SHILLELAGH

Written by
Emmett O. Saunders III
© 1985

WG755978

Contact information:
emmett71755@hotmail.com
715 Sommers Street
Lynchburg, VA 24501
434-485-3128
www.youtube.com/emmett71755

This material was registered with the Writers Guild of America in 1985 by Emmett O. Saunders III. All rights reserved. No part of this material may be reproduced, copied, or sold in any form without the written permission from the owner of the copyrights.

Writers Guild of America: WG755978

Episode 1: A Fair Trade

Two young college students find a magical Irish walking stick in an old man's estate auction. One believes in the shillelagh's gift, the other student scoffs until their housekeeper unwittingly wishes a million dollars on them. They must determine if the shillelagh is real and can save them when a robber returns for the money, stolen from a bank heist.

Episode 2: The Cost of Higher Education

A divorced mother, working in a diner, concocts a life insurance scam to send her daughter to college. Her only wish is to give her daughter a higher education even if it means she may never see her again in life.

Episode 3: Adventures in Paradise

A wheelchair bound boy wishes for adventure, while his only school friend wishes for him to be her hero. When a high executive kidnapping plot threatens the children, it's up to the children's parents to make their wish for a safe return.

FADE IN:

EXT. CLOVER FIELD IN IRELAND - DAY

Opening credits superimpose on the shot. Picture blends into one leaf of a 3-leaf clover that gets pushed aside as ZOOM UP to a shillelagh parting a field of clover.

ST. PATRICK's steady hand grasps the shillelagh as he treks through the field with mountains and a rainbow visible in the distance.

MUSIC THEME

First strains of Celine Dion and Andrea Bocelli's "Prayer" plays and fades out as St. Patrick vanishes in a puff of smoky mist surrounding him.

EFX of "Shillelagh" in lower right hand corner. Sparkles in, then fades away as green smoke plays behind titles.

MUSIC OUT with "Shillelagh" vanish.

TITLE appears for first story, "A FAIR TRADE"

EFX turns to smoke and dissipates.

EXT. APARTMENT BUILDING - (STOCK) - EARLY MORNING

INT. DARKENED APARTMENT

A siren't WAIL is intermixed with GUNSHOTS.

A police car's headlights SHINE briefly through the window.

PAT

(from the couch)

Jim, what's going on out there?

JIM

How would I know? Sounds like the police.

(stumbles to window)

Right the first time. They've got somebody in handcuffs.

JIM

C'mon back to bed, Pat. There's enough to do tomorrow without losing sleep over that.

PAT

Guess we do. The auction could run until five. The old man's estate was enormous.

JIM

Besides, there's not enough hours in the day for ...

PAT

Know what you mean. Mary's been after me for days. She planned a big dinner Friday night, complete with family. I really ought to go, but Fridays are always too long at the store.

JIM

Fourteen, do I hear fifteen?

PAT

Sleep soundly, partner. You'll work yourself to death one of these days.

SUNLIGHT filters through the window. Pat rises first and heads to the bathroom.

WATER RUNS for several seconds, then he reappears, wrapped in a brightly flowered towel. He tries unsuccessfully to wake Jim.

JIM

One minute I'm on the beach, and the next I'm hit by a native!

PAT

Funny... it's seven-thirty.

You didn't set the alarm again?

PAT

I think it was your turn?

JIM

Just go grab your shower. I'll be awake by the time you're through.

PAT

Nothing doing. I remember the cold coffee yesterday.

JIM

So the pot wasn't plugged in? You could have had instant!

PAT

(sternly)

Get up!

JIM

All right. I'm up, see?

PAT

Good enough.

Jim collapses on the rollaway as LOUD STRAINS of an old Irish melody emerge from the bathroom.

JIM

(bangs on end table)

You'd better turn that down. The neighbors are gonna call again.

PAT

So what? Not my fault if they're not cultured enough to be saved by good music.

JIM

Neither can we, if Mrs. Peabody decides she's had enough.

She gets her share every Friday night, then spends the weekend sleeping it off.

JIM

Doesn't matter. As long as her bedroom's next to our bathroom. We don't have any choice.

PAT

(enters from bathroom)

We could move.

JIM

On what we make? Not likely.

PAT

We're not exactly in the slums here.

JIM

Not at the top of the social scale either.

PAT

I'm content where we are.

JIM

That's the trouble. So am I.

PAT

And we don't really fit in with the upper crust of society.

JIM

Wouldn't want their business headaches, that's for sure, but what's wrong with executive types?

PAT

There's nothing wrong with expensive tastes. You just need the money to pay for them.

JIM

Which we lack.

And we'll be lacking a lot more if you don't get ready. The store has to be open by eight-thirty at the latest.

JIM

(exits into bathroom)

On my way.

A KNOCK sounds at the front door. An elderly landlady, MRS. PEABODY, stares back. She wears an almost new floral print dress. Beige stockings and mahogany colored shoes give her an appealing, though comical look.

MRS. PEABODY

(noticing Pat's unbuttoned shirt)
Good morning. Did I wake you?

PAT

Not at all, Mrs. Peabody. Come on in, we were just starting on breakfast.

MRS. PEABODY

Well, in that case, I'll be glad to help.

She hurries to the kitchen and begins preparing coffee.

MRS. PEABODY

Did you hear all that commotion outside last night?

PAT

Sure did. We wondered what was going on.

MRS. PEABODY

Ralph woke me. I was almost into a good sound sleep when he popped one of my earplugs out.

PAT

I didn't know you needed those.

At my age, you gotta try anything to sleep, and sometimes we pick up this strange music on our bedsprings at the oddest times.

(remembering)

Although when we were younger, Ralph used to do this little thing with...

PAT

(breaking in quickly)

Breakfast ... remember?

MRS. PEABODY

Oh yes, ... anyway, there was this great big crash right outside my dining room window.

THUMP sounds at the door.

PAT

There's the morning paper.

MRS. PEABODY

There were squad cars everywhere in front of the building, and that man they led away looked absolutely frightening.

PAT

He evidently gets around. It's the same guy that held up the First Merchants bank last week.

MRS. PEABODY

Really?

PAT

Yes. It seems like people are never satisfied with what they have.

MRS. PEABODY

Isn't that the truth?

Coffee sure smells good this morning. I bet there isn't another landlady in the city who brews it better.

MRS. PEABODY

You know, if I were just a few years younger, I'd consider that a compliment. But I should know a few things by my age.

PAT

Age has nothing to do with anything.

MRS. PEABODY

Except getting older.

JIM

Who was at the door? Oh, good morning, Mrs. P.

MRS. PEABODY

The second time it was the newspaper, Jim. I usually don't thump.(admires his physique) I do know some things that do, though.

JIM

Better keep a grip on that heart of yours, Mrs. P. One of these days some guy's gonna steal it away from you.

MRS. PEABODY

I wasn't referring to my heart, young man. Some things have rather outstanding appearances.

JIM

(glances down, then away)
You're a dirty old lady, Mrs. P.!

MRS. PEABODY

It's true, you know. Haven't had a bath in years, only showers.

She laughs, continuing to fix breakfast.

I don't mean to complain, but what's keeping Pat away from his usual cold cereal and toast?

MRS. PEABODY

Burying himself in the newspaper over there. They caught a robber in the alley last night.

JIM

Really?

PAT

Yeah, and the article doesn't say anything about the money he stole. Wonder what happened to it?

MRS. PEABODY

Patrick Kelly, I'm surprised at you! You should be thanking your lucky stars that the man didn't come in here last night. Then where would you be?

PAT

Probably paying off my creditors today. I'd have gotten the money from him somehow.

JIM

You mean "our" creditors, don't you? Or did you forget my half of the business.

PAT

Haven't forgotten, partner. I just don't think about your half. Mine's depressing enough as it is.

Don't give it another thought. You know I'll lend you boys the money if you ever get behind on rent. Lord knows, I've got enough to last me a lifetime. Then again, the end could come sooner than I'd like to think about.

JIM

No need to worry, Mrs. P. Especially with your stamina.

MRS. PEABODY

And just what would you know about my stamina?

JIM

Well, I ...

PAT

I think he means you're as young as you feel, right?

JIM

And I feel really...really young at the moment.

MRS. PEABODY

Oh, I do too, and with you boys around to keep my spirits up ... among other things.

PAT

Breakfast!

MRS. PEABODY

You'd better hurry or you'll be late for work.

JIM

(to Pat)

Dishes, I think, are your turn this time.

Don't worry about those. I'll get them. I need something to occupy myself till Ralph gets home. Besides, I need to check the plumbing fixtures. Your utility bill is a bit higher this month.

PAT

How high?

MRS. PEABODY

Don't get alarmed. It's only ten dollars. There's probably a leak in one of the faucets. Shouldn't take long to find it.

PAT

Good. We can't afford any more increases in anything at this point. Especially telephone bills.

(glances at Jim)

It's share and share alike, right, old buddy?

JIM

I only had one long distance charge on there.

PAT

To Delightful Chicken Farm?

JIM

Felt like a snack.

PAT

For that much snack on a 900 number, you could cook a whole henhouse.

MRS. PEABODY

I'm sure he tried.

JIM

Gotta run...late already!

Hey, not so fast. (pulls two tickets out of his pocket) Almost forgot about these.

JIM

What's that?

PAT

Tickets for the concert tomorrow night. You kind of forgot to pay me for them.

JIM

I didn't forget. Just not sure I'll need them after all.

PAT

Which doesn't change the fact that I paid thirty dollars apiece for best seat section.

JIM

Best seat section would have been the parking lot.

PAT

If I don't get money back for these, your choice is gonna be standing room only.

JIM

Okay, I'll give you the money after the auction.

(steps outside and sniffs suspiciously)
Whew, smells like something's
overturned out here, Mrs. P.
Better check the garbage cans.

MRS. PEABODY

I'll be sure and add it to my list. I just wish people would be a little more careful with their garbage.

PACT

Well, be careful what you wish for. You know the old saying.

Never happens, child. I've been wishing a long time, and outside of a comfortable life, nothing came true.

PAT

Seems to me that's a pretty good wish. See ya later.

INT. APARTMENT - MID-AFTERNOON

Mrs. Peabody is dutifully dusting. A KNOCK sounds on the door.

MRS. PEABODY

Who is it?

JIM

It's me, Mrs. P. Forgot my key this morning.

MRS. PEABODY

You gave me a scare! I wasn't expecting you boys back until dinnertime.

JIM

Well, the auction finished up pretty quickly.

MRS. PEABODY

Everything get sold?

JIM

All, except this.
(Holds up an old carved wooden stick)
I used it to knock on the door.

It didn't sound like your usual knock.

JIM

Isn't it neat? It's got all these carvings on it. Looks like some type of Celtic language.

MRS. PEABODY

So you have been paying attention to some of your studies?

