

HORRIFIC TALES  
OF THE  
WICKEDLY MACABRE  
PRESENTS

KINDHEARTS

Written by

Sean Chipman

Wraparound Story Written By

Sean Chipman

**TEASER**

INT. NATE'S BBQ - DINING ROOM - NIGHT

The Driver and Passenger sit opposite each other.

PASSENGER  
Look, you're not, uh...

DRIVER  
What?

The Passenger searches for the right words.

PASSENGER  
I mean... You know, I have a  
girlfriend.

DRIVER  
(Chuckles)  
No, that's not what I mean.

PASSENGER  
Then, how?

Just then, a WAITRESS (early 20s) walks up, holding two cups  
of coffee. She has a Breast Cancer ribbon on her uniform.

The Waitress sets the two coffees down.

DRIVER  
(To Waitress)  
Thank you.

The Waitress gives a friendly smile.

WAITRESS  
Anything I can interest y'all in  
orderin'?

The Driver reaches into the sugar holder and tosses two  
sugars towards the Passenger.

PASSENGER  
Thanks.

DRIVER  
(To Waitress)  
Can I have a half-rack, please?  
Double fries, no greens.

The Waitress takes the order, then looks to the Passenger.

The Passenger looks up to the Driver.

DRIVER  
(Reassuring)  
It's on me.

PASSENGER  
(To Waitress)  
Uh, same, sure. I'm not really  
hungry so,... Yeah, the same.

WAITRESS  
All right. Be out in a bit.

The Waitress walks away.

The Passenger looks back to the Driver.

PASSENGER  
About this money?

DRIVER  
Well, first things first... how  
squeamish are you?

PASSENGER  
(Guarded)  
Not... particularly...

DRIVER  
And, you may be comfortable with...  
skirting the law?

PASSENGER  
You're not gonna steal my fuckin'  
organs, right?

The Driver breaks out in laughter.

DRIVER  
No. No, god, no. Nothing quite that  
illegal.

PASSENGER  
Then, what?

DRIVER  
Okay.  
(Searches for the words)  
I... procure... potentially-  
valuable items... from the not-so-  
recently deceased.

The Passenger squints hard at the Driver.

PASSENGER  
You steal from the dead?

DRIVER  
(Shrugs)  
Well,... you know... Yeah.

PASSENGER  
(Laughs)  
Come on, man. Nobody does that anymore. That's Old West shit.

DRIVER  
(Sniffles)  
Okay.

The Driver pulls out his wallet and takes a stack of \$100 bills from it. He flips through them.

DRIVER  
What kind a' tip you think should I leave?

The Passenger can't take his eyes off the money.

PASSENGER  
(Re: the money)  
All that...?

DRIVER  
Well, from selling the stuff.  
(Chuckles)  
Nobody'd be dumb enough to bury themselves with a big pile a' cash.

PASSENGER  
So, what kind of stuff?

DRIVER  
After we eat.

**END TEASER**

**KINDHEARTS**

FADE IN:

EXT. PALMETTO PLAZA - AFTERNOON

An outdoor strip plaza of typical chain store anchors and family-friendly restaurants.

Tucked away in a corner, by itself, is a standalone restaurant --

Kindhearts; the corporate, mass-marketed love child of TGI Friday's and Auschwitz-Birkenau.

A family sedan pulls into the nearly-full parking lot and searches for a parking spot. It finally does.

EXT. KINDHEARTS - PARKING LOT - THEN

A family of four gets out of the sedan.

The father, GREG (46), puts on a pair of sunglasses to shield out the blinding sun.

His son, BRETT (11), plays a Tiger handheld game as he gets out of the car.

His wife, CHRISTINA (34), takes a long, accusing glare over at Greg, then smiles at --

Her daughter, JULIA (15), applying a soft red lipstick.

The Family makes their way to the front door.

Greg opens the front door for Christina.

For just a moment, their fingers touch.

Greg pulls his hand away as Christina holds the door open for Julia...

JULIA  
(Off-handed)  
Thanks, Mom.

...and for Brett, who doesn't acknowledge Christina.

Christina forces a tiny smile then heads inside.

INT. KINDHEARTS - WAITING AREA - THEN

The Family gathers by the front desk.

Christina looks down at the waiter's stand.

On the stand are menus and a bell, but there is a simple, red button right in the middle of the stand.

Brett takes a seat on a wooden bench, while Julia looks out into the restaurant, searching for someone.

Greg looks impatient as he turns his attention to a CRT TV set in a cabinet.

It plays some form of advertisement, over pictures of poverty-stricken areas and sad, dirty children and mothers.

MALE VOICE (V.O.)

(On the TV)

Here at Kindhearts, we believe in providing our customers with a loving, family environment. However, for many children and families, this is a reality that they will never know. That's why, in 1981, I created the Kindhearts Foundation. The mission of the Kindhearts Foundation is to ensure that these families will get the love and support that they deserve. For only \$5, you can save the life of one adversity-stricken child...

Greg scoffs as he looks over at Christina.

GREG

Where's the waiter?

CHRISTINA

I'm sure he's coming.

Greg looks back to the TV.

MALE VOICE (V.O.) (CONT'D)

(On the TV)

...Please join Kindhearts as we try to end their needless suffering. Thank you.

The commercial cuts off, then restarts a few moments later.

