

THE VIRGIN OF AKRON, OHIO

"Pilot"

Written by

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SECOND DRAFT
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TEASER

FADE IN:

INT. SERIES OF PHOTOGRAPHS DAY

MUSIC plays over shots of RALEIGH GATES: As a beautiful child. A precocious teen. A stunning young woman modeling in New York. She's brash, sexy, funny and wild.

The shots come more and more quickly. More provocative and jaded. Ending with a shocking mug shot of Raleigh (a la Nick Nolte's famous mug shot) on the night she was arrested on drug charges. MUSIC ends as the screen slowly FADES TO BLACK.

A chyron reads: THREE MONTHS LATER.

FADE IN:

EXT. MANHATTAN SUPERIOR COURTHOUSE DAY

Raleigh (27, just out of rehab) exits the busy courthouse with her harried LAWYER. An effortless beauty despite all she's been through. Right now she's in shock.

LAWYER

Raleigh, look, I know you're upset.

RALEIGH

There's no way I can do this.

LAWYER

Trust me, community service at home with your family is a lot better than jail time in New York.

RALEIGH

Yeah, well, you haven't met my parents. I can't live in Akron, Ohio.

LAWYER

You really don't have any choice.

She looks away a moment. Wipes away tears. Knows her whole life is about to change.

RALEIGH

I know you did the best you could.
Thanks.

She heads into the crowd. Her lawyer watches after her. Worried.

INT. AIRPLANE DAY

Raleigh in coach. She can't sit still. She readjusts her pillow. Stuffs it on the floor. Grabs her Marc Jacobs tote. She searches through, finding the The Big Book of AA. She opens it, finds a certain passage. (The entire book is dog-eared, underlined within an inch of its life.)

The OLDER WOMAN next to her notices and pushes her glass of wine away a bit.

INT. AKRON AIRPORT TERMINAL DAY

Raleigh strides through throngs of tacky MID-WESTERNERS, on her cell phone, already looking painfully out of place.

RALEIGH

No, I'm just a little late. I had to change planes in Cincinnati. Are you kidding? Hideous ...no, I'm fine getting a cab, I don't want any special attention. They do have cabs here, right?

She listens, rolls her eyes. GUYS are checking her out.

RALEIGH (CONT'D)

That was a joke. Dinner? What about it?
(she listens, grimaces)
Mother, just because I'm an addict doesn't mean I've started eating red meat.

INT. TAXI DAY

Raleigh rides into town with a CABBIE (45) who keeps checking her out in the rear view as they cruise down the freeway.

RALEIGH

Excuse me. Eyes on the road.

The cabbie grins. Looks back at the road. Then sneaks another look. Raleigh shakes her head. This happens all the time. She looks out at the approaching town.

A sign reads: WELCOME TO AKRON, OHIO--RUBBER CAPITAL OF THE WORLD. We see row upon row of smoky Goodyear plants.

RALEIGH (CONT'D)

Wow, Akron's really beautiful, huh?

CABBIE

It's got its charms. What's a pretty girl like you doing here?

Raleigh groans, rummages through her tote for lip gloss.

RALEIGH

Good question. My family moved here from Columbus four years ago when my grandmother was dying.

CABBIE

Oh yeah? I went to the Zucchini Festival in Columbus last August.

RALEIGH
 Never miss an opportunity to honor a
 zucchini. I always say.

He shoots her a hopeful expression as they exit the freeway.

RALEIGH (CONT'D)
 You have a one track mind, don't you?

CABBIE
 At least I'm focused.

RALEIGH
 Trust me, I've been there. Anyway, my
 older sister and her husband just
 moved here, too. A year ago when he
 got out of seminary. Figure the odds.

CABBIE
 But why are you here?

Raleigh meets his gaze. Answers matter of factly.

RALEIGH
 It was either this or off to jail on
 drug charges. Some choice, huh? My
 dad's a judge, he pulled some strings.
 No time in jail if I live with him and
 my mom during my probation and
 complete 1000 hours of community
 service "without incident." How's that
 for a good laugh? Hilarious, huh?

The cabbie nods, but he doesn't smile.

RALEIGH (CONT'D)
 They might as well have thrown me back
 in rehab.

She looks out the window. Utterly depressed now. The full
 impact of what she's doing suddenly crashing in on her.

RALEIGH (CONT'D)
 OhmyGod... Oh Jesus...

CABBIE
 What's wrong?

RALEIGH
 I need some air.

She rolls down the window as they head into town.

CABBIE
 Should I pull over?

RALEIGH
 No, I'm fine. I just... Oh my God!

She starts having a full blown anxiety attack.

CABBIE
Lady, what's the matter? You're--

RALEIGH
I can't do this. TURN AROUND!

The cabbie glances at her, alarmed, as--

INT. ONCOMING VOLVO DAY

A hot Latino couple, CARLOS ALFARO (42) and LINA DIAZ (25) speed toward an intersection, all over each other. She's laughing, kisses him as they run a red light and PLOW through the intersection.

EXT. INTERSECTION DAY

The Volvo SMASHES into Raleigh's taxi. The taxi SPINS out of control, side-swipes a van and HURLS through a railing. It SAILS through the air and CRASHES headfirst into a ravine 50 feet below. A bone-crunching THUD. The taxi falls over on itself, upside down.

ON THE STREET ABOVE--

Lina escapes the crashed Volvo, dress torn, hysterical.

LINA
He's stuck inside. My God, somebody help him!

Carlos can be seen crushed inside the Volvo.

Lina runs to the railing, gazes over to see Raleigh emerge from the overturned cab below, totally unscathed, bathed in a strange halo of light. (Or is it just sunlight reflecting off a nearby office building?)

Startled ONLOOKERS on the street snap photos from their cell phones as Raleigh pulls the bloodied CABBIE from the smoking cab.

Lina gazes at the sight wide-eyed, then up at the glass window of a LIFE INSURANCE OFFICE TOWER made smoky by the wreck.

It looks like a 30-foot-image of the Virgin Mary is shimmering in the glass. (Or does it?)

Lina crosses herself, starts praying in Spanish.

LINA (CONT'D)
Dios te salve María, llena eres de Gracia, el Señor es contigo...

As Raleigh stares at her in shock.

INT. EMERGENCY ROOM DAY

SLAM through swinging doors to ENTER a hectic emergency room, MOVING to find a YOUNG DOCTOR examining Raleigh.

YOUNG DOCTOR
No dizziness, no pain whatsoever?

RALEIGH
No, I feel fine.

YOUNG DOCTOR
There's not a scratch on you.

Nearby, two INTERNS try to examine the cabbie who is bloody and delirious on a a gurney near the glass exit doors.

INTERN #1
Sir, I need you to lie still.

CABBIE
An angel reached in and saved me.

The Interns exchange glances as Raleigh's family arrives: Her impressive/stalwart father, JAMES (54) pushes in first.

JAMES
Honey, are you OK?

RALEIGH
(goes to his embrace)
Daddy, I'm fine. I'm sorry.

JAMES
You're home, that's all that matters.

Raleigh's high strung, perfectionist mother, LYDIA (53) pushes through, upset. A woman always expecting the worst.

LYDIA
Good Lord, is she hurt? Are you hurt?
How did this happen?

RALEIGH
Mother, I'm fine.

LYDIA
We need a doctor over here!

YOUNG DOCTOR
Ma'am, I'm a doctor. Your daughter is perfectly alright.

LYDIA
Don't tell me she's alright. The police said her cab flipped off an overpass and flew into a ditch.

She adjusts Raleigh's blouse so it's not so revealing as Raleigh's brother KYLE (15, clean cut, sardonic) steps in.

KYLE
Jesus, Mom was right. You'll do anything for attention.

RALEIGH

I'm OK, jackass, if you were worried.

Kyle grins, goes to hug her as their tough, older, overworked sister NATALIE (28, not so beautiful/not so thin) pushes her way past an ORDERLY.

NATALIE

Would you let me by? She's my sister.

She stops when she sees Raleigh is perfectly fine. And perfectly beautiful. Their eyes meet. We see every contradictory emotion they've ever felt toward each other. And a deep bond despite a love/hate dynamic that's grown more tense over the years.

NATALIE (CONT'D)

You scared the crap out of us. You look totally fine.

(she give her a hug)

Maybe I should take drugs?

RALEIGH

Can we just get out of here?

(pulls away)

How're the kids? Where's Paul?

NATALIE

We left them with neighbors. Paul's right here. She's OK, Paul.

Natalie's husband, PAUL SCHUYLER (30), a quiet, intense minister of a small Methodist church, hangs back, confused by all the people crowded outside the glass doors trying to look inside. (We recognize some of them from the crash site.)

PAUL

Those people are trying to get in to see you. Are you OK?

Raleigh nods, glances at the crowd outside the doors, unnerved.

YOUNG DOCTOR

Look, you're welcome to stay for observation, but I don't see any...

LINA'S VOICE

Excuse me. Please. Let me through!

Lina (the woman from the accident) rushes up to Raleigh.

LINA

You can't leave, please. The man I was with, he's in critical condition. You can save him. The Virgin blessed you.

(to the others, emphatic)

I saw it. She was touched by God.

The family turns to Raleigh, confused. OFF Raleigh's dazed reaction, we end the TEASER.

ACT ONEINT. EMERGENCY ROOM DAY

Lina and Raleigh. Where we left off.

RALEIGH

I have no idea what you're talking about. I'm sorry. I can't help you.

LINA

But I saw what you did. You saved him. I saw the Holy Mother bless you.

NATALIE

Miss, you've got the wrong person.

