The Newscaster

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INT. HOSPITAL - DOCTOR'S OFFICE - DAY

Doctor WEISS, bearded, professor-type, in his 50s, stands in front of a computer monitor.

INSERT - COMPUTER MONITOR

Several 3D images of a brain are displayed on the screen.

BACK TO SCENE

SID MELTZER, in his late 70s and his wife ESTELLE, early 70s, sit on office chairs facing doctor Weiss. They appear apprehensive.

She wears a cheap blond wig. Her emaciated face shows the marks left by the chemotherapy.

DR. WEISS
Since the last scan, the tumor has grown. It has invaded the right cerebral hemisphere. It's now a GRADE III ANAPLASTIC ASTROCYTOMA.

ESTELLE
What does it mean doctor?

DR. WEISS
It's a serious tumor, impossible to treat.

SID
With all the chemo and radiation she had?

DR. WEISS
Unfortunately, this tumor has been very aggressive. We tried several types of chemo. We did our best considering what is available.

Estelle stares at Dr. Weiss. Her eyes are wet.

ESTELLE
How much time I have left?

DR. WEISS
It's difficult to say, maybe a year, maybe less.

SID
Is there anything else you can do?
There is a new drug under approval by the FDA--

Can she enroll in the trial?

The trial is over, the Stage III results have been sent already to the FDA. The company told me that it will be approved expeditiously and go on sale next month.

A month is not a long time, we can wait.

Yes, she can wait a month but no more than that and I have to advise you that it's going to be very expensive.

Will Medicare pay for it?

I'm sorry, I'm afraid this drug is not covered. You've to pay for it yourself.

Estella starts to sob quietly.

Doctor, I'm ready to have surgery, we can try that.

I'm sorry Mrs. Meltzer, this tumor is inoperable. I'll put you in touch with a support group, they can help you during the last period.

If I find the money, where can I buy this new drug?

Once is on the market, you can buy it from your drug provider or the hospital pharmacy if you have been admitted. But, again, it's very costly.
ESTELLE
We don't have the money--

SID
Let me see what I can do. How much are we talking about?

DR. WEISS
For the first month, approximately ten thousand dollars. The regimen requires nine months of treatment, so, about ninety thousand dollars.

ESTELLE
Oh my God!

SID
Don't worry, we'll get the drug.

DR. WEISS
Let me know when you're ready to buy it. I've to write the prescription.

INT. HOUSE - OFFICE - DAY

Rabbi MENACHEM KATZ, long white beard, traditional Orthodox black attire, in his 60s, sits at his desk in a dingy office.

Sid is seated facing him.

SID
This is my situation, can you help me?

MENACHEM
Sid, I'm sorry for your wife, what do you think I can do more than pray for her?

SID
Rabbi, I desperately need this money.

MENACHEM
I'm sorry, we can't do it, the congregation has spent more than two million dollars to renovate the synagogue. Did you try with her church?
SID
She's not a practicing Catholic, she never goes to church.

MENACHEM
Why she didn't convert to Judaism?

SID
I told her many times, she doesn't believe in any religion.

MENACHEM
Too bad. You know, we have many sick people in our congregation, they need help and they are all Jewish.

SID
I do a lot for the synagogue, I--

MENACHEM
You're not sick Sid.

SID
Can you start a collection?

MENACHEM
Sid, if I'll do it for your wife any sick Gentile will knock at my door. I can help only our people.

SID
Rabbi, my wife will die without this drug.

MENACHEM
I'm sorry, we all have our destiny.

INT. BANK OFFICE - DAY

The bank's young-looking ASSISTANT MANAGER (40s) sits behind his desk.

Sid is seated in front of him. His hands trembles and he breathes with difficulty.

ASSISTANT MANAGER
What can I do for you? Are you okay Mr...?

SID
Sid Meltzer. I'm fine, just nervous. I need a loan.
ASSISTANT MANAGER
How much?

SID
Ninety thousand dollars.

ASSISTANT MANAGER
Ninety thousands, you said?

SID
Yes.

The Assistant Manager types on his computer's keyboard.

ASSISTANT MANAGER
Sorry Mr. Meltzer, your financial situation is insufficient to guarantee this loan.

SID
I had a savings account in this bank for thirty years. This is the first time I'm asking for a loan.

ASSISTANT MANAGER
Mr. Meltzer, you've only got two hundred dollars in your account.

SID
I'm not going on vacation with this money, my wife needs an expensive drug, she's very sick.

ASSISTANT MANAGER
I'm very sorry, I sympathize with you but you ask me for something I can't give you.

SID
Maybe, only ten thousand dollars. We can pay you back every month with our pensions.

ASSISTANT MANAGER
Mr. Meltzer, be realistic, your pensions hardly covers your livelihood. I can't approve this amount. It's out of discussion.

SID
You're a manager--
ASSISTANT MANAGER
An assistant manager and I started just a month ago. I'm sorry, I have to be very careful when I propose a loan to top management. Do you belong to any association?

SID
No, only to my synagogue.

ASSISTANT MANAGER
Okay, ask your rabbi. Maybe he can organize a collection.

SID
I did.

ASSISTANT MANAGER
And?

SID
He can't.

ASSISTANT MANAGER
You don't have any friends who can help you...maybe, a thousand dollars each...ten, fifteen friends.

SID
They are all retired. They have their own problems.

ASSISTANT MANAGER
I'm sorry Mr. Meltzer. Believe me, I'm really sorry.

SID
Thank you, I understand.

INT. APARTMENT - ROOM - DAY

Sid and Estelle relax in worn out armchairs in their outmoded living room. A forlorn atmosphere pervades the room.

ESTELLE
What the bank says?

SID
The manager refused to give me a loan.
ESTELLE
Why?

SID
Why, why...Because we have just two hundred dollars in our account, that's why. We are poor, you understand? Poor!

ESTELLE
Poor people have to die...is this what you're saying?

Tears slide down Estelle's cheeks.

SID
Honey, you don't have to die...I'll find the money. Don't worry, I'll find it!

ESTELLE
Nobody will help you, I know it and you know it.

SID
Don't say that, trust me.

Tears slowly come down Estelle's face.

Sid gently kisses her while wiping her tears with a tissue.

INT. APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Sid and Estelle sit on a sofa. Estelle holds an old photo album.

She selects a photo and shows it to Sid.

ESTELLE
Remember, our last concert? You looked so different with that phony beard and big mustaches, you wanted to impersonate a violinist from the 19th Century. You were so funny, everybody loved you.

SID
I didn't care about the others, I did it to make you laugh.

ESTELLE
I knew it.
ESTELLE (cont'd)

Estelle smiles.

ESTELLE (cont'd)
I fell in love with you because you were so silly.

Sid smiles while glancing at Estelle.

SID
Estelle, the sexy second chair violinist, always serious.

ESTELLE
We played good music together.

SID
It was not the MET but a good orchestra. And they always paid on time.

ESTELLE
Yes, the BROOKLYN PHILARMONIC. Remember the last violin, Joe, he was a fireman, good looking.

SID
I know you liked him.

ESTELLE
But I married you.

A beat.

SID
What was the name of our manager?

ESTELLE
MARTY.

SID
Yes, Marty Gold, he was a good guy.

ESTELLE
A little cheap.

SID
He needed money for his daughter, she was always in trouble.
ESTELLE
He was honest though.

SID
He took only ten percent, that crook.

A long beat. Sid looks pensive.

SID (cont'd)
Do I still have my disguises?

ESTELLE
Yes, I saved your beard and mustaches in a box. Why you ask?

SID
Just curious.

INT. APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Estelle lounges on her armchair. She looks serene.

A clock radio lies on a small table on the side of the armchair. Classic violin music pervades the room.

Sid's voice cuts through the music.

SID (O.S.)
Honey, I'm going out, I have to see somebody.

Estelle opens her eyes and smiles.

ESTELLE
Come back soon. Love you.

SID (O.S.)
Love you too. See you in a hour.

INT. APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - LATER

Estelle has her eyes closed. She is immerses in the delicate sound of the violin.

Suddenly, the voice of a female newscaster interrupts the music.

Estelle opens her eyes and stares at the radio.
NEWSCASTER
This is a special report. A robbery attempt took place at the People Bank on Second Avenue twenty minutes ago. The bank robber has been killed by the security guard. He was an elderly man in his 70s wearing a fake beard and mustaches. He had no gun. The robber just gave the cashier a note saying "I have a gun, I need all your money, please." No name is available at this time. Stay tuned for further news.

The End