

INT. JESSICA'S HOSPITAL ROOM - NIGHT

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

JESSICA
Won't be long now.

There is an eerie calmness about her.

JESSICA
(joking)
If that damn priest can ever get
here.

Melanie has to turn away for a moment. The veterans, Matilda and Ethel wait rotely - subdued.

Candace glances across the hall to Michael's room.

POV - MICHAEL IN HIS WHEELCHAIR

Parked just inside his door. Blank as hell.

JESSICA

Admiring her finger where a ring used to be.

JESSICA (CONT'D)
Did he call?

No one wants to answer that question but...

ETHEL
No.

Matilda nods at the door and Candace promptly pokes her head out.

POV - DOWN THE HALL

It's Father Styles, the quintessential priest in standard frock, walking with that casual gait. A small, distinguished cross hangs around his neck.

Styles enters the room, 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 SYTTLES
 Well I'm here, Jess. We're still
 sure this time?

JESSICA
 We're sure.

FATHER SYTTLES
 I'm gonna miss our talks.

JESSICA
 Oh admit it, you're gonna miss me.

FATHER SYTTLES
 (smiles)
 Yes. Yes I am.

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

Heads shake, amazed. Even on her death bed, Jessie is
 Jessie. Even the somber Styles has to quip. But not
 Melanie. Her hand is over her face, tears automatic.

JESSICA (CONT'D)
 Ah, Melanie, I'm sorry, dear.
 (to Styles)
 She's a bit emotional these days.
 She's in love y'know.

Melanie suddenly vulnerable to everyone in the room.

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

JESSICA
 Little late for flirting.

Candace just stares at her , in awe of her candor and
 fearlessness. Matilda reassures Melanie with an arm thrown
 around her.

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

JESSICA (CONT'D)

Candace.

The others continue on, Melanie still in tears. But Candace hangs back, taking Jessica's outstretched hand. Hamm looks to Styles to set order.

FATHER SYTTLES

(to Hamm)

Let's give them a minute.

The disruption registers on Hamm, but he obliges and follows Styles exit.

Candace leans close. It's not easy to say goodbye. She squeezes Jessica's hand.

JESSICA

I want you to do something for me.

CANDACE

Sure, Jess, anything.

Jessica glances at her bible on the night stand.

JESSICA

Make sure Michael gets my bible will you. I let him think he was doing it for me, but I was really doing it for him. He needs to forgive his father.

MICHAEL ACROSS THE HALL

Sitting there, face twisted as if another loss has unjustly touched his life.

CANDACE

Now there's a tear.

CANDACE

I will.

JESSICA

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

CANDACE

Uh huh.

Jessica squeezes Candace's hand tighter.

JESSICA

I'm very proud of you, dear. I know
your mother would've be proud to.

Candace really wells up now - the core of her exposed.

JESSICA

But I see you hurting. I see you
deciding something.

Jessica's eyes bore right into her. Candace face to face with
herself.

JESSICA (CONT'D)

You're heart won't take it,
Candace. You know that, right?

Candace is there now, tears streaking her cheeks. Jessica
touches her face, her smile spreading ear to ear.

JESSICA (CONT'D)

And the next time you see my ex-
husband, flip that bastard the
bird.

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

JESSICA (CONT'D)

I'll be watching you, dear.

INT. JESSICA'S HOSPITAL ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Styles is bedside, bible in hand. Candace is on the other
side, rubbing Jessica's hand, trying to be strong -
professional. Behind her Dr. Hamm is waiting by the life
support machines, ready to proceed. Ethel is at the ready,
syringe of morphine in hand. She's not doing as well as
usual.

Styles leans close to Jessica - the warmest of smiles
exchanged.

FATHER SYTTLES

God be with you, Jessie.

JESSICA

He already is.

Styles nods to Ethel. The syringe is inserted in the IV.

FATHER SYTTLES

Jessie, were going to give you the morphine now, okay.

Jessica is brave. Yet her hand squeezes Candace's.

Styles nods to Hamm. A moment later the machines have all whined down. The VENTILATOR DIAPHRAGM under her bed pushes it's last breath into Jessica's dying body. An arcane silence fills the room until...

A few beats later Jessica gasps, gulping for the 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 it gets ugly, the gurgling in her throat drowning her soul.

Ethel watches, harder by the second. Hamm has little emotion at all.

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

FATHER SYTTLES (CONT'D)

(to Candace)

Hold her.

Jessica's gagging now, eyes rolled open wide as saucers, begging for life, for air.

Candace grabs her hand, holds it close - tears running.

A few more tugs, chokes and then Jessica's eyes roll over white, head arches back - the last breath.

Her mouth contorts as if the final heartbeat is painful, then nothing. Her face relaxes, her hands go limp, falling from Candace's touch.

FATHER SYTTLES

(evenly)

Be at peace, Jessie.

Ethel is just standing there and Candace seems bewildered by her. There's emotion.

ETHEL

She was my favorite one.

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