LINA

I'm telling you. It's her.

JAMES

(steps in, protective)
OK, everybody, let's go home. She's just upset. It's alright.

He escorts Raleigh out. The others follow. Raleigh stops in the doorway and glances back at Lina.

INT. JAMES' SUV DAY

The family drives home in silence. Raleigh's in back with Natalie and Paul. Kyle's in front between James and Lydia.

KYLE

OK, that was officially weird.

NATALIE

Lots of crazy people out there.

LYDIA

Poor thing. I hope she's alright.

She checks her hair in the passenger mirror.

JAMES

You're sure you're OK, sweetheart?

RALEIGH

I'm fine, Daddy. Really.

LYDIA

You're home now, safe and sound. How's that for an answered prayer? You are just gonna love Akron once you get used to it. It's safe and clean. Everybody's so friendly. We just joined the country club. You can swim or play tennis all you want.

JAMES
Your mom's undefeated in her tennis league. She was elected vice-president of the Akron Historical Society.

RALEIGH
Wow, that's exciting.

She rolls her eyes at Natalie.

LYDIA
I made you a little "Get To Know Akron" packet of maps and brochures so you can familiarize yourself with everything.

Kyle groans, puts on his ipod so he won't have to listen.

LYDIA (CONT'D)
We're so glad you're home, honey. How many people get a chance to start all over and recreate themselves?

Raleigh, uncomfortable with this, turns to Paul.

RALEIGH
How're things at your new church, Paul?

PAUL
Good. I'm really enjoying it.

LYDIA
He turned the place around in just a little over a year.

PAUL
I'm barely associate pastor, Lydia.

LYDIA
Don't be so modest. The congregation adores him. That's where we had Nanna's funeral. While you were in Miami, Raleigh. Modeling underwear.

Raleigh absorbs this, tense. Kyle takes off his earplugs.

RALEIGH
Swimwear, Mother. There's a difference.

LYDIA
(picks lint off her dress)
Maybe to some people.

Raleigh looks at Natalie. Shakes her head. It never ends.

EXT. GATES HOME DAY

They arrive at a perfectly manicured two-story Tudor. Raleigh stares out at the quiet, pristine neighborhood.

INT. GATES HOME DAY

Immaculate. Tasteful. Someone likes everything in its place. Raleigh glances around. A baby grand is covered with framed family photos. Everything else is alien to Raleigh.

LYDIA
(heading for the kitchen)
Dinner's in half an hour. Raleigh, the guest room's all ready. First door on the left upstairs. I put out fresh towels.

RALEIGH
I'm really exhausted. I think I'll just go to bed if that's OK.

LYDIA
I spent all day in the kitchen.

JAMES
Lydia, enough, she's had a rough day.

LYDIA
The doctor said she's perfectly fine.

NATALIE
Raleigh, get some rest. Let's have lunch tomorrow.

RALEIGH
I wanna see your restaurant.

PAUL
She just got a rave review.

KYLE
In the Akron News. Her life is complete now.

LYDIA
(slapping at Kyle)
The food is fabulous. We're really proud. She's accomplished so much.

PAUL
(to Raleigh, protective)
We'll take you out to a movie or dinner this week and catch up.

LYDIA
They have a single's supper Tuesday nights at the church.

NATALIE
You should come. It's a good way to meet quality people.

RALEIGH
I don't do the church thing anymore.

Lydia's busy pouring herself a glass of wine at the bar.

LYDIA

What's that? What am I missing?

Raleigh notices the wine, glances at her sister.

RALEIGH

Nothing, I was talking to Natalie.

LYDIA

You two have a lot of catching up to do. I would've killed to have a sister. James, want a glass of wine?

JAMES

I...think I'll help Raleigh with her bags.

KYLE

I'll help her, dad.

PAUL

I can do it, James.

NATALIE

Let me, I don't mind--

They all go for her at once.

RALEIGH

You guys, I'm not some invalid.

LYDIA

Let her go to bed. Forget dinner.

(the martyr)

I'll bring it up if I have to.

RALEIGH

Mother, I don't want dinner. Jesus! Do you ever listen?

Silence. Everyone stares. It's painfully awkward.

RALEIGH (CONT'D)

I just want to go to bed.

INT. RALEIGH'S BEDROOM (THE GUEST BEDROOM) DAY

Raleigh enters, stares at the staid, conservative room. Decorated for someone's grandmother.

RALEIGH

Someone, please just shoot me.

She notices that framed photos of her in high school have been put out on a shelf: cheerleading, winning tennis trophies, helping retarded kids at church camp. She studies the photos, trying to remember the girl she once was. Irritated, she puts the photos in a drawer.

Then she gazes at herself in a mirror. Then at her hands. She puts them to her face. Odd, they feel unusually warm. This bothers her a moment. The door cracks open. It's James.

JAMES
Everything OK, sweetheart?

RALEIGH
(starts unpacking)
Yeah, great.

JAMES
You can be honest, you know?

RALEIGH
She had to start drinking the second we walk in the door?

James hesitates, knows this is touchy.

JAMES
She's a little nervous, that's all.

RALEIGH
Why'd you make me come home, Daddy?

JAMES
...we just want another chance, honey.
To make things better. That's all.

He studies her. Not sure what else to say. He smiles. Leaves.

INT./EXT. (SERIES OF SHOTS) NIGHT

The city of Akron as the moon rises and the city sleeps.

Raleigh in bed, drenched in moonlight, tossing and turning.

James in bed, wide awake, staring at the ceiling. Lydia next to him, wearing an eye mask.

A shot of the crash site. Lonely and quiet. Someone has left flickering candles and flowers under the office tower window.

EXT. GATES HOME (ESTABLISHING) THE NEXT MORNING

INT. GATES KITCHEN/BREAKFAST NOOK SAME

James reads *The Wall Street Journal*. Lydia makes a big breakfast as Raleigh walks in, barely awake.

JAMES
Mornin', honey. How'd you sleep?

RALEIGH
Great. Until someone started yodeling that breakfast was ready.

LYDIA

I forgot how grouchy you get. We have a schedule around here. Everyone keeps it.

Raleigh sits down. Looks at James. He smiles. Lydia serves pancakes and sausages. Raleigh grimaces, pushes the sausages away as Kyle walks in with his laptop.

KYLE

Oh man, check this out. There are photos of Raleigh saving that cab driver all over the internet.

RALEIGH

What? Gimme that.

Kyle sits down. They all look at the screen: an ARTICLE and PHOTO of Raleigh saving the cab driver in a halo of light.

KYLE

This is so ripe. They're calling you "The Virgin of Akron, Ohio." ...at least they got the town right.

Lydia swats at him. Raleigh is irate.

RALEIGH

What is wrong with people? Look at my hair, I look like a bag lady.

JAMES

It's clearly just some effect from the sunlight on the camera.

KYLE

It looks pretty real to me.

LYDIA

Would you put that away please?

KYLE

(reading, loving it)
 "Onlookers claim the former J. Crew model rescued the cabbie in a halo of light as a dazzling image of the Virgin Mary appeared in an office tower window nearby blessing her. Has the Virgin chosen a Holy Emissary?"

RALEIGH

OK, this is insane.

LYDIA

Really. Why would the Virgin Mary choose you? We're not even Catholic.

KYLE

But you look hot in this photo. Maybe this could jump start your career? A little scandal never hurt Kate Moss.

LYDIA

Raleigh's modeling days are over.
Catalogues and a few commercials is
not a career. It's time you get a real
job with a real future.

JAMES

Can we discuss this later?

LYDIA

No, I've got everything all lined up.
(to Raleigh)
You can wait tables at Natalie's cafe.

RALEIGH

I don't know anything about waiting
tables.

LYDIA

How hard can it be? Who wouldn't want
a pretty girl waiting on them?

RALEIGH

Me. For one. Daddy...

JAMES

You said yourself you're out of money.
Honey, we want you to have a job.

LYDIA

And help with chores around the house
and keep reasonable hours.

KYLE

Welcome to my nightmare.

JAMES

Sweetheart, there's no pressure. But
it's important you have a schedule and
some structure in your life.
(he gives her some keys)
You can use your grandmom's car to get
around. You have AA this morning, right?

LYDIA

We were saving the car for Kyle.

KYLE

The Virgin can have it.

JAMES

(to Raleigh)
Meet me at the courthouse at one. I'll
introduce you to the woman in charge
of community service.
(moves closer, whispers)
You're gonna be fine.

He kisses Raleigh's forehead, walks out the door. Raleigh
looks like she may be ill.

EXT. AKRON STREET DAY

A dented, dusty, '63 Plymouth Valiant sputters down the street.

INT. PLYMOUTH VALIANT DAY

Raleigh drives. Mortified. She searches the street. Realizes she's lost. She grabs the map her mother gave her. Opens it.

INT. PLYMOUTH VALIANT LATER

She pulls into The 777 Bingo Hall parking lot.

RALEIGH

I'm in hell. And they play bingo.

INT. 777 BINGO HALL DAY

Raleigh enters to find a ragtag group of 25 AKRON LOCALS gathered for an AA meeting. It seems they all know each other. Let's just say it's not New York.

Raleigh heads to a check-in desk. A CHEERY WOMAN in a pink Juicy Couture sweat suit greets her.

CHEERY WOMAN

Oh, hi there, hon, how are you?

RALEIGH

I have these papers from the court.

CHEERY WOMAN

Aren't you pretty? I bet everyone tells you that so I'm not going to. I'll take care of those.

(she takes the papers)

Each meeting you need a signature to show the court you attended.

