

A PRIVATE WAR

by

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OPENING CREDITS

EXT. ASHTON-IN-MAKERFIELD - BLUE BELL MEADOW - DAY (1959)

Children lie in the grass full of blue bells, looking up at the clouds.

Voice-over by adult Eileen Wilson.

EILEEN (V.O.)

Life's like a meadow just rolling along. Some lives are short, others are long. The meadow reflects what the heavens throw down.

Cawing crows fly to a big old tree with a rope hanging from it.

EILEEN (CONT'D)

The grass may shimmer or may turn brown. Often there is grass growing over our feet, but there in the distance are flowers so sweet.

Children laugh and tickle each other.

EILEEN (CONT'D)

Sometimes there is mud just sucking us in and life's like a game that we just cannot win. But the meadow holds delights for our eyes to behold...

EILEEN WILSON (8, agile, fearless), brother WILFRED WILSON (12, a rough-and-tumble boy in torn trousers), and brother, DENNIS WILSON (11, a playful follower), roll over on their hands and knees, jump up, and run to the tree. A pregnant German shepherd BARKS.

EILEEN (CONT'D)

The light shines upon it, sometimes silver or gold. Whatever may happen one thing we do know; when one life does end, another will grow.

Close-up of Eileen beating her chest giving the Tarzan yell as she leaps off the rope with abandon. Her mother, THELMA WILSON (40-something), calls:

THELMA (O.S.)

TIME FOR SUPPER!

The children run, the dog lumbering after them.

EXT. ASHTON-IN-MAKERFIELD - WALKWAY - WEEKS LATER

A puppy German shepherd, CHEETAH, with a ball in her mouth, follows Eileen along the walkway.

"

EXT. ENGLAND - CATTERICK BARRACKS - NIGHT (1981)

Eileen transforms into a 30-year-old, focused warrant officer walking a military dog toward a barracks.

INT. ENGLAND - CATTERICK BARRACKS - CONTINUOUS

Eileen and a Duty NCO walk briskly down the hall. They hear loud laughing and talking, burst the door open, flip the lights on and six women go quiet. Two of the six jump out of bed to stand at attention. The other four hang their heads.

EILEEN

Ladies, I asked you once to keep the noise down, please. You obviously need a little cooling off!

EXT. ENGLAND - CATTERICK BARRACKS - LATER

The six women shiver in their peacoats and nighties outside the barracks.

EILEEN

As a soldier you must learn to respect your fellow recruits and superiors. Next time when you are given an order YOU DO IT!

EXT. NIJMEGEN - AIRPLANE HANGAR - DAWN (1981)

Cramped with 400 beds, teeming with women soldiers in the last stage of dressing.

Outside, garrison leader Eileen gathers her 11 teammates, who wear combat trousers, white polo shirts, green berets carry a small banner: "WRAC Rheindahlen Garrison."

EILEEN

All right, ladies, we've trained hard for the Nijmegen March. Remember pacing and our goal: all of us make it to the finish line in four days without casualties!

Eileen picks up her backpack, steps forward.

EILEEN (CONT'D)

We can do it. Let's show the rest
of them how it's done! HEAD OUT!

Along with thousands of energetic men and women they run in pack formation as they march through the countryside. Tired but smiling, they sing, "It's a Long Way to Tipperary." A cacophony of songs in various languages fade in and out.

SUPERIMPOSE: "Fourth Day."

EXT. NIJMEGEN COUNTRYSIDE - DAY

Marching with her team, Eileen shifts to slow motion with the sound of her feet THUDDING. She shakes it off as motion returns to normal speed. They pass a medic tent with men on stretchers.

EXT. FINISH LINE - DAY

Eileen's team cross the finish line jubilant and dripping wet. A cheering, clapping crowd packs the sidelines as a band plays.

INT. DUTCH RESTAURANT - NIGHT

A buzzing room is packed with military and civilian marchers. Eileen's team wear medals. They raise their glasses to toast.

EILEEN

To the WRAC Rheindahlen Garrison,
we did it!

They clink glasses, stand, and cheer. Eileen's eyes flutter, and she hits the floor with a THUD.

INT. UNDERGROUND TUNNEL - DAY

Eileen, dressed for work, carries a briefcase and purse. She drifts sideways to the left, bumps into the wall. Returning to the middle she drifts off to the left again a half dozen times.

SUPERIMPOSE: "1984."

INT. DOCTOR'S EXAM ROOM - DAY

A blurry eye chart is viewed behind phoropter lenses as they click and change. Wearing an exam gown, Eileen wobbles as she stands on one leg. A reflex hammer hits her knees and ankles.

INT. QUEEN ANNE'S MILITARY HOSPITAL - EILEEN'S ROOM - NIGHT

Eileen sits in bed. Nearby are her sister MOIRA (late 30s, dark hair, full lips, natural beauty), and her nephew SHELDON (18, doe-eyed).

Enter COLONEL GARDNER (50-something, strong, all business and no bedside manner). "Mr. Gardner" is embroidered on his white coat. His right hand is scarred and missing its first three fingers.

COLONEL
(briskly)
Good day, pleased to meet you. I'm
Colonel Gardner.

Looks for her name on the chart.

COLONEL (CONT'D)
You must be Warrant Officer Wilson.

He holds a chart in one hand, shakes Eileen's hand with the other.

EILEEN
This is my sister Moira Wilson and
my nephew Sheldon.

He shakes their hands perfunctorily, flipping through the medical chart as he speaks.

COLONEL
Well, then, let's see, you have
been having trouble with your eyes
for three years and difficulty
running.

He finishes thumbing through to the end of the chart.

COLONEL (CONT'D)
Yes. Yes. And we've completed all
our tests.

He taps the chart.

COLONEL (CONT'D)
We have come to the conclusion that
you have MS.

Eileen appears perplexed.

MOIRA

(shocked)

Can you tell us any more, like what tests were done for MS? Any scans?

COLONEL

We've done a battery of tests and although the one MS test was negative, all indications are that she has MS.

MOIRA

Could it be anything else? Have you tested for other diseases?

COLONEL

Look, dear, I have 30 years of experience in my profession. I understand it is difficult to come to terms with this kind of news, but it would be in everyone's best interest if you let us do what we know best. I have prescribed a three-week course of steroids.

MOIRA

No offense meant, Colonel, but would you at least humor me and give me a copy of the test results? This is a shock. We don't know much about MS.

COLONEL

(mildly irritated)

If you insist. Officer Wilson, you will have to fill out release forms.

EILEEN

(peeved)

Moirra, hold on. You have my permission for the test results, but please, I just want to get back to work in Cyprus next month. Let's just let the medicine and the doctor do their job.

COLONEL

Unless there is anything else, I've got to finish my rounds.

INT. QUEEN ANNE'S MILITARY HOSPITAL - DAY - TWO MONTHS LATER

At a distance, DR. KILROY (30-something, kind-faced chief resident), notices Eileen pushing a rolling tray table while her left ankle drags, turning inward. He rushes up with a wheelchair.

DR. KILROY
Here, please sit down.

Their eyes meet with a spark.

DR. KILROY (CONT'D)
Excuse me, I'm sorry, I'm Dr.
Kilroy, chief resident. Just trying
to keep you safe.

EILEEN
Why, thank you. I see I'm in good
hands.

INT. PHYSIOTHERAPY DEPARTMENT - DAY

Eileen sits on a low treatment table wearing metal braces from her thighs down to a pair of shoes. JANE, the physiotherapist, young and fit, adjusts the straps.

JANE
All right, Eileen, hold on to the
walker and stand.

Jane holds the gait belt in front and gives a tug with one hand.

JANE (CONT'D)
One, two three!

Jane locks the braces. Eileen is steady until she has leg tremors, which travel up her back. She arches backward acutely, hands fly up in the air, the walker is thrown, and she FALLS forward onto her belly. Her head arches uncontrollably in the direction of her feet and feet in the direction of her head.

EXT. GRASSY TRAINING FIELD - AFTERNOON (FLASHBACK)

Twenty men and five women, new recruits, are at attention. Burly SERGEANT FOX has a large German shepherd on a leash.

SERGEANT FOX
In war, these dogs are trained to
attack the enemy. I need a
volunteer.

EXT. GRASSY TRAINING FIELD - AFTERNOON - LATER

Barely able to walk, Eileen enters wearing an oversized protection suit with a head cage attached. The released dog runs toward her. Eileen is flipped 10 feet in the air, landing on her belly.

END FLASHBACK.

INT. PHYSIOTHERAPY DEPARTMENT - DAY

Jane, horrified, runs out.

JANE
HOLD ON, I'LL GET HELP!

INT. PHYSIOTHERAPY DEPARTMENT - LATER

As Jane holds down Eileen's legs, Dr. Kilroy gives her an injection into her buttock. The spasms are slow to subside, so he gives a second injection. Eileen passes out.

INT. QUEEN ANNE'S MILITARY HOSPITAL - EILEEN'S ROOM - DAY

Eileen has a full-blown spasm while on her back. Dr. Kilroy and a nurse rush in. Dr. Kilroy sees the full hanging IV bag, grabs the clipboard.

DR. KILROY
DAMN, the heminiverin is already up
to the maximum dosage, and it isn't
working. Nurse, page Colonel
Gardner right away.

INT. QUEEN ANNE'S MILITARY HOSPITAL - EILEEN'S ROOM - LATER

Slightly blue, sweaty, and her voice hoarse from grunting, Eileen wears an oxygen mask.

INT. GAS ROOM - DAY (FLASHBACK)

Two men peer through a glass window as Eileen, 17 year-old recruit, wearing a gas mask, is in a 10 x 10 room filled with gas. She walks around three times, takes off her gas mask, drinks a glass of water, and eats from a plate of biscuits. Her eyes tear uncontrollably.

EILEEN
(choking)
W/857249.

END FLASHBACK.

INT. QUEEN ANNE'S MILITARY HOSPITAL - EILEEN'S ROOM - DAY

Colonel Gardner enters to find Eileen still choking.

DR. KILROY
Colonel, the drip is no longer
stopping the spasms. She's already
at maximum dosage.

COLONEL
Mr. Kilroy, open the drip all the
way.

Colonel Gardner grabs the clipboard and writes an order.

DR. KILROY
With all due respect, sir, that
would be enough to knock out 20
men.

COLONEL
Do it, Mr. Kilroy!

Dr. Kilroy opens the drip. Within seconds Eileen's spasms
stop and she is unconscious.

INT. QUEEN ANNE'S MILITARY HOSPITAL - HALLWAY - NEXT WEEK

DOCTOR RAHJ (40-something, Indian with kind eyes, in a suit
and bow tie), signs in at the desk. Moira accompanies him.

INT. QUEEN ANNE'S MILITARY HOSPITAL - EILEEN'S ROOM -
CONTINUOUS

Eileen is in a wheelchair.

DR. RAHJ
It's so nice to meet another member
of the Wilson family.

He shakes Eileen's hand.

EILEEN
(slowly, mildly drugged)
The pleasure is mine.
(MORE)

EILEEN (CONT'D)

Dr. Rahj, I don't know much about homeopathy, except that you've helped Moira, and my nephew Sheldon.

INT. QUEEN ANNE'S MILITARY HOSPITAL - HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Colonel Gardner and Dr. Kilroy walk towards Eileen's room doing rounds.

INT. QUEEN ANNE'S MILITARY HOSPITAL - EILEEN'S ROOM - LATER

DR. RAHJ

Now that we've completed your assessment, I'm prescribing a remedy. Open your mouth, please.

Dr. Rahj unscrews a dropper bottle and places two drops of liquid on her tongue.

DR. RAHJ (CONT'D)

I'm writing the instructions on the bottle. Please call me with a report in six weeks.

He hands Eileen a slip of paper and a bottle.

DR. RAHJ (CONT'D)

Should anything come up before then, just ring me.

A knock, the Colonel and Dr. Kilroy enter.

COLONEL

Excuse me. We are here doing rounds. Miss Wilson, who is this?

MOIRA

(flustered)

Colonel, this is Dr. Rahj, our family homeopath.

COLONEL

I did not authorize any outside consultation! This is a military hospital, Dr. Rahj. I must ask you to leave, NOW.

INT. QUEEN ANNE'S MILITARY HOSPITAL - EILEEN'S ROOM - DAY

Eileen, in bed, is hooked up to an empty IV bag. Moira and Sheldon knock, enter. Sheldon walks with a side-to-side lurch. Moira kisses Eileen and pats her head.

MOIRA

What have you been doing?

EILEEN

(giggles)

Just painting my toenails. Did you bring me my cigarettes?

MOIRA

Oh, yes. Don't worry, I never forget those. I also just picked up some new remedies from Dr. Rahj for you and Sheldon.

She places a dropper bottle on the nightstand. Sheldon walks over to the small television, turns it on, flips channels.

SHELDON

How can you stand this tiny television? Brilliant, a horror film!

Food trays in the hall CRASH. Eileen goes into full spasm while on her back. Her left arm flails around.

MOIRA

It's OK, it's OK, here are your drops.

Dr. Kilroy pauses at the doorway to see Eileen in spasm and Moira giving Eileen a few drops in the corner of her mouth. Moira massages Eileen's lower back as the spasms gradually abate. Amazed and perplexed, Dr. Kilroy quietly walks past the room.

INT. QUEEN ANNE'S MILITARY HOSPITAL - EILEEN'S ROOM - DAY

Half-asleep, Eileen watches a drama on television. Moira enters putting snacks on the night table.

MOIRA

Hi, Eileen.

EILEEN

(groggy)

Hel...lo.

MOIRA

Are you sleeping at this hour?

EILEEN

No, I'm...perfectly awake. I've been...watching a show about... fishing.

Moira turns the TV off. Eileen yawns.

Dr. Kilroy and Colonel Gardner knock, enter.

COLONEL

Good afternoon, ladies.

EILEEN

Good day, Sir.

COLONEL

Officer Wilson, we have to stop these spasms of yours. My plan is to put you to sleep. A machine will breathe for you. When we wake you up, the spasms will be gone.

EILEEN

That sounds...good to me. Colonel, you know I want...to get back ... to my post...as soon...as possible.

MOIRA

Colonel, may I have a word with you over here please?

COLONEL

Miss Wilson, I'm in the middle of rounds, I don't really have time for this.

They step away from Eileen's bed for privacy.

MOIRA

Your plan makes no sense to me at all! Not only that, but she is drugged up to the eyeballs! You haven't even given the homeopathic drops a chance.

DR. KILROY

Sir, I've seen them work!

COLONEL

Now listen both of you, homeopathy isn't for serious illnesses.

(MORE)

COLONEL (CONT'D)

Look, we are giving her the best modern medical care possible.

MOIRA

I won't allow it. You can't put her on a ventilator without a second opinion. I have enduring power of attorney.

COLONEL

Stay calm, we have things under control, you'll see.

EILEEN

(scowls at Moira)

Easy now...Moira, it'll be...all right.

Moira leaves the room furious.

INT. QUEEN ANNE'S MILITARY HOSPITAL - EILEEN'S ROOM - DAY

Eileen has an IV in her arm. Colonel Gardner and NURSE YORK organize the ventilator/intubation set-up. Colonel Gardner flips the alarm switch, causing a buzzer to sound and light to flash in the hallway.

