

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?

DR. WEISS

There is a new drug under approval by the FDA--

SID

Can she enroll in the trial?

DR. WEISS

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.

SID

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

DR. WEISS

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.

SID

Will Medicare pay for it?

DR. WEISS

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

Estella starts to sob quietly.

ESTELLE

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

DR. WEISS

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.

SID

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

DR. WEISS

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.

(MORE)

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**