

SHATTERED BUT STRONG
GENRE: DRAMA
TRUE STORY FILM
BY
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FADE IN:

INT. KITCHEN- MORNING

The kitchen is warm, the smell of oatmeal filling the air as the sun rises, casting a soft light through the window. Brittany, 14, is seated at the kitchen table, her hair in a messy ponytail, half-asleep as she stirs her oatmeal with a spoon. Susan, 16, sits across from her, already looking wide awake, a mischievous glint in her eyes.

BRITTANY

(yawning)

Ugh, I can't believe I have to go to school today. Why does oatmeal always taste so bland?

SUSAN

(smiling slyly)

Maybe you just haven't found the right... *flavor*. You know, some people like to spice things up a little.

Brittany takes a few more bites of the oatmeal, unaware of what Susan is plotting. Susan leans in with a playful grin, then suddenly, without warning, opens her mouth wide, showing Brittany the contents — a gross, partially chewed-up piece of oatmeal. She slowly wiggles it around in her mouth, making sure Brittany sees every disgusting detail.

SUSAN

(teasing)

Mmm, this oatmeal is *delicious*, don't you think?

Brittany freezes, her spoon halfway to her mouth, her eyes widening in horror.

BRITTANY

(gasping)

What the hell, Susan?! Why would you do that?

SUSAN

(laughing)

Oh, come on. It's just a little bit of... breakfast art.

Brittany immediately drops her spoon, her stomach churning. She stands up quickly, turning away from the table, but it's too late. The sight of the chewed-up oatmeal in Susan's mouth sends her stomach into overdrive. She gags and, before she can stop herself, she pukes all over her bowl of oatmeal.

BRITTANY

(panicking)

I—I can't! I can't look at that! I'm going to— *ugh*...

Susan bursts into laughter, clutching her stomach, clearly pleased with herself.

SUSAN

(teasing)

Oh, come on, Brit. You've gotta admit, it's pretty funny.

Before Brittany can recover, Nancy, their 63-year-old grandmother, steps into the kitchen. She's holding a wooden spoon and humming a tune to herself as she heads over to the stove. When she notices the mess, she frowns.

NANCY

(looking at the puke)

Well, that's a shame. Waste not, want not, Brittany.

BRITTANY

(voice trembling)

Grandma, no... You can't... I just... I just threw up in it!

NANCY

(serious, not looking up)

You're not wasting food, Brittany. I don't care how it looks.
You'll eat it, and you'll appreciate it.

Brittany's face turns green as she stares at the now-contaminated oatmeal being stirred with the same spoon. She opens her mouth to argue, but Nancy raises her finger, silencing her.

NANCY

(sternly)

There are children starving in this world, and you think you can throw food away just because it's not pretty? No, no. You're going to eat what you're given.

Brittany's stomach churns, but she knows that tone. There's no arguing with Grandma when she gets like this. With trembling hands, Brittany reaches for her spoon, eyes wide with revulsion. She lifts a bite of the puke-tainted oatmeal to her mouth, her entire body shuddering.

Susan watches with a wicked grin, barely holding back laughter. Brittany glares at her sister, but she knows there's no getting out of it now. She forces the spoon into her mouth, chewing slowly, her eyes watering as the foul taste fills her senses.

BRITTANY

(eyes watering, gagging slightly)

I can't... I can't believe I'm doing this.

NANCY

(nods approvingly)

That's better. You'll feel much better once you've eaten a good breakfast.

Brittany swallows a mouthful with visible repulsion, the lump of oatmeal sitting heavy in her stomach. She stares down at the bowl, her face a mix of disgust and resignation.

SUSAN

(smiling wickedly)

You're welcome, Brit. At least you'll be *fully* awake for school now.

Brittany picks up another spoonful, her eyes narrowed in fury, but she forces herself to eat, each bite feeling like it takes a part of her dignity with it. She doesn't look up, focusing only on the spoon as she moves it toward her mouth, trying not to let the tears show.

CUT TO:

EXT./INT. PINK DODGE COLT VISTA – MORNING

The sun is just beginning to climb higher, casting a soft golden hue over the neighborhood. Brittany and Susan walk side by side down the driveway toward the old Dodge Colt Vista parked in front of their house. Their backpacks hang loosely over their shoulders, the weight of the morning's events pressing heavily on their minds.

Brittany's face is still pale, her eyes distant, and her steps slower than usual. The Dodge Colt Vista, a faded red color with rust spots and peeling paint, looks out of place next to the neatly kept homes in the neighborhood. It's a car that has seen better days but still gets the job done. Robert, their 64-year-old grandfather, sits in the driver's seat, adjusting the mirrors. He's humming softly to himself, seemingly unaware of the tension hanging in the air. His gray hair is neatly combed, and he's wearing his usual button-up shirt, looking like the embodiment of a quiet, steady routine.