Christina politely rings the bell once.

INT. KINDHEARTS - KITCHEN - THEN

The bell dinging gets the attention of NICHOLAS MCNEILL (late 20s), dressed as a waiter.

Nicholas sits in a chair, his leg and both hands shaking. A bead of sweat drips down his forehead.

Just then, the HEAD CHEF (mid 40s) looks over.

HEAD CHEF  
(To Nicholas)  
That's you. Get your ass out there!

Nicholas swallows hard as he stands up.

NICHOLAS  
(To Head Chef)  
Please, I'm begging you, just let  
me see 'er.

HEAD CHEF  
When your shift's done. Get to  
work.

Nicholas tries to compose himself, then straightens his collar. He puts on the best smile he can.

INT. KINDHEARTS - WAITING AREA - THEN

Greg looks down at his watch.

GREG  
This is ridiculous.

Greg storms over and slams his hand down on the bell.

Christina spots Nicholas approaching.

CHRISTINA  
(Soft)  
Relax, he's coming.

GREG  
About time.

Nicholas walks up to the waiter's stand.

NICHOLAS  
(Voice breaks)  
Welcome...  
(Clears his throat)  
(MORE)

NICHOLAS (CONT'D)  
 Welcome, folks, to Kindhearts,  
 folks. Um, sorry, um...  
 (Deep exhale)  
 Welcome to Kindhearts.

CHRISTINA  
 (Concerned)  
 Are you okay?

NICHOLAS  
 Yes, I'm fine, thank you. Just  
 nervous. It's, um, it's my first...  
 um... day.

CHRISTINA  
 Those first day jitters?

Greg impatiently clears his throat.

NICHOLAS  
 Yes, of course, I'm sorry. Four?

GREG  
 Yeah.

Nicholas tries to smile as he gathers four menus.

NICHOLAS  
 And, I don't know if you saw the  
 advertisement --

GREG  
 For your scam charity? Yeah, we saw  
 it. Not interested, thank you.

NICHOLAS  
 But, it's for a really good cause.  
 For only \$5 --

GREG  
 (Irritated)  
 Not interested. Thank you.

Nicholas nods, then tries to smile, but can't hold it.

NICHOLAS  
 This way, please.

Nicholas leads them into the --

KINDHEARTS - DINING AREA

They walk through a maze of tables and booths.



Christina looks around and notices every table seems to have the same red button right in its center.

Julia scans the area of happy families all enjoying dinner when she spots a family on the far side of the room.

She makes eye contact with --

TRAVIS (15), radiant smile, seated with his PARENTS (40s), who nods once to Julia.

Julia nods back once.

Nicholas stops by a booth and holds his arm out for them.

The Men sit on one side, the Women on the other.

Nicholas sets a menu down in front of each of them.

Greg looks down at the button.

GREG

What is this?

NICHOLAS

(Stammers)

That's, uh, j-just for the Kindhearts, um, Foundation. If you, you know, change your mind. You know...

GREG

We won't.

Nicholas nervously nods.

NICHOLAS

I'll, uh, I'll be back to help you -- Um, take your drink orders. When you've had a chance to look at them, I mean. You know, not now, but then. When you're ready.

Nicholas waits for somebody to respond.

Christina gives an empathetic smile to Nicholas.

CHRISTINA

(Friendly)

Thank you...

Christina reads his nametag.

CHRISTINA (CONT'D)  
 ...Nicholas.

Greg gives Christina a death stare.

Christina catches this.

NICHOLAS  
 I'm sorry.

Nicholas walks back to the Kitchen.

CHRISTINA  
 (To Greg)  
 Would it kill you to give the kid a  
 break?

GREG  
 Every third word, it's "Uh, uh,  
 uh".

Everyone, except Brett, picks up their menu and looks.

Julia sneaks glances across the restaurant at Travis. She gazes at him with dreamy eyes.

CHRISTINA  
 Well, it's obvious he has some sort  
 of speech impediment. It being his  
 first day probably doesn't help.

GREG  
 Then, he shouldn't be working with  
 the public. Have him doing dishes  
 for all I care. If you work with  
 the public, you should be well-  
 spoken, professional, good at your  
job, at the bare minimum.

Greg looks down at Brett, still playing his game.

GREG  
 Put the toy away when you're at the  
 supper table.

Brett looks up at Greg.

GREG  
 (Aggressive)  
 Now.

CHRISTINA  
 (Stern)  
 Greg...  
 (MORE)

CHRISTINA (CONT'D)

(To Brett, polite)  
Honey, can you put your game away,  
please? It's not polite.

GREG

(Mutters)  
Impolite.

BRETT

(Soft)  
Okay.

Greg notices Julia staring at Travis. He looks over at Travis, too.

Julia realizes and looks back through her menu.

Nicholas returns to the table with a small notepad.

NICHOLAS

Sorry about the delay. Are we --  
you all set with drinks? Who wants  
to start?

Nobody responds.

NICHOLAS

(To Greg)  
Sir?

GREG

Unopened bottle of water and a  
glass of ice, half-filled.

Nicholas jots it down.

NICHOLAS

(To Christina)  
And, you, ma'am?

CHRISTINA

Oh, uh, can I have the strawberry  
margarita, please?

NICHOLAS

Yes, of course.