JIM

Linguistics always fascinated me. Can you imagine passing up a bargain like this?

MRS. PEABODY

Frankly, I can. It looks like a piece of junk, and none too sturdy.

JIM

It is sort of crooked, but it's good wood.

MRS. PEABODY

Well, you can't use it for walking when it's bent up that way.

JIM

How about a crooked mile?

MRS. PEABODY

It's an interesting conversation piece.

JIM

No, I really do want to use it for a cane. The head is smooth and rounded, just right to hang onto.

MRS. PEABODY

What made you want something like that anyway?

JIM

No one else did.

You got a heart of gold, Jim.

JIM

I don't think so, but at least we made enough off the auction that I can give Pat money for those tickets.

MRS. PEABODY

That's good, and enough to get by for awhile?

JIM

See, that's just it, Mrs. P. I don't want "just enough" to get by on. I want the whole enchilada. The big cheese. Enough to paint the town red ... even if it's just for one night.

She grasps the stick.

MRS. PEABODY

Well, I wish you enough money to forget the need for having it.

JIM

I'm not that greedy, Mrs. P. I just want a nice comfortable nest egg for retirement.

MRS. PEABODY

Doesn't everyone? You know the only difference between that robber last night and a businessman?

JIM

No, but I'm sure you've got it figured out.

MRS. PEABODY

One gets money to run a business, and the other runs business to get money.

JIM

Which is which?

That part's not too clear.

JIM

Well, I have to get cleaned up before dinner. Excuse me

He heads into the bathroom.

MRS. PEABODY

Where are you eating tonight? I'm fixing meatloaf.

JIM

I think Pat's treating since we cleaned up at the auction.

MRS. PEABODY

I'd better get going then. Ralph's bound to show up before I get the meat in the oven. He likes watching me bend...

Jim sticks his head out of the bathroom to cut her short

JIM

Dinner!

MRS. PEABODY

(nods and leaves)

Right.

Jim crosses to kitchen and pulls out a full garbage can.

JIM

Better get this out of here since Pat's been doing it all week.

He leaves the door open, carrying the can out into the alley. A short, HEAVYSET MAN, in his early thirties, appears in the doorway.

ROBBER

It's gotta be in here somewhere. I've been watching that old woman half the morning. This is the only place she's been since those cans were cleaned up.

Searches the apartment for several moments before Jim's return.

ROBBER

Better stop back after hours. Much safer then.

A SUDDEN CRY is heard.

ROBBER

Maybe somebody saw me from the front. Better see if there's another exit.

Jim reappears in the doorway, hands clasped around a dirty paper sack. He scours the apartment for a safe hiding place, decides on the closet and shoves the moneybag in.

рдт

Okay, Jim. Where is it?

JIM

Where's what?

PAT

You know what I'm talking about!

JIM

Calm down. What's got you hot under the collar?

PAT

The shillelagh...the wooden shillelagh!

JIM

What's a shillelagh?

PAT

A wooden walking stick from Ireland.

You mean this? What's so important about a piece of wood?

PAT

My father had one when he was a boy. A con artist tricked him out of it one night at a fair. I've always said that if I ever saw another one, I'd buy it on the spot.

JIM

Well, there it is.

PAT

It's beautiful, isn't it?

JIM

Makes an interesting conversation piece.

PAT

Oh, but it's more than that. Much more.

JIM

I don't get it.

PAT

It's not just a stick of wood, my friend. A shillelagh has certain qualities a layman can't comprehend.

JIM

What kind of qualities? Or is this some of your Irish blarney?

PAT

It's true. Believe me, if you only knew how valuable this stick really is...

JIM

How valuable is it?

I'll tell you ... all about it over dinner. In the meantime, this "stick" as you call it, will reside in my capable hands.

JIM

I thought our motto was share and share alike?

PAT

This is different.

(sets shillelagh under the couch)
I'm not sure how old this one is ... or
how many times it's been used, but it's
best not to tempt fate.

JIM

Tempt it how?

PAT

Let's just get ready for a night on the town. It'll do us both a lot of good.

JIM

Pizza or hamburgers?

PAT

On a night like this ... definitely O'Connors.

JIM

Can we afford that?

PAT

With what we made today, we can afford that, and impress Mary O'Connor.

JIM

She's a waitress...she can't cook.

PAT

Matter of opinion.

JIM

I thought we only made a little extra.

The last bidder solved our worries for awhile.

JIM

The old chest of stuff only brought \$120.

PAT

This was after the auction.

JIM

What did you sell?

PAT

I'll tell you later. Let's get going.

Clasps Jim's shoulder as they exit.

INT. A BRIGHTLY LIT IRISH PUB AND RESTAURANT

The bar area is crowded and SEVERAL WAITRESSES are moving quickly between the tables.

As Jim and Pat enter, they are hailed by several OLD FRIENDS seated at the bar.

JIM

It's rocking tonight...Irishly speaking.

PAT

What's the deal? They always gear up on Thursday nights.

JIM

Been awhile since we've been in.

PAT

Doesn't matter. Our seats are always by the piano.

JIM

I can't handle that tonight, Pat. Let's get the ones over by the bar.

And listen to that pack? No thanks. It's the piano for good music.

JIM

Only if Billy Joel shows up. .

WAITRESS

Can I help you?

PAT

Yes, we'd like a table by the piano.

WAITRESS

Sorry, sir. That section's reserved tonight for another party. How about a booth nearer the bar?

JIM

That's fine.

PAT

We'd prefer a table.

WAITRESS

All right. One is available on the other side. This way, gentlemen.

Moving through tables, Jim is brushed by a YOUNG WOMAN.

JIM

Excuse me ... HEY!

PAT

(quietly) What's wrong?

JIM

You'd never believe where she grabbed me.

PAT

Between your clovers and blarney stone?

JIM

No, wee ones and a pot of gold.

Sounds more like legends of the fall. Wonder who had those tables reserved by the piano tonight?

JIM

Probably some big wheel.

PAT

I'll be keeping an eye out to see who claims them.

JIM

The girl who grabbed me is sitting down over there.

PAT

Her?

JIM

That's the one.

PAT

Wouldn't mind being grabbed by her.

JIM

You would if you knew how hard she squeezed.

PAT

But you're none the worse for wear, now are you? Chalk it up to experience.

BOISTEROUS LAUGHTER drowns Pat out as a party of SIX PEOPLE arrives to join the first woman and her date.

ELDERLY MAN

(to the young woman) My word! How big was it?

More laughter, then the waitress arrives at Pat and Jim's table.

WAITRESS

Are you ready to order?

Yes. I'd like the sauerkraut and potato combo.

WAITRESS

Very good, sir, and your friend?

JIM

I'll have filet and rice.

WAITRESS

I'm sorry, but we don't have rice.

JIM

We'd have to at our wedding!

WAITRESS

At these prices, you wouldn't be able to throw it.

JIM

How about a potato, then?

WAITRESS

Anything to drink?

PAT

Your best whiskey.

JIM

Beer, please.

WAITRESS

Thanks, your food will be ready shortly.

She leaves.

PAT

She was a peach, wasn't she?

JIM

Ripe for plucking.

An OLD ACQUAINTANCE of Pat's comes over from the bar. He is a little older than Pat, but dressed just as conservatively.

MIKE

Pat, and the Lord's keeping you fit these days!

PAT

Mike Ryan, I'd like you to meet my business partner, Jim...

MIKE

Never mind with the last name, Jim. (shakes his hand)

I couldn't remember them at my age. Even if I did know them to begin with.

JIM

A pleasure to meet you, Mike.

MIKE

Well, that's the first time anyone's ever said that.

PAT

He doesn't know you as well as I do.

MIKE

There's the heart of the matter. C'mon over to the bar and I'll buy you both a drink.

PAT

Jim? We still have awhile before the food gets here.

JIM

No, thanks. You go ahead. Drinks will be here soon.

MIKE

You have some already ordered?

PAT

Yes, but I'm always game for another. We're celebrating tonight.

MIKE

Fine...(leads Pat away) Any excuse, eh?

Jim sits by himself for several moments, then glances up to see the BEAUTIFUL YOUNG WOMAN standing over him.

BEAUTIFUL WOMAN

Mind if I have a seat?

JIM

Not at all. Just keep your hands in plain sight.

BEAUTIFUL WOMAN

Fair enough. I only wanted to get your attention.

JIM

You almost took a lot more, Miss ...

BEAUTIFUL WOMAN

Jean. Jean Watson. I'm with a date, but he thinks more of his boss's wife than me.

JIM

It's a wonder he slipped through your fingers so easily.

JEAN

I guess I deserved that. On the other hand, I only handle merchandise that interests me.

JIM

What do you do for a living? Sell roosters?

JEAN

I run Major Industries. Didn't catch your name... or title.

Jim Reedle. I'm in business with my partner over there. We run an auction house on the side.

JEAN

Well, Jim. We're a multi-million dollar business. How about you?

JIM

Getting there.

JEAN

Not fast enough, I'll bet.

JIM

So if you're so rich... what are you doing in this section of town?

JEAN

O'Connor's is the only decent restaurant in town. As for my being here, let's just say my friends have a notion... every now and then ... to mingle with the working class.

JIM

So why are you here talking to me?

JEAN

I need a man who's secure with himself. Someone who isn't afraid of life. You look the type.

JIM

Thanks for that, but why the brisk come-on?

JEAN

It's exciting to see how a man responds.

JIM

Not very decent.

JEAN

Few things are these days. Listen, if you want a place to stay tonight...

JIM

A place to sleep, you mean.

JEAN

It's a package deal.

JIM

I don't think so. I'm finally straightening out some things about money and what it does to people.

JEAN

What does that mean?

JIM

People with money have no right to treat other people like dirt.

JEAN

A hundred men would jump at the chance to sleep with ...

JIM

You? ... or what your money's made you?

A moment of recognition for both, then Jean slaps Jim's face. She rises and rejoins her group.

PAT

What happened?

JIM

She made me an offer I couldn't refuse.

PAT

I'm proud of you, man. There aren't a lot of guys who would pass up an opportunity like that.

JIM

Speaking of opportunities, what've you been up to over there?

Just checking into some things. That sale I mentioned was for the shillelagh.

JIM

You sold it?

PAT

Five thousand dollars worth.

JIM

What?

PAT

You heard me. That was the price this old man offered for it.

JIM

He's gotta be senile! Nobody offers that kind of money for a simple stick.

PAT

Maybe it's not so simple.

ттм

No more blarney, tonight...I can't handle it.

PAT

I suppose you think Saint Patrick didn't exist either?

JIM

He lived in Ireland. That's all I know.

PAT

Well, he wasn't from Ireland. His real name was Succat and he lived in southwestern Britain until he was sixteen years old.

Then, Irish marauders carried him off into captivity for six years. He spent the time tending sheep in County Cannaught near the mountain Slemish.