(signs with a flourish)

That didn't hurt much, now did it?

Raleigh just stares. God, this is going to be painful.

INT. 777 BINGO HALL LATER

The meeting is in progress. A BEEFY GUY drones to a finish.

BEEFY GUY

...I feel great, I do. I think Trina and I have a real chance now that the Judge removed the restraining order.

The group looks unconvinced. Raleigh checks her watch.

GROUP LEADER

OK, thanks for sharing again, Joel. Anyone else before we wrap up?

He glances toward Raleigh. She starts gathering her things.

GROUP LEADER (CONT'D)
We're all ears. Especially newcomers.

Raleigh meets his gaze. Is this bumpkin talking to her? She glances away. Everyone is staring at her. Oh, God.

RALEIGH
My name is Raleigh. I'm an alcoholic.
And a drug addict.

THE GROUP
Hi, Raleigh.

They smile. Position themselves to listen. She hesitates.

RALEIGH
I, uh, just got out of rehab in New York. My parents came up with the brilliant idea of me moving to Akron to live with them while I get sober. No offense, but I spent most of my life trying to get out of Ohio. And away from my parents.

The group just stares. She shifts in her seat.

RALEIGH (CONT'D)
Now I'm supposed to live with them while I pull my life together?
(beat)
See, my mother...she has a drinking problem. Which no one will acknowledge. It all gets tied up in this Methodist martyr role she plays. And she is so completely furious at me. My father enables her. I'm not sure why. I guess it's easier to point the finger at me. I'm so totally overt.
(beat)
I had to get away so I moved to New York when I was 18. To go to college. Well... that's what I told my parents.

EXT. NEW YORK CITY (FLASHBACK) DAY

Raleigh sashays down a street in the Village, joking around with a group of impossibly HIP, FASHIONABLE FRIENDS. It's the old Raleigh: wild/sexy/confident/free.

RALEIGH (V.O.)
I dropped out after my first semester.
To model. And have some fun.

INT. NEW YORK (SERIES OF SHOTS) DAY

Raleigh in hair and make-up. At photo shoots. Stunning. Working the camera. Loving it.

RALEIGH (V.O.)
Which went well a couple of years.

INT. NIGHTCLUB BATHROOM DAY

A MODEL casually offers Raleigh a vile.

RALEIGH (V.O.)
Until I got a sidetracked. With drugs.

Raleigh hesitates, takes the vile.

INT. NIGHTCLUB LATER

MODELS party on the dance floor. No one more so than Raleigh.

RALEIGH (V.O.)
My therapist thinks I was acting out
all the things my mother repressed.
Which is really scary.

INT. 777 BINGO HALL DAY

As Raleigh talks to the AA group.

RALEIGH
She dropped out of college to marry my
dad when she was 19. Supposedly she
was really fun and popular back then.
(beat)
She had a DUI a few years ago my dad
managed to keep off her record.
Something's always been wrong in our
family. But no one will ever talk about
it. It's always just...underneath.

She falls silent. The Group Leader studies her.

GROUP LEADER
...are you...is that all?

Raleigh manages a self-conscious nod. The group just stares.

LATER

A rugged, sexy guy in his late 30's, VINCE LOWDER (we'll see him slip in late to the meeting) walks up to Raleigh as the group disperses. Something in his eyes says he's seen a lot.

VINCE
Just wanted to say hi and welcome. I'm
Vince. I'm glad you shared.

Raleigh nods. This guy is hot and it doesn't go unnoticed.

VINCE (CONT'D)
I just hit five years two weeks ago.
So it is possible.

RALEIGH
That's good to know. I'm three months,
five days, god--two hours. Where do I
pick up my prize?

He grins. Fuck, she's funny, too.

VINCE

Just make sure you get lots of support. I didn't my first time around. Learned the hard way. I used to be a cop. I work over at the Bingham Nursery on State Street now. If you ever...need anything green.

Raleigh nods. He nods. There's something noble about him, but dangerous at the same time. Hard to place.

VINCE (CONT'D)

Well, see ya around.

He smiles and leaves. Raleigh watches until he's out the door.

EXT. AKRON COUNTY COURT HOUSE DAY

Raleigh walks up, heads inside.

INT. COURT HOUSE JAMES' OFFICE DAY

James sits at his desk reading the *Akron Beacon Journal* with concern. There's a PHOTO of Raleigh saving the cabbie in a halo of light. Raleigh walks in. James puts away the paper.

RALEIGH

Hey, Daddy.

JAMES

Honey, hey. How was your meeting?

RALEIGH

They said I'm totally fine. Evidently my parents are the problem. I can go back to New York now.

He shoots her a look. She crosses to the window.

RALEIGH (CONT'D)

Nice office. A lot bigger than Columbus. You've got a view.

JAMES

I'm starting to really like it here.
(beat, more serious)
Honey, that picture of you in the accident, it was in the paper today. I know it's all crazy, but it worries me.

RALEIGH

Why? It's all so ridiculous.

JAMES

I know. I just want you to be careful. Attention like this, it's the last thing you need right now.

RALEIGH
 ...you mean the last thing you need?
 Since you're an elected official.

JAMES
 Raleigh, that's not what I saying. I
 just want things back to normal.

Raleigh's about to say more as a self-assured, stylish-for-Akron lawyer in her 50's, CAROLINE JEFFREYS, walks in, shuts the door, ranting. She doesn't see Raleigh at first.

CAROLINE
 James, we have to discuss the Murray
 case. I can't hold off J.W. any longer.
 And don't think you can cajole me into
 another late dinner, I have plans--

JAMES
 Caroline, this is my daughter,
 Raleigh.

Caroline turns, sees Raleigh, and is immediately embarrassed.

CAROLINE
 I thought you were alone. I'm sorry.
 (genuinely pleased)
 It's so good to meet you, Raleigh.

She crosses over. They shake hands.

CAROLINE (CONT'D)
 Your father never stops talking about
 you. He must have shown me that
 catalogue you were in a hundred times.
 You're even prettier in person.

Raleigh nods. Glances at her father. It's awkward now.

CAROLINE (CONT'D)
 Well, I'm sure you two have lots of
 catching up to do.

She glances at James. There's a friendly, rather intimate energy between them that Raleigh can't help but notice.

CAROLINE (CONT'D)
 We can discuss this later, James.

She puts the file on his desk. Smiles at Raleigh. Walks out.

RALEIGH
 ...someone has a crush on my father.

JAMES
 Caroline's just friendly. She's been
 through alot lately. Her husband
 passed away six months ago.

Raleigh absorbs this. Not sure what to make of it.

JAMES (CONT'D)
Come on, you don't want to be late.

INT. COURT HOUSE COMMUNITY SERVICE OFFICE DAY

James and Raleigh enter and walk up to a desk where a large, seen-it-all black woman ROWENA JONES (45) sits eating nachos.

JAMES
Raleigh, Rowena Jones. Our Community Service Supervisor.

RALEIGH
Hi, Miss Jones.

ROWENA
Honey, call me Rowena. Everyone else does. Your daddy gave me the heads up. I need you to fill out these forms. Then we'll get you started tomorrow.
(wipes her fingers, hands Raleigh some documents)
Read these documents, sign and date where I've notated. Be aware all noncompliances will be reported to Judge Fennis in New York. You must satisfy all 1000 hours of service without incidence to satisfy your probation. Damn, that's alot. Never had anybody with that many. Any questions, sugar?

RALEIGH
Which window can I jump out of?

ROWENA
Take your pick. But I've got dibs on the middle one around two.

She grins. Raleigh grins, takes the documents and sits down to fill them out, overwhelmed.

JAMES
Thank you, Rowena.

Rowena nods, goes back to her nachos. James turns to leave, but he stops in the doorway and looks back at Raleigh, worried now. How did things ever come to this?

Raleigh glances up, catches him watching her.

RALEIGH
Don't worry, Daddy. I'm OK.

She smiles, not all that convincingly. James nods and leaves.

INT. COURT HOUSE HALLWAY CONTINUOUS

But when he gets out in the hallway, he has to stop a moment. Staggered by the emotions his daughter brings up in him. He wipes his face, composes himself and moves on.

EXT. NATALIE'S CAFE DAY

Raleigh parks the Valiant, gets out and looks at the cafe. The exterior is understated and tasteful. A big sign reads: NATALIE'S CAFE AND CATERING. Raleigh's impressed and intimidated at the same time.

INT. NATALIE'S CAFE DAY

Raleigh walks in. The place is bustling and impressive. Someone's put a lot of thought and care into it.

NATALIE

Raleigh, you're here.

She grabs her arm and announces to the STAFF and CUSTOMERS:

NATALIE (CONT'D)

Everybody, this is my little sister, Raleigh. She just moved here from New York City where she was modeling. Now she's gonna wait tables here awhile.

There's a smattering of impressed applause. Raleigh is embarrassed. STAFF MEMBERS rush up to say hello: A cute counter girl APRIL (19). A chubby gay waiter BRICK (23). And the Pakistani cashier ROOPA (49).

APRIL

OhmyGod, I have SO many questions to ask you about New York. Everyone I know says I should be a model.

BRICK

Honey, not everyone.
(to Raleigh)

You, the Nokia commercial, flawless.

ROOPA

Have you ever met Tyra Banks?

RALEIGH

I shot a catalog with her once.

ROOPA

(floored)
You did not.

They all start talking at once, wanting Raleigh's attention. This is not what Natalie had in mind.

NATALIE

Ok, enough. Back to work. We're gonna grab some lunch now.

