

St. Jude's

by

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FLASHBACK - HIGH SCHOOL - DAY

Early 60s. A preppy-looking BOY in early teens stand at a doorway. He looks out, clutching his books tightly. Glancing around, he opens the door and walks out.

EXT. HIGH SCHOOL GROUNDS - DAY

A rough-looking gang of TEENAGE MALES loiters in the parking lot. Carrying his school books, the BOY walks quickly across the school grounds, glancing at the gang of teenagers.

FIRST TEENAGER

There he goes.

(beat)

Look at him.

SECOND TEENAGER

Never fights back.

THIRD TEENAGER

Too chicken.

(Shouts at the boy.)

Hey . . . where ya going, faggot?

FIRST TEENAGER

Hey, faggot! We're talking to you!

The boy stops, frightened. The gang encircles him. One of the teenagers stands back and watches the others.

SECOND TEENAGER

Can't ya hear, faggot?

(beat)

We're talking to you!

The second teenager pushes the boy so hard that he drops his books. The gang laughs as the boy bends down to gather his books. The first teenager stands in front of him and kicks his books away. The third teenager walks over to the boy as he bends down and kicks him so hard that he goes flying across the ground.

The boy slowly gets up and looks at them. The teenagers walk toward him.

BOY

Please . . . don't. Please.

(Bends down with his
arms over his head
to protect himself.)

Please.

GANG OF TEANAGERS

GET HIM! BEAT THE FAGGOT!

A lone teenager backs away and watches as the other gang members brutally hit and kick the young man.

BACK TO THE PRESENT

INT. KIRK'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Late at night. Asleep on the sofa, KIRK THOMPSON, a man in his late 30s, wakes up suddenly from a nightmare.

KIRK

NO!

He sits up and tries to shake the dream away. In another room, he hears the faint sounds of a man in pain. He walks quietly down the hall.

INT. KIRK'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

As KIRK walks into the dark bedroom, he hears moans of pain.

KIRK

Tim . . . Tim? Is everything okay?

No answer. Walking over to the bed, he turns on the bedside lamp. TIM, a skeleton of a man in his 30s, lies in bed, covered with sweat, shaking uncontrollably. Kirk picks up the phone and dials frantically.

EXT. KIRK'S APARTMENT BUILDING - NIGHT

Flashing lights of an AMBULANCE. KIRK hurries alongside two MEDICS, carrying TIM on a stretcher.

EXT. CITY STREETS - NIGHT

A CITY BUS pulls over to the curb to let out passengers. MARCY MOSSIDOE, an overweight woman in her mid-30s with long, stringy hair tied back into a ponytail, a broken pair of oversized thick glasses, held together with tape, and dressed in thrift store hand-me-downs, climbs wearily off the bus. Sirens blaring. Lights flashing. An AMBULANCE races through the city. Marcy stands to watch the ambulance go by.

INT. COUNTY WESTERN BAR - NIGHT

Dark, loud, smoke-filled bar, crowded with blue-collar types drinking and carrying on. Honky-tonk music blares from the jukebox. JIM ROBERTS, a hard living, blue-collar worker in his late 30s, sits at the bar, drinking a whiskey and flirting with SALLY, a middle-aged, peroxide-blond woman, who looks as if she's been around the block a few times.

SALLY

How come I haven't seen you 'round here before?

JIM

'Cause you haven't.

SALLY

That's too bad.

(beat)

What's your plans for tonight?

JIM

I aint got none . . . 'cept for
screwin' 'round with you.

SALLY

You're invitin' yourself over to my
place?

JIM

(Flashes a smile.)

Somebody has to. We don't have all
night.

EXT. MARCY'S APARTMENT BUILDING - NIGHT

Close to midnight. Carrying her bags and purse, MARCY walks down a littered, deserted street, lined with abandoned cars. She climbs the stairs of a dilapidated apartment building, turns around to make sure no one is behind her, and unlocks the front door.

INT. MARCY'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

As MARCY enters her apartment, she is welcomed by a TELEVISION blaring in the living room. She flips the lights on to reveal MELISSA, her nine-year-old daughter, asleep on the worn sofa. Dropping her bags on a nearby armchair, she turns off the television. She blends down and gently wakes her daughter . . .

MARCY

Come on, angel. Let's get to bed.

Marcy helps her daughter up and they walk down the hallway, holding each other.

INT. MARCY'S CHILDREN'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

As MARCY tucks MELISSA into bed, she gives her a kiss on the forehead.

MARCY

Good night, honey.

She looks over at JOEY AND LARRY, her two sons, who are seven and five years old respectively, asleep in another ruffled bed. She straightens the blankets and sheets around her sons, bends down and kisses them good night. In the doorway, she glances back at her children then softly closes the door.

INT. MARCY'S APARTMENT - HALLWAY - NIGHT

MARCY walks down the hallway to her bedroom and opens the door, expecting to find her oldest daughter asleep.

MARCY'S POV

Unslept bed.

Marcy hurries down the hall to the children's bedroom.

INT. MARCY'S CHILDREN'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

MARCY shakes MELISSA gently to wake her.

