

Shake in the Tree
By
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FADE IN...

EXT. CEMETERY - DAY

A delicate drizzle pelts the vast graveyard.

One lone, sprawling OAK TREE towers over black umbrellas huddled around A WHITE CASKET over an open grave.

A PRIEST stands at the head of the grave, ROSARY in one hand, bible in the other. This is FATHER STYLES, 55. To his immediate right is...

LONG HAIRED CANDACE ROTHWELL, 30, a regal beauty mustering against her grief while clutching JEFF, 7, his tiny hands clung to her black dress, tears streaking his perfect cheeks.

Just beyond Candace's reach is CHRIS, 13, a boy determined to stand like a man, the resemblance telling us he's her son. The space between them obvious. He just stares at the CASKET.

Candace flinches as...

A military polished shoe kicks THE WINCH CLIP.

Mourners really cry now and hold each other through FATHER STYLES'S "Ashes to ashes, dust to dust," spiel.

WE HOVER OVER THE DESCENDING WHITE CASKET

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. HOSPITAL - MARY'S ROOM - NIGHT

AND HOVER OVER MARY GRAYSON, 29, IN BED

She's a SHORT HAIRED quadriplegic tucked tightly under blankets, tubes and wires trailing from her catatonic body to a bank of machines keeping her alive. Her eyes are red and wet - profoundly sad.

On a shelf we see A WEDDING PICTURE of her and husband, Clint - the perfect couple fresh out of high school.

On another shelf A BOOM BOX and A CRAYON COLORED FAMILY TREE picture with wallet photos of Mary and Clint, a young son and pre-teen daughter taped to the branches.

On the settee is a framed photo of CANDACE and Mary, heads pushed together, both with BEAUTIFUL, LONG, BRUNETTE HAIR - infinite smiles - friends.

Mary's eyes flutter, her mouth tightens, head twitches.

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A handsome CLINT, 30, leans over the bed rail in shirt and jeans, draping himself across Mary, hands pressing her shoulders down - bracing. He throws a pleading look at...

Rugged and fit SAM, 60, standing at the foot of the bed with A ROLLED UP SLEEPING BAG under his arm and an unopened OH HENRY bar in his hand. He's unable to do anything but watch Mary convulse, such helplessness unfamiliar to him.

CLINT
Sam! Hold her.

Sam drops the sleeping bag and the Oh Henry and holds her ankles firm.

Mary's face contorts, spittle trickling from her wrenched mouth - pure agony. The entire bed shaking from her violent spasms.

Clint and Sam helpless to do anything but hang on.

MARY
(screaming)
Candace!!

INT. CANDACE'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - NIGHT

SHORT HAIRED CANDACE springs awake in bed, sweating and hyperventilating - a nightmare had her.

She sits up, tucks her knees to her chest, gripping against the grief.

She's alone in bed.

The clock radio says 1AM.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. CANDACE'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - DAY

The clock radio says 7AM.

Super: "Seven months before."

LONG HAIRED CANDACE lies in bed, watching JOSH, 32, her jock husband, snore away beside her. There is something bittersweet about her.

JEFF
Mom!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Jeff bursts onto the bed in Spiderman pajamas, a proud grin and a crayon picture pushed right to her face.

CANDACE

Shsssh.

He checks his Dad sleeping.

JEFF

(whispers)

I want one just like that.

He's drawn a big black dog. She gives that look all conflicted mothers give when the answer has to be 'no'.

CANDACE

(whispers)

Jeff, you have to stop--.

JEFF

Ah, c'mon. No puffs.

Josh stirs.

CANDACE

Shsssh.

JEFF

(whispers again)

Can I at least get a maybe.

CANDACE

(whispers)

Okay, maybe we'll talk about it after you're dressed.

JEFF

Yes!

She shoos him off the bed and scoots him out of the room.

INT. CANDACE'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

Candace rushes around in a nurse's uniform, downing coffee and sorting lunch bags.

Chris and Jeff sit on stools at the island. Chris scoops cereal while Jeff colors his crayon picture of the dog.

CHRIS

We're not getting one, y'know.

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CONTINUED:

JEFF

We could.

CHRIS

Oh yeah. Did you tell Mom you had a puff yesterday?

JEFF

I hate you.

That halts Candace in her tracks, finger pointing.

CANDACE

Hey, what did I say about using that word.

JEFF

Sorry, mom.

CHRIS

(rustles Jeff's hair)
Busted.

JEFF

Shut up.

CANDACE

Chris.

CHRIS

He said it.

He gets the look that says 'enough already'.

CHRIS

Whatever.

CANDACE

Both of you hurry up.

Josh ambles in, rubbing sleepy eyes, puzzled with Candace's hectic pace.

JOSH

Are you working this morning?

CANDACE

(curt)
Yeah.

She brushes by him like he's not there. It feels like familiar tension. Josh checks his boys. Forced smiles.

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CONTINUED: (2)

JOSH
We're getting close, Candy.

She wipes the counter hurriedly, definitely upset.

CANDACE
I have to go. I'm already going to
be late.

Suddenly A CELL PHONE RINGS from somewhere in the house.

Candace stiffens, a resonating worry.

Jeff bolts off his stool, snaps up THE WALL PHONE, baffled
it's still ringing.

CHRIS
It's the cell, dufus.

CANDACE
Chris!

CHRIS
Whatever.

Jeff hunts the ringing down. He snaps a cell phone off the
couch and runs it to Josh.

JOSH
Thanks, little man.

JEFF
My boy, right, dad.

JOSH
No puppy.

JEFF
Ah, nuts.

Josh tussles Jeff's hair and flips open the phone. There's
talking from the other end.

Jeff slides back onto his stool, back to his crayon
masterpiece.

CHRIS
Suck up.

JEFF
Fart face.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

CANDACE
 (firm)
 Boys.

JOSH
 (to cell)
 And we're sure this time, Jerry?

The boys freeze with that same resonating worry.

Candace burns a stare through Josh. He only shrugs - *I'm sorry* - and disappears down the hall.

JOSH
 (to cell)
 I'm on my way.

The boys with their forced smiles. Candace masking worry.

CANDACE
 Boys, go brush your teeth.

EXT. HOSPITAL - DAY

A sprawling complex. And in the PARKING LOT a battered Ford Explorer speeds along the row of parked cars, the brakes suddenly hammered.

EXT. THE EXPLORER - STOPPED - DAY

Candace smacks the wheel. A crisp new Mercedes sedan in her parking spot.

CANDACE
 Shit!

INT. HOSPITAL - PALLIATIVE CARE WARD - DAY

ETHEL, 55, a robust and matriarch woman stands behind THE UNIT DESK in an RN's uniform, flipping through a chart with one eye watching the elevator. She's pissed.

MATILDA, 58, a Metis similar to Ethel's figure, saunters up in a much brighter RN uniform, shaking her head at Ethel.

MATILDA
 You're gonna give yourself a headache.

ETHEL
 She's late.

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MATILDA

Let Sonja worry about it.

Ethel laces Matilda with a nasty frown.

MATILDA

Oh, pop a smile in that face.

Ethel grunts it off as demur and petite MELANIE, 24, strolls around the corner. A nursing assistant all too familiar with Ethel's fuming. Her and Matilda share a smirk as..."PING"

Candace shoots out of the elevator, greeted by Ethel's scowl.

ETHEL

You're late.

CANDACE

I know that.

ETHEL

Makes the whole unit look bad. We have a new administrator you know. In case you care at all.

CANDACE

Bite me, Ethel.

Melanie and Matilda speechless as Candace marches past the UNIT DESK with her fowl mood. But nothing fazes Ethel.

ETHEL

You have Michael and Jessie this morning. See if you can get them up before lunch.

Candace goes to fire back but stops when she sees...

Sonja, 30, the ever professional unit manager in her pressed dress suit, standing outside her office, arms folded, not impressed.

Candace mouths - *sorry* - as...

TWO PATIENTS amble UP THE MAIN CORRIDOR.

Chubby LESTER, 65, dressed in house coat and slippers, and rail thin JASPER, 70, with a wheeler walker equipped with oxygen tank firmly in hand, prongs up his nose, the tube dangling precariously.

Lester tosses Candace a 'horny old man' wink.

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CONTINUED: (2)

CANDACE
Not today, Lester.

JASPER
(raspy)
Smooth, Romeo.

LESTER
(making a fist)
How'd you like a pop.

RACHEL (O.S.)
Get out of my way!

Everyone looks...

UP THE CORRIDOR

Here comes RACHEL LEE, 80, hunched like a bat out of hell in her electric wheel chair, feeble hand pressing the throttle to the max. She veers wildly, narrowly missing the food and linen carts.

JASPER
It's Rachel!

LESTER
Damn, damn, damn!

They hobble out of the way as fast as two chronically ill guys can.

Candace avoids Rachel's chair, but the old girl veers and...

CANDACE
Rachel!

...bumps Jasper's oxygen tank, knocking him into the wall.

RACHEL
Jay walker!

JASPER
Maniac!

Candace and Melanie quick to Jasper's aid, steadying him and the tank.

Rachel gives the finger as she races on down the hall.

RACHEL
Addict!

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CONTINUED: (3)

JASPER

Menace!

Ethel and Matilda shake their heads. Just another day on the ward.

Lester visibly upset, trembling as he stuffs the precious prongs into his nose. Candace and Melanie get him back in order, make sure he's got a good hold of the wheeler.

JASPER

She's crazy.

It all manages to pull Candace out of her sulk.

CANDACE

Definitely certifiably.

Then Jasper and Lester flush with lust, watching...

Buxom blonde, CHYNA, 35, and her swaying hips walk up the hall. She's a Marilyn pin up with her tight uniform undone one button too many.

JASPER

Boy, that Chyna knows how to walk.

LESTER

Best part of my day.

CANDACE

Guys...

Lester and Jasper giggle and hobble off as Chyna arrives with her pin up smile. She glances an open door to a patient's room.

CHYNA

She's in a mood again this morning.

CANDACE

Great.

Suddenly a BED PAN whips out of the room, careening off the wall. Everyone on the unit stops and looks.

CHYNA

See.

Ethel, Matilda, and Melanie take stock of the bedpan mess. Their eyes glint to...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

CANDACE

Me? Why Me?

MATILDA

Because she listens to you.

CANDACE

Thought I have to get Michael and Jessie up.

ETHEL

You do. After you calm Odel down.
 (gestures at the mess)
 Clean this up, Melanie. And Chyna,
 why don't you and your cleavage go
 get Mary up.

The tension instant. Chyna just glares, but Ethel's scowl wins.

CANDACE

Maybe I should get Mary up.

ETHEL

You're not the only one who can
 handle Mary, Candace.
 (to Chyna)
 Now.

Candace can only fold her arms and shake her head as Chyna and Melanie both strut off - pissed. Ethel only stares back at Candace. Matilda eases the tension by nudging Candace to the open door.

MATILDA

Better go before she starts tossing
 furniture out here.

Candace relents, braves herself and steps into...

INT. HOSPITAL - ODEL'S ROOM - DAY

ODEL, 65, looks exactly the way she sounds, snarly and mean, scraggly hair from years of institution living. She's propped in bed, remote aimed at her extension arm TV, doing her damndest to ignore Candace.

Nick knacks clutter the room and hordes of paper backs clog shelves. Reading has been her life.

ODEL

Get out.

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CANDACE
You're hucking bed pans, Odel.

ODEL
Ever shit in one. You'd huck it too.

CANDACE
Maybe we just need to get you out of that bed, hmmm.

Candace gestures at an electric wheel chair. Odel just grunts, snaps the remote and ups the TV volume.

CANDACE
Odel...c'mon.

ODEL
I don't know what you're so cheery about.

Odel points at the TV where we see...

DAYSIA DELANY, 30, with her perfect blonde hair and perfect smile, anchored behind a news desk. Over her shoulder an academy picture of a POLICE OFFICER, 30, slides onto the screen.

Candace overtaken with that resonate worry.

DAYSIA
(on TV)
...and as of yesterday police still had no leads in the shooting death of Constable Gus Chalmers last week. But this morning a new lead may prove their luckiest break in the case yet. I spoke with officer Josh Rothwell last night and...

Candace grabs the remote and quells the volume - enough of that.

ODEL
If it were my husband's partner that was killed, I'd be a tad short on perkiness.
(eyes the TV)
Hope Josh catches the sonofabitch.

CANDACE
Yeah, well, he's not your husband.

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ODEL

Whoa, Cinderella, who shit in your cereal this morning?

CANDACE

Life. Let's get you going.

Candace drops the bed rail, forcing herself to perk up.

She slides the sheets back and freezes - stunned. The bedsheet is COMPLETELY SOILED.

Odel stares at the TV, shame riddled in her defiant face.