Greg glares at Christina.

GREG

Guess I'll be the one driving  
everybody home, too.

Christina looks up to Greg, then clears her throat.

CHRISTINA  
(To Nicholas)  
On second thought, can I have a  
strawberry lemonade, instead?

NICHOLAS  
Yeah. 'Course.

Nicholas glances down at the red button.

CHRISTINA  
Thank you, Nicholas. You're doing  
great, okay?

NICHOLAS  
Thank you.  
(To Julia)  
And, you, young lady?

JULIA  
A, uh, banana shake, please?

NICHOLAS  
(Swallows hard)  
Banana... shake...

Nicholas pauses, in a reflective manner. His face turns sad,  
but he tries to hold it together.

CHRISTINA  
Are... are you okay? Nicholas?

NICHOLAS  
(Voice nearly breaks)  
Yeah. My, uh... My daughter love...  
She likes these shakes, too.

The Family all seems confused by Nicholas.

Nicholas realizes and recomposes himself.

NICHOLAS  
We can do that. A shake. Banana,  
you said? What size would you like?

Julia meekly looks over towards Greg.

Greg stares back at Julia, stone-faced.

CHRISTINA  
(Playful)  
The biggest size you have.

GREG  
Christina...

Christina does a faux-friendly smile at Greg, through gritted teeth.

CHRISTINA  
(Off-handed)  
It's fine, Greg.

Nicholas tries not to acknowledge them.

NICHOLAS  
(As he writes)  
"Biggest"...

CHRISTINA  
(Chimes in)  
It's a special occasion.

NICHOLAS  
Oh, yeah?

JULIA  
Mom, don't.

CHRISTINA  
Why not?

JULIA  
Come on, it's embarrassing.

NICHOLAS  
(Realizes, to Julia)  
It's your birthday, isn't it?

JULIA  
I just don't want them to sing to me. It's weird.

NICHOLAS  
My daughter used to hate when I did that to her, too. She hated when the waiters would sing to her.

Nicholas pauses to reflect again. He fakes a smile.

NICHOLAS  
(To Julia)  
No singing. I promise.  
(To Brett)  
And, you, son?

Greg and Christina both share a glance at each other.

CHRISTINA

He's shy. He only ever likes to drink --

GREG

Milk. Low fat.

Nicholas kneels down to Brett's height.

NICHOLAS

Is milk what you really want? You can have anything you want to drink. Anything at all.

Brett pauses to think, then nods, several times. He seems to revert back into his shell.

Nicholas stands up and writes.

NICHOLAS

Milk, it is. I'll be back with your drinks then, if you're ready --

GREG

We're ready to order now.

NICHOLAS

Oh. Okay.

Nicholas glances back towards the Kitchen.

NICHOLAS

Uh, sure, what's everybody getting?

GREG

I'll have the 10-ounce Angel Heart, medium-well, sides of asparagus and a Caesar salad.

NICHOLAS

Okay.

Nicholas looks up to Christina.

CHRISTINA

I'd like the Mother's Love and may I have the baked potato on the side, please?

NICHOLAS

Sure, of course.

CHRISTINA  
 (Pleasant smile)  
 Thank you.

Nicholas lightly smiles back at Christina, but hides it when he catches Greg staring at him.

NICHOLAS  
 (To Julia)  
 And, what would the birthday girl like?

JULIA  
 Um, could I have the Eternal Bond Burger, but with no tomato, please?

NICHOLAS  
 (To himself)  
 "No tomato."  
 (To Brett)  
 And, for you, buddy?

Brett doesn't respond.

CHRISTINA  
 (Gently)  
 Brett, honey? The man asked you what you'd like for dinner.

BRETT  
 (Soft)  
 Chicken fingers.

NICHOLAS  
 We can do that. I'll, uh, get your orders put in, okay?

Nicholas collects everyone's menu, then walks away.

Julia watches as Travis gets up and heads for the bathroom.

JULIA  
 Dad, can I use the restroom?

Greg looks over at Julia, annoyed.

GREG  
 What did you just say?

JULIA  
May I?

GREG  
 Yes, you may.

Julia gets up and heads for the bathroom.

CHRISTINA  
Brett, honey? Look what I see.

Christina points away from the table.

Brett looks over and see the "Kookie Kart": a display of assorted pastries and snacks in glass cases.

CHRISTINA  
Why don't you go over and pick out what you'd like for dessert, huh?

BRETT  
(Soft)  
Okay.

Brett gets up and heads for the Kookie Kart.

CHRISTINA  
(To Greg)  
What the hell is wrong with you?!

KINDHEARTS - BATHROOM HALLWAY - THEN

Julia walks into the Hallway and sees Travis leaning up against the wall. She heads into the Women's Bathroom.

KINDHEARTS - WOMEN'S BATHROOM

Julia searches each stall, but the Women's Bathroom is empty. She walks back to the door.

KINDHEARTS - BATHROOM HALLWAY

Julia knocks on the door twice.

Travis smiles as he heads inside the Women's Bathroom.

KINDHEARTS - DINING AREA

Greg glares at Christina.

CHRISTINA  
You can't talk to our children like that.

GREG  
Your children.



CHRISTINA  
Brett is your son.

GREG  
That's...

Greg laughs to himself, as he looks over to see Nicholas approaching with a drink tray.