BRITTANY

(quietly, under her breath)

I can't believe she made me eat that...

Susan doesn't reply immediately. She just opens the backdoor of the car and slides into the passenger side, throwing her backpack onto the floor. Brittany hesitates for a moment before following her sister, sliding into the seat next to her. The car creaks as they settle in, the engine not yet turned on.

Brittany stares out the window, her face scrunched in disbelief as she tries to shake off the feeling of what had just happened at breakfast. The memory of their grandmother stirring the puke-tainted oatmeal with such casual indifference lingers in her mind.

SUSAN

(softly, shaking her head)

That was messed up and I was playing with you.

Brittany nods slowly, still not looking at her sister. Her stomach churns as she recalls the way their grandmother had forced her to eat it, the look of utter nonchalance on her face as she'd gone about her business, making them clean their plates.

BRITTANY

I... I don't know how she could do that. I mean, it wasn't even food anymore. It was... it was disgusting.

SUSAN

(sighs)

Yeah, I get it. I'm pissed too. But you know how Grandma is. When she gets in that "waste not, want not" mood, there's no stopping her.

BRITTANY

(whispering)

She didn't even care. I thought I was gonna... I thought I was gonna die when I had to swallow that.

Susan looks at her sister for the first time, her expression softening. She reaches out and gives Brittany's shoulder a quick squeeze, the only comfort she can offer in the moment.

SUSAN

(sincerely)

I'm sorry. That was *wrong*.

Before Brittany can respond, Robert, still humming softly, turns the key in the ignition. The engine sputters to life with a low growl, the old car shaking slightly as it starts. The radio crackles to life with static before playing an old country song from the '80s. Robert taps his fingers on the steering wheel, seemingly lost in his own world, unaware of the tense silence in the backseat.

ROBERT

(cheerfully)

Alright, you two ready to go? Another day of school, huh?

Both girls remain silent, the weight of the morning's events hanging between them like a thick fog. Robert, oblivious to their discomfort, adjusts his grip on the steering wheel and pulls the car out of the driveway, heading down the street.

The road outside the window blurs by, but Brittany can't tear her mind away from the image of their grandmother's casual cruelty. She looks at Susan, who seems just as affected, her expression unreadable.

ROBERT

(cheerfully, trying to lighten the mood)

You two are awfully quiet this morning. Something on your mind?

Neither of them responds. Robert doesn't press the issue, instead humming along to the song on the radio. The car moves down the road, but for Brittany and Susan, it feels like the longest drive of their lives. The morning, in all its quiet discomfort, stretches on.

CUT TO:

INT. SEWING ROOM - LATE AFTERNOON

The sewing room has a vintage folding singer 533 sewing machine and table. It also has a folding table to cut fabric on or fold clothes.

Brittany, 14 her hair a bit messy from the day's activities. She's sweeping methodically, making sure the floor is clean, though her mind is elsewhere, still reeling from the strange, uncomfortable morning.

She turns to see her grandmother, Nancy, standing in the threshold of the room. Nancy, 63, is squinting as she looks toward the floor, her hand raised, pointing at a spot near the corner of the room.

NANCY

(clearing her throat)

Brittany, there's something on the floor over there by the chair. You missed it.

Brittany looks up, slightly puzzled, and follows the line of Nancy's finger. She squints in the dim light, trying to see what her grandmother is pointing at, but the area looks clean to her. The old laminate floor reflects the soft light from the window, and there's nothing that stands out to her.

BRITTANY

(confused)

I... I don't see anything, Grandma. Where?

Nancy huffs a little, stepping into the room more fully, her eyes narrowing further behind her glasses as she looks at the floor.

NANCY

(pointing more forcefully)

Right there, by the sewing chair! I'm telling you, it's right there.

Brittany tilts her head and walks over to the spot, still unsure what her grandmother is referring to. She squats down, running her fingers along the floor, even though she still doesn't see anything. The space looks spotless to her.

BRITTANY

(frowning)

Grandma, there's nothing there.

NANCY

(sternly)

I know my own house, Brittany. I'm not mistaken. There's something there, and it needs to be picked up. You're not doing a good job if you keep missing things like this.

Nancy grabs Brittany fast and throws her into the wall. Brittany's body and head hit so hard on the wall that she falls to the floor that she passes out.

Robert rushes in to attend to his granddaughter and picks her up and sits her on the sewing room chair.

