

# **THE SOUL SINGER**

By

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# THE SOUL SINGER

## CHARACTERS

RUTH SANCHEZ

*40s, Hispanic*

PRESTON CHANDLER ROSS

*30s. preppy*

CODY WILKERSON

*20s, farmer*

MILLIE HENDERSON

*70s, African-American*

CEECEE HENDERSON

*40s, Millie's daughter*

CLAIRE SIMMONS

*20s, Preston's girlfriend*

NURSE BECKY

*40s, strict but compassionate*

DR. NEWBY

*Late 20s, tired, arrogant*

## OTHER CHARACTERS

OLD SICKLY MAN

ROCK BAND

COUNTRY AND WESTERN BAND

X-RAY TECH

ANDREW COLT (physical therapist)

CODY'S DAD

MR. AND MRS. ROSS (Preston's parents)

GOSPEL CHOIR

## ACT ONE

### PROLOGUE

A portable hospital toilet is center stage.

An OLD SICKLY MAN in a hospital gown enters and sits on the toilet. Takes a dump. Gets up without wiping. Looks around confused. Brown liquid shit falls from his backside onto the floor. He walks off.

RUTH enters singing. She cleans up the crap on the floor and toilet.

RUTH (SONG 1, BEFORE YOU  
CLOSE YOUR EYES)

*Before you close your eyes  
And say your last goodbye.  
Let me hold your hand  
Just for a while.*

*Take all the fear inside  
The pain of your life  
Let it go if not just for a while*

PIANO PLAYER appears, accompanies Ruth.  
MANAGER appears, frustrated.

RUTH

*And share with me  
The memories  
The love you've earned  
And lost through all your days.*

*The mountains climbed  
The rivers cried  
The ones you've touched and  
Changed along the way.*

MANAGER

Whoa. Whoa. Whoa. STOP. What's with this Karen Carpenter crap?

Ruth is shell-shocked.

MANAGER

You're auditioning for a rock band. R. O. C. K. Get out of here, Mamacita. The all-you-can-eat taco buffet closes in half an hour. Next!

Ruth walks away.

Three red neck COUNTRY BAND MEMBERS appear.

BAND LEADER

You know any Dolly Parton Songs?

RUTH

Of course. Which ones were you thinking of?

BAND MEMBERS (IN UNISON)

We hate Dolly Parton.

Ruth walks away.

She comes to a front door. Loud and nasty heavy metal music blares from inside. She listens, no fucking way. Walks off.

## ACT 1

## SCENE ONE

1. CODY'S ROOM

A generic hospital room, with only a gurney, side table, closet, and hanging IV bag.

CODY wears a bandana. He sits up in bed, nauseated. Tries to hold it in, but VOMITS on the bed and front of his gown.

Ruth rushes in, holding a kidney-shaped emesis pan, helps clean him up.

CODY

Thanks.

RUTH

You're welcome.

CODY

I hate being a fuss.

RUTH

Don't worry about it. It's a sign the chemo is working.

Cody pulls off the bandana, points to his bald head.

CODY

No, this is a sign the chemo is working.

RUTH

I love that look on you, so masculine. Studies show women prefer bald men. Vin Diesel. The Rock. Samuel Jackson. Patrick Stewart. Yum. So virile.

CODY

I won't be able to have kids, either. They wanted a sperm sample.

RUTH

TMI.

CODY

To freeze for later. But I don't want kids.

RUTH

You never know. Lost of girls would want your kids.

CODY

TMI.

Cody reaches for the basin. RETCHES, but doesn't vomit.

RUTH

We'll get you some medicine for that. You have any fever?

CODY

No.

Ruth places a thermometer in his ear, waits.

RUTH

99 point 2. Okay. So how are you really doing?

CODY

I'm bored.

RUTH

Didn't you bring any books or music or a computer or anything?

CODY

I didn't know I was going to be admitted. I thought I had the flu, not leukemia.

RUTH

We'll have to get you un-bored. Who's your favorite singer?

Cody ponders this.

RUTH

Come on now.

CODY

Patsy Cline.

RUTH

Wow, didn't see that coming.

CODY  
She died young, too.

RUTH  
Shut up. You're going to do fine.

CODY  
I got a 50% change of living five years.

RUTH  
Then you better start.

CODY  
What?

RUTH  
Living.

Ruth grabs his hand, reassures him. Exits.

## 2. MILLIE'S ROOM

Another generic hospital room. An IV bag hangs by the bed. Family photos and flowers are on the side table. MILLIE half sits up on her gurney bed. CEECEE sits in a nearby chair.

CEECEE  
God damn it. You've never been a quitter.

MILLIE  
Don't you dare swear at our Lord. And I'm not quitting.

CEECEE  
And what would you call it, Mother, when someone chooses not to live?

MILLIE  
I didn't choose this to happen.

CEECEE  
You're aborting your own life!

Ruth enters with a vital signs cart.

MILLIE  
Well, howdy do, Ruthie.

RUTH

Hey, Millie.

MILLIE (TO CEECEE)

Let's talk about this tomorrow.

CEECEE

I'm not going to let this happen. You hear me?

RUTH

I can come back later.

MILLIE

No, no. We were just saying goodbye.

CEECEE

Damn it, Mother.

CeeDee hugs Millie, then exits. Ruth puts a blood pressure cuff on Millie.

RUTH

Everything okay?

MILLIE

It will be, eventually.

RUTH

You alright?

MILLIE

She don't understand. I'm just so tired.

Ruth helps Millie get comfortable in bed, puts a pillow between her legs.

RUTH

Shoot me some soul, mamma.

MILLIE (SONG 2, NOBODY KNOWS)

*Nobody know the trouble I've seen*

*Nobody know my sorrow*

*Nobody knows the trouble I've seen*

*Glory Hallelujah.*



*Sometimes I'm up  
 Sometimes I'm down  
 Oh yes, Lord*

*Sometimes I'm almost to the ground  
 Nobody knows the trouble I've seen  
 Nobody know but Jesus  
 Nobody know the trouble I've seen  
 Glory Hallelujah*

Millie reaches out and grasps Ruth's hands. They comfort each other.

### 3. PRESTON'S ROOM

A third hospital room, with gurney, side table, chair , but no IV. An old beat up guitar case is in the corner.

PRESTON sits up in bed, talks into a headset. CLAIRE sits in the chair looking at a law book.

PRESTON (INTO HEADSET)

No, I said two points of stock. Those guys have their heads up each other's asses.

CLAIRE

Anal retards.

Ruth enters.

RUTH

Evening, I'm your night aide.

No one acknowledges Ruth. She takes his blood pressure.

PRESTON (INTO HEADSET)

Seriously, what time is it there? Fine. I'll send it when I finish. Call me first thing in the morning.

Preston clicks off the headset.

CLAIRE

Why do you always work with inept buffoons? What is it now?

PRESTON

I have to rewrite the proposal again.

CLAIRE

Tonight? You need to get some sleep.

PRESTON

I can sleep after the merger, when we're on vacation. Where do you want to go, Tahiti?

CLAIRE

Last time I got food poisoning.

PRESTON

Puerto Rico? I still have the time share.

Ruth moves a thermometer toward Preston's ear.

CLAIRE

Could you do that later?

Preston calmly takes Ruth's hand and helps her guide the thermometer to his ear.

PRESTON

Lune, honey. Chill. Why don't you go home and get some sleep? Seriously, I'm fine.

CLAIRE

Till tomorrow, then, Prez.

Claire gives him a kiss. Exits.

RUTH

Can I get you anything?

PRESTON

Coffee would be great.

RUTH

I'm sorry, but the nurse said nothing but water until after your tests.

PRESTON

What I really, really need is coffee.

RUTH

I can bring you hot water and you can pretend it's coffee.

Game on!  
PRESTON

4. CODY'S ROOM

Ruth enters wearing a face mask. Cody lies in bed.

Heya cowboy.  
RUTH

Heya nurse.  
CODY

I'm not a nurse.  
RUTH

I'm not a cowboy.  
CODY

Fooled me.  
RUTH

Fooled me.  
CODY

Ruth opens the closet door, exposing a flannel shirt, cowboy boots, jeans, and a cowboy hat.

This is cowboy shit.  
RUTH

You're wearing nurse shit.  
CODY

Ruth pulls out the dirty boots.

These should be incinerated.  
RUTH

Fuck no.  
CODY

Ooops, forgot, rule number one: Don't mess with a cowboy and his boots.  
RUTH

She puts the boots back in the closet.

RUTH

I have to scrub now for 5 minutes. How's the nausea?

CODY

Better.

She takes his temperature.

RUTH

99 point 1. You haven't had any visitors.

CODY

I'm not from around here.

RUTH

No girlfriend?

CODY

Nope.

RUTH

Parents?

CODY

We don't talk.

RUTH

Friends?

He shakes his head no.

RUTH

Kids?

CODY

None that I know of.

They both laugh.