MARCY

Melissa. . . . Melissa.

MELISSA

What?

MARCY

Do you know where your sister's at?

MELISSA

(Half-asleep)

I don't know, Mama. She went out with her friends. Is everything okay?

MARCY

Yeah, everything's fine. Go back to sleep.

EXT. NEIGHBORHOOD STREETS - NIGHT

MARCY walks fast down sidewalks, past groups of teenagers, frantically looking for her daughter.

INT. SALLY'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Late. JIM lies on his back, smoking a cigarette, staring into space while SALLY embraces him. Running her hands over his muscular chest and arms, she discovers a lump in his armpit.

SALLY

(Looks up to him,
concerned.)

What's this?

JIM

(Turns away from her.)

It's nothin'.

SALLY

It's pretty big to be nothin'. You should get it checked.

JIM

You should mind your own business.
Okay?

SALLY

Okay.

IN. HOSPITAL - NIGHT

Graveyard shift. The elevator doors open and KIRK walks off, looking tired and lost. He spots the NURSING STATION down a long, dimly-lit corridor and walks toward it. Several NURSES gather at a table, doing paper work. One of the Nurses, a black woman in her mid-50s, looks up and sees KIRK approaching.

NURSE

Yes?

KIRK

Which room is Tim Sullivan in?

NURSE

(Looks through her
records.)

He's in room 506B.

KIRK

Thank you.

As he starts down the corridor, looking for Tim's room, the NURSE calls out.

NURSE

Sir? Are you family?

KIRK

No . . . I . . .

NURSE

Only family is allowed in the
patient's room.

KIRK

I . . .

NURSE

Those are the rules. You understand?

Kirk says nothing, turns and walks away.

INT. DOCTOR'S OFFICE - DAY

JIM sits on the exam table, talking with a DOCTOR, a young man in his early 30s. Reluctantly, Jim takes his shirt off and shows the Doctor the lump under his arm. The Doctor's expression changes as he examines the lump.

Jim notices the worried look on the Doctor's face as the examination continues.

EXT. ST. JUDE'S HOSPICE - DAY

A former convent which has been converted to a hospice. The building's dilapidated condition mirrors the hopelessness of the surrounding area. A PHONE is heard, RINGING inside the building. A HOMELESS MAN trudges past, pushing a grocery cart filled with his belongings.

INT. ST. JUDE'S HOSPICE - DAY

The PHONE continues to ring. A cluttered and cramped nursing office is seen.

MARCY O.S.
 (Hollers.)
 Will somebody answer the phone for
 Christ sake? Jose'!
 (No response.)
 Jesus . . .

MARCY emerges from behind a large pharmacy case with a medical cart covered by rows of small paper cups and the remains of a fast-food meal. Wiping her hands, she walks over to the phone and picks it up.

MARCY
 St. Jude's.
 (beat)
 Yeah . . . that would be me.
 (Her expression
 suddenly changes.)
 What? Are my kids alright?

INT. PROTESTANT CHURCH - DAY

An ORGAN plays AMAZING GRACE, as pall bearers carry a CASKET away from the altar. KIRK sits alone, head bent as TIM'S FAMILY follows the casket. TIM'S MOTHER, a distinguished woman in her 70s, turns and sees Kirk at the same time he glances over at her. Their eyes meet. He stands and reaches out a hand to her. She looks straight ahead and continues to walk away. Kirk slowly sits down.

INT. KIRK'S BEDROOM - DAY

A week later. Early morning. Dark bedroom. Dressed in a suit ready for work, KIRK sits on the side of his bed and weeps.

INT. - DOCTOR'S EXAM ROOM - DAY

JIM waits on an examination table. Getting off the table, he glances at the various diplomas on the walls and explores the cabinets and drawers. Hearing voices in the hall, he slams a drawer shut, just as the young DOCTOR hurries into the room.

DOCTOR

Sorry I've kept you waiting.
Something important came up and I
. . . .

JIM

Hey . . . what's 45 minutes? I'm
already bein' docked half a day's pay
. . . what's a few more minutes?

DOCTOR

Excuse me?

JIM

I understand. Ya don't have to
explain. If somethin' or somebody
who is more important than me came up
. . . .

DOCTOR

Mr. Roberts . . . I don't have all
day.

JIM

Good, I don't either.

DOCTOR

I do have other patients to see.

JIM

Do ya make them wait, too?

DOCTOR

Mr. Roberts . . .

JIM

I accept your apology.

DOCTOR

Excuse me?

JIM

It's only time, right?

The Doctor ignores Jim's comment and looks through his file.

JIM

(continuing)

Ya know . . . ever since ya removed
that lump from under my arm, I
haven't had any trouble. So whatever
it was, it's not there any more. I
feel fine.

(beat)

I really do . . . believe me!

(beat)

Hello!

The Doctor closes the file and looks up at Jim.

DOCTOR
It's not what we'd hoped.

Jim looks back at him, not knowing what to say.

INT. SCHOOL ADMINISTRATION OFFICE - DAY

DALE SIMMONS, a guidance counselor in his 30s, escorts MARCY, into the room. He carries several files with him.