ODEL

Took you long enough to get in here.

CANDACE

Try pushing the button instead of hucking pans, Odel.

ODEL

I have my dignity.

INT. HOSPITAL - PALLIATIVE CARE WARD - CORRIDOR - DAY

Where Candace finds Chyna waving her into...

INT. HOSPITAL - MARY'S ROOM - DAY

Candace hustles in to find Mary slung up in THE HOYER LIFT. Mary's HAIR LONG AND FULL. She's visibly upset.

A strong and fit respiratory tech, GREG, 30, is waiting to maneuver the lift over a GURNEY.

MARY

(raspy)

Candace, tell them I don't need that tube down my throat again!

CANDACE

Okay, Mare, calm down.
(to Chyna and Greg)
What are we doing?

GREG

I'm supposed to get her down to respiratory...
(taps his chest)
...get that phlegm out of there.

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CANDACE
Doctor Hamm order this?

CHYNA
Ethel's order.

Candace sighs, all of them familiar with Ethel's strict command.

CANDACE
Sorry, Mare.

MARY
But Clint and the kids are coming.

CANDACE
Don't worry. We'll have you back in
no time. Promise.
(to Chyna)
Right?

Forced smiles.

CHYNA
You bet.

Greg gestures at the gurney - tired of waiting.

GREG
Can we..?

CANDACE
I'll give you guys a hand getting
her to the elevator.

CHYNA
(flops her arms)
Great, now Ethel's gonna write me
up.

CANDACE
I can handle Ethel, Chyna. Don't
worry.

Candace assumes Mary's head in her hands.

GREG
See, Mary, all better now.
Florence Nightingale is here.

CANDACE
Thanks for that, Greg.

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Chyna giggles. Greg preens, checking the 'undone one button' cleavage. Something Candace and Mary share a quick glance over.

CANDACE
Okay, let's do this.

Greg heaves the lift over the gurney as Chyna drops the rails.

Candace holds Mary's head firm. Mary looking up at her with complete trust.

MARY
Can you be with me when I get back?

Candace glances at Chyna, who nods - *go ahead*.

CANDACE
You bet.

INT. HOSPITAL - MICHAEL'S ROOM - DAY

MICHAEL, 20, works obsessively at his computer, iPod hooked into his ears, imprisoned in a wheel chair - a hacker.

His room minimalist and sterile, no pictures aside from pin up posters clinging to the walls.

Candace walks in surprised to find him up. Even his bed is made. She pops an earphone out.

CANDACE
You're up? Did heaven and earth
move?

Michael doesn't joust back. He just frowns her off and positions A SMALL VIDEO CAMERA on his desk then pecks the keyboard.

Candace peeks over his shoulder.

CANDACE
So what mayhem are we up to today?

MICHAEL
Got a new toy from my guilt ridden,
never-comes-to-see-me father.

A few keystrokes and...

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ON THE MONITOR Candace is captured live, looking over Michael's shoulder.

MICHAEL
Wireless video cam.

He picks THE SMALL CAMERA UP and aims the eye around the room.

CANDACE
Should I be concerned with you
having this?

Michael laughs like all evil doers, aims the camera ACROSS THE HALL where...

A clean cut MAN, 35, in an expensive suit, totting a brief case, exits a room.

Candace watches on the monitor then glances across the hall for herself. They're concerned.

MICHAEL
The asshole's lawyer. He's
divorcing her.

INT. HOSPITAL - JESSICA'S ROOM - DAY

Candace walks in and pops open the blinds.

CANDACE
Up and at 'em, Jess.

JESSICA, 70, a once spry woman ravaged from life in bed. A portrait on her wall captures youthful beauty, a sharp contrast to the sickly woman under the covers.

A ventilator under her bed works tirelessly.

Jessica smiles gloriously with the sunlight washing over her.

Candace LEANS OVER the bed rails, nearly nose to nose.

JESSICA
It's a beautiful day. Isn't it,
dear?

CANDACE
It's March, Jess.

Candace notices a legal document on Jessica's bed table. A "Divorce Decree." Jessica's smile dims.

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JESSICA
He's free now.

CANDACE
So are you.

Jessica's withered fingers caress the bed rail - her prison.

JESSICA
Almost. How's our Josh? It's a
very sad thing something like that.

Candace smiles - feigning calm. And then Melanie leans into the doorway.

MELANIE
Hi, Jess.

JESSICA
Hello, dear.

MELANIE
(to Candace)
Mack's door is still closed.

INT. HOSPITAL - MACK'S ROOM - DAY

The once formidable MACK BLAKEY, 40, in his WHEEL CHAIR, parked at his open WINDOW. He's watching something on a PORTABLE DVD PLAYER on his lap, earphones in his ears, his jaw clenching.

His room homey with NHL POSTERS of him - yesterday's star goalie - tacked to the walls.

Candace breezes into the room with REGGIE, 25, a body building respiratory tech, pulling a wheeled ventilator pack behind him.

CANDACE
Morning, Mack. Reggie is going to
get your ventilator hooked, okay.

Mack barely nods, his attention on what he's watching.

Reggie runs hoses from the pack.

REGGIE
How's our hockey man today?

No response. Reggie is used to it, does his job.

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Candace sees A PICTURE OF "MISS CANADA 1982" on the settee.

CANDACE
Is Lara coming today?

Nothing but a rueful nod answers.

Reggie has Mack RIGGED UP in no time, easing the mask over his face, careful to not pop out the earphones. Reggie checks out what Mack is watching.

REGGIE
Good game?

Mack just stares at THE DVD PLAYER on his lap. Candace and Reggie exchange a quick shrug.

CANDACE
We'll check in on you later, Mack.

Reggie leaves. Candace hangs at the door, professionally concerned. Mack gradually faces her with the faintest of smiles.

Candace manages one herself then leaves, the door easing shut.

Mack RETURNS TO THE DVD PLAYER, his laboured breath fogging the mask.

We see his torture ON THE SCREEN. A STANLEY CUP GAME, Mack the goalie as he once had been. An amazing save, the announcer yelling "Mack Blakey has done it!" The cheering crowd in his earphones.

His fist clenches, slams his knees. Then again. Then again. Then again.

INT. HOSPITAL - MARY'S ROOM - DAY

Mary BACK IN BED, her clef trachea and ventilator hooked. She anxiously waits for Candace to dig a make up kit out of the settee where that picture of them together is perched.

MARY
(less raspy)
They'll be here soon.

CANDACE
I know. I know. Calm down. I'm sure
we have time.

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A bit of blush. Mary eyes her WEDDING PORTRAIT.

MARY

I just want Clint to see the woman
he married.

CANDACE

I think he still sees her.

Mary sighs, a moment of pity that Candace assuages with
eyeliner.

CANDACE

Hold still.

MARY

Yeah, cause today I can magically
move.

CANDACE

Very funny. Ha ha. You distract me,
this takes longer you know.

MARY

I'm just nervous. My Dad is coming
with Clint and the kids.

CANDACE

Try not to get too upset.

MARY

I know he's just really scared,
but...

CANDACE

(pauses the eyeliner
brush)
You're blinking.

MARY

Sorry. How's Josh?

CANDACE

(lies)
He's okay.

MARY

Liar. You're not though.

CANDACE

I'm the nurse. You're the patient,
remember.

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CONTINUED: (2)

MARY
Oh yeah, that slipped my mind.

Candace digs in the bag.

CANDACE
Boy, you and I are in the same mood
today.

Finds the lip gloss.

CANDACE
Pucker your lips a bit.

MARY
You should tell him how you feel.
Let him know how upset you are.

CANDACE
What, are you a marriage counsellor
now? Pucker.

MARY
(while puckering)
Was he married?

CANDACE
Who?

MARY
Josh's partner.

That stops Candace, that resonating worry again.

The moment hangs there between them, the reality of losing a
loved one biting.

MARY
You're really scared, aren't you?

Candace shakes it off. Puts the makeup away.

MARY
I see that look.

CANDACE
What look?

MARY
The same look Clint has.

Candace can't hide the worry, the dread she conceals.

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CONTINUED: (3)

Suddenly... A knock.

CLINT
We're here.

Clint enters with bright eyed and smiling, JUSTIN, 6, holding his hand. The formidable Sam follows with JAYLEE, 13, entering the room like she hates being dragged along. She's Mary all over again.

JUSTIN
Hey, mommy!

MARY
(beaming)
Hi.

CANDACE
Good morning, Clint.

CLINT
Morning, Candace.

CANDACE
Hi, Jaylee.

Jaylee hangs by the window, a forced grin from afar.

JAYLEE
Hi.

Candace and Mary exchange a quick glance - *teenagers*.

CANDACE
Sam, how are you?

SAM
Fine, Candace.
(gestures at the door)
Can we have some time with her if you don't mind.

CLINT
Sam...

SAM
What. I don't want to visit my daughter while they poke and prod her.
(off Jeff and Jaylee's frowns)
It upsets the kids.

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CLINT
(to Candace)
Sorry.

Candace smiles it off.

CANDACE
I understand. I'm done for now.
I'll come back in a bit. You guys
just enjoy the visit.

She rustles Justin's hair on her way out.

CANDACE
Cuter every time, Justin.

Justin loves that.

Sam closes the door following Candace's exit. Clint leans over the bed, soaking in his wife.

CLINT
You look beautiful.

They're eyes meld for barely a moment before Justin presses his face to the bed rail.

JUSTIN
Yeah, you look pretty, mommy.

MARY
Thanks, baby.

Jaylee still hanging by the window - lost in the view.

MARY
Hey, girl.

JAYLEE
Hey.

And Sam stands at the foot of the bed.

SAM
How'er you doing, kiddo?

MARY
(looking at Clint)
Better now.

JUSTIN
Can I hug you, mommy.

(CONTINUED)

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MARY
I'm sorry, baby. I wish you could.

SAM
You know your mom would spasm,
Justin.

CLINT
(passive)
He knows, Sam.

Justin hangs by the bed, head drooped. Mary aches to sooth him.

MARY
Hey, baby. How bout a head butt.

Clint hoists Justin up and leans him to Mary. Justin touches her face the instant their foreheads gently connect, then he's back on his feet.

The whole display twists a frown out of Sam. Jaylee just looks on, dour.

MARY
(to Justin)
Better?

JUSTIN
Yep. Can I watch TV?

MARY
Sure, baby.

And Clint snaps up a remote, cartoons suddenly alive in the room. For the moment a family again.

EXT. HOSPITAL - PARKING LOT - DAY

Candace marching for the Explorer, cell phone to her ear.

She evil eyes A SLICK GUY in an expensive suit climbing into the Mercedes in her stall.

CANDACE
(to cell)
Fine, I'll get Jeff but you have to
pick Chris up, Josh.

INT. PRECINT SQUAD ROOM - DAY

Josh looking over crime scene evidence spread over a tactical desk with his squad team, his cell phone to his ear.

JOSH
(to cell)
He's thirteen, Candy, can't he___.

CANDACE
(over cell)
Josh, his hockey practice is at six, so there isn't time for him to eat and go--.

JOSH
(to cell)
Okay, okay. You're right. I'll get him.

Josh folds the phone.

JERRY
How many times have I told you.
Just say 'yes'.

JERRY, 40, a portly guy in cheap shirt and tie with a standard issue gun strapped around his shoulder, combs over the evidence.

JOSH
We're getting close here. I can feel it

JERRY
We're always getting close. Take a night off. Stay with Candy and the boys. Gus's death is hard on them too.

Josh acknowledges that with a nod, points at the evidence table.

JOSH
You sure, Jerry?

JERRY
That's an order.

Josh reluctantly makes for the door.

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JOSH
Okay, but if anything comes up___.

JERRY
I'll call.

JOSH
I mean anything...

JERRY
(to other cops)
What did I just say.

Josh hangs on the door.

JERRY
(waves him off)
We'll call. Go. go.

And Josh finally goes.

EXT. ELEMENTARY SCHOOL - DAY

Kids flooding out the doors for their rides. Jeff among them, sagging under a weighted backpack.

The battered Explorer pulls up to the curb.

EXT. THE EXPLORER - PARKED - DAY

Jeff climbs in, grunting, his backpack way heavy. He slams the door like all kids do - way too hard. It all pulls a smirk out of Candace.

CANDACE
Hey, buddy. Have a good day?

JEFF
Uh huh.
(big smile)
No puffs.

CANDACE
Awesome.

JEFF
(bigger smile)
That's almost a whole week.

CANDACE
Still won't change the answer.

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CONTINUED:

JEFF

Nuts.

CANDACE

Really don't like you using that word, bud.

JEFF

It's not even a swear.

CANDACE

It's a mom thing. How 'bout 'peanuts' instead.

JEFF

If I get a dog I won't say it anymore!

CANDACE

Nice try.

EXT. HIGH SCHOOL - DAY

Chris waits by the front steps, passing the time with an iTouch. A few girls sashay by, waving and giggling.

GIRLS

Hi, Chris.

He waves, used to the flirting.

A VINTAGE MUSTANG roars up the street and stops.

Chris sees the car - laments the ride.

EXT. MUSTANG - MOVING - DAY

Josh driving. Chris avoiding, staring out the window. Josh searching for a way to break the quiet.

JOSH

How was your day?

CHRIS

Fine.

JOSH

Just...fine?

CHRIS

What, do you want a full report or something?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JOSH
Where's that coming from?

CHRIS
Never mind.

The familiar tension. Josh drives. Chris stares at nothing out the window.

Josh tries again.

JOSH
Wanna stop my wicked slap shots for a while after supper?

CHRIS
It's okay. I have a practise tonight anyway.

JOSH
Be like a warm up. Get you all stretched out.

CHRIS
I don't know. Maybe.

JOSH
Or not. Fair enough. What time is practice?

CHRIS
Seven. Why?

JOSH
Well, I'll take you.

CHRIS
Thought you have bad guys to catch.

Josh resists an argument. He drives for a beat then...

JOSH
Gus was my friend, Chris. My partner. He had kids too.

CHRIS
So do you.

JOSH
Yeah, I do. And the guy who shot him is dangerous.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

JOSH (CONT'D)

So, the sooner I catch him, the sooner I get to feel my family is safe again. Understand?

Chris just gazes out the window, suppressing his anger.

JOSH

(firm)

I'll take you to your practise, alright.

CHRIS

Whatever.

Josh just drives, shakes his head - *teenagers*.

INT. CANDACE'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Candace pops a CARTRIDGE INTO A PUFFER as Chris walks in, flops his back pack on the floor and takes his dark mood to his room.

Josh trails behind. All he can do is shrug as he plops his keys and cell phone on the island.

JOSH

I didn't do anything. But his attitude has to change.

CANDACE

He's just...a little scared. We all are.

Josh sighs off his guilt.

JOSH

So, then it's okay he's pissed at me all the time?

CANDACE

No. But it's a reason. We're all feeling it, Josh.

JOSH

(backing off)

Okay, I know that, alright. But his attitude has been downhill even before.

(points at the puffer)

Jeff okay?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CANDACE

He's a bit wheezy. He was hiding a spare one in his room so we would think he wasn't puffing.

Josh fetches milk out of the fridge, a glass out of the cupboard.

JOSH

Man, he really wants a dog. Maybe we could get one of those non-allergetic ones or something.

CANDACE

And you'll walk it in the morning?

JOSH

Ah...no.

Josh grins, takes the puffer.

JOSH

Chris will.

Before he makes the hallway...

CANDACE

Josh...

JOSH

Yeah.

CANDACE

Maybe you could spend some time with them tonight. That might help.

JOSH

(takes her in his arms)
Maybe some 'us' time, too? Hmmm.

Candace smiles out of his arms.

JOSH

Or not.

Josh smirks off the rejection.

JOSH

That scared or that mad, Candy?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

She backs herself to the counter, points at the puffer - avoiding the answer.

CANDACE
He needs that.

JOSH
Right.

Josh disappears down the hall. Candace sighs as if confused by her own reaction.

Suddenly Josh's cell phone vibrates on the island.

She stares at it with that resonating worry again. She steps over, picks it up.

Caller ID is *Daysia Delany*.

JOSH
Who is it?

Candace startles. Josh is behind her.

CANDACE
Daysia Delany?

He flips it open.

JOSH
(to cell)
Hello, Daysia. One second.
(covers the cell)
She's a reporter who's been bugging me for an interview about Gus. Let me get rid of her and we'll take the boys for burgers or something, okay.

CANDACE
(feigned smile)
Okay.

Josh kisses her cheek, turns back down the hall.

JOSH
(to cell)
Daysia. Sorry about that. Yeah, maybe tomorrow might be okay...

Candace watches him, completely annoyed with herself - *what's wrong with me?*

INT. CANDACE'S HOUSE - JEFF'S ROOM - NIGHT

The room adorned with shelves of Tonka trucks and NHL memorabilia. A poster of Mack Blakey back in his goalie heyday.

Jeff, in Spiderman pajamas, dashes into the room with Candace chasing after him. He flops on his bed, giggling and twisting to avoid Candace's tickles.

JEFF
Mom, I give. I give.
(wide eyed)
I'll pee.

CANDACE
Don't you dare. Get in there.

Candace tucks him in, LAYS DOWN beside him, stroking his hair. Jeff reaches for that crayon picture on his bed.

JEFF
Pretty good, huh.

CANDACE
Yes, it's very good.

JEFF
I really want a puppy.

CANDACE
(tickling his stomach
playfully)
I want a puppy. Boohoo. Boohoo.

JEFF
(giggling)
Stop it.

CANDACE
(still tickling)
Boohoo. Boohoo.

JEFF
Mom. I'll pee.

Candace plants a huge, mother loving kiss on his head. Jeff sits up, rubs the kiss off.

JEFF
You slobbered me, mom. Cooties.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CANDACE
Mothers don't have cooties.

She kisses him again, a quick hug.

CANDACE
Sleep.

JEFF
If I have no puffs for the whole week, can we get one?

CANDACE
Tell you what. You have no puffs for the whole week, we'll think about having a talk about maybe getting one some day. Of course I'll be checking your room for puffers.

He flops down.

JEFF
This sucks.

CANDACE
Excuse me?

JEFF
I mean 'peanuts'. Geez, I can't even use little swears.

She tucks him tight, another quick kiss, goes to turn off the light but...

JEFF
Mom?

CANDACE
Yeah.

JEFF
Daddy won't die like Uncle Gus, right?

Candace kneels down to him, masking her worry.

CANDACE
Daddy is going to be fine.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

JEFF
 (extends his pinky)
 Promise.

CANDACE
 (joins pinky fingers)
 Promise. Now get to sleep.

Another kiss. She flicks off his light, leaving the door ajar.

Then from the kitchen...

JOSH (O.S.)
 I'm on my way.

INT. CANDACE'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Josh putting on a jacket with his cell phone tucked in the crook of his neck.

JOSH
 (to cell)
 ...and we're sure it's the same car..?

He catches Candace glaring at him and freezes.

JOSH
 (to cell)
 I'll be there in ten, Jerry.
 (flips the phone closed)
 This could be our guy.

Her arms fold, the wall against her vulnerability.

CANDACE
 Fine. Go.

JOSH
 I'll be back as soon as I can.

And he's gone. She sighs - coping.

INT. CANDACE'S HOUSE - CHRIS'S ROOM - NIGHT

Candace pokes her head through the door. The lights are already out.

CANDACE
 Night, Sweetie.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CHRIS
(annoyed)
Mom.

CANDACE
Sorry. Good night, Christopher.
That better?

CHRIS
Yeah.

He rolls over, his back to her.

CANDACE
You know, we're all worried. It's
okay, y'know.

He turns to her with that irritating teenage scowl.

CHRIS
Mom, I'm not one of your patients.
I just wanna go to sleep.

CANDACE
Okay. Good night.

CHRIS
(rolls back over)
Night.

She closes the door, a little wounded.

INT. CANDACE'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - NIGHT

The room dark.

SHORT HAIRED CANDACE lays in bed, wide awake, staring at the
CLOCK RADIO - 2AM.

She rolls over, alone, touches Josh's side of the bed.

INT. HOSPITAL - MARY'S ROOM - DAY

SUNLIGHT BLINDS the eyes as LONG HAIRED CANDACE throws open
Mary's drapes. She's well into her morning groove.

CANDACE
Rise and shine.

Candace leans over the bed rail and strokes Mary's LONG HAIR.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CANDACE
Morning, bright eyes.

Mary shimmers.

MARY
(raspy)
You're with me?

CANDACE
I've got you for the whole day.

INT. HOSPITAL - MARY'S ROOM - DAY

Candace and Melanie lean Mary forward in her modified chair.

While Melanie supports Mary, Candace ties a washing cape around her, the bottom tucked into a bucket.

INT. HOSPITAL - MARY'S ROOM - DAY

While Candace supports Mary, Melanie pours water over her head. Mary trembles and shakes - minor spasms.

Candace holds her till she calms.

INT. HOSPITAL - MARY'S ROOM - DAY

Melanie holds Mary's head while Candace shampoos. It's like girls getting ready for a Friday night out.

INT. HOSPITAL - MARY'S ROOM - DAY

Mary in the chair. Melanie folds Mary's limp arms together under a blanket while Candace combs her hair lovingly.

INT. HOSPITAL - MARY'S ROOM - DAY

Candace applying lipstick and eyeliner to Mary. Melanie holds up a make up mirror. Mary smiles. Some dignity revived. Still a beautiful woman.

INT. HOSPITAL - MARY'S ROOM - DAY

Mary BACK IN HER BED. Candace fishes through a drawer, flipping through CD's while Melanie tucks Mary's bedsheets tight.

CANDACE
Time for a little distraction.
Whad'ya think?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MARY

Let's raise some hell.

They eye Melanie, the demure accomplice.

MELANIE

Oh, I am down for that.

Candace SLIDES THE DISC into the BOOM BOX. Music fills the room.

Candace and Melanie dance as if transported back to the high school sock hop.

Mary's smile spreads from ear to ear - dancing inside. Candace cranks the volume more. Mary blinks along with the song.

CANDACE

You go, girl.

INT. HOSPITAL - PALLIATIVE CARE WARD - CORRIDOR - DAY

Heads poke out of rooms, all staring at Mary's open door where music blares from inside.

Chyna comes out of Michael's room as Matilda walks up. Chyna boogies a shoulder.

Matilda laughs, continues up the corridor, her body swaying to the music as if barely aware it's happening.

Ethel standing at her UNIT DESK, arms folded, her consternated gaze fixed on Mary's open door.

MATILDA

Lighten up.

ETHEL

They don't have to have it so loud.

Rachel GLIDES UP TO THE DESK IN HER SPEEDY WHEEL CHAIR, her bony fingers snapping to the beat.

RACHEL

Groovy, man.

ETHEL

Oh brother.

INT. HOSPITAL - ODEL'S ROOM - DAY

She ups the TV volume, violated by the music flooding in.
She eyes her bedpan.

INT. HOSPITAL - MACK'S ROOM - DAY

Mack in his wheel chair, staring out the window, nose prongs
in place while the ventilator aids his breathing.

His gaze drifts from the window to the door - *fucking racket*.

INT. HOSPITAL - JESSICA'S ROOM - DAY

Chyna dances into the room and throws open the blinds.
Jessica's face the usual glow, cranking her head to see out
the door.

JESSICA

I miss dancing.

Chyna shakes her impressive cleavage to Jessica's delight.

INT. HOSPITAL - MICHEAL'S ROOM - DAY

He's no where in his room. But...

ON THE MONITOR

WE SEE A VACANT HOSPITAL ROOM where someone is placing the
CAMERA EYE strategically inside a cabinet, closing the door
just enough to hide it, aimed right at the bed.

Micheal's face comes into view, checking the placement.

INT. HOSPITAL - PALLIATIVE CARE WARD - CORRIDOR - DAY

The music rocking through the unit.

Micheal pokes his head out of the vacant room. The coast
clear, he quickly wheels himself for his room. Covert as
hell as...

INT. HOSPITAL - LESTER'S ROOM - DAY

Through the ajar door, Lester and Jasper watch Michael wheel
out of the vacant room. They snicker with a high-five.

THROUGH THE DOOR CRACK they see Chyna skip by, her wonderful
cleavage heaving against her top.

Lester rubs at his heart - that's a bit too much.

INT. HOSPITAL - SONJA'S OFFICE - DAY

Sonja behind her desk, across from the exceedingly handsome DEVLIN JONES, 30 - the slick guy. A meeting in progress.

The muffled music rumbles beyond the door.

DEVLIN
Someone celebrating?

SONJA
I have a pretty good idea where
it's coming from.

They step out into the hall, the music flooding.

INT. HOSPITAL - MARY'S ROOM - DAY

Mary's SMILE stretched even more.

Candace spins around with a HAIRBRUSH for a MICROPHONE,
singing along. Melanie joins in.

They put the brush to Mary's mouth. The girls are gettin'
down!

INT. HOSPITAL - PALLIATIVE CARE WARD - UNIT DESK - DAY

Matilda pulls out a chart, grooving. Ethel souring more with
each beat. They see...

Reggie and Greg come up the hall, Reggie dancing like a man
possessed.

GREG
Don't hurt yourself, man.

Matilda has to watch Reggie shake PAST. Even Ethel sneaks a
peek.

Suddenly Matilda stiffens, diverts herself with the chart.
Ethel smirks, watching...