LATER

Raleigh watches with disgust as Natalie chows down on a big plate of fattening food. Natalie glances up.

NATALIE (CONT'D)

Don't look at me that way. I don't have time to be thin now.

RALEIGH

And you never will be with that attitude.

NATALIE

If you must know, food is my drug.

Raleigh shoots her a look. Natalie savors a french fry.

RALEIGH

We could do something about your hair?

NATALIE

I like my hair.

RALEIGH

I could do your makeup?

NATALIE

We're not twelve anymore. You look great by the way.

RALEIGH

Thanks. ...your place is amazing. Really. You did a great job.

NATALIE

It took a lot of hard work. It didn't just happen overnight.

Raleigh knows this is a thinly veiled jab.

RALEIGH

I worked really hard, too, Natalie.

NATALIE

I know you did. Nobody was pulling for you more than me. I really thought you were gonna make it there for awhile.

(beat)

You didn't have to totally shut me out. I would have been there for you.

An awkward, guilty silence. Raleigh glances around.

RALEIGH

Must be nice, having Mom and Dad lend you the money to do all this.

NATALIE

They wanted us in Akron. When Paul got out of seminary a church opened up here. We thought, why not?

RALEIGH

You've always done everything right.

NATALIE

There's nothing wrong with doing things right, Raleigh.

Their eyes meet. A lot of history here.

RALEIGH

How are mother and daddy doing? Have they been fighting lately?

NATALIE

Why do you always assume there's some problem? They're doing great. The move was good for them. ...what's next for you? What's your plan?

RALEIGH

I just got out of rehab. Can I have a day to figure out the rest of my life?

NATALIE

You haven't thought about it?

RALEIGH

Yeah, I'm gonna marry George Clooney, have five kids and get my own talk show.

NATALIE

You don't have to be a smartass.

RALEIGH

Would it kill you to be supportive?

NATALIE

I'm just asking you a question.

RALEIGH

(confident)
When I finish my hours...I'm moving back to New York. Model again.

NATALIE

Honey, isn't that what got you in this mess in the first place? It's not like you're getting any younger.

Raleigh stares at her, pierced, as Brick rushes up.

BRICK

Natalie, we need you in the kitchen. There's an issue with the eggplant.

Natalie gets up to take care of it. Raleigh glances around the cafe. Morose.

The front door opens. A great-looking guy, OWEN BERKHALTER (28, athletic) walks in. Button down, khakis. Big catch in Akron. He strides up to the counter to order lunch.

OWEN

April, hey. I'll take the usual to go.
Where's Natalie?

APRIL

She'll be out in a minute.
(hushed, excitement)
Her sister. The model. She's here.

Owen sees Raleigh eating alone. He heads over. Smiles.

OWEN

Hey, you're Natalie's sister, right? I recognize you from the J. Crew catalogue. Gotta tell you, I love their shirts.

RALEIGH

I'll make sure and let them know.

OWEN

That's funny. You're funny like Natalie. I like that. Sorry, Owen Berkhalter. I work across the street.

RALEIGH

At Teesha's Glamour Nails?

OWEN

Berkhalter Insurance. If you ever need any coverage, I'm your man. I come in here every day. Natalie and I are really tight. She told me all about you.

RALEIGH

Did she?

OWEN

You had 'em really worried. Bet you're glad to be home with your family.

RALEIGH

Actually, I...

OWEN

(pulls up a chair)
I read about the "Virgin Mary sighting". What the hell was that about? Totally bogus, right?

RALEIGH

(wants him to leave)
Yeah. Totally.

OWEN
Sad, isn't it? What people will believe. And talk themselves into.

RALEIGH
It's pathetic.

OWEN
But don't worry, you're gonna love it here. Everyone's friendly, we take care of each other. It's the perfect place for someone to, you know, pull their life together.

RALEIGH
Is that what I need to do?

OWEN
I'm just saying it's a great town. I've lived here my whole life.

RALEIGH
How sad for you.

OWEN
Excuse me?

RALEIGH
How sad. For you.

His smile fades. Major button pushed.

OWEN
I happen to love it here. I have a great life. And last time I checked I haven't been in rehab.

RALEIGH
Yeah, too bad I had to go, 'cause the only way I'd find you interesting is after five vodka tonics.

Owen's face drops. Raleigh gets up, tosses her napkin and walks out just as Natalie returns from the kitchen.

NATALIE
Raleigh, where are you...? Owen, what happened?

Owen just glares. But there's a regret in his eyes that tells us he's not a totally bad guy.

INT. JAMES' SUV LATE AFTERNOON

James drives home. He turns onto his block. Stares. His front yard is packed with a CROWD OF PEOPLE.

EXT. GATES HOME LATE AFTERNOON

James gets out, heads into the clamoring crowd.

JAMES

What the hell is going on?

OLD MAN

We came to be blessed by The Virgin
Raleigh.

James looks at the crowd: People carry gifts, rosaries,
flowers, animals to be healed. He pushes through, alarmed, as
Raleigh comes out on the porch.

RALEIGH

Daddy, I tried to tell them to leave.

JAMES

I want them out of our yard.

A FRANTIC WOMAN grabs Raleigh's arm.

FRANTIC WOMAN

Just one question for the Virgin...

FATHER WITH YOUNG GIRL

My daughter, she is ill.

TEEN-AGED GUY

My father's missing in Iraq.

OLD LADY

I can't find my dog.

Everyone's grabbing, pushing closer. Raleigh pulls away, yells.

RALEIGH

Look, I can't help you, OK? I don't have
any "connection" to God--I'm not even
sure I believe in God--and I'm calling
the cops if you don't get off our lawn.

Lydia comes out, freaked when she sees the size of the crowd.

LYDIA

Good Lord, stop stomping my flowers.
Shoo, get off, move back.

Kyle comes out, snapping off photos.

KYLE

Oh man, this is so ripe. Raleigh,
smile. Say something profound.

Raleigh turns, glares. He SNAPS a shot.

KYLE (CONT'D)

Gotta be a way to cash in on this.

JAMES

Kyle, enough. Get in the house.

The crowd pushes to get closer to Raleigh, calling her name.

CROWD

Raleigh! Help us. You are blessed.

Lina (the woman from the accident) arrives in her Jetta, jumps out, pushes in, trying to get closer.

LINA

Let me by. I have to talk to her.

James spots Lina at the same time Raleigh does.

JAMES

It's that woman from the hospital.
(to the family)
In the house. Everybody. Now.

LYDIA

(grabs Raleigh's arm)
I don't want you talking to these people. Or her. Understand me?

RALEIGH

Mother, I'm just trying to...

LYDIA

(shakes her arm)
Understand me?

RALEIGH

Yes, Jesus, you're hurting my arm.

She glances back as her mother yanks her into the house, catching Lina's pleading gaze.

Something tells her this isn't going away on its own.

END ACT ONE

ACT TWOEXT. GATES HOME NIGHT

The front yard is empty now. The crowd is gone. We MOVE to the street where Lina sits alone in her Jetta. Staring at the house. Finally, she gives up and drives away.

INT. GATES' HOUSE, DINING ROOM NIGHT

The family (including Natalie, Paul and their kids HENRY (9) and SPENCER (7) are gathered for Raleigh's homecoming dinner.

JAMES

Those people bother you again, I wanna know about it.

LYDIA

(pouring herself more wine)
I can only imagine what the neighbors must think. I told you to ignore them and what did you do? You went outside.

RALEIGH

It's not like they hurt anybody.

NATALIE

The whole thing is just laughable.

RALEIGH

Insane, right?

PAUL

It's so bizarre, I was just reading about this place in Lourdes, France-- five million people a year travel there to visit a cave where a peasant girl had a visitation.

NATALIE

And what proof did they have?

PAUL

That's just it. A miracle, by it's very definition, can't be explained.

KYLE

That's convenient.

LYDIA

Those Catholics will believe anything.

NATALIE

Mother, honestly.

LYDIA

I'm just saying--

HENRY

Is a miracle like magic, Daddy?

PAUL
It's something...God does to make us
remember he's there.

SPENCER
(to Raleigh)
But sometimes you forget. Like at
night when monsters are in the closet.

HENRY
Daddy says to pray when you're scared
and God will make you feel safe.

LYDIA
Sounds like a very good idea, Henry.

SPENCER
Yeah, grandma, but sometimes you need
someone with skin on 'em.

Everyone laughs. Lydia sips her wine.

RALEIGH
(to Henry and Spencer)
I missed you guys. You know that? You
grew up so fast when I was gone.

SPENCER
We missed you, too, Aunt Raleigh.

HENRY
Now you're all well again so God chose
you to help people.

SPENCER
That's why he put his mother in the
office tower window. To bless you!

For a mortified moment, no one knows what to say.

Then Kyle spits out laughter. Henry and Spencer laugh with him
as if it's the greatest thing ever. The others are silent.

LYDIA
Spencer, that's really cute. But that's
not the way God works. He doesn't
"reveal" himself in office tower
windows. That's what church is for.

RALEIGH
Mother, don't tell her that. She's
just trying to understand.

LYDIA
And I'm trying to help her.

RALEIGH
By limiting her view of God?

LYDIA

Well, he certainly didn't "reveal"
himself to you in an office window.

RALEIGH

(flares)

Why? Because I'm too screwed up to be
of any use to God?

Silence.

JAMES

That's not what she's saying, Raleigh.

RALEIGH

Then what is she saying?

NATALIE

Would you two please stop?

Raleigh looks at her mother. Defiant.

LYDIA

Well... Time for dessert.

She gets up, grabs her glass of wine. Walks out of the room.