Startled, Nurse York knocks a metal tray, and it CRASHES to the floor. Out of breath, Dr. Kilroy rushes in, shocked by what he sees: Nurse York picking up the tray/intubation set, the Colonel scowling and Eileen in full spasm.

COLONEL

Mr. Kilroy, you are late! Prepare to intubate! Nurse York, open the drip!

Nurse York opens the drip, and Eileen's spasms subside as she goes unconscious.

COLONEL (CONT'D)

Mr. Kilroy, intubate now!

Flustered Dr. Kilroy intubates Eileen, then uses an ambu bag while Colonel Gardner sets the parameters on the ventilator. Dr. Kilroy attaches the ventilator.

INT. QUEEN ANNE'S MILITARY HOSPITAL - NURSES STATION - LATE AFTERNOON

Moira marches in horrified.

MOIRA

What have you done?

COLONEL

We had no choice, Miss Wilson, she stopped breathing.

Unconvinced, Moira glares at Nurse York and Dr. Kilroy.

MOIRA

I just knew you would do it when I was gone.

Colonel Gardner moves closer in an attempt to placate her. Moira recoils.

INT. QUEEN ANNE'S MILITARY HOSPITAL - INTENSIVE CARE ROOM - DAY - ONE MONTH LATER

Eileen is on the ventilator now which attached through her throat. She is swollen, skin slightly yellow and her hair completely black (previously brown). Dr. Kilroy, Nurse York and Colonel Gardner stand on the outside of the curtain. Eileen's face twitches as she hears the Colonel.

COLONEL

(troubled)

It's been a month and we can't wean her off the ventilator. We are out of options. I'm afraid she is fading away.

INT. QUEEN ANNE'S MILITARY HOSPITAL - INTENSIVE CARE ROOM - LATER

Heart-wrenching music.

Moira sits sobbing as she shakes her prayerful hands on the bed.

MOIRA

My beautiful baby sister, what have they done to you?

Moira looks upwards.

MOIRA (CONT'D)

I've been trying to look after her father, but...

She sobs slowly, and her prayerful hands turn to fists as they pound the bed.

MOIRA (CONT'D)
 You're the soldier. DAMN IT,
 EILEEN, START FIGHTING LIKE ONE!

Moira collapses into unconsciousness holding Eileen's hand.

Enter Dr. Kilroy, sorrowful, with fluid-filled eyes. He stands by Eileen's bedside. He doesn't see the red light blinking on the ventilator. He looks up and down at her once beautiful body, now swollen and still.

FADE TO WHITE.

INT. WHITE TUNNEL - CONTINUOUS

P.O.V. EILEEN LOOKING UP - WHITE TUNNEL OF LIGHT

She sees, out-of-focus, her father GEORGE WILSON as a younger man in military uniform, and a youthful Cheetah. Various kind faces of nurses smile, and float in space.

The camera ascends, Eileen moves upwards to the sound of ascending celestial musical tones and sweet beckoning voices.

GEORGE
 EILEEN!

CHEETAH
 BARKING!

EILEEN
 BUGGER OFF, I'M NOT READY!

Quick descent away from the faces.

FADE TO DARK.

INT. QUEEN ANNE'S MILITARY HOSPITAL - INTENSIVE CARE ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Dr. Kilroy, holding Eileen's other hand, notices the ventilator blinking and that the alarm is switched off.

DR. KILROY
 Good God, EILEEN!

Dr. Kilroy resets the ventilator. Moira wakes up panicked.

INT. QUEEN ANNE'S MILITARY HOSPITAL - OUTSIDE COLONEL GARDNER'S OFFICE - NEXT DAY

P.O.V. HALLWAY WINDOW TO COLONEL GARDNER'S CLOSED OFFICE

Colonel Gardner looks incredulous as Dr. Kilroy's unheard conversation escalates to slow motion yelling and gesticulating.

Colonel Gardner turns pale.

Dr. Kilroy quickly takes off his jacket, throws it and a letter of transfer on the Colonel's desk. Dr. Kilroy storms out. The Colonel pounds his fist on the desk, shaking his head.

SUPERIMPOSE: "Months Later."

INT. QUEEN ANNE'S MILITARY HOSPITAL - EILEEN'S ROOM - DAY

Eileen looks brighter with only an IV. Moira combs her hair. A NURSE enters with a syringe.

MOIRA

(to nurse)

So, how is it going, Dr. Fletcher's drug trial?

NURSE

Week three, so far so good. Dr. Fletcher is pleased. Those liver spots are almost gone now, too.

EILEEN

I feel pretty good. Hey, at least I'm awake!

MOIRA

Yes, I have noticed it isn't as quiet around here! Leave it to my sister to have a rare neurological disease! Finally a doctor who knows what's wrong with you!

SUPERIMPOSE: "One Month Later."

INT. QUEEN ANNE'S MILITARY HOSPITAL - EILEEN'S ROOM - DAY -

Eileen, dazed, stares at the sunset. Moira enters, notices the IV and nasal feeding tube, and lifts the lid of a food tray to see an untouched lunch.

Nurse enters, hangs a new IV bag.

MOIRA

Nurse, what's that for?

NURSE

I don't know, Miss. Colonel Gardner ordered it.

MOIRA

May I see the chart please?

INT. QUEEN ANNE'S MILITARY HOSPITAL - MEN'S LOUNGE - NIGHT

Colonel Gardner converses with other men smoking and drinking brandy. Moira storms in. Colonel Gardner walks to a quiet corner.

COLONEL

Miss Wilson, I'm sorry this is not the place...

MOIRA

We will talk here and now!

Moira plants herself steady.

MOIRA (CONT'D)

I arrived today to find Eileen looking like a zombie, not eating nor drinking and back on those drugs again.

COLONEL

My pet, don't get upset, we know what we are doing. Let me get something to calm you down.

He touches her shoulder. She pulls away.

MOIRA

DO, NOT, touch me! And do NOT call me YOUR PET! I'm not hysterical.

Moira braces herself.

MOIRA (CONT'D)

(mocking)

"Trust me, we know what we are doing, give the drugs a chance to work. Put her to sleep to stop the spasms." She has Stiffman's Disease Colonel, not MS! She was improving on Dr. Fletcher's drug trial. I don't think you know WHAT THE HELL you are doing!

COLONEL

Look, I enlisted the help of Dr. Fletcher on a prayer that he might be able to help. But the spasms have returned with a vengeance and I needed to control them!

The Colonel pounds his fist into his hand.

COLONEL (CONT'D)

So the drug trial is over, THAT IS THAT!

They notice the other doctors looking at them.

MOIRA

But Dr. Fletcher said she shouldn't be on such high dosages.

Moira brusquely hands him a document.

MOIRA (CONT'D)

Not that you have ever respected it, but I do have enduring power of attorney, Colonel. I want my sister off those drugs.

COLONEL

May I remind you that this is a military hospital, Miss Wilson? Your sister is under my command. I will not deviate from what I consider to be the best medical care for my subordinate.

He crumples the document and throws it in the garbage.

COLONEL (CONT'D)

My authority OUTRANKS yours.

Moira pleads with her eyes for support from the other doctors, who look away and sip their drinks.

SUPERIMPOSE: "SIX MONTHS LATER, 1987."

INT. QUEEN ANNE'S MILITARY HOSPITAL - EILEEN'S ROOM - DAY

Eileen is thin, groggy, with a feeding tube and IV. Colonel Gardner with longer hair, mid-eighties style, enters carrying a little red book.

COLONEL

How are you today?

EILEEN
Ship...shape sir.

COLONEL
Well, as you know, we've held your
position open for nearly three
years now.

The Colonel walks to the window, looks out.

COLONEL (CONT'D)
I'm afraid you won't be able to
return to it.

EILEEN
But sir...what if...I improve?

COLONEL
I'm sorry, Eileen. This illness of
yours is the most confounding enemy
I have ever seen in all my battles.
It has evaded my every manoeuvre.
Not only that but it has outlasted
me.

He turns to face her.

COLONEL (CONT'D)
I only wish it were possible for
you to return to duty.

The Colonel breathes, purses his lips, rubs the little book
in his hands.

COLONEL (CONT'D)
I've prepared your medical
discharge. Here is your record-of
service-book.

SUPERIMPOSE: "One Month Later."

INT. QUEEN ANNE'S MILITARY HOSPITAL - EILEEN'S ROOM - DAWN

Soft light breaks outside, high snow on the sill. Moira is
asleep in a chair. Eileen opens her eyes. A light shines on
her face.

EILEEN
(confused)
Moira, get my uniform. I have to
report for duty.

Moira startles awake.

MOIRA

What?

EILEEN

I'm going! We ship out!

Moira takes Eileen's face in her hands.

MOIRA

Eileen, you can't, darling. You've been discharged from the army.

EILEEN

No, No, Moira NO!

Eileen becomes defiant, pounds bed.

EILEEN (CONT'D)

NO, NO, NO more of this. I WON'T HAVE ANY MORE OF THESE DRUGS!

Moira sees the empty IV.

EILEEN (CONT'D)

You heard me, I don't want any part of this treatment anymore. I want only Dr. Rahj's medicine.

Moira takes Eileen's face in her hands again, kisses her.

MOIRA

Oh, Eileen, you are back! That's my sister talking!

INT. QUEEN ANNE'S MILITARY HOSPITAL - EILEEN'S ROOM - DAY - LATER

Moira brushes Eileen's teeth. The IV bag is still empty. Colonel Gardner enters.

COLONEL

Good morning ladies. Sorry I'm running late, but we are a little shorthanded today with the snow storm.

Eileen spits into the spittoon.

EILEEN

Colonel, I don't want any more of your drugs.

COLONEL

I don't think you are in a position to know what is best for you.

The Colonel glares at Moira.

EILEEN

Colonel, I may not be sure what day it is, but I do know what position I'm in. I want my wishes to be respected.

COLONEL

My dear, you've been on 25 different drugs for the past three years. If I stopped them all today, you would go through an agonizing withdrawal. I won't allow it.

EILEEN

I don't care, I can bear it.

Incensed, the Colonel calms down, considers his response.

COLONEL

Warrant Officer --

EILEEN

(gently correcting)
Miss Wilson, Colonel.

COLONEL

(realizing)
All right, Miss Wilson, if you insist on disregarding my medical advice, the safest thing to do is to wean you off slowly. It could take two or three years. That is my final offer.

EILEEN

Accepted.

SUPERIMPOSE: "Winter, 1988."

INT. HAMPSTEAD - MANSION LIBRARY - DAY

Unfurnished, spacious. ROBIN (40-something, balding, trim, tidy, in stocking feet), has his hands on CHRISTINE (early 30s, small-framed but sturdy American). He gives her an Alexander lesson in a chair.

Eight other students carry out procedures on the floor, table, and a wooden horse.

Robin looks at his watch.

ROBIN

OK, class, that is it for today.
Christine, may I have a word,
please?

CHRISTINE

Sure.

ROBIN

The sister of one of my private students has some kind of rare neurological disease. It's pretty bad. They are all at their wit's end, because no one seems to be able to help her. She asked me if the Alexander Technique could help.

Robin clears the room, placing chairs against the wall.

ROBIN (CONT'D)

Honestly, I thought of you because of your physical therapy background. Would you mind contacting her?

CHRISTINE

Sure, no problem.

EXT. SWISS COTTAGE TUBE STATION (1988)

Winter. Christine outside. Early 1980's car pulls up, the window rolls down. Moira in the front seat, Sheldon drives.

MOIRA

Christine?

CHRISTINE

Yes, Moira and Sheldon?

INT. CAR - CONTINUOUS

Christine gets in the back seat.

MOIRA

I'm glad Robin was able to hook us up. He said you are on his Alexander training course.

CHRISTINE

Yes, as a physical therapist, or, as you say, physio, Robin refers some of his students to me. Have you both taken Alexander lessons from him?

MOIRA

Yes, and they've really helped Sheldon with his ability to stand up. He's had muscular dystrophy since about 11 years old.

CHRISTINE

That's great! I'm glad it has been helpful. How long of a drive have we got?

SHELDON

About two and a half hours as the crow flies.

CHRISTINE

Then you'll have plenty of time to tell me about Eileen!

MOIRA

Where do I start? Well, my little sister Eileen enlisted in the Women's Royal Army Corps at the age of 17. She was diagnosed at about 30, first with MS, but she really has Stiffman's disease.

CHRISTINE

Never heard of it.

MOIRA

It is a rare neurologic disease not many people know about. At its worst the spasms literally choked the breath out of her. Now milder spasms and tremors still make it hard for her to move or be moved.

The car begins slow winding turns.

MOIRA (CONT'D)

And because she can't sit, she lies flat, making her joints stiff hence "Stiffman's Disease."

CHRISTINE

Unbelievable. I can see in the early phase it being diagnosed as MS, but horrific spasms surely would have tipped them off that something else was wrong.

MOIRA

Five years of wasted life, being drugged out of her mind just to keep the spasms under control...

The car takes faster winding turns.

MOIRA (CONT'D)

Eileen is off most of the drugs now. They have left her, well, not quite herself. She doesn't remember a lot of what happened.

Christine is uneasy, pulls out a tissue.

Moira (CONT'D)

Though they've tried, none of the therapists have been able to make any progress.

CHRISTINE

So I'm brought in to be Annie Sullivan in the "Miracle Worker"?

MOIRA

I'm afraid so. I just don't know what else to do.

Christine goes pale.

CHRISTINE

Sheldon, quick pull over now!

EXT. HOLY HAVEN HOSPITAL - DRIVEWAY - LATER

Sacred CHANTS sung by women off-screen. The car winds uphill, passing an outdoor enclosed aviary containing budgerigars and cockatiels. The birds startle and fly.

The car parks. Moira gives Sheldon a pull out of the driver's seat. They all walk toward entrance.

INT. HOLY HAVEN HOSPITAL - EILEEN'S ROOM - LATER

Eileen, with a nasal feeding tube, watches cartoons. Just a few personal items are on her shelves. Sheldon enters.

EILEEN
(silly duck voice)
Hello, little nephew. How are you?

SHELDON
I'm fine, thank you.

EILEEN
Hey, where are Moira and Christine?

Sheldon
Well, you know how winding the roads around here are? Christine got car-sick. She's freshening up in the ladies room.

He sits next to her bed. Eileen pulls his index finger, making another duck noise. She continues playing with his face.

Moira and Christine enter.

MOIRA
Well, we made it.

EILEEN
Are you OK?

CHRISTINE
Yes, I'm fine, sorry to keep you. Next time if I'm in the front seat I'll be fine. I know, a motion specialist who gets motion sickness! Just one of those mysteries of life I guess.

MOIRA
Christine, this is my little sister Eileen.

Moira turns off the TV.

Christine reaches out to shake Eileen's right hand. As Eileen leans forward, her left hand flies up waving uncontrollably.

EILEEN
Pleased to meet you. Don't mind my left arm. We call her Fidge.
(MORE)

EILEEN (CONT'D)

She's very friendly and excited to meet you.

CHRISTINE

Well, pleased to meet you, both.

MOIRA

I hope we haven't scared you off!

CHRISTINE

Not yet. So, Eileen, Moira has told me a little about you. What would you like to accomplish if I were to work with you?

EILEEN

Honestly, I just want to get better and get out of here. I'm afraid, afraid of being like this forever, not at my age.

