharon smiles. She likes this Sharon too.

ROSE

Promise me you'll hang onto her?

SHARON

Promise to try.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

Rose nods. She'll take it.

EXT. LOUISVILLE - DAY

The hottest day yet. Tar in the asphalt bubbles.

EXT. ED'S BACKYARD - SAME

The girls splash in their PLASTIC SWIMMING POOL, playing with the hose. Barbara watches them from the porch, sitting in front of an OSCILLATING FAN. Opens the neck of her shirt so the air blows down her sweating chest.

INT. GROCERY STORE - DAY

Ed, dirty and sunburned from today's landscaping job, pushes a shopping cart down the FROZEN FOOD AISLE, looking at a SMALL HANDWRITTEN LIST OF ITEMS.

AT THE REGISTER --

The CASHIER finishing ringing him up.

CASHIER

That'll be \$71.63

Ed hands her his DEBIT CARD. She swipes it. The machine makes a LOW BUZZ. DECLINED.

CASHIER

Uh...it didn't go through.

Ed freezes, remembering the ER bill. He might not have enough money in his account.

ED

(putting back the
cigarettes)

I don't actually need these.

She replaces them on the shelf behind her, subtracts the money.

CASHIER

Alrighty. That'll be \$65.16. Swipe
it agin?

He nods. She swipes it again. The machine BUZZES again.
Ed starts to sweat.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CASHIER

Hmmm...

He randomly grabs SEVERAL ITEMS, shoving them aside to be put back. The PEOPLE in line start to watch.

ED

Try it again without those.

The cashier starts to get as nervous as he is, hoping for his sake it goes through.

She quickly subtracts the items. Ed waits with held breath as she tries the card again. The machine CHIMES.

CASHIER

(eyes brightening)

Ahh. There we go.

EXT. ED'S HOUSE - EVENING

Ed unloads the groceries from the bed of his truck, still steeping in the humiliation.

Then he notices something in the truck bed: The CAMERA and FILM ROLLS he put in there when he took Michelle to the hospital.

He reaches in to get them, sees: The FILM ROLLS have melted and warped in the day's broiling heat. All the photos he took, ruined.

He tosses down the roll, pissed.

ED

Dammit!

He slams the tailgate shut, picks up the groceries, storms up the driveway.

Right before he gets to the door, he stops, realizing he can't take his bad mood inside to the girls.

He slowly draws in a breath, trying to get himself to calm down.

INT. ED'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Ed walks in. The girls are still in their swim suits, doing a puzzle on the floor.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MICHELLE

Daddy!

ED

Hey...

Michelle runs over, hugging his knees.

ED

You look a whole lot better. You
two good for Grammy today?

ASHLEY

She wasn't, but I was.

Barbara comes in from the kitchen.

BARBARA

They were both angels. Except one
of the angels found her mama's
nail polish...

Ed now notices Michelle's hands, face, and swim suit are
covered in HOT PINK NAIL POLISH. She grins, proud.

Barbara takes some of the groceries from Ed, carrying
them into the kitchen.

BARBARA

Dinner's almost ready, just need
to make the noodles you got...
Pa's got the late shift at the
hardware-store tonight, won't be
home to eat...

(searching the bags)
Where are they?

ED

What?

BARBARA

The noodles. The egg noodles.
They're not here, they were on the
list.

Ed suddenly remembers that was an item he put back.

ED

Oh...uh, I guess I forgot...

BARBARA

What do you mean you forgot, it
was on the list.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

BARBARA (CONT'D)

I already made the stroganoff, it
just needs noodles.

She points to the BEEFY GRAVY ready on the stove.

ED

I'm sure we can still eat it.

BARBARA

Well, not really. It's just gravy.

ED

I...I don't know what to say, I'm
sorry.

BARBARA

But how could you forget when I
gave you a list?

ED

I don't know--

BARBARA

That's why I write lists, so you
don't forget, so you see the list
and--

ED

I couldn't pay for it, okay?! I
just didn't have enough damn
money! There, are you happy now?!

Barbara is frozen. The girls look over. Ed exhales,
hating himself for losing his cool.

ED

Goddammit.

He stalks off to his bedroom to calm down for a second.

MICHELLE

Is daddy okay?

BARBARA

He's fine.

MICHELLE

But why did he--

ASHLEY

(cutting her off)
Shhhh. Just shush.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

Ashley intuitively understands it's an adult thing and to stay out of it. Michelle leaves it be.

INT. ED'S BEDROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Ed stands by his bed, trying to settle down. Barbara walks in.

BARBARA

I'm sorry, Ed. I shouldn't have made such a big deal. It was stupid.

ED

No, it's not your fault.

Ed closes his eyes a moment, hating to be in this situation.

BARBARA

We can give you more money...

ED

You've already emptied your savings, pa workin' all hours at the store...

He's right. They've all gone broke weathering this, and weren't well-off to begin with.

BARBARA

Well, we'll find a way somehow... When it looks like there's no way, you get on our knees and pray, and God *makes* a way...

Ed just stares at the floor, something about her unflappable faith getting to him. Stirring up all of his anger. Finally, he can't hold it in.

ED

You wanna know how many prayer lists Teresa was on?

Barbara just blinks, not sure what to make of his tone.

ED.

Seventeen. Seventeen congregations praying for her. Hundreds of people, all on their knees, begging for God to "make a way."

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

His eyes are locked with hers, finally speaking all the things he's been keeping in.

ED

And now they've got Michelle on all those same lists... and everybody keeps actin' like that's supposed to make me feel better. Really? I mean, *really*?

He laughs darkly at the absurdity of it.

ED

Maybe hadn't none of this ever happened, I'd be saying the same thing to some other poor soul. *Oh we're praying for you, we're trusting in the Lord to make it alright...* Well that's all a nice and fine, but the only thing I give a damn about right now? *This*.

He opens his arms, indicating the actual reality they're living in.

ED

What's right here where I can see it. The rest... all due respect, I don't got time for anymore.

Barbara sees very clearly where he's at.

There's a LITTLE KNOCK on the bedroom door.

ASHLEY (O.S.)

Daddy...

ED

Yes sweetie, we're coming right out.

She cracks the door, poking her head in.

ASHLEY

The lady from mama's funeral is at the door.

ED

What lady from mama's funeral?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

MICHELLE
(poking in too)
The sparkly-rainbow lady!

Ed and Barbara exchange a look, no idea who the girls are talking about.

INT. ED'S LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Ed opens the door, Barbara behind him. They find Sharon at the threshold.

ED
Hi...

SHARON
Is this a bad time? Didn't have your phone number, hope I'm not buggin' you...

ED
No, it's alright.

SHARON
Won't stay long, just came by to give ya'll this.

She hands him a THICK ENVELOPE. He takes it, not sure what this is.

SHARON
So, uh, my friend and I own a hair salon over in Russell. We had a thing a couple days ago to raise money for your daughter... That's \$3,051. I know it's not a much in the overall scheme of things. But, I hope it helps...

Ed is speechless. So is Barbara.

ED
Wow... I...

He doesn't know what to say.

BARBARA
Bless you. What was your name again?

SHARON
Sharon. Sharon Stevens.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BARBARA

Have you eaten yet? I just made dinner, why don't you stay?

SHARON

Oh, I don't want to intrude...

BARBARA

Please, it's no intrusion.

Barbara pulls her inside.

SHARON

Oh... well...

BARBARA

Come in. Come in. I made stroganoff. Except with... who knows, rice maybe, if we got it.

Barbara smiles at Ed over her shoulder: *How's that for god "making a way"?*

INT. ED'S LIVING ROOM - A LITTLE LATER

They sit around the table, eating stroganoff next to a PILE OF MAC N CHEESE.

BARBARA

Did you get enough to eat?

SHARON

Oh plenty, thanks. Nice place you have here. Real cozy.

Ed looks around at all Teresa's touches.

ED

Thanks... my wife.

MICHELLE

Excuse me, Miss Sharon?

SHARON

Why yes Miss Excellent Manners?

MICHELLE

Can I please have your sparkle skirt?

Sharon laughs. Ed shakes his head.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ED

Michelle, you can't just ask
people to give you their stuff.

SHARON

That skirt sure made a splash.
Tell you what, sugar. I'll do you
one better. I'll make you your
very own sparkle skirt in your
very your size, and it'll *spin*
real big too, how 'bout that?

Michelle beams, loving that idea. Sharon looks over at
Ashley.

SHARON

And for you... I'm gonna make a
real elegant purse. 'Cause every
lady needs herself a sharp uptown
handbag for special occasions.

Ashley grins, liking that idea too.

ASHLEY

I could put my chapsticks in it.

SHARON

Yep, and a little mirror, so you
can see when you're puttin' it on.

Ed can't help but notice how great Sharon is with the
girls.

EXT. ED'S HOUSE - LATER

Barbara and Ed walk Sharon to her car.

BARBARA

Thanks again. Your timing...well,
it couldn't have been better.

Ed has to admit the same.

ED

Been a bit of rough patch.

SHARON

Oh yeah?

ED

Had a scare with Michelle. The
bills...

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ED (CONT'D)

Then I lost all the photos for this "portfolio" I'm trying to make...

SHARON

What kind of portfolio?

ED

For a job I'm trying to get. I do landscaping and they need photos of my work and all.

SHARON

Ah. Well... if you need it, I got an old Nikon lying around, takes real pretty pictures...