RALEIGH

Right. And another glass of wine.

Henry and Spencer glance around. Unsettled by the tension.
Natalie gets up, follows her mother out of the room.

INT. FAMILY ROOM NIGHT

MTV plays on TV. FIND Raleigh and Kyle sprawled on the sofa.

KYLE

Just go along with whatever Mom says.
Trust me, it's easier that way.

RALEIGH

She doesn't drive you crazy?

KYLE

I don't listen to her anymore.

He grins. Raleigh throws popcorn at him.

RALEIGH

She has this perfect frozen picture of
how everything should be. Now I'm
ruining it for her all over again.
...she's drinking a lot, isn't she?

KYLE

She had two glasses of wine.

RALEIGH
That we noticed.

She glances at her hands, holds them out to him.

RALEIGH (CONT'D)
Do my hands feel warm to you? It's
weird. Ever since the accident--

Kyle feels her hands and yanks back in astonishment.

KYLE
OhmyGod, what's wrong with you?

Raleigh yanks back, then sees he's joking.

RALEIGH
That's not funny.

KYLE
Why would they be warmer? You don't--

RALEIGH
Yeah, I'm blessed. Can't you tell?

KYLE
There's a word for what happened.
I looked it up. Pareidolia. Sounds
kinky doesn't it? It's an illusion
involving some obscure stimulus that's
perceived as being clear and distinct.
Your mind fills in the details. Like
seeing Jesus in a taco. Or Scarlett
Johansson in the clouds.

RALEIGH
That's frightening. It's all so weird.
This happening now.

KYLE
Isn't that part of getting sober? Your
body like freaks out. What was rehab
like anyway? What happened in New
York? No one would tell me.

RALEIGH
The less you know the better.

KYLE
I'm not ten anymore. I have a right to
know.

She looks at him, sees he's serious.

RALEIGH
How did you turn out so normal? You're
practically perfect.

He smiles, but he's hiding something. He changes the subject.

KYLE

What if you were chosen by God? How cool would that be? To know your life had a purpose.

RALEIGH

That would be helpful.

KYLE

You still believe in God, right? I heard you tell Natalie you don't go to church anymore.

RALEIGH

...I haven't set foot in a church since...God, high school. I wanna believe in something. Does that count?

KYLE

I seriously doubt it.

He grins. She grins back. Then, after a moment--

KYLE (CONT'D)

I missed you, Raleigh. I didn't think you'd ever come back.

He leans over, gives her a hug and a kiss. It throws her, there's something so genuine and unaffected about it.

KYLE (CONT'D)

I gotta go study. All A's last semester. Tough being perfect.

He gets up, goes up to bed.

LATER

Raleigh's channel surfing when she sees a LIVE NEWS REPORT about a CANDLELIGHT VIGIL being held at the crash sight to honor the Virgin Mary. She sits back, amazed.

REPORTER ON TV

Some of the people who have gathered here are part of the Marian movement, devotees of the Virgin Mary, who travel to sites around the world renowned for visitations. Others come out of curiosity. Or to pray and be blessed. Most believe the Virgin makes appearances in times of crisis. To offer hope and solace. And remind us that God is with us forever.

Raleigh settles in, eats popcorn.

REPORTER

Lina Diaz witnessed what happened here the day of the supposed visitation.

Lina eagerly steps into view, joins the reporter. Smiles.

RALEIGH
Oh God, not her.

LINA
Yes, after the wreck I saw her, Raleigh Gates. She pulled the taxi driver out of the crash. Not a scratch on her. A halo shining around her head. Then the Virgin Mother appeared in that office window. I swear on my mother's grave. Shining with hope. Blessing her. Such love in her eyes.
(to the camera)
Please, Miss Gates, the man in the accident with me is in critical condition at Sisters of Charity Hospital. He could die. Fulfill your service to the Virgin and save him.

Dumbstruck, then pissed, Raleigh gets up, grabs her keys.

EXT. OFFICE TOWER (CRASH SITE) NIGHT

Raleigh arrives and searches the crowd. The news crew is gone but a GROUP OF 30 are still gathered. She makes her way to Lina as inconspicuously as possible and pulls her aside. Hushed.

RALEIGH
What do you think you're doing?

LINA
Praying you would come. It worked.

RALEIGH
Listen to me, I just moved here. I'm trying to have a normal life. My parents live here, too, and I don't need you blurting my name out on television, saying I can save people.

LINA
But you can. I saw you.

RALEIGH
OK, this is insane. There is nothing I can do to help your husband.

Lina looks away. She's hiding something.

RALEIGH (CONT'D)
What is it? What's wrong?

Lina won't answer, but suddenly Raleigh knows the truth.

RALEIGH (CONT'D)
OhmyGod. He's not your husband, is he?

Lina hesitates. She shakes her head.

LINA

He's my boss. We've been having an affair. He has a wife and two babies.

(tortured)

I'll never forgive myself if he doesn't pull through this.

OFF Raleigh. Dumbstruck.

INT. RALEIGH'S VALIANT NIGHT

Raleigh drives Lina to the hospital.

RALEIGH

Ten minutes, tops, that's it. Then you'll leave me alone, right?

LINA

Yes, I'll leave you alone. I can't tell you how much this means. I used to be so close to the Virgin. When I was a girl I would feel her with me. But as I got older I lost my faith.

Raleigh glares at the road, but she's hearing every word.

LINA (CONT'D)

Then a year ago I started praying again. Every relationship I had was worse than the one before. I couldn't take it anymore. I begged God to help me. I was drinking and partying. My whole life was a wreck...

Raleigh glances at her now.

LINA (CONT'D)

That's when I met Carlos. I work for him in accounting. He has a very successful auto parts company.

RALEIGH

And he cheats on his wife.

LINA

Are you judging me? Is the Virgin judging me?

RALEIGH

Yeah, she thinks it's despicable and you're gonna burn in hell.

LINA

Now you're teasing.

RALEIGH

I'm being honest, Lina.

LINA

So am I. I've never felt this way. He's miserable with his wife. They barely even have sex anymore.

RALEIGH

And it's gonna be so different with you?

LINA

We want to move to Florida together. He just can't leave yet because of the kids.

RALEIGH

I hate to tell you this, but I've been there before.

(she looks at her now)

This is not going to end well for you.

INT. HOSPITAL WAITING ROOM NIGHT

Raleigh and Lina arrive to find ROSIE ALFARO (42, tough, pretty but chunky) sitting with worried FRIENDS. She rises.

ROSIE

Thank God you found her.

LINA

Raleigh, this is Rosie. Carlos' wife.

ROSIE

Thank you for coming.

(she kisses Lina's cheek)

I knew I could depend on you.

(to Raleigh)

Lina is always there for Carlos.

RALEIGH

That's definitely my understanding.

Rosie smiles, she obviously has no idea about the affair. She takes Raleigh's arm, leads her down a hallway. Lina follows.

ROSIE

He's still unconscious. Just sit with him. Pray God gives us a second chance. We have two children.

Raleigh eyes Lina. What a mess.

INT. CARLOS' HOSPITAL ROOM NIGHT

Raleigh and Rosie enter to find Carlos in bed, banged up and unconscious. Rosie pulls up a chair for Raleigh as her cell phone RINGS. She checks the caller I.D.

ROSIE

My kids. I have to take this.

She walks out of the room, pulling the door shut. Raleigh glances at Carlos, unnerved. What the hell is she supposed to do now? She hesitates, then goes over to the bed. Cocks her head. Hmmm. Sexy guy. No wonder Lina's upset.

She studies him a moment. Seeing him in such awful shape softens her. Brings up emotions she didn't expect. She hesitates, then reaches out towards him--

But she stops just before touching him. Feeling ridiculous now. She pulls her hand away as Rosie walks back in.

ROSIE (CONT'D)
Everything OK?

Carlos' eyes flutter. His arm twitches.

ROSIE (CONT'D)
OhmyGod. That's the first time he's moved! Since the accident.

RALEIGH
It was just a twitch.

ROSIE
Because of you.

RALEIGH
OK, I've gotta go now.

INT. HOSPITAL HALLWAY NIGHT

Raleigh hurries out of Carlos' room. Lina is waiting.

LINA
Is he better? What happened?

RALEIGH
Nothing. He twitched.

LINA
OhmyGod, did he say anything?

RALEIGH
No. And we're outta here. Now.
(escorts her to elevator)
I did what you asked. This is your chance to get out of this. Quit your job, move to another town. Do whatever it takes to get as far away as possible.

Lina stops, looks at her incredulous.

LINA
But I can't leave now. I'm pregnant. Carlos doesn't know yet.

She smiles. Raleigh stares at her, utterly speechless.

END OF ACT TWO

ACT THREEINT. RALEIGH'S VALIANT NIGHT

Raleigh drives Lina back to her car. Fed up.

RALEIGH

Even if he gets better he's never gonna leave his wife and kids. They never do. And when they do, they'll end up blaming you. You need to take responsibility. Move on. Stop living in a fantasy. There's this really terrifying thing, it's called reality.

LINA

Why do you joke? I love Carlos, he loves me. God brought us together. God will help us find a way.

RALEIGH

This is about you, Lina, not "God".

LINA

How can you say that? God sent you to save him. You can explain it to Rosie. She'll listen to you.

RALEIGH

(you're a freak)
OK, I'm done here. And if you're smart, you will be, too.

She swerves into the office tower parking lot. Stops.

LINA

You're obviously not listening to the Virgin now. You feel alone, don't you? Even with the Virgin right beside you.