RUTH

I wrote a song you might like.

Ruth grabs an kidney-shape emesis pan and bangs a beat on it.

## (SONG 3, A COWBOY'S DOG)

*If your girl don't care  
And your coffee's bad  
But a cowboy's dog is always glad.*

*If your feet are wet  
And you're oh so sad  
But a cowboy's dog is always glad.*

*If your socks smell gross  
And your hair looks rad  
But a cowboy's dog is always glad.*

CODY

Damn! You could make a living singing.

Ruth walks away, turns before leaving.

RUTH

I been trying, since longer than you been born.

5. MILLIE'S ROOM

Millie sits up in bed, writing in a journal. Ruth enters carrying something behind her back.

RUTH

Heya, Millie. Feeling any better?

MILLIE

As good as I can.

Ruth flashes a fudgesicle.

MILLIE

You trying to kill off an old diabetic?

RUTH

Don't they feed you in here?

Millie takes the fudgesicle, unwraps it, offers it to Ruth.

MILLIE

You want a bite?

RUTH

Can't. Rules say I can't eat my patient's food. Besides, I'm watching my figure.

MILLIE

Girl, you got a lot of that to watch.

Ruth looks at the bag below the bed.

RUTH

This urine bag could easily end up on your IV pole.

Millie hands her journal to Ruth.

MILLIE

Could you read this back so I can hear how it sounds?

Ruth reads from the journal.

RUTH

Millicent May Henderson, born September 2, 1948, in Wellington, Kansas. Shouldn't your daughter be doing this?

MILLIE

Oh, she don't want to read nothing of this sort. I got it almost all planned out, though, casket and everything. Only thing left is I need another song. I only have two. Need three. You have to help me pick a third.

RUTH

What you got so far?

MILLIE (SONG 4, PRECIOUS LORD  
LIKE GOSPEL SONG)

*Precious Lord, take my hand  
Lead me on, let me stand.  
I'm tired, I'm weak. I'm alone.*

RUTH

*Through the storm  
Through the night  
Lead me on to the light.*

## MILLIE AND RUTH

*Take my hand precious Lord,  
Lead me home.*

Ruth reaches out to touch Millie's shoulder. Millie smiles, then sings another gospel song.

## MILLIE

This the next one.

Millie coughs, regains her breathe. Sighs in pain.

MILLIE (SONG 5, BYE AND BYE,-  
LIKE GOSPEL SONG)

*Bye and bye,  
Bye and bye  
When I reach that home  
Beyond the sky  
The wicked will cease from troubling...*

Millie waits for Ruth to join in, but she doesn't know the song.

## MILLIE

*And the weary will be at rest  
Every day will be Sunday  
Bye and Bye.*

## RUTH

You got a beautiful voice!

## MILLIE

Ain't nothing like yours. Those two are my favorites. I want you to help me chose the last one. Pick something you or CeeCee might like. Newer, hip, groovy.

## RUTH

We're not going to like anything "groovy."

6. PRESTON'S ROOM

Preston, sits in bed, wears headphones. Sings along to Puccini's operatic aria.

PRESTON (SONG 6, NESSUN  
DORMA-LIKE OPERA SONG)

*Nessun Dorma.  
Nessun Dorma  
Tu pure, o, Principess*

Ruth enters, listens.

PRESTON

*Nella tua fredda staza  
Guarid le stelle  
Che tremano d'amore  
E di speranza.  
Ma il mio mistero è chiuso in me  
Il nome mio nessun saprà*

Preston reaches for a plastic glass with his right hand, but it slips out and falls and thuds against the floor, splashing ice and water.

Ruth rushes in, grabs some towels and cleans up the mess.

Preston takes off the headphones, leans over and sits on the side of the bed.

PRESTON

Sorry. And thank you.

RUTH

I love Puccini. You have an amazing voice. You could sing professionally.

PRESTON

Ha! I sang in a band in college, but had to give it up during law school.

RUTH

You should find time to do what you love.

PRESTON

You sound like a self-help boo.

RUTH

Ha!

Ruth points to the old guitar case.



That a guitar?  
RUTH

Yep.  
PRESTON

Can I see it?  
RUTH

Preston motions to Ruth to get the case She does. He opens it, revealing a gleaming acoustic guitar.

It's beautiful.  
RUTH

I probably paid too much for it.  
PRESTON

Case of beer says it's out of tune.  
RUTH

What?  
PRESTON

I'll bet you a case of beer that your guitar is out of tune.  
RUTH

Game on. How did you know I like beer?  
PRESTON

That's what guitar players and fraternity boys drink.  
RUTH

Preston take the guitar out and strums it. It's horribly out of tune.

So what beer am I getting for you?  
PRESTON

Don't worry about the beer. I'm sure there's a rule somewhere about not taking alcohol from patients.  
RUTH

I would have made you pay up.  
PRESTON

RUTH

Duh. You get that tuned, and ready for our next check.

Ruth exits.

### 7. MILLIE'S ROOM

Millie's asleep in bed, motionless.

Ruth enters, leans over to and listens for breathing, to make sure Millie's still breathing. Ruth smiles with relief.

Ruth takes Millie's notebook off the bed and places it on the side table. She picks up a framed picture of a Millie's husband. Puts it back down. Turns the lights off. Exits.

### 8. CODY'S ROOM

Ruth enters the dark room. Cody lays in bed, back turned to the door.

CODY

I can hear you.

RUTH

Sorry.

CODY

Don't be.

Cody rolls over to face her.

CODY

I feel like shit.

Ruth inserts a thermometer into his ear.

RUTH

You're susceptible to all sorts of infections. We just want to make sure to catch stuff early if it happens.

Ruth pulls the thermometer up and reads it.

RUTH

99 point 5. We don't really worry until it's over 100. But I'll be checking on you more often.

CODY

How about less often at night?

RUTH

Stop it. And I checked with the nurse. You got a 95% chance of remission. You'll do fine.

Ruth pats his shoulder, reassuring him.

RUTH

You're not going to die.

CODY

Yet.

RUTH

I'm not going to die. Yet. You make "yet" happy or sad. Let's work on making "yet" happy.

Cody doesn't follow.

RUTH

Do your parents know you're here?

Cody shakes his head "no."

RUTH

They need to know.

CODY

I'd rather die.

RUTH

Now, Cody.

CODY

They'd like me better dead.

RUTH

The would not.

CODY

My mom would. Really.

RUTH

Mi dulce bebe. We'll need to talk about this.

CODY

I'd rather die.

RUTH

I don't know how you can go through all this by yourself. You're hurting you more than your blood cancer, which, by the way, is most likely all gone. I'm not a doctor, and I'm not a therapist, but I do know that something's eating at you, and I want you to know, I'm here for you. Let me know how I can help. I'm real serious about this.

Cody tears up. Nods a little yes. Turns around and away from her.

Ruth exits.

### 9. PRESTON'S ROOM

Preston lays in bed. Head tilted backwards, eyes rolled back. His right arm and upper body jerk. He's having a SEIZURE.

Ruth enters, realizes something's wrong.

RUTH

Hey, Preston. Can you hear me?

Ruth turns on the light, punches the read emergency button. Preston continues seizing.

RUTH

Help. Code Blue. Code Blue.

She tries to hold down Preston's shaking arm. Holds him tight so he won't fall out of the bed.

RUTH

Relax. Just try to relax.

Three emergency personnel rush in with a CRASH CART. NURSE BECKY rushes in, looks at Ruth.

NURSE BECKY

What's going on?

RUTH

I found him this way.

Nurse Becky moves Ruth away from the action. The emergency personnel surround the bed, check his pulse, prepares and intubation tube, puts AED pads on Preston's chest.

NURSE BECKY

He's getting air fine.

DR. NEWBY rushes in.

DR. NEWBY

What's the scoop?

NURSE BECKY

He's seizing. Airway's open.

MED TECH ONE

Pulse 140, regular.

DR. NEWBY

Leave him alone. Back off. He'll do fine. Move the crash cart away.

After a few moments, the seizing stops. Preston's head moves back to a normal position.

DR. NEWBY

Everyone that's non-essential please leave the room.

The crash team leaves. Ruth moves to the far corner.

Preston's eyes roll back to normal. Dr. Newby stares at Ruth.

DR. NEWBY

That means you, too, darling.

Ruth exits. Dr. Newby and Nurse Becky remain, observe the now calm Preston.

DR. NEWBY

The code was overkill. A waste of valuable resources.

NURSE BECKY

I'll bring it up at shift change and counsel the person who called it.

10. NURSE MANAGER'S OFFICE

Ruth, all alone, cries.

Nurse Becky enters. Sits down next to Ruth. Grabs a tissue and hands it to Ruth.

NURSE BECKY

You alright?

Ruth nods yeah. Wipes tears away.

NURSE BECKY

We need to debrief this red flag event.

RUTH

I know. I'm very sorry.

NURSE BECKY

Stop. It's okay.