Robert looks harshly at Nancy as to resemble being angry at her for doing that to Brittany.

Brittany comes to after a few minutes and is in visible pain holding her neck and her lower back.

She sits there quietly so as not to anger Nancy anymore, as she does not get anymore abuse happening to her.

Robert goes to the kitchen to grab some ice for Brittany for her neck and back to help relieve some of the pain.

CUT TO:

(jump 1 year forward)

EXT. BACKYARD - AFTERNOON

The sun hangs low in the sky, casting a warm golden light over the backyard. A gentle breeze stirs the leaves scattered all over the lawn, making the task at hand seem endless. Brittany, 15, and Susan, 17, are outside near the woodshop/garage, both holding a rake and a shovel. The girls are slowly working their way through the backyard, attempting to gather the piles of leaves into neat piles, but their efforts are clearly not as organized as their grandmother would like.

Brittany, with her messy ponytail and worn-out sneakers, drags the rake across the yard half-heartedly, glancing over at Susan, who's crouched down shoveling leaves into a bag. Neither girl looks particularly thrilled to be out here, the chore dragging on longer than they both expected.

BRITTANY

(annoyed)

Ugh, this is taking forever. How many more piles are left?

SUSAN

(sarcastic, wiping sweat from her brow)

Oh, just a *few* more. Nothing to worry about, right?

Brittany grumbles in response, pushing the rake forward a bit too aggressively, sending leaves flying in all directions. She sighs dramatically and looks over at the garage. The two girls haven't made much progress, but they're trying their best, or at least what they think is best.

As they continue to work, the sound of the back door opening cuts through the silence. Nancy, their 64-year-old grandmother, steps out onto the back porch, her hands on her hips. She's wearing an old apron over a faded floral dress and her glasses are perched low on her nose. Her expression is hard to read, but there's a clear tension in her posture as she surveys the yard.

NANCY

(sharply, with authority)

Well, well, look at this mess.

Brittany and Susan both freeze, and Brittany slowly turns around, trying to mask her annoyance behind a strained smile.

BRITTANY

(slightly defensive)

Uh, we're just trying to get all the leaves cleaned up, Grandma. We're almost done.

NANCY

(frowning, crossing her arms)

Almost done? You call this *cleaned up*? You've barely even made a dent!

Nancy strides over to the girls, her gaze moving from the scattered piles of leaves to the way they're sweeping—clearly unimpressed. Her eyes narrow as she watches Brittany attempt to rake in a somewhat chaotic manner, sending leaves back into the spots she just cleaned.

NANCY

(agitated)

What are you doing, Brittany? You're just making more work! You have to rake with some *purpose*! It's not a game.

Brittany's shoulders slump as she tries to stifle the urge to snap back at her grandmother. She pushes the rake through the leaves more carefully this time, but it's clear she's frustrated.

Nancy steps closer, reaching down and grabbing the rake out of Brittany's hands with surprising speed. She starts raking the leaves herself, her movements fast and precise.

Susan, still holding the shovel, looks between Brittany and Nancy, the tension mounting. She sets the shovel down, arms crossed, clearly not interested in being lectured, but unwilling to jump into the conversation either.

SUSAN

(quietly, trying to diffuse the tension)

Okay, okay, Grandma, we get it. We'll do it your way.

NANCY

(sternly)

It's like you don't even care about the work anymore. You can't just *half-do* things and expect everything to be fine. If you're going to do something, do it right. Otherwise, don't bother.

BRITTANY

(defeated, but trying to keep her cool)

We're doing it, Grandma. We're just... not *exactly* doing it how you would.

Nancy grabs Brittany's both arms tightly with her sharp long nails and begins to shake her.

Nancy is holding her tight while she shakes her, and blood is now coming out of both arms.

Brittany is screaming in pain but that does not stop Nancy from shaking her.

Now Nancy turns to Susan and does the same thing that she did to Brittany to Susan.

After Nancy stops what she did to both girls Nancy walks back into the house and the girls get back to cleaning up the backyard not saying a word about what just happened to them.

CUT TO:

(jump 9 years forward)

INT. LIVING ROOM - EVENING

The living room is cozy, with the soft hum of the television in the background. It's been a long day, and the family is settling into their evening routine. Robert, 74, is sitting in his favorite chair, a well-worn recliner, flipping through a fast food menu on his phone. Brittany, 24, lounges on the couch, scrolling through her own phone, while Nancy, 73, stands by the window, gazing out with a thoughtful expression.

ROBERT

(cheerfully)

Alright, dinner time! So, what's everyone in the mood for tonight? Let's get this show on the road. I'm getting hungry just thinking about it.