Raleigh absorbs this, refuses to look at her.

LINA (CONT'D)

Thanks again for your help. I'll pray the Virgin guides you.

She gets out, heads to her car. Raleigh shakes her head, but can't help glance out after her a moment before driving away.

INT. GATES HOUSE THE LIVING ROOM NIGHT

Raleigh walks in, exhausted. She heads upstairs in the dark.

INT. RALEIGH'S ROOM NIGHT

Raleigh enters and is startled to find her mother in her nightgown, rummaging in her closet.

RALEIGH

What are you doing?

LYDIA
Your closet, it's a mess.

Raleigh glances in the closet. It's perfectly fine. This is strange. Lydia seems vaguely wired.

LYDIA (CONT'D)
Where've you been so late?

RALEIGH
I...met a friend from AA for coffee.

LYDIA
At midnight? Don't lie to me, Raleigh.

RALEIGH
Are you snooping through my things?

LYDIA
I was worried. I couldn't sleep.
You're our responsibility now.

RALEIGH
Mother, I'm fine. Just go to bed.

LYDIA
I found this in a box from the old
house. It's yours from Junior High.

She holds out an old copy of the LIVING BIBLE.

Raleigh takes it, unnerved, flips through. Page after page is underlined and highlighted. (Not unlike the Big Book of AA we saw her with on the plane.) This throws her, stirs up memories.

LYDIA (CONT'D)
You just got lost along the way. God
can help you get back on track.

RALEIGH
Mother, I can't get into this with--

LYDIA
I want to help you, honey.

RALEIGH
You can't. I have to do this on my own.

LYDIA
You need help. I begged you not to go
to New York. I told you what would--

RALEIGH (OVERLAPPING)
You never gave it a chance.

LYDIA
And look where it got you! When I as
young did I run off and do whatever I
pleased? No, I made sacrifices.

(MORE)

LYDIA (CONT'D)
 I didn't make myself out to be something special. That's always been your problem. You have to be humble now. Ask God to help you and he will.

Raleigh glances at the Bible, then back at her mother.

RALEIGH
 How many glasses of wine have you had tonight?

Lydia stares at her, astounded. She LAUGHS.

LYDIA
 You will never cease to amaze me.

She shakes her head, takes the Bible, walks out of the room.

Raleigh goes to the door. Locks it and leans against it.

INT. COURT HOUSE, COMMUNITY SERVICE OFFICE DAY

Rowena eats chicken wings. Raleigh walks up to check in for service.

RALEIGH
 Hi, Rowena.

ROWENA
 Oh hey, honey. Hungry? I got plenty.

RALEIGH
 God, no. No thanks.

Rowena wipes her fingers, holds up identical day-glo vests.

ROWENA
 Take your pick. Orange or orange?

Raleigh feigns a smile, glancing over at a dispirited group of PAROLEES in day-glo vests, waiting on a bench by the door.

EXT. CITY SHELTER DAY

The parole group exits a van to face the alley of a run down city shelter. The coordinator ELSON FICKET claps his hands.

ELSON
 OK people, your job today, if you choose to accept it, is to clean this filthy alley, paint over this graffiti and plant some beautiful new sycamore trees. Any questions?

RALEIGH
 Is it too late to choose jail time?

The group snickers. Elson is not amused.

LATER

As the group clears trash and paints, a downtrodden woman in a wheelchair, ZELDA MEANS (50's) wheels out to study Raleigh.

ZELDA
You're that girl they've been talking about on TV. The one who was blessed.

RALEIGH
Sorry, that wasn't me.

ZELDA
Sure it was. Would ya just put your hands on my legs for a minute? The doctors don't know what else to do.

RALEIGH
I'm sorry. I really can't help you.

ZELDA
But it would mean so much to me.

There's nothing demanding in her voice now. Just a simple request. Their eyes lock. Raleigh glances around to make sure no one is looking. A small part of her wonders...

She hesitates, then reaches out and lays her hands on the woman's legs. Zelda shuts her eyes. Takes a breath. Relaxes.

ZELDA (CONT'D)
Oh, that feels nice. Your hands... they're so warm. ...dear God.

A tear falls from her eye. Raleigh watches, breathless.

ELSON
(walks up)
What the hell are you doing?

Raleigh pulls her hands away. Straightens.

RALEIGH
I...we...we were just talking.

ELSON
We're not here to chat. Now are we?

Raleigh nods and walks away, embarrassed, but not without glancing at Zelda as she wheels back into the shelter.

MUSIC comes up: Seal's "Get It Together", taking us to:

INT. RALEIGH'S VALIANT DAY

Raleigh driving, lost in thought, sunlight and shadow bouncing off her face, as a MONTAGE BEGINS.

We see FLASHES of the next few days:

Raleigh at AA meetings. Community service hours. Being trained to wait tables at Natalie's cafe. Dinners with her family.

SEAL'S VOICE

"Now's the time for stepping out of place. Get up on your feet and give account of your faith. Pray to God, or something, or whatever you do..."

Raleigh in bed, exhausted, lonely. She goes to her iBook, studies a web site that has photos of her saving the cabbie.

Lydia at the country club, playing tennis with FRIENDS.

Paul teaching a SENIOR'S BIBLE STUDY at his church.

Kyle at school taking a test. He sneaks out a crib sheet.

James eats lunch at a restaurant, laughing with Caroline.

Raleigh jogs through her neighborhood. She approaches her house, sees REPORTERS and NEWS TRUCK waiting outside. She ducks her head and jogs the other way.

SEAL'S VOICE

"We've got to keep this world together. Got to keep it movin' straight. Love like we mean forever. So the people can relate..."

Raleigh waits tables at rush hour. She plows out of the kitchen with a tray Natalie's given her and runs right into April. BAM! Food flies everywhere...

And we're back in Raleigh's Valiant. It's several days later. Raleigh looks out, exhausted, sees a liquor store. An intense flash of temptation. Then right up ahead she sees--

A HOT GUY loading fertilizer into a car at a nursery. It's Vince from AA. A beat. She whips into the parking lot.

EXT. NURSERY DAY

Raleigh browses, acting like she's shopping for a plant as Vince walks by, lugging a flat of begonias.

RALEIGH

Oh, hi. Vince, right? This is the nursery you work at? How weird.

Vince smiles. She smiles.

RALEIGH (CONT'D)

I was just shopping. For a plant. For my mother. She's ill.

VINCE

That's too bad. Lemme help.

He sets down the begonias.

VINCE (CONT'D)
 What about an Amaryllis? They're
 always good. Or a Cyclamen.

RALEIGH
 What a hideous name for a plant.
 (she takes it, smiles)
 Perfect for my mother. Thanks.

It's awkward. Vince looks her over. Senses more is up.

VINCE
 How's it going anyway?

RALEIGH
 Great, really great.

VINCE
 I read there was a "Virgin Mary
 sighting" when you were in an accident
 the other day. What was that about?

RALEIGH
 Evidently I'm God's "special"
 messenger now. Lemme know if you need
 anything.

He smiles, but he's smart enough to see through her veneer.

VINCE
 Not exactly the kind of attention
 you're probably looking for now, huh?

She hesitates, more vulnerable now.

RALEIGH
 No, it's not actually. When exactly
 does it start getting easier?

VINCE
 I don't know if it ever does. But my
 worst day sober still beats the hell
 out of my best day drunk.

RALEIGH
 I was a really fun drunk actually. You
 should've seen me on ecstasy.

He grins, but he's not going to let her change the subject.

VINCE
 What's it like living with your folks?

RALEIGH
 It was always my dream to move home
 again. And live with my insane mother.
 Who has all the answers.

VINCE
 Better get lots of outside support
 then. That's why God made friends. To
 make up for giving us families. And
 insane mothers.

RALEIGH
 Cute, did you just make that up,
 because--

She suddenly gets choked up. It comes utterly out of nowhere.

RALEIGH (CONT'D)
 I'm sorry. I don't know what's--
 (she breaks down)
 Oh God, I just--

VINCE
 Hey, it's OK. It doesn't bother me.

RALEIGH
 I can't stand people who...blabber all
 over the place. It's just...my
 parents...my mother...

She loses it again. Vince opens his arms.

VINCE
 You've been through a lot. Come here.

He opens his arms as if it's the most natural thing. She
 hesitates, then moves to him. He wraps his arms around her.
For the first time we see her actually relax. She takes the
 deepest breath. Holds him close. But then it's too much for
 her. Too charged. For both of them. She pulls away.

RALEIGH
 OK, that was incredibly embarrassing.
 I gotta go. Nice...running into you.

She heads off, totally forgetting the plant.

EXT. NATALIE'S CAFE DAY

Raleigh hurries up and runs smack into Owen as he exits.

OWEN
 Oh, hey. I was looking for you. Look,
 I want to apologize for yesterday.
 Seriously, I never meant to judge you.

RALEIGH
 But you did judge me. Seriously.

OWEN
 Wow, are you always this difficult?

RALEIGH
 Yes. When someone's being an ass.

She heads inside, leaving him exasperated.

INT. NATALIE'S CAFE DAY

Raleigh enters. The place is packed. Natalie rushes by, crazed.

NATALIE
Where've you been? You're half an hour
late. Help me bus these tables.

Raleigh follows as they work their way through the room.

RALEIGH
I got hung up at a meeting.

NATALIE
AA was your excuse yesterday.

RALEIGH
So I'm lying?

NATALIE
I don't know. Are you? Look, I'm in no
mood. Reporters were in here earlier.
People have been coming in all day
asking for the "Virgin Raleigh".