SIMMONS
If you wouldn't mind taking a seat here, Mr. Wilcox will join us shortly.

Marcy sits and glances around the room. She looks at her watch.

MARCY
Do you know how long this is gonna take? I've got to get back to work.

SIMMONS
I really couldn't say.

MARCY
You wouldn't know what's goin' on, would you?

SIMMONS
You don't know?!

MARCY
No.

SIMMONS
The letters that were sent home with your children?

MARCY
Letters?
(beat)
What are you talkin' about? Have they been playin' hooky or causin' trouble again? That's it, isn't it?
(beat)
When you called me at work yesterday, you made it sound so serious.

SIMMONS
You're being investigated for child abandonment and endangerment.

MARCY
What?!

INT. BANK OFFICE - DAY

Large, modern office, designed and furnished for a high-level executive. KIRK enters and closes the door. He takes off his coat and hangs it carefully on a small hook behind the door.

Kirk places his briefcase on the desk and opens it to remove several files. He also removes a small, FRAMED PICTURE which he stands next to his phone. Moving his briefcase to a nearby credenza, Kirk retrieves a stack of papers from his in-box. He sinks into his chair, opens a file and reaches for the phone. Stopping mid-dial, Kirk replaces the receiver and lifts the framed picture off the desk.

INSERTS - THE FRAME PICTURE

TIM IN HAPPIER DAYS

BACK TO SCENE

Gazing intently at the picture, Kirk is startled by the PHONE. After the second ring, he answers.

KIRK

Hello.

(beat)

Yes . . . Uh-huh . . .

(beat)

Put her through.

(beat)

Hi.

(beat)

Yes, I got your message last night

. . .

(beat)

No . . . no, I haven't been avoiding you.

(beat)

I've been working late and . . .

(beat)

You called the office?

(beat)

I just haven't felt like talking with anybody.

(beat)

No, I'm not sick. I just haven't

. . .

A knock at the door.

KIRK

(continuing)

Listen, I've got to go.

(beat)

I know . . . I know.

(beat)

I'll call you this weekend.

Another knock. Kirk hangs up the phone and quickly places the picture face down on his desk.

INT. DOCTOR'S EXAM ROOM - DAY

Stunned, JIM stares blankly at the doctor.

JIM

Cancer?!

(beat)

You keep me waitin' for 45 minutes,
and then tell me I've got cancer.

DOCTOR

I'm telling you . . .

JIM

And I'm tellin' you that I'm fine!

DOCTOR

I know you're upset.

JIM

UPSET?! You're goddamn right I'm
upset. Wouldn't you be?

(beat)

I mean . . . how would you like it if
some punk fresh out of medical school
told you you had cancer and you were
gonna die. Huh? How would you like
that?

DOCTOR

I didn't say you were going to die.
I said you have cancer.

JIM

Excuse me?

DOCTOR

You do have options.

JIM

Options?!

DOCTOR

I suggest chemotherapy as soon as
possible, and then, after six months,
some radiation treatment.

JIM

Chemotherapy . . . Radiation?

(beat)

What in the fuck are you talking
about?

DOCTOR

They're treatments for cancer.

JIM

I know they're treatments for cancer.
 (Calms down and
 thinks for a moment.)
 Do I have a choice?

DOCTOR

Look, Mr. Roberts . . . they are the
 best treatments available. I would
 highly recommend you start as soon as
 possible in order to stop the spread.

JIM

And what if I don't?

DOCTOR

You'll probably be dead within the
 next six months.

JIM

So if I do start the treatments?
 I'll be all right?
 (beat)
 Right?

DOCTOR

I didn't say that.
 (beat)
 But your chances will be better.

JIM

Better?!
 (beat)
 Funny, you don't sound too convincing.

INT. SCHOOL ADMINISTRATION OFFICE - DAY

Dumbstruck, MARCY shoots back at SIMMONS.

MARCY

What are you talking about? I love
 my kids.

DOUGLAS WILCOX, a school administrator in his 40s, comes into
 the office, followed by BRIAN WESTMOUNT, a social worker in
 his 30s. Simmons quickly stands and takes his position
 behind Wilcox.

WILCOX

Mrs. Mossideo . . .

MARCY

It's Ms.
 (beat)
 I never married.

WILCOX

I see.

(beat)

I believe you know Mr. Simmons, the school's counselor.

MARCY

Yeah. We've met.

WILCOX

And this is Mr. Westmount. He's the social worker who's been assigned to your children's case.

MARCY

Social worker?! What is this? My children don't need a social worker.

Simmons hands Wilcox the file. Wilcox opens the file and examines its contents.

WILCOX

Are you aware of the seriousness of these offenses?

MARCY

No.

(beat)

All I know is that I love my kids and I'm tryin' to be good mom to them.

WESTMOUNT

Yet you leave your children alone at all hours?

MARCY

I have to. Who's goin' to support them if I don't work?

WESTMOUNT

You're endangering your children's lives by your absences from home.

MARCY

I have to work.

WESTMOUNT

You also have a responsibility as a parent.

MARCY

What does that mean? How many children do you have?

WESTMOUNT

I'm not married.