CHRISTINE

I get that. I can't imagine it for myself, either. Well, let's see what you can do.

INT. HOLY HAVEN HOSPITAL - EILEEN'S ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Eileen twitches as Christine measures the severely limited motion of her left shoulder and wrist with a goniometer.

CHRISTINE

Now make a fist.

Eileen's arm and hand spasm.

CHRISTINE (CONT'D)

Good try, Fidge. Enough for now.

Moira pulls down the sheets to reveal atrophied legs. Her feet are pointed downwards, toes red compared to white legs.

EILEEN

(giggling)

Meet Flip and Flop, wave to the nice lady!

Eileen struggles to barely wiggle her stiff toes and ankles.

Moira helps Eileen slowly roll to the left side. Her back and neck mildly jerk, arch, and spasm.

Moira gives Eileen drops on her tongue, massages her back.

CHRISTINE

Wow! This happens every time she is moved?

MOIRA

Well, yes or if she tries to move. Eileen has to be moved very slowly, not much time for that around here.

CHRISTINE

I worked at the county hospital in Chicago and saw almost everything medical there is to see. But I'll say I've never seen such an illness.

EILEEN

Do you think you can help me?

CHRISTINE

Honestly, I never really know if I can help a patient until I try and then see how they do.

The spasms subside. Moira helps her roll on to her back.

CHRISTINE (CONT'D)

Here's the problem I see. We've got to get your joints bending a lot more so you can sit up. We've clearly got to work slowly. If you can manage yourself in a wheelchair you should be able to get out of here.

EILEEN

Sitting up in a wheelchair would be huge. You know when people see me flat on a gurney they don't see me as a "person." They see a body on its way out.

CHRISTINE

That must be pretty discouraging.

Christine checks her calender.

CHRISTINE (CONT'D)

I'd suggest I come one Sunday a month?

EILEEN

I'll do what ever it takes. Moira will too, right?

Moira nods.

EILEEN (CONT'D)
Ooh, I'm ready for a smoke now.

SUPERIMPOSE: "Next Month."

INT. HOLY HAVEN HOSPITAL - EILEEN'S ROOM - DAY

Christine gently massages and stretches Eileen's left hand and arm.

EILEEN (CONT'D)
You are far from home, aren't there any Alexander training courses closer to home?

CHRISTINE
Oh, sure. About three and a half hours away. But I've lived my whole life in Chicago. London versus central Illinois? It was a no-brainer. Also my Alexander teacher trained here.

EILEEN
I couldn't wait to leave home as soon as I could enlist. In our little town you either worked in the mine or the mill. I left with one suitcase!

EXT. HEATHROW - DAY (FLASHBACK)

Cabdriver throws the remaining bags in his cab, gets in, and takes off.

CHRISTINE (V.O.)
You should have seen me, my girlfriend Dana, bird Grace and 15 bags in two cars, when I first came here two years ago. I had to follow the cab to our B and B!

Christine in a rental car follows the cab down London streets, ending up at Hathaway House B and B.

END FLASHBACK.

INT. HOLY HAVEN HOSPITAL - EILEEN'S ROOM - DAY

EILEEN
Cor, 15 bags! What did you bring?

CHRISTINE

Always a prepared Girl Scout, I brought everything I needed for three years! The tools were handy in fixing up the old car I bought from OT at the psychiatric hospital.

EILEEN

Psychiatric hospital? That sounds a little dicey?

CHRISTINE

No, not really. The patients I work with are not dangerous.

EILEEN

Do you think I'm crazy, the way I talk to my body?

Christine pauses.

CHRISTINE

Crazy? You've had to stay connected in some way with parts of yourself you can't control! Hey, at least you are talking to them!

EILEEN

(laughing)

True, but I wish they'd do what they're told!

CHRISTINE

All in due time.

Christine reaches Eileen's neck, and Eileen softens, her eyes closing with pleasure.

Eileen opens her eyes and looks directly at Christine.

EILEEN

Do you get homesick?

CHRISTINE

I admit I still do even though I have friends the women's choir and the Alexander school.

Christine stops, washes her hands.

CHRISTINE (CONT'D)

It did help that my first job here was working as an au pair for a Jewish family. It was like having a family away from home.

EILEEN

I miss my family. And there is no home since my parents died. That was the only home I've ever known, because I was always on the move in the service.

Eileen clutches and pulls up the covers like a little girl.

EILEEN (CONT'D)

(tearing)

Right all I have is Moira.

Christine flattens the fingers of Eileen's left hand down on Eileen's heart.

SUPERIMPOSE: " Next Month."

INT. HOLY HAVEN HOSPITAL - EILEEN'S ROOM - DAY

Christine massages Eileen's thighs and works to get her hips and knees bending about 50 percent of normal.

EILEEN (CONT'D)

That feels good.

CHRISTINE

Good. In order to get your knees and hips bending we've got to gently loosen your muscles.

Christine works on the other leg.

CHRISTINE (CONT'D)

I've never known any women in the military. What did you do?

EILEEN

I thought I wanted to be a driver, but I got assigned to the telegraphy division called the Royal Signals.

CHRISTINE

What's that?

INT. TELEGRAPHY CLASSROOM - DAY (FLASHBACK)

Female recruits, wearing their WRAC berets and Royal Signals pins, sit in front of teleprinters typing as an instructor points to various keys on a chart.

EILEEN (V.O.)

We encrypted and sent all army communications in the 70s and 80s with telegraphy machines.

END FLASHBACK.

INT. HOLY HAVEN HOSPITAL - EILEEN'S ROOM - DAY

CHRISTINE

Were you on the battle lines?

EILEEN

No, but some women were. We were all trained to be able to go wherever needed.

CHRISTINE

What was your training like then?

EILEEN

We had to be at the peak of physical condition at all times.

BEGIN FLASHBACK MONTAGE:

INT. SMALL GYMNASIUM - DAY

Recruits wearing physical-training outfits run relays, do push-ups, and throw the medicine ball from person to person.

EXT. PARADE SQUARE - DAY

Eileen and 25 female recruits march in formation to commands heard off-screen.

EXT. OUTDOOR TARGET RANGE - DAY

Eileen and women in camouflage uniforms fire at targets using submachine guns while instructors watch.

EXT. SKY - DAY

P.O.V. EILEEN ON CLOUDS BELOW

Eileen, strapped facedown, to the underside of a helicopter, flies through the sky.

END FLASHBACK MONTAGE.

INT. HOLY HAVEN HOSPITAL - EILEEN'S ROOM - DAY

CHRISTINE

Wow, I had no idea. Being as active as you were I can see how painful it is to be confined to a bed.

Moira enters with a tray of tea and biscuits.

MOIRA

Time for a break?

CHRISTINE

Sure, but first just let me show you how nice Eileen's knees and hips are bending.

Christine gets an eight-inch roll and places it under Eileen's knees.

CHRISTINE (CONT'D)

Moira, if you can massage a little and get the knees on here for a little stretch when you visit, that would help a lot.

MOIRA

Sure. Here you go.

They drink and eat.

CHRISTINE

So, how do you think you got Stiffman's?

EILEEN

We don't know. No one knows.

MOIRA

Well, it might have been those infected leg bites you got in India, or the gas they trained you with, or even the tainted milk in Holland?

EILEEN

I don't care really nor do I want to place blame. All I've ever wanted to do is get better!

SUPERIMPOSE: "Next Month."

INT. BRITISH RAIL TRAIN - DAY

Christine, looking pale, drinks Diet Coke and pops a Dramamine while she looks out window.

INT. HOLY HAVEN HOSPITAL - EILEEN'S ROOM - SAME DAY

Christine takes a vinyl foot board, placing it at the foot of the bed.

CHRISTINE

OK, Eileen, we are going to slowly,
and I mean slowly, stretch out your
ankles and feet.

Christine grabs Eileen's legs and slides her down the bed so that the balls of her feet touch the board. She fusses with the heel angles, pulls a little more, and slides the feet down so heels are closer to the board. This process continues and progresses as...

CHRISTINE (CONT'D)

So, Eileen, aside from Moira do you
have other family?

EILEEN

Yes, three older brothers, but I
haven't seen them since Dad died. I
remember that day...

Eileen wrings her hands.

EILEEN (CONT'D)

I flew home from Hong Kong...

BEGIN FLASHBACK:

INT. UNDERTAKER'S PARLOR - DAY

Seated, dabbing their eyes, THELMA WILSON (60-something but beautiful), Moira, Sheldon, Eileen, Dennis, Wilfred, DAVID WILSON (40, mature, in military clothing), talk quietly under their breath to each other.

The FUNERAL DIRECTOR, wearing white gloves, obsessed with cleanliness, enters carrying a large urn of cremains.

DAVID

Sir, we won't be needing that after
all.

INT. UNDERTAKER'S PARLOR - LATER

The Undertaker scoops out ashes with a teacup into six manila envelopes. Disgusted as some spills on his white gloves, he brushes the ashes back into the envelope.

INT. ASHTON-IN-MAKERFIELD - LANGFORD SOCIAL CLUB - THAT EVENING

The Wilson family drink and snack and laugh at a table.

WILFRED

Did you see the look on his face as he was divvying up father's ashes?

They all laugh and hold up their envelope in turn.

EILEEN

Well, we are all scattered about, that's the way he should be with us.

MOIRA

Right then, so what part of Dad do you have, Wilfred?

WILFRED

I got Dad's hands.

MOIRA

I've got dibs on his brains.

EILEEN

I've got his feet.

DENNIS

I've got his ears!

DAVID

I've got his B...

THELMA

Backbone! And I've got his heart.

DAVID

We lift our glasses to you, Dad.

They clink their glasses and say CHEERS!

END FLASHBACK.

INT. HOLY HAVEN HOSPITAL - EILEEN'S ROOM - DAY

CHRISTINE

(laughing)

You've all got quite the sense of humor.

Christine adjusts Eileen's feet and cranks the foot of the bed lower.

EILEEN

How about you?

CHRISTINE

I have two younger brothers. My folks are still alive.

EILEEN

May I ask how they are with you and Dana?

CHRISTINE

Long story, but we have time while your feet stretch...

FLASHBACK BEGINS:

INT. CHICAGO - CHRISTINE'S BATHROOM - NIGHT

Christine in the tub, crying on the phone.

CHRISTINE

Dana, dinner is off with my folks. Yeh, I guess they realized that we are more than just friends. I know they say it is nothing personal, but I'm so sorry.

INT. CHICAGO - CHURCH COUNSELING ROOM - NIGHT

MARILYN (pretty, 50-something), VINCE (distinguished, late 50s), FATHER JAMES, and Christine sit in a semi-circle. Everyone except Father James is very tense.

MARILYN

I just don't understand, dear, you had boyfriends.

CHRISTINE

Yes, there have been plenty of guys pursuing me. I've been open to them, but --

MARILYN

There was Greg and Ron?

CHRISTINE

Look, Mom, as far as I can remember I've always felt more intimate with women. I've always just wanted to be with Juliet, not Romeo.

MARILYN

I don't know what to say to family or friends.

FATHER JAMES

Say whatever you are comfortable with. You'll find a way. What about you, Vince?

VINCE

Well, Father, Christine's lifestyle is just not compatible with our religious beliefs.

FATHER JAMES

OK, Vince, I hear that you think your religious beliefs are not in line with her lifestyle. My question to you is this: Can you still love your daughter?

Silence.

VINCE

Yes.

FLASHBACK ENDS.

INT. HOLY HAVEN HOSPITAL - EILEEN'S ROOM - DAY

EILEEN

Wow, what an amazing priest!

CHRISTINE

Right, it still amazes me, too. I was so tense and afraid of how it could have gone, hell and damnation and all!

Moira enters, takes off her coat.

MOIRA

What is all this?

CHRISTINE

Oh, something I'll teach you to do with Eileen. Where is Sheldon?

MOIRA

He had to work. I took the train.

CHRISTINE

You don't drive?

MOIRA

No, I tried, but...

EILEEN

I did try and teach you...

INT. AUSTIN ALLEGRO - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

Eileen on the passenger side, tipsy and nervously petting Cheetah.

EILEEN (CONT'D)

(tearful)

I can't believe Dad's gone. Moira, I've got two more years in Hong Kong...

Eileen hugs and kisses Cheetah.

EILEEN (CONT'D)

So, Moira, are you ready for your driving lesson?

MOIRA

Are you crazy? I had imagined a well-lit car park, if you must know.

EILEEN

Come on now, I need a designated driver and you need to practice.

Moira pulls out with a SCREECH, almost hitting another car.

MOIRA

Good God! I hope you said your prayers today.

EILEEN

Moira, you know I'm not the religious type.

MOIRA
Well, you better start if you
expect to get home tonight!

END FLASHBACK.

INT. HOLY HAVEN HOSPITAL - EILEEN'S ROOM - DAY

CHRISTINE
So, have you two always been, how
shall I say it, so agreeable?

EILEEN
Nah, that's just us.

MOIRA
And you try to look after a little
sister like this one! Impossible!

They all laugh.

SUPERIMPOSE: "Next Month."

INT. HOLY HAVEN HOSPITAL - EILEEN'S ROOM - DAY

EILEEN
Look, see what I've been up to!

Eileen laces two hands and raises them overhead slowly.

CHRISTINE
Great! I see you've been
practicing.

EILEEN
That's not all. Moira get the roll.

MOIRA
Yes, Colonel!

Moira puts an eight-inch roll under Eileen's knees. Eileen alternately straightens then lifts each knee slowly!

CHRISTINE
And I see you've been getting a
kick out of your homework! Keep it
up.

SUPERIMPOSE: "Winter, 1989."

INT. HOLY HAVEN HOSPITAL - EILEEN'S ROOM - DAY

Alone in silence, Christine holds Eileen's left thumb and pinkie finger like the reins of a horse. A transmission of life connects the two.

EILEEN

How come I'm getting so much better now when I wasn't improving before?

CHRISTINE

Good question. We've slowed everything down, put space between your intention and action. Maybe helping you over-ride the spasms?

Christine re-adjusts her grip on Eileen's left hand.

CHRISTINE (CONT'D)

I've also made the movements simple enough so you could do them without straining, and you've done your homework!

EILEEN

I guess slow and easy has never been my strong suit.

Christine slowly lets go. Eileen takes her left arm up effortlessly overhead. They both smile deeply.

CHRISTINE

Brilliant, well done. So, Eileen, how did you end up here at Holy Haven, with nuns?

EILEEN

That much I do remember like it was just yesterday. Two years after I had become a civilian, the military decided to transfer my care. I was almost sent to a home for incurables!

Christine works with Eileen's right hand.

EILEEN (CONT'D)

I flat out refused. Holy Haven was the next choice. Little did I know that there would be battles ahead with a superior of a different kind!

BEGIN FLASHBACK:

INT. HOLY HAVEN HOSPITAL - HALLWAY - DAY

Off-screen women SING scared chants. A nun, wearing a traditional black habit with white bib, walks down a white hallway. A nun in a white habit turns left to a small, stark, white room, where Eileen lies flat in bed. On a night table are a leather cigarette case and lighter.

SISTER MARY THOMAS (middle-aged, humorless), KNOCKS. Eileen, (with a nasal feeding tube, is still very thin), dozing, wakes.

SISTER MARY THOMAS
Good afternoon, Eileen Wilson?

INT. HOLY HAVEN HOSPITAL - EILEEN'S ROOM - CONTINUOUS

EILEEN
Yes, Sister?

SISTER MARY THOMAS
I'm Sister Mary Thomas, the mother superior here at Holy Haven.

EILEEN
Do come in. Pleased to meet you, Sister.

Sister Mary Thomas enters.

SISTER MARY THOMAS
I trust you are settling in and wonder if there is anything special you require?

EILEEN
Well, just my cigarettes, that's all.

Sister Mary Thomas smiles, winces, and hands Eileen a Bible.

SISTER MARY THOMAS
As a welcome to your new home, I'd like you to have this.

EILEEN
Thank you, Sister. Is it a best seller?

Eileen takes the Bible.

EILEEN (CONT'D)

Well, I see it is a best seller,
and one I've never read. Thank you.

Sister Mary Thomas makes a mental note, "a non-believer."

SISTER MARY THOMAS

Well, if there is anything at all
you need, just ask to see me. Oh,
and by the way, if you wish to
attend Sunday mass, one of the
nurses can take you to the chapel
on a gurney. God bless.

SISTER MARY CELESTE (a full-bodied, whimsical, aging Irish
nun with large ears and nose, and thick glasses), KNOCKS and
pops her head into the open doorway.

SISTER MARY CELESTE

Oh, so sorry to interrupt!

SISTER MARY THOMAS

No problem, Sister. Eileen, I'd
like you to meet my right hand, the
ears and eyes of Holy Haven, Sister
Mary Celeste.

SISTER MARY CELESTE

A warm welcome to you, Eileen!

Fusses with her welcome gifts.

SISTER MARY CELESTE (CONT'D)

Let's see, I've got today's paper,
crossword puzzles, an extra
blanket, a menu for the week, and
oh! Can I bring you a nice cup of
tea?

EILEEN

Yes, thank you. Just skim milk, no
sugar.

Sister Mary Celeste spies Eileen's cigarette case and winks.

END FLASHBACK.

SUPERIMPOSE: " Spring, 1990."

INT. HOLY HAVEN HOSPITAL - EILEEN'S ROOM - DAY

Christine with very short hair; Eileen brighter, propped up
on a wedge; Moira depleted with dark circles under her eyes.

Eileen fully bends her left elbow and raises her arm up overhead. She lifts her right leg in the air, bends the knee about half-way, and straightens it in the air.

Moira removes the wedge, easing Eileen down. Eileen rocks her upper body side to side to pop up onto her elbows. Her head barely trembles, nor does her body as she steadies herself, smiling. Holding briefly, she gently spreads her elbows to lie back down, then rolls on her side, trembling a little.

Christine, Moira and Sheldon HOOT and CHEER. Moira puts a pillow under her head.

CHRISTINE

Brilliant! It's been so great to see you progress over the last year. I know you've still got a ways to go, but I'm pretty sure the physios here can help you to the finish line.

Christine scribbles her address on a piece of paper and hands it to Moira.

CHRISTINE (CONT'D)

Please do write to me in the States and let me know how you are doing. I've got Moira's address in case you bust outta here soon!

EILEEN

AMEN!

SUPERIMPOSE: " One Year Later."

INT. HOLY HAVEN HOSPITAL - OUTSIDE EILEEN'S ROOM - DAY

Sitting in the hallway, Sheldon in a push wheelchair; Moira despondent and red in the face.

Nurses pass them entering Eileen's room, where Eileen lies flat. They take Eileen's blood pressure and hang IVs.

Sister Celeste approaches, putting her arms around Moira.

SISTER MARY CELESTE

Now, now, it may just be a temporary setback dear.

Moira sobs deeply.

SISTER MARY CELESTE (CONT'D)

That's right, dear, let out all your tears.

MOIRA

Sister, I can't bear it. Two years of progress, all gone. She can't move. It was just bladder surgery. How can this be? The move, caring for Sheldon, it's all too much.

SISTER MARY CELESTE

That's it, breathe deeply. You must take care of yourself, love. Leave the rest in God's hands.

Sheldon is disturbed at seeing Moira fall apart.

SUPERIMPOSE: "Autmn, 1992."

INT. HOLY HAVEN HOSPITAL - EILEEN'S ROOM - DAY

Posters of russet-colored orangutan and a kitty hanging onto a pole by its nails decorate the walls. Books, audio equipment, a photo of Eileen and Cheetah on shelves.

Eileen works a crossword puzzle. Moira enters carrying a stack of reading material.

EILEEN

No Sheldon today?

MOIRA

(drained, short-tempered)

No, I took the train. The van is being fitted with new hand controls and a lift for his electric wheelchair. It won't be ready for another week.

EILEEN

That should be easier on your back! What would you do without Sheldon as your driver?

MOIRA

I hate to think of where we'd all be if he couldn't drive and work at the switchboard.

Moira tidies, hands Eileen magazines.

Eileen hits the magazines with her left hand, which then jerks up in the air frantically.

EILEEN

(escalating)

I can't do another crossword puzzle, Moira! I just can't! I've seen nothing but these four walls for five years! I'M GOING STIR CRAZY!

Moira pulls out a brochure, hands it to Eileen, speaks to Eileen's left hand.

MOIRA

I know, I know, keep your shirt on, Fidge. I may have just the thing.

EILEEN

(incredulously)

A group called "Across"...takes handicapped people on holidays!

MOIRA

Yes, and they have an opening in April!

EILEEN

Brilliant! How soon can we pack?

SUPERIMPOSE: "WINTER, 1992."

INT. CHICAGO - COFFEE SHOP - DAY

December. Christine writes a Christmas card.

CHRISTINE (V.O.)

Dear Moira and Eileen, wondering how you are getting on? Dana, Grace and I have been living with Dana's mom, saving up for a house.

EXT. CHICAGO - CHRISTINE'S APARTMENT BUILDING - DAY

December. Moving men carry items up the front walkway.

CHRISTINE (V.O.)

The yard has great garden potential, and there is space for me to work at home! I wonder how you all are getting on?

SUPERIMPOSE: "Spring 1993."

EXT. ENGLAND - FERRY PARKING LOT - DAY

A Jumbulance, an extra-wide bus with "Across" painted on it, waits for seven disabled people to board. Most are in wheelchairs assisted by a crew of ten volunteers.

DAVID (30-something, sweet-faced), and other volunteers load luggage.

Moira kisses Eileen good-bye as she is strapped tight to a gurney.

EILEEN

Wish you were coming. Maybe we could find a spare wheelchair and they'd take you!

MOIRA

Go on now. I'll finally get some peace and quiet. I might even go to a spa for the week! If you don't come back I won't let on that I know where you are!

As Eileen is loaded on the lift, it jerks; her left hand flies up, waving. Moira waves back.

BEGIN MONTAGE:

INT. JUMBULANCE - DAY

Jumbulance travels through the countryside. David leads everyone singing: "100 Bottles of Beer on the Wall."

INT. FINICULA - DAY

Joined by David and Claire, Eileen looks from her flat gurney with wonder and delight as they travel high above the trees.

EXT. OUTDOOR EUROPEAN CAFE - DAY

The "Across" group sit around several tables laughing, talking, and eating. Eileen's gurney is next to the tables. Sue passes around chocolates. Eileen sips out of a cup with handles and a lid.

END MONTAGE.

INT. JUMBULANCE - NIGHT

Pretending to be tipsy, everyone sings: "Show Me the Way to Go Home." Sue passes around chocolates. Eileen touches David's arm with her right hand across the aisle.

EILEEN

I've had such a fantastic time. I'm definitely going to apply next year.

DAVID

Oh, Eileen, with so many disabled people wanting to go on holiday each year, you may only be able to apply for a pilgrimage.

EILEEN

Hmm, well, OK. I'll apply for a pilgrimage, but between you and me, I wouldn't be going for religious reasons.

Eileen drifts off into a happy daydream.

SUPERIMPOSE: "Autmn, 1994."

INT. CHICAGO - CHRISTINE'S 2ND FLOOR PORCH - DAY

Christine in tears, watches DANA (30-something, tall), loading a car with clothing and a moving van being loaded with boxes.

INT. CHICAGO - CHRISTINE'S BASEMENT - DAY

Christine sands an old dresser, by hand. Friend JOANN (40, handsome), arrives at back door with a bag. They hug.

CHRISTINE

Hey, Jo, thanks for bringing me the steel wool, also for this great old dresser.

JOANN

No problem. Hey, how are you doing?

CHRISTINE

Great on the sanding front. Let's say when the going gets tough, the tough makes things look better! Honestly, though, dating sucks.

Joann helps with the sanding.

CHRISTINE (CONT'D)

It's been two years on my own, and I've had personal-ad dates and coffee dates arranged by a service for women. I get my hopes way up, and then it's a real letdown. I'm not at my best having a hungry heart.

JOANN

I'm glad I'm with Gayle. It's not like when we were in our twenties and went to the coffeehouse or bar for fun, that's for sure. Doing anything for fun?

CHRISTINE

Hmm, yes, one bright spot is that I've been going to this American Baptist Church --

JOANN

GOD NO!

CHRISTINE

Wait now, it's a welcoming and affirming church that believes in soul liberty.

JOANN

What is that?

CHRISTINE

First, they are open to all regardless of sexual orientation. Second, they hold that everyone must come to know God and the truth through their own heart and mind, not according to set doctrine.

Christine wipes the sawdust off the top with a swish!

CHRISTINE (CONT'D)

I'm comfortable being myself there. And I get to sing in the choir! I've really missed singing!

INT. HOLY HAVEN HOSPITAL - EILEEN'S ROOM - DAY

Sister Mary Thomas knocks, enters. Eileen puts down her book.

EILEEN

Thanks for stopping by, Sister.

SISTER MARY THOMAS
No trouble at all, anytime.

EILEEN
Sister, I'd like to get an electric trolley so I can get out more often. If I had a letter of recommendation from you, it would help me get funding.

SISTER MARY THOMAS
I'm sorry, Eileen. You've been confined to a bed now for what, 10 years? I just don't think you'd be safe in something like that. I cannot support anything that may be dangerous or unsafe.

EILEEN
Sister, I can manage it. I've tried a prototype.

SISTER MARY THOMAS
Isaiah 40:11 "Like a good shepherd I will tend and protect my flock."
I just cannot take responsibility for that kind of risk. Surely you understand my position.

Sister Mary Celeste has overheard the conversation from the hallway and enters. Sister Mary Thomas takes this opportunity to leave.

SISTER MARY THOMAS (CONT'D)
Good day, Eileen. Sister.

Sister Mary Thomas exits.

EILEEN
Sister, I flat out need more freedom! I will not let her stop me. We must find another way.

INT. JUMBULANCE - FRENCH COUNTRYSIDE - DAY

Eileen lustily leads the travelers in singing "Pack Up Your Sorrows." Next, CHRIS (middle-aged, plump, wearing dangling Virgin Mary earrings), leads the group in singing "Kumbayah." Eileen doesn't know the song and is silent. They arrive at a beautiful wooded grotto at Lourdes.

CHRIS

Shush! We are here, we are at the
Holy Grotto.

EXT. FRANCE - LOURDES GROTTA - CONTINUOUS

Travelers unload. David pushes Eileen's gurney to the front of the grotto, joining Chris and others in a silent circle of prayer. Starting with David each person takes the hand of the next until Eileen reluctantly takes the hand of the person on her right. Her left arm jerks when she takes David's hand.

In this ultimate moment of grace and intimacy, Eileen is touched deeply. Fidge calms down. They all witness the beauty and peace of the sun setting.

INT. LAKE STREET CHURCH - SANCTUARY - MORNING

Sun streams through a beautiful stained-glass window onto Christine's lap as she sits in a pew with the choir before service.

CHRISTINE (V.O.)

(quietly)

Oh, Holy One, help me to recognize
the person YOU would have me to
love, someone of faith who together
we can be more than who we'd be on
our own. Let us love and serve you
together and individually. AMEN.

INT. LAKE STREET CHURCH - SANCTUARY - LATER

Choir stands singing "For the Beauty of the Earth" with Christine singing with joy.

INT. HOLY HAVEN HOSPITAL - HALLWAY OUTSIDE EILEEN'S ROOM -
DAY

Sister Mary Celeste totters down the hall pushing a cart. Her large ears perk up as she hears Eileen yelling angrily.

EILEEN (O.S.)

YOU STUPID THING, I DIDN'T TELL
YOU, YOU COULD DO THAT!

INT. HOLY HAVEN HOSPITAL - EILEEN'S ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Sister Mary Celeste rushes through the open doorway and is relieved to see Eileen lying flat in bed using an adapted computer with the monitor on a rolling shelving unit.

SISTER MARY CELESTE

I should have known you were on the computer.

EILEEN

Are you psychic now?

SISTER MARY CELESTE

My psychic powers aren't that good yet, but my ears are. I could hear you down the hall!

EILEEN

Well, if it would do as it was told, it wouldn't need a talking to!

Sister Mary Celeste hands Eileen the newspaper and mail. Squinting, she spies some papers on the bed.

SISTER MARY CELESTE

May I ask what you are working on?

EILEEN

Poems. Here, take a look. They just came into my head, so I wrote them down.

Sister Mary Celeste picks up the papers and strains to read them.

SISTER MARY CELESTE

Say, these are good. I bet children would love them!

EILEEN

Here is a new one: "The Bible is a book, explaining life on earth, It has many stories, including Jesus' birth."

SISTER MARY CELESTE

I know a local publisher you could send them to.

EILEEN

If you think so.

SISTER MARY CELESTE

My dear, it may just be the answer to our prayers!

INT. HOLY HAVEN HOSPITAL - EILEEN'S ROOM - DAY

Eileen lies in her new electric trolley with the head of it up a little. Sister Mary Celeste combs Eileen's hair, puts on lipstick.

INT. HOLY HAVEN HOSPITAL - HALLWAY LOUNGE - CONTINUOUS

Eileen slowly drives the trolley with her right hand on a joystick. She and Sister Celeste arrive at the lounge. Journalist HELEN GREEN, and a proud Sister Mary Thomas stand up.

SISTER MARY THOMAS

Eileen, this is Helen Green from the Hanover Herald, here for your interview.

Helen Green takes a flash photo of Eileen holding her book on her lap. This turns into a black-and-white still photo on the front page of the Hanover Herald newspaper titled: "Poems for all the Family," dated 1996.

INT. LAKE STREET CHURCH - DANCE FLOOR - NIGHT (1996)

Dancers travel around counterclockwise to a Cajun band playing music. CATHY (40-something, pretty), dances with VICKI, the dance instructor. Christine chats with a guy on the sideline.

VICKI

Hey, Christine, you ought to dance with Cathy. She's new here tonight.

INT. LAKE STREET CHURCH - DANCE FLOOR - LATER

Christine leads a waltz with Cathy, who looks awkward.

CATHY

What am I doing wrong?

CHRISTINE

Are you by any chance left-handed?

CATHY

Yes, how did you know?

CHRISTINE

Well, I'm a movement specialist! I believe you are pulling to the left. Can you relax and just let me steer?

They glide with the greatest of ease, and smile.

INT. LAKE STREET CHURCH - CAJUN DANCE FLOOR - LATER

During a break, Christine and Cathy talk, laugh, and flirt.

INT. CHICAGO - CHRISTINE'S KITCHEN - NIGHT

Christine is on headset phone, as she washes the dishes.

CHRISTINE

Hi, Sharon? This is Christine from Cajun dancing. How's Memphis treating you and Rick? Great to hear. Hey, I got your number from Vicki because I met an old co-worker of yours, Cathy Elliott. Yes, well, Sharon, I really like her and need your advice.

Christine stops and gets serious.

CHRISTINE (CONT'D)

It's a delicate matter. I'd like to ask her out. Do you think she'd go out with someone such as myself? OK, so she's dated men as far as you know. A complex person? Hmm. OK. I'll go for it. Do you still have her number?

INT. CHICAGO - CATHY'S KITCHEN - NIGHT

Cathy is drying the dishes. The phone RINGS. She answers it.

CATHY

Yes, Christine and who? Oh, yes, Christine from the dance. I had such a great time. Great that you talked to Sharon. Sure. I'd love to go to a Cajun restaurant. Way out in Wheeling?

Cathy looks at her wall calender.

CATHY (CONT'D)

OK, how about the Friday after Thanksgiving? Let's firm up the time that week.

INT. HOLY HAVEN HOSPITAL - HALLWAY - DAY

Moira and Eileen (lying flat in her electric trolley) travel down the hallway. Hearing a dog BARK, Eileen's heart nearly leaps out of her chest.

BEGIN FLASHBACK:

INT. WILSON FAMILY HOME - DINING ROOM - MORNING

1959. Dennis bursts in the front door.

DENNIS
MAM, COME QUICK! Sheba had her
puppies last night!

Thelma throws off her apron.

INT. GARDEN SHED - CONTINUOUS

Sheba the German shepherd lies on an old blanket with 11 puppies fighting to get to her teats. Dennis, Thelma, Moira, and Eileen (8) are mesmerized. Three small puppies are pushed to the outside. Eileen gushes with love for the runt with an adorable face.

EILEEN
Mam, look at the runtiest runt of
them all! She can't get to the
milk!

THELMA
Now, now, dear, stop your crying.
Nature is not always fair.

EILEEN
How's she gonna live?

MOIRA
Well, nature may not be fair or
kind, but we have to try to even
the odds. Here Mam, help me.

Moira picks up some of the bigger pups, and puts them on the end while Thelma puts the small pups up to Sheba's teats.

THELMA
Not to worry, dear, thanks to
Moira, we'll see they all get their
turn.

Moira is pleased. Eileen locks eyes on the runt.

EILEEN

Mam, I love that one. She'll be my
baby, my Cheetah.

END FLASHBACK.

INT. HOLY HAVEN HOSPITAL - HALLWAY - DAY

Moira and Eileen stop at the occupational therapy department. They see a sign on the open door, "Stroke Club," where a half dozen stroke patients with various types of disabilities sit in a circle surrounding two dogs wearing "Canine Partners" vests.

Eileen's eyes grow wide. One dog steps up to a woman in a wheelchair and gently takes off her scarf and hat. The occupational therapist, KAREN, greets them at the door.

KAREN

Hello, you are welcome to come in
and meet the assistance dogs.

INT. HOLY HAVEN HOSPITAL - OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY DEPARTMENT -
CONTINUOUS

Eileen and Moira enter and sit on the outside of the circle. There are objects on the floor: keys, a purse, a pen. Karen points to the keys.

KAREN

Look, look.

The other dog picks up the keys.

KAREN (CONT'D)

Hold it, give it.

The dog drops them in the lap of a man who has a paralyzed right arm.

KAREN (CONT'D)

Good girl.

Moira and Eileen watch amazed. Eileen leans over to Moira, whispers.

EILEEN

Moira, I want a dog! I want my
freedom!

MOIRA

One victory at a time, Eileen.

INT. HOLY HAVEN HOSPITAL - HALLWAY - DAY

Eileen zips joyfully down the hallway on her electric trolley to the open door of Sister Mary Thomas. The hospital administrator MR. MCLEMORE and Sister Mary Thomas stop talking.

EILEEN

Excuse me, Sister.

SISTER MARY THOMAS

We're done here, aren't we, Mr. McLemore? If you can get those reports to me next week. Yes, Eileen, how can I help you?

EILEEN

Sister, I'd like to apply for an assistance dog from the Canine Partners. They can do all sorts of amazing things. A dog could help me be more independent.

Sister Mary Thomas and Mr. McLemore are poker-faced.

MR. MCLEMORE

(in fine Queen's English)

Well, it is certainly a possibility.

Sister Mary Thomas looks at Mr. McLemore.

SISTER MARY THOMAS

We can't make any promises, but go ahead and make your application and keep us apprised. I would ask, though, that you not mention it to any of the staff or other patients.

Eileen looks overjoyed.

INT. HOLY HAVEN HOSPITAL - HALLWAY - DAY

Excited, Eileen speeds down the hallway with a letter on her lap. She knocks rapidly on Sister Mary Thomas' door. It opens.

SISTER MARY THOMAS

Good afternoon, Eileen.

EILEEN

Sister, I've just received a letter of approval for an assistance dog from the Canine Partners. A volunteer will come and clean up the toileting area and groom my dog once a week!

Eileen waves the contract toward Sister Mary Thomas.

EILEEN (CONT'D)

I have the contract right here. I just need your signature.

SISTER MARY THOMAS

Eileen, I'm afraid we've decided against setting this kind of precedent. I can't sign the contract.

INT. HOLY HAVEN HOSPITAL - HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Eileen drives erratically, sobbing.

Sister Mary Celeste pushes her tea trolley and observes from behind.

INT. RAMSGATE FLAT - KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Moira is on the phone, Sheldon in his electric wheelchair.

MOIRA

I can't believe it! She let you apply, go through months of the vetting and approval process, then she said no!

Moira slams down a book she was reading.

MOIRA (CONT'D)

She clearly had no intention from the start of letting you have a dog. She probably didn't believe anyone would ever give you a dog.

INT. HOLY HAVEN HOSPITAL - EILEEN'S ROOM - DAY - CONTINUOUS

EILEEN

Moira, I want my dog! I can't. I can't. All hope, snatched away. I must get out of here!

A KNOCK on the door.

SISTER MARY CELESTE

It's me.

Sister Mary Celeste enters, holds Eileen as she sobs, clinging to her.

SISTER MARY CELESTE (CONT'D)

My child, now, now. We must keep the faith no matter how dark the day may seem.

Eileen's sobbing slows to a jerky sigh.

SISTER MARY CELESTE (CONT'D)

Dear, you must understand the Mother. She has been in the convent since she was a troubled girl. This is the only life she knows. I don't agree, but she believes it is for the best.

Sister Mary Celeste looks lovingly into Eileen's eyes.

SISTER MARY CELESTE (CONT'D)

The responsibility of her position has blinded the eyes of her heart. Let's keep it in prayer and I'll have a word with her.

Sister Mary Celeste wipes Eileen's tears.

SISTER MARY CELESTE (CONT'D)

But for now nothing can help more than a nice cup of tea and some chocolate, or maybe a shot of whiskey. I'll be back with mother's medicine!

INT. CHICAGO - CHRISTINE'S KITCHEN - DAY

Christine walks in, listens to her answering machine.

CATHY (V.O.)

Christine, so sorry to say, but we may have to cancel tonight. I'll call you later.

INT. HOLY HAVEN CHAPEL - NIGHT

Sister Mary Thomas and Sister Mary Celeste walk and talk.

SISTER MARY CELESTE

Mother, please consider it. I've grown to love her dearly, and she's grown so much in the Lord. She may be one of the few ones here who could have more of a life.

SISTER MARY THOMAS

Not you too? What is so wrong with this life? It is good enough for us, isn't it?

SISTER MARY CELESTE

Look, all I'm asking is to keep it in prayer, Mother. Will you please?

They both kneel in the chapel and look toward the Virgin Mary as they begin to say their prayers.

INT. CHICAGO - TAPAS RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Christine and Cathy laugh and eat.

CHRISTINE

I'm glad we were able to swing into Plan B. This way you'll have eaten a decent meal, had some laughs, and you can get back to the hospital with your mom tonight. I'm sure it isn't easy working and taking care of her in your downstairs apartment.

CATHY

Not easy isn't the half of it. She is not an easy person. She's legally blind now, diabetic, and has fired every caregiver I've hired. I'm her only friend here. I really need a change of scene and my own life.

CHRISTINE

Wow, well, I'm glad we made it happen and hope we can do it again. Say, do you have time for pumpkin pie at my place?

CATHY

There is always time for pumpkin pie!

INT. HOLY HAVEN HOSPITAL - EILEEN'S ROOM - DAY

Eileen wakes to a KNOCK on the door. Chris pops her head in.

CHRIS

I have arrived from Rome! Greetings
from the weary traveler!

EILEEN

Ah, you made it.

Chris bustles in, and hugs and kisses Eileen with an arm full of photo albums.

CHRIS

I couldn't wait to show you the
pictures from our last trip and
others I found!

PHOTOGRAPHIC FLASHBACK MONTAGE BEGINS:

From the albums on Eileen's lap, each photo is shown with the sound of a CAMERA SHUTTER. Captions are written beneath.

1. The "Across" group, outside of a church in Prague, 1996.
2. The "Across" group in the mountains of South Tyrol, 1999.
3. Costume party: Chris dressed as Cruella de Vil, smoking a long cigarette; Eileen as a Dalmatian with paws up.
4. Formal party with Eileen receiving a kiss on the lips from English celebrity Jimmy Savile.
5. POPE JOHN PAUL II blessing Eileen in St. Peter's Square.

END MONTAGE, PHOTO FOUR MERGES WITH FLASHBACK:

INT. ENGLAND - FORMAL BALLROOM - EVENING

CHRIS (V.O.)

(laughing)

Oh, and who could forget your dream
night with Jimmy Savile!

Attendees are dressed in festive formal attire. JIMMY SAVILE(60-something, aging actor), comes up from the kiss. The whole group howls! He hams it up. Eileen beams as he dances around her gurney to late 90s dance music.

PHOTO FIVE MERGES WITH NEXT FLASHBACK:

EXT. VATICAN - ST. PETER'S SQUARE - DAY

Pope John Paul II gives a benediction to a crowd, they disperse, but a small group of people in wheelchairs remain. Eileen and Chris bow their heads as the Pope approaches.

CHRIS (V.O.)

And our most recent trip to the Vatican.

POPE JOHN

Jen dobre, you English?

EILEEN

(chuckles, blushes)

Yes.

Pope Paul prays in Latin, touching Eileen's head. She makes the sign of the cross. Chris stretches her hands to receive his blessing.

EILEEN (V.O.)

I felt that all the way down to my toes.

CHRIS (V.O.)

That was enough to turn even an atheist Catholic!

END FLASHBACK.

INT. HOLY HAVEN HOSPITAL - EILEEN'S REMODELED ROOM - MORNING

The room is smaller now, cramped. Outside, trees blossom and birds chirp, pecking noisily at an empty Plexiglas window feeder. Eileen wakes to the warm glow of the sun, mesmerized. Her right foot suddenly twitches.

INT. HOLY HAVEN HOSPITAL - EILEEN'S REMODELED ROOM - LATER

Wimbledon tennis is on the TV. Eileen struggles to sit up in the electric trolley, only getting to 25 degrees. Moira enters.

EILEEN

It is about time you got here!

MOIRA

I'm glad you won't be docking my pay! The usual British rail delays, today it was rail work! What in the world are you doing?

Eileen pushes the controls again.

EILEEN

What does it look like? I'm trying to sit up, but the chair won't go any further!

Moira sees birds pecking and squawking at the empty bird feeder.

MOIRA

It seems everyone has a complaint today!

Eileen continues to struggle.

MOIRA (CONT'D)

Here, let me see.

Moira impatiently puts her hand behind Eileen's back.

MOIRA (CONT'D)

Well, the chair is bending just fine. It's is your hips and back that are not bending!

EILEEN

Well, I've been telling it to bend! It just doesn't listen or cooperate! Oh bother, I give up. I do feel strange, though.

MOIRA

That's nothing new!

EILEEN

NO, MOIRA, I feel brighter, stronger within myself. I WANT TO MOVE! My feet keep wanting to move. They feel warm.

Moira touches them, shrugs unsure.

EILEEN (CONT'D)

Maybe they're waking up? Remember that American physio?

MOIRA

Yes. Are you thinking what I'm thinking?

EILEEN

You read my mind.

SUPERIMPOSE: "Summer, 2000."

EXT. CHICAGO - PATIENT'S APARTMENT DOOR - DAY

Christine rings the doorbell. Looks at her watch, makes a cell-phone call.

CHRISTINE

Mr. Henley? Yes, I'm at your front door. You're out shopping? Then I'm not sure I need to see you.

Christine walks down the street making another call.

CHRISTINE (CONT'D)

Janet, yes, this is Christine. That new patient Mr. Henley, I made an attempted visit. He is not home, nor homebound. Apparently he's out shopping. I'm sorry, did you say I shouldn't question his homebound status as I have work? No, I'm sorry, I just can't admit him.

Irritated, Christine gets in her car, and drives.

INT. CAR - CONTINUOUS

Christine is still on the phone.

CHRISTINE

Also, I will be discharging Mrs. Peterson tomorrow after I review her home program. Can I see her for another two weeks? Why? Because the agency makes a higher rate of pay after eight visits? I'm sorry, she just doesn't need it.

INT. CHICAGO - CHRISTINE'S SECOND-FLOOR FRONT PORCH - NIGHT

Christine and Cathy eat dinner in front of the windows. Suddenly Christine breaks down crying.

CATHY

What's wrong?

CHRISTINE

I can't do home health anymore. I just can't.

CATHY

You've always loved your work, why?

CHRISTINE

Yes, I love working with the patients but not for the people I'm working for. It has become a big business, with Carpet Master running the agency, recycling the same patients over and over. There's the pressure to do unnecessary visits, patients who are not homebound. WHERE IS THE INTEGRITY? THE ETHICS?

INT. CHRISTINE'S KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Christine stands to clear the dishes; she and Cathy walk to the kitchen and load the dishwasher.

CHRISTINE

Just today I was told I have to become a full-time employee if I want to continue to work. The reams of paperwork, phone calls, meetings.

Christine stops, focuses.

CHRISTINE (CONT'D)

THIS IS MY ONE PRECIOUS LIFE! I have very special skills that I'm not using in this job. I want to work with patients who I can help more profoundly.

CATHY

OK, you are right! So what do you want to do?

CHRISTINE

I'm gonna quit and practice privately here at home 100 percent of the time.

CATHY

How will you pay your mortgage?

CHRISTINE

It may mean that I have to take out of savings till my private practice builds. I think I can afford it.

CATHY

Great, then how about you get that computer you've wanted and in your spare time you learn how to use it?

CHRISTINE

If you help teach me, it's a deal!

EXT. CHICAGO - CHRISTINE'S FRONT GARDEN - DAY (2000)

Summer. A St. Francis statue is nestled in a lush June-flower border with a statue of the Virgin Mary below the front-porch windows.

INT. CHRISTINE'S HOME OFFICE - DAY - CONTINUOUS

View a small front-porch treatment room with simple physical therapy equipment. There is also an open office where Christine and Cathy connect computer cables. An African grey parrot chats softly nearby. Christine grabs an incoming fax and reads:

EILEEN (V.O.)

Dear Christine, I hope you are the Physio that helped me 12 years ago. I didn't have your current address but found you via the Internet.

CHRISTINE

It's from my English patient, Eileen!

EILEEN (V.O.)

Anyway to catch you up, I continued to make good progress until I had bladder surgery, then lost control of my legs and Fidge went wild again. I'm contacting you because I think my feet may be waking up. I'm wondering if you know anyone here in England that could help me? Apologies if I don't have the right Christine. Eileen Wilson.

CATHY

Wow! What synchronicity! We just set up that fax machine!

INT. CHRISTINE'S HOME OFFICE - DAY - A WEEK LATER

Photos of Eileen joints are on the computer screen. Christine clicks on the skinny knee, and places a goniometer flat on the screen to measure the bend at 20 degrees.

CHRISTINE

Good timing, Eileen. Since we last worked together I've become a Feldenkrais teacher and I now have a computer. So I do believe we can work together, but long-distance.

Christine measures Eileen's hip bending and notates.

CHRISTINE (CONT'D)

I will lie on the floor and imagine I am you. I will create and tape-record instructions on how to do customized Feldenkrais movement lessons. Your body will recognize orderly patterns of movement and it will reprogram your nervous system in ways that exercise alone cannot.

Christine, back at the computer, finishes measuring then energetically types on the computer as if she is playing a piano.

CHRISTINE (CONT'D)

Based on the photos, it looks like you are physically back to square one and more stiff than ever. We need a little divine intervention this time!

Christine stops typing to gesticulate with her hands.

CHRISTINE (CONT'D)

Hey, it would be a real test of what the work can do and it'll be my "dissertation". Ha. As Moshe Feldenkrais would say, together we "will make the impossible possible!" Yes, I'm comfortable opening each lesson with a prayer, per your request.

Christine pulls out an address book and lifts the W tab to reveal a "return to sender" stamp on a letter addressed to Moira.

CHRISTINE (CONT'D)

And by the way I need your address.

INT. CHRISTINE'S HOME OFFICE - LATE AFTERNOON

Christine, prone on a blue Oriental rug, with pen, paper and tape recorder by her side. Late afternoon sun shines on her.

CHRISTINE

We are grateful for this time
together. In quiet stillness we
become aware of your presence
around us and within us, in every
cell of our bodies.

INT. HOLY HAVEN HOSPITAL - EILEEN'S ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Eileen lies awake with the dull bustle of noise outside her closed door. Moonlight shines through the window.

CHRISTINE (V.O.)

We soak up your love and healing
grace. May elasticity return and
useful motion. Guide Eileen
spiritually, heal her through and
through. AMEN.

INT. HOLY HAVEN HOSPITAL - EILEEN'S ROOM - EARLY AFTERNOON

Summer. Two nurses enter and use the electric bed controls then a draw sheet to move Eileen from her back to her left side, causing mild arching and spasms.

The poem "The Quest":

EILEEN (V.O.)

Christine said she'd help me get
back on my feet / But did Christine
realize this would be a feat? Fred
and Flop are touchy, Fidge and Flip
a pest / But did Christine realize
the enormity of the quest?

The nurse on the right stuffs pillows behind Eileen's back and behind her legs.

EILEEN (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Never mind and fear not, for we'll
get there in the end / But did
Christine realize it would drive
her round the bend?

Eileen still spasms.

EILEEN (CONT'D)
 (struggling to speak)
 Sister kindly put in the tape.
 Remote, please?

Slowly the spasms subside, and the nurse hands Eileen the remote.

EILEEN (CONT'D)
 (voice pinched)
 Thank you.

The nurses leave, close the door.

The first movement lesson shown in the next two scenes involves spinning the hand on the bed.

CHRISTINE (V.O.)
 ...turning your fingers
 counterclockwise. Now turn them
 clockwise.

Eileen is lying on her left side, right palm flat on the bed in front of her chest and her elbow in the air. She spins her hand clockwise and counter clockwise awkwardly several times.

Sound of computer keyboard accompanies voice-over.

EILEEN (V.O.)
 I completed side B. Could feel
 parts of me that someone has glued!
 Not to worry, the lessons after all
 are solvents.

Eileen turns her right hand counterclockwise and back several times, but she looks confused. Sound of computer keyboard accompanies voice-over.

EILEEN (V.O.)
 Brain and limbs got a bit confused.
 I think I'll blame it on the limbs,
 can't possibly believe that there's
 a problem with my brain!

Moments later she has the back of her right hand on the bed and spins her fingers back and forth clockwise, then counterclockwise, several times.

A tape deck plays Christine singing a simple version of "The New Puppy Dog Blues." Sound of computer keyboard accompanies voice-over.

EILEEN (V.O.)
By the way I loved your latest
song. I think you ought to form a
band and make a record!

INT. HOLY HAVEN HOSPITAL - EILEEN'S ROOM - LATER THAT NIGHT

Lying on her right side Eileen tries to spin the back of her left hand but the fingers curl up and the movement is disorganized. Sound of computer keyboard accompanies voice-over.

EILEEN (V.O.)
After supper Fidge wasn't too good
so aborted session. Have decided
that for today imagining the
movement is probably the best.

Barely visible in the dark, Eileen, on her right side, stares at her left hand in front of her on the bed.

As she closes her eyes, her fingers and arm twitch as she imagines the smooth spinning of her hand on the bed. She smiles.

INT. HOLY HAVEN HOSPITAL - EILEEN'S ROOM - AFTERNOON

Eileen lies on her left side with pillows packed behind her and the bed tipped forward.

An IMAGINARY CHRISTINE sits watching.

EILEEN
Christine, I completed Tape 3
before Moira came in the afternoon
to disturb me!

Sweating and breathing heavily, Eileen struggles to lift her top leg forward of the bottom leg, jerking and teetering with difficulty.

CHRISTINE
Remember, Eileen, you are learning
to move all over again. At first
you will feel like a clumsy baby.
Not to worry.

EILEEN
I can't say it was impossible, but
I really needed the prayer at the
end! It should have been one of
giving me the last rites!

Jerking slightly, she lifts the right leg again as her head and body teeter back and forth. Exhausted, she drops her right leg behind the left leg on the pillow behind it. Imaginary Christine CHUCKLES as she makes the sign of the cross over Eileen!

INT. HOLY HAVEN HOSPITAL - EILEEN'S ROOM - DAYS LATER

Eileen is on her left side, bed flat, only one small pillow behind her back, none behind her legs.

Imaginary Christine watches.

EILEEN

How many years do I have to perfect
this tape, Christine?

Breathing heavily, drenched in sweat, teetering as she lifts her top leg up twice as high as before, Eileen swings it forward, middle, and back.

EILEEN (CONT'D)

(frustrated)

ASH!

She drops her top leg backwards, losing her balance, and falls back against the pillow behind her.

CHRISTINE

Focus on the process, Eileen. Go
slowly, with less effort. You will
find your own right rhythm.

EILEEN

I enjoyed the prayer, by the way.
When you asked for his loving arms
to be around us and to hold us in
the palm of his hand, I couldn't
stop myself from thinking it
would've been nice if one of you
would've put a hand on my back and
given me a push over!

Christine and Eileen look at each other and chuckle.

INT. HOLY HAVEN HOSPITAL - EILEEN'S ROOM - DAY - ONE WEEK
LATER

Eileen is on her left side, both hands together in front of her. One pillow is behind her, and the bed is flat.

She turns her head to the right and lifts her right hand up in the air each time progressively further behind her until she loses her balance, falling backwards onto the pillows.

Determined, she reaches forward with her right hand and with great effort slowly muscles herself back to the middle. Exhausted, she smiles.

INT. HOLY HAVEN HOSPITAL - EILEEN'S ROOM - DAY

Imaginary Christine watches. Eileen, on her back, in the middle of the bed puts both arms out to their respective sides. She reaches her right hand and arm across her body toward the left a number of times, meeting resistance.

CHRISTINE

Learning occurs through
observation, error, slight
adjustments, and repetition. Use
your whole self.

Eileen presses her right heel into the bed, turning the leg inward. She rolls onto her left side in a jerky fashion.

EILEEN

Yes, yes, yes! I did it! I wanted
to shout it from the rooftops but
of course I mustn't let anyone know
but you!

Imaginary Christine and Eileen high-five.

Eileen hears footsteps and talking in the hallway. She quickly rolls back onto her back with a Cheshire cat smile. Christine is gone. Sound of computer keyboard accompanies voice-over.

EILEEN (V.O.)

Got to go, the nurses are here for
a bath. They don't know a thing! Do
you know, the last time I could
roll was 16 years ago? Have a great
weekend. Luv Me.

INT. HOLY HAVEN HOSPITAL - EILEEN'S ROOM - MORNING

Autumn. Nurses position an arching Eileen face-down on her bed, head turned stiffly to the right, left hand by left hip, right hand near her face.

EILEEN
 (strained)
 Thank you.

Nurse 1 puts a remote control in Eileen's right hand on the way out. Nurse 2 pops a tape into the tape deck.

NURSE 1
 See you after lunch.

NURSE 2
 Enjoy your music!

INT. CHRISTINE'S HOME OFFICE - NIGHT

Christine, face-down on her blue oriental rug, her tape recorder, paper, and pen within reach.

CHRISTINE
 Eileen, your toes will become
 desensitized. It is as if we are
 painting and polishing them. They
 need to become part of you again.

Christine easily sweeps the toenail side of her toes on the rug to the right and left, using her whole body in a coordinated way.

INT. - HOLY HAVEN HOSPITAL - EILEEN'S ROOM - DAY

Eileen tries the same movement, but her feet intermittently lift off in pain.

EILEEN
 (weak voice gets stronger)
 On my belly I'm useless, like a
 fish out of water.

A naked imaginary Christine lies face-down in a shallow glistening pool of blue water next to Eileen's bed. She repeats the sweep but lifts her head up, turning to the right to watch her toes.

CHRISTINE (V.O.)
 The most primordial motions are
 like those of a fish and involve
 rolling. There is greater ease with
 rotational motions around your
 spine.

With eyes wide, Eileen tries to copy Christine. Her struggling becomes easier.

EILEEN (V.O.)

Well, by the time I'm finished I
hope I will evolve from a fish to a
land creature!

Christine progresses the motion to include sliding her right knee up as she looks at her right toes, then alternates the motion from side to side.

Eventually Eileen and Christine are both naked in a larger pool of water, both splashing and gliding through the motions.

Christine and Eileen laugh and SQUEAL with delight.

Eileen's feet jump and slap the water as she tries the full motion.

EXT. NEW ORLEANS - MAPLE LEAF CLUB - GARDEN - NIGHT

Christine and Cathy, wearing lace up boots and skirts, slow-dance a one-step to Cajun music.

CATHY

I can't believe how the moon lights
up your earrings. I love this
moment.

They dance closer.

BEGIN MONTAGE:

INT. ROCK AND BOWL - NIGHT

To sounds of bowling alley and Zydeco music, Cathy leads Christine in a Zydeco dance.

INT. MULATE'S - NIGHT

Christine and Cathy dance a Cajun swing on an open dance floor.

INT. TIPITINA'S - NIGHT

Christine dances with an old one-armed man, music stops.

Christine and Cathy dance a two-step.

END MONTAGE.

INT. HOLY HAVEN HOSPITAL - EILEEN'S ROOM - DAY

P.O.V. OVERHEAD VIEW FROM CEILING TO EILEEN IN BED

Eileen prone, head turned, wearing a hospital gown. Sound of computer keyboard accompanies voice-over.

EILEEN (V.O.)
 Stretch, stretch, wakey, wakey,
 tut, tut! Christine you are
 probably asleep and I've already
 done my morning work!

An IMAGINARY PRE-ILLNESS EILEEN, wearing her WRAC skirt suit, sits on a chair looking at the real Eileen in bed. Sound of computer keyboard accompanies voice-over.

EILEEN (V.O.)
 I don't know how your conscience
 lets you sleep while I'm slogging
 away over a hot bed! Toes are still
 sulking, but I am starting to feel
 more clearly more of my parts as
 they participate.

Imaginary Eileen stands from the doorway looking at the real Eileen in bed. Sound of computer keyboard accompanies voice-over.

EILEEN (V.O.)
 Thanks for the suggestion to
 visualize myself from various
 points in the room. I loved the
 expanded sense of space and
 perspective.

Imaginary Eileen hovering prone, above the real Eileen on the bed. Sound of computer keyboard accompanies voice-over.

EILEEN (V.O.)
 The hovering face down above myself
 was the most useful and easiest...

The hovering imaginary Eileen falls down on top of the Eileen in bed! Sound of computer keyboard accompanies voice-over.

EILEEN (V.O.)
 Though I had to invent a platform
 to lie on, 'cause I kept falling on
 top of the "me" on the bed!

On a platform covered with grass 15 feet above the bed, an imaginary Christine lies on her belly next to the imaginary Eileen as they both watch the real Eileen through binoculars, like two SOLDIERS.

The real Eileen, in bed, tries to roll from lying on her left side to her belly by pulling her left arm under and behind herself while pushing on her right hand. Right knee is bent, left straight.

Her left arm gets stuck beneath her as she tries to lift her waist. Imaginary Eileen and Christine smile at each other.

EILEEN

Not brilliant, but it will come.

INT. HOLY HAVEN HOSPITAL - EILEEN'S ROOM - LATER THAT NIGHT

Asleep on her left side, Eileen awakens to involuntary bending of her knees and hips alternately to about 40 degrees. Distraught, she is unable to control them.

Imaginary Christine sits in the dark room watching.

EILEEN

Christine, we have certainly "woken up" the legs! During the night they decided to "play." Now, they'd obviously forgotten that they can't bend very much, but they were trying to!

Leg motion continues.

EILEEN (CONT'D)

It is quite painful. They clearly liked this game and carried it out most of the night, just wouldn't stay still!

CHRISTINE

Sorry to hear about your nighttime rebellion! It sounds like overload. Go easy, maybe do an old tape, return to this one next week.

Eileen's leg motion stops.

EILEEN

Well, that very well might be the case, but if the legs are trying to copy Fidge, I refuse to let them attempt to use the computer or put a chocolate in my mouth!

They both chuckle.

Christine is gone. Eileen's left foot twitches, itching to the point where she is afraid her legs might start up again. Quite automatically her right foot moves over to scratch the left vigorously to her relief and satisfaction.

Sound of computer keyboard accompanies voice-over.

EILEEN (V.O.)

Well, although their independent streak is showing up, at least they've learned to scratch their own itches! Bye, Me.

INT. AMBULANCE - NIGHT

Late autumn. Eileen, in evening wear and makeup, is strapped onto a flat trolley latched to the wall of the ambulance. One other male patient is in a wheelchair. The driver is accompanied by a hefty nurse.

The vehicle winds its way along a dark country road. Large bare trees appear as spooky shapes through the window. With eyes of wonder, Eileen strains to see the houses they pass. She is startled, trembles slightly as a HORN SOUNDS from a passing car. Composing herself, she takes out a pair of earplugs from her handbag and puts them in her ears.

INT. CONCERT HALL - NIGHT

Electric chandeliers illuminate the seven piece 17th-century period musicians as they play a Vivaldi piece on violin, viola, and cello. Eileen, lying on her trolley, close to the stage, is entranced by the nuances of fingers and bows moving. The piece concludes, and she quickly places her earplugs in before the audience applauds.

INT. AMBULANCE - NIGHT

After the concert, Eileen appears dreamy and enchanted. Sound of computer keyboard accompanies voice-over.

EILEEN (V.O.)

Christine, Vivaldi by candlelight was so lovely, the time flew by. Yes, being out at night again was strange but ever so magical. I heeded your warning. It didn't get messy. The ambulance did not turn into a pumpkin! I was home before midnight. I'm sure I'll be shattered in the morning, but I don't care! Love, Cinderella.

INT. HOLY HAVEN HOSPITAL - EILEEN'S ROOM

Autumn. Eileen's thin legs are visible under her long-sleeved nightie as she lies in bed using the computer.

Sound of computer keyboard accompanies voice-over.

EILEEN (V.O.)

I won't be giving you a report today, so you can recover from your exhausting day. I guess I'll have to add that to my growing list of virtues. Let's see intelligent, cooperative, obedient, and now kind and understanding. Patient? I did ask Moira to pick me up a bottle of patience at the shop on her way in today. Here she is now. Bye.

Moira bustles in setting down her wool coat and bags.

EILEEN

There you are. I'd begun to wonder if you were coming.

MOIRA

No, it takes more than leaves on the track to keep me away. Delays, it is always something! Sheldon had to work this weekend, so I'm on my own.

Eileen is mesmerized, her eyes shift to every move as if she is seeing it in slow motion: Moira hangs up her coat, unpacks clean laundry, sets out snacks on the night table. Moira notices Eileen staring.

Eileen snaps out of it.

MOIRA (CONT'D)

What is so interesting? You look as if you've never seen me before.

EILEEN

That is true, not like this anyway. Are you aware of all the parts of you that are being dragged around when you move, Moira? Like your ribs, shoulder blades, and spine?

MOIRA

Can't say that I am. Why?

EILEEN

Well, for months now Christine has been telling me to slow down and feel all the parts of me as I move, and I'm feeling my body so much more than I used to. It's like I'm being rewired. All that goes into movements everyone takes for granted. It still amazes me!

Moira breaks out in uncontrollable laughter, then tears up as she has to sit down.

EILEEN (CONT'D)

Moira, are you having a breakdown?

Still laughing, Moira stands up and squeezes Eileen's right arm.

MOIRA

I do believe you are developing muscles!

Moira feels her right leg.

MOIRA (CONT'D)

Indeed you are! Your legs are filling out, too!

Moira walks around the bed to inspect Eileen's left arm. Her left hand is near her left ear looking less bent at the wrist and fingers than in the past. Moira feels her left arm ("Fidge") then the right arm and shakes her head.

MOIRA (CONT'D)

Ugh, uh, hmm, sorry, Fidge needs more work.

EILEEN

Listen, Moira, Fidge is enormously upset because she works just as hard and isn't getting any of the same recognition!

Eileen turns to "listen" to Fidge.

EILEEN (CONT'D)

Fidge says she is going to write to the R.S.P.C.F. Yes, the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Fidges. Mind you, Fidge is not really living up to her name nowadays. She's become very cooperative.

A fruit fly lands on Eileen's forehead without her taking notice. Fidge automatically swats it a little vigorously, surprising Eileen.

EILEEN (CONT'D)

Easy now, Fidge, good girl.

Moira pulls out a small box of chocolates from her tote, opens it, offers to Eileen.

EILEEN (CONT'D)

Well, Fidge might forget about the letter.

Eileen picks out a piece with her right hand, presses it into her left hand as she works to grasp it. With a big grin of enjoyment, she stuffs the chocolate into her mouth with her left hand.

MOIRA

Well done, Fidge!

INT. HOLY HAVEN HOSPITAL - EILEEN'S ROOM - AFTERNOON

The room is decorated for Christmas. Head-band antlers hang on the headboard. The Nutcracker Doll and Soldier Dance is on the TV.

Eileen lies on her left side. In this movement lesson, Eileen rolls from side to belly and back. Sound of computer keyboard accompanies voice-over.

EILEEN (V.O.)

Dear TLW (the little whip), As you've been so kind as to give me the month off to recover from that nasty flu, I didn't think a slave driver like you would want me taking off Boxing Day. I feel brighter and thought I'd better do some work.

Eileen slides her right leg forward out to the side, left leg back. Pushing on her right hand, she makes a space under her waist for her left arm, then pulls it back beneath and behind her. Sound of computer keyboard accompanies voice-over.

EILEEN (V.O.) (CONT'D)

I completed Side A of Tape 15! WOW!

She slides her right leg down straight to land on her belly.

EILEEN (CONT'D)

WOO-HOO!

Nurses can be heard coming down the hallway laughing. She freezes. Sound of computer keyboard accompanies voice-over.

EILEEN (V.O.) (CONT'D)

I know you gave me the choice of either getting myself back or waiting for the nurses to come and rescue me. I didn't have a choice. Bearing in mind that they don't even know that I can get onto my side, how on earth was I going to explain being on my belly? They'd have put it down to one heck of a spasm! So I followed your instructions...

Eileen, on her belly, reverses the process to roll onto her back. Sound of computer keyboard accompanies voice-over.

EILEEN (V.O.) (CONT'D)

...and got back! What a team! I forgot to give Fidge a chocolate earlier, so will have to be fair!

Eileen moves a chocolate from her right hand to her left, and puts it clumsily in her mouth with a smile.

INT. HOLY HAVEN HOSPITAL - EILEEN'S ROOM - DUSK

A brilliant sun sets through Eileen's window. Eileen reads a book. KNOCK.

SISTER MARY THOMAS

Sister Mary Thomas here. I got the message. You wished to speak to me?

EILEEN

Yes, come in.

Sister Mary Thomas enters. Eileen's face is rosy pink from the reflected sunset.

EILEEN (CONT'D)

I've made another application to social services. Sister, someday I'd like to live in my own home. I know I'll still need assistance, but there is a big wide world out there and I believe there is a place for me in it.

Sister Mary Thomas hardens.

SISTER MARY THOMAS

Eileen, it is not a bed of roses out there. It is a very different world since last you lived there. Fifteen years or so is it?

EILEEN

Yes, I know, but all I can do is face problems when they arise. I know things have changed. There may be drugs and crime. On the other hand, there are some wonderful things and wonderful people. I have faith my life has purpose and everything will work out.

SISTER MARY THOMAS

You have on rose-colored glasses, Eileen. You don't know what it's like out there. We are your family and this is where you belong. I'd never sign off on anything like that.

EILEEN

No, NO, NO! No trolley, I handled it. I was accepted, then no dog! I've traveled the world, Sister!

SISTER MARY THOMAS
Not on your own.

EILEEN
Don't I deserve a shot at a REAL
life?

SISTER MARY THOMAS
I gave you my answer!

She turns, then calmly leaves, closing the door with a final
SLAM.

EILEEN
(shouting)
JOHN 10:12, SHE "THAT IS A HIRED
HAND DOES NOT OWN THE SHEEP!" AHH!

Furious, Eileen THROWS her Bible at the door. The sun has set
and the light is gone from Eileen's face.

INT. HOLY HAVEN HOSPITAL - EILEEN'S ROOM - DAY

Soft military drums beat in the background. With a touch of
magical realism Eileen wears camouflage fatigues.

Eileen is prone, rises onto her elbows.

She strains to lift her belly about 4 inches off the bed,
throws it down hard on the bed to the right, again up center,
left, right repeatedly.

Sound of computer keyboard accompanies voice-over.

EILEEN (V.O.)
Today I received a copy of the
latest report from the social
worker. Just as they did when I
applied six years ago, they are
still defining me as "Has a rare
neurological, et cetera, et
cetera." All right, I accept that,
but also "and has spastic
quadriplegia."

She stops the lesson to speak to audience.

EILEEN
Now I'm not too sure what that is,
but I'm sure I haven't got one!

JUMP CUT TO:

Eileen, on her right side, laces her hands overhead. With a grunt she lifts her upper body up enough to land on her elbows on the right. Her head bobs mildly in an uncontrolled fashion. Repeating several times, she slides her left leg behind her.

Light-headed, her head bobs more strongly. She lifts her left elbow off the bed a second, drops it. After several times, she is able to hold her left arm up.

Sound of computer keyboard accompanies voice-over.

EILEEN (V.O.) (CONT'D)
I'm not flying high at the moment,
considering I've got my head up in
the air today!

JUMP CUT TO:

Sweating profusely, she lets out a loud grunt, thrusts herself forward into right side sitting, leaning on her right elbow, grating her teeth to hold this position, for five seconds. She appears very woozy. Drums crescendo.

EILEEN (CONT'D)
I'VE HAD THE RUG PULLED OUT FROM
UNDER MY FEET, THE WIND TAKEN OUT
OF MY SAILS! I'VE BEEN DENIED CARE
IN THE COMMUNITY!

JUMP CUT TO:

Prone, on elbows, feet close to the foot board, Eileen rocks her hips from side to side. She struggles to pull herself up the bed with her elbows one at a time. She reaches the top of the bed in a full sweat, drops to sleep.

FADE TO BLACK.

INT. WAR TUNNEL - DAY (DREAM SEQUENCE)

Wearing a helmet and full army gear, Eileen crawls on her belly digging. The sound of BOMBING is heard; tunnel SHAKES. Ominous military music accompanies scene (Sister Mary Thomas' "theme").

Another soldier ahead of her turns: we see it is Sister Mary Thomas.

SISTER MARY THOMAS
IT'S TOO DANGEROUS! TURN AROUND! GO
BACK!

EILEEN
NO, I WON'T!

SISTER MARY THOMAS
THAT IS AN ORDER!

One bomb EXPLODES collapsing the tunnel on Sister Mary Thomas, another behind Eileen. The dirt settles. Seeing a light to the side, she digs and crawls in that direction.

Drums and brass swell.

EILEEN
I'm not usually a dissident, but
they've got me FIGHTING MAD NOW!
LET THE BATTLE COMMENCE!

END DREAM SEQUENCE.

INT. HOLY HAVEN HOSPITAL - EILEEN'S ROOM - DAY

Still in full army gear, prone on elbows at the bottom of the bed, Eileen drags herself up the bed by advancing right elbow, left knee, left elbow, right knee.

EILEEN
I don't care how long it takes or
how many legal appeals I must make,
there must be a light at the end of
this tunnel!

She reaches the top soaking wet, drops flat onto her belly with a look of victory on her face.

Lively Irish music follows. Sister Mary Celeste KNOCKS on the door.

SISTER MARY CELESTE
'Tis me! I've got your weekly
package from the States.

Eileen thinks about it, but is too tired to roll over.

EILEEN
Come in, Sister.

Sister Mary Celeste bustles in with the package. She stops in her tracks seeing Eileen on her belly in a drenched nightie.

SISTER MARY CELESTE
JESUS, MARY, AND JOSEPH! What's
going on? Are you all right?

She trundles over to touch Eileen's wet face.

EILEEN

I'm fine Sister, just exercising.

SISTER MARY CELESTE

Exercising? Is that what you call it? You look more like Michael Flatley at the end of a Riverdance performance. I half expected to find him in here, with that music on!

EILEEN

You've got the Flatley part right, Sister! Can I trust you with a little secret?

SISTER MARY CELESTE

Sure.

EILEEN

No, I really mean it. I can't risk being shut down again.

SISTER MARY CELESTE

Cross my heart, darling.

Sister Mary Celeste crosses her heart. Eileen turns herself over onto her back and pops up onto her elbows on the right.

SISTER MARY CELESTE (CONT'D)

IT'S A MIRACLE!

Arms raised up, she throws them around Eileen. Their embrace releases. Eileen looks seriously at Sister Mary Celeste.

EILEEN

Yes, it is. But sometimes God works slowly, and by way of human love and sweat! Not a word now.

Sister Mary Celeste makes the vertical portion of the sign of the cross and instead of the horizontal sweep she zips her lip.

INT. HOLY HAVEN HOSPITAL - EILEEN'S ROOM - NIGHT

Under her covers, lying on her back, Eileen practices lifting her opposite arm and leg as if she were walking. Sound of computer keyboard accompanies voice-over.

EILEEN (V.O.)

Did my night shift again last night. Pity I don't get paid for this nocturnal work, I'd make a fortune!

She pauses as if she is visualizing the next move and starts again. She hears the sound of faint NURSE'S FOOT STEPS in the hall outside her door.

She continues the alternating motions more confidently and times them with the approaching sound of the footsteps, as if she were walking too. Footsteps fade. Sound of computer keyboard accompanies voice-over.

EILEEN (V.O.)

Even when I've finished playing, the body refused to lie still.

Smiling, eyes closed, she moves her chest and shoulders ever so slightly, alternating off the bed as she visualizes walking. She falls asleep.

EXT. WALKWAY TO ASHTON-IN-MAKERFIELD HOME - DAY (DREAM)

Eileen walks behind Cheetah, in time with the dog's body rhythm, toward her old "home."

END DREAM.

INT. HOLY HAVEN HOSPITAL - EILEEN'S ROOM - DAY

Eileen, on her right side, rests on both elbows, legs almost straight. Sound of computer keyboard accompanies voice-over.

EILEEN (V.O.)

Well, Tape 21 arrived. OK, Teach, thanks for the great laugh! Er... after listening to it I realized that the tape was a joke, but I decided to have a go at it just for fun while waiting for the real one.

Eileen's attempts to progressively shift her weight from both elbows on the right to touch the bed on the left with her left hand, then land with weight on both elbows behind her. Sound of computer keyboard accompanies voice-over.

EILEEN (V.O.)

When I got to the "leap of faith" part...

The left elbow won't support her so she falls back onto her back, both elbows slide outward. Sound of computer keyboard accompanies voice-over.

EILEEN (V.O.)

It was more of a fall from Grace!
RIP, Love EC, Eileen Cinderella.

EXT. ILLINOIS - RIVER DAM - DAY

Winter. With binoculars Christine and Cathy watch bald eagles fishing at the unfrozen portion of a river dam. One young eagle catches a fish and drops it. Sound of computer keyboard accompanies voice-over.

CHRISTINE (V.O.)

Dear EC, All things are unobtainable at first. No joke, you got the real tape! It is just your first approximation. Focus on the process and the end will do itself.

Christine views an eagle catches a fish, lines it up with the length of its body, fish wriggling. The eagle it holds on, and flies to nearby tree.

INTERCUT EILEEN AND EAGLE

Eileen, on her right side, throws herself from lying on both elbows on her right to landing on both elbows behind her. Her head trembles, bobs, face shines!

The eagle, sitting on the branch, flips the last of the fish tail in its mouth with a gulp.

Eileen, on her back, lifts head, pops onto right then left elbow, holding firmly. She smiles smugly.

INT. HOLY HAVEN HOSPITAL - EILEEN'S ROOM - AFTERNOON

Sheldon fidgets with the television remote sitting in his electric wheelchair next to Eileen, then turns it off.

SHELDON

Not a thing worth watching on the box!

A KNOCK.

EILEEN

Do come in, Sister.

SISTER MARY CELESTE
 (short of breath)
 Got your afternoon tea.

Sister Mary Celeste balances on the tea trolley, wheels it in.

SISTER MARY CELESTE (CONT'D)
 Here we go, Sheldon. I've got just what you like, a full English breakfast. Say, where is Moira? I've got the cake!

SHELDON
 She popped down to the shops. She'll be back soon.

SISTER MARY CELESTE
 Well, I worry about her. Who looks after her? She's been the "Rock of Gibraltar" for you both for so long, traveling down here every weekend. She's given her life blood. A rare and precious gem she is!

Eileen has a sobered look on her face as she tucks into her tea. Sheldon devours his breakfast.

EILEEN
 You are right, Sister, without Moira I wouldn't be here today. Maybe there are some debts one can never repay.

Eileen grabs a pen.

EILEEN (CONT'D)
 Shel, hand me that birthday card, will you?

Eileen writes furiously in the card, as if taking dictation.

Moira enters with shopping bags. Sister Mary Celeste moves to the side to reveal the birthday cake as they all SHOUT "SURPRISE" and sing Happy Birthday!

Eileen hands the card to a surprised Moira. Moved, she reads:

MOIRA
 Happy Birthday to my big sister, to you sometimes I must feel like a blister. (Laughs) Like chalk and cheese, we bicker and tease.
 (MORE)

MOIRA (CONT'D)

Like oil and water, more thank
yous, I oughta. Right! But one
thing is for certain, without you
my heart would be hurtin'!

All laugh uproariously, shaking heads in agreement.

MOIRA (CONT'D)

That is for certain! Eileen J.
Bronte.

EXT. CHICAGO - CHRISTINE'S FRONT YARD - DAY

Christine answers her cell.

CHRISTINE

Yah, Cath. Slow down. Your mom is
moving out? Your sister's
retirement home in Florida? Why?

INT. CHICAGO - CATHY'S BASEMENT APARTMENT - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

IDA (a large, plain, angry, 80-year-old woman), sits in a
recliner.

IDA

Christine is more than just a
friend, isn't she?

Cathy nods.

CATHY

I'm just trying to be happy?

IDA

Maybe you'll be happy if I to stay
with your sister, full-time.

END FLASHBACK.

EXT. CHICAGO - CHRISTINE'S FRONT YARD - DAY

Christine in light tears.

INT. HOLY HAVEN HOSPITAL - CHAPEL - DAY

Dimly lit. Nuns CHANT sweetly. A priest waves an incense ball
around a casket praying in Latin. Eileen in her electric
trolley (head up 25 degrees) advances from the back toward
the casket. She cries with tears from her right eye only.

EXT. HOLY HAVEN HOSPITAL - SIDEWALK - LATER

A teary Eileen drives her trolley down the sidewalk from the chapel accompanied by a nurse. Overcast sky, light spring rain, beautiful hills are behind her. Sound of computer keyboard accompanies voice-over.

EILEEN (V.O.)

Christine, it was a sad morning. I went to the funeral mass of Sister Mary Celeste. I couldn't help shed a little tear or two. Her enormous heart was my saving grace here.

The trolley hits a bump, and Eileen's left hand flies upward, waving. Nuns walking in the opposite direction wave back. Eileen is surprised at their response until she sees her left arm lowering.

Sound of computer keyboard accompanies voice-over.

EILEEN (V.O.) (CONTINUED)

Well, now that I've got an angel in heaven, maybe she can talk to the real boss! I did notice something very strange, though. I must have only been half sad. The tears only came out of my right eye!

Budgies startle, flying freely within the outdoor aviary as Eileen and nurse pass.

INT. HOLY HAVEN HOSPITAL - EILEEN'S ROOM - DAY

Spring. Sun streams through Eileen's window, illuminating small buds and leaves of the trees outside. Blue tits flit at Plexiglas feeder. Easter lily sits on her night table.

Sheldon, in his electric wheelchair next to the bed, leans on the bed rail watching Eileen intently. Moira puts away fresh laundry. Eileen works on a lesson that takes her from lying on her right side to full side sitting.

Eileen, on her right side with her right arm out in front of her on the bed, progressively works to lift her head and left leg in the air at the same time.

Rain and hail hits the window.

Repeating the motions, Eileen gets her head much higher. Her head bobs slightly as she holds everything up for five seconds; she breaks out in a light sweat.

Moira, focused on tasks, responds to the hail:

MOIRA

Yes, England, a green and pleasant
land!

Sheldon is transfixed.

Eileen gets even higher, pushes with her left hand, stretches
left leg downwards.

Eileen repeats until she ends up on her hands, both elbows
fully extended, sitting on her right hip with both knees
slightly bent, feet to the left.

SHELDON

BLIMEY!

Moira turns to see Eileen sitting up sideways, head bobbing,
sweaty, clenching her teeth. No longer raining, the sun
shines.

MOIRA

MY GOD! Well, Easter was not only
for Jesus, EILEEN HAS RISEN!

Eileen, no longer able to hold herself up, drops back down in
stages to lie flat on her back. She smiles. Her body lies
still, lifeless and fatigued. Moira grabs a small towel and
wipes off her sweat.

EILEEN

If I don't answer the phone this
week, Moira, you will know I am
dead! This is where I will be seen
to differ from Jesus. He died and
rose. I rose then died!

All laugh uproariously. Moira covers Eileen with the bed
sheets and blanket.

She wipes the remaining sweat off Eileen's brow and hands her
a glass of water. Eileen tries to lift her hand but can't.

EILEEN (CONT'D)

Sorry, Moira, I think the body has
gone on strike. It's had enough.

Moira puts a straw in the glass. Eileen sips as Moira holds.

MOIRA

You've always said maybe you should
have some of your blood stored in
case you a need transfusion.

(MORE)

MOIRA (CONT'D)

Well, maybe it's time. At this rate
you will be sweating blood!

All laugh.

INT. HOLY HAVEN HOSPITAL - EILEEN'S ROOM - DAY

Mid-spring. Eileen, on her back, pulls her bent elbows up under her, head bobs. Sound of computer keyboard accompanies voice-over.

EILEEN (V.O.)

Hello, TLW, "The Little Whip," I'm still here! Huh, you didn't get rid of me that easily. You want feedback on Tape 23? OK, but remember it was my first day! First the prayer. Nice one, thank you.

Leaning to the right elbow, straightening her left elbow, she lifts her left hand off the bed quickly and then tries it on the other side.

EILEEN

There is a famous saying: "Failure is just a seven-letter word and each letter can be deleted letter by letter with time, patience, and hard work." OK, so it isn't famous. I've just this minute made it up, but it is still true!

Imaginary Christine chuckling, sits next to Eileen.

CHRISTINE

Yes, Eileen, with each approximation you feel more clearly the essence of the movement. When you are clearer you can delete the interfering tensions and you have it!

Eileen leans to one side, reaches across with the opposite hand to touch the bed, alternates sides.

EILEEN

Success means that you get up one more time than you fall down.

Eileen leans, tries to pop up onto straightened elbows, falls flat.

EILEEN (CONT'D)

So guess who's got to repeat Side
A? I did actually enjoy doing it,
even the part I couldn't do!

CHRISTINE

Brilliant, you are enjoying the
movements for the sheer pleasure of
it! The finale is really just the
reward for enjoying the journey!

Christine is gone.

EILEEN

Cheery bye!

INT. CHICAGO - VETERINARY ICU - DAY

With moist eyes, Christine strokes her African grey parrot in
front of a bird incubator. The parrot offers her cheek, head,
and neck for scratching.

This poem is taped on the front of the incubator:

EILEEN (V.O.)

Grace, you're almost 19, and what a
joy you've been. I pray that you'll
get better, and because you're just
a teen, many years of companionship
you still can give Christine. Love.
Eileen.

Imaginary Eileen sits next to Christine, touching her
shoulder.

EXT. CHICAGO - CHRISTINE'S FRONT GARDEN - DUSK

Crying Christine kneels before a St. Francis statue in her
front yard.

EILEEN (V.O.)

This time I've come to say good-bye
and to bid a fond farewell, to wish
you all the very best in the home
where you now dwell.

Christine places her lifeless parrot in a small hole in the
ground and covers her.

EILEEN (V.O.)

For a time you lived in England and drank our English tea, but your time with us was ended when you flew across the sea. You travelled far and wide I know as Christine's cherished pet, and I know one thing for certain, her sweet Grace she won't forget. Good night and God bless Amazing Helen Grace.

INT. HOLY HAVEN HOSPITAL - EILEEN'S ROOM - DAYS LATER

On both elbows, face up, Eileen leans her body to the right, extending her left elbow with legs turning to the right. Repeats this to the other side. Sound of computer keyboard accompanies voice-over.

EILEEN (V.O.)

Teach, do you want the good news or the bad news? OK, you are not sure? I'll give you the good news: I don't get a star today.

Eileen shifts right, extends left elbow straight, pops the right elbow straight up with both elbows straight. She smiles that Cheshire cat smile. Sound of computer keyboard accompanies voice-over.

EILEEN (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Now the bad news. The amount of stars I've earned is heavy enough to sink the Titanic. Twice! So you owe me a cup of coffee instead, maybe even a pot!!!

Head bobs, grits teeth, smiles, holds 10 seconds. Sound of computer keyboard accompanies voice-over.

EILEEN (CONT'D)

Side A thought it could get the better of me, did it? Shoulders and wrists whined that I should go on a diet so that I'd be lighter to lift, but I ignored them. Wowiee, yes, I got the finale. It wasn't a fluke yesterday because today I got up three times!

Eileen eases herself back on the bed. Sound of computer keyboard accompanies voice-over.

EILEEN (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 Just bear in mind that Side B,
 while not perfect, will be worth
 even more!

INT. HOLY HAVEN HOSPITAL - EILEEN'S ROOM - NEXT DAY

Eileen sits with weight on extended arms, hands very far behind her, legs straight in front. Her head bobs and teeters. She rounds her back and neck, sticking out her chest a little as she looks up.

Sound of computer keyboard accompanies voice-over.

EILEEN (V.O.)
 Good day, TBW, and that is
 definitely B for big whip, I'm now
 dead as a dodo, but I've got only
 one word to say to you: YES!

Eileen coordinates her whole body to do little scooting motions of her legs forward and back. Sound of computer keyboard accompanies voice-over.

EILEEN (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 I had to bribe Fidge with an offer
 of chocolate because, as you know
 when Fidge is upset she can
 suddenly take herself out of an
 unpleasant situation. Had she done
 so today, I would have been a
 goner! I was banking on all my
 weight going through her so she
 couldn't escape!

Sound of computer keyboard accompanies voice-over.

EILEEN (V.O.)
 I can't say it was very smooth
 because I swayed about as much as
 our new millennium bridge.

Eileen, supported by extended arms in long sitting, sways to the sound of a bridge creaking in slow motion.

Tentatively pushing off her right hand, she jerkily brings it across herself to land it on the bed in front of her left hip. Her legs are rolled left. She holds this position swaying and trembling.

Sound of computer keyboard accompanies voice-over.

EILEEN (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 It was, to say the least, a little precarious.

Swinging her right hand back to where she started, Eileen returns to both arms locked, facing forward at normal speed. Sound of computer keyboard accompanies voice-over.

EILEEN (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 But I got there!

Beams holds it like an Olympic dismount. Sound of computer keyboard accompanies voice-over.

EILEEN (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 So, two pots of coffee me thinks,
 Teach! On second thought, I refuse
 to give the body all the credit. No
 matter how cooperative the body is
 being, without you and me, it
 wouldn't achieve anything! Enjoy
 yer lunch wiv yer muver! PS, I
 completed my biography and sent you
 a copy today. EC.

INT. HOLY HAVEN HOSPITAL - EILEEN'S ROOM - NIGHT

Late spring. Under the covers on her side, Eileen views the moonlight shining through tree blossoms.

EILEEN
 Christine, I can't sleep.

Imaginary Christine rolls from the edge of Eileen's bed to face her. Startled, Eileen rolls to face imaginary Christine.

CHRISTINE
 Yes, dear friend? You amaze me. I
 love you. I love the way you
 brighten my quiet days with your
 jokes, poems, courage,
 determination, and, yes, victory.

Christine wipes her moist eyes.

CHRISTINE (CONT'D)
 Each week when I become you to
 create a new lesson I pushed myself
 to go beyond what I knew the
 Feldenkrais work could ever do, to
 resurrect your life, maybe a real
 life outside of here.

EILEEN
 (choked up)
 Yes. Yes.

CHRISTINE
 You know what that means, right?

EILEEN
 No, what?

CHRISTINE
 You have to be able to get up.

Eileen is shocked.

EILEEN
 Like sitting up, over the edge of
 the bed?

CHRISTINE
 It is your ticket outa here, kiddo!

EILEEN
 If it were possible...

CHRISTINE
 I believe it is possible. I really
 don't know exactly how we are going
 to do it yet because your hips
 don't bend enough. We will, though,
 and when we pull this off, forget
 the coffee. We'll both deserve a
 gold medal!

EILEEN
 I understand it has the potential
 for being a tricky moment, maybe
 even dangerous. It wouldn't be fair
 to ask Moira to get me up without
 training or knowing what to expect.

Imaginary Christine is gone.

EILEEN (CONT'D)
 Those exact same thoughts have
 entered my head before, and I've
 been wondering what on earth I was
 going to do?

Eileen rolls to face the window again. She pulls the edge of the blankets off her legs, juts her feet over the edge of the bed with toes dipping toward the floor as if they were eyeing it.

EILEEN (CONT'D)
My toes can't bear to look.

Eileen quickly pulls her feet back under the covers.

EILEEN (CONT'D)
There is no way they will go onto
that floor till it is mopped!

Dreamy, Eileen stares out the window.

EILEEN (CONT'D)
You've just answered my prayers,
"professor." Thank you for your
offer to come out here this autumn.
Won't that be an exciting time?

EXT. CHICAGO - CHRISTINE'S FRONT GARDEN - DAWN

Early June. Vintage houses with front porches line the street. Christine carries leather garden gloves, binoculars; walks down her front sidewalk, lined with beds of blooming forget-me-nots and large blue squill.

Through binoculars, across the street, Christine sees a fledgling crow cawing, holding on to a branch flapping its wings across the street.

A beautiful fledge with new shiny feathers lies lifeless on the street below. Christine puts on the gloves, lovingly picks up the crow, walks it to the Saint Francis statue in her front hedge, and reverently places it down.

The fledge in the tree flies down gliding across the street into the back yard of a next-door neighbor. Running to follow it, she sees the crow confronted by a menacing dog in a pen. Three adult crows surround the dog, cawing, swooping over it. Christine slowly approaches the dazed fledge, grabs it, and places it on a tree outside the pen.

Sound of computer keyboard accompanies voice-over.

EILEEN (V.O.)
GOOD GRIEF, Corvus Christi to the
rescue! I had to laugh, as I
couldn't help equate myself to the
two fledges.

INT. HOLY HAVEN HOSPITAL - EILEEN'S ROOM - DAY

Gestures with a flapping motion. Sound of computer keyboard accompanies voice-over.

EILEEN (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 Will I resemble the fledge that
 soared or the one that fell flat on
 its face? Maybe when you come you
 should bring a shovel just in case!

Eileen reads from her computer screen, while Wailin' Mahalias music plays in background. Sound of computer keyboard accompanies voice-over.

EILEEN (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 My research has shown that in some
 cases nestlings may be thrown out