CUSTOMERS at the counter wave at Raleigh.

RALEIGH
Maybe I should get a commission?

NATALIE
It's not funny. They're blocking the
way for paying customers. I didn't
sign up for this nonsense.

RALEIGH
And I don't appreciate you telling
Owen what's his name my personal
problems. I just ran into him outside.

NATALIE
Maybe I don't hide my problems from the
people I care about and shut them out.
I tell them what I'm going through. So
they can understand and support me.

RALEIGH
You don't "share" your problems, you eat!

April and Brick hover nearby, not wanting to miss this.
Natalie yanks Raleigh behind the counter.

NATALIE
Oh, that's priceless, coming from
COURTNEY LOVE.
(to April and Brick)
Get back to work.
(MORE)

NATALIE (CONT'D)
 (to Raleigh)
 I am not having this conversation.

RALEIGH
 Don't walk away from me.

NATALIE
 Owen Berkhalter is one of my best customers. And friends.

RALEIGH
 (realizing)
 You have a thing for him, don't you?

NATALIE
 (stunned/exposed)
 I do not! He's engaged.

RALEIGH
 Oh, God. Then why do you care more about his feelings than mine?

NATALIE
 (aghast)
 You honestly still think everything revolves around you, don't you? Lemme tell you something, while you were in New York turning your nose up on what we have here, some of us were busy building lives we care about.

People are staring. Raleigh wants this to end now.

RALEIGH
 Natalie, I'm sorry, I just--

NATALIE (OVERLAPPING)
 You traipse in here, upsetting everybody all over again.

RALEIGH
 I'm just trying to--

NATALIE (OVERLAPPING)
 Mother was starting to love it here. You show up, she's miserable. Maybe you coming home wasn't such a good idea?

RALEIGH
 (eyes brimming)
 You think I want to be here? I quit.

She throws plates in a bus bin, turns and stalks out.

EXT. NATALIE'S CAFE CONTINUOUS

Raleigh exits, heads down the street as Rosie and some of her FRIENDS head up. The last person Raleigh wants to see now.

ROSIE
 Raleigh, thank God we found you.
 Carlos is bleeding internally. The
 doctors don't know what else to do.

RALEIGH
 I really can't talk to you now.

ROSIE
 You have to come help. He got better
 the other day after you left.
 (grabs her arm)
 Is it money you want? I don't care.
 Lina's waiting for us with Carlos.

Raleigh yanks away. This is so twisted.

RALEIGH
 What part of "no" do you people not
 understand? Leave me the hell alone.

Rosie and her friends are stunned to hear her talk this way.

ROSIE
 The Virgin blessed you and you won't
 help us? What kind of person are you?

Raleigh stares with no answer. Rosie shakes her head,
 disgusted, and walks away. As do her friends, one by one.

Raleigh stands there, pierced, as Natalie watches from the
 doorway of the cafe with April and Brick.

INT. RALEIGH'S VALIANT DAY

Raleigh drives home. Wipes away tears. Everything is so
 fucked up. She pulls up to her house. A GROUP OF PEOPLE are
 waiting in the front yard with flowers and gifts.

INT. GATES HOUSE DAY

Raleigh manages to get into the house to find her mother
 pacing in the living room, manic. The curtains are drawn.

RALEIGH
 Mother, are you alright? What's wrong?

LYDIA
 (pointing, enraged)
 Some Mexican was peering in my window
 with his video camera. My flower beds
 are ruined. One of our neighbors left
 a nasty note on the door complaining
 about the trash these people leave in
 the street. I can not live like this.

RALEIGH
 Mother, just settle down--

LYDIA (OVERLAPPING)
 Don't tell me to settle down. Do you
 have any idea how this makes us look?
 The whole town is talking.

RALEIGH
 Mother, trust me, people have plenty
 of things to talk about besides us.

LYDIA
 You're enjoying this, aren't you?

RALEIGH
 I hate it. It's the last thing I want.

LYDIA
 Then go out there, tell them you have
 no idea how to help them. Do they even
 know you just got out of rehab? They
 think you're special? You can't even
 hold a job. Natalie just called worried
 to death you may go on another bender.

RALEIGH
 If I go on a bender it'll be because
 you care more about appearances than
 what's really going on with me.

LYDIA
 (pouring a glass of wine)
 I know what's going on with you.
 You're selfish and immature and
oblivious to the impact your actions
 have on others.

RALEIGH
 What about your actions?

LYDIA
 Great, blame me. I wasn't affectionate
 enough. I didn't smother you with
 praise. You were the prettiest girl in
school. I was worried about Natalie.

RALEIGH
 (brimming with tears)
 So you turned your back on me when I
 started having problems? And grab a
 drink every time we start having a
 real conversation?

A flash of guilt, but Lydia plows through.

LYDIA
 Don't lay your problems on me. I gave
my life for you kids. Your father and
 I almost got a divorce because of you.

Raleigh had no idea. She flashes with anger.

RALEIGH
And you wish I was never born. Why
don't you just say it?

Lydia SLAPS her across the face. Raleigh steps back, stunned.

Lydia's eyes fill with regret. She starts to say something.

Disgusted, Raleigh shakes her head, turns and walks out.

INT. RALEIGH'S VALIANT DAY

Raleigh drives through town, desolate. No idea where to turn now. Up ahead, she sees the liquor store down the street from the nursery where Vince works. A dread in her eyes. A decision.

INT. LIQUOR STORE DAY

Raleigh moves quickly down an aisle to find the vodka section. She grabs a bottle, takes it to the CASHIER and puts it on the counter.

END OF ACT THREE

ACT FOUREXT. PAUL'S CHURCH (ESTABLISHING) DAY

Quiet. Serene. As the sun begins to set.

INT. CHURCH SANCTUARY DAY

We MOVE down the center aisle. Light from the stained glass windows saturates the room. At first the sunlight makes it hard to see if anyone is there, it all feels surreal. Then we make out Raleigh, alone in one of the front pews.

She stares at a CRUCIFIED IMAGE OF CHRIST above the altar. She studies the stained glass windows: scenes from the Bible, angels and miracles, the Virgin Mary ministering to Christ.

Raleigh wrings the sleeves of her blouse. Tears well. She exhales, pulls out her cell and scrolls through numbers.

INT. COFFEE SHOP NIGHT

MOVE to a booth in back. Raleigh is deep in conversation. At first we can't tell who she's with, then we see it's Vince.

RALEIGH

...I ended up at my brother-in-law's church. I'm not even sure why. But he wasn't there. So I just sat in the sanctuary and waited. I guess I prayed...

(beat)

And there was this moment. Sometimes there's this moment. Where I feel like I'm so close to understanding why things are the way they are. Why my family's so screwed up.

(she wipes away tears)

But then it's gone. Just as suddenly as it came. And nothing makes sense all over again. I hear "the voices".

(vicious)

"You're nothing but a drunk. Who the hell are you to understand anything?!"

(back to normal)

I actually laid my hands on a crippled woman the other day. Like I could somehow heal her. Part of me wanted it to be true. So I could be special. Everyone will have to love me now. How pathetic is that? When here I am obsessed, and I mean utterly obsessed, with a cheap bottle of vodka out in the back seat of my crappy little car. Oh God, I'm turning into a full frontal freak show!

Vince grins.

RALEIGH (CONT'D)

It's not funny.

VINCE

If it'll be funny later, it's funny now. And it's a little funny now.

Raleigh groans, buries her head in her arms.

RALEIGH

I need a drink.

VINCE

Did that ever really help anything?

RALEIGH

Yes, it most absolutely did.

VINCE

You're past that now. You're starting to feel things again. Which is good.

RALEIGH

No, it sucks. I called my mother a drunk. Accused her of marrying my dad because she had to. Basically told her her entire life is a lie.

VINCE

All hell breaks lose when someone in the family starts telling the truth. Mine's still not speaking to me.

RALEIGH

I'm sorry. That must be hard.

VINCE

Families are as sick as their secrets. 'till someone tells the truth.

RALEIGH

...I think one of the reasons my sister tries so hard to be perfect is to make up for the freedom my mother lost when she got married so young.

VINCE

Are you close to your sister?

RALEIGH

...I used to be. Long time ago.

VINCE

Maybe there's a chance to be close again? I know it's hard, but you can't let your mother's problems hold you back from doing what you need to do.

RALEIGH

So I get thrown back right where all my problems started?

VINCE
 Maybe that's where you have to be...
 before you can go anywhere else.

Raleigh considers this. She looks away, then back at him.

RALEIGH
 ...thank you.

VINCE
 For what?

RALEIGH
 Being here. I didn't know who else to
 call.

VINCE
 I'm glad you called me.

He smiles. She smiles back. It feels good to be with him.

RALEIGH
 I've got one more question. What the
 hell am I supposed to do about all
 these freaks who keep asking me to
 help them?

Vince considers this. Glances away a moment.

VINCE
 Aren't we all sent here to help? In
 some way, if we can?

Raleigh considers this and laughs, it sounds so ridiculous.
 But Vince isn't smiling. He's perfectly serious.

VINCE (CONT'D)
 Maybe you have something to offer?

RALEIGH
 I can barely take care of myself and
 God "chose" me?

VINCE
 Why not you? Maybe he chooses all of
 us? We're just too busy screwing
 around to notice.

He smiles matter of factly. Raleigh just stares. With no idea
 what to make of him.

EXT. COFFEE SHOP NIGHT

Raleigh and Vince walk outside, stop to say goodbye.

RALEIGH
 I feel better now. Thanks.

VINCE
 Should we get rid of that vodka?