MORE

PAT (CONT'D)

After seeing a number of visions urging him to escape, he finally did one night.

JIM

Where'd he go?

PAT

Northern coast of France, but you're getting ahead. The night he left, several guards were standing watch on a boat anchored along the coast.

He didn't know how he was going to stow away on board without them seeing him.

JIM

They would have discovered him later anyway.

PAT

Maybe, but he had another vision to take a big, wooden stick and break it in half. Half, he used to build a scarecrow.

On the mountainside, it looked like he was still watching the sheep. The other half he used to sail past the boat.

JIM

So where's the shillelagh come in?

PAT

He used the same piece of stick that he eluded them with for a walking cane. Later, it came in handy to drive all the snakes out of Ireland.

JIM

Now that's a story!

Believe what you want, but the legend goes that St. Patrick never forgot the stick's help and he often grants wishes through a shillelagh.

JIM

Oh, come on now! Who do you think believes something like that?

PAT

Evidently the old man does. He's willing to pay five thousand dollars.

JIM

It's ridiculous.

PAT

Old legends never die.

JIM

Well, maybe this one should.

PAT

And leave us penniless?

JIM

Well, maybe it could keep breathing until after the check's cashed.

INT. SAME APARTMENT - DARKENED

A shadow can be seen through a window, moving toward the door. Scuffling SOUNDS of a lock being jimmied are heard, then a figure snaps on a flashlight.

ROBBER

Seems like a logical place to hide it. Can't spend too much time looking for the money. Cops are bound to be here soon.

He opens the closet door and, being too short, looks around for a chair to reach the top shelf.

He grabs one of the kitchen chairs, then returns to closet.

ROBBER

It's always on the top shelf...

He feels something slippery and jumps back, falling from his perch.

What was that? Felt like a snake!

SOUNDS OF SINGING drift in from off the street. Glancing at the door, he manages to replace the chair at the kitchen table and close the closet door before shadows move across the window. Seeking a place to hide, he finds the bathroom and vanishes inside as a key turns in the lock.

PAT

When Irish eyes are smilin'...

He finishes off a verse by himself, then Jim joins in on the chorus.

PAT

That's my partner! I'll make an Irishman of you yet!

JIM

Irish from English? Don't be ridiculous! It'd be easier to drive all the snakes from Erin's fair shores.

PAT

Ah, not so hearty! 'Twas done once before, you know. We still have remembrances from his visit.

JIM

Like what?

PAT

Like this!

He reaches into the closet and tosses the snake at Jim.

Very funny!

He trips over the shillelagh sticking out from under the couch.

JIM

Why don't you learn to put things away?

PAT

Sorry, I completely forgot about it. (takes the stick) I'll put it in the closet on the top shelf. It won't bother anyone there.

He puts the shillelagh on the top shelf, then heads for the bathroom. He stops as the phone rings.

JIM

Hello? (listens intently for several seconds) I understand. We'll check around outside. Thanks for calling!

PAT

What's up?

JIM

Sergeant at the cop shop. He said the man captured last night in the alley is loose again. They're not sure, but he might be in the area. Someone phoned in an anonymous tip.

PAT

Nothing to worry about then. Just lock up like you said.

JIM

I'm not so sure. Said there was Irish music playing in the background.

PAT

Guess we'd better tell Mrs. Peabody, in case she hasn't heard.

Why don't you go? I'll check everything in the apartment. Make sure nothing's missing so far.

PAT

Be right back!

Pat leaves. Jim stands unsteadily, then heads for the bathroom. Before he reaches the door, the robber appears and levels a gun at him.

ROBBER

Value your life? Better stay calm.

JIM

What do you want?

ROBBER

Good act, kid. I want the money. Where'd you hide it?

JIM

I don't know anything about money. Except you need it at tax time.

ROBBER

Consider me an early collector on returns then.

JIM

I don't have it.

ROBBER

Not a very convincing performance. Maybe your partner knows?

JIM

Pat has no idea... I mean, I had it, but I threw it back out in the trash where you left it.

ROBBER

Why don't I believe you?

Go on out and see for yourself. When I heard you were loose, I figured you'd be back for it, so I just heaved it back outside. It's there ... go on, see for yourself!

ROBBER

If it isn't there... you're gonna take its place for pickup!

He heads out into the alley. Jim starts searching frantically for a hiding place.

JIM

What am I gonna do?

Pat enters, startling Jim.

PAT

What are you doing?

JIM

The robber's here!

PAT

Is he armed?

JIM

Yes.

PAT

What's he doing?

JIM

Wants his money. Said if he didn't find it, I'm a dead man.

PAT

Have you got it?

JIM

Yeah. In the closet.

PAT

Give it back.

It's a fortune. We'd be set for life.

PAT

Which could be rather short if he doesn't get it back.

Pat rushes to the closet and pulls the shillelagh from the top shelf.

JIM

What good will that do against bullets?

PAT

Maybe stop them from being fired.

He grasps the stick and closes his eyes tightly.

I wish we get out of this safely!

JIM

And just like that... it's gonna work?

SOUND of the front door handle turning draws their attention.

JIM

He's back!

PAT

Take it easy, man.

Both men are relieved as Mrs. Peabody enters.

MRS. PEABODY

Hello, boys, ... it's me!

Pat grabs her and slams the door.

MRS. PEABODY

Goodness, Pat...you look frightened out of your wits.

JIM

He is and so am I.

PAT

Mrs. Peabody, did you see the robber out there?

MRS. PEABODY

What does he look like?

JIM

Short, very dangerous.

MRS. PEABODY

Must have been that little man who asked me about the garbage. I told him we just had a pickup not more than ten minutes ago. He took off running through the alley and was nabbed by two policemen across the street. Guess they had the area staked out after last night.

JIM

They got him then and we got the money!

He reaches into the closet to drag the moneybag out and comes up empty-handed.

PAT

I think we got something more valuable than money out of this.

JIM

(feeling around on the top shelf) It's not here...

MRS. PEABODY

What? That old dirty bag you had stashed up there? I threw that out this afternoon when I finished cleaning.

JIM

No...no...

A KNOCK at the door draws their attention.

JIM

He's back!

Pat shakes the shillelagh.

PAT

No match for this!

He opens the door to a policeman.

OFFICER

Just wanted to thank you folks for all your help in getting the robber out into the open.

MRS. PEABODY

We were glad to do our civic duty, officer.

JIM

He's really gone, then?

OFFICER

Oh, yes, and we should have the money back after checking trash truck runs. Only one runs through this whole area.

PAT

I'm just glad the whole thing's over.

He sets the shillelagh beside the couch.

OFFICER

Well, we'd like to finish the report downtown if you wouldn't mind accompanying me.

MRS. PEABODY

Come on, boys. I'll fix a late snack when we get back.

JIM

That's worth staying up for.

PAT

(whispers to the shillelagh)
Don't worry! I'm not selling you to
anyone.

EFX as the door closes behind them. A faint wisp of GREEN SMOKE changes to a dense cloud as an OLD MAN steps from the cloud.

ST. PATRICK

Where are you, little one? Ah, there you are ... Your work's done here. Time we moved on.

He WHISTLES an Irish air walking to the front door. It opens by itself. He pauses to look both ways before venturing into the light.

ST. PATRICK

A great many people need your help.

He frowns slightly as he studies the inscription on the shillelagh.

ST. PATRICK

But what they can't read ... they can't use.

EFX as he holds the shillelagh up and the Celtic inscription TRANSFORMS into English. It reads:

WISH IN NEED, GOD'S MERCY RECEIVE.

His face beams as he turns and vanishes into smoke.

EFX as SMOKE dissipates.

MUSIC UP with theme as title appears,

"The Cost of Higher Education".

TITLE FADES.

CAMERA MOVES THROUGH SMOKE into

INT. SMALL TOWN DINER - MID-DAY

Fairly busy lunchtime crowd is visible as an older waitress can be seen taking orders. A bus is visible through the

front window, letting off a large crowd of high school children.

CAROL

Billy Ray! You better get Cassie off her break. We got a load heading in.

BILLY RAY

Carol, she had a pick up at the post office. Won't be back for ten minutes.

CAROL

Maybe I need to pick up something for myself. Like a last paycheck.

St. Patrick appears behind her at the empty table. He is dressed conservatively.

ST. PATRICK

Oh, no, my dear. You must think about your daughter. How would she be getting to college next year?

CAROL

How'd you get in here? And how'd you know Cynthia's going to college in the fall?

ST. PATRICK

How does anyone learn anything in a small town?

CAROL

OK, enough about me. (taps her notepad) You gonna order?

ST. PATRICK

I think you'll have plenty from them.

He nods toward the door as TEENAGERS pour in.

CAROL

Got that right. Sometimes I wish there was another diner to handle them on field days.

ST. PATRICK

Now, now ... (taps the shillelagh against the table) Better be savin' a wish for your retirement!

CAROL

That's something I'll never see!

She turns back to find an empty table except for the shillelagh resting against it.

CAROL

Sir, if you're not gonna order ... Where'd he go?

She glances quickly around the diner as the children's VOICES drown out her thoughts. Carol shrugs and sets the shillelagh aside in a corner.

INT. SAME DINER - EARLY EVENING

Carol is wiping off the counters as Billy Ray clears the register.

BILLY RAY

Guess you'll be heading home, huh?

CAROL

Yeah. I gotta get some alterations done on Cynthia's gown. Tomorrow's the big day.

BILLY RAY

You'll still be here half-day, right?

CAROL

Since you didn't give me the day off, guess I'll have to.

BILLY RAY

New girl be here next week for training.

CAROL

Well, if she's anything like Cassie, I'll be doing it myself.

BILLY RAY

I spoke to her about all the breaks. She agreed to cut back.

CAROL

Uh, huh. I hear ya.

(picks up the shillelagh)
Wonder if he'll come back for this?

BILLY RAY

What's that? A cane?

CAROL

A walking stick for sure. I think it's called a shillelagh.

BILLY RAY

I used to own one of them. Wouldn't drive worth a darn in cold weather.

CAROL

Not a car name, Billy Ray. My uncle had one of these. Used to see it at his house every time we'd visit.

BILLY RAY

Well, you can't leave it here. Don't know how cured the wood is ... might have bugs.

CAROL

I'll take it with me. If the old guy shows up again, I'll just invite him over to get it back.

BILLY RAY

So that's how you get all your dates?

CAROL

Don't even go there!

(Grabs her purse to leave)

I'm outta here. See ya tomorrow.

BILLY RAY

Ok, bright and early, remember! You're taking half-day.

CAROL

Gotcha covered.

EXT. PARKING LOT - SAME TIME

A MAN steps from the shadows between the buildings. Startled, Carol raises the shillelagh to defend herself.

CAROL

Back off!

TJ

Hey, Carol. Didn't mean to frighten ya!

CAROL

TJ, what are you doing here?

ΤJ

Remember the other day? You said you wanted to talk about the insurance policy.

CAROL

Yes, but not here.

(Looks around nervously)

Too public...

TJ

We could go have a beer. Talk things over.

CAROL

Not a good idea.

TJ

Open for suggestions?

CAROL

My place. In about an hour. I got alterations to do on Cynthia's graduation gown anyway. Might as well kill two birds with one stone.

TIT

Sounds like a plan.

INT. CAROL'S APARTMENT - A LITTLE LATER

Sparsely furnished but comfortable. Cynthia is idly flicking through TV cable channels as she chats on the phone.

CYNTHIA

(into phone)

Gotta run, she's here. (pretends to be absorbed by the program) Hi, Mom. How's it going?

CAROL

I'm fine. Did you get the makeup test done?

CYNTHIA

Coach Bryant said I passed with flying colors.

CAROL

So why couldn't you do it right the first time? Would have avoided a whole lot of trouble.

CYNTHIA

I'm graduating. Isn't that enough? I mean, it's not like Dad's gonna show up, right?

CAROL

Do we have to bring him into this?

CYNTHIA

I guess not. Considering he hasn't taken any interest in me since he left.

CAROL

I know, honey. I've tried to explain.

CYNTHIA

Explain? (sterner) Explain what, Mom? He's the best collegiate football MORE

CYNTHIA (CONT'D)

coach in the business. He takes time to watch every play. Counsel every player. Even maps out career goals to the last detail ... for somebody else, but his own daughter? I'm a throwaway. Probably wishes he'd never had me.

CAROL

You can't mean that.

CYNTHIA

So now I'm graduating, and that should make a difference.

CAROL

I wrote and told him you'd finished.

CYNTHIA

You did what? I can't believe you did that. I don't want him there.

CAROL

I just thought ...

CYNTHIA

You thought wrong.

Cynthia stomps off down the hall. The slamming of her bedroom door jars Carol back into routine. She grasps the shillelagh tightly.

CAROL

Dear God, I wish there was some way to reconcile this family.

EFX as she sets the shillelagh down, unaware of a faint GREEN GLOW that emanates briefly from the stick. She begins fixing a teapot of water and pulls out the graduation gown.

CAROL

Bill, how could you do this to your own daughter? She's so much like you it's scary. The same drive. Ambition. She could go far. Given the chance, but where am I gonna get that kind of money?

KNOCK sounds quietly at the door. Carol opens it to find TJ.

TJ

I know you said an hour. Kinda figured we could cut through the business and get to the pleasure.

CAROL

Cynthia's in her room. Let's keep it business tonight, ok?

TJ

Fine. I checked all the premiums. You're good to go on paper. All paid up.

CAROL

No problem with her collecting?

TJ

Guarantee it.

CAROL

Do I have to be in the car?

ТЛ

Nowhere near it. Like I told you last week ... I'll take care of the car leaving the pavement. All you have to do...is make sure you're on the red eye to San Diego. (sees her hesitation) If you can't go through with it, now's the time to tell me.

CAROL

I can do it. She's got to have the money for college.

ΤJ

You'll never see her again.

CAROL

Don't you think I know that? I'll miss everything in her life from this point forward, ... her dreams, her heartaches, her successes, her failures. Everything a mother needs to share with her daughter. I'll never have it.

ΤJ

Then why do it?

CAROL

Because it's her one chance to get what she wants out of life, and in getting that, my dreams for her will come true.

TJ

Then it's settled. Everything's set for tomorrow night.

CAROL

Her graduation night? It's too soon! I never said ...

т.т

My advice to you is ... enjoy the next twenty four hours with her, and hey... look at the bright side. You won't be working in that dump of a diner ever again.

He leaves as she sinks slowly into a chair holding the graduation gown.

CAROL

What have I done?

Cynthia reappears at the corner of the kitchen.

CYNTHIA

Mom, I'm sorry. I shouldn't have gotten mad at you.

CAROL

It's okay, honey. We all have our moments.

CYNTHIA

And tomorrow at graduation, I don't care if Dad does show up. You're the only one I want there.

CAROL

Thank you. It means a lot to hear you say it.

CYNTHIA

Now, can we please get this done?

(holds up the gown)

I don't want to fall into the graduation speaker, getting my diploma.

CAROL

Even if the speaker was Ricky Martin?

CYNTHIA

I might make an exception in that case.

INT. DINER - EARLY MORNING

Carol is absently going about her duties, glancing at the clock every few minutes. Billy Ray watches intently for several moments, then calls her behind the counter.

BILLY RAY

Hey, Carol. Let me see you a minute.

CAROL

What's up? I got those four tables to set before we open.

BILLY RAY

You don't look good.

CAROL

Thanks.

BILLY RAY

No, I mean ... heck, I don't know what I mean. We've worked together a long time, what ten, twelve years?

CAROL

At least.

BILLY RAY

You ain't focused. Like something's pulling on your mind.

CAROL

So now you're a psychiatrist?

BILLY RAY

I know what I see, and what I don't see is you paying attention to what you're doing.

CAROL

Well, maybe I shouldn't be doing it anymore?

BILLY RAY

So you're quitting?

CAROL

No, Billy Ray, I'm not. You know I got four more years to get my daughter through college, and you know you've got the only place in town for a washed up waitress.

BILLY RAY

Never said that. You're the best waitress in four counties. Probably the state. Maybe the country. I'm glad you're here.

CAROL

I don't believe it. A compliment from you?

BILLY RAY

You are good.

CAROL

There's always better.

BILLY RAY

And worse.

CAROL

Serious though, Billy Ray. You meant what you said about my work?

BILLY RAY

Yeah, but don't hold me to it for a raise. I got enough on me just keeping this place going.

CAROL

You depend on me, then?

BILLY RAY

If you didn't show up every day ... I'd be shoving the food in front of customers myself.

CAROL

I never thought about it that way.

BILLY RAY

Hey, if you can't depend on somebody, you got no business working with them.

CAROI

Thanks, Billy Ray. It's a lot to think about.

EXT. HIGH SCHOOL FOOTBALL STADIUM - MID-AFTERNOON

Stands are filled with anxious PARENTS and Carol is just getting seated hurriedly as the BAND starts playing.

Cynthia waves from the football field where chairs are situated for the graduation.

Carol waves back and then her attention is drawn to TJ standing by the entrance gate.

CAROL

God, give me strength to get through this.

A hand taps her shoulder.

BILL

Maybe you could spread some of that strength around?

CAROL

Bill! I didn't think you'd make it.

BILL

My own daughter's graduation from high school? It's a big event, Carol. For all of us.

CAROL

Cynthia didn't want ... I mean ...

BILL

I know she didn't want me here, but if I hadn't come, the bridge between us would have been damaged beyond repair.

CAROL

It already is.

BILL

I suppose so from where you sit.

CAROL

Don't make a scene.

BILL

That's not why I'm here.

CAROL

You don't skip half your daughter's life. Then come waltzing back in for the grand finale.

BILL

She's always thought of you as the hero, right? I'm not gonna dash her hopes.

(looks around)

I think my seat's on the other side.

He leaves. TJ shoots her a dirty look, then vanishes back into the crowd. Carol manages to

find a tissue in her purse to dab her eyes before the speaker begins the proceedings.

CAROL

Cynthia was right. I should never have reminded him.

SPEAKER

Today, our graduating class faces many challenges...

Carol's eyes are focused on another high school graduation.

FLASHBACK

Bill is receiving his diploma with honors. Carol watches as he leaves the dais and is hugged by his MOTHER and YOUNGER VERSION of herself.

BILL

Mother! And Carol, how nice of you to come.

CAROL

Your mother said it would be alright.

MOTHER

Yes, Bill. She's got something to tell you.

BILL

Just think, Carol, next year you'll be walking up these same steps.

CAROL

I know this isn't the right time, and definitely not the way I wanted to tell you ...

BILL

Come on now. We can all talk later.

He tries hurrying her away, but his stops him.

MOTHER

This can't wait.

BILL

Serious? On a day like today?

CAROL

We're gonna have a baby.

BILL

You must be kidding!

MOTHER

This is not a joking matter, son.

BILL

Well, she's mistaken. It must be ...

CAROL

Oh, no ... it's yours...and mine.

BILL

But my plans ... the university...

MOTHER

Plans change ... in their own way.

FLASHBACK ENDs

EXT. CURRENT GRADUATION

Cynthia walks across to receive her diploma. Carol snaps a picture from her vantage point.

Cynthia descends from the platform and Bill smiles at her in front of flashes going on around them. She freezes for a moment as he presses an envelope into her hand.

BILL

Congratulations, princess. I knew you could do it.

CYNTHIA

Thanks, sir.

INT. CAROL'S APARTMENT - EARLY EVENING

Cynthia is preparing for a night on the town. Carol battles her feelings.

CAROL

You won't be too late?

CYNTHIA

Mom, it's graduation! A few of us are going out, that's all.

CAROL

Promise me, you'll be back before midnight.

CYNTHIA

I'm eighteen, not eight, remember? Besides, I haven't had a midnight curfew since grade school.

CAROL

You've got job interviews coming up next week.

CYNTHIA

You worry too much. I'll be fine.

CAROL

You never did tell me what your father said.

CYNTHIA

It's not important. Just gave me an envelope. Probably a graduation card.

CAROL

You didn't open it?

CYNTHIA

For what? Like something he writes matters to me? Gave up on that a long time ago.

Horn BLOWS outside.

CYNTHIA

Gotta run.

CAROL

Cynthia, wait.

CYNTHIA

Mom, they're waiting!

CAROL

One more hug?

CYNTHIA

Always got time for that.

CAROL

Take care of yourself. Don't ever lose hope that things can get better.

CYNTHIA

Mom, are you all right? Sounds like the last time you'll ever see me.

CAROL

Just hard letting go, that's all.

CYNTHIA

Well, don't wait up!

Cynthia kisses her cheek before she leaves. Carol stares out the window. A KNOCK at the door sends her racing to see what Cynthia forgot. TJ steps in quickly and shuts the door behind him.

TJ

I thought you'd be on your way to the airport.

CAROL

What have you been doing? Stalking me?

TJ

Look, I get a certain percentage of the money. Gotta protect my assets.

CAROL

This won't work, TJ. It can't.

ΤJ

(exasperated)

Fine. We'll call it off. See ya round. (he goes to leave) By the way, this wouldn't have anything to do with your ex showing up today?

CAROL

It's over between Bill and me.

TJ

Carol, you make me crazy sometimes. I thought we had something going.

CAROL

The nights are fine, TJ. They're great, as a matter of fact, b the days ... the days go on forever, and as much as I care about you ... once I'm gone, they're gonna look real hard at where I've been ... who I was seen with.

TJ

How many people know about us?

CAROL

If only one person ties us together ... that's enough to call the whole thing off.

ТJ

What do you want to do? Drop it and let your daughter struggle the rest of her life? She's already got a broken home. And more guilt in that beautiful head than a teenager can handle. Breakups aren't nice. There's always gonna be a hurt party on one side or the other, b why put her in the middle any longer? There is a way out. This is the way out!

CAROL

You're right. I know you are. I need to make a decision and stick to it, b you don't know what it's like! A part of me is being ripped away like it never existed.

ΤJ

You gave her a home and a solid foundation to build on. Don't take that away from her.

CAROL

You care about her, too. Don't you, TJ?

ΤJ

Like she was my own. I'll watch over her. I promise, and I'll get pictures to you on a regular basis.

CAROL

All right, then. (tosses him the car keys) You better go out the back. Down the alley ...

TJ

Don't worry. I know the routine. See you in San Diego.

He leaves. Carol stands quietly looking around the home she'll never see again. She picks up a picture of Cynthia.

CAROL

It's not much, but it's all I have to leave you, honey. Until I get this behind me.

EXT. MOUNTAINOUS ROAD OVERLOOKING CITY - EVENING

Cynthia is lying on a blanket with several friends and staring up at the twinkling stars.

CYNTHIA

This is so great! I can finally think about the future.

PEGGY

What's so great about a future here?

CYNTHIA

I mean after college. I can travel. See the world. Take my mom along.

DAVE

Take your mother with you? Boy, those apron strings are tight.

CYNTHIA

You don't understand. She's been stuck here all her life. Because of me. She's never had the chance to spread her wings. Fly on her own.

DAVE

You mean like this?

He pretends to soar majestically.

CYNTHIA

Don't get so close to the edge, Dave. It's a long way down.

DAVE

(looks over the edge)
Yeah, you'd need big wings to keep from hitting the bottom.

SCREECHING of tires as a car races by. Everyone turns to see the car disappear around the bend.

PEGGY

Isn't that your mom's car?

CYNTHIA

Looked like it, b she's at home. Anybody got a cell phone?

LAURA

I do. Help yourself.

CYNTHIA

There's no answer.

Dave runs to the other side of the clearing. A loud RENDING NOISE and CRASH is heard.

DAVE

Whoever it is better slow down around that curve. Oh, my God! The car went over...

CYNTHIA

What?

She gets up and runs to see. An EXPLOSION is heard and everyone races for their cars.

CYNTHIA

It can't be Mom. It just can't.

EXT. SIDE OF ROAD FARTHER DOWN MOUNTAIN

A guardrail is missing as the teens jump from their cars. Another car is already parked closer to the open support and Cynthia recognizes her father as he disappears over the embankment edge.

CYNTHIA

Dad, what are you doing? Don't go down there!

BILL

I swerved to avoid her. Princess, that was your Mom's car. If she's alive ... she needs help fast!

CYNTHIA

I'm going with you.

Several friends hold her back.

BILL

Not this time.

PEGGY

You can't, Cynthia. It's too steep!

DAVE

(to Laura)

Call 911. Hurry!

LAURA

(dialing swiftly)

I want to report an accident ...

BILL

I see her coat, Princess. I can get to her.

CYNTHIA

Dad, be careful!

Car EXPLODES, threatening to shake Peggy and Cynthia over the edge. Debris flies in all directions as the girls scream.

CYNTHIA

(looking back in horror)

Dad...

DAVE

Nobody could have survived that.

Laura shoots him a dirty look.

LAURA

They'll be okay, Cynthia.

PEGGY

Rescue's on the way.

INT. AIRLINE TERMINAL - SLIGHTLY PAST MIDNIGHT

Several passengers are seated waiting for the call to board. A little boy is curled up, asleep in a chair next to a young woman. He twitches every few moments as though bothered by a disturbing dream. Carol smiles at the woman, who smiles back guardedly.

CAROL

Is that your little boy?

WOMAN

No, we're just traveling together. He's one of the refugees from Kosovo.

CAROL

You're relocating him, then?

WOMAN

Second time around. He's a special case.

CAROL

I can't imagine what he's been through.

WOMAN

Seen more than his share. Both parents were killed in the initial raid.

CAROL

Well, I'm sure he's in good hands with you.

WOMAN

I can place him, but I can't erase what goes on over and over in his head. That's something to haunt him the rest of his life.

CAROL

Must be hard starting over at such a young age.

WOMAN

It's really hard at any age. Some adults spend years getting over childhood traumas. Guilt. Fear. A nurturing home environment keeps them off the street sometimes, but parents really play a very critical role in building tomorrow's generation.

Often they don't even notice the little things that children pick up on.

Nonverbal signals. Shared experiences missed in childhood can't be replaced MORE

WOMAN (CONT'D)

once they're grown, and little ripples of apathy can sow great seeds of dissension.

CAROL

What about protecting them from hardships? Doesn't that count for something?

WOMAN

Protect them from life? Sharing it with them is much more important.

Carol stands and glances at the ETA board. The plane is beginning its final descent to the runway.

ROAR of the engines draws her attention to the large plate glass windows facing the field.

CLOSEUP OF WOMAN'S FACE

She MORPHS into St. Patrick.

He DISAPPEARS in green mist while the boy sleeps beside him.

CAROL

Thanks for the advice...

She stands, looking around in bewilderment, then heads away from the terminal toward the nearest exit.

INT. CAROL'S APARTMENT - SAME NIGHT

Cynthia is saying goodbye to her classmates as they leave. The rescue squad leader eyes her suspiciously.

LEADER

Are you sure you'll be ok here tonight?

CYNTHIA

I'll be fine.

PEGGY

I'm staying with her.

CYNTHIA

There's no need ...

LEADER

I think it'd be best if she did.

CYNTHIA

I can manage.

PEGGY

Are you sure?

CYNTHIA

Positive.

LEADER

(nods to Peggy)

You've got our number.
Don't be afraid to use it.

CYNTHIA

I will. Thanks...(hugs Peggy)
I appreciate all you've done.

PEGGY

Call you in the morning?

CYNTHIA

Yeah. I'd like that.

Cynthia closes the door. She stares vacantly at the apartment as though seeing it for the first time.

CYNTHIA

I can't do this. Mom, why were you on the road? Did you think I couldn't take care of myself?

She sinks onto the sofa. Clutching one of the throw pillows, she sobs into it.

Regaining her composure, she notices the shillelagh setting beside the coffee table.

Picking it up, she runs her fingers gingerly over its surface. Then pauses to read the inscription.

CYNTHIA

"Wish in need, God's mercy receive." (looks up) Where were You, God, when my mother went over the cliff?

A shadow appears at a corner of the kitchen. It is Carol. Her face is distraught over her daughter's lack of faith, but she holds her tongue, knowing Cynthia needs to face the pent-up emotions that have driven her to such despair.

CYNTHIA

Where were you when my Dad went down that cliff after her?

Carol's eyes widen at the revelation.

CYNTHIA

I don't understand how you can just sit back and watch. My whole family's gone. (shakes the shillelagh violently) A wish in need? Shoot, if I only believed it could happen ... I'd wish for understanding . . . why it happened!

EFX as Cynthia furiously throws the shillelagh across the room. Carol sees the shillelagh GLOW as it careens into a small table, knocking over a lamp and sending a book to the floor.

CYNTHIA

(races to pick up the lamp and book) Mom, I'm sorry.

Cynthia notices it's her mother's Bible and lies opened to a particular section Carol had marked. She begins reading aloud.

CYNTHIA

"Then the Lord addressed Job out of the storm and said: Who is this that obscures divine plans with words of ignorance? (pauses) I will question you, and you tell me the answers!

Where were you when I founded the earth? Tell me, if you have understanding. Who determined its size; do you know? Who stretched out the measuring line for it? Into what were its pedestals sunk, and who laid the cornerstone. While the morning stars sang in chorus, ...

CAROL

(finishing for her)

And all the sons of God shouted for joy?

Cynthia looks up and sees her mother. Carol joins her and gently places the Bible back on the table.

CYNTHIA

You're alive!

CAROL

Very much so.

CYNTHIA

I thought you were gone forever.

CAROL

Someday perhaps, but not for a very long time.

CYNTHIA

Why were you in the car? Where were you going?

CAROL

I wasn't in the car, Cynthia. I cooked up a stupid scheme that backfired. CYNTHIA

What?

CAROL

You needed a chance at college. I didn't have the money.

CYNTHIA

I don't understand.

CAROL

I made a deal with TJ. He agreed to fake my death in a car crash. Then my life insurance would have covered you through four years of college.

CYNTHIA

Mom, no!

CAROL

It was the only way I could think of to get that kind of money.

CYNTHIA

And you thought college could replace you in my life?

CAROL

No, honey. It's not that. I guess ... I wasn't thinking too straight.

CYNTHIA

(hugs her tightly)

I'm just glad you're alright. Don't ever scare me like that again. Promise?

CAROL

That I can promise.

Telephone RINGS.

CYNTHIA

I'll get it. Probably Peggy calling to make sure I'm ok.

CAROL

(straightening the lamp) Make it short. We'd better call the police and let them know I'm alright.

CYNTHIA

(into phone) Yes, this is she. (pauses) I can hold.

She absently plays with a white envelope beside the phone base. Turning it over, she recognizes it as the one her father had given to her at graduation. She tears it open gently and drops the phone as a large amount of money falls out.

CAROL

What is it?

Carol retrieves the phone and listens intently a moment.

CYNTHIA

Mom, it's cash!

CAROL

(into phone) Hello? Is anybody there?

CYNTHIA

I was on hold. It was the hospital.

CAROL

Not anymore. They hung up.

CYNTHIA

They had the strangest music on hold. Sounded almost Irish.

CAROL

Where did this envelope come from? Is this the one your father gave you?

CYNTHIA

Yes!

CAROL

There's enough here to cover two full years of college.

CYNTHIA

He saved it for me.

CAROL

I think we better call the hospital back.

CYNTHIA

You think he's there.

CAROL

Wouldn't hurt to check it out.

(grasping the shillelagh)
You got your wish. Maybe there's one left for me.

CYNTHIA

Mom, you don't think that thing has any kind of "power" do you?

CAROL

But if Bill's at the hospital... we need to be there with him.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - SAME NIGHT

Bill is resting comfortably in bed as Cynthia and Carol enter.

NURSE

Please, don't stay too long. He's been through a lot. He needs his rest.

CYNTHIA

He's got the rest of his life for that.

CAROL

Don't worry. We'll only be a minute.

BILL

Hey, Princess. How's it going?

CYNTHIA

I'm fine, Dad. Mom's here.

BILL

Your mother? She wouldn't want to see me.

CAROL

I beg to differ on that. Cynthia told me you went down that cliff to rescue me.

BILL

Pretty stupid, huh?

CAROL

Very heroic in my book. It took a lot of courage.

CYNTHIA

Dad, I got the money.

BILL

That's for college, and I don't want to hear any argument from your mother...

CAROL

You won't.

CYNTHIA

You'd better get some rest, Dad. We've got a lot of things to talk over ... once you're out of here.

BILL

They said it was a miracle I even survived.

CAROL

We can all use divine intervention now and then.

CYNTHIA

Got that right. I'm gonna wait outside.

(kisses her father's cheek)
But I'll be back tomorrow.

BILL

Thanks, Princess. I'll be looking for you.

She leaves and Carol starts to go.

CAROL

I'd better be going, too. The nurse said not to stay too long.

BILL

Hey!

CAROL

Yeah?

BILL

I never meant to hurt either one of you.

CAROL

I know that now.

BILL

I only wish you'd known it then.

CAROL

Hold that wish. You might need it for retirement.

BILL

That's something I could look forward to ... with you.

CAROL

That's a whole lotta wish.

BILL

You're worth wishing for.

CAROL

You know the old saying. Be careful of what you wish for ...

BILL

I just might get it?

CAROL

You ... might.

She leaves and Bill closes his eyes with a smile on his face.

INT. HOSPITAL HALLWAY

Carol heads toward the exit. An OLD PATIENT smiles at her as she passes him. He is seated, grasping a walking stick, which makes her think of the shillelagh. Suddenly, she stops, dead certain it's the same man she saw in the diner.

CAROL

Don't suppose there's any point in my looking for the shillelagh back home?

ST. PATRICK

You're bright and perceptive, my dear. Despite your lack of so-called "higher education".

He MORPHS from the patient status to his true clothing.

CAROL

You're not really here, are you?

ST. PATRICK

Are you? Or are you really in an airline terminal? Basing your life's direction on other people's decisions.

CAROL

That was you in the terminal with the little boy.

ST. PATRICK

Yes, I must confess for a moment you had me worried.

CAROL

Me worry you? I've been to the end of my rope and back in the past twenty-four hours.

ST. PATRICK

(enervated)

And what did you discover?

CAROL

I had the answers inside me all along.

ST. PATRICK

Very good, and you didn't need a bit of book learning to teach you that.

CAROL

Are you saying Cynthia doesn't need to go to college?

ST. PATRICK

Never hold back an inquiring mind. The directions it chooses to go are entirely up to the person. Where they wind up is quite another matter.

CAROL

Seems like a circle.

ST. PATRICK

Sometimes it is, but circles go places. They rarely stand still.

CAROL

I won't see you again, will I?

ST. PATRICK

Never's a long time.

CAROL

I just wanted to say thank you. For everything.

ST. PATRICK

There now, my dear.

(pats her hand)

You take care of yourself, and if you find someone needing a bit of luck, be sure to lend them some of yours.

Cynthia walks around the corner and looks puzzledly at her mother.

CAROL

I know. I'm coming. I just stopped to talk to a patient.

CYNTHIA

(looking around)

Where?

Carol looks beside herself at an empty chair. Then, smiles and rises to join her.

CAROL

You'd be surprised how fast patients recover here.

EXT. HOSPITAL - SAME TIME

It's dark, lit by occasional lampposts dotting the sidewalk. St. Patrick is glancing up at the top floor of the building. He grasps his shillelagh and begins walking toward the parking lot at the far end of the hospital.

ST. PATRICK

Come, little one. Your work's done here. Time we moved on.

SPECIAL EFX as he VANISHES into a green mist.

MUSIC UP with theme as title appears in smoke,

"Adventures in Paradise"

TITLE FADES

EXT. MIDDLE SCHOOL PLAYGROUND - MID-MORNING

Sixth through eighth graders are engaged in various activities. NANCY HAWKS, a seventh grade red-haired girl, is seated with her friend, SCOTT RAINEY, a blonde-haired boy with glasses. He is the same grade level, but confined to a wheelchair. Both are in the shade of a large tree watching their classmates.

Two school supervisors are keeping a close eye on the playground. JILLIAN, a tall, attractive spinster-looking

woman is conversing with GEORGE, the physical education instructor.

JILLIAN

George, don't you think we ought to get them involved?

GEORGE

Believe me, every week it's the same thing. Scott's quick, b his special needs can't overshadow the rest of the class. I do what I can.

JILLIAN

At least he's got Nancy.

GEORGE

Yeah, but she can't be his bodyguard forever.

A soccer ball bounces at Nancy.

NANCY

I've got it

(catches the ball, then turns to Scott)
You choose, Scott. Who gets it?

SCOTT

On the end ... Franklin. Hurry, or you won't stand a chance against those two.

Two boys descend on Nancy. They yank the ball away and scowl menacingly at Scott.

MARTIN

We don't need your advice.

Martin bounces the ball off Scott's head.

TIM

We can handle the team just fine ... on our own.

NANCY

Pick on somebody your own brain size, like an ant.

MARTIN

(teasing Scott)

Whatsa matter? Gotta have her fight all your battles for you?

George motions the boys away.

GEORGE

Tim! Martin! Let's keep the game moving.

They move off as the coach nears.

GEORGE

Everything ok?

NANCY

Just everyday cat and Cmouse, Coach.

SCOTT

(tries smiling)

Didn't mean to interfere with the game.

GEORGE

No problem, Scott. Looked like you were talking plays with Nancy.

NANCY

Told me to throw to Franklin.

SCOTT

I just thought ...

GEORGE

(breaks in)

Well, it was a good thought. You're a born strategist, Scott. Maybe you can help me plan a few plays later.

SCOTT

You mean it?

GEORGE

Definitely. I'll catch you after practice.

SCOTT

Gee, thanks.

Coach moves off.

St. Patrick is seen standing behind Scott's wheelchair.

SCOTT

(unaware of St. Patrick behind him)
You think he really means it?

ST. PATRICK

He's a good man. Recognizes talent when he sees it.

NANCY

(gasps)

Where did you come from?

ST. PATRICK

A wee little place on the other side of the ocean.

NANCY

I meant just now.

SCOTT

I didn't see him walk up either.

ST. PATRICK

(to Nancy)

And what would be the color of flowers on the hill behind your fair head?

Nancy starts to turn, but is caught by St. Patrick's stare.

NANCY

I don't know. I didn't notice.

ST. PATRICK

If you missed all of their beauty ... why would you notice an old man with a shillelagh? Sometimes it's important to notice the details.

SCOTT

Good point.

NANCY

So what's a shillelagh?

He hands her the shillelagh. She turns it over, admiring the workmanship.

ST. PATRICK

Most are for walking, but a few ... a very select few ... are for wishing.

She and Scott notice the inscription.

SCOTT

"Wish in need ..."

NANCY

(finishing)

"God's mercy receive."

What's that supposed to mean?

ST. PATRICK (V.O.)

Remember details!

Nancy circles the tree in vain. St. Patrick has vanished as mysteriously as he arrived.

SCOTT

Any sign?

NANCY

Nothing. It's like he was never here.

SCOTT

Oh, he was here all right. The question is ... why?

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM - SAME DAY

GRETA HAWKS, Nancy's mother, is at one end of an executive conference room. She is of medium height, expertly coiffured and dressed. She is also part owner of a top computer software corporation and busily engaged in outlining sales plans for the next quarter. A number of CORPORATION MEMBERS are seated around her, intent on her presentation.

GRETA

All right, I think we can agree on where we're headed. The new X-20 needs to be in testing by week's end. Production needs to be finished by the end of the month.

Then, introduction will hit its deadline right on time. If you see any delays or problems cropping up...don't wait. E-mail either me or Gary (nods at her co-owner) at the first sign of trouble.

GARY PERKINS, a conservatively dressed executive, nods back. At first glance he appears firmer in decisions than Greta. In actuality, his personality is far warmer than his counterpart.

GARY

We don't want tidal waves off the shoreline... unless they're good consumer responses.

GRETA

(as cell phone rings)
Can we take a minute and look at the
time line?

Everyone starts looking nervously at each other. They realize it's not their cell phone as Greta switches the ringer off on her phone.

GRETA

Sorry about that. We have a lot to get through this afternoon. No interruptions.

GARY

Definitely. Fewer the breaks ... the more we can accomplish.

GRETA

Now, let's get a closer outlook on budget projections.

Cell phone RINGS on table.

EXT. FOREST - LATE AFTERNOON

A hand is seen holding another cell phone. Nancy snaps the phone's power off and clicks it to her belt. Scott is peering intently into the woods with special infrared binoculars.

SCOTT

Any luck?

NANCY

She must be in a meeting. Mom's good about checking back though. She'll get the message I left on voice mail.

SCOTT

You're sure you want to do this?

NANCY

We've been planning for weeks. I know a really good trail through the thickest part.

She wheels him down the hill in back of her house. He liberally applies the wheelchair's brake at various points to make sure he doesn't run into a small stream at the forest's cross point.

SCOTT

Just make sure it's easy access. I don't want to get stuck in the dark out here.

NANCY

Hey! I got you covered.

(taps a bag on the chair back) We've got food and water in here.

SCOTT

Oh, at least for several hours.

NANCY

(taps her knapsack)

Emergency provisions.

SCOTT

Why do I feel like a wagon train heading west?

NANCY

And the best part ...

(holds up the shillelagh)
a weapon to fend off the strongest
opponent.

SCOTT

(taking it from her)

This? Please ...

NANCY

I already wished an adventure on us.

SCOTT

You what? Don't tell me you believe what it says?

They look at the inscription.

NANCY

Couldn't hurt to try it out.

He turns the shillelagh over and grips it tightly.

SCOTT

Well, I wish I could stand on my own two feet for a change.

NANCY

Scott, you can't wish that.

Out of the corner of his eye, Scott notices the SPECIAL EFX as the shillelagh faintly GLOWS green.

SCOTT

Too late ... already done.

NANCY

That's in God's hands.

SCOTT

Not according Dto this.

(wields the stick like a sword)
Maybe it's time a wish of mine did come true.

Wheelchair hits a stone and almost tips over. Nancy manages to steady it, but Scott drops the shillelagh over the side of a large ravine along the path.

NANCY

Scott! Are you alright?

SCOTT

Fine, but I lost the stick.

NANCY

Doesn't matter. There are plenty more where we're going.

SCOTT

(grins, imitates John Wayne)
Let's head on out, Pilgrim. Just be careful on the inclines.

EXT. SMALL CLEARING - FADING SUN

Nancy checks her watch for the time and its face reveals a miniature walkie-talkie microphone and speaker.

NANCY

Almost five-thirty. Think we oughta make camp?

SCOTT

Sounds like a plan.

NANCY

(turns on her walkie-talkie)
Better make sure these work as well.

SCOTT

(switching his own walkie-talkie on) Yeah, remember what the old guy said about details.

She moves off, checking the underbrush.

NANCY

(into the watch)

He was weird.

SCOTT

(speaks into the watch)
Seemed pretty normal to me. Then again
... you seem normal to me, too.

Scott remains silent as he listens to her progress.

NANCY

Very funny. Thought about bringing any "good" jokes with you?

A CRACKLING SOUND is heard over the small speaker.

SCOTT

I think you'd better head back now.

NANCY

(over speaker)

I'm fine. There's some markers tied on the trees over here. Somebody's been through ...

Scott listens intently.

NANCY

(whispers)

Scott ... we gotta get out of here. There's two guys coming up the trail.

SCOTT

(calmly)

Nancy, get back here. This isn't fun.

NANCY

I can't get back there in time. Hide in the bushes. Quick! They've got ... they've got guns.

SCOTT

(freezing in fear)

What do I do? I can't hide in the wheelchair.

The two men pass Nancy's hiding place. She waits until both have moved farther down the trail before responding.

NANCY

Scott ... can you hear me?

Scott struggles to crawl into the underbrush.

SCOTT

I made it. They can't see me.

NANCY

Stay put. I'll be there in a second.

SCOTT

No, they found the wheelchair.

The men toss the wheelchair into the ravine.

NICK

C'mon out. We know you're here. And you can't crawl away now.

BRETT

Nick, not so loud! She's not out here by herself. Chair proves that.

NICK

What's the deal? You think some kid in a wheelchair is gonna stop us?

BRETT

The deal's for her. Not him.

Scott locks the walkie-talkie's switch on "send".

SCOTT

(whispering)

Don't come back here.

Nick whirls around and drags Scott from his hiding place.

NICK

Well, whaddya know? One down ... one to go.

SCOTT

Lemme go ...

BRETT

You're our ticket to the big league, buddy. You ain't going nowhere.

SCOTT

Who are you? What do you want?

Nick dangles Scott over the ravine.

NICK

How'd you like to join your wheels at the bottom?

SCOTT

You wouldn't dare! You need me to get her.

BRETT

Not bad enough to put up with your smart mouth! Go on, Nick. Throw him over.

NICK

One chance. Where is she?

Nancy steps up behind them.

NANCY

I'm right here. Now leave him alone.

Nick motions for Brett to grab her. At the same moment, he drops Scott over the side of the ravine. Scott YELLS as Nancy SCREAMS.

NICK

Now we can get down to business.

NANCY

Scott! ... Can you hear me?

INT. NANCY'S HOUSE - SAME TIME

Greta enters. She punches the answering machine and brightens as she hears Nancy's voice.

NANCY

Mom, sorry I couldn't catch ya at work, but I tried. Scott and I are just going for a nature hike out back in the woods. See you at supper. Bye!

Machine BEEPS, then begins rewinding.

Greta checks a small bundle of mail, then clicks on her computer to retrieve e-mail. The familiar moniker "You've Got Mail" is heard. Then, as she clicks on an unidentified piece, her eyes freeze on the print that appears.

SCREEN

Your daughter's life is in our hands. To see her safely home again, bring \$20,000 in small bills to the place shown on the map before 9 p.m. No police!

Greta grabs the map being printed off the computer. Turning to watch the screen, she sees the message deleting itself. She struggles with her inner anger as she realizes the message sender's name vanished before she made note of it.

GRETA

Who could have sent this? What sick ... depraved mind has gotten hold of Nancy?

She slams her fist into the computer tabletop.

GRETA

(thinking aloud)

The money's no problem. I can get that, b how do I know they'll release her if they get the money?

(glances at the map)

This isn't far through the woods. An old lime kiln set back up in there. (picks up the phone) No police? By the time I get through with you ... you'll wish you had police protection.

EXT. BOTTOM OF RAVINE - EVENING

Scott lies groggily shaking off the effects of his fall.

Far off HOWL of dogs.

SCOTT

Not too far from my wheels. Good! Now I gotta get over there.

(drags himself to the wheelchair) How am I gonna get this back up on the path?

Squirrel nibbles at the knapsack. A piece of rope is visible at one edge.

SCOTT

The rope! I forgot all about it.

He pulls it out and ties himself to wheelchair.

SCOTT

All I gotta do is get from point A here to point B up there and it's a piece of cake.

Squirrel cocks its head to listen. Scott recognizes the gesture and looks down at his walkie-talkie still on "send" mode.

SCOTT

Squirrel watches Scott claw his way up the hill. The boy slides back several times before managing to gain a foothold on the ascent.

SCOTT

It's not that far \dots I gotta get to Nancy.

BRETT

(over walkie-talkie)

Put her in the last one on the left. Nobody's gonna find her there.

SCOTT

(getting angrier by the minute) Wrong, buzz brain. Just keep the channel open, Nancy. Please, God, let her be all right.

NICK

Did you hear something?

Scott checks his walkie-talkie, still securely locked in "receive" mode.

BRETT

Coupla guys down by the stream. Snooping around.

NICK

Time we threw them off the track. Just like the kid in the chair. C'mon get your gear and let's go.

BRETT

What about her?

NICK

She won't be going anywhere. Especially with the dogs watching.

Scott reaches the path at the top of the ravine.

SCOTT

(begins pulling the wheelchair up)
Once I get these wheels up... no dogs
are gonna keep me from rescuing her.

Squirrel scampers off behind a tree.

SPECIAL EFX as it morphs into St. Patrick. He smiles.

EXT. EDGE OF FOREST - SAME TIME

Several groups of parents are gathered, preparing to head into the woods. Greta is handing maps to everyone.

FIRST WOMAN

Are you sure all this is necessary?

GRETA

Definitely. If anybody gets lost ... rendezvous at the base of the lime kiln.

SECOND WOMAN

Greta, how far could they have gone?

GRETA

I'll admit ... the boy's in a wheelchair, b my daughter has enough sense to stay on the path.

JESSE, a young, handsome man is seen behind her. He's dressed in jeans and a sweatshirt, but has the look of a successful businessman.

JESSE

And my son doesn't?

GRETA

Look ... I didn't mean anything by that, Mr. Rainey.

JESSE

Jesse will do.

GRETA

I don't have time for sarcasm, Jesse. My daughter's lost in the woods.

JESSE

With my son...

GRETA

Yes, with your son...but I've got a presentation in the morning, and I don't need ... or want some local yokel giving me instructions on how to proceed.

JESSE

Seems to me you need some. You brought all these people in to scour the woods after dark. (pauses) Or is there another reason you haven't bothered to tell anyone?

GRETA

(shocked by his tact)

What do you mean? Your son talked my daughter into going on a nature hike when he didn't have any business being near the woods.

JESSE

And that's how you see it? Handicapped people don't have the right to explore things? Challenge themselves and others to look at life from a(gestures for quotations) "different" point of view. Lady, if that's your attitude going in to save your daughter and my son from kidnappers ... we don't stand a snowball's chance.

FIRST WOMAN

Kidnappers?

SECOND WOMAN

Wait a minute! You didn't say anything about kidnappers.

GRETA

I said we needed to rescue the children.

FIRST WOMAN

Forest animals are one thing...

SECOND WOMAN

As long as they're about this high (indicates height)

FIRST WOMAN

And stay that way.

Greta watches as the crowd disperses.

GRETA

(to Jesse)

Any other words of wisdom?

JESSE

(grabs a flashlight)

Yeah...save our kids.

EXT. LIME KILN

Stream flows gently at the base of the lime kiln area. Brett and Nick stop as they come up on the two game wardens.

WARDEN STEVE

(noticing their gear)

Doing a little night fishing?

NICK

Not much luck this afternoon. Figured we might give it a try.

WARDEN GREG

(stooping to examine the water)
Course now these parts probably don't
attract a lot of meal fish.

BRETT

Just here to get away from it all ... for the most part.

WARDEN STEVE

And the other part?

NICK

Fishing.

Trout speed swiftly along through the running water.

BRETT

And we're missing the best ones.

WARDEN GREG

Don't let us hold you up then.

WARDEN SCTEVE

Yeah, we've still got a ways to go before that sun sets.

Dog HOWLS in the distance. Steve looks toward the general direction as Greg watches Brett and Nick exchange glances.

WARDEN STEVE

You haven't seen any wolves in the area, have you?

NICK

Not yet, and with any luck, we won't.

WARDEN GREG

Well, have a good evening.

BRETT

Thanks. Same to ya.

The wardens move off into the forest. Brett looks at Nick and gets no response. Nick is intent on ensuring the wardens are gone before opening up any conversation.

Wardens head down the path.

WARDEN GRCEG

Wanna run a check?

WARDEN STEVE

Already in progress.

WARDEN GREG

That remote camera sure comes in handy.

WARDEN STEVE

Should have the lowdown on these two before they make their first cast.

EXT. CAVE HIGH ON THE LIME KILN CLIFF

A small rock hewn path leads into a dark opening where two large dogs guard the entrance. They are chained but nervously pace, awaiting Brett and Nick's return.

INT. CAVE

Nancy manages to wriggle free from the ropes that previously bound her, but she makes no sudden movements to infuriate the dogs. Slowly she activates her watch from its locked "send" mode.

NANCY

(whispers)

Scott, are you there? Can you hear me?

Moments of silence pass before she tries again. She does not take her eyes off the dogs who glare back menacingly.

NANCCY

If you're there, Scott ... let me know.

SCOTT

Still here.

The dogs hear the second voice and get agitated. One BAYS loudly, the sound heard by the warden, and stands rigidly at attention poised to strike at Nancy if the chain didn't restrain him.

NANCY

Scott, lower your voice.

SCOTT

Why?

NANCY

Because I'm looking at the biggest, meanest dogs I've ever seen. Both are chained, but they're getting really mad at the sound of another voice.

SCOTT

Where are you?

NANCY

In a cave at the lime kiln. The two guys have gone someplace. I couldn't see where.

SCOTT

Don't worry. I'm on my way.

NANCY

No! Scott, you've got to go back. Warn my mother.

SCOTT

So they can take you farther away? I don't think so.

NANCY

Please, Scott ... listen to me.

A shadow falls across the watch. Brett and Nick have returned from another entrance farther back in the cave.

NICK

(grabs the watch)

No, I think it's time you listened to us.

NANCY

How'd you get back in here?

BRETT

Never mind. Who you talking to?

NICK

Gotta be the boy. Knew we should have finished him off.

SCOTT

(over speaker)

Fat chance, you goons. You'd better not hurt her or you'll answer to me.

Brett moves to wave a piece of Scott's shirt in front of the dog's noses, then unchains them. They swiftly race off down the path, growling fiercely.

NICK

This isn't your call, boy, but it might be your last.

(holds watch toward cave opening) Listen to the sound that will tear you apart when they find you.

NANCY

(screams as Nick smashes the watch) Scott, get out of the woods!

BRETT

Yell all you want! If your mother doesn't pay the ransom ...you won't be leaving the woods alive either.

NANCY

What? Why are you doing this?

NICK

That's enough, Brett.

BRETT

She wants to know.

NICK

She doesn't need to know.

NANCY

I have the right ...

NICK

Not here you don't, but if the money's not turned over...

NANCY

This isn't about money.

BRETT

She's smart, too.

NICK

That's enough. Tie her up. We need to check on the dogs...and what's left of the boy.

EXT. FARTHER DOWN TRAIL

The two wardens freeze as the dogs bay on approach.

WARDEN STEVE

Don't like the sound of that.

H.Q., You got that on tape?

VOICE ON SPEAKER RADIO

We copy.

WARDEN GREG

Moving fast. This way.

WARDEN STEVE

Get to cover. Can't be out in the open when they ...

The dogs bound into the clearing. Warden Steve manages to draw his gun and shoot a tranquilizer dart at the second dog as it attacks Warden Greg.

Greg wrestles with the dog until the drug takes effect. As he rises, Greg holds his arm where the dog managed to get a bite in before succumbing to the dart.

WARDEN STEVE

Greg, let me see it.

WARDEN GREG

Just some superficial stuff.

SPEAKER ON TWO WAY RADIO

Backup's dispatched!

WARDEN STEVE

(cuffing the dog's collar to a tree) The owners are probably those two we just left.

WARDEN GREG

Better check it out.

SPEAKER ON TWO WAY RADIO Attention! We've got a report on two children in the woods.

WARDEN STEVE

Any more details?

SPEAKER

Neighbor phoned it in. The parents are searching in the vicinity.

WARDEN STEVE

We copy.

WARDEN GREG

I'll check on the parents.

WARDEN STEVE

Sure you're up to it?

WARDEN GREG

I'm fine.

Dog BAYS in distance.

WARDEN STEVE

Sounds like the other dog's circling. I'll head up to the kilns. Send backup that way.

WARDEN GREG

Check. I'll join you soon as I locate the parents.

EXT. CLIFF FACING ENTRANCE TO NANCY'S CAVE

Map is being carefully folded.

Scott is in his wheelchair, rolling out of shallow water along the river's edge.

SCOTT

This oughta throw the dogs off the scent. Now if the map holds true, there's another path to a clearing directly across from the caves. I gotta make that before the dogs get back to Nancy.

EXT. FOREST PATH

Greta and Jesse are examining the clearing and broken brush where Scott was sent over the embankment.

GRETA

Can you see anything?

JESSE

Not much. Lot of food stuffs. Nothing major (pauses)...Wait a minute.

He clears away small branches, revealing the cell phone. Picking up a large stick, he waves back up the hill.

JESSE

Found their phone.

(wields the stick, climbing up the bank)
And there's no sign of the wheelchair.
Scott's probably still in it then.

GRETA

I hope so.

JESSE

Do you mean that?

GRETA

Yes ... I do. As long as I know they're together, there's a chance.

JESSE

That's a vote of confidence for both of them.

GRETA

I mean that, Jesse. They need each other to get through this.

She sinks into his hug momentarily.

JESSE

They'll be alright, Greta. I know it. I only wish we had more help finding them.

EFX as SHILLELAGH GLOWS for a moment. Greta's eyes widen as she sees the glow, unnoticed by Jesse.

GRETA

Jesse, that stick

JESSE

What?

He releases her and looks at the shillelagh.

GRETA

It glowed.

JESSE

Probably came from the sunset over there.

GRETA

No, Jesse, it was green.

JESSE

Maybe it's radioactive or something.

He tosses it aside and Warden Greg appears, stepping through the underbrush.

GRETA

Who are you?

WARDEN GREG

Game warden, ma'am. Greg Walker. Ran into some trouble up the trail. Need to get some backup in here. Should be arriving any minute.

JESSE

Have you seen our children? A little girl and a boy in a wheelchair?

WARDEN GREG

Haven't seen them, b my partner's checking a lead up by the lime kilns.

GRETA

We've got to go.

WARDEN GREG

Now, ma'am, I don't think that's such a good idea.

Warden Greg absently reaches to stop her from leaving and reveals the dog bite mark.

JESSE

Something bit you.

WARDEN GREG

Nothing to be alarmed about. As soon as backup arrives, we can go back down the trail.

GRETA

We're going now. With or without you, warden!

JESSE

She's right. We can't help the children standing here.

WARDEN GREG

All right, b let me lead. I know the general direction they followed.

They turn to head out and face Gary Perkins holding a gun directly at them.

GARY

Nobody moves from here, till I get confirmation from you, Greta.

GRETA

Gary, what is this?

GARY

This, my dear partner, is where I leave you in the dust.

WARDEN GREG

Take it easy, mister. Nobody needs to get hurt here.

GARY

My point exactly. All we have to do is stay right here until the close of business tomorrow.

GRETA

You'd kidnap my child for a delay in product launch?

GARY

Not just a delay. More like an end to competition.

GRETA

You switched sides \dots you sorry excuse for \dots

GARY

Money, plain pure and simple.

He fires one shot in the air as a signal. Immediately, Scott and Brett step into view.

SCOTT

Here, boss.

BRETT

Girl's secure.

Backup force materializes behind them.

LEAD BACKUP OFFICER

And I'd hasten to add the same for yourselves.

SECONDC BACKUP

How'd we get here? We were just talking to the old guy.

THIRD BACKUP

He pointed that walking stick at us, and we were like here.

LEAD BACKUP OFFICER

(motioning to Gary, Brett and Scott)
You three get over there. (motions
for the other backups to cuff them)
Read their rights, and get them out
of here. Kidnapping children's at the
top of my list for swift justice in
court.

WARDEN GREG

Thanks for the help, officers.

JESSE

Let's get moving. Scott and Nancy are still out there, and it's getting dark.

LEAD BACKUP OFFICER

I'm with you on that.

WARDEN GREG

Steve's probably reached them by now.

NICK

If the dogs haven't torn them apart yet.

GRETA

(whispers to herself)

God, please keep them safe!

EXT. ALTERNATE LEDGE.

Scott is seen watching the entrance to the cave where Nancy peers out. The single remaining dog is pacing nervously only a few feet away.

Scott has tied himself into the wheelchair and cut loose one end of a hanging vine. Testing its strength, he pulls himself and the wheelchair slightly off the ground. As the chair's wheels slightly lift, it rolls toward the edge of the rocky path.

Scott quickly releases his grip and returns to earth. Straining backward, he rolls the chair to its greatest tension point directly in line with the slightly higher ledge where Nancy is stranded.

NANCY

What are you doing, Scott? You can't make it over here.

SCOTT

Says who? You?

NANCY

You're too low.

SCOTT

Can you make it to the edge of the path?

She takes one step from the mouth of the cave. The dog inches closer, circling viciously.

NANCY

Don't think the dog likes that.

SCOTT

Then we won't invite him on the ride.

NANCY

What's the plan?

SCOTT

I'm gonna swing as close as I can to the edge and then you jump.

NANCY

You're kidding!

SCOTT

Never more serious in my life.

Dog runs toward Nancy, forcing her back into the cave. Then turns as it hears footsteps heading up the path. Warden Steve's footsteps grow louder.

WARDEN STEVE

Hang on, kids. It's Warden Steve. I'm almost there.

NANCY

Don't come any closer. There's a killer dog loose.

WARDEN STEVE

I've got it covered.

The dog bounds off and surprises Steve. His tranquilizer gun gets knocked to one side as he fends off the vicious attack.

SCOTT

Nancy, you gotta do it!

NANCY

Ok, hurry...

Scott releases the brake on the wheelchair, careening off the side of the ledge. He swings out directly under Nancy as she starts to run.

The dog is caught in the middle of either continuing its attack on the warden or stopping her from escape. Remembering its training, the dog heads for her.

She screams, but manages to leap off the side into Scott's waiting arms. The vine continues its forward motion and then swings back to its point of origin, depositing both children safely on the opposite ledge.

The dog, angry at its escaped prey, turns its fury back on the warden. Steve recovers his tranquilizer gun and fires, stopping the animal in mid-attack.

EXT. OPPOSITE LEDGE

Nancy hugs Scott tightly. Grateful for her rescue from certain harm.

NANCY

You saved me.

SCOTT

Had to. Owed you from the playground.

NANCY

That's the only reason?

SCOTT

That ... and this.

He kisses her.

NANCY

Rescued and rewarded.

SCOTT

Sorry, didn't mean to take advantage ...

NANCY

Sometimes, it's nice.

SCOTT

Guess we both got our wish then.

NANCY

It did take standing on your own two feet to save me.

WARDEN STEVE

They sure grow up too fast these days.

INT. OFFICE BUILDING. MID-MORNING.

Greta walks toward the board room door. Then veers away abruptly as her cell phone rings.

GRETA

I told you never to call me at the office.

JESSE

It's important.

GRETA

Enough to keep me from a board meeting?

JESSE

I'll let you be the judge of that.

GRETA

Time is money.

JESSE

Oh, it's much more than that. We could discuss it over lunch. Say about twelve-thirty?

GRETA

I really can't. Nancy's got a soccer match then.

JESSE

I know. Scott's calling plays with the coach.

GRETA

A working lunch? Sounds like a plan.

JESSE

See you on the bleacher then.

GRETA

Nothing heavy.

JECSSE

Salad, soda and a choice of dessert.

GRETA

Twelve-thirty, then.

She heads back to the board room. Her eye catches on a walking stick being used by an older man making his way down the hall.

GRETA

Sir, I couldn't help noticing your cane.

ST PATRICK

This?

(waves the shillelagh)
I'd be a sorry sight trying to walk
without it.

GRETA

It really looks familiar.

ST PATRICK

Many times familiar things become commonplace. People forget the gifts life has to offer.

GRETA

Believe me, I've learned how valuable a life can become.

ST PATRICK

That's the greatest wish of all.

SECRETARY calls to Greta. Diverted momentarily from St. Patrick, she turns to respond.

SECRETARY

Miss Hawks, they're looking for you in the board room.

GRETA

I'll be right there. After I finish talking to this gentleman.

SECRETARY

Who?

Greta turns back and St. Patrick is nowhere to be seen. A look of amazement freezes in place on her face.

EXT. SOCCER FIELD

Nancy and Scott are seen conversing right before the beginning of their match. He is outlining plays and she is hurriedly trying to remember them.

St. Patrick walks past the field and down the sidewalk toward a small neighborhood several blocks ahead. He gingerly taps the shillelagh against the sidewalk.

ST PATRICK

Little one, we've a great deal ahead of us today.

EFX as the shillelagh begins GLOWING.

ST PATRICK

And a wee bit of Irish luck to turn the tide!

MUSIC UP as he VANISHES into a cloud of green smoke, leaving the shillelagh resting against a car parked in front of a fire hydrant.

FIRE TRUCK pulls to a stop behind it.

FADE OUT