Ed cocks his head. *Actually.*

EXT. LOUISVILLE - MORNING

A pretty day. The heat is finally starting to let up.

EXT. SHARON'S HOUSE - DAY

Ed idles in his truck out front. Sharon jogs to the curb, carrying the NIKON. She hands it to him through the window.

SHARON

Here she is.

ED

Thanks again.

It's an old camera, with lots of buttons and gears.

ED

Fancy...

SHARON

It was my mama's, she saved up a long time for it. It was just us two, so there are more photos of little me than anybody'd ever want to see... You ever used one like this?

ED

No.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Not even close.

SHARON

You're gonna rack focus here, hold this down for your light-meter to see what exposure you need...

Ed looks a little overwhelmed by it. Sharon notices.

SHARON

I could come shoot a few with you if you want, show you how to use it?

ED

Oh... well, I mean, if you're not doing anything...

Sharon shakes her head, hops in the truck.

EXT. PRETTY UPPERCRUST HOUSE - LATER

Sharon and Ed walk up to a BEAUTIFUL HOME with gorgeous gardens.

SHARON

Wow. All that prettiness thanks to you, huh?

ED

Well the plants do most of the work...

Sharon snaps a few photos. The OWNER of the house waves from the porch.

HOMEOWNER

Fingers crossed for ya Ed.

ED

Thanks a lot, Gil.

SHARON

These'll be gorgeous. You should take this sucker home for a while, get some good ones of the girls. Goes fast at that age.

ED

Oh do you have kids?

Sharon pauses half a second before answering that.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SHARON

Uh...not really.

ED

Not really?

Weird way to put it. Sharon re-answers, definitively this time.

SHARON

No. I don't.

(then)

On to the next house?

Ed nods.

EXT. LOUISVILLE - EVENING

The sky is purple and gray, the street lights coming on.

INT. ED'S HOUSE - LATER THAT NIGHT

Ed flips through a PHOTOBOOK where all the pictures have now been developed, and neatly organized into clear plastic pockets.

ED SENIOR

Real nice, son. Looks real professional.

ED

Sharon took all of 'em, spent the whole day practically.

BARBARA

That was nice of her.

ED

Yeah, I don't know why she's being so nice to a perfect stranger, but...

But he'll take it. That reminds Barbara of something.

BARBARA

Well... I ran into Liz Ruffcorn this morning. Guess she knows Sharon. I told her about the money and what she did, and she was shocked...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ED

What do you mean?

BARBARA

Guess Sharon has a reputation...
Drinkin' too much, gettin' into
all kinds of things... There's a
rumor she got pregnant back in her
20's but still wouldn't slow
down... gave birth to that baby
and it never took a single breath.

Barbara shakes her head at the tragedy of it.

BARBARA

Anyway...good for her for trying
to change her ways. God never
gives up on anyone, I'll tell you
what.

Ed thinks back on the "not really" comment. It makes more
sense now.

INT. SHARON'S KITCHEN - NIGHT

Sharon sits at her kitchen table with BOLTS OF FABRIC and
SEQUINS LAID OUT, figuring out how to sew the skirt and
purse for the girls.

EXT. NEW HOUSING DEVELOPMENT - DAY

Ed's truck pulls in. He gets out, wearing his collared
shirt again, the PORTFOLIO and PAPERWORK under his arm,
nervously approaches the site manager's trailer.

INT. CONSTRUCTION TRAILER - MOMENTS LATER

The Site Manager flips through Ed's material. Ed waits
quietly, anxious.

BOB GREEN

Real good looking stuff here. Real
nice. I'll get it to the guys
today.

Ed loosens, relieved.

BOB GREEN

I'll call you as soon as I know.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ED

Great. Thanks a lot, Bob.

They shake hands.

EXT. LOUISVILLE - MORNING

A beautiful day. Not a cloud in sight.

INT. ED'S BATHROOM - SAME

The girls ready for the FIRST DAY OF SCHOOL. Ashley brushes her teeth while Ed combs Michelle's hair into two PIG TAILS. He struggles with the rubber-bands, not very good at this.

ED

There ya go, all set.

Michelle turns around, stands on her tip-toes to see in the mirror. Her pig tails are lop-sided, bumpy. She scrunches her face, knowing they're not right.

ED

Hold on. Uh...

He tries to fix them. Ashley spits out her toothpaste.

ASHLEY

I can do it for her.

ED

Great. I'll get going on breakfast.

He hands her the brush.

INT. ED'S KITCHEN - A FEW MINUTES LATER

TWO WAFFLES pop up from the toaster. Ed puts them each on a paper plate, hurries to get the Syrup from the fridge.

The girls walk in, ready to go.

ED

Eat up quick. Bus'll be here in 8 minutes.

He sets the plates in front of them.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ED

Ashley, you'll help Michelle find her classroom first, then you'll go to yours after.

ASHLEY

I know, you already told me.

ED

And Michelle, if you feel even a little tired, you tell your teacher right away, alright? Even a little.

Michelle nods, understanding. Ed is still anxious.

The DOORBELL rings. He goes to go open it. It's Sharon.

SHARON

Don't mean to bother you.

ED

Hi...

SHARON

Was just on my way to work and wanted to drop these off for the girls real quick.

She holds up the SPARKLY SPINNY SKIRT and ELEGANT PURSE. The girls have already made their way to the door.

MICHELLE

That's mine?!

SHARON

Wait til you see how it spins.

Michelle takes the skirt, thrilled.

MICHELLE

Can I wear it for the first day of school, daddy?!

ED

If you hurry and change.

SHARON

And here you are, madame.

Sharon hands Ashley the purse. She puts it on.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

SHARON

Reach in and see if anything's in there.

Ashley looks inside, finds a TUBE of LIP GLOSS.

ASHLEY

Woah.

Step-up from the chapstick.

SHARON

Hope that's alright, dad.

MICHELLE

Look at me!

Michelle comes out in her skirt, SPINNING.

SHARON

Wow, you're gonna take off like a helicopter!

The PHONE RINGS in the kitchen.

ED

Do you mind?

SHARON

Oh I should go anyway. I'll see you girls later, alright?

Sharon leaves, and Ed heads into--

INT. ED'S KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

He picks up the phone.

ED

Hello, Ed Schmitt.

BOB GREEN

Ed, it's Bob Green from R&R Homes.

Beat as Ed suddenly realizes this is THE call.

ED

Oh, hey Bob...

BOB GREEN

I just heard back from the investors...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Ed holds his breath.

ED

They want to make a deal with you.

Ed breathes again.

BOB GREEN

They like your work. And all your references say you're fast. They like that too.

ED

That's great news. Real great.

BOB GREEN

Can you start today? Lot to do quickly.

ED

Oh, uh, sure, I can be there in half an hour.

BOB GREEN

See you soon.

Ed hangs up the phone. Can't believe it. He stands there a moment, grateful. Looks over at a FRAMED PHOTO of Teresa from their wedding, finally feeling like he's making good on his promise to take care of the girls.

ASHLEY (O.S.)

The bus is here!

Ed snaps out of it, looks out the window to see the SCHOOL BUS pulling catty-corner to their house.

ED

Okay, got your backpacks and lunches? Shoes all tied?

They grab everything they need, hurry out the door.

EXT. ED'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Ed watches the girls make run for the bus, Ashley holding Michelle's hand to cross the street.

ED

Have a great first day!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

His heart expands, feeling for a moment they might just make it through this.

EXT. CONSTRUCTION SITE - DAY

Bob Green is outside, directing a couple HARD HATS.

Ed walks up, ready for work.

BOB GREEN

Hey Ed. Come're, I'll get you up to speed.

Ed follows him, still riding the high of winning the job.

EXT. CONSTRUCTION SITE AREA -- A LITTLE LATER

Ed stands with Bob by a ROW OF NEARLY-FINISHED HOMES, JUST DIRT surrounding them.

BOB GREEN

It's all going up in phases. Block by block, east to west. These 6 here are first up. Walk-though models. They all need to be ready to show by the 15th.

Ed jots a note on a little pad.

ED

October 15th, got it.

BOB

No, of this month.

ED

(beat)
September 15th.

Bob nods.

ED

You mean...6 days from now.

Bob nods again. Ed blinks. It's a nearly impossible schedule.

ED

I...I'd have to have guys laying rebar today and pouring cement tomorrow.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BOB

Why I thought you might wanna get
a move on.

Ed nods. Okay then. Out of the frying pan, into the fire.

INT. CONSTRUCTION TRAILER - ED'S DESK - EVENING

Ed's on the phone, trying to crew up and order cement.

ED

Yeah, I got a rush job, need 120
yards ready-mix of 3000 PSI. Can
you get me on the books for 7:30?

(beat)

No, it's gotta be a.m.

(beat)

Call me back if it changes.

Ed hangs up, dials another number.

ED

Billy! Ed Schmidt. You and your
guys free today?

We can see the answer is "no" by the look on Ed's face.
He looks at his watch.

ED

How about tonight?

EXT. CONSTRUCTION SITE - NIGHT

Ed and a CREW OF WORKERS lay REBAR under WORK LIGHTS.

INT. ED'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Barbara peaks out the kitchen window, Ed's truck still
gone as she serves dinner to the girls and Ed Senior.

MONTAGE, the days going by--

- Ed manning the pump as CONCRETE pours over rebar.

