

FADE IN TO:

INT. CARDIAC INTENSIVE CARE UNIT, MOTHER SETON HOSPITAL

VERY PRETTY NURSE

If you'd like to speak to someone  
about his condition... his  
situation...

We are in the cardiac ICU of a large metropolitan hospital. The room is octagonal, with a matching octagonal desk in the center. On seven of the eight sides of the octagon are large windows, each displaying an intubated patient in a sterile room. Most of the patients are on ventilators. The eighth side of the octagon has supply cabinets and the corridor leading to the rest of hospital. The BACKGROUND NOISES are soft and muffled: this is an eerily quiet place.

VERY PRETTY NURSE

...there's a social worker. I think  
she can see you now.

She is talking to TOM. Tom has just emerged from one of the aseptic rooms and is wearing a mask, gown, booties, and gloves. He stands there awkwardly in the unfamiliar garb.

TOM

Okay...  
(then awkwardly, pointing to  
his gown)  
What should I...?

VERY PRETTY NURSE

Oh...

She gives Tom a radiant smile.

VERY PRETTY NURSE

You can put the booties and gown in  
this bin. The gloves and mask, they  
go over here, in the trash.

The Very Pretty Nurse returns to her paperwork behind the efficient octagonal desk. Tom removes his no-longer-sterile outergarments and places them in the proper receptacles.

We now see that Tom is in his mid-thirties, wearing corporate casual clothes, slightly rumpled. He removes the bootie from one foot with athletic grace, but moves gingerly and hesitantly when removing the other.

As Tom throws away the gloves and mask, he looks back through the large window into the patient room he has just visited. On the bed is WILLIAM, a man in his late fifties, on a ventilator. William's eyes are open, staring blankly. His hands are fidgeting. He looks very weak.

TOM

(to nurse)

Have you... have you been his nurse the whole time?

VERY PRETTY NURSE

Excuse me?

(looking up from her chart)

Oh yes, your friend. He's been here quite a long time now. He's a doll, except when he... when we try...

INT. WILLIAM'S ROOM IN ICU

It is several weeks earlier. A team of nurses and doctors are attempting to wean William from his ventilator. William flails about wildly, with amazing violence for someone so ill. He grabs the Very Pretty Nurse by her hair, pulls her close to his face, and stares desperately into her eyes. The VENTILATOR WHEEZES loudly. In the background we hear one of the doctors calling for Thorazine.

INT. CARDIAC ICU

VERY PRETTY NURSE

But the social worker can tell you all about that. The consulting room is just down that little corridor, second door to the left.

She shows the way to the consulting room.

VERY PRETTY NURSE

The social worker said she'd meet you there.

INT. CONSULTING ROOM

The SOCIAL WORKER is setting up temporary shop in the small consulting room--it's just four walls, an empty bookcase, and a desk with a chair on either side. She is in her late forties, and carries several large bags, a kind of portable office.

SOCIAL WORKER

I'm so glad you came to visit William...

She gestures toward the chair on the other side of the desk.  
Tom enters the room.

SOCIAL WORKER  
You're only the second visitor he's  
had.

She pulls out a thick stack of files.

SOCIAL WORKER  
The nurse tells me you didn't know  
where he was.

TOM  
No one knew.

He sits down.

TOM  
I mean, no one in the neighborhood.

SOCIAL WORKER  
Of course.

She picks up another bag.

SOCIAL WORKER  
And how long have you known William?

She pulls some forms from the bag.

TOM  
Only six weeks or so.

SOCIAL WORKER  
Oh.  
(beat)  
You understand that... he's been here  
for the last six weeks?

She holds the papers in the air, not sure she's going to  
need them.

TOM  
Of course... sure... that's right.  
(embarrassed smile)  
What I mean is, I first met him three  
months ago--but he... he's been  
missing for half that time.

The social worker smiles and sets down the papers.

SOCIAL WORKER  
Yes. Yes, I see.

Tom shifts uncomfortably in his seat.

TOM (V.O.)  
 Oddly enough, I was the one in the  
 hospital--this same hospital, Mother  
 Seton...

EXT. RESIDENTIAL NEIGHBORHOOD DAY

We see Tom driving home from work. A PUBLIC RADIO FUND  
 DRIVE is on his car radio.

TOM (V.O.)  
 ...three months ago, when my new  
 neighbor moved in.

A grocery store shopping cart bounces down a hilly side  
 street.

TOM (V.O.)  
 Where did the shopping cart come  
 from? I don't know. Maybe some kids  
 were fooling around.

We see three boys release a shopping cart from the top of  
 the hill. One of them chases after it on a bike.

TOM (V.O.)  
 Maybe some homeless person had it,  
 but lost control.

We see a Homeless Man drop a large bag of aluminum cans and  
 chase after the runaway cart.

TOM (V.O.)  
 No grocery store in the vicinity, but  
*there it was...*

As Tom speeds up slightly to enter an intersection with a  
 blinking DON'T WALK signs,

THE RUNAWAY SHOPPING CART

suddenly appears in front of him.

HE SLAMS ON THE BRAKES.

TOM (V.O.)  
 I swerved to avoid it...

From inside the car, we see

THE INTERSECTION SPINNING.

A BOY ON A BICYCLE

appears directly in front of the car. Tom desperately reverses the steering wheel.

TOM (V.O.)  
 ...swerved again to avoid the kid on  
 the bike, the one who always shows up  
 on cue in these situations...

ANOTHER CAR SWERVES

to avoid Tom's car.

TOM (V.O.)  
 ...and then a street lamp stepped  
 forward to prevent any further  
 swerving.

From outside the car, we see the left front end of Tom's car

CRASH SIDEWAYS

into a street lamp.

TOM (V.O.)  
 The heavy concrete pillar absorbed my  
 car's momentum...

In slow motion, we see

TOM'S BODY SNAP FORWARD,

and then bounce back.

TOM (V.O.)  
 ...and the seat belt absorbed mine.

We see the empty front seat of Tom's car. The pillar that holds up the roof has been pushed in toward the steering wheel. The PUBLIC RADIO FUNDRAISER continues to play on the radio.

TOM (V.O.)  
 Which interior object gave my knee a  
 sound rap has yet to be determined.

The blue arm of a police officer reaches into the front seat of Tom's car and turns off the ignition. The sound of the radio stops, and we hear an AMBULANCE SIREN approaching.

The cop removes the keys from the ignition, and then backs carefully out of the front seat, avoiding some jagged metal. He walks toward the back of the car, where Tom is sitting on

the trunk, talking to the cop's female partner. She is taking notes. There is a bleeding cut above Tom's right eye.

TOM  
(speaking with too much energy)  
You know what you should do? You should give that shopping cart a ticket. Attempting to leave... leave the scene of an accident.

The cops exchange worried glances.

TOM  
Don't you get it? It's a joke!  
C'mon... just because I had an accident...

A small crowd is gathering and watching curiously. In the back of the crowd we see the wary faces of the three boys and the homeless man.

TOM  
What's wrong with a little post... post-traumatic humor?

The female cop writes something in her notebook.

TOM  
(trying to be playful)  
What are you doing? Stealing my joke? C'mon, lemme see...

Tom stands up walks toward the cop.

MALE COP  
Take it easy. The ambulance—

Tom's right leg buckles, and he collapses in the street. The cops bend down to help him. The ambulance pulls up and cuts out its SIREN. The emergency medical technicians rush over to Tom.

TOM (V.O.)  
The patella, or kneecap, is a small bone, but as I learned in that moment, a leg is largely useless without one.