BRITTANY

(enthusiastically)

I'm in the mood for Taco Bell. I've been craving a bean burrito all day.

Nancy, standing by the window, turns around, arms crossed, looking unimpressed. Her face hardens just a little at Brittany's suggestion.

NANCY

(skeptically)

Taco Bell? Again? We had that last week, didn't we?

Brittany shrugs with a grin, not backing down.

BRITTANY

(defensively)

Yeah, but it's been a week, Grandma. A whole week! It's like the perfect comfort food after a long day.

NANCY

(sighs)

I'd rather have something from Jack in the Box, personally. You can't beat a good Jumbo Jack.

Robert, who's been quietly listening to the exchange, raises his eyebrows, looking between Brittany and Nancy. He knows his wife and granddaughter well enough to recognize when he's about to get caught in the middle of a fast-food battle.

ROBERT

(laughing softly)

Alright, alright. Let's do this. I'll go to Taco Bell first for Brittany, then we'll swing by Jack in the Box for you, Nancy. Sounds good?

Brittany's face lights up, thrilled with the compromise.

BRITTANY

(smiling)

Perfect. Thank you, Grandpa! You're the best.

Nancy, though not entirely happy with the plan, nods begrudgingly. Robert, still smiling, stands up from his chair and stretches, as if preparing for a mini adventure.

Nancy walks toward the door, grabbing her purse off the coat rack. Robert follows her, grabbing his jacket from the back of the chair.

Nancy opens the door and steps outside, Robert following close behind.

As the sound of the car fades, Brittany turns her attention back to the TV, content with the knowledge that dinner is on its way—and that, for tonight, she got what she wanted.

CUT TO:

INT. TACO BELL - EVENING

The soft hum of the fluorescent lights above fills the air as Robert, 74, stands at the counter of Taco Bell, a little unsteady on his feet but determined. He's patiently waiting as the young cashier, a teenager with a name tag that reads "Sarah," punches in the order for Brittany's bean burrito. Outside, Nancy waits in the car, her hands on the steering wheel, impatiently tapping her fingers to the beat of a song on the radio.

SHAWN (TACO BELL EMPLOYEE)

(cheerfully)

Alright, sir, that'll be a bean burrito, anything else?

ROBERT

(smiling warmly, though a little winded)

No, that'll do, thank you.

Robert shifts his weight slightly, feeling a bit dizzy but trying to hide it. The room feels warmer than usual, and his vision seems a bit blurry. He leans against the counter for support, hoping it's just a brief moment of lightheadedness. The cashier, focused on her register, doesn't notice.

SHAWN (TACO BELL EMPLOYEE)

(grinning)

Your total is \$3.50, please.

Robert pulls out his wallet, fumbling a bit as his hands feel unsteady. His breath is shallow, and his head feels heavy. He tries to steady himself, but his vision begins to blur further, and before he can catch himself, his knees buckle.

ROBERT

(softly)

Oh, my...

Suddenly, the ground rushes up toward him, and he starts to collapse. Before he hits the floor, a Shawn the Taco Bell employee—sees the sudden movement. Instinctively, Jake lunges forward and catches Robert just in time.

SHAWN (TACO BELL EMPLOYEE)

(panicking)

Whoa, sir! You okay?

Robert, now leaning heavily against Jake's chest, struggles to stay conscious. His breathing is uneven, and his skin looks pale.

Shawn is still holding Robert, keeping his arm around Robert's back to steady him. At the same time, SARAH another taco bell employee quickly grabs the phone from under the counter and dials 911, her voice trembling.

SARAH (TACO BELL EMPLOYEE)

(on the phone, rushed)

Yes, we need an ambulance. There's an elderly man, he's not looking well... he just collapsed in our store.

(20 minutes later)

At that moment, the paramedics burst through the door, rushing in with their medical bags. One of the paramedics, a tall man in his thirties, immediately spots Robert and steps toward him.

PARAMEDIC 1

(authoritatively)

We need to get him on a stretcher, now.

Shawn, still holding Robert, looks up at the paramedics and shakes his head.

SHAWN (TACO BELL EMPLOYEE)

(defensive)

No, he's not moving. I'm not letting go of him until you make sure he's safe.

PARAMEDIC 1

(firmly)

We need to take control of the situation. You need to let him go so we can assess him.

SHAWN (TACO BELL EMPLOYEE)

(shaking his head)

I'm not just letting go of him. He was about to fall, and I'm not gonna risk him getting hurt again.