--Ed and his crew carrying PIPES for IRRIGATION

- FRESH SOIL being off-loaded from the back of a TRUCK

--BRIGHT GREEN SOD unrolling on top of dirt

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

- Ed directing his crew where to plant TREES.
- Barbara reads the girls a bedtime story in their room.
- The block of 6 houses are nearly complete, with manicured bright green lawns.
- A TEACHER gives a presentation in front of a blackboard reading "Back to School Night." Barbara and Ed Sr, surrounded by young parents.
- Ed surveys a lawn as sprinkler heads pop up and spray.
- Ed working in his office, pulls the last post it note reminder off his desk, tosses it the trash, DONE.

EXT. ED'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Ed's truck pulls into the driveway. He gets out, lumbers up to the door, bone tired.

INT. ED'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Ed steps in to see his mom has fallen asleep in front of the TV. He gently touches her shoulder, waking her.

BARBARA

Oh. Hi...

ED

Sorry I'm so late. How was back to school night? I feel awful I missed it.

BARBARA

Oh, it was fine... You get everything done at work?

ED

For now... Start another just like it next week. It's gonna be like this for a while...

Barbara understands he means his absence from the family.

BARBARA

Well... you do what you've gotta do.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

They both just look each other, recognizing the irony of it: In order to provide for his girls, he can't be present to parent them.

He heaves a sigh. Not an uncommon conundrum.

ED

I'm gonna go check on them...

Barbara nods. Ed disappears down the hall.

EXT. LOUISVILLE - DAY

Orange leaves blanketing the streets. PUMPKINS on porches. It's Halloween Day.

INT. SHARON'S BEDROOM - MORNING

Sharon lies in bed, staring at the ceiling, something weighing on her today.

Finally, she pulls the covers off, willing herself up.

SHARON

(sotto)

Just get up, just go.

INT. INCH BY INCH SALON - A LITTLE LATER

Rose is dying a CLIENT's roots when Sharon walks in.

SHARON

Hey...

ROSE

G'morning.

Sharon goes over to her station, sees a STYROFOAM CUP OF COFFEE and LITTLE WHITE BAG on her station. She opens the bag -- a couple of DONUTS inside. She's not sure who they belong to.

SHARON

Is this--

ROSE

Figured you could use it today.

Sharon looks over at Rose, touched she remembered.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SHARON

Thanks...

ROSE

How old?

SHARON

Woulda been 13.

ROSE

Well...the teen years stink
anyway. Least you dodged that
bullet.

SHARON

You know what I was thinking about
this morning?

ROSE

What?

SHARON

Today's the first day I hate not-
drinkin'.

Rose pauses, looks over at Sharon. Can see she's not
joking, really means that.

ROSE

Honey... I...

Rose isn't quite sure what the right thing to say to that
is. The door CHIMES, Sharon's client arriving.

CLIENT

Sorry I'm late!

SHARON

Oh hi sugar, come on in.

CLIENT

Boy am I glad to see you, will ya
take a look at this mop...

Sharon goes over to her, the moment lost.

EXT. PUMPKIN PATCH - THAT DAY

HUNDREDS OF PUMPKINS spread out in hay. Barbara watches
as the girls run through the patch, searching for their
favorites.

EXT. PUMPKIN PATCH / DIRTY PARKING LOT - LATER

Barbara struggles to carry 2 HEAVY PUMPKINS, one in each hand, through the dirt parking lot. The girls run ahead.

ASHLEY

I'm gonna carve mine a unicorn.

MICHELLE

So am I.

ASHLEY

No, that's copying.

BARBARA

Slow down, wait for Grammy.

Barbara hurries to catch up with them. Her foot catches in a pot hole, making her roll her ankle and FALL HARD ONTO THE DIRT, the pumpkins rolling away.

The girls see it happen, run back to help her.

INT. DOCTOR'S OFFICE - A LITTLE LATER

Barbara sits on an exam table, her ANKLE in a BRACE.

DOCTOR

You've got a small fracture in the tibia. You'll need to be off it for about 6 weeks.

BARBARA

6 weeks? Ugh. And it's Halloween. I'm supposed to take 'em trick or treating tonight.

DOCTOR

I'm sorry...

ASHLEY

Can Daddy take us instead? Or granddaddy?

BARBARA

Granddaddy's at the store, and your dad's working late again, said he'd try but don't count on it.

The girls are crestfallen. What's Halloween without trick-or-treating? Barbara feels terrible.

EXT. INCH BY INCH SALON - EARLY EVENING

Sharon is locking up the salon for the night, still struggling against that tug of emptiness she woke up with.

As she locks the deadbolt, she glances across the street at the LIQUOR STORE....contemplating it. How much better she'd feel in an instant.

Then...the PHONE RINGS inside the salon. She turns the lock the other way, goes back inside to get it.

SHARON

Inch by inch Salon, this is Sharon.

(expression lifting)

Oh, hi...

EXT. ED'S HOUSE - EARLY EVENING

Ed throws his truck in park, gets out. The neighborhood kids are just starting to trick-or-treat.

INT. ED'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Ed pushes through the door.

ED

Hey, I'm home early.

He sees Barbara in front of the TV, her foot elevated in the brace.

ED

What happened?

BARBARA

(waves it off)

Oh I did something dumb at the pumpkin patch.

ED

Oh no. You should've called me.

BARBARA

No I wasn't gonna bother you at work. It's not that bad.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ED

You wouldn't have bothered. Where are the girls?

BARBARA

Trick or treating. Sharon was nice enough to come over and take 'em.

ED

Oh...

He's grateful, but also really wanted this night with the girls.

BARBARA

Anyway, are you hungry? I'd love to make dinner, but...

ED

Oh. Yeah. No, I'll do it.

He heads into the kitchen to make them something to eat.

INT. ED'S LIVING ROOM - LATER

Ed and Barbara finish dinner. Sharon and the girls come through the door.

SHARON

Take a look at this loot!

ED

(standing)
Hey, how'd it go?

MICHELLE

I got ten-hundred Milky Ways!

Michelle dumps her plastic pumpkin bucket over, a river of candy pouring out.

ASHEY

I got more!
(counting)
1,2,3...4...

BARBARA

Thanks again for doing this.

SHARON

Oh, no, it was fun. Haven't done Halloween in...god...years.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

She appreciates the distraction today. Ed nods his thanks too, but still wishes he got to do it.

ED

Yeah, thanks a lot.

SHARON

Listen, really, anytime you need a hand, I make my own hours, so...

BARBARA

Well, since you mention it...
Could maybe use some help around
dinnertime a few nights a week...

Ed looks over at his mom. Had no idea she'd make this request. A little uncomfortable with such a big ask.

SHARON

Of course, sure, I'd love to.
Though I should prob'ly tell ya,
I'm not exactly the best cook in
town... Might even be the worst.

BARBARA

I can order you around the kitchen
from my chair.

ED

She can. Got a taste of it
tonight.

Sharon laughs.

SHARON

Great... then I'll see y'all again
on Wednesday, same time.

Barbara smiles: It's a plan.

Ed is not so thrilled Sharon will be doing the job he feels he should be doing, but what choice does he have?

MONTAGE--

--Ed at work late studying blueprints

--Sharon rushing off from the salon for her date with the girls

--Barbara in a chair in the kitchen, instructing Sharon how to prepare a pot roast.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

--Sharon dressed up like a little old lady, playing "HOUSE" with the girls

--Sharon pushing the girls on their backyard swing set

--Sharon helping Barbara into the passengers seat of Ed Senior's car. Waves as they pull out of the driveway.

INT. ED'S KITCHEN - EVENING

Sharon carefully pours PANCAKE BATTER into a hot pan. Ashley walks in.

ASHLEY

Pancakes? But it's nightttime.

SHARON

Never heard of breakfast for dinner? Special treat. Also the only thing I can make without your grammy's help... She's on a date with your granddaddy. Their Anniversary. 53 years...

Sharon scoops the pancake onto a plate for Ashley. Ashley stares at, noticing its FUNNY SHAPE.

ASHLEY

It looks like...E.T.?

Sharon grins, proud of her creation.

SHARON

Took me two tries to get his skinny little neck.

(then)

Michelle, eat up, Mickey's gettin' cold.

Michelle sits in front of her MICKEY MOUSE pancake, not touching it.

MICHELLE

I'm not hungry...

SHARON

Not hungry for Mickey pancakes?

Michelle just pokes it with her fork. Sharon narrows her eyes, worried. She feels Michelle's forehead for a fever.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SHARON

You feel okay. Let's keep an eye
on you, huh?

INT. THE GIRLS ROOM - LATER

Sharon sits between the girls' beds, reading them *Good
Night Moon*.

SHARON

*And a comb and a brush, and a bowl
full of mush... and a quiet old
lady whispering hush...*

Michelle COUGHS. Sharon looks over. The coughing stops.
She seems to be ok.

SHARON

...Goodnight room... Goodni--

Michelle COUGHS again, but this time it turns into a
COUGHING FIT. Sharon shuts the book, gets up.

SHARON

Michelle--

Michelle's cough turns into a GAG. BLOOD starts coming
out of her mouth. Sharon's eyes flash with panic.

SHARON

Ashley, call 911!

Ashley rushes to the phone as Sharon scoops up Michelle.

EXT. CONSTRUCTION SITE - A FEW MINUTES LATER

Ed is down on his hands and knees, working on an
electrical unit for outdoor lighting. An ASSISTANT from
the construction office runs up.