RALEIGH
I'll do it. I need to know I can.

VINCE
Here, I want you to have something.

He takes a cross necklace off his neck.

RALEIGH
Vince...no, I can't, it's yours.

VINCE
Someone gave it to me when I got
sober. Now I'm giving it to you.

He puts it around her neck. She's speechless.

VINCE (CONT'D)
The world can use all the miracles it
can get.

RALEIGH
It's beautiful.

VINCE
So are you.

She looks at him. It's awkward now. That nagging attraction.

RALEIGH
...I better get going.

VINCE
...I'll see ya around.

She gives him a quick hug and heads off into the night.

INT. GATES HOME NIGHT

Raleigh walks in exhausted. She turns on the light. James is
waiting up for her. Sitting in an easy chair.

RALEIGH
Daddy...you didn't have to wait up.

JAMES
Your mom told me what happened. Your
sister called upset. You weren't
answering your cell. I was about to
call the police.

RALEIGH
I should've called, I'm sorry.

She glances at the sofa, there's a pillow and blankets on it.

RALEIGH (CONT'D)
Why are you sleeping down here?

He doesn't answer. It's far more complicated than that.

RALEIGH (CONT'D)
 Mother said you almost got divorced
 because of me. Is that true?
 (no response)
 Why do you stay with her?

James hesitates. Part of him wants to tell her everything.

JAMES
 Raleigh, your mother and I...
 (but he changes his mind)
 Made a commitment to each other...a
 long time ago. She needs me now. Like
 you need us.

RALEIGH
 But Daddy, I don't want you to--

JAMES
 All we want is for you to get better.
 (tears in his eyes)
 Why do you make it so hard on yourself? I
 just want you to be happy.

It kills her to see him so upset. She breaks into tears.

RALEIGH
 Daddy, I'm sorry.
 (goes to his embrace)
 I never should've come home. I screw
 up everything.

JAMES
 No, you don't. Don't say that.

RALEIGH
 Mom can't forgive me. She hates me.

JAMES
 That's not true. You just have to be
 more patient.

RALEIGH
 She makes me crazy. Maybe if you talk
 to the Judge I can go back to New York?

JAMES
 You're exactly where you need to be.

RALEIGH
 Then why does it feel so wrong?

James has no answer. He strokes her hair and kisses her
 forehead. For now that's enough.

INT. UPSTAIRS BATHROOM NIGHT

Raleigh brushes her teeth. She stops and stares at herself in
 the mirror as the bathroom window CREAKS open. She's about to
 scream when she realizes it's only Kyle. Plowed.

RALEIGH
What the hell are you doing?

KYLE
What's it look like I'm...sonofa--!

He falls in on the floor with a THUD. Cracks up LAUGHING.

RALEIGH
OhmyGod, are you high?

He crawls up, holding up a finger.

KYLE
Promise you won't tell mom and dad.
They can't handle anything. Not after
you.

He gives her a knowing look, kisses her on the cheek and stumbles out the door. Raleigh stands there, floored.

INT. RALEIGH'S ROOM NIGHT

Raleigh starts to get into bed, but stops, hearing something outside. She creeps to the window, unsure.

Rosie and Lina stand in the front lawn in the moonlight.

Raleigh opens the window, whispers, pissed.

RALEIGH
It's after midnight. What are you--

ROSIE
Carlos is dying. Come sit with us.

Raleigh steps back. Jolted. But there's no way she's getting involved again. She closes the window, pulls the blind. She turns to get back into bed, but something stops her. Maybe it's what Vince said about helping. Maybe part of her wants her life to matter. She knows the decision could change everything.

RALEIGH
Christ.

She turns on the light and starts getting dressed.

INT. ROSIE'S LAND ROVER NIGHT

Rosie drives with Raleigh next to her. Lina's in the back seat.

ROSIE
The doctor's said there's no hope now.
They can't stop the internal bleeding.
Just pray for him, that's all I ask.

RALEIGH
Rosie, it won't make any difference.

ROSIE
 (hysterical)
 Don't say that. You can't let him die.
 We have two little children. They need
 their father. Just one small prayer.
 JUST ONE, PLEASE!

RALEIGH
 Jesus, fine. If you'll just shut up!
 (one furious breath)
 Dear God, please be with Carlos, don't
 let him die, stop the bleeding if
 that's your will, or whatever. Amen.

Lina frowns, that didn't sound very professional.

ROSIE
 (sighs, relieved)
 Oh, thank you, thank you, so much. The
 Virgin will intercede now.

RALEIGH
 Ok, that's it. Enough with the Virgin
 and all these secrets. You two have got
 to talk about what's going on here.

ROSIE
 What do you mean what's going on?
 (looking at Lina in the
 rear view)
 What's she talking about?

Lina can hold back no longer.

LINA
 I love him, too, Rosie.

A horrible silence. Rosie blinks it in, then...

ROSIE
 You love him? You and Carlos?
 (losing it)
All this time?
 (to Raleigh)
 You knew? You liar.
 (to Lina)
YOU WHORE! I'll kill you!

She reaches back, starts grabbing and swinging at Lina.

EXT. STREET NIGHT

The SUV weaves through traffic. Horns BLARE. A VAN heads
 straight for them--

INT. ROSIE'S SUV NIGHT

Lina SCREAMS. Raleigh grabs the wheel. Swerves out of the way.

RALEIGH
Rosie, damn it. Watch the--

ROSIE
I can't bear this, I can't bear it.

RALEIGH
Well, you better 'cause that is the truth of it. Now pull over. You two need to yank your heads outta the sand and deal with this.

Rosie whips the car over to the side of the road and stops.

RALEIGH (CONT'D)
It's really pathetic if all you ever do is run from your life. And trust me, I'm saying so from experience.

INT. HOSPITAL HALLWAY NIGHT

Raleigh, Lina and Rosie arrive at Carlos' room just as the DOCTOR steps out. Dumbfounded.

DOCTOR
I can't explain it. The internal bleeding...it totally stopped. Carlos is out of danger. You can see him now.

Rosie turns to Raleigh. Stunned.

INT. CARLOS' ROOM NIGHT

The women enter and are amazed to find Carlos awake and smiling. Until he sees the furious look on Rosie's face.

CARLOS
Rosie, what's wrong? I'm OK now.

LINA
She knows Carlos. I told her.

ROSIE
(gathers her things)
Do whatever the hell you want. I want a divorce.

CARLOS
Baby, no, God gave me a second chance.

ROSIE
Good, 'cause I'm not going to!

CARLOS
I wanna make things right with you.

ROSIE
It's too late.

LINA
Carlos, tell her about Florida.

CARLOS
Lina, shut up. It's over. I want you
to leave now. What we had it was
wrong. I want to be with my wife.

Lina glares, disbelieving. Carlos turns to Rosie.

CARLOS (CONT'D)
Baby, can you ever forgive me?

His eyes brim with tears. He's clearly in despair. Rosie
resists, but her love for him is too deep. She breaks down.

ROSIE
Oh Carlos, thank God you're alright.

She rushes to his embrace.

CARLOS
I'm so sorry, baby. I'm sorry.

ROSIE
It doesn't matter. It's OK now.

LINA
Raleigh, you have to tell them.

RALEIGH
Lina, you'll be OK--

LINA
No! You said you would help me.

Raleigh takes a moment.

RALEIGH
No, I told you this wouldn't end well.

Tears blister in Lina's eyes. She looks at Carlos and Rosie
embracing each other. If ever there was a time to tell him
she's pregnant it's now.

LINA
Carlos, there's something...

But the words get stuck in her throat. She looks at Raleigh.
Helpless now. Reality crashing in.

RALEIGH
You're gonna be fine.

Lina shakes her head in anguish. But in some small way the
truth is a relief. She looks at Carlos and Rosie once more,
then turns and walks out.

ROSIE
 (to Raleigh, relieved)
 I don't know how to thank you.

CARLOS
 Did I miss something? Who is this?

ROSIE
 Our angel, Carlos.

Raleigh clearly doesn't feel this way.

ROSIE (CONT'D)
 Maybe now you believe?

Raleigh has no answer.

ROSIE (CONT'D)
 Carlos and I want to be alone now.

Raleigh glances at Carlos and walks out, shutting the door.

INT. HOSPITAL HALLWAY CONTINUOUS

Raleigh exits to find herself alone in the hallway. Lina has disappeared. She realizes she doesn't have a ride and she didn't bring any money. She curses, then remembers she has her cell phone. She pulls it out, looks up. Makes a decision.

EXT. HOSPITAL ENTRANCE NIGHT

Raleigh paces by the entrance. It's lonely and quiet. She hears a car, looks out as a Buick pulls up. At first we can't tell who's driving. Then we see it's Natalie. Their eyes meet. Natalie rolls down the window.

NATALIE
 Are you OK?

RALEIGH
 I'm fine. Thanks for coming. I know
 it's really late.

NATALIE
 Raleigh, all you had to do was ask.

She shrugs matter of factly. Smiles. Raleigh smiles back and almost loses it right there, seeing how much her sister loves her. She gets into the Buick.

They drive off into the night together.

INT. CITY SHELTER REC ROOM NIGHT

MOVE down a long dark corridor to enter the rec room--

Zelda (the downtrodden woman Raleigh spoke to when she worked at the shelter) sits in her wheelchair, staring at late night TV. OTHERS have dozed off. Everyone else has gone to bed.

She mumbles something under her breath, closes her eyes--

Then with great concentration, she rises from the wheelchair and stands there, totally on her own. Trembling with joy.

BLACKOUT.

THE END