Sonja and Devlin march right past the desk.

ETHEL
Now she's gone too far.

INT. HOSPITAL - MARY'S ROOM - DAY

Reggie TWISTS into the room, nudging against Melanie's
gyrating body. A beat later they freeze - caught.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Candace stops singing into the brush when she sees...

SONJA IN THE DOORWAY - *BUSTED*

Candace shuts the boom box off at mid chorus.

CANDACE

Sorry, Sonja. I was just...ah...

She notices Devlin throwing a disarming smile as Sonja steps into the room, gauging the misdemeanors.

SONJA

Okay, the three of you. I have no problem with a little music, put a little fun in the day, that kinda thing. Just don't have it blasting through the whole unit. We are a hospital. I don't like having to listen to Ethel rant any more than the rest of you, alright. And close the door next time. Candace??

Candace glancing at Devlin - curious and intrigued.

SONJA

Candace?

CANDACE

Got it. Close the door.

SONJA

Thank you.

Sonja leaves. Devlin waves a mock finger then disappears down the hall. Even Melanie noticed him.

MELANIE

Who was that?

CANDACE

I don't know.

Mary's SMILE still brims - still enjoying the diversion from pity and paralysis. Candace leans over the rail.

MARY

Pick another one.

CANDACE

That's enough trouble for one day.

INT. HOSPITAL - PALLIATIVE CARE WARD - UNIT DESK - DAY

Candace loitering just beyond the desk, trying to get a peek into...

Sonja'S OFFICE

Through the door window she sees Devlin sitting in a chair.

Ethel struts behind the desk, still annoyed.

CANDACE

Ethel, who's that guy in there with
Sonja?

ETHEL

Get back to work.

She huffs off with a chart in hand, duties to do.

Matlida steps up behind Candace.

MATILDA

Checking out the new administrator.

CANDACE

That's him?

MATILDA

(whispers to Candace)
He drives a Mercedes.

That changes everything - *asshole*.

INT. HOSPITAL - COMMISSARY - DAY

Candace plugs THE CANDY MACHINE and selects an 'Oh Henry'
bar.

She sees Chyna and Greg nuzzling at a table.

Candace watches them a beat, envious.

INT. HOSPITAL - MARY'S ROOM - DAY

Candace places a morsal of Oh Henry in Mary's mouth, let's
her savor, then removes it.

Mary's voice raspy again, her breathing shallow.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CANDACE

I think you're right about Greg and Chyna.

MARY

I thought they were gonna do it right here in the room with me.

CANDACE

Okay, okay. That's what we need. More gossip around here.

MARY

Michael told me he saw them.

Candace slices off another morsal - another savoring.

CANDACE

How would Michael see them?

MARY

He says they're doing it all the time.

CANDACE

Like he'd know.

(a thought)

Unless he's...he wouldn't...would he?

MARY

What are you talking about?

CANDACE

Nothing.

Mary has a far away look.

CANDACE

What?

MARY

I miss doing it.

CANDACE

Can't help you there.

MARY

You're a prude.

CANDACE

I am not.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

MARY
You are. You're a prude.

CANDACE
Am not.

MARY
Yes you are.

CANDACE
No I'm not.

MARY
Fine. Then tell me the last time
you and Josh did it? Did it good.

CANDACE
I've been married a while.

MARY
Prude.

CANDACE
Uh huh. Whatever.

Another piece of Oh Henry. Savors - spits out.

MARY
At least you get it. I'd even
settle for a stripper.

CANDACE
Maybe this chocolate isn't a good
idea.

They laugh at that. Candace eases another piece to Mary's mouth but suddenly stops. Mary's face scrunching. Her breathing raspy.

MARY
I have to pee.

INT. HOSPITAL - MARY'S ROOM - DAY

Candace and Melanie maneuver Mary in her bed, adjusting her limp legs apart, leaving a sheet to cover her.

Melanie passes a CATHETER to Candace. Candace lifts the bedsheet, and reaches her hand between Mary's propped legs. Mary grimaces slightly then...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CANDACE

There.

Suddenly Mary spasms, her head jerking violently.

MARY

Candace!

Candace grabs Mary's head. The spasm subsides as if her touch alone subdued her.

CANDACE

Okay.

MARY

They're getting worse.

Candace wipes Mary's sweaty forehead with a damp cloth, slightly concerned with Mary's pale complexion, every breath a wheeze. She coughs, winces - something hurting.

MELANIE

She does look pretty pale.

Candace wipes dark spittle trickling down Mary's chin.

CANDACE

I'm going to get Doctor Hamm to have a look at you tomorrow.

MARY

No. He'll send me back down to Respiratory for a week. Clint and the kids won't be able to come.

Candace uses her best smile to disarm Mary's worry. Melanie endorses with one of her own.

CANDACE

He'll just have a look. Okay.

Mary nods, her worry evident.

INT. HOSPITAL - MARY'S ROOM - NIGHT

Mary IN BED, a medicated sleep with the mask on, her wheezy chest heaving, the machinery pinging and chirping. Her door slightly ajar, a thin stream of hallway light trickles in.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

She's dreaming, the wisps of a smile barely visible under the fogged mask.

FLASHBACK TO:

INT. LIVINGROOM - NIGHT

The CRAYON COLORED FAMILY TREE PICTURE sits atop an entertainment unit. The paper a little newer, the colors bright, like kindergarten class was that day.

We move DOWN THE HALL as panic echoes behind a closed door somewhere in the house.

CLINT (O.S.)

Mary! Wake up!

As we pass Jaylee's open door, she rouses from blissful slumber.

JAYLEE

Dad. Mom?

Justin springs into the hall from his bedroom, hustles across the hall and PUSHES OPEN the bedroom door to find...

Clint FRANTICALLY SHAKING Mary in bed, sheer panic consuming him. Mary limp - a coma has claimed her.

CLINT

Mary! Mary!

Justin and Jaylee recoil in horror.

JUSTIN

Mommy!!

JAYLEE

Mom!!

It's pandemonium. Clint jumps over his still wife, checking her pulse.

CLINT

Please, Mary. Wake up. Please!

And then...

MARY (O.S.)

Nooo!!!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

WE SWING FROM CLINT TO MARY STANDING IN THE DOORWAY

Her image has replaced Justin and Jaylee, still dressed in her hospital gown, the tubes and wires dangling free around her.

MARY

Wake me up! Wake me up!

SMASH BACK TO:

INT. HOSPITAL - MARY'S ROOM - NIGHT

Mary startles awake, as if the dream released her, quickly disheartened to find herself still in her hospital room, still in her bed, still in her catatonic life.

Gradually she looks up at HER WEDDING PICTURE and THE CRAYON COLORED FAMILY TREE with wallet photos of her family - her tormented breathing raspy under the mask. Life nothing but pain and loss. She cries.

And just down the hall...

INT. HOSPITAL - JESSICA'S ROOM - NIGHT

Michael's wheel chair parked beside Jessica's bed, the bible open on his lap.

They hear Mary sob down the corridor. Michael fuming behind his eyes, angry at their turn of fate.

But Jessica gently rubs at her bed rails, a complete calm about her that leaves Michael uneasy.

INT. HOSPITAL - MARY'S ROOM - DAY

DOCTOR HAMM, 50, the classic 'A' type personality, places his stethoscope under Mary's top. Her wheezy chest echoing the room.

Candace, Ethel and Matilda wait his diagnosis.

ETHEL

She was fine the day before. I had her check out.

DOCTOR HAMM

She wasn't fine. She has pneumonia, again. She's going to respiratory. And this time she stays till I dismiss her.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Mary looks to Candace, begging her to do something.

CANDACE

Ah, Doctor Hamm is that necessary?

Ethel glares Candace like a soldier who just stepped out of rank. So does Hamm.

DOCTOR HAMM

Remind me again, Candace, what you do here?

Candace regrets her boldness.

CANDACE

Nursing.

DOCTOR HAMM

Exactly. Nursing.

CANDACE

It's just all she has is her family coming, and in respiratory they can only come for short visits, and___.

ETHEL

Candace, that's quite enough, please.

DOCTOR HAMM

(to Candace)

You want to take responsibility for her failing health?

(off Candace's nod)

Didn't think so.

(To Ethel)

I'll get her a bed in respiratory in a few hours.

ETHEL

Yes, Doctor.

DOCTOR HAMM

In the meantime, give her a mild sedative with her Ventalyn. Keep her relaxed.

Candace can only offer Mary a forced smile. Mary doesn't have a smile to give back.

INT. HOSPITAL - PALLIATIVE CARE WARD - LOUNGE - DAY

Reality show *Cheaters* is on the BIG SCREEN TV.

Jessica in her bed, enthralled. Melanie sitting with her, spooning Jell-o.

Lester and Jasper duel it out at the chess table. Lester waiting a lifetime for Jasper's next move. Jasper goes for his Bishop but...

LESTER
Wouldn't do that.

A groan. Jasper tries his Knight.

LESTER
Wouldn't do that.

JASPER
Shut up!

Candace glides Mary's electric chair in and parks her beside Jessica. Mary has an OXYGEN MASK on.

CANDACE
Good show today, Jess?

JESSICA
Very exciting one, dear.

Rachel coasts in. Jasper slicks his hair and straightens.

LESTER
What's with you?

JASPER
(smiling at Rachel)
Nothing.

Rachel gives him the finger, more interested in the reality show. Candace and Melanie can't help but grin.

LESTER
(gestures to game)
Move.

JASPER
Stop telling me how to play!

JESSICA
Shush, you two!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

They both moan to Candace and Melanie's delight.

Ethel in the doorway, poised with that strict face as usual.

ETHEL
Candace, Sonja wants to see you.

CANDACE
Now.

ETHEL
Now.

CANDACE
(to Mary)
I'll be right back.

Candace leaves.

Jessica's infectious SMILE tossed at Mary.

JESSICA
I heard Chyna and Greg doing it in
the spare room. He's a machine,
that one.

Melanie's mouth falls open, Jell-o at mid spoon.

MELANIE
Jessie...

JESSICA
Boy what I wouldn't give for a
night with him.

LESTER
Hmmp. Shouldn't have lost your
husband then.

They all berate Lester. Jasper even tosses his Bishop at
Lester's head.

LESTER
What! What did I say?

But Jessica is too concerned over Mary's raspy breathes
getting shorter under the mask.

INT. HOSPITAL - SONJA'S OFFICE - DAY

Sonja professionally behind her desk. Candace pokes in the
door.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CANDACE

Sonja, you wanted to see me?

SONJA

Yeah, c'mon in, Candace.

Candace takes the seat, knowing what's coming.

CANDACE

So whose complaining this time?

SONJA

More like concerned.

CANDACE

Fine. Ethel's concerned. What is she concerned about this time?

SONJA

The same thing I am. We have to keep trying to get some of the others in with Mary. You're still spending too much time with her.

CANDACE

If this is about the music we'll tone it down and__.

SONJA

It's not about the music.

CANDACE

Well, every time it just ends up being me in there anyway. Why put her through that?

SONJA

I know. I know. But we still have to try.

CANDACE

Sonja, I understand her. That's why. You know that. No one else does.

SONJA

This is coming from higher up than me. With the new administrator there's going to be a few more changes around here before it's all done.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

CANDACE

What is that supposed to mean?

SONJA

It means we have to watch what were doing, that's all.

CANDACE

It means I have to.

Sonja tenses - an awkward question coming.

SONJA

Candace, is everything okay at home?

CANDACE

What?

SONJA

I'm just saying that that's a helluva thing to go through. I mean about Josh's partner.

CANDACE

We're getting through it.

SONJA

Okay. I'm just saying if you feel you need to take some time, I'll find a way to make it work.

CANDACE

Ethel would like that.

SONJA

Ethel will rant, but I'm unit manager.

(carefully)

I just know it hasn't been easy for you, that's all.

Candace glances the door - she's heard enough.

CANDACE

I'm still with her today?

Sonja realizes she's offended. She smiles complacently.

SONJA

Sure, okay. But we'll try with Chyna again tomorrow, okay.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

CANDACE

Fine.

(gets up then stops)

And why is Mr. Devlin parking in my spot?

SONJA

I wasn't aware of that. I'll look into it.

Suddenly through the DOOR WINDOW they notice Greg and Reggie run past. Something is wrong.

INT. HOSPITAL - PALLIATIVE CARE WARD - LOUNGE - DAY

It's code blue pandemonium. Reggie and Greg hold Mary while she spasms violently. Melanie doing all she can to replace her oxygen mask.

The patients all horrified - death and agony front and center.

Candace and Sonja race in.

CANDACE

What happened!?

REGGIE

A little help!

Candace grabs her head, whispering in her ear. It's not working. Mary wrenching with painful contortions.

REGGIE

No good, Candace. Not this time.

(to Greg)

Do it.

Ethel and Matilda rush in the room. Rachel on their heels with her speedy chair.

Everyone watching Mary's spasmodic body vibrate the shit out of her chair.

JASPER

Jesus.

Mary grits pure pain. They can't hold her down.

Greg plunges the needle into her upper neck.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Almost instantly Mary's spasms subside, her face relaxes. The raspy breathing even more evident.

The room calms down. Jessica watches them straighten Mary in her chair.

JESSICA
She hurts so much.

They all look to Jessica, somehow baffled by her calm.

JESSICA
And that is no way too live.

Candace keeps hold of Mary's limp head, looking at Jessica as they all do. Like the way she spoke was a little too phlegmatic.

Finally Jessica's composed gaze finds Candace.

JESSICA
It's no way too live at all.

Candace can only gaze back, as if sensing Jessica's meaning.

INT. CANDACE'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - DAY

Josh asleep, sprawled out, the entire bed to himself.

Jeff, in his spider man pajamas, nudges Josh.

JEFF
Daddy...

Another nudge.

JEFF
(louder)
Dad.

JOSH
(stirring awake)
Hey, Spiderman.

JEFF
I thought mom wasn't working today?

Josh double takes the room - no Candace - really wakes up.

JOSH
She went to work?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JEFF

She's going to miss Chris's game.

JOSH

I'm sure she'll be there.

Josh lifts the blankets.

JOSH

C'mon, little man.

Jeff climbs in and snuggles up, a smile from ear to ear.

INT. HOSPITAL - PALLIATIVE CARE WARD - LOUNGE - DAY

Candace on the phone across the room. It's vacant except for Mack parked at the window.

CANDACE

(to phone)

...But the game isn't till two,
Josh. I think she really needs me.

INT. CANDACE'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

Josh pours cereal for the boys with the WALL PHONE tucked under his chin.

INTERCUT BETWEEN JOSH/CANDACE

CANDACE

(over phone)

I'll meet you guys at the game.

CHRIS

Supposed to drive some of the guys
too, dad.

JOSH

(to phone)

How am I supposed to do all this?

CANDACE

The same way I usually do, Josh.

JOSH

I know you're concerned about your
patient. But that's what she is,
right? A patient.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CANDACE

I can't believe you just said that to me.

JOSH

Candy, we've barely talked this past week, let alone anything else. It's like you're never here.

CANDACE

Usually it's you who's not there, okay.

JOSH

So this is about punishing me? What the hell is that?

CANDACE

(glances at Mack)

I can't talk right now. I'll see you at the game.

Josh hangs up with enough force to nearly break the phone. In a beat he catches himself. THE BOYS' forced smiles.

JOSH

Go get ready.

They scoot off without a word.

JOSH

Jeff, make sure you've got your puffer.

JEFF

I don't need my puffer.

JOSH

Just do it.

JEFF

Ah, peanuts.

He sulks down the hall. Josh shakes his head and clears the dishes off the island.

INT. HOSPITAL - PALLIATIVE CARE WARD - LOUNGE - DAY

Candace glances over at Mack sitting at the window. Lost as usual - or so it seems.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CANDACE

Sorry you had to hear that.

Mack looks down at himself - the withering man. His eyes lock with Candace's, regret toiling.

MACK

Lara used to say that I was never there. That's why she doesn't come very often. I wasn't a very good husband.

Candace marches for the door.

CANDACE

You're not the only one.

INT. HOCKEY ARENA - DAY

The crowded bleachers erupt with cheering fans as a pass zooms right across the ice to A STICK.

The player weaves through the opposing team, straight for the net.

A hummer of a shot straight for the top corner.

The GOALIE snatches it in his glove with perfect reflex.

The crowd cheers. He gives the REF the puck, then slips off his mask. It's Chris! The star goalie.

IN THE BLEACHERS

Josh and Jeff are on their feet, cheering. Good ole Jerry is tagging along, with a foot long hot dog in one hand and a extra large soda in the other.

Josh notices Jeff searching past the crowd at the arena doors in the distance. Jerry picks up on it as well.

JOSH

She'll be here, buddy.

JEFF

Chris is going to be mad if she misses it.

JOSH

There's more games. Don't worry.

And then Josh sees...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

That perfect blonde reporter Daysia Delany smiling up at him from a few ROWS DOWN. Josh smiles back.

Jerry notices. And he doesn't like it.

JERRY
What's she doing here?

JOSH
(waving)
Must really want that interview.

Daysia's perfect smile beams up at him.

INT. HOSPITAL - RESPIRATORY UNIT - DAY

Mary RIGGED with nose prongs, IV's in both arms. She looks like an android there's so many tubes and wires feeding to the bank of machines around her bed. A sad sight.

Candace, in casual sweats, strokes Mary's LONG HAIR.

MARY
You know what I miss the most.

CANDACE
What?

MARY
The mornings. Getting them out of bed. Chasing Justin to clean up his toys that are all over the house. Clint panicking because he can't decide on a tie. And Jaylee freaking out cause her jeans don't fit right.
(eyes tear up)
She won't even come near me, Candace. I've lost all of that, and I'm right here. God, I miss them so much.

Candace rubs her hand, empathizing.

MARY
I want to feel Justin squeeze me in one of his head butts so tight it hurts my neck. I want Jaylee to tell me about boys she wants to kiss.
(sobs)
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MARY (CONT'D)

And I want Clint to make love to me. I miss him touching me so much it feels like I'm burning inside.

Candace wipes Mary's tears, resisting a cry herself.

Clint and the kids arrive.

CANDACE

I think you're in good hands now.

Candace kisses Mary's forehead and let's them huddle in. Jaylee, of course hanging back, noticing every machine keeping her mother alive.

Justin clings to the side of the bed, his wounded face steeped with worry.

Clint nods appreciatively at Candace. She musters a smile.

CANDACE

I'll just be out in the hall.

She shares a last look with Mary and leaves.

INT. HOSPITAL - RESPIRATORY UNIT ENTRANCE - DAY

Candace STEPS out and as the doors ease shut she hangs by the window, her REFLECTION captured in the glass while she watches Mary's family.

Sam steps into the reflection. He's strained and exhausted.

SAM

She's getting weaker, isn't she?

CANDACE

Yes.

They watch Clint hold Justin back, his little arms stretching for Mary. Jaylee to overwhelmed to do anything but stay distant.

The pain of it clearly seen in Mary's face, even from the entrance door window.

Sam sighs heavily, watching them.

SAM

Mary is so much like her mother y'know.

He looks at Candace, courage failing him.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SAM

That's why I know what my daughter
is going to do. I just don't know
if I'm strong enough to let her go.

EXT. THE EXPLORER - PARKED - DAY

Candace CRANKS THE KEY, but the truck just turns over with
blatant defiance. She slaps the dash.

CANDACE

C'mon!

Still not starting. She slaps it again. Again. Candace
punching the steering wheel till she breaks down and cries.

WE HEAR HEAVY BREATHING echo with deafening cadence.

INT. CANDACE'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - NIGHT

The clock radio says 3AM.

WE HEAR heavy breathing coming from down the hall.

SHORT HAIRED CANDACE SNAPS UPRIGHT in bed. She's alone.

JEFF (O.S.)

(raspy)

Mommy!

She grabs a puffer out of the night stand drawer and runs
for...

INT. CANDACE'S HOUSE - JEFF'S ROOM - NIGHT

Candace cradles Jeff in bed. He gulps down a puff. His head
tips into her shoulder, his breathing coming back.

Chris hangs at the door, annoyed as usual.

JEFF

I had a bad dream.

Candace nods, rubs his hair.

JEFF

I wish Daddy was here.

CHRIS

Well, he's not so you have to get
used to it.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JEFF
I don't want to.

CANDACE
Boys.

CHRIS
You don't always get what you want,
duffus.

JEFF
You're mean.

CANDACE
(calming)
Chris. Please.

Chris rolls his eyes and leaves. Candace braves a reassuring smile for Jeff.

JEFF
Do you miss him, mommy?

CANDACE
I do.

She squeezes him into a deep hug.

CANDACE
I do.

INT. HOSPITAL - PALLIATIVE CARE WARD - CORRIDOR - DAY

A hucked BED PAN careens off the corridor wall.

Jasper and Lester give it no attention at all as they hobble past, getting out of the way as Rachel's SPEEDY CHAIR races by.

RACHEL
Jerk.

JASPER
Biddie.

LESTER
Got yourself a real romance there.

JASPER
Yeah, like you'll nail Chyna.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LESTER

Screw off.

They amble by the UNIT DESK, bickering like the odd couple they are.

AT THE UNIT DESK, Matilda stands poised with her fists wedged to her hips, frowning at the pissy mess from Odel's pan.

Ethel going through morning charts, no intention of wiping pee.

ETHEL

Get Chyna to do it. It's her patient this morning.

MATILDA

Where is she?

ETHEL

Better question is; where's Greg?

Ethel glances up the hall with a lilted eyebrow, seeing...

Greg slip into the VACANT HOSPITAL ROOM.

Matilda's eye brow does a little twitch of her own.

INT. HOSPITAL - VACANT ROOM - DAY

Chyna pulls Greg inside before the door even closes, tearing at his shirt, giggling and ready. He lifts her blouse, kissing feverishly.

CHYNA

(moaning)

Oh, Greg.

Unaware of the WIRELESS CAMERA EYE IN THE CABINET

INT. HOSPITAL - MICHEAL'S ROOM - DAY

Watching his computer, enjoying the free show. Chyna's oohs and aahs filtering from the speakers at minimal volume.

Lester and Jasper hover in his open door for an invitation.

Micheal waves them in and with remarkable quickness they snag chairs and nudge up for the show.

INT. HOSPITAL - PALLIATIVE CARE WARD - LOUNGE - DAY

Melanie tucks a warm blanket around Jessica, her chair in front of the TV for another *Cheaters* episode.

Odel is parked beside her with her permanent scowl. She watches like she hates every second of it.

Jessica diverts to the window, a complete peace about her.

JESSICA

My it's a nice day, isn't it, Odel.

ODEL

Looks like shit.

JESSICA

But nice shit, isn't it.

Odel deadpans her. And then there's something sad. Melanie sees it in Odel for an instant. She smiles sympathetically. Odel huffs it off.

ODEL

What are you smiling at?

MELANIE

Nothing.

Suddenly TAPPING on the corridor window.

Reggie with a big grin. Melanie waves flirtatiously, practically skipping to the lounge door.

Odel just groans at the romantic display. Jessica proud of herself.

JESSICA

Told you.

ODEL

I don't want to hear it. Just watch your damn show.

INT. HOSPITAL - PALLIATIVE CARE WARD - UNIT DESK - DAY

Ethel and Matilda witness Reggie and Melanie's coquettish little exchange at the lounge entrance.

ETHEL

Does anybody actually work around here?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PING...

LONG HAIRED CANDACE COMES OUT OF THE ELEVATOR

Hauling Jeff behind with his backpack slung over his shoulder. Chris, the aloof teen, TRAILS along at his own pace - hates coming.

BEFORE Ethel has a chance to say anything...

CANDACE

I know, Ethel. It's my day off. I just brought them to meet Mack. Sonja knows. It's been cleared.

Ethel huffs at that.

MATILDA

Well, Mack could use a little cheering up I'd think.

Jeff beams. Chris annoyed with having to tag along. He shrugs off Candace's look that says 'best behavior'.

BANG!! Everyone looks UP THE CORRIDOR.

THE RACHEL LEE collided the WHEELER, pinning Jasper against the wall, his oxygen tank teetering.

Lester LAUGHS hysterically as Reggie and Greg run to help.

JASPER

You moron!

RACHEL

Why don't you watch where you're going!

Ethel has had enough. The chart slammed down, she hustles to crack a few heads.

ETHEL

Alright, you two!

The boys laugh at the ruckus down the hall.

And then Candace follows Matilda's pensive gaze through the lounge window at Melanie tending to Jessica.

Odel looks back at them, feigned bravery from afar.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

CANDACE

When?

MATILDA

Tomorrow night.

INT. HOSPITAL - RESPIRATORY UNIT - DAY

Mary stirs awake to find Candace leaning over the bed rail with a mischievous grin.

MARY

It's your day off.

Candace slips an Oh Henry bar out of her pocket.

CANDACE

Figured you could use some chocolate.

Mary smiles delightfully.

INT. HOSPITAL - MACK'S ROOM - DAY

Jeff and Chris sit on Mack's bed, awkward and nervous.

Mack at the window in his chair, nose prongs in place. Humility difficult for him to overcome.

MACK

So, you're hockey players I hear.

JEFF

I'm not. My brother is though. He's a goalie just like you.

Chris smiles - humbled.

CHRIS

(to Mack)

Little brothers.