RUTH

But he said it was overkill.

NURSE BECKY

And that I have to counsel you. Which is what I'm doing now. You did the right thing. Exactly what I would have done--call a code and let the code team and doctor figure it out.

Ruth sighs with relief. Nurse Becky chuckles to herself.

NURSE BECKY

You know what we call him, right?

RUTH

Dr...

## RUTH AND NURSE BECKY

Mean Ass.

NURSE BECKY

You didn't hear me say that, okay?

Ruth nods.

NURSE BECKY

You just might have saved a life. He's getting a CT scan now, trying to find out what's going on to cause that. You did good, Ruth. And you're really good with patients.

Ruth tears up, happily this time.

NURSE BECKY

Now get out of here and get some sleep..

Ruth exits.

### 11. RUTH'S APARTMENT

A simple studio. A bed, a small desk with a computer, speakers, and a synthesizer keyboard. Ryan Gosling photos are taped, shrine like, to the wall.

Ruth enters, falls backwards onto the bed. She's too exhausted and excited to sleep. She gets up, sits at the desk, clicks some buttons, starts playing on the keyboard.

Ruth pecks out the unfinished gospel melody to SONG 7, TAKE ME HOME SWEET JESUS, GOSPEL SONG.

RUTH

*Oh my Lord  
I'm so tired  
My knees are weak  
My body aches  
My back is worn.  
I am ready, really am  
Take me home  
Oh my Lord.*

Ruth tweaks the notes, plays the melody again. Adjusts the lyrics.

*Oh my Lord  
 My feet are tired  
 My knees are weak  
 My back is worn  
 My body aches.  
 I am ready, yes I am.  
 Take me home, Lord Jesus,  
 Take me home.*

RUTH

Ruth, focused, repeats that last few bars.

*Take me home, my Jesus.  
 Duh, duh, duh.*

RUTH

Repeats it again.

*Take me home, Sweet Jesus.  
 Take me home.  
 Bingo, baby!*

RUTH

## 12. CODY'S ROOM

Cody's in bed. Ruth enters.

Heya fake nurse.

CODY

Heya fake cowboy.

RUTH

Ruth puts the thermometer in Cody's ear.

How you feeling?

RUTH

Fine, just fine. Considering.

CODY

Ruth pulls the thermometer out.



100.1 RUTH

Fuck. CODY

Ruth puts her hand on his forehead.

RUTH  
You don't feel warm. Are you feeling hot anywhere?

He shakes his head no.

RUTH  
Aches? Chills? Nausea? Vomiting?

CODY  
Not since I puked yesterday.

RUTH  
Weakness?

CODY  
Everywhere. Fuck.

RUTH  
I'll check it again in about 30 minutes. One high reading doesn't mean much.

CODY  
But two is twenty fucking sticks. Damn it.

RUTH  
Don't count your sticks before your stuck.

Cody smiles.

RUTH  
If you're not a real cowboy, what do you do?

CODY  
Farmhand.

RUTH  
That's so cool.

CODY  
You ever work on a farm?

RUTH  
Nada.

CODY  
Not so cool.

RUTH  
I mean you're outside, fresh air, good physical work.

CODY  
I'd rather rodeo.

RUTH  
Then rodeo.

CODY  
You know how much it costs to have a horse and saddle and trailer and truck?

RUTH  
It's good to have goals.

CODY  
Not going to happen.

Cody looks away.

RUTH  
You need anything?

CODY  
Nah.

Ruth pats his arm.

RUTH  
Later.

She exits.

### 13. MILLIE'S ROOM

Ruth takes Millie's blood pressure. Sings a made up jingle.

RUTH

*Your blood pressure's a little low  
But that's not new  
And you're not ready to go.*

MILLIE

Ha. The melody's pretty good, but the words need some work. A lot of work.

RUTH

I'm working on something specially for you. But you have to help me.

MILLIE

Can do.

Millie pats the side of the bed. Ruth sits there.

RUTH

What are the most important things in your life?

MILLIE

Hmm, in no particular order: My husband, Jake.

Millie points to the framed picture of Jake on the side table.

MILLIE

My Lord, and his son, Jesus.

Millie pulls out a Cross on a necklace from behind her gown.

MILLIE

My daughter, CeeCee. And you're going to have to help me with her, you know.

RUTH

She seems like a distinct personality.

MILLIE

Anyone worth knowing has a distinct personality..

RUTH

Anything else?

MILLIE

Chocolate.

Amen, sister.

RUTH

Nurse Becky enter the room, carries a medication tray.  
Ruth jumps up from the bed, writes something on the clipboard.

MILLIE

Nurse Happy Juice! How kind of you to stop by.

NURSE BECKY

Hey, Millie.

Nurse Becky smiles at Ruth.

NURSE BECKY

Mr. Ross in 16B requests your presence.

Ruth exits.

NURSE BECKY

You ready for this dose?

MILLIE

Oh, yes. Yes, I am.

NURSE BECKY

Pills or liquid?

MILLIE

Liquid now. Leave the pills for later. And you can bump it up a notch, please, last dose didn't help much.

Nurse Becky counts out a couple pills, puts them in a paper cup, hands them to Millie, then takes out a syringe, inserts it into Millie's IV line port, pushes the medication.

Millie closes her eyes. Takes in a deep breath. Relaxes, lets it out. Smiles.

MILLIE

That juice is just fine.

#### 14. PRESTON'S ROOM

Preston, in a daze, stares at the wall. The left top of his head is completely covered in white gauze bandage.

Ruth enters.

RUTH

Hey, handsome.

PRESTON

Hi.

RUTH

I'm so sorry. How you doing?

Preston shrugs his left shoulder. His right should and arm don't move.

PRESTON

I didn't think I'd need to fill out a will at 31.

Preston moves his left hand and reaches over to grab his totally paralyzed right and places it in his lap.

PRESTON

And now I can't even sign a will.

.RUTH

You'll get function back.

PRESTON

Ah, no. The clot's behind the primary tumor, which is growing larger. Even if they did surgery and radiation, I'll never regain use of the arm or leg. And since the melanoma has spread all over, they don't recommend surgery or radiation because they can't fry my whole brain..

RUTH

Oh, God. I'm so sorry.

Preston cries. Ruth bends down to hug him.

PRESTON

Thanks.

RUTH

You're welcome.

PRESTON

No, I mean thank you for helping me yesterday. They said if you hand't found me I could have choked on my vomit. On the other hand, maybe that would have been better.

Preston motions for the plastic urinal jug on the side table. Ruth hands it to him. He grabs it with his left hand, puts it down by his groin, but can't do it with one hand. Preston tears up.

RUTH

Let me help you with that.

PRESTON

I can do it.

RUTH

Not with one hand. Yet. OT will help.

Ruth, with Preston's consent, reaches down and hold the jug. Ruth look away. Preston places his penis in the jug, pees.

He stops peeing.

RUTH

Finished?

PRESTON

Yeah.

Ruth takes the jug, caps the lids, inspects the urine.

PRESTON

Sorry about this.

RUTH

What are you talking about?

PRESTON

This tinkle stuff.

RUTH

Tinkle stuff? This is what I do. Nothing at all to be sorry about. I know it seems lowly to you--

PRESTON

That's not what I meant.

RUTH

Sure you did. I get to help people. Helping people here is my job, lowly or not. I actually enjoy it.

PRESTON

But you don't love it.

RUTH

It pays the bills.

PRESTON

You should sing.

RUTH

Doesn't pay the bills.

PRESTON

It could.

RUTH

It hasn't.

PRESTON

Sing me something.

RUTH

I have to get going.

Preston flashes his irresistible grin.

RUTH (SINGS SONG 8, MOM'S SONG)

*When the road is hard  
And you're out of gold  
Know that I will always be there.*

*When the day is done*

*And you grow old  
Know that I will always be there.*

*When the darkness comes  
And the world grows cold  
Know that I will always be there.*

PRESTON

Jesus, you're amazing. The song is great.

RUTH

My mom used to sing it to me before she got sick.

PRESTON

What does she have?

RUTH

Did have. Diabetes. But it was her heart that killed her.

PRESTON

I'm sorry.

RUTH

Like she used to say, "These things happen."

PRESTON

Diabetes and heart attacks don't just happen.

RUTH

Yes, sir, counsellor. She ate herself to death.

PRESTON

I didn't mean that.

RUTH

Yes, you did. And it's true. She loved food more than she loved me.

PRESTON

I highly doubt that.

RUTH

Sometimes things just happen. Or they don't.

PRESTON

You make things happen.



RUTH

You sound like a shrink.

PRESTON

I've been to a few of them, so guess I picked it up.

Claire storms in.

CLAIRE

Sorry, traffic was brutal.

Claire leans over and kisses Preston. She glares at Ruth.

CLAIRE

We're good here sweetheart.

Ruth leaves with the jug.