ASSISTANT

Ed. Just gotta call your
daughter's being taken to Norton
Children's Hospital.

Ed freezes, a cold panic coming over him. He leaps to his
feet, calls out to one of his CREW.

ED

Inspector's here in 20. Handle it.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

He takes off. Starts RUNNING.

INT. CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL - LATER

Docs check Michelle's vital signs, hook her to an IV. A FRANTIC BLUR. A blood-stained Sharon watches, helpless, her arm around Ashley, who looks small and scared.

INT. ED'S TRUCK - SAME

Ed floors it down the highway.

INT. CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL - A LITTLE LATER

Ed bursts through the ENTRANCE, hurrying down the hallway in search of Michelle's room.

INT. MICHELLE'S HOSPITAL ROOM - A LITTLE LATER

Ed flies through the door, sees Michelle in the bed, hooked up to several machines, asleep now.

Sharon stands near, Ashley by her side.

ED

Tell me exactly what happened.

SHARON

I... I don't know... she just started coughing up blood. Out of nowhere. She wasn't hungry for dinner, which I thought was a little strange, but--

ED

She wasn't hungry?

SHARON

Well--

ED

You should've called me that minute!

Sharon is taken aback by his anger.

ED

That minute! I would've come. I would've been there.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Sharon isn't sure what to say.

SHARON

Ed...I...

Barbara hobbles in on her crutches, Ed Senior behind her.

BARBARA

(seeing Michelle)

Lord have mercy.

Ed flags down a passing NURSE.

ED

I want to talk to the doctor. Now.

LATER ---

Ed and his parents listen as DR. GHORBANI (50's), Michelle's pediatric hepatologist, explains the situation. Sharon sits in a chair nearby, eavesdropping, Ashley curled up asleep on her lap.

DR. GHORBANI

We're doing everything we can to help reduce the hemorrhaging. But her condition is not good... We've moved her to #1 on the transplant list. She needs a donor liver to show up as fast as we can get it...

ED

(cuts to the chase)

How long does she have without it.

The doc lowers his voice, hating to deliver these kinds of estimates.

DR. GHORBANI

4 weeks... 8 maybe.

Ed sets his jaw, trying not to fall to apart. Barbara brings her hand to her mouth, Ed Senior puts an arm around her, pulling her closer. Sharon looks over at Michelle in the bed, can't bear the thought.

DR. GHORBANI

If a match becomes available in time, Michelle will need to immediately fly to the Children's Hospital in Omaha.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ED

Omaha?

DR. GHORBANI

They're the closet ones who perform this kind of surgery. I recommend you arrange a plane to stand by. A donor liver is only viable for 6 hours. Patients have missed that window because they couldn't get a flight.

Ed presses his eyes shut. This is all so impossible.

ED

We need a plane now too. A *plane*.

This task is so preposterous it's enraging.

DR. GHORBANI

Look, I know it's--

ED

And how *the fuck* are we supposed to "arrange a plane," doctor?

Barbara puts a hand on Ed, trying to calm him down.

BARBARA

Ed... Please.

ED

(to doctor)

No. Tell me. How are we supposed to do that?

Sharon chimes in, trying to settle things too.

SHARON

Ed, we'll do it. We'll figure it out somehow. We will.

Ed looks over at Sharon, then his mother and Ed Senior. He can't take it anymore and just walks out of the room.

EXT. LOUISVILLE - DAY

The trees are jagged sticks, the air cold and crisp.

INT. HOPEWELL CHURCH - SAME

Barbara and Ed Senior sit in Sunday church service, listening to MINISTER THOMAS's sermon. She closes her eyes, tuning out the Minister for a moment to pray on her own for Michelle.

INT. INCH BY INCH SALON - SAME

Sharon talks to Rose as they both mix up hair color.

SHARON

I've gotta find a private plane to stand by, ready to go whenever she needs it. Think. Do you know anyone with one of those?

ROSE

Maybe one of my friends?

SHARON

Really?

ROSE

Shit no! You think I got friends like that?!

Sharon keeps thinking, determined.

SHARON

I gotta get this damn plane, Rose.

Rose sighs, shaking her head, understanding the stakes but having no idea how Sharon can pull it off.

EXT. CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL - DAY

Ed rolls Michelle in a wheelchair out to his track, a NURSE rolling the IV POLE next to her.

INT. THE GIRLS' ROOM

Ed gets Michelle settled into her bed, hooked up to her medical stuff.

Ashley pokes her head in, backpack on, ready for school.

ASHLEY

The bus is here.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ED
Okay, just a sec.
(to Michelle)
I'll be right back, okay.

MICHELLE
But I wanna go to school, daddy.

His heart breaks for her.

ED
I'm sorry, honey... When you get
better, okay?

Michelle sighs, hoping it's soon. Ed gets up to send
Ashley off, trying to be all things to both girls.

EXT. CONSTRUCTION SITE - A LITTLE LATER

Ed heads towards the site. Bob Green comes out of his
trailer, intercepts him.

BOB GREEN
Ed, speak to you for a sec?

ED
Sure.

Ed joins him.

BOB GREEN
Failed inspection yesterday.

Ed shakes his head, surprised.

ED
I don't understand, everything was
up to code, double checked, by the
plans.

BOB GREEN
Well, inspector wanted to see the
steel certification, and, well,
you weren't there, so...

Ed can't believe it. Flunked for something so minor.

ED
That's ridiculous, the grade's
stamped all over the rebar. I have
the cert right here in my planner,
I'll call him back out.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Bob nods, not happy, but letting Ed skate on this one.

Bob heads back towards his trailer. Ed walks to the site, frustrated.

INT. SHARON'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Sharon sits at her kitchen table, a YELLOW PAGES PHONE BOOK open next to her, finds a listing for an AVIATION COMPANY. She dials.

SHARON

Hi... I'm looking for a private plane.

AVIATION GUY

To charter?

SHARON

Actually, for donation. It's for a little girl that needs...

AVIATION GUY

(cutting her off)

Yeah, we're just a charter service. We don't own the planes ma'am.

SHARON

Who does?

AVIATION GUY

Corporations mainly, big companies, CEO types.

Sharon jots that down.

SHARON

Thank you.

She thinks for a moment. How do you find CEOs? She looks down at a BIG FULL PAGE AD in the YELLOW PAGES: FIRST BANK OF KENTUCKY. She dials the number.

BANK REP

First Bank of Kentucky, how may I help you?

SHARON

Yes, hello, can you tell me the name of your CEO?

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SHARON (CONT'D)

(beat)

Mr. Albert Gonzalez...thank You.

She scribbles his name down on a piece of PAPER.

EXT. MODERN OFFICE BLDG. - DAY

SECRETARY (V.O.)

Albert Gonzalez's office, how may
I help you?

SHARON

Hello, this is Sharon Stevens, may
I speak with Mr. Gonzalez?

SECRETARY (O.S.)

Please hold.

INT. MODERN OFFICE BLDG. - DAY

ALBERT GONZALEZ, mid-50's, works at his desk. The
intercom BUZZES.

ALBERT

Yes?

SECRETARY (INTERCOM)

There's a Sharon Stevens on the
phone.

ALBERT

Who?

SECRETARY (INTERCOM)

Sharon Stevens.

ALBERT

Don't know that name.

SECRETARY

Didn't think so.

(back to Sharon)

I'm sorry, he's stepped out of the
office. Would you like to leave a
number?

TIME PASSES--

Sharon makes call after call. "No," "Sorry" "He's
unavailable." She crosses off all the names on her list,
coming up empty.

INT. INCH BY INCH SALON - DAY

Sharon curls the gray bubble-hairdo of a WOMAN in her 60's, listening as she tells a story.

DIANE

And I said, "with all due respect Mr. Holloway, I know I'm just a secretary, but in my 33 years at this law firm, I've picked up a thing or two, and I'm very concerned about the wording in paragraph 3 where it says--

A lightening bolt of inspiration strikes Sharon.

SHARON

WAIT!

The woman startles. Sharon spins around, yells across the salon to Rose.

SHARON

Rose! The secretaries! That's it!

ROSE

Huh?

SHARON

The CEOs'll never gimme the time of day, I've gotta pitch the secretaries!

Rose gives her a thumbs up.

SHARON

(hugs the woman)

You're a genius!

The woman grins, still totally lost.

INT. OFFICE BLDG. - LATE AFTERNOON

Sharon sits with MR. GONZALEZ' SECRETARY, showing her photos of Michelle. She has tears in her eyes.

SECRETARY #1

This poor child...

SHARON

I know...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SECRETARY #1

Don't worry, I'll make sure he
sees this.

ANOTHER OFFICE, ANOTHER SECRETARY--

SECRETARY #2

(resolute)

We can't let this happen. We've
got to do something.

SHARON

Yes we do.

A THIRD OFFICE, A THIRD SECRETARY--

SECRETARY #3

(into intercom)

Bill, there's a woman here you
should meet. It's important.

BILL (O.S.)

I'm busy, tell her come back
later.

SECRETARY #3

Bill, get your ass in here now.

Sharon's eyes widen. She's allowed to talk to her boss
like that?

Bill immediately APPEARS, all smiles.

BILL

Hi, I'm Bill.

The secretary smiles proudly.

INT. ED'S HOUSE - DAY

Barbara limps around, making dinner, her foot slowly
starting to heal. There's a KNOCK at the door. She goes
over to open it, finds Sharon outside.

SHARON

Guess what I got.

BARBARA

Wait. No way. You got the plane?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SHARON

Nope.

(beat)

I got *five* planes. Just in case.

Barbara lets out a SQUEAL, hops around on her good foot, hugging Sharon.

BARBARA

I can't believe it! I can't
believe it! Thank you god, thank
you god!

Ashley runs over, joining in their celebration. Ed comes down the hall to see what the commotion is.

ED

What's going on?

Barbara's face is streaked with tears.

BARBARA

Sharon did it. She did it. We've
got a plane. A whole buncha
planes!

Ed is gob-smacked. Looks over at Sharon, astounded by what she's accomplished.

ED

I... wow...

Despite himself, he can feel it again: a sliver of hope.

EXT. LOUISVILLE - DAY / EARLY DECEMEBER

CHRISTMAS DECORATIONS starting to go up around town.

EXT. CONSTRUCTION SITE - SAME

More homes are finished now. It's actually starting to look like a tiny neighborhood.

Ed oversees a CREW smooth-finishing the cement driveways of THREE FANCY CUL-SEC-SAC HOMES with lots of upgrades.

He notices the cement is drying before they can smooth it out properly.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ED

That load was hot, it's going off
too fast. Add some water.

The FINISHER slowly lumbers over to get the hose, spray
it down. Ed hurries him, knowing how quick this can go
wrong.

ED

Move it.

The FINISHER goes faster, a little annoyed. The OFFICE
ASSISTANT approaches.

OFFICE ASSISTANT

Ed, got a call inside.

INT. CONSTRUCTION TRAILER - A FEW MINUTES LATER

Ed picks up the phone.

ED

Ed Schmitt.

ED'S NEIGHBOR

Ed it's Cliff Donahue, what's
going on over there at your house?

ED

'scuse me?

ED'S NEIGHBOR

Got a bunch of news crews in your
driveway. What's going on?

Ed furrows his brow. Suddenly, he can think of only one
reason: *Something has happened to Michelle.*

EXT. ED'S TRUCK - MOMENTS LATER

Ed barrels home as fast as he can.

EXT. ED'S NEIGHBORHOOD - A LITTLE LATER

Ed peels around the corner onto his street.

Sees the NEWS VANS, the FLURRY of activity around his
house. Hurries to park.

EXT. ED'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Ed hurries out, pushes through the reporters, up the driveway to his front door.

ED

What the hell's going on? This is my house.

INT. ED'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Ed steps inside, sees CAMERA CREWS set up filming Michelle in an INTERVIEW, Sharon and Barbara looking on.

ED

What's happening? What is this?

Barbara shushes him to be quiet for the crew.

BARBARA

Sharon called the news. Thinks the more people who know about Michelle, we can raise the money for her surgery...

Sharon looks over at Ed, holding up a pair of CROSSED FINGERS that her idea will work out.

Ed is seething. AMY CHAN (30's), reporter for the local radio news station, suddenly realizes who he is.

AMY CHAN

Wait, this is the father?

(to Ed)

I'm Amy Chan from KPPI radio. Can I ask you a few questions as well?

The OTHER REPORTERS overhear this, and begin to DESCEND ON ED. He backs away, inundated, not liking this at all.

ED

No. No you can't.

He turns around, leaving. Barbara and Sharon exchange look, not sure why he's so upset...

EXT. CONSTRUCTION SITE - A LITTLE LATER

Ed pulls back up back to the site, gets out of his truck, still upset.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

He hurries back to the driveways, finds Bob Green standing near them, frustrated.

BOB GREEN

There you are.

Bob points to the sections of two driveways. The cement looks sloppy, inconsistent.

BOB GREEN

The load went off before they got through the finish.

Ed's eyes fall shut. Exactly what he was trying to make sure wouldn't happen.

BOB GREEN

We've gotta jackhammer them both out and re-pour.

A colossal mistake. Huge.

BOB GREEN

Dammit, Ed.

ED

Bob, I'll make it right.

BOB GREEN

No. We'll pay you for what you've done, but we can't use you on the rest of the project.

ED

Bob, wait--

BOB GREEN

No, look, I know you got a lot of personal stuff going on, and I don't wish on anybody what your family's going through... But this job is obviously a little too much for you to chew. I'll have accounting tie up the loose ends.

Bob walks away. Ed stands there, gut-punched.

INT. THE GIRLS ROOM - EVENING

Michelle is asleep in her bed, tuckered out from the big day with news crews.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Sharon adjusts her pillow a bit, makes sure all her machines are working as they should.

Then softly closes the door, goes out to--

INT. ED'S LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

As she comes down the hall, Ed comes through the front door.

SHARON

Hey... Michelle just fell asleep,
your mama took Ashley for ice-
cream.

Ed doesn't say anything.

SHARON

Interview aired an hour ago. Amy,
the reporter from the station
called me, and you won't believe
it -- almost three hundred
thousand dollars in donations
already in, and they keep comin'.
Michelle's surgery'll be covered,
plus her care for a long time...

Sharon can't believe the outpouring of generosity. It's
incredible news.

Ed quietly nods, then turns, looking her right in the
eye, furious.

ED

Mind telling me something, Sharon.

Sharon is thrown by his tone.

SHARON

Um...

ED

I don't care if you mind. This is
my house. *Mine*. And you think you
got the right, coming in here, to
my house, with my girls, acting
like you own the goddamn place?

Sharon doesn't know what to say.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ED

News crews here without even asking me, Michelle's face spread all over the TV?!

SHARON

Ed, I'm sorry, I thought you'd--

ED

YOU THOUGHT WRONG. So lemme set it real straight for you.

He gets in her face, boiling over.

ED

You are not welcome here in this house, Sharon. You aren't those girls' mother, you aren't our family, you aren't anybody. You got the whole town fooled thinkin' you're such a hero, doing all this for a poor little girl. You aren't doing this for her, you're doing it for you. Wanna feel better you drank your own kid to death so now you're trying to save mine. Well, she ain't your free ride to redemption. Go find another sob story to leech onto.

Sharon is frozen. Can't speak, tears gathering in her eyes. She quickly gathers up her stuff to leave. Ed watches her go.

EXT. ED'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Sharon rushes to her CAR, tears falling down her face now. She gets in, slams the door, starts the engine.

INT. SHARON'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

She's about to drive off but looks over to see: The PURSE she made for Ashley, on her passenger seat, accidentally left there during an outing.

If she's never going to see them again, she has to give it back.

She grabs it off the seat, gets out of the car--

INT. ED'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Ed turns around to Sharon coming back up the driveway.

SHARON

Ashley left it.

She sets the purse down, about to turn and leave again, but then--

SHARON

You know Ed, I'm not proud of who I am. I've been a drunk so much of my life, I don't know where half of it went.

Ed turns around to face her.

SHARON

I'm sorry if I hurt you or those girls or anybody, 'cause I swear all I ever wanted to do was make it easier, even a little.

She pauses, finding these next difficult words...

SHARON

And you're right...I did. I stole my own baby's life away from her. But it wasn't from drinkin', or any of that...

She's never said this out loud, doesn't know if she can bring herself to...

SHARON

I didn't want her.

She shakes her head at what an awful thing that is to say.

SHARON

I spent everyday for nine months wishing she wasn't there. I didn't want her. To raise a child. I felt like a child myself.

All of the conflicting feelings come back.

SHARON

And then... 8 days before she was due, Halloween day...she gave me my wish.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SHARON (CONT'D)

And when I saw her...I knew. She
could feel it, the whole
time...her own mama didn't want
her... How do you start a life
like that...?

The thought of it still wrecks her.

SHARON

I'll never forgive myself for
that... And not even your daughter
livin' can fix it.

Ed is quiet. Even through the haze of his own emotions,
he sees she is stating a central truth.

SHARON

My life has gotten better because
your girls are in it, because of
helping ya'll. Coming here, to
this house, every corner of it
made by a mama in love with her
baby girls. But if that's why I
did all this... well, that ain't
right.

(meaning it)

It ain't right.

Sharon wipes her eyes. Genuinely scared she's just broken
enough for that to be true.

She quietly exhales. Then turns, and walks out.

Ed stands there alone for a moment, hearing the silence
in the room.

EXT. LOUISVILLE - DAY

SNOW FALLING, gently covered the town in white. A couple
weeks have passed. Christmas is only a few days away now.

EXT. ED'S HOUSE - SAME

Barbara and Ed senior carry GROCERIES into --

INT. ED'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Ed helps his mom with the bags.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BARBARA

We got the last gallon of milk.

ED SENIOR

Just heard 'em on the radio saying
biggest storm in 30 years.

Ed looks outside. It's snowing harder now, getting windy.

ED

Definitely starting to come down.

He goes to the BACKDOOR, gestures to Ashley and Michelle,
PLAYING IN THE BACKYARD SNOW. Michelle looks skinnier,
paler. She still has her spunk, but the disease is taking
its toll.

ED

Come on in girls. The wind's
picking up. Time for lunch. Grammy
and Granddaddy are here.

The girls shuffle in as Barbara is putting away food.

BARBARA

What do you feel like, I got Mac N
Cheese, chicken-fries, whole lotta
tuna cans...

MICHELLE

Ooh can we have Mickey pancakes?

BARBARA

Can you have what? I don't know
what that is.

ASHLEY

Pancakes that look like Mickey.
Sharon makes 'em. Like E.T. too.

MICHELLE

Oooh can she come over?

ASHLEY

Yeah, can she?

Barbara throws a look to Ed, knowing they've had a
falling out.

ED

Sharon's busy right now.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

ASHLEY

How do you know?

ED

Just... not today.

Barbara gives Ed a look: *Why are you doing this?* He brushes it off, not wanting to get into it right now.

EXT. LOUISVILLE - AN HOUR LATER

Snow barrels in from all directions. Officially BLIZZARD conditions.

EXT. ED'S LIVING ROOM - LATER

The house RATTLES against the howling wind. Out the windows, it's a TOTAL WHITE-OUT. The girls huddle closer to Ed, a little nervous, the family gathered around the TV, watching the NEWS.

FEMALE NEWS ANCHOR

Officials are calling it the worst blizzard in state history. 42,000 homes without power, half of the interstates closed, and all inbound and outbound flights grounded. Highway patrol urges everyone to stay off the roads and hunker down where you are. This storm isn't going to let up anytime soon, and appears to be intensifying.

ED SENIOR

Hope we bought enough food...

Even Ed Senior has never experienced mother nature like this.

The PHONE RINGS in the kitchen.

Barbara gets up, goes in to answer it.

BARBARA

Hello?

(beat)

Oh, yes, hi Dr. Ghorbani. It's Barbara.

(beat)

Go on...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

As Barbara listens, her expression slowly begins to fall.
She looks as if her legs might crumble underneath her.
Finally...

BARBARA
(quietly)
Thank you.

She hangs up the phone, just stands there, staring out
the window at the ROARING STORM, paralyzed with emotion.

Ed walks into the kitchen, notices the state she's in.

ED
What's wrong? Who was that?

Barbara just shakes her head. Can't bear to say it.

ED
Ma...?

Ed Senior walks in, concerned now too.

Barbara finally looks over at both of them, musters the
words...

BARBARA
They've got the liver. On the one
day we can't get to it.

Ed and his father are frozen as they process this
unimaginably bad luck.

Barbara's eyes suddenly pool with tears. Her faith can't
hold her up anymore. Not through this.

BARBARA
(breaking)
It's not fair. It's just cruel.

The girls look over, notice her getting upset.

MICHELLE
Grammy? What's wrong?

Barbara realizes they're watching, and hurries into the
other room so they won't see her fall apart.

Ed and his father exchange a look. Neither has any words.

Ed heads down the hall, into--

INT. ED'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

He opens the door, finds Barbara facing a corner in the far side of the room, quietly sobbing. He goes to her side.

ED

Ma...

He puts his arms around her. She hates that she isn't strong for him right now. Tries to stop crying.

BARBARA

I'm sorry. I'm sorry.

ED

No, Ma...

He pulls her close.

BARBARA

What do we do...

ED

We find some way.

BARBARA

But what way? How?

ED

I don't know...

That's the problem. Barbara sighs, utterly defeated. Ed looks down, centering himself. Then--

ED

Look. I told Teresa I'd take care of our girls. I'm not gonna let her down.

Barbara can see the conviction in his eyes.

ED

We'll find a way.

And for the first time, it's his hope buoying her.

INT. SHARON'S HOUSE - DAY

Sharon's fiddles with her OLD WALL HEATER, turning it up to full blast. A KETTLE begins to WHISTLE on her stove.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

She turns off the burner, gets a jar of INSTANT COFFEE from the cupboard.

The PHONE rings.

SHARON

Hello, it's Sharon.

ED

Sharon, it's Ed...

Sharon pauses, not expecting to hear his voice on the other end of the line.

SHARON

Oh... hi, Ed...

ED

Look, I'm gonna cut to the chase because there isn't much time. I owe you an apology. A big one. These past few months, you kept my family afloat, and it shoulda made me grateful, but instead it tore me up I couldn't do it myself... I'm sorry. You didn't deserve what I said to you. Truth is, I don't even wanna think about where we'd be if you hadn't come along to help...

She can feel his sincerity.

ED

And, well, right now... I need your help again, this time more than ever.

Sharon sits up straighter, listening.

ED

Michelle's gotta be in Omaha in less than 6 hours. Half the roads are closed, the airport is shut down, and all the airplanes are grounded.

We stay on Sharon's face, registering what they're up against. It's insurmountable.

ED

Today's the day. We gotta get it done.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

Instantly, her unshakable determination takes over.

SHARON

Have her bags packed. I'll call
you back.

She hangs up, her brain hitting warp speed.

Ed puts the receiver back, goes to the HALL CLOSET to get
the SUITCASE out. Barbara and Ed Senior exchange a look,
no idea how they'll pull this off.

INT. ROSE'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

Rose pre-heats the oven, dumps a bunch of FROZEN TATER
TOTS onto a pan.

A BUNCH OF HER FAMILY MEMBERS, including MARCUS and
KELVIN, have gathered at her house to ride out the storm.
They're a LOUD GROUP, talking and laughing as they play a
game of UNO.

Her PHONE rings.

ROSE

Hello?

SHARON

I need you to call highway patrol,
find out which roads are open, and
plot a route from 12th and Henley
to the airport.

ROSE

What?

SHARON

It's liver time. This is it.

Rose drops the bag of tots.

ROSE

Sweet Jesus. *Today?*

She looks out her window at a NEIGHBOR'S CAR buried in a
snow drift.

SHARON

As fast as you can do it. The
flight's 2 hours, plus an hour to
the hospital and 30 minutes to
prep her.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SHARON (CONT'D)

That leaves us a little over 2
hours to get her to the
airport...36 miles away.

Rose quickly grabs a pencil and paper--

ROSE

12th and ---

SHARON

Henley. Off the Pike. And I still
gotta find a plane to fly in this
storm...

ROSE

Do it. I got this.

Rose hangs up, turns to her FAMILY, yells at the top of
her lungs---

ROSE

EVERBODY SHUT YOUR MOUTH!

They all stop talking at once, look at her, shocked.

ROSE

I need it quiet. I gotta
concentrate.

She reaches into a cabinet, grabs the CITY MAP.

INT. CEO'S HOUSE - STUDY - DAY

Albert Gonzalez sits in his study, reading a GOLF
magazine. HIS WIFE peaks her head in.

WIFE

A woman named Sharon Stevens on
the phone?

He nods, picking up his line.

ALBERT

Hey, Sharon.

SHARON

Any chance you can get that plane
up today, Al?

ALBERT

(laughs)
Ha ha. Real funny.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SHARON

I'm afraid I'm dead serious.

Beat. Albert looks outside at the blinding snow, the whipping winds.

ALBERT

Uhhhhh...

SHARON

We gotta get it up. Please. The liver just came in.

Albert rubs his head, feeling awful about the timing.

ALBERT

Uh...I'll call the pilot and see what he can do... I'm just real worried what he's gonna say...

SHARON

Just beg him if there's any way. Any way at all.

Albert nods, doubtful, a pit in stomach.

INT. SHARON'S HOUSE - MINUTES LATER

Sharon's on the PHONE with the AIRPORT SECURITY now.

AIRPORT SECURITY MANAGER

Sorry, the airport's closed, ma'am.

SHARON

I know, but we need an exception to fly a private plane out of there. It's an emergency.

AIRPORT SECURITY MANAGER

No flights in or out, I'm sorry.

SHARON

It's a little girl going into surgery. She's gotta get to Omaha for a transplant. It's her only shot.

This moves the needle a bit.

AIRPORT SECURITY MANAGER

I... I'll see what I can do.

INT. GIRLS ROOM - DAY

Ed quickly throws everything in a suitcase while Michelle puts her shoes on.

ED

Extra socks, pajamas, did we pack
your toothbrush?

Ashely comes in carrying Michelle's TOOTH BRUSH.

ASHLEY

Right here. I got it for her.

Ed throws it in bag, hurries to zip it up.

INT. ROSE'S HOUSE - SAME

Rose is on the PHONE with Sharon, tracing her finger along the MAP. Behind her, her whole family is now huddled around the TV, watching TRAFFIC & ROAD CLOSURE UPDATES.

ROSE

So he's gonna take Rounders Pike
to Highway 2, take that to the
215, and then--.

KELVIN

(seeing the news on
TV)
215 just closed!

ROSE

Crap. Scratch that. He's gotta go
around then.

SHARON

Shit...

ROSE

(looking at map)
He's gotta go through Canyon
Creek.

SHARON

Canyon Creek's a one lane highway!

ROSE

It's the only road still open.

Sharon takes a deep breath. This is going to be tough.

INT. ED'S LIVING ROOM - SAME

Ed and Michelle are at the door now, ready to go. He helps her into her WINTER COAT.

Barbara's on the phone from the kitchen, yells over to him--

BARBARA

Sharon says Highway 2 to Canyon Creek, take it all the way around, it'll spit you off south of the tarmac.

Ed blinks at these directions, knowing just how far out of the way that is.

ED

Canyon Creek?

BARBARA

It's the only route.

Ed picks Michelle up. Ed Senior pats him on the back.

ED SENIOR

Good luck, son. We'll be praying.

ED

Thanks.

Ed bends over to hug Ashley.

ED

Take care of your grammy and granddaddy okay?

ASHLEY

It's all gonna work out, right daddy?

Ed musters a sure expression.

ED

Yes, honey. Yes it is.

INT. SHARON'S HOUSE - MINUTES LATER

Sharon's on the phone, head in her hands, hitting a brick wall trying to get a plane to fly.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SHARON

Please. I just need one of these 5 planes to take off. Just one.

SECRETARY #2

I know. You have no have idea how bad I want to be the one to make this happen Sharon. They just won't do it. They just won't fly in these conditions...

The secretary is gutted she can't help.

SHARON

Thanks, Shirley... Call me if anything changes.

Sharon hangs up, crosses the 4TH PLANE off her LIST OF 5

The PHONE RINGS again.

SHARON

Hello?

AIRPORT MANAGER

You're the lady called about the flight for the little girl?

SHARON

That's me.

AIRPORT MANAGER

We're gonna make an exception and open a runway. We'll have someone waiting for you at the gate.

SHARON

Oh Thank you, thank you!

Finally, a win.

SHARON

They're in a red pick-up truck, they're already on their way!

INT. ED'S TRUCK - MINUTES LATER

Ed and Michelle in the truck. Barely crawling. No visibility. He looks out his passenger window, sees several ABANDONED VEHICLES.

He knew it would be bad, but this is treacherous.

INT. SHARON'S HOUSE - MINUTES LATER

Sharon's on the phone, the line RINGING.

SECRETARY #3

Hello?

SHARON

Gabby, did you get ahold of your pilot?

SECRETARY #3

Just got off with him... I'm sorry, Sharon. Even if he could fly, he's all way in Ramsey, he'll never get there in time...

Sharon's eyes fall shut.

SHARON

Thank you...

She hangs up, looks down at her list of 5 airplanes. Crosses THE LAST ONE off.

Then just sits there, gutted. *What does she do now?*

The PHONE rings.

SHARON

Hello it's Sharon.

ALBERT

He can take the plane up.

SHARON

What? Really? He'll do it?

ALBERT

Retired air-force, flown in storms worse than this. He's on his way now.

SHARON

Thank you, Al! Thank you more than you'll ever know!

Sharon looks heavenward, thanking whoever or whatever made this miracle happen.

INT. ROSE'S HOUSE - SAME

Rose and her family are still gathered around the NEWS, anxiously watching updates.

TRAFFIC REPORTER

More bad news from the highways.
Closures on 134, Highway 6, and
big rig jack-knifed on Canyon
Creek, blocking both directions--

ROSE

Noooo. No no no no no! Shit!

The whole family MOANS at the bad luck.

INT. SHARON'S HOUSE

Sharon's on the phone, just having heard the bad news, frantically searches her brain for a fix.

SHARON

We've gotta get 'em to turn
around, go a different route.

ROSE

You're not hearing what I'm
sayin', there is no other route,
they're all blocked.

SHARON

Not one other route? There's gotta
be.

ROSE

The only other way I see is
through Meadowlake, but it's 3
times longer, in this snow, they'd
be on the road 4 hours.

Sharon sighs, defeated. They're so close. There has to be
a way.

ROSE

God I wish that car could fly...

Sharon's eyes suddenly brighten. Getting an idea.

SHARON

Wait... a helicopter.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ROSE

Yeah, that'd be nice.

SHARON

No, I mean we really try to get a helicopter.

ROSE

Okay... uh, how the hell we gonna get a helicopter?

SHARON

I don't know, I gotta think. I'll work on it, you just find some way to stop 'em before they get to that big-rig crash, get 'em back here for plan B.

They both hang up, getting to it.

Sharon looks around, trying to figure out where to even start on a helicopter.

She grabs the PHONE BOOK, opens it to the letter "H."
Heating, Hearing Aids, Home Repair...

Nothing. She slaps the book closed, needing another idea.

As she quietly thinks, she hears the THE RADIO, on in the background for live updates.

AMY CHAN (O.S.)

*...I'm Amy Chan, and you're
listening to KPPI News...*

Suddenly, an idea--

SHARON

Amy Chan!

One of the reporters that came to the house to interview Michelle. Sharon quickly finds the number to the station.

INT. KPPI RADIO STATION NEWS BOOTH - DAY

Amy sits behind a microphone, having just tossed to commercial. A PRODUCER intercoms in.

PRODUCER

A woman named Sharon Stevens on
line 4? About the little girl who
needs a liver transplant?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

AMY CHAN

Yes, of course! Put her through.
(picks up the line)
Sharon, hey, how are you? How's
Michelle?

SHARON

Well...

Amy listens as Sharon describes the situation.

INT. ED'S HOUSE - SAME

Barbara, Ed Senior, and Ashley are in front of the TV,
seeing the news about the BIG RIG. Barbara looks sick to
her stomach.

BARBARA

Lord no...

The PHONE rings. She rises to get it.

BARBARA

Hello...

SHARON

Don't panic. I'm working on
gettin' a helicopter. Turn on your
radio.

Barbara brightens.

BARBARA

Ed, the radio, turn it on quick.

Ed senior hurries to switch it on.

AMY CHAN (O.S.)

*Louisville, we've got an emergency
and need your help. A little girl
named Michelle Schmitt has to fly
to Omaha today for a liver
transplant today to save her life.
But all roads to the airport have
been closed and now her only hope
is a helicopter to get her there.
Please. If you're listening, and
you're a helicopter pilot, or know
one, and your can help save this
little girl's life...please, call
in now.*

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Barbara and Ed Senior exchange a look, desperately praying for someone to call.

BARBARA

Please god let the right person
hear this.

Amy looks down at her phone lines, waiting for them to light up.

INT. ED'S TRUCK - MINUTES LATER

Traffic starts to slow in front of Ed. Soon, he comes to a complete stop.

MICHELLE

What's going on, daddy?

Ed tries to see, but the snow is too thick to tell.

ED

Not sure...

He turns on the a.m. radio, tuning it.

A.M. RADIO

*...big rig down on Canyon Creek.
Highway Patrol says it'll be at
least an hour, possibly two,
before they're able to get that
tractor trailer off the road...*

Ed swallows, instantly realizing the trouble they're in.

ED

Wait here a second, I'll be right
back.

Michelle looks a little scared.

ED

Don't worry. Right back.

Ed opens the door, climbs outside to --

EXT. CANYON CREEK ROAD - CONTINUOUS

He looks behind him, trying to figure out if there's a way to turn around out here. But he's totally hemmed in, cars behind him, in front of him, to the sides of him.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The people in front are starting to get out of their cars, ABANDON THEIR VEHICLES.

His heart sinks. He is stuck here. For who knows how long.

Suddenly, a HUGE DECKED-OUT LIFTED BRIGHT ORANGE 4X4 TRUCK with OVERSIZED MONSTER-TRUCK WHEELS comes barreling down the shoulder.

It skids to a stop, the doors fling open. Rose's cousins -
- Kelvin and Marcus -- jump out, wave Ed over.

KELVIN

You Ed Schmitt?

Ed nods.

MARCUS

Hop in!

Ed has never been so grateful to see anybody in his whole life. He hurries to get Michelle out of his truck.

ED

Come on, honey.

MICHELLE

What are we doing?

As he pulls her outside, she gets a load of Kelvin's HUGE CRAZY MONSTER TRUCK.

MICHELLE

WOAAAAAAHHHHH.

Kelvin grins, proud.

KELVIN

(to Marcus)

See. And all ya'll do is make fun of it.

Marcus rolls his eyes, still thinks it's too-much.

INT. KELVIN'S MONSTER TRUCK - A LITTLE LATER

Ed and Michelle are sandwiched in the backseat now.

ED

Where are we going?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

KELVIN

Back to your house, Sharon's going to plan B.

ED

What's plan B?

MARCUS

Find a helicopter.

Ed laughs at the "joke." Then realizes they aren't.

ED

Wait, what. That's plan B?

KELVIN

All the other roads are closed, man.

Ed swallows, all of the relief he was just feeling instantly vanishing.

INT. ED'S HOUSE - SAME

Barbara and Ed are still huddled by the radio, anxious.

AMY CHAN(O.S.)

Still waiting for any leads on a helicopter. Anybody... Please, give us a call... We're waiting...

INT. SHARON'S HOUSE - SAME

Sharon is next to her radio too, breath held, waiting.

INT. ROSE'S HOUSE - SAME

Rose and her family are doing the same thing, losing their minds with all the suspense.

INT. KPPI RADIO - SAME

Amy looks down at her switchboard. Still not lighting up. She's sweating too, invested in this.

AMY CHAN

Anybody... with even a shred of a connection for a helicopter...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Finally, line 1 starts to BLINK.

AMY CHAN

*Here we go, we've got a caller on
line 1! Hello, you're on with Amy
Chan, go 'head.*

HELICOPTER PILOT (O.S.)

*Hello this is Todd from A-1
Aviation. I remember that little
girl from the news. We can get her
a helicopter.*

INT. SHARON'S HOUSE - SAME

Sharon LEAPS out of her chair.

SHARON

YES!!!!

INT. ED'S HOUSE - SAME

Barbara and Ed Senior GASP and CHEER.

BARBARA

THANK YOU LORD!!!

INT. ROSE'S HOUSE - SAME

Rose and her family JUMP UP AND DOWN WITH JOY.

ROSE'S WHOLE FAMILY

A HELICOPTER! WE GOT HER A DAMN
HELICOPTER!

INT. MINISTER'S THOMAS HOUSE - SAME

Minister Thomas' wife, GEORGIE (60s'), sits near the
radio, tearing up from the news.

MINISTER'S WIFE

Thomas, Thomas! Come're. You've
gotta hear this. Michelle got the
liver but the roads are closed and
they just found her a helicopter!

Minister Thomas runs over to listen.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HELICOPTER PILOT (ON RADIO)

What we're gonna need now is a flat open place to pick her up. No trees or power lines, a hundred square feet cleared of snow for landing.

AMY CHAN (ON RADIO)

Okay, did everyone get all that? They need a clear space big enough to land. If you have any ideas, please--

Minster Thomas' eyes light up.

MINISTER THOMAS

I know where they can do it!

He grabs the PHONE to call the station.

INT. KPPI RADIO - SAME

Amy sees Line 2 lights up.

AMY CHAN (ON RADIO)

(picks it up)

We have another caller on line 2. Go 'head.

MINISTER THOMAS (ON RADIO)

The helicopter can land at Hopewell Church on 14th and Bass.

INT. ED'S HOUSE - SAME

Barbara's eyes widen.

BARBARA

That's Thomas!

PASTOR THOMAS (ON RADIO)

But we're gonna need help to clear the snow. Come as quick as you can. Bring shovels. We'll need lots of shovels.

Ed Senior springs into action.

ED

Oh I got shovels.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

He grabs his coat.

INT. ROSE'S HOUSE - SAME

Rose and her family all hurry to get their coats on and get to the church.

ROSE

Move it, move it, move it!

EXT. SHARON'S HOUSE - SAME

Sharon bursts out her front door, grabs the SNOW SHOVEL leaning against her garage, sprints across the driveway, flings it into the backseat of her car.

INT. CLIFF'S HARDWARE STORE - SAME

Ed Senior uses his KEY to open the CLOSED STORE.

He pulls EVERY SHOVEL off the shelf, piles them into a wheelbarrow.

EXT. ED'S NEIGHBORHOOD - SAME

All around the neighborhood, PEOPLE are coming out of their front doors, hurrying towards the church.

EXT. CHURCH PARKING LOT - A LITTLE LATER

Minister Thomas and his wife are already there, rushing to stake off the 100 FOOT AREA. A PORTABLE RADIO sits in the snow, broadcasting updates.

Sharon comes running up over a snow bank with her shovel.

SHARON

I'm here!

She drives it into the snow, immediately getting to work. It digs out about a teaspoon of ice.

She gets a load of the area they have to clear: IT'S MASSIVE. The SNOW IS WAIST-DEEP.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SHARON

(realizing)

We won't be able to do this
without a lot more help.

Then, she looks over to see TONS OF PEOPLE coming from all directions. Rose and her whole crew, people we recognize from Teresa's funeral, salon clients, one of the secretaries, Jason the hair assistant, all sorts of strangers from the neighborhood.

Barbara and Ed Senior hurry over, pushing the WHEELBARROW FULL OF SHOVELS, Ashley following behind them, bundled in her snowsuit and wrapped like a burrito in a BIG RED BLANKET.

Everyone immediately gets digging. It's a sight to behold, all these people working together to do the impossible.

EXT. HELICOPTER HANGAR - SAME

The HELICOPTER PILOT climbs aboard the AIRCRAFT, prepares for take-off.

INT. KELVIN'S MONSTER TRUCK - SAME

They're making steady progress, but it's slow going. They come up on more traffic, slow to a STOP again.

Ed looks at the time, nervous.

KELVIN

It'll clear. Prob'ly just somebody
stopping to make a left...

EXT. CHURCH PARKING LOT - SAME

They've made some headway clearing the landing spot, but not much.

AMY CHAN (ON RADIO)

*Folks, we just got word, the
helicopter is fueled up, and will
soon be on its way.*

Everyone CHEERS, digs faster.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Sharon looks at the area they have left to clear, realizing that even with all these people, they won't be able to clear it in time.

SHARON

We're barely a quarter through...

ROSE

(yelling at her
family)

Faster! Dig! Dig! Dig!

Just then, the sound of a BLARING TRUCK HORN.

Everyone turns around in unison to see...

A GIANT PICK-UP TRUCK with a SNOW PLOW ATTACHED TO ITS GRILL.

SHARON

Who is that?

The old lady with the RAINBOW MOHAWK, Mrs. Allen, leans out the passenger window of her son's F-150.

MRS. ALLEN

MOVE THE HELL OUT OF THE WAY!!!

Everyone quickly gets out of the way to let them through.

INT. KELVIN'S MONSTER TRUCK - MINUTES LATER

They're still at a dead stop. Stuck.

MARCUS

(losing patience now)
Come on.

Ed is sweating bullets in the backseat.

MICHELLE

Is everything okay, daddy?

No, it's not. But he can't say that to her.

ED

Yeah, honey. It's fine.

He puts an arm around her, trying to believe somehow it will be.

EXT. CHURCH PARKING LOT - A LITTLE LATER

The truck finishes plowing, just as the HELICOPTER comes buzzing into sky above them. Everyone looks to the sky, CHEERING.

BARBARA

There it is!

ASHLEY

It's here! It's here!

SHARON

Everyone move back so he can land!

They all make room, wait for him to land. But the helicopter just hovers overhead, snow blowing everywhere.

SHARON

What's going on. Why isn't he landing?

ROSE

Turn up the radio!

The minister's wife turns it up.

AMY CHAN (ON RADIO)

Getting word from the pilot. Go 'head.

HELICOPTER PILOT

I can't see the landing area in the white out conditions. I'm sorry... I can't land here.

It guts him to say it.

Sharon looks out over the landing area. The blowing snow has already put a sheet of white powder over it, and more is dumping down.

INT. KELVIN'S MONSTER TRUCK - SAME

The car in front of them starts to move. The guys let out a collective sigh of relief.

MICHELLE

Look daddy, we're going.

Ed nods, sweating bullets.

EXT. CHURCH PARKING LOT

The crowd is silent, confused, worried.

BARBARA

Isn't there something we can do?

Sharon is utterly defeated. Every solution, every miracle -- used up.

Then...

Ashley, wrapped in her red blanket, walks towards the center of the landing area.

ROSE

Where she going?

Sharon watches, not sure. Ashley stops, takes her blanket off, spreading it out over the white snowy ground. She looks back at Sharon.

ASHLEY

Does this help?

Sharon, not sure, looks up at the Helicopter.

A beat. The whole crowd on edge.

HELICOPTER PILOT (OVER RADIO)

*I can see that! Cover the area and
I can land!*

SHARON

Everyone, run to your houses! Grab sheets, blankets, towels, anything you can!

The crowd instantly scatters, running to their homes.

--A set of closet doors swing open and a woman grabs a stack of BLUE SHEETS.

- A man in his bathroom picks up a stack of PURPLE TOWELS, then spots his PURPLE SHOWER CURTAIN and rips it off the rod.

- MINISTER THOMAS is in the church, pulling giant RED CURTAINS down from the windows.

-People in the parking lot are taking off their jackets, offering them up too.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

-Everyone spreads out the FABRICS, making a GIANT COLORFUL PATCH WORK QUILT IN THE SHOW.

Sharon looks up at the sky, praying this works. Finally, Amy breaks the silence.

AMY CHAN (OVER RADIO)

He's good! He's good! He can land!

The crowd ERUPTS IN CELEBRATION. Barbara nearly falls to her knees, relief all over her face.

The HELICOPTER starts to lower down, just as...

KELVIN's MONSTER TRUCK turns the corner towards the church.

INT. KELVIN'S MONSTER TRUCK - SAME

Ed looks out the window, his eyes going wide.

ED

What the...

He watches the HELICOPTER descend from the sky, the MASSIVE CROWD gathered around to pull this off.

MICHELLE

Daddy! Daddy! Do you see that!!

Ed is pinned to his seat, watching. His eyes begin to well up, absolutely overwhelmed.

As the chopper touches down, all the BLANKETS SWIRL AND FLY THROUGH THE AIR, blowing in all directions like a rainbow colored dandelion.

Kelvin and Marcus cheer, pounding the roof.

KELVIN

YEAH BABY! THAT'S WHAT I'M TALKING ABOUT!

Ed and Michelle get out of the truck. Barbara, Ashley, and Ed Senior run over.

BARBARA

You made it!

They HUG. Barbara hurries them on their way.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BARBARA

Go, go, go!

Ed picks Michelle up in his arms, runs towards the helicopter, everyone CHEERING.

Just as he climbs in, he looks over his shoulder, searching for someone in the crowd...

He finds Sharon. Their eyes LOCK for a beat.

His, expressing bottomless gratitude no words can convey.
Hers, expressing the honor of a thousand lifetimes.

Ed turns and climbs into the helicopter.

It LIFTS OFF, soaring away through the snowy sky...

The image getting lighter and lighter, until it has FADED up to..

A PERFECTLY WHITE SCREEN.

And for a moment, everything STILL. SILENT.

Then... a SOUND.

Barely audible, but unmistakable nonetheless...

A slow exhale.

And with it, the weight of the world, released.

THE END

END TILE CARDS & PHOTOS:

The transplant was performed successfully just in time.

In 2014, Michelle Schmitt earned her college degree. A year later, Ed walked her down the aisle.

Sharon, who never misses a family get-together, showed up in a sparkly sequined dress.