MACK

I have one too.

Jeff digs an NHL card out of his back pack, steps it over to Mack with a beaming smile.

JEFF

Can you sign this for us?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Mack only stares at the card, tensing with more humiliation. He looks down at his crippled hands.

MACK
I...can't. My hands don't work like
that anymore.

JEFF
Really?

Chris grabs the CARD out of Jeff's hands, salvaging the moment.

CHRIS
He didn't know. Sorry.

MACK
It's okay.

JEFF
What happened to you?

CHRIS
Jeff!

MACK
That's alright.
(to Jeff)
I have ALS.

JEFF
What is ALS?

MACK
Means my body doesn't work like it
should.

Jeff touches Mack's twitching hand.

JEFF
I have Asthma. That's why I can't
play hockey. Does ALS mean you
can't play too?

MACK
Yeah.

JEFF
That really sucks.

Mack manages a smile at that. Chris impressed with how Jeff lightened the moment.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

But then...Blood trickles from Mack's nose. The boys shocked.

CHRIS
You alright?

MACK
You should get a nurse.

INT. HOSPITAL - PALLIATIVE CARE WARD - LOUNGE - DAY

Cheaters is still on. Odel watches with her typical scowl. She's not happy.

Jessica's undivided attention lavished on Chris and Jeff, the weirdest of smiles torturing them.

They're awkward and out of place on one of the couches.

JEFF
(to Jessica)
Are you alright?

ODEL
No she's not. Next stupid question.

JESSICA
Odel, don't be so mean.

ODEL
(eyes the boys)
I'm not a baby sitter.

The boys share an uncomfortable glance.

JESSICA
(to the boys)
Boring, isn't it? Stuck with two old biddies.

CHRIS
Nah, it's fine.

ODEL
Bullshit.

JEFF
(shocked)
You swore.

Odel has to laugh at that.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ODEL

You are Candace's son.

Chris eyes the door, his escape route. And again with Jessica's weird smile.

JESSICA

Don't worry. Mack will be fine.
We get used to that sort of thing
around here.

And CANDACE HUSTLES INTO THE LOUNGE.

CANDACE

(to boys)
What happened?

EXT. HOSPITAL - PARKING LOT - DAY

Candace towing Jeff along. Chris strutting ahead FOR THE EXPLORER, beyond pissed off.

She unlocks the door, fed up.

CANDACE

I'm getting pretty tired of this
attitude, Chris.

CHRIS

You left us alone in that freak
show in there.

CANDACE

Chris! That's enough.

He reams open the door for Jeff to scoot up into the truck.

CANDACE

I thought you would've like to have
met Mack.

CHRIS

No, you wanted to see your patient,
mom. They're all more important
than us.

CANDACE

Well, that sounds like your father.

CHRIS

You're both the same.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

He climbs in, slams the door. Candace bites her lip, resists the urge to lash out. She climbs behind the wheel, plugs the keys in. The truck turns over. And over.

CANDACE

Shit.

JEFF

Shouldn't swear, mom. Use
'peanuts'. It kinda works.

She's in no mood - a forced smile.

CANDACE

You're right, bud.

Suddenly...A knock on the window. She startles.

A MAN, 25, hard and street tough, points at a cigarette in his mouth.

Candace goes to roll down the window.

CHRIS

What are you doing?

JEFF

Mom, don't.

CANDACE

(rolls down the window)
Just calm down, both of you.
(to Man)
Can I help you?

Suddenly, a GUN is pressed to Candace's cheek. She screams. The boys riveted with fear.

JEFF

Mommy!

He cocks the hammer with his thumb.

MAN

Tell your husband to watch out.

Then suddenly from far across the parking lot...

FATHER SYTLES (O.S.)

Hey, what are you doing?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

It's Father Styles, the priest from the funeral, now in Adidas sweats, whose brisk walk snaps to a run across the lot when he sees the danger.

FATHER SYTLES
Get away from there!

The man smears grease across Candace's chin.

MAN
Tell him I was this close.

The GUN suddenly off Candace's face, she gasps. The man gone.

Father Styles comes to the open window, sucking deep breathes with that good samaritan worry.

FATHER SYTLES
Candace. Are you alright?

But Candace only hangs on to the wheel, trembling with that grease smear across her cheek, fear turning to crying.

Jeff cries and gasps, clinging to Chris, who only scowls at Candace.

Father Styles reaches through the open window, clasps his hands over Candace's to ease her trauma.

FATHER SYTLES
It's okay. It's okay.

INT. HOSPITAL - FATHER'S STYLES OFFICE - DAY

Not your typical Priest's office, small credenza of religious texts, a nice modern desk lit with sunlight pouring through a big window.

A small crucifix tacked to the wall just above the couch where Candace is wiping her eyes with Kleenex.

FATHER SYTLES
I heard about your husband's partner.

Father Styles leans forward in his chair, fingers interlocked, elbows resting on his knees - thoughtful. He checks the boys sitting at a table across the room.

Jeff is coloring. Chris being a good big brother, pretending to be interested while keeping one eye on Candace and the Priest.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Father Styles speaks quietly, conscious of the boys hearing.

FATHER SYTTLES
That must of been very difficult
for you and your family.

Candace poorly masks that resonating worry.

CANDACE
My husband is taking care of it.

Styles studies her, far from convinced she's okay.

FATHER SYTTLES
If you ever need to talk, my door
is always open.

CANDACE
Thank you, Father, but we're fine.
I'm fine.
(off Style's concern)
Really, I am. Just never had a gun
in my face before.

Suddenly a knock. The door opens to Josh bounding in to save his family.

JOSH
I got here as fast I could.

Jeff bounces from the table with his masterpiece...

JEFF
Daddy!

...right into his arms. Josh hugs him tight.

JOSH
Hey, little man.

Neither Candace nor Chris rejoice over him finally coming. The familiar tension thick as they join Josh and Jeff at the door.

JOSH
You guys okay?

Chris nods it off - *whatever*. Candace smiles through her fear.

CANDACE
We're fine.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

The glance between Josh and Father Styles tells us they don't believe that.

JOSH
I'm Josh Rothwell, Father..?

FATHER SYTTLES
Styles.

JOSH
Nice to meet you.

FATHER SYTTLES
You too.

JEFF
He let me color, Dad.

Jeff has drawn another dog. His bottom lip pouts.

JEFF
I really want to get a dog. He'd protect us from the bad man, Daddy.

Jeff buries his crying into Josh's shoulder. That resonating worry hanging between them all.

Josh can only rub Jeff's back, his look telling Candace and Chris they should go.

Styles diffuses the moment.

FATHER SYTTLES
Well, it's quite a family you have here, Candace.

Chris rolls his eyes and gets the hell out of there. Josh and Candace can only smile off his rudeness.

JOSH
(to Styles)
Thanks again.

CANDACE
Yeah, thanks, Father.

FATHER SYTTLES
No problem. Really.

But before Candace slips out the door behind her family...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

FATHER SYTLES

Candace..?

She gestures for Josh to keep going with the boys.

CANDACE

I'll be right there.

Candace turns back to Styles, forcing herself to calm down.

CANDACE

What is it?

FATHER SYTLES

If you don't want to be here tomorrow, I'm sure Jessie will understand.

CANDACE

Don't worry, Father. I'll hold up.

FATHER SYTLES

It's not that. I know how you feel about Jessie. She tends to grow on you. I'm just concerned about you, that's all.

CANDACE

Well, thanks for your concern, but I'll be here...for her.

Styles with that warm smile all Priest's give.

FATHER SYTLES

Good. Good.

And with that Candace leaves.

Styles closes the door behind her, duly concerned.

INT. HOSPITAL - JESSICA'S ROOM - NIGHT

Jessica in bed, attended by Candace, Melanie, Matilda and hard-assed Ethel. Jessica runs her hand along the bed rail.

JESSICA

Won't be long now. If that damn priest can ever get here.

Melanie has to turn away, hiding her tears. The veterans, Matilda and Ethel wait rotely - subdued.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Candace glances across the hall at Michael's room.

He's parked his wheelchair just inside his open door. Bible on his lap. Blank as hell.

Then Candace watches Jessica consider her finger where a ring used to be.

JESSICA

Did he call?

No one wants to answer that.

ETHEL

No.

The disappointment reads in Jessica.

Father Styles enters in his CASSOCK, ROSARY wrapped around his hand. He's pleased to see the nurses present.

FATHER SYTLES

Evening ladies.

ALL

Father.

He takes Jessica's hand and never lets go.

JESSICA

Father Styles. My girls and I were wondering where you got to.

FATHER SYTLES

Well I'm here, Jessie. We're still sure this time?

JESSICA

We're sure.

FATHER SYTLES

I'm gonna miss our talks.

JESSICA

Oh admit it, you're gonna miss me.

They all smile bittersweetly - even Ethel manages a slight one.

FATHER SYTLES

Yes. Yes I am.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

JESSICA

It's lucky for you you're a priest,
or you'd be missing me a whole lot
more.

Heads shake - *she's joking now?* Even the somber Styles has
to quip. But not Melanie. Her hand is over her mouth, tears
automatic.

JESSICA

Ah, Melanie, I'm sorry, dear.

(to Styles)

She's a bit emotional these days.
She's in love y'know.

FATHER SYTLES

I think we're all feeling a little
emotional right now.

JESSICA

Little late for flirting.

Candace in awe of her candor and fearlessness. Matilda
throws her arm around Melanie.

Doctor Hamm walks in and the nurses file out as Styles
prepares to perform Jessica's last rites.

JESSICA

Candace.

Candace takes Jessica's outstretched hand.

Hamm looks to Styles to set order.

FATHER SYTLES

Let's give them a minute.

Hamm annoyed, but he obliges and follows Styles out.

Candace leans close. It's not easy.

JESSICA

I want you to do something for me.

CANDACE

Sure, Jess, anything.

JESSICA

Make sure Michael keeps reading the
Bible I gave him. He needs to
forgive his father, y'know.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

CANDACE

I will.

JESSICA

And tell Lester I forgive him for hurting my feelings the other day. Just between you and me, he's been chasing me since he came here.

(off Candace's smirk)

He could've had a chance too, if he wasn't so crass all the time.

CANDACE

(wipes a tear)

I won't tell him that part though. Anything else?

JESSICA

Watch over Odel for me. She's very scared. But you know that don't you?

CANDACE

Uh huh.

Jessica squeezes Candace's hand, beckons her even closer. Her eyes bore right into Candace.

JESSICA

The men we love aren't always easy on us. But I know you're heart won't take leaving Josh, Candace. No matter how scared you are. You know that too, don't you?

Candace is there now, tears streaking her cheeks.

JESSICA

I'll be watching you, dear.

Jessica touches her face, her smile spreading ear to ear.

JESSICA

But if you ever see that asshole husband of mine, flip that bastard the bird.

Candace laughs, but emotion overrides it. She embraces Jessica fully.

INT. HOSPITAL - JESSICA'S ROOM - NIGHT

Father Styles is bed side, Bible and Rosary in hand. Candace opposite, rubbing Jessica's hand, trying to be strong - professional.

Behind her Doctor Hamm waits by the life support machines, ready to proceed.

Matilda is at the ready, syringe in hand. She's not doing as well as usual.

Ethel is at the foot of the bed.

Styles leans to Jessica, warm smiles exchanged.

FATHER SYTLES
God be with you, Jessie.

JESSICA
He already is.

Styles nods to Matilda, the syringe inserted in the IV.

FATHER SYTLES
Jessie, we're going to give you the morphine now, okay.

Jessica's hand squeezes Candace's.

Styles nods to Hamm. Switches are flicked.

A moment later the machines whine down. The VENTILATOR DIAPHRAGM under her bed pushes the last breath into Jessica's dying body.

An arcane silence fills the room...

INT. HOSPITAL - PALLIATIVE CARE WARD - CORRIDOR - NIGHT

The silence creeping through the hall, touching...

MICHAEL parked in his open door across the hall, bracing for what's coming.

Lester and Jasper step out of their rooms, stand in the hall facing Jessica's door as...

Rachel glides to a stop down the hall, waiting...

INT. HOSPITAL - ODEL'S ROOM - NIGHT

The silence finds Odel, who lays in her bed, eyes tearing, waiting...

INT. HOSPITAL - JESSICA'S ROOM - NIGHT

Jessica gasps, gulping for air that won't come.

Her hand locks onto Candace's and suddenly the need to live an involuntary fight of thrashes and spasms. It's not long before the gurgling in her throat drowns her soul.

Matilda watches, harder by the second, tears dripping.

Hamm and Ethel have little emotion at all.

Jessica's thrashing pulls her hand free of Candace's grip.

FATHER SYTLES

Hold her.

Jessica gags, eyes roll white, gasping for air.

Candace holds on, tears running.

A few more chokes and then Jessica's head arches back - the last breath.

Her mouth contorts, the final heartbeat painful, then nothing. She relaxes, hands go limp, slipping from Candace's touch.

Styles closes Jessica's eyes and moves a shock of hair out of her face.

INT. HOSPITAL - PALLIATIVE CARE WARD - CORRIDOR - NIGHT

Candace steps out of Jessica's room, wiping her eyes, and finds Michael, Jasper, Lester and Rachel facing her, their blank expressions a reminder of what befalls them all.

INT. HOSPITAL - ODEL'S ROOM - NIGHT

Candace slips in to find Odel stone still in her bed, eyes wet.

ODEL

What am I supposed to do with out her?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The moment Candace touches her arm, she let's go, the cry deep.

INT. PRECINT SQUAD ROOM - DAY

Josh, Jerry and the team gathered around the evidence table with a PICTURE of the STREET TOUGH MAN FROM THE PARKING LOT tacked up.

Jerry taps Josh's shoulder when he sees...

CANDACE

Hair a shambles, distraught.

Without thinking Josh IS THERE. He lovingly moves locks of hair out of her eyes. He pulls her into him, his arms squeezing tight.

INT. CANDACE'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Candace ON TOP, head flopped back, the pleasure reeling through her. She pulls Josh up to her lips. They KISS PASSIONATELY, bodies locked together, never letting go. The perfect moment.

INT. CANDACE'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - NIGHT

SHORT HAIRED Candace springs awake from the dream. Realizes it wasn't real. She looks at Josh's empty side of the bed.

INT. CANDACE'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT

It's dark.

SHORT HAIRED CANDACE ambles into the kitchen. Gets a glass of water. Her doleful gaze drawn out the window at...

EXT. CANDACE'S HOUSE - DRIVEWAY - NIGHT

Where Chris is giving his little brother a lesson in street hockey. He whisks the sponge puck at Jeff's head. It takes Jeff's Spiderman toque right off.

JEFF

Hey!

Knuckles rap a window. The boys look at...

LONG HAIRED CANDACE IN THE KITCHEN WINDOW

Shaking her finger at the boys - smarten up.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Chris with that typical eye roll. He flips the puck softly into Jeff's stick.

CHRIS
It was a lucky shot. Try again.
Just react quicker.

JEFF
Not so hard.

And then we hear a familiar car. Headlights swath over them, their shadows pasted on the garage door. It's...

JOSH'S VINTAGE MUSTANG

Jeff drops his stick and runs. Chris hangs back, flicking the puck at the net.

The instant Josh climbs out of the car, Jeff leaps up into his arms.

JEFF
Hey, dad!

JOSH
Hey little man.

CANDACE WAVES FROM THE WINDOW

Josh waves back as he and Jeff walk up to Chris.

JEFF
You shoulda seen it. I scored on
him big time, dad.

JOSH
You did.
(to Chris)
He did.

CHRIS
I let him have one.

JOSH
Good for you.

Jeff comes back with a big stick from the garage.

JEFF
C'mon, dad. Help me whip him.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

JOSH AND CANDACE CONNECT THROUGH THE WINDOW

He winks and she returns it with a smile. A smile we haven't seen before. One that says - *I'm in the mood after.*

JOSH
(to Chris)
A whipping, huh.

Chris drives the puck into the top corner - a wry grin.

Josh eyes Chris. The challenge on.

CHRIS
Bring it.

JOSH
Oh it's on.

JEFF
He's going to be dog food, isn't he, dad.

And they play.

INT. CANDACE'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Candace warms at Josh playing with the boys - the perfect family. They are truly happy.

SMASH BACK TO:

INT. GARAGE - NIGHT

SHORT HAIRED Candace steps inside, turns on the light. Josh's Mustang quiet and still, like a token of the past.

She runs her fingers along the roof and hood, a deep melancholy.

The door opens. It's Chris. His anger melting to sadness. Candace steps to him and he folds into her arms. They comfort each other.

INT. CANDACE'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - NIGHT

SHORT HAIRED CANDACE on the phone. It's ringing. Someone answers.

FATHER SYTLES
(groggy)
Hello?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The clock radio says 4AM.

CANDACE
Father Styles...it's me...Candace.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. HOSPITAL - MARY'S ROOM - DAY

LONG HAIRED Candace walks in, horrified to find Mary in her chair and her BEAUTIFUL LONG HAIR gone! Nothing but a SHORT CROP left. Mary devastated.

CANDACE
What the hell?

Melanie barely containing her fury.

MELANIE
Ethel.

INT. HOSPITAL - PALLIATIVE CARE WARD - UNIT DESK - DAY

Matilda and Ethel going over charts when Candace storms up with fire in her eyes.

Even Jasper and Lester pick up on it - fight!

CANDACE
What the fuck did you do!

MATILDA
(shocked)
Candace.

Ethel's eyes narrow to slits. Sonja lured OUT OF HER OFFICE.

ETHEL
What?

CANDACE
You cut her fucking hair! God!!

ETHEL
Does this place look like a salon to you. We're going to be short staffed thanks to you, and WE won't have time to cater to just one.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CANDACE

Oh, whatever, Ethel! It's just one more opportunity for you to be mean, you ass.

ETHEL

Hey!

SONJA

Candace.

CANDACE

Bite me, Ethel!

SONJA

(firmer)

Candace.

Ethel gets the BACK OFF LOOK from Sonja.

SONJA

It wasn't Ethel. It was me.
(off Candace's glare)
With her spasms it puts her through too much to wash her hair every other day.

CANDACE

Did we ask her that?

Sonja stiffens.

SONJA

Maybe you need to take that time off now, rather than later.

CANDACE

Maybe I do.

Suddenly from Mary's room...

MELANIE (O.S.)

Candace!

INT. HOSPITAL - MARY'S ROOM - DAY

Candace rushes in, with Ethel and Matilda hot on her heels, to find Mary contorting and twisting, vibrating the shit out of her bed. Melanie helpless to do anything but try to hold her head.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MELANIE

Help me!

Candace seizes Mary's head. Ethel and Matilda jump into to action.

MATILDA

(yelling into the hall)
Reggie! Greg!

Mary's body spasms against Candace's firm hold of her head. Her eyes roll back white, spittle gushes from her mouth.

Candace hangs on, trying to hold her steady. It's too much to bare anymore.

INT. HOSPITAL - FATHER STYLES OFFICE - DAY

SHORT HAIRED CANDACE on the couch, sitting pensively in her sweats, twisting at her fingers, the image of someone grappling with what to say. Finally...

CANDACE

Sorry I called so late last night.

Father Styles sits opposite, eased back in his chair in sweats as well, glasses and two day beard growth. The father figure anyone would confide in.

FATHER SYTLES

That's okay. I was wondering when you were going to call.

(folds his hands)

So, here we are.

(off her reluctance)

You know, it's been my experience that the person who calls in the middle of the night, is the one who wants to talk.

CANDACE

I don't think I should've been suspended.

FATHER SYTLES

Me either.

CANDACE

I mean, a reprimand I would've understood. It was just the way I found out about Mary that set me off.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CANDACE (CONT'D)

I know everyone thought it was because of Josh's partner dying the way he did.

(holds back tears)

But it's not why I did that.

FATHER SYTLES

Funny, I thought it was because he took your parking spot.

That pulls a slight chuckle out of Candace.

FATHER SYTLES

That's a helluva arm you have.

Candace smirks off the compliment. A long moment of nothing, not knowing how the conversation should keep going.

FATHER SYTLES

You know, they still talk about what you did for Mary that day. Why did you do that?

CANDACE

(wipes her wet eyes)

Because she lost everything. Because they cut her hair, and I knew how much that hurt her. I knew what it meant. So, I did the only thing I could think of to do for her.

(a tear drips)

Just didn't go the way I planned.

INT. HOSPITAL - PALLIATIVE CARE WARD - CORRIDOR - DAY

LONG HAIRED Candace pow wows with Melanie, who can't believe what she's just been asked.

MELANIE

Are you kidding? You're going to be in so much shit.

CANDACE

I'm taking a leave anyway. Can you get Reggie to do it?

Melanie likes it.

MELANIE

I'll convince him.

INT. HOSPITAL - MARY'S ROOM - DAY

Melanie whirls in with Michael's WIRELESS VIDEO CAMERA and sets it on the shelf beside the boom box. Without a word she leaves. Mary completely puzzled.

INT. HOSPITAL - MICHEAL'S ROOM - DAY

Michael keys rapidly, focusing Mary's room captured on the monitor. He gives Candace a thumbs up when she pokes her head in the door.

MICHAEL

We're good.

INT. HOSPITAL - ODEL'S ROOM - DAY

Odel huffs and cranks the TV remote volume to drown out the ruckus of voices. Candace breezes in.

CANDACE

Ready.

ODEL

I'm not going.

Candace cranks the massive hydraulic chair around.

CANDACE

Today you are.

And she pushes...

INT. HOSPITAL - MARY'S ROOM - DAY

Candace heaves Odel in the room, followed by Melanie, Matilda, Chyna, Greg and a gang of candy striper girls, all smiles.

MARY

What's going on?

Candace leans close, clasping Mary's hand with a beaming grin.

CANDACE

I thought we'd kick it up in here.
Jessie style. What do you think?

ODEL

I think we should do this already.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Eyes roll at Odel's caustic tongue. Melanie picks a CD and loads it in the boom box.

The RACHEL LEE glides into the room.

RACHEL
Hold up, dammit! I wouldn't miss
this.

She parks beside Odel's chair.

RACHEL
You like guys?

ODEL
Oh shut up.

Laughter.

Candace opens the door and waves someone in and Melanie kicks off the boom box - a funky dance beat at nearly full volume.

Mary can't believe it. Another one of those ear to ear smiles as...

Reggie SHUFFLES into the room, gyrating like a pro stripper.

The girls start WHOOPING AND HOLLERING - even Matilda is getting caught up. They all clap in time to the groove, and Reggie is really going, focusing on Mary.

And Melanie gets in on the act. Her back to Reggie, his hands caressing her sensuously. Then Candace. Then Matilda.

The girls all roar and Oooh.

Even Odel can't help but follow Rachel's nimble hands clapping along.

Reggie tears off his shirt, spinning it wildly, sending the girls into a frenzy.

Mary's eyes blinking like strobes.

And then Chyna joins in. Right to the floor - no surprise there.

INT. HOSPITAL - MICHEAL'S ROOM - DAY

Michael aroused seeing Chyna groove on the monitor. Lester and Jasper over his shoulder. Lester grabbing at his heart again.

INT. HOSPITAL - MARY'S ROOM - DAY

The room alive like a bar on the strip. Reggie moves into Mary and WINKS. Her smile saying it all.

But then...

CLINT AND THE KIDS

Standing in the doorway, dumbstruck. The staff freeze.

Clint sees the look in Mary's eyes - alive. But the kids.

Justin yanks free of dad's hand and runs for his mom.

JUSTIN

Mommy!

MARY

Baby, it's okay.

But the moment Justin touches Mary the spasms ignite.

CLINT

Justin! No!

Reggie stands back with the staff, looking on as Clint eases Justin away and Candace steadies Mary's head. Melanie cuts the boom box.

CLINT

(to Justin)

It's okay.

JUSTIN

(to all of them)

She's going to die!!

Mary's smile dissolves. An instant sadness connecting with Candace. Justin tugging against Clint to get to her.

JUSTIN

I don't want mommy to die.

Mary anguish warping her face.

CLINT

Justin, stop.

Candace glares at Matilda - she knew, her eyes dropping to the floor.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Clint and Mary connect the only way they can as Justin cries in Clint's arms.

Heads all hang low. Jaylee storms off, crying.

Clint leads Justin for the door, but that's as far as he gets.

Suddenly...

Justin BREAKS FREE and runs at Mary's bed, colliding with all the determination his little body can muster, his small arms flinging around her NECK, pulling his FOREHEAD to HERS.

Mary SPASMS, her whole body trembling.

Candace and Clint go to pull Justin off.

MARY
NO!!! NO!!! Don't you touch my
baby!!

The staff are shell shocked. It's too much. Even Matilda. Even Odel.

Melanie collapses into Reggie's shoulder.

Candace helpless to watch Mary's body rack violently, her forehead still melded to Justin's, whose arms wrap and squeeze and refuse to let go.

Then...

Jaylee runs back into the room, straight for THE BED, clawing for her mother.

JAYLEE
I love you, mom!!

Clint doing his best to steady Mary, her body racking viciously.

Greg runs into the room - another needle.

Ethel leads Sonja and Devlin in, appalled at the scene.

They're accusing glares landing on Candace.

INT. HOSPITAL - SONJA'S OFFICE - DAY

Candace pacing, inconsolable. Sonja standing behind her desk, arms folded, on the defensive. Devlin his holier than now self.

CANDACE

You should've told me, Sonja. I had a right to know that!!

SONJA

To know what, Candace. She decided.

CANDACE

Because they cut her hair!

DEVLIN

You need to get a grip.

CANDACE

I need to get a grip! I do?!

DEVLIN

What do you really know about Mary Grayson, Candace? Tell me. Did you know her husband claimed bankruptcy? Or how about even what Mary was before she came here? What was her life? Do you even know that?

CANDACE

What?!

DEVLIN

Exactly. This is about you, about what you need from her to get you through your day.

Candace's gaze lands on Sonja. She's on her own.

SONJA

I told you, Candace.

CANDACE

(to Devlin)

What the hell would you know about what I need?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DEVLIN

I know you need a job where you can come in late every morning and nothing seems to really be said. Or you can bring your kids along like it's some kind of 'visit the patient' day. Or you can leave on a whim when life gets too tough. I understand what happened to your husband's partner and what that has probably put your family through, but--.

CANDACE

You don't know what my family has been through.

DEVLIN

I have a pretty good idea. But I also know something about what Mary and her family have been through. They requested our discretion in the matter. Did Mary mention that to you?

CANDACE

(defiant)

No.

DEVLIN

Then it was not our responsibility to mention it either. Was it?

CANDACE

You're an asshole.

SONJA

Candace!

Devlin stiffens. Sonja bewildered and shocked.

DEVLIN

You're on thin ice.

CANDACE

I know what guys like you are like. You take some one's parking spot without asking. You change everything around here so you feel like you're earning that inflated salary you don't deserve, and you screw it up for them.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

CANDACE (CONT'D)

The patients who are facing the end of their life, but you don't give a shit, do you.

Sonja speechless.

DEVLIN

Go home. Now.

CANDACE

Fuck you.

Candace slams the door on her way out.

EXT. HOSPITAL - PARKING LOT - DAY

Candace struts down the walkway, a loose piece of COBBLESTONE begging at her. She grabs it, marches straight for Devlin's Mercedes, and heaves it at the back window with everything she's got.

SMASH!!!

The car alarm rings out.

INT. HOSPITAL - FATHER STYLES OFFICE - DAY

Father Styles still sits in his chair in that relaxed, wise way we expect from someone wanting to help. His hands fold over his lap. That pleasant smile of his.

FATHER SYTLES

Bet it felt pretty good.

Candace wipes her nose and eyes. Tucks her SHORT HAIR behind her ears.

CANDACE

It did at the time.

Styles amused then curious.

FATHER SYTLES

When did you cut your hair?

Candace looks out the window, anything to not think about that, the anguish in her face. Her hand over her mouth, fighting the resonating torment.

INT. CANDACE'S HOUSE - BATHROOM - NIGHT

LONG HAIRED CANDACE looking at herself in the mirror, wearing that BLACK DRESS FROM THE FUNERAL, grief stricken to the point of numbness.

She raises scissors to her LONG HAIR and starts cutting, every cut more fierce and determined than the last.

Gobs of hair drop into the sink.

INT. HOSPITAL - FATHER STYLES OFFICE - DAY

Styles leans forward slightly, resting his elbows on his knees. He just hit the nerve and knows it.

FATHER SYTTLES

It's been what, six months now?

Candace's eyes flutter. Her lip trembles.

FATHER SYTTLES

Was the same day Mary opted wasn't it?

She can barely nod.

INT. HOSPITAL - MARY'S ROOM - NIGHT

SHORT HAIRED Mary calm, the same kind of calm we saw in Jessica that last day.

Mary looks at her wedding picture atop the computer desk beside the crayon colored family tree montage and boom box.

LONG HAIRED CANDACE, dressed casually - no uniform - putting on a brave face. A brave smile.

MARY

You're my best friend, y'know.

CANDACE

I know.

And then Clint comes into the room with a ROLLED UP SLEEPING BAG in his shirt and jeans. He gives them a moment.

Candace embraces Mary one last time.

MARY

I love you.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CANDACE

Love you too.

She hugs Clint on her way out.

INT. HOSPITAL - PALLIATIVE CARE WARD - UNIT DESK - NIGHT

Candace saunters by the UNIT DESK.

Matilda and Ethel are at their usual posts. Matilda gives Candace a quick little hug.

MATILDA

I wanted to break his window too.

Ethel snaps a chart up and struts down the corridor.

ETHEL

That's what we need. Less staff.

Matilda just rolls her eyes.

MATILDA

She misses you. You sure you're not staying? You can you know.

CANDACE

I can't do this one with her. Not her.

MATILDA

Okay, honey.

Candace goes to the elevator and presses the down button.

MATILDA

Say 'hi' to Josh and the boys for me.

CANDACE

I will.

And then...

MACK (O.S.)

Candace...

Mack, more sickly than before, wheels himself to the elevator, oxygen tank fastened to the chair, nose prongs in place. Candace glad to see him.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CANDACE

Hi.

MACK

(raspy)

I want to give you this.

(hands over a card)

He's the best goalie coach here in town. Chris should go see him.

CANDACE

Thanks, Mack.

The doors open to a weary...

SAM

A rolled up sleeping bag under his arm and so unsure about what he is about to do. Candace wants to say something, but he walks by without so much as a hello.

Suddenly he stops when he sees...

DOCTOR HAMM, FATHER STYLES AND DEVLIN JONES

Waiting outside Mary's room down the corridor.

We know what this means for Sam. He turns to Candace with wet eyes and pulls AN OH HENRY out of his pocket. A man grappling with an impossible reality.

SAM

Do you think you could help me give this to her?

Candace can only embrace him.

INT. HOSPITAL - FATHER STYLES OFFICE - DAY

SHORT HAIRED CANDACE at the window, blank and numb.

Styles in his chair, fingers interlocked, wise and patient.

CANDACE

But I couldn't stay and watch her die that night. And you know what's funny, if I would've, I never would've got that call.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CANDACE (CONT'D)

The boys would've woken up and they would've gotten it. I wouldn't have been there for them.

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. CANDACE'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT

THE SEARING WALL PHONE RIPS THROUGH THE SILENCE

LONG HAIRED CANDACE dashes into the room, flicks on the lights and reaches for the phone desperately.

CANDACE

Hello!

JERRY

(over phone)

Candy, it's me.

Fear is automatic.

EXT. CEMETERY - DAY

The funeral of black umbrellas.

LONG HAIRED CANDACE clutching Jeff hanging on her black dress.

Chris distant, numb, forever changed.

And now WE SEE JERRY IN SMART UNIFORM folding the FLAG.

A battalion of POLICE UNIFORMS hover in the distance where we didn't see them before, their rifles at the ready.

THE WHITE CASKET DESCENDING.

INT. WAREHOUSE - NIGHT

Josh leads Jerry through the door into the darkness. Jerry grabs his arm.

JERRY

Let's wait for backup.

JOSH

We're getting this guy!

JERRY

No.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Suddenly WE SEE the STREET TOUGH MAN from the parking lot POINTING HIS GUN from deep in the warehouse.

Josh sees him too late, freezes.

BANG!!

EXT. CEMETERY - DAY

As the TWENTY ONE GUN SALUTE CRACKS across the sky.

Jeff buried in Candace's dress. She's strong, resolute. Chris holding his head high.

INT. CANDACE'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT

LONG HAIRED CANDACE, slumps down the wall, phone dropping to the floor. She wails painfully. Chris and Jeff run into the room, tumbling into her arms.

SMASH BACK TO:

INT. HOSPITAL - FATHER STYLES OFFICE - DAY

SHORT HAIRED CANDACE at the window now, hand cupped over her mouth, tears running down her cheeks.

CANDACE

I don't know how to let him go.

FATHER SYTLES

I know.

CANDACE

I feel so guilty. I was so mad at him cause I was scared. I loved him so much. But now he's gone.

Styles gets up. He comes to her at the window, a fatherly hand on her shoulder. She looks out the window, over the vast grounds, like absolution lies out there somewhere.

CANDACE

How do I move on?

FATHER SYTLES

You know Mary changed her mind when we heard about Josh.

CANDACE

I know.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

FATHER SYTLES

She's not the only one who'd like
you to come back. It's time to
start living again.

Candace only stares out the window, more than anything
wanting to live again.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. CANDACE'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - DAY

Super *"One year later."*

Jeff, the Spiderman, bursts into the bedroom, a BLACK POODLE
on his heels, yappy as hell.

JEFF

Mom!

Jeff shakes CANDACE awake in bed.

JEFF

(louder)

Mom.

She stirs groggily.

CANDACE

Hey, bud.

JEFF

We're going to be late.

Now she's AWAKE. And the clock radio tells the story - 8AM -
shit! The blankets fly and she bounces out of bed like it's
a spring board.

CANDACE

Jeff, why didn't you guys get me
up!

(yelling down the hall)

Chris!

(pointing at the dog)

Get him outside before he pees.

She's frantically making the bed - restoring order. Jeff
leads the poodle out.

JEFF

C'mon, boy.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CANDACE

And get Chris up. Quick. Move,
move, move.

INT. CANDACE'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

Candace flying around in her nurse's uniform, trying to catch up. Jeff shovels cereal, sneaking the dog toast. Chris smirks at that while he peruses a *Driver's Handbook*.

CANDACE

C'mon, c'mon, c'mon...we have to
move. Stop feeding the dog.

She scoots Jeff out of the kitchen.

CANDACE

Teeth, teeth, teeth.

Jeff reluctantly obliges.

JEFF

This sucks. I hate brushing my
teeth.

CANDACE

Go! And don't forget your puffer.
(to Chris)
Is your goalie gear in the truck?

CHRIS

Yeah. Calm down.

She frowns at that, then leans across the island, touching his *Driver's handbook*.

CANDACE

When is your *Driver's* test?

CHRIS

Next week.

Candace has her hands cupped together, smiling. Chris looking at her likes she's nuts as usual.

CANDACE

I was thinking. You should use the
Mustang.

CHRIS

Really.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CANDACE

Really.

She opens her hands to show the Mustang keys. Chris beams.

CHRIS

Thanks, Mom.

She kisses his head.

EXT. CANDACE'S HOUSE - DAY

It looks and feels like a nice fall day. Candace locking the door as the boys head for the battered Explorer with the dog tagging along.

EXT. THE EXPLORER - DRIVEWAY - DAY

They climb into the Explorer, Jeff in the back with the dog. Candace fumbles the keys and of course, the truck really doesn't want to go.

CANDACE

Dammit!

JEFF

Shouldn't swear, mom.

Still turning over...

CANDACE

I'm sorry, honey. You're right.

(off the dog barking)

Quiet!

Still turning over...

CANDACE

Shit!

The boys' mouths drop. But at least the truck started.

CANDACE

(relieved)

There.

And away they go, out of the driveway and down the street.

JEFF

Mom, can I swear now too?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CANDACE

No.

JEFF

It sucks being a kid.

CHRIS

Good one.

Candace speeds THE TRUCK into third gear.

CANDACE

Well, being an adult is sucking pretty good right now too.

JEFF

Yeah, but you get to swear.

Chris laughs at that one.

CANDACE

Jeffery.

INT. HOSPITAL - PALLIATIVE CARE WARD - DAY

Candace shoots out of the elevator to Ethel's typical scowl.

CANDACE

I know, I know.
(as she runs past)
I'll write myself up, Ethel.

Ethel tries not to smile, but she does anyway as she pops a chart. And caught by Matilda's knowing smirk.

INT. HOSPITAL - PALLIATIVE CARE WARD - CORRIDOR - DAY

Candace breezes down the hall as...

A BED PAN RATTLES INTO THE WALL. She pauses, gawks into Odel's open door.

INT. HOSPITAL - ODEL'S ROOM - DAY

Rachel and Odel side by side in their chairs, Rachel wiping her hands together, proud of her toss.

RACHEL

How was that?

ODEL

Not bad.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Odel winks at Candace, points her remote and flicks the TV channel until they find *Cheaters*.

INT. HOSPITAL - MICHAEL'S ROOM - NIGHT

Candace pokes her head in the door to find Michael, Lester and Jasper huddled around the computer.

And joining them is Mack in his wheelchair with oxygen prongs in place.

CANDACE

Morning, guys. Were not watching anything illegal, right?

They wave off Candace's shaking finger from the doorway. She moves on for...

INT. HOSPITAL - MARY'S ROOM - NIGHT

Candace steps in to find Melanie and a very pregnant Chyna putting Mary's make up on.

Mary beams at Candace.

The smiles turn to mischievous grins.

A CD is fed into the boom box. The volume knob cranked.

Candace closes the door, SHUTTING US OUT IN THE HALL.

We hear the music thump inside.

THE END