### 15. HOSPITAL CHAPEL

Ruth plays a tune on the piano (it's the tune that will later become SONG 10 "Never Been Kissed," later played for Cody.) She tries out some lyrics.

RUTH

*If you never try  
You will always fail.  
If you never cry  
You will not feel.  
If you never kiss...*

Ruth, frustrated, looks up at the Crucifix hanging on the wall.

Nurse Becky quietly enters.

RUTH

A little help would be nice.

NURSE BECKY

It doesn't sound like you need much help.

Ruth, startled, turns around.

NURSE BECKY

And the powers that be help you every day.

RUTH

I'm sorry if I'm late from break.

NURSE BECKY

You're not late. Yet. You got two minutes, then you'll be late.

Ruth jumps up.

NURSE BECKY

You don't have to rush. Your music is beautiful.

RUTH

Really?

NURSE BECKY

You don't have to fish for compliments. We all have our own gifts from God. Your's is pretty obvious. I haven't figure out mine yet.

RUTH

You help people that are suffering and in pain.

NURSE BECKY

I give them pills for that. Stopping suffering isn't the same as giving someone joy.

RUTH

It's more important to go from pain to no pain, than from no pain to joy.

NURSE BECKY

Glass is half full or half empty argument. Between the two of us, we got both covered!

Nurse Becky looks at her watch.

RUTH

I know. Back to work.

Ruth rushes out.

## 16. MILLIE'S ROOM

Ruth changes the top sheet of Millie's bed. CeeCee enters. Millie's face lights up.

MILLIE

MayMay.

CEECEE

Maman. You haven't called me that for ages.

MILLIE

I just saw my little MayMay walk in the door.

Ruth pulls out a thermometer, places it in Millie's ear.

RUTH

Sorry, Millie, I gotta get this.

MILLIE

I know. MayMay is my little Cecelia May. The May is after Mahalia Jackson, the Queen of gospel. She couldn't say Mahalia, it came out MayMay. It was Pappy and MayMay. The best of friends, then she hit thirteen and turned into a little shit.

CEECEE

Mom!

MILLIE

Petite merde. Broke your Pappy's heart.

CEECEE

I did not.

MILLIE

Believe what you want. You always have. I still love you.

Millie reaches for CeeCee's hand. CeeCee notices a brightly colored hospital wrist band on Millie's wrist. Printed on it is DNR.

CEECEE

What is this?

MILLIE

It's a Do Not Resuscitate, bracelet.

CEECEE

I know what the hell it means.

MILLIE

Shush. I signed the papers.

CEECEE

Without me?

MILLIE

It's my choice. I don't want people pounding all over me and spending all that money when it's my time.

CEECEE

Stop this. I don't care about the money. I care about you staying alive.

MILLIE

What type of life is this, MayMay?

CEECEE

I'm not going to stand by while you let yourself die when there's perfectly fine treatment.

CeeCee looks at Ruth.

CEECEE

How do we reverse this? She's not of sound mind.

MILLIE

It's already done. For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind.

CEECEE

Who do I talk to?

RUTH

I'll find the nurse.

CEECEE

I'll find her myself.

CeeCee storms out.

MILLIE

I'm sorry you heard that.

RUTH

No problem. You okay?

MILLIE

Fine, fine. She's just like her father.

Millie points to the framed picture of Jake on the side table.

RUTH

That him?

MILLIE

Yes. Gone seven years now. But I'll see him soon. And I'm ready.

Ruth reaches out and holds Millie's hand.

### 17. CODY'S ROOM

Nurse Becky enters carrying a medication tray. Cody's asleep. Turns on the light.

Cody wakes up, then sits up.

NURSE BECKY

And how are you feeling?

CODY

I was fine until you woke me up.

Nurse Becky takes his temperature.

NURSE BECKY

Any fever, nausea?

CODY

Nope.

NURSE BECKY

Here's a refill on your nausea medication.

CODY

I'm fine without any now.

She takes out the thermometer. Reads something on the clip board. Reads the temp.

NURSE BECKY

101.5

CODY

Damn it.

NURSE BECKY

Sorry, you not going to get much sleep for a while.

18. NURSE'S OFFICE

Ruth enters. Nurse Becky follows.

NURSE BECKY

What were you thinking?

RUTH

I was going to check it right after you.

NURSE BECKY

He's immunocompromised. He can't fight off infections well. A small infection somewhere could rapidly become sepsis. And he could die.

RUTH

He said he felt okay. I was giving him a few more minutes of sleep. I didn't think--

NURSE BECKY

That's right, you didn't think.

RUTH

I'm sorry. It won't happen again.

NURSE BECKY

It's not your fault, Ruth. A couple extra minutes won't make much difference, but you need to know how dangerous this could be. Come on. Let's get working on this.

19. CODY'S ROOM

Ruth enters. Cody wakes up. She hands him a urine sample container.

CODY

I know what that's for.

Ruth tears up.

CODY

Hey. What's wrong? You know something I don't.

Ruth shakes her head no.

RUTH

Clean catch sample. Start the urine flow then quickly place the cup under. It's called a mid-stream sample. All the bacteria is at the tip.

CODY

The tip of what?

RUTH

The bacteria there gets wash away first.

CODY

You can't say it.

RUTH

A mid-stream sample with bacteria means there may be an infection in the little tube or bladder or kidney.

CODY

At the tip of my what?

RUTH

Come on. Can you stand up and get to the bathroom, or are we going to have to do this in bed?

CODY

Do what in bed? Is this one of those tests where you have to watch the piss come out the tip of my...PENIS?

RUTH

Shut up. No. That's for a drug screen. I don't have to watch.

CODY

Do you want to watch?

RUTH

Shut up.

CODY

You brought it up.

RUTH

It doesn't look up to me..

Cody stand ups, walks with the sterile urine cup off stage.

RUTH

And don't touch anything on the inside of the plastic cup.

CODY (OFF STAGE)

Don't touch the inside with what?

RUTH

Your fingers or your skin.

CODY (OFF STAGE)

Foreskin? Did you say foreskin?

RUTH

Shut up.

CODY (OFF STAGE)

If you were watching the piss come out of my penis, like you mentioned, you'd know I didn't have any.

RUTH

Shut up.

CODY (OFF STAGE)

Have I PISSED you off yet?

## 20. HOSPITAL CHAPEL

Millie, in a wheel chair, reaches out to a small alter. Ruth stands near her. Millie finishes a prayer, then kisses her fingers then taps them on the alter.

MILLIE

Could you take me to the piano?

Ruth pushes the wheelchair to the piano, helps her out of the wheelchair and onto the piano bench.

Millie stretches out her fingers, it's been a long time, then feels some of the key,.



She plays boogie woogie, which changes to ragtime, then jazz, then a somber funeral march.

CeeCee enters, exasperated.

CEECEE

Next time tell someone where you're going.

MILLIE

I know where I am.

Millie stops playing. Takes her hand off the keys,, kisses her fingers, then places them back on the keyboard.

MILLIE

I'm ready to go.

CEECEE

No you are not.

MILLIE

I'm ready to leave the chapel.

CEECEE

Mother, please let me know where you are. No one knew where to find you.

MILLIE

It won't happen again.

Millie winks at Ruth.

MILLIE

Take me home, Miss Daisy.

Ruth wheels Millie out.

## 21. PRESTON'S ROOM

Preston's in bed, wearing headphones, fakes being asleep. Ruth takes his blood pressure. He hums the song Ruth sang to him (SONG 4).

RUTH

Faker. I didn't hear any music coming out of those things.

PRESTON

I was hoping it would be you.

RUTH

I bet you say that to everyone who brings you a urinal.

PRESTON

I've been thinking about what you said, and your passion for music. I want you to hear a song I wrote.

RUTH

Bring it on.

Preston clears his throat. Sings (SONG 9, PRESTON'S SONG).

PRESTON

*Sometimes we dream about  
Grass that is greener  
And how we would wish to be.*

*Sometimes we pray for  
Our lives to be better  
And how we can grab for more.*

*Then you find the one  
Who changes your world around  
And you see things quite differently.*

Claire enters.

PRESTON

*That's when you 'll realize  
The grass is much greener  
Your life is lots better  
And someone has changed your world.*

Ruth CLAPS. Claire's pissed that Preston was singing romantically to Ruth.

CLAIRE

Sorry to interrupt.

Claire exits.

PRESTON

Claire. Claire! Come on now.

RUTH

I can go get her.

PRESTON

No. It's not your fault. And I don't need more drama right now.

RUTH

Thank you for that song. You're incredible.

PRESTON

I wouldn't go that far.

RUTH

Come on. You know it.

PRESTON

My therapist says I should say thank you. So thank you.

RUTH

You're welcome.

PRESTON

Actually, I've never been comfortable with compliments.

RUTH

I see.

PRESTON

No, I'm not playing that game. I want to know what you're doing here. Instead of being out there singing.

RUTH

I tried.

PRESTON

Talent, luck, persistence. Try again.

RUTH

I'm here for the same reason you're a lawyer.

Ruth's beeper BEEPS. Preston tries to lift his right hand up to her, but can't. He struggles trying to move his limp right arm.

PRESTON

I'm afraid.

Ruth reaches over to grasp his left hand, squeezes it.

RUTH

I know. Let's work on that.

Ruth exits.

## 22. MILLIE'S ROOM

Millie stares at the ceiling, breathing quickly.

RUTH

It's going to be okay.

MILLIE

It hurts so much. Please let it end.

RUTH

The nurse will be here soon, I promise.

Millie SHRIEKS in pain.

MILLIE

Call MayMay. You gotta call my baby.

RUTH

She's been called. She's on her way.

Millie lets out another painful SHRIEK.

MILLIE

I need Nurse Happy Juice.

Ruth holds Millie's hand.

I'm here for you, Millie.

RUTH

Oh God, give me strength.

MILLIE

Nurse Becky enters. Ruth moves out of the way. Nurse Becky takes a prepared syringe, injects it into Millie's IV line.

This will help. You might feel a little groggy or go to sleep.

NURSE BECKY

I want to be awake for my baby. Is she here yet? Is she coming?

MILLIE

Millie breathes a little easier.

I can't leave without her.

MILLIE

Ruth leans over to hug Millie. CeeCee rushes in.

I have this. Thank you for your help.

CEECEE

Nurse Becky exits. Ruth stays.

It's okay.

CEECEE

Can I get you anything?

RUTH

No. We're fine.

CEECEE

CeeCee motions for Ruth to leave. Ruth exits.

### 23. ICU ROOM

Codie lies in bed, with two IV lines connected and a urine tube coming out of his groin area. A heart monitor BEEPS.

Ruth enters.

RUTH

Heya cowboy.

CODY

Heya nurse.

RUTH

Is that tube going into your... penis?

Cody chuckles, then coughs.

RUTH

So they went full press on you.

CODY

I knew this was going to happen.

RUTH

Come on. Some infection is expected this stage of chemo. You got started on antibiotics early.

CODY

They had me call my parents. That's how bad it is.

RUTH

Cody, you're going to pull through. Your temperature has stabilized.. You gonna tell me?

CODY

What?

RUTH

About your parents?

Cody looks away.

RUTH

It's eating you alive. You can't fight all this and your parents at the same time.

CODY

They found out I'm gay.

RUTH

Oh Cody, I'm so sorry.

CODY

I'm sorry I'm gay, too.

RUTH

I didn't mean that, you dummy! About your parents. I figured you were gay.

CODY

How?

RUTH

Patsy Cline.

COY

Pul-leeze.

RUTH

And that "puh-leeze." And the twinkle in your eye where you say "penis." And that you talk to me like a person.

CODY

What?

RUTH

Straight guys your age wouldn't have looked at me twice.

Cody reaches his arm out to her. They hug.

#### 24. MILLIE'S ROOM

Millie's in bed. Ruth charts, hums a gospel song melody.

MILLIE

That's lovely. You have the words for it yet?

RUTH

I'm still working on it.

MILLIE

You better sing me what you got. Come on. Let's hear it. Sing!

RUTH (SONG 7, TAKE ME HOME  
SWEET JESUS, REPRISÉ)

*Oh my Lord, my feet are tired,  
My knees are weak.  
My back is worn,  
My body aches.  
I am ready yes I am.  
Take me home, Sweet Jesus.*

*Oh my Lord, my house is clean.  
My friends are gone.  
My baby's grown.  
My work is done.  
I am ready, yes I am.  
Take me home, Sweet Jesus*

CeeCee enters.

RUTH

*Oh my Lord, I know he's there.  
Smiling down from Heaven high.  
I miss his laugh.  
I miss his hugs.  
I am ready, yes I am.  
Take me home, Sweet Jesus,  
To my man.*

Millie's moved to tears. CeeCee glares at Ruth.

CEECEE

You have no right.

MILLIE

She has every right. It's wonderful, Ruthie. Wonderful. I asked her to write this. For me. For my funeral.

CEECEE

That's not going to happen.

MILLIE

Promise me, Ruth, that you will sing this at my service.

RUTH

I... I can't.

MILLIE

Yes, you can. It's amazing. You're amazing. You brought me great joy these last few days. Please promise me you'll sing it.

CEECEE

I will not allow it. I'm going to find your supervisor. This is totally inappropriate.



MILLIE

No, CeeCee, it's absolutely appropriate. Ruth, promise me.

CeeCee fuming, exits.

MILLIE

Promise me.

RUTH

I can't.

MILLIE

Then promise me you will find someone to sing it. I want my church to hear this glorious song. Please, honey. It's my last request.

RUTH

Stop it.

MILLIE

Please?

RUTH

I'll try.

MILLIE

*Take me home, Sweet Jesus,  
To my man.*

## 25. ICU ROOM

Cody's in bed. IV's still attached.

Ruth enters, followed by ANDREW, 27, even with a mask on, he's hunky cute.

RUTH

I brought you some company.

ANDREW

Heya, Cody. I hear you rodeo.

CODY

Some. Not anymore.

ANDREW

You'll do fine. We'll get your strength back up to normal in no time.

RUTH

Andrew and I have a little surprise for you.

Cody smiles. Ruth and Andrew SNAP their fingers in unison then start a simple 50's doo wop song.

RUTH AN ANDREW (SONG 10,  
NEVER BEEN KISSED)

*Shoe bop, shoe bop bop.  
Shoe bop, shoe bop bop.*

RUTH

*Why are cowboys always sad?  
When they really should be glad?  
They got their dog  
They got their boots  
And after beans  
They got their toots.*

ANDREW

*Got their boots.  
Got their toots.*

RUTH

*Why are cowboys always sad?  
When they really should be glad?  
Why are cowboys always pissed?  
Maybe cause they've never been kissed.*

ANDREW

*Always pissed.  
Never been kissed.*

RUTH

*Cowboys need a tryst.  
Cause they've never been kissed.*

ANDREW

*Need a tryst.  
Never been kissed..*

Ruth and Andrew lean over and kiss Cody. He enjoys it for a second, then panics.

CODY

You had no right.

ANDREW

I gotta get back. Nice meeting you, Cody.

Andrew exits.

RUTH

You've got to deal with this.

CODY

No I do not.

RUTH

You have to admit, he's really cute.

CODY

Fuck you.

RUTH

And you enjoyed it.

Ruth exits.

## 26. PRESTON'S ROOM

Preston sits up in bed. He's looks exhausted and sick. He holds his guitar with his left hand. Ruth stands close.

PRESTON

You ready for this?

RUTH

You bet.

Preston reaches over with his left hand and clicks on his phone which is set up on a tripod at the foot of the bed. He speaks directly to the phone.

PRESTON

Hey, Mom and Dad. I want you to have a recording of this. It's taken me a long time to finally realize this, but we don't need any more lawyers, we need more musicians.

Preston nods to Ruth, who reaches for the guitar. She places her right hand on the upper guitar strings to form the chords. Preston strums with his left hand.

PRESTON (SONG 11, PRESTON'S  
LOVE BALLAD)

*Unforgettable*  
*That's what you are.*  
*Unforgettable*  
*Tho' near or far.*

PRESTON AND RUTH

*Like a song of love that clings to me.*  
*How the thought of you does things to me.*  
*Never before*  
*Has someone been more...*

RUTH

*Unforgettable*  
*In every way.*  
*And forever more*  
*That's how you'll stay.*

PRESTON AND RUTH

*That's why, darling, it's incredible*  
*That someone so unforgettable*  
*Thinks that I am*  
*Unforgettable, too.*

As they sing, some of the staff look in. When they finish, the audience APPLAUDS.

## 27. NURSES STATION

Dr. Newby and Nurse Becky review a chart. CeeCee enters.

CEECEE

I got a complaint.

DR. NEWBY

And you are?

CEECEE

Millie Peterson's daughter.

NURSE BECKY

What is your concern?

CEECEE

Your night nursing assistant, Ruth, has encouraged my mother to just give up and die.

DR. NEWBY

And how do you know that?

CEECEE

She sang a song to her that said just as much. I want her fired.

NURSE BECKY

Let's be reasonable. I'm sure she was just supporting your mother's wishes. She is, after all, DNR.

CEECEE

Not by my choice.

DR. NEWBY

It's not actually your choice.

CEECEE

So you want her to die, too?

DR. NEWBY

No, not at all. I didn't say that. I had a long discussion with your mother about her options, and she made her choice, she doesn't want to prolong the inevitable.

CEECEE

I can't believe I'm hearing this from her doctor. I'm calling my lawyer.

DR. NEWBY

You don't need to do that. If her actions are harmful, we will deal with this, I assure you.

NURSE BECKY

I'm sure she was just trying to help your mother.

CEECEE

By telling her it's okay to die?

DR. NEWBY

I'll take care of this.

CEECEE

You better.

CeeCee exits. Dr. Newby glares at Nurse Becky.

DR. NEWBY

Your singing CNA has got to go.

28. NURSES STATION, LATER

Ruth enters. Nurse Becky motions to her to sit down.

NURSE BECKY

Have a seat.

Ruth sits down.

NURSE BECKY

There's been a complaint against you.

RUTH

I know, but the patient specifically asked me to help her. The daughter had no right--

NURSE BECKY

She has every right to expect that an employee of this hospital does not hasten the death of a patient.

RUTH

That's not what I was doing.

NURSE BECKY

Sounds like it to me.

RUTH

Am I being fired?

NURSE BECKY

No. This is a reprimand. You are no longer allowed to sing to your patients.

RUTH

What?

NURSE BECKY

No more singing. No more playing in the chapel on breaks.

RUTH

I thought you liked my music.

NURSE BECKY

I do, but not while at work.

Nurse Becky hands Ruth a piece of paper.

NURSE BECKY

This is a written warning. A repeat of this misconduct will result in termination.

RUTH

Making people happy is misconduct?

NURSE BECKY

Making people angry is. Do you have any idea how much paperwork the doc and I have to fill out related to this complaint?

RUTH

Not really.

NURSE BECKY

Lots. And it'll require credentials committee review also. I'm hoping it doesn't involve lawyers.

RUTH

I was just trying to help make her happy. And she specifically asked me to help her chose a song.

NURSE BECKY

A song for what?

Ruth avoids answering.

NURSE BECKY

A song for what?

RUTH

Her funeral.

NURSE BECKY

See. If she had asked you to give her pills to help hasten her death, would you?

RUTH

Not the same thing

NURSE BECKY

Explain that to her daughter. You can still make your patients happy. You just can't do it by singing. It's a waste of their, and our time.

RUTH

You don't care.

NURSE BECKY

No, Ruth, I do care, deeply, about my patients, and you. Some things are beyond my control. You've been warned. Do not sing while at work. Understand?

Ruth nods her head yes.

NURSE BECKY

I need a verbal confirmation. Do you understand you are not to sing to your patients?

RUTH

Yes, I understand.

### 29. CODY'S ROOM

Cody sits up in bed. Ruth enters, hands him a POPSICLE.

RUTH

Welcome back home! I told you you'd be fine.

CODY

What's this? A peace offering?

RUTH

It's vanilla. We're out of rainbow sprinkles.

CODY

I don't like rainbow stuff.

RUTH

You need to get over that.



CODY

Can you drop it, please?

RUTH

You're going to have to deal with it.

CODY

I've got enough going on. Maybe I don't want to deal with it.

RUTH

He's a really nice guy. And he likes cowboys.

CODY

Drop it.

RUTH

It makes me sad.

CODY

What?

RUTH

That you won't allow yourself to be loved.

CODY

You can leave now.

RUTH

Cody.

COY

You make me feel worse.

RUTH.

I'm sorry. Really, I am.

Ruth exits. Cody rolls over, pulls the sheet over his head.

### 30. MILLIE'S ROOM

Millie, sitting up in bed, COUGHS loud. Ruth enters, helps wipe the spit off Millie's mouth and tears from her eyes.

RUTH

I'm getting the doctor.

MILLIE

No you're not. I've had enough of doctors and needles and tests and all the God damned pain.

RUTH

Millie.

MILLIE

My apologies to God, and to Jesus, but I just can't take this any more.

RUTH

I can call for more pain medicine.

MILLIE

I got plenty already. I need this to end.

RUTH

I can call CeeCee.

MILLIE

I already said goodbye.

Millie reaches out to Ruth, they hold each other's hands.

MILLIE

I need to confess something.

RUTH

I can get Chaplain Davis.

MILLIE

No child, not at this hour.

RUTH

He's always on call. He'll be happy to come.

MILLIE

No. Thank you, though.

Millie holds Ruth's hand tightly.

MILLIE

When Jake died, I lost hope, but worse, I also lost faith. I couldn't believe in a God that would take him away, make him suffer from lung cancer. And he didn't even smoke, we just went to some bars where others smoked.

Millie tears up.

MILLIE

I been faking it, Ruthie. And I'm scared. If Jesus is there, he knows I don't believe like I should. I been lying about it all. And I thought it didn't matter. But it does. It does.

RUTH

But you're the most Christian person I know.

MILLIE

I do try to follow Christ's teachings.

RUTH

Then you got nothing to worry about.

MILLIE

I got plenty to worry about. Jake didn't believe in the Bible, or any religion. Now what if there is an afterlife, and since he don't believe, he didn't get to Heaven? Then what do I do?

RUTH

You can't look at it that way.

MILLIE

Jesus said: I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but my me.

RUTH

Now I can't help you with the Bible quotes.

Millie yells out in pain, tries to stifle it.

MILLIE

It hurts too much. Please hand me the pill bottle in the drawer there.

Ruth opens the drawer, takes out a pill container, hands it to Millie.

RUTH

Let me help.

MILLIE

No, I got it.

Millie holds Ruth's hand tightly, looks straight into her eyes. Sings the last verse of TAKE ME HOME SWEET JESUS.

MILLIE

*I am ready, yes I am.  
Take me home, Sweet Jesus,  
To my man.*

Millie opens her arms. Ruth embraces Millie, hugs her tight.

MILLIE

I'm not letting you go until you promise.

RUTH

Promise what?

MILLIE

You know. That you'll sing for me one last time.

RUTH

I can't do that.

MILLIE

You got to promise. You got to. Please promise me.

RUTH

Okay.

Millie lets Ruth go. Heaves in pain and relief.

MILLIE

Maybe you should go get Chaplain Davis.

Ruth exits.

MILLIE

Thank you, Ruthie.

### 31. OUTSIDE CODY'S ROOM

Andrew comes out of Cody's room. Takes off his face mask. Sees Ruth, flashes her a thumbs up sign.

Ruth flashes a thumbs up back, but doesn't enter Cody's room.

### 32. PRESTON'S ROOM

Preston, markedly more ill, lays in bed..

Ruth enters.

PRESTON

My favorite CNA.

RUTH

I heard it was Lisa on the second shift.

PRESTON

Then you're my second favorite.

RUTH

I will cut her.

Preston chuckles, but it turns into a violent coughing. When he covers his mouth, there's a DNR bracelet on his wrist.

PRESTON

You'll be my favorite for the rest of my life.

Ruth points to the DNR bracelet.

RUTH

Why that?

PRESTON

Metastasis to my brain and lungs and liver. Pretty much spread everywhere. Can't do radiation. Chemo won't help when it's this far along, just prolong it and make me sicker.

RUTH

There's got to be something they can do.

PRESTON

There are no good options.

Ruth tears up as she takes his temperature. Preston tries to cheer her up by singing the song they sang together. His voice is weak.

PRESTON

*Unforgettable*  
*That's what you are.*  
*Unforgettable*  
*Tho' near or far.*

He waits for her to sing, she's too emotional.

PRESTON

Come on, please. I want to hear your amazing voice. Please?

RUTH

I can't.

Preston points to his guitar.

PRESTON

I want you to have the guitar. Take it. Make beautiful music. You have a gift from God, and now a gift from me.

RUTH

I can't.

PRESTON

Of course you can. Hand it to me, please.

She picks up the guitar case and brings it to him in bed. He takes it then pushes it right back at her.

PRESTON

This is for you. Don't let your talent go to waste.

Ruth cries.

PRESTON

What the hell are you doing wasting your time here? I made one very big mistake in my life. I don't want you to screw it up, like I did.

RUTH

You certainly didn't screw up your life. Jeez.

PRESTON

You're ten times more talented than me. Don't make the mistake I did.

RUTH

I'm not going to law school.

PRESTON

Ha. You know what I mean. You're going to be a super star.

RUTH

Yeah, right.

PRESTON

Remember, talent, luck, persistence. That's what you need. You definitely got the talent. Persistence, that's the big question. You gonna keep on trying?

RUTH

Yes.

PRESTON

Louder.

RUTH

YES!

PRESTON

Good. Now sing for me.

RUTH

I can't.

PRESTON

One last song.

Ruth tears up, rushes out.

### 33. CODY'S ROOM

Ruth takes Cody's temperature. He still wears a mask.

RUTH

98.2 You're doing fine. One more day, right?

CODY

Yep.

Bet your excited. RUTH

Yep. CODY

RUTH  
I saw Andrew walking down the hall. Funny thing, there are no physical therapy patients on this floor. Did you have a visitor?

Cody just glares at her.

RUTH  
Yep. Was that a smile? Did I see a smile?

CODY  
No.

RUTH  
Cody.

CODY  
Fuck no.

RUTH  
Let's take a look at the big picture here. You could have died, but you didn't. You're going to pull through this just fine. And you're still angry?

CODY  
I'm not angry.

RUTH  
You shouldn't be. You've been given a second chance. Be happy.

CODY  
Who died and made you the Pope?

RUTH  
No one died. And I can't be the Pope. I'm a woman.

CODY  
Who died and made you Madonna?



RUTH

I can't be Madonna. I can sing.

CODY

How'd you feel if all I ever asked you about was your personal life?

RUTH

Actually? Flattered. You've never asked one question about me. So typically male.

CODY

Are you a lesbian?

RUTH

I wish. No Cody, I'm not. But what if I was?

No response from Cody.

RUTH

You can't just wish or pray away your sexuality.

CODY

Are you dating anyone?

RUTH

No, I'm not. I don't really date.

CODY

And you're lecturing to me?

RUTH

Who's gonna go out with me?

CODY

Good point.

RUTH

Fuck you.

CODY

I'm just joking.

RUTH

If you were straight... oops. But. You. Are...

CODY

Not.

RUTH

Good boy. That's a start. If you were straight, honestly, would you date me?

Cody's silent.

RUTH

There you go.

Ruth exits.

### 34. RUTH'S APARTMENT

Ruth enters. Walks to the desk, sees the Ryan Gosling shrine.

RUTH

Heya, Ryan.

Ruth sits down, starts playing the keyboard. She fools around with the gospel melody.

### 35. MILLIE'S ROOM

Millie's bed is bare of sheets, there's just a plastic cover over the mattress. Some of Millie's belongings are strewn on the bed.

CeeCee packs stuff in a box.

Ruth, holding a fudgesicle, enters. Sees the empty bed.

RUTH

Was she transferred to the ICU?

CEECEE

No, she passed. This afternoon.

Ruth is shocked. Leans against the wall for support.

CEECEE

She talked about you a lot.

RUTH

I know this has to be hard for you. She was my favorite patient.

CEECEE

Really? You encouraged her to give up and you know how hard it is for me?

RUTH

It was her wish to join her husband as soon as possible. She was afraid to talk to you about it, so she told me.

CEECEE

She would be here now if she had treatment.

RUTH

That's what you wanted, not what she wanted. She looked forward to joining Jake. She wasn't leaving you, she was joining him.

CEECEE

You brought great joy to my mom in her last days. Thank you.

RUTH

All she talked about was you. She is so proud of you.

Ruth offers the fudgesicle to CeeCee.

RUTH

For you, then?

CEECEE

Honey, do I look like I need it? You can have it?

CeeCee hands it back to Ruth.

RUTH

Do I look like I need it?

CeeCee reaches for something on the side table, it's an empty pill container.

CeeCee hands something to Ruth. It's a happy face drawn on a piece of paper and glued to a popsicle stick.

CEECEE

She made me promise one thing before she left.

CeeCee hugs Ruth.

CEECEE

That you would sing at her funeral.

RUTH

I know. I can't.

CEECEE

She was absolute on this. She loved that song. It was the last thing she wished for. Except that I find a husband.

RUTH

It's impossible.

CEECEE

For me to find a husband?

RUTH

No. For me to sing.

CEECEE

I can pay you. I'm the executor of the estate.

RUTH

It's not at all about money. I'd lose my job.

CEECEE

I'll take care of that.

RUTH

Apparently, you already did.

CEECEE

I'm sorry about that. I was really pissed, and I took it out on you. I won't break this promise to her. You absolutely must sing at her funeral.

They hug.

### 35. PRESTON'S ROOM

Preston sits in bed. Doesn't look well. Ruth enters, smiles.

RUTH

How you doing?

PRESTON

I have a final wish.

RUTH

Don't talk like that.

PRESTON

It is. And you can't turn it down. Promise.

Preston reaches for her hand. They hold hands.

PRESTON

Promise?

RUTH

I promise.

PRESTON

You have to sing your favorite song to me. Right now.

RUTH

I can't do that.

PRESTON

You promised.

RUTH

I didn't know that was the wish. It's not possible.

PRESTON

Come on. You're fantastic. Please.

RUTH

I can't sing to patients anymore. I'd lose my job.

PRESTON

Ha. I'll take care of Nurse Happy Juice. Don't you worry about her. Now sing.

Preston pats the side of his bed. Ruth moves closer. Sings  
SONG 1, BEFORE YOU CLOSE YOUR EYES.

RUTH

*Before you close your eyes---*

PRESTON

Wait, wait a sec. I want to record this. All of it.

Preston grabs his cell phone. Taps it to start recording, hold it up to frame Ruth. Nods for her to start again.

RUTH

Before you close your eyes  
And say your last goodbye  
Let me hold your hand  
Just for a while.

Take all the fear inside  
The pain of your life.  
Let it go, if not just  
For a while.

And share with me  
The memories  
The love you've earned  
And lost through all your days.  
The mountains climbed  
The rivers cried.  
The ones you've touched  
And changed along the way.

Before you close your eyes  
Take me back in time  
Your crazy dreams  
Your first kiss.  
Did she smile?

The secrets cared inside  
Your greatest of night  
Were you ever free  
Running wild?

And please share with me  
The memories  
The love you've earned  
And lost through all your days.

The mountains climbed.

The rivers cried.  
The ones you've touched and changed  
Along the way.

Tell me how your story goes.  
Tell me how your story goes.

Preston, eye's filled with tears, reaches out with his left hand, pulls her hand toward him, and kisses it.

PRESTON

Jesus. I'll watch this every day I have left.

Preston taps off his phone. Ruth is speechless. Preston ad libs to the same tune.

PRESTON

*When I leave  
Please let me go.  
But promise me  
You'll sing for you.  
You'll sing for me.*

Preston opens his arm wide, and they hug.

### 36. CODY'S ROOM

Cody sits in bed. There's a loud KNOCK at the door. It startles Cody.

CODY

Jesus. What?

Cody's DAD enters.

DAD

Hey , Cody.

The stare at each other.

DAD

Well.

CODY

Well what?

DAD

How are you?

CODY

Thanks for asking. I almost died.

Cody dials a number, speaks into his phone.

CODY

Could you send Ruth 314. Cody Wilkerson. Now. Thanks.

Dad moves closer.

CODY

Don't come any closer, your germs will make me sicker.

DAD

You could have told us.

CODY

Mom will get her wish.

DAD

She never wished this.

CODY

The Hell she did. Her exact words were: I wish you were never born.

DAD

She was in shock. I've read a lot more about it now. It's no one's fault.

CODY

Yes, it's not her, or your fault. That should be a relief for you both.

DAD

Cody, I'm trying to understand. I would have come earlier if you had called.

CODY

Thank you, Dad, for coming. Where's Mom?

DAD

She's praying for you.

CODY

I don't need her prayers.



DAD

It appears you do.

CODY

Yes, I can hear her now preaching “God chose to give you leukemia.”

DAD

She wouldn’t say that.

CODY

Oh yeah, what she’d say is “God gave you leukemia because you’re gay.”

Dad looks away.

CODY

Right? That’s what she said. I know it.

Ruth walks in, sees Cody’s Dad, turns to leave.

CODY

Don’t you leave. Come back here. Ruth, this is my Dad.

RUTH

Nice to meet you.

DAD

Thanks you for taking care of Cody. I’m going to go find your mother. Your room is still there. You can stay at home until you feel better.

CODY

Thanks, Dad, but no way in Hell.

DAD

Cody!

Dad exits.

### 37. CHURCH SANCTUARY

A casket sits in front. A large photo of Millie and Jake smiling stands next to it.

CeeCee stands behind a pulpit, speaks into a microphone. Ruth stands nearby, wearing a black choir robe. A gospel choir stand in the back.

CEECEE

Millicent coached me, pushed me, inspired me, motivated my rebellion, then unconditionally, well almost unconditionally, accepted me. But she was always my best friend, though I acted sometimes like her enemy. During her last few months, she was cared for by an amazing staff of very compassionate and even sometimes funny staff. They made her smile each and every day and she made them smile right back. But I want to thank one person in particular.

CeeCee nods toward Ruth.

CEECEE

There was one person Mama looked forward to seeing every single night she worked. They shared a deep love of gospel music. At Mama's request, this wonderfully talented singer wrote a special hymn for her. Her name is Ruth Sanchez, and she's going to sing Mama's song for you.

CeeCee nods to Ruth, who comes to the pulpit.

RUTH

Millie, I know you're looking down on us now, at these flowers, your loving friends and family, and I'm hoping there's an abundance of chocolate in Heaven. This is for you.

Ruth nods. The Chorus stands. Ruth sings SONG 4,  
TAKE ME HOME SWEET JESUS.

RUTH

*Oh my Lord, my feet are tired,  
My knees are weak.  
My back is worn.  
My body aches.*

CHORUS

*I am ready, yes I am.  
Take me home, Sweet Jesus*

RUTH

*Oh my Lord, my house is clean.  
My friends are gone.  
My baby's grown.  
My work is done.*

## CHORUS

*I am ready, yes I am.  
Take me home, Sweet Jesus.*

## RUTH AND CHORUS

*I am ready, yes I am.  
Take me home, Sweet Jesus,  
To my man.*

CeeCee, tearful, smiles lovingly at Ruth.

38. PRESTON'S ROOM

MR. and MRS. ROSS sit by Preston's bed. Preston's half asleep.

Ruth enters.

## RUTH

I'm sorry to disturb him, but I need to get vitals.

Ruth takes his temperature. Preston opens his groggy eyes. He smiles, but can't talk.

## MRS. ROSS

We saw the movie of you and Preston singing. It made us so happy. Thank you.

Preston shakily raises his left hand and points to the guitar case, then point to Ruth.

Mrs. Ross cries. Mr. Ross comforts her.

## MRS. ROSS

He wants you to have his guitar.

## RUTH

I can't take it.

## MR. ROSS

Yes, he is absolutely resolute that you take this.

## MRS. ROSS

He said you made better music than him.

## RUTH

I can't.

Preston slaps the side of his bed with his left hand. Points to the guitar case then back at Ruth again. Struggles to speak. He can't so he slaps the bed again, points to the guitar case.

MR. ROSS

He is adamant that you take it.

Mr. Ross grabs the guitar case and presents it to Ruth.

MRS. ROSS

Please take this, and use it well. He insists.

Ruth takes the guitar case, then grabs Preston's left hand. He lets his head and body relax. Ruth cries.

### 39. CODY'S ROOM

Cody, without a face mask, sits up in bed.

RUTH

Your Dad seems like a nice guy.

CODY

He tries.

RUTH

Did you talk to him anymore?

CODY

About what?

RUTH

You know.

CODY

Yes, he knows I have leukemia.

RUTH

You need to talk about you.

CODY

There you go again.

RUTH

I just want you to find someone. I know this cute physical therapist.

I know. CODY

I'm going to miss you. RUTH

Thanks. CODY

Cody's Dad enters.

Hey. CODY

How you doing? DAD

Fine. CODY

I'll see you later, gater. RUTH

Probably not. They're moving me to the regular ward. My blood count is almost back to normal. CODY

Then it's goodbye, my friend. RUTH

Cody gets up and hugs Ruth.

Thank you for all your help. And pushiness. Remember me when you're famous. CODY

Sure. RUTH

Ruth, holding back tears hugs Cody again. Exits.

#### 40. HALLWAY OUTSIDE CODY'S ROOM

Ruth enters, watches Mr. Ross, standing outside the door talking to Claire. Mr. Ross enters, Claire stand guard.

Ruth pulls the vitals cart up to the door, tries to enter the room. Claire stands in the way.

CLAIRE

There's no need for that.

RUTH

Sorry, what?

CLAIRE

No one is to disturb the family.

RUTH

But I need to get this information.

CLAIRE

No you do not. Do you understand?

RUTH

I didn't get a chance to--

CLAIRE

Take his blood pressure or pulse? That doesn't matter anymore.

Ruth tries to peak in. Claire blocks her view.

CLAIRE

You are not to enter this room.

RUTH

It's just, he wanted--

CLAIRE

What he wanted is no longer relevant. What he needs is peace and to be with his family.

They stare at each other, then Ruth exits with her cart.

#### 41. NURSES STATION

Nurse Becky and Dr. Newby review charts.

NURSE BECKY

Oral phenergan's not helping the new admit in 316. I'd like permission to try--

Claire enters and interrupts the conversation.

CLAIRE

I have something you need to see. This is absolutely outrageous.

Claire shoves her phone in their faces. The phone plays the recording of Ruth singing to Preston.

RUTH (ON THE PHONE)

*If you should ever go  
Before you leave, just let me know  
So I can say goodbye then cry  
A lake of tears.*

Claire's outraged.

CLAIRE

It's inappropriate for an employee to be flirting with and singing love songs to a patient.

NURSE BECKY

When was that taken?

CLAIRE

Yesterday.

NURSE BECKY

That was after her warning. Could you please get the video link to me? We need it as evidence.

CLAIRE

I trust this will be taken care of immediately and appropriately!

DR. NEWBY

You have my word.

CLAIRE

Thank you. I can't believe you'd let someone like that work here.

Claire exits.

DR. NEWBY

I thought you took care of this?

NURSE BECKY

I thought so too.

DR. NEWBY

She's gone. You know that.

NURSE BECKY

Yes, doctor.

42. NURSES STATION, LATER

Ruth enters, sits down next to Nurse Becky.

RUTH

You wanted to see me?

NURSE BECKY

Yes, Ruth. What did I warn you last time. You know. What were you warnnd not to do?

RUTH

Sing to patients.

NURSE BECKY

That's right.

Nurse Becky pulls out her cell phone, taps on it, then the video of Ruth singing to Preston starts playing.

RUTH (ON THE PHONE)

*If you should ever go  
Before you leave,  
Just let me know*

Nurse Becky clicks the phone off.

NURSE BECKY

Was this recorded before, or after I warned you?

Ruth stalls.

NURSE BECKY

I'd think about this very carefully, as the video has a date and time on it.

RUTH

After you warned me.

NURSE BECKY

Ruth, I have no choice but to terminate your employment. For cause. As of right now.

RUTH

But he made me promise to sing to him.



NURSE BECKY

And Miss Millie wanted you to help her die.

RUTH

No, no, that's not true at all.

NURSE BECKY

Human Resources will send you your final check.

RUTH

All I ever did was try to make people happy.

NURSE BECKY

I know. But it's out of my hands. The orders came directly from the doctor. He won't change his mind. I'm sorry. Good-bye.

Ruth stand up, exits.

#### 43. HALLWAY OUTSIDE PRESTON'S ROOM

Mr. Ross helps escort a tearful Mrs. Ross outside the room.

Ruth enters, wearing her regular clothes, stops a distance away.

Mr. Ross looks directly at Ruth, shakes his head no. Ruth knows he's gone, sits on the floor, cries.

#### 44. NURSES STATION

Nurse Becky looks at her computer, clicks through a couple screens, finds the YouTube recording of Ruth singing to Preston. Plays a couple seconds of it.

RUTH (ON THE COMPUTER)

*If you should ever go  
Before I leave,  
Just let me know.*

Dr. Newby enters. Nurse Becky stops the video.

DR. NEWBY

The singing nun is gone, correct?

NURSE BECKY

Yes. But I'm not certain we did the right thing.

DR. NEWBY

It's the right thing for the hospital. Don't worry about it anymore. I checked with legal. Unless there's a formal complaint filed, which there isn't, nothing can happen.

Dr. Newby exits.

Nurse Becky get back to the computer, clicks to start the video again.

RUTH (ON THE COMPUTER)

*So I can say goodbye the cry  
A lake of tears.*

Nurse Beck cries. Regains her composure, then CLICKS the share button.

#### 45. VIDEO SCREEN

MONTAGE:

A group of medical assistants watch the video.

A Facebook page shows thousands of hits.

A post reads: Amazing Singing CNA.

Someone tweets: Why is she still working in a hospital.

A Nigerian man uploads a file, types: "I would by her music."

A Vietnamese woman watches the video at a store.

An office worker in Brazil types "You got to see this.

A group of Indian children crowd around a TV set watching Ruth sing.

#### 46. THEATER STAGE

Ruth sits alone, in a chair center stage, holding Preston's guitar. She's nervous, but confident. She looks up at the ceiling, blows a kiss upwards.

Ruth nod okay, ready to go.

The curtain opens up. Over the loudspeaker system, Preston's recorded voice plays:

PRESTON (RECORDED)

Jesus. I'll watch this every day I have left.

Ruth sings SONG 1, BEFORE YOU CLOSE YOUR EYES.

RUTH

*Before you close your eyes  
And say your last goodbye  
Let me know you hand  
Just for a while.  
Take all the fear inside  
The pain of your life.  
Let it go if not just  
For a while.*

Cody, now with a full head of hair, and Andrew appear and watch.

RUTH

*And share with me  
The memories  
The love you've earned  
And lost through all your days.*

*The mountains climbed  
The rivers cried.  
The ones you've touched  
And changed along the way.*

CeeCee and Nurse Becky appear and watch.

RUTH

*Before you close your eyes  
Take me back in time*

*Your crazy dreams  
Your first kiss.  
Did she smile?*

*The secrets caged inside  
Your greatest of night  
Were you ever free  
Running wild?*

Andrew reaches over to grab Cody's hand. Cody smiles, takes Andrew's hand, and they watch together.

RUTH

*And please share with me  
The memories  
The love you've earned  
And lost through all your days.*

*The mountains climbed  
The rivers cried  
The ones you've touch  
And changed along the way.*

*Tell me how your story goes.  
Tell me how your story goes.*

Ruth finishes. Cody and Andrew and CeeCee and Nurse Becky applaud.

*(Fade Out.)*