Nicholas sets everyone's drinks now.

CHRISTINA  
Thank you.

Greg inspects his water bottle. The cap is loose.

GREG  
(Re: the bottle)  
This was opened. I said unopened.

NICHOLAS  
I-I'm sorry, sir. I'll, uh, I'll  
get you a new one.

GREG  
Don't bother. Just...

KINDHEARTS - WOMEN'S BATHROOM - HANDICAPPED STALL

Julia slams and locks the door, then turns back to face Travis. She leans forward and passionately kisses him.

They kiss and grope each other.

JULIA  
Thank god. I had to get the fuck  
outta there.

TRAVIS  
That bad?

JULIA  
Bad enough. We gotta make this  
quick.

Travis pulls Julia's shirt over her head.

Julia reaches back and unclasps her bra as Travis pulls his shirt off.

Travis stares at Julia's body.

TRAVIS  
God, you're so hot.

Julia smirks as she kisses Travis and runs her hands all over his body.

Travis does likewise.

KINDHEARTS - DINING AREA

Greg opens the bottle and pours it into the glass.

NICHOLAS  
I am sorry, sir. I can fix it.

GREG  
Just go.

NICHOLAS  
(Nervous nod)  
I'll be back with your food.

Nicholas walks back towards the --

KINDHEARTS - KITCHEN

Nicholas hurries towards the Head Chef, who cooks several steaks at once.

NICHOLAS  
(To Head Chef)  
I need to see her.

HEAD CHEF  
Later. Get back to work.

Nicholas grabs a large butcher knife and holds it out towards the Head Chef, threatening him.

NICHOLAS  
Right now! I wanna see her!

The Head Chef stops and stares down Nicholas, unafraid.

NICHOLAS  
Where is she?!

HEAD CHEF  
(Cold)  
You have two minutes.

Nicholas swallows hard.

## HEAD CHEF

Break room. Then, get back to work.

The Head Chef returns to his steaks.

Nicholas keeps the butcher knife as he nervously backs out of the Kitchen, into the --

## MAINTENANCE HALLWAY

Nicholas follows the Maintenance Hallway to a door at the end of the hall. The sign next to it reads:

EMPLOYEE  
BREAK ROOM

On the wall, under the sign is a keycard reader.

Nicholas looks at the keycard reader, then up to a security camera, looking down at him.

Like that, the keycard reader beeps and the door unlocks.

Nicholas opens the door and heads inside.

## EMPLOYEE BREAK ROOM

Half of the room looks like a normal break room: mini fridge, microwave, a table with a couple chairs.

The other half would fit right in, in a '60s-era NASA control room -- a bank of machines and a large screen on the wall.

The screen shows a video of a dark room.

Nicholas steps closer, as the image becomes clearer.

The image is of a person, but not much clearer.

Nicholas inches his way closer.

Just then, the room on the screen illuminates completely.

Nicholas' eyes go wide at what he sees.

The butcher knife falls from his hand.

Nicholas' daughter, JESSICA (12), is tied to a wooden chair. Most of the flesh above her right knee is gone.

Above Jessica, a small bucket hangs, dripping single droplets of ACID onto her leg.

Jessica screams and cries in pain.

NICHOLAS  
Jess-Jessica? Jessica!

Nicholas slams his hand down on the "Talk" button and lowers his mouth towards the speaker.

NICHOLAS  
(Frantic)  
Jessica? Can you hear me?

JESSICA  
(Scared, pained)  
Dad?

NICHOLAS  
Yeah, it's me, baby. I'm so sorry.  
(Shallow breaths)  
Come on, stop it! I did what you  
wanted!

MALE VOICE (V.O.)  
(On the P.A. system)  
Did you?

NICHOLAS  
I gave you what you want! Let her  
go! Please.

MALE VOICE (V.O.)  
(On the P.A. system)  
When we get what we want, she goes  
free. That was the deal.

NICHOLAS  
I'll do it, I swear to god! Just  
let Jessica go, please.

JESSICA  
(Sniffles, weak)  
Dad, it hurts.

NICHOLAS  
Goddamn it! Let my daughter go! You  
fucks! Let her go!

MALE VOICE (V.O.)  
(On the P.A. system)  
We believe you're not properly  
motivated.

Just then, a MASKED MAN, in black, walks into frame, holding a power sander by his side.

NICHOLAS

No -- What are you doing? Come on,  
stop this! Stop it!

MALE VOICE (V.O.)

(On the P.A. system)

You can stop it.

HEAD CHEF (V.O.)

(On the P.A. system)

McNeill, order's up.

Nicholas stares at Jessica, on the screen. Almost instinctively, he shakes his head.

NICHOLAS

(Meek)

No.

MALE VOICE (V.O.)

(On the P.A. system)

No? Kill the lights.

Just then, the video feed goes dark, but the sound still plays audibly.

The power sander whirs to life, which causes Nicholas to jump straight up.

NICHOLAS

No, don't do this.

MALE VOICE (V.O.)

(On the P.A. system)

Then, don't make me.

Just then, Jessica lets out a blood-curdling scream as the sound of blood splashes and flesh tears.

Nicholas backs away from the screen and covers his ears. The volume on the video feed is turned up as high as it can.

He can't escape the pure terror of listening to his daughter being horrifically tortured.

NICHOLAS

ALL RIGHT! I'll do it, just stop  
it, please! Please!

As if a switch were flipped, the power sander stops.

Nicholas slowly gets to his feet, the color drained from his face. He shakes and tears stream from his eyes.

NICHOLAS

Jessica, I'm so sorry. I love you.  
I promise I'm going to get you out  
of this. I promise.

Nicholas heads back for the door.

KINDHEARTS - WOMEN'S BATHROOM - HANDICAPPED STALL

Julia has her legs wrapped around Travis' waist.

Just then, the bathroom door opens as high-heeled footsteps approach.

This gets Julia and Travis' attention. They smile at each other and listen closer.

The footsteps go into the stall next to them. The woman, O.S., starts crying.

Travis gently sets Julia down.

Julia gathers up her clothes and gets dressed.

TRAVIS

(Whispers)  
Where are you going?

JULIA

(Whispers)  
I wanna know if she's okay.

Julia opens her stall door.

Travis impatiently holds his arms out to the side, "What do you want me to do?"

Julia swings her stall door closed.

INT. KINDHEARTS - WOMEN'S BATHROOM - THEN

Julia stands in front of the Crying Woman's stall. She gently knocks on the door.

JULIA

(Soft)  
Hey. Are you okay?

The Crying Woman snuffles once then clears her throat. She flushes the toilet and opens the door.

She is actually a Kindhearts WAITRESS.

WAITRESS  
(Fake smile)  
Yeah. Yeah, I'm fine.

The Waitress heads for the sink and washes her hands.

Julia looks over at the Waitress, confused.

JULIA  
Are you sure?

WAITRESS  
Yeah, it's just allergies.

The Waitress looks up at Julia, in the mirror.

WAITRESS  
Did you, uh, donate to the  
Kindhearts Foundation?

JULIA  
(Confused)  
No.

The Waitress dries her hands off, then turns to face Julia.

WAITRESS  
You should. It's a really good...

The Waitress places her hand on Julia's cheek. She tries to hold strong, but starts crying again.

WAITRESS  
I'm sorry.

The Waitress leaves the Women's Bathroom.

Travis pushes the stall door open, now fully dressed.

TRAVIS  
What the hell was that?

JULIA  
I don't know. But, I gotta get  
back.

Julia heads for the door.

TRAVIS  
Hey.

Julia stops and turns back.

TRAVIS  
Tomorrow?

JULIA  
Yeah. Sure.

Julia leaves the Women's Bathroom.

INT. KINDHEARTS - DINING AREA - THEN

Greg pours the water into the glass.

GREG  
What was that you said before?

CHRISTINA  
When?

GREG  
Brett is my son?

CHRISTINA  
And?

Greg cracks his neck.

GREG  
"Thou shalt not bear false  
witness."

CHRISTINA  
(Confused)  
What is this? About what?

Greg pulls a folded-up piece of paper from his pocket and tosses it on the table.

Christina meets Greg's steely-eyed gaze as she reaches for the paper. Her hand lightly shakes.

GREG  
"Thou shalt not commit adultery."

Christina unfolds the paper and reads it. It is a DNA Paternity Test Result.

GREG  
I knew... when I married you, that  
you were a whore; a nasty, filthy  
whore. But, I thought it possible  
to bring you back into the grace of  
God. Unfortunately, for your  
immortal soul, I was wrong.



Christina doesn't know how to respond to this. She's angry, sad, scared and, maybe, just a little bit happy.

CHRISTINA  
Goddamn you, Greg.

GREG  
"Thou shalt not take the name of  
the Lord thy God --"

CHRISTINA  
Fuck your God.

Greg takes a sip of his water. Then:

GREG  
Hmm.

CHRISTINA  
Fuck you and your God. The kind of  
God that allows a monster like you  
to exist isn't worth worshipping.

GREG  
I'm sorry you feel that way.

Greg glances off to the side and sees Julia and Travis emerging from the bathroom together.

GREG  
Your daughter takes after you.

Christina looks over at the approaching Julia. She turns back to face Greg.

CHRISTINA  
Whatever she becomes, I'll always  
be proud of her and I'll always  
love her.

GREG  
Not as much as God does... so long  
as she follows His teachings.

Christina folds the paper back up and hides it underneath the table. Julia sits down as Brett returns to the table.

Greg stands, so Brett can sit on the inside. As Brett passes:

GREG  
Hey, buddy, find some good snacks?

Nicholas approaches with a tray of food.

Brett slightly nods and looks down at his lap.

Greg stares straight across at Christina.

GREG  
That's good.

Nicholas arrives with the tray of food and, one-by-one, hands each plate out to everyone.

CHRISTINA  
Thank you.

Nicholas nods, trying to hide his worry.

NICHOLAS  
You're welcome.

Nicholas glances over at Greg.

NICHOLAS  
Now, I know what you said before,  
but I'd like to reiterate --

GREG  
Is this another pitch for your  
ridiculous charity?

NICHOLAS  
Please. Just hear me out one time.

Greg clears his throat, then stares straight into Nicholas' eyes, honestly listening.

GREG  
Okay.

NICHOLAS  
This charity... I'm not pitching it  
because they're asking me to. I  
wholeheartedly believe in their  
mission to finally end children's  
needless suffering, throughout the  
world. I just... it has to end. We  
can't just turn a blind eye  
anymore. I was...

Nicholas pauses to reflect.

NICHOLAS  
Do you know what I'm saying? Do you  
know... Have you ever felt sorry  
for yourself?... Regretted mistakes  
you've made in the past?

(MORE)

NICHOLAS (CONT'D)

I know you have -- we all have. It doesn't... matter what you did wrong, what you did right, as long as you're trying to do better or help make things better... and all it'll cost you is gently placing your hand down on that button. That's it...

Nicholas lets out a deep sigh.

NICHOLAS

(Calm)

That's it.

GREG

You're done?

NICHOLAS

(Swallows hard)

Yes.

GREG

This charity...

Greg looks down and sees Brett picking at his fries.

Brett notices this and pulls his hand away.

Greg turns his attention back to Nicholas.

GREG

This charity of yours, that you're so proud of, is it a 503(c)?

Nicholas looks surprised by this question.

NICHOLAS

Is it... huh?

GREG

A nonprofit.

NICHOLAS

Uh... Yeah? I think...

GREG

And, how much actually goes to these kids? What's their overhead? What kids? Africa, Asia, South America? Kids here at home? How do we end their needless suffering? How do you define "needless"?

(MORE)

GREG (CONT'D)

"For I consider that the suffering of the present is not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us." The Bible states that suffering is good for people. Why would you deprive them of this?

Nicholas stammers, trying to think of answers.

CHRISTINA

Greg, stop it. Why are you doing this to him? This is just some stuff the company makes him say.

GREG

No, no, no, that's not right.  
(To Nicholas)  
That's not what you said, right? You said, that they weren't making you say this. Yeah, you said you believe in their mission.

NICHOLAS

(Lip quivers)  
I... I'm just trying to do the right thing.

Nicholas turns and shuffles away.

GREG

(To himself)  
Aren't we all?  
(To his Family)  
Now, let's bow our heads.

Everyone except Christina bow their heads and places their hands together in prayer.

BRETT

(Soft)  
Mommy, don't you want to pray with us?

Christina looks over at Brett and sad-smiles. She glances over at Greg, who slowly raises his eyebrows.

CHRISTINA

(Defeated)  
Of course I do, honey.

Christina bows her head and puts her hands together.

JULIA

(To Greg)

Do you want me to lead us in the saying of Grace?

GREG

No, I think I'll do it tonight.

(Clears his throat)

The Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, we thank thee for your presence with us this evening. We humbly request you bless this food to our bodies, so that we may be strong to serve You, gracious in giving and overflowing with love. Amen.

JULIA/BRETT

Amen.

Everyone puts their hands down and opens their eyes then starts digging in to their food.

Christina leans over and kisses Julia's cheek.

CHRISTINA

(Soft)

Happy birthday, honey.

JULIA

Thanks, Mom.

Greg cuts into his steak, then glances up and sees Nicholas, leaning on a booth, about 20 feet away, staring at them.

He wipes off his face.

GREG

Excuse me.

Greg gets up and storms over towards Nicholas.

Christina and Julia look behind them as Greg walks away.

JULIA

Why don't we just hit the button?

CHRISTINA

Don't.

JULIA

Why not?

CHRISTINA  
You know your father. Just eat your  
dinner, okay? How is it?

JULIA  
It's good.

GREG

Gets right in Nicholas' face.

GREG  
What the hell is your problem?

NICHOLAS  
(Stammers)  
I -- Uh, uh -- What do you -- what?

Greg mocks Nicholas' mumbled nonsense.

GREG  
What?

NICHOLAS  
I need...

Nicholas suspiciously looks over his shoulder, back towards  
the Kitchen, then chooses his words carefully.

NICHOLAS  
I'd... prefer...

GREG  
Will you finish a gosh darn  
sentence? Can you do that?

Nicholas sees the cross necklace around Greg's neck.

NICHOLAS  
You're a man of God?

GREG  
I believe in the Lord, yes.

NICHOLAS  
So, you believe in donating to  
charity?

GREG  
Not yours.

NICHOLAS  
Yeah, I got that. Look...

Nicholas pulls out his wallet and counts the money.

NICHOLAS

It's uh... \$87. Here, take it.

Nicholas holds the money out for Greg to take.

GREG

I don't want your money.

NICHOLAS

Just press the button. It's only \$5 and I'll give you \$87. It's a good deal.

GREG

Why is it so important to you whether I donate or not?

Nicholas swallows hard.

NICHOLAS

(Shakes his head)

I can't tell you. I can't.

GREG

(Deep exhale)

Keep your money. I'll press your button, all right?

Nicholas lets out a sigh of relief.

NICHOLAS

Thank you. I mean it.

GREG

Can we get back to our meal, now? I mean, no offense, but you've been bothering us all night.

NICHOLAS

Of course. I'm really, really sorry and, yeah, I swear, you won't have to hear from me again.

GREG

Good.

Greg turns back for his table.

NICHOLAS

(Soft, to himself)

Thank you.

Greg returns to the table and sits down.

CHRISTINA  
Everything fine?

GREG  
Now, it is.

Greg cuts a piece of steak and eats it.

INT. KINDHEARTS - KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER

Nicholas approaches the Head Chef.

The Head Chef is dead-focused on the steaks he's cooking.

NICHOLAS  
He pressed the button. Let my  
daughter go. Now.

HEAD CHEF  
(Off-handed)  
He hasn't pressed it, yet.

Nicholas looks confused to hear that.

NICHOLAS  
He-he will.

HEAD CHEF  
And, when he does, you and your  
daughter are free to go. Not a  
moment before.

Nicholas turns and faces away.

NICHOLAS  
(Self-reassuring)  
He will.

Nicholas nervously paces back and forth.

INT. KINDHEARTS - DINING AREA - THEN

The Family enjoys their meals.

CHRISTINA  
(To Greg)  
So, what did you two talk about?



GREG  
The button again. Always that  
damned button.

CHRISTINA  
So, what about it?

GREG  
I told him I'd press it to get him  
off my ass.

Christina waits for Greg to respond.

CHRISTINA  
So...?

GREG  
So, what?

CHRISTINA  
You told him you'd press it.

GREG  
(Clarifies)  
To get him off my ass.

JULIA  
(Soft)  
You lied to him?

GREG  
No. He didn't keep the Sabbath day  
holy. He shouldn't be working  
today, so that's his problem.

CHRISTINA  
(Confused)  
What... What does that... have to  
do with anything?

Christina puts her utensils down and raises her hand to hit  
the button.

GREG  
What are you doing?

CHRISTINA  
This is ridiculous, Greg. It's \$5.

GREG  
No, it isn't just \$5. It's  
principle.

(MORE)

GREG (CONT'D)

I will not be bullied and  
intimidated or guilted into  
donating to a non-specific charity  
I don't believe in, just because  
some \$3-an-hour fuck-up got  
brainwashed into thinking he's  
helping out the poor and needy.

JULIA

Dad, why can't we just do it?

Greg looks over at Julia.

JULIA

I mean, does it really matter why?  
Do you care about the kids it's  
helping or... No. The point isn't  
to help because he's asking or  
because... I don't know, to appease  
your conscience. You do it because  
it's the right thing to do.

GREG

The right thing to do is finish our  
meals and go home. There's  
something wrong with these people.

CHRISTINA

(To Greg)

The only person who's wrong right  
now is you.

JULIA

No, Mom, Dad's right. Something is  
really wrong here.

CHRISTINA

Wrong, like what?

JULIA

When I was in the bathroom, there  
was some waitress in there and she  
was crying about something. She  
tried to fake like she wasn't, but  
I'd already caught her. And, uh,  
she asked if we'd donated to the  
Kindhearts Foundation, yet, and  
that we should. Then, she broke  
down crying again and left.

GREG

Another one? What the hell is up  
with these people?

CHRISTINA

They're probably just under a lotta pressure. Between this being a shit job and being forced to hock a charity, it's a lot to take in.

JULIA

Dad?

GREG

What?

JULIA

I think we should.

GREG

I know you do. No.

Just then, Nicholas double-times it towards their table.

Greg rolls his eyes as he sees Nicholas coming.

GREG

Look, man, we've had just about enough of --

Nicholas grabs Greg's collar and lifts him up. The movement knocks glass and plates onto the floor.

NICHOLAS

You lying fuck!

Nicholas pulls Greg away from the booth and punches him in the face.

CHRISTINA

Hey!

NICHOLAS

Goddamn you!

Nicholas hits Greg again and again and again.

JULIA

Stop hitting my dad!

CHRISTINA

(Calls out)

Help! Help!

(To Julia, soft)

Move, go get someone. Hurry.

Julia gets out of the booth and runs away to find help.

NICHOLAS (O.S.)  
All you had to do was hit the  
fucking button!

CHRISTINA  
Brett, honey, come to Mommy.

Brett slides under the table, switching to Christina's side.  
Christina hugs Brett as tight as she can.

CHRISTINA  
(Whispers, to Brett)  
Brett, lie down on the seat. Don't  
get up until I say.

BRETT  
(Soft)  
Okay, Mommy.

Brett does as he's told and curls into a ball on the seat.  
Christina gets out of the booth and puts her hands on  
Nicholas' shoulders.

CHRISTINA  
Nicholas, stop hurting him!

Nicholas rips his body away from Christina's hands, as he  
continues his assault on Greg.

He's about to break down in tears.

NICHOLAS  
(Voice breaks)  
They're gonna kill my daughter!

Christina looks confused by this.

NICHOLAS  
All you have to do... is press it.  
That's all. That's...

Christina turns back and slams her hand down on the button.  
Just like that, a playful ditty rings out from their table.  
Nicholas lets go of Greg and turns to face the button.  
Greg falls backwards and leans on a counter.  
Christina hurries over to Greg's side and hugs him.

Several SECURITY GUARDS approach, with Julia behind them, and take hold of Nicholas' arms then lead him away.

Nicholas tries to fight out of their grip.

NICHOLAS  
No, hey! I did what you said!

The Security Guards overpower Nicholas and drag him off.

NICHOLAS  
Please! Let my daughter go! I did  
what you said!

Christina helps Greg back to the table, then dips a napkin into a glass of ice water.

She cleans off the blood on Greg's face.

Just then, the MANAGER (mid 50s) comes up to the table.

MANAGER  
Sir, are you okay? Would you like  
me to call an ambulance for you?

GREG  
(Groggy)  
No. No, it's fine.

CHRISTINA  
Greg, yes.

GREG  
I'm fine. What the hell was that?

MANAGER  
Sir?

GREG  
About his daughter.

MANAGER  
I didn't hear that, sir. I don't  
know about it.

CHRISTINA  
What's gonna happen to him?

MANAGER  
Obviously, we'll deal with him,  
then, more than likely, the police  
will handle it.

GREG  
(To Christina)  
Let's go.

CHRISTINA  
Are you sure that --?

GREG  
Let's go.

Greg gets up and stumbles towards the front door.

Christina kneels down and tries to clean up.

The Manager kneels down by her side.

MANAGER  
No, please, ma'am. We'll take care  
of everything for you.

Christina nods, as they both stand up.

MANAGER  
I cannot adequately express how  
sorry I am about all this.

Christina nods, as she leads Julia and Brett towards the  
exit.

The Manager watches as they go. Then, he glances over at the  
button and clicks his tongue.

INT. GREG'S HOME - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Greg sits on the sofa, holding an ice pack against his face.

Christina leans against the wall, in the Dining Room,  
watching Greg. She takes a long drag of a cigarette.

INT. GREG'S HOME - GREG'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Greg lies asleep in bed, then the distant crunching of glass  
gets his attention. His eyes flicker as he stirs awake.

He reaches his hand out to Christina's side of the bed, but  
she's gone. He lifts his head up.

GREG  
(Groggy)  
Christina?

Just then, a Girl screams, O.S..

Greg's eyes snap open as he jumps out of bed. He rubs his eyes as:

GREG  
(Calls out)  
Christina?! Julia?!

Greg makes his way into the --

LIVING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Greg searches through the darkness, but is grabbed by a MASKED MAN with a pistol.

The Masked Man kicks Greg's leg out.

Greg falls to his knees, with the gun aimed at his temple.

Just then, the Manager emerges from the darkness, holding a brown package by his side.

MANAGER  
(Pleasant smile)  
Hello, Greg.

GREG  
Where are they? Where's my family?

MANAGER  
You'll find out. We have a few things we have to go over, first. Okay? You listening?

GREG  
Yeah.

MANAGER  
Okay. I promise you that you'll see your family again. But, you need to do exactly as I say.

GREG  
Who the hell are you?

MANAGER  
I'm the Manager.

The Manager holds the package out for Greg.

MANAGER  
I have a little gift for you, then we really need to go over the rules, okay?

Greg takes the package and opens it up. He looks up at the Manager, with fear in his eyes.

INT. KINDHEARTS - WAITING AREA - DAY

A miserable-looking FAMILY OF FOUR impatiently waits by the waiter's stand.

The FATHER dings the bell three times.

Just then, Greg approaches the waiter's stand, dressed in a Kindhearts polo shirt and nametag.

Greg forces a smile as he grabs four menus.

GREG

H-hello, everyone. Welcome to Kindhearts.

CUT TO BLACK.

**END KINDHEARTS**



EPILOGUE

INT. NATE'S BBQ - DINING ROOM - NIGHT

The Driver's plate is nearly finished, while the Passenger casually picks at his fries.

PASSENGER

What does your family think about what you do?

DRIVER

(Chuckles)

"Do they approve?"

PASSENGER

Well, I mean, do they even know?

DRIVER

Nah. I'm, uh, I'm all that's left of my family.

PASSENGER

Really? Brothers, sisters, aunts, your drunk, uncle Fred?

DRIVER

(Shakes his head)

For a long time, there, it was just my mother and my baby sister. They both passed away a few years ago.

PASSENGER

Man, I'm sorry. I didn't mean to --

DRIVER

It's all right. I've... I've come to terms with it.

The Passenger sits in an embarrassed silence.

DRIVER

It's okay, really. How 'bout you? What's the home life like?

PASSENGER

Like yours, basically. Just me and my Mom. She had been battling breast cancer.

DRIVER

"Had?"

PASSENGER

(Scoffs)

Well, like you told me, this isn't  
1986 anymore, is it?

DRIVER

But... she could've gone into  
remission. You don't know.

The Passenger eats a fry.

PASSENGER

Yeah, I do. I made a call when you  
stopped. The line was disconnected.  
She... she died and I wasn't there  
for her.

DRIVER

You don't know that.

PASSENGER

Yeah, I do.

The Passenger pauses in quiet reflection.

PASSENGER

How'd you know how I take my  
coffee?

DRIVER

(Shrugs)

You just struck me as a two sugar  
guy.

The Passenger looks suspicious.

PASSENGER

So... we've eaten. What, now?

DRIVER

Now?... Now, we get back on the  
road. You were heading to San  
Antonio. Coincidentally, so was I.

The Passenger nods as the Driver gets up from the booth.

INT. NATE'S BBQ - LOBBY - MOMENTS LATER

The Driver and Passenger head for the front door.

The Waitress waits by the front desk.

WAITRESS  
Have a good night, guys.

DRIVER  
We will.

They leave the restaurant.

INT. IROC-Z - MOMENTS LATER

They get in the IROC-Z.

The Driver backs the IROC-Z out of the parking space, then pulls out onto the road.

The Passenger stares directly across at the Driver. Something about the Driver has him suspicious.

**END EPILOGUE**