PARAMEDIC 2

(urgently, raising his voice)

We are medical professionals! Let us do our job. We need to get him on the stretcher.

After a brief standoff, Jake hesitates, looking down at Robert, who is breathing shallowly but is still conscious. With a reluctant nod, Jake slowly releases his grip. The paramedics immediately step forward and start to move Robert onto the stretcher.

PARAMEDIC 1

(gently but firmly)

Alright, sir. We've got you now. Let's get you on the stretcher.

As they begin to lift him, Robert's legs give way, and he slumps forward, once again starting to fall.

But the paramedics quickly stabilize him, catching him just before he hits the ground again. They expertly secure him onto the stretcher, their motions quick but controlled.

PARAMEDIC 2

(quickly)

Alright, let's get him out of here. He's going to the hospital, but we'll take good care of him.

Jake and Sarah exchange worried glances as they watch them leave, the weight of the situation still hanging in the air.

The sound of the ambulance's sirens blaring as it speeds off into the night is the last thing heard before the Taco Bell store falls into a heavy silence.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - EVENING

The sterile scent of disinfectant hangs in the air. The fluorescent lights cast a cold white glow over the small exam room, where **Robert** lies in a hospital bed, hooked up to monitors that beep steadily. His face is pale, drawn, but his eyes flicker open every so often as if fighting to stay alert. **Nancy**, still in her coat from the earlier Taco Bell run, sits beside him in a hard plastic chair, her purse in her lap, hands clenched tightly together. She hasn't moved much since they arrived.

A **DOCTOR** in scrubs and a white coat steps in, holding a tablet. He looks young but serious, his eyes flicking from Robert to Nancy as he pauses just inside the door. Behind him, a **nurse** quietly checks the IV drip and monitor leads.

DOCTOR

(gently)

Mrs. Ellis? I've reviewed the results of your husband's tests. We found the cause of his collapse.

NANCY

(quietly)

What is it?

The doctor takes a careful step forward, his tone even and professional.

DOCTOR

Robert experienced a **brain hemorrhage**—a small bleed in his brain. It's what caused the sudden dizziness and loss of balance.

NANCY

(stunned, whispering)

A brain bleed?

DOCTOR

Yes. He's stable for now, but this kind of condition requires a specialist to treat properly—a **neuroradiologist**, someone who can assess and manage brain bleeds at a very detailed level. Unfortunately, we don't have that specialist here at this facility.

Nancy blinks, overwhelmed but listening intently.

DOCTOR

We're arranging for Robert to be transferred to **St. Augustine Regional**, about **23 miles from here**. They have the team and equipment needed to give him the care he requires. We'll send him by ambulance—he'll be monitored the whole way.

Nancy nods slowly, fighting the sting behind her eyes.

NANCY

I'll drive there. Just... Please, get him there safely.

The doctor gives her a reassuring nod.

DOCTOR

He'll be in good hands, Mrs. Ellis. The ambulance team is prepping now. They'll be ready in just a few minutes.

Nancy turns to Robert and brushes her hand gently over his knuckles.

NANCY

(softly, with forced calm)

You're going to be alright, Robert. Just a little detour... but I'll be right behind you. You hold on.

A few moments later, **two paramedics** enter the room with a stretcher, efficient and calm.

PARAMEDIC 1

Alright, Mr. Ellis. We're going to get you moved over now and take you to the next hospital. Just hang tight.

Nancy steps back to give them space. She watches as they gently lift Robert, IV lines and monitors trailing, and secure him onto the stretcher. The beeping from the portable monitor syncs with his pulse—steady but fragile.

The paramedics check everything quickly, then give a nod to the nurse and doctor.

PARAMEDIC 2

Ready to go.

They begin to wheel Robert out of the room. Nancy follows them into the hallway, watching as her husband is rolled past a row of closed emergency room doors, the wheels of the stretcher squeaking softly over the linoleum.

As they turn the corner toward the ambulance bay, Nancy slows her steps, her voice low but firm.

NANCY

(quietly, almost to herself)

Don't leave me, Robert. Just stay with me a little longer.

The automatic doors whoosh open as the paramedics disappear into the night, pushing Robert toward the waiting ambulance bathed in flashing red and blue lights.

Nancy watches, standing still for a beat, then turns and hurries toward the parking lot, fumbling for her keys. There's no time to fall apart. He needs her on the other end.

CUT TO:

INT. INSIDE AMBULANCE - LATE EVENING

The interior of the ambulance hums with quiet tension, dimly lit by overhead LEDs. **Robert**, 74, lies strapped to the gurney, pale and still, his eyes half-lidded but open. The heart monitor beeps steadily beside him. **Paramedic 1** climbs into the driver's seat, adjusting her radio headset.

PARAMEDIC 1

(into the radio)

Unit 11 en route to St. Augustine Regional. Male, 74, confirmed brain hemorrhage. Condition stable, oxygen monitoring initiated. ETA—twenty-two minutes.

Paramedic 1 puts the vehicle in drive. Outside, the red and white lights of the **ambulance bay** flash in slow rhythm. The back doors click shut as **Paramedic 2**, stays in the back with Robert, monitoring vitals and watching him closely.

The ambulance rolls slowly out of the bay and into the hospital **parking lot**, tires crunching over pavement before gliding out onto the **street**, gaining speed as it approaches the highway on-ramp.

Inside, Eli checks Robert's pulse again, glancing at the monitors.

PARAMEDIC 2

(soft, calm voice)

Hang in there, Mr. Ellis. We're gonna get you there. Just keep breathing for me.

The monitor's rhythm begins to change—just slightly at first.

Suddenly, the monitor *spikes*—a rapid, irregular pattern. Robert's breathing becomes labored, his chest rising with sharp, erratic effort.

PARAMEDIC 2

(urgently)

Damn—he's seizing. Possible second bleed.

He grabs the **oxygen mask** from the wall-mounted panel and quickly places it over Robert's face, adjusting the straps with practiced speed.

PARAMEDIC 2

we've got changes back here—possible second hemorrhage. I'm putting him on oxygen. We need to move.

PARAMEDIC 1

Copy that. I'm punching it.

The ambulance accelerates, merging onto the highway as the **siren wails to life**, cutting through the night.

CUT TO:

EXT. ST. AUGUSTINE REGIONAL HOSPITAL, AMBULANCE BAY – MOMENTS LATER

The ambulance screeches to a stop under the bright **overhang** of the emergency entrance. ER staff are already waiting with a trauma team—two nurses and a doctor with a portable stretcher.

Paramedic 1 kills the engine and jumps out from the driver's side, while Eli swings open the back doors.

PARAMEDIC 2

(calling out)

74-year-old male, second suspected hemorrhage in transit!
Oxygen in place, vitals unstable!

The team swarms forward. Together, they transfer Robert from the ambulance gurney to the hospital's stretcher, moving with swift precision. The oxygen mask stays on, misting with each shallow breath from Robert.

ER DOCTOR

Let's move—get him to Neuro immediately. Call CT. Prep for possible intervention.

As the sliding doors open and Robert is rushed inside, the paramedics exchange a quick, tense glance before reloading their gear. The flashing lights reflect off the white hospital walls as the doors slide shut behind the trauma team.

CUT TO:

INT. ST. AUGUSTINE REGIONAL HOSPITAL – ICU ROOM – LATE NIGHT

The fluorescent lights are low and sterile, casting a pale, blue-white glow over the quiet hospital room. Machines beep rhythmically beside **Robert**, who lies in the bed, still and pale, a **ventilator** gently expanding and deflating his chest. Tubes and wires trail from his body like threads anchoring him to the world.

Nancy, 73, sits in a chair at his bedside, hunched forward, her hands clasped in her lap, eyes fixed on the subtle rise and fall of Robert's chest. The room smells faintly of antiseptic, and the only real sound is the soft whoosh of the ventilator and the steady pulse of the heart monitor.

A soft knock at the door.

Heather, 42, Robert's daughter, slowly opens the door and enters with **Brittany**, 24, close behind her. Brittany walks cautiously, her eyes scanning the machines, her face already creased with confusion. Heather nods gently to her mother.

HEATHER

(softly)

Hey, Mom. How's he doing?

Nancy rises slowly from the chair, her voice is low and weary.

NANCY

No change yet. The doctors said they're doing everything they can... but the ventilator is doing the breathing for him now.

Brittany, standing near the foot of the bed, tilts her head slightly.

BRITTANY

(confused)

Wait, what do you mean "doing the breathing"? Isn't Grandpa just sleeping?

HEATHER

(speaking gently, carefully)

Sweetie... the machine is helping him breathe because... his body can't do it on its own right now.

BRITTANY

(frowning, her voice strained)

But he's moving a little... I saw his chest move. He *is* breathing. He's gonna wake up, right?

HEATHER

We don't know yet. But he's getting help now. And Grandma's staying with him tonight.

Nancy nods, swallowing hard as she gently brushes Robert's hair back from his forehead.

HEATHER

(sighing)

We need to get home. The girls have school in the morning. I'll come back tomorrow after I drop them off.

NANCY

I'll give you any updates.

Heather leans down and kisses her father's cheek.

HEATHER

Love you, Dad. Keep fighting.

Brittany hesitates, then steps closer to the bed. She fidgets with her sleeves before slowly leaning in and giving her grandfather a gentle kiss on the cheek, her hand briefly resting on his.

BRITTANY

(whispering)

Goodnight, Grandpa.

Heather gives her mom one more hug and then gently guides Brittany toward the door. As they leave the room, the quiet closes in again.

Nancy sits back in her chair, reaching out and taking Robert's hand in hers. She watches the rise and fall of his chest, the faint beep of the monitor steady but unnerving in its precision.

CUT TO:

(jump 4 days forward)

INT. LIVING ROOM – MORNING

Muted sunlight filters through the curtains. The atmosphere in the **Ellis family living room** is somber and heavy, as though the walls themselves are holding their breath. A pair of shoes sits neatly by the front door, untouched. Coats are folded on the armrest of the couch, ready to be worn.

NANCY (73) sits quietly in an armchair, staring at nothing in particular, her hands loosely folded in her lap. Her face is stoic, but her red-rimmed eyes betray long nights of crying. Beside her on the couch sit **HEATHER** (42) and **SUSAN** (26), both dressed in quiet, dark tones, their movements slow and deliberate. **BRITTANY** (24) sits on the floor, knees to her chest, near the coffee table, silently hugging a worn sweatshirt that once belonged to **Robert**.

No one speaks.

There's a shared understanding of what the day will bring.

HEATHER

(softly)

We'll leave in ten minutes... okay?

No one answers. Even **Susan** just nods faintly, staring down at her hands. Nancy doesn't move.

BRITTANY

(quietly)

Do we have to see it? When they... turn it off?

NANCY

(small voice)

We were going to say goodbye. That is the plan.

Silence again.

Then—

The house phone rings.

HEATHER

(Startled)

...Who would call the house?

NANCY

(almost whispering)

Maybe the hospital.

Brittany slowly stands up, her arms still wrapped around the sweatshirt. She walks into the **dining room**, picks up the phone from the receiver on the wall.

INTERCUT – DINING ROOM

BRITANY

(softly)

Hello?

HOSPITAL STAFF (V.O.)

Hi, is this the Ellis residence? I'm calling from St. Augustine... I'm so sorry to have to say this over the phone—but Robert passed away early this morning. His heart stopped. It was peaceful. He... he made the decision for you.

Brittany stands frozen, clutching the receiver tightly.

BRITTANY

(shaking)

He... he's gone?

HOSPITAL STAFF (V.O.)

Yes, I'm so sorry. There was nothing more anyone could've done.

Brittany hangs up slowly.

INT. LIVING ROOM – CONTINUOUS

The others look up, waiting.

Brittany steps back into the room, her eyes wide, her expression unreadable.

BRITTANY

(stammering)

We—we don't have to go. Grandpa... Grandpa already...

Her lip quivers. She turns and **runs down the hallway to her bedroom**, disappearing behind a door that slams shut a moment later.

HEATHER

(almost breathless)

Oh no...

Nancy stays seated, her body still, eyes glassy.

SUSAN, tears silently streaming down her cheeks, gently folds Robert's favorite blanket over the couch cushion and pulls her knees to her chest.

MONTAGE – THE WEEKS THAT FOLLOW

INT. BRITTANY'S BEDROOM – DAY

Curtains remain closed. Plates of uneaten food collect on the desk. Brittany lies under a pile of blankets, unmoving. Her hair is unbrushed. The same sweatshirt remains clutched in her arms. The sound of the shower running elsewhere in the house echoes faintly—**not in her room.**

INT. HALLWAY – NIGHT

Heather stands outside Brittany's door, holding a towel and fresh clothes. She knocks gently.

HEATHER

Sweetheart... please. Just a shower. Just once. For Grandpa.
He wouldn't want this.

No answer.

INT. BATHROOM – LATER THAT WEEK

The light is off. Brittany stands at the sink, looking at herself in the mirror. Her face is pale, her eyes hollow. She turns on the faucet but doesn't move.

CUT TO:

INT. LIVING ROOM – AFTERNOON – THREE MONTHS LATER AFTER ROBERT'S DEATH

The once-warm family home feels colder now. Sunlight filters through dusty blinds, casting slanted lines across the carpet. A stack of unopened mail sits on the table. A photo of **Robert** remains on the mantle—framed, untouched.

BRITTANY stands near the hallway, holding a laundry basket, her posture tight. Her face is worn—not just tired, but drained. **Nancy** stands near the kitchen, her voice raised, jabbing the air with one hand.

NANCY

(sharply)

Why are you just standing there? I told you that yesterday's towels are still damp because *you* didn't fold them right. You never listen! You never do anything the way I tell you to!

BRITTANY

(struggling to stay calm)

I... I don't know what you're talking about, Grandma. I folded them. Just like I always do.

NANCY

(disbelieving, cruel)

Don't you backtalk me! You've always been ungrateful. Ever since you were little. Your whole life—nothing but a burden!

BRITTANY

(voice cracks)

Why do you always do this?

NANCY

(snarling)

Because someone has to tell you the truth! You're too soft, too slow, too—retarded!

Brittany drops the laundry basket. **Something inside her breaks.**

Her shoulders tremble as she takes a step forward. Her eyes—usually full of fear—now burn with a quiet, long-suppressed rage.

BRITTANY

(voice rising)

You've yelled at me... humiliated me... blamed me for things I didn't understand—for *years*. I was just a kid!

Nancy rolls her eyes and turns her back.

Brittany steps forward. Her breathing grows shallow, face flushed. Years of fear, confusion, grief—**Robert's death, her only support gone**—all crash into this moment like a tidal wave.

Brittany suddenly grabs **Nancy's throat with both hands**, spinning her around. Her hands tremble as she reaches up and presses them **lightly** to her grandmother's throat, not hard—but enough to make Nancy freeze.

BRITTANY

(through gritted teeth)

I just wanted you to stop.

Nancy stares at her, stunned. For the first time, the power dynamic shifts. Brittany's eyes fill with tears, her hands slowly falling back to her sides. She backs away, choking on her emotions.

Brittany grabs her coat off the hook and storms out the front door, the screen door slamming behind her. The silence that follows is deafening.

stands in the center of the room, rattled. Shaken. Perhaps for the first time... aware of her actions.

CUT TO:

(Jump 3 years forward)

INT. BRITTANY'S ROOM – AFTERNOON

Cardboard boxes are scattered around the room—some open and half-filled, others already taped shut and labeled in Brittany's neat handwriting. Clothes, books, notebooks, and a few framed photos are spread across the bed. The walls are bare now, the posters and photos taken down. The room feels different—**lighter**.

BRITTANY (27) kneels by a box, gently placing a folded hoodie on top of a stack. Her hair is tucked behind her ears, her face glowing with a quiet, **nervous joy**. There's a soft smile on her lips as she exhales, looking around the room she grew up in—**the room she survived in**.

She picks up a small framed photo of her and her grandfather **Robert**, taken when she was a child. She touches the glass, her smile tightening.

BRITTANY

(softly, to herself)

You'd be proud of me, Grandpa.

She gently places the photo in a box marked "**Keep Close**".

MONTAGE – “MOVING FORWARD”

INT. BRITTANY'S NEW APARTMENT – KITCHEN – DAY

Brittany laughs with her **roommate**, a kind-looking woman in her 20s, as they attempt to cook stir-fry. She carefully flips vegetables in the pan and grins when they don't fall out.

INT. COUNSELING OFFICE – LATE AFTERNOON

Brittany sits on a couch, talking openly to her **therapist**. Her posture is more relaxed now. Her hands don't fidget as much. She smiles as she reflects on her progress.

INT. COLLEGE CAMPUS – LIBRARY – NIGHT

Books open around her, Brittany studies late, headphones in. A sticky note on her laptop reads: *"Degree #2 halfway done!"*

INT. LAUNDROMAT – EVENING

She loads clothes into a washer, humming to herself. A small printed list is taped to the inside of her tote bag—"Colors vs. Whites."

INT. DMV – DAY

She holds up her **new driver's license**, eyes wide with pride.

EXT. PARK – SUNSET

Brittany sits on a bench, reading, looking peaceful. She watches couples walk by, children playing, dogs barking—and for the first time in a long time, she doesn't feel like an outsider. She smiles to herself.

INT. BRITTANY'S NEW APARTMENT – BEDROOM – NIGHT

Brittany unpacks the last box. She pulls out the same framed photo of her and Robert, places it gently on the nightstand. She sits on her bed, cross-legged, and exhales deeply.

She looks around. The walls are bare but clean. There's no yelling. No tension. Just quiet. A quiet she chose.

She pulls out her journal and begins to write:

BRITTANY (V.O.)

Three months ago, I thought freedom was impossible. But here I am. I'm still healing, still learning. But I've come so far. And for the first time in my life... I really believe I'm going to be okay.

She closes the journal, clicks off the lamp, and settles into bed with peace on her face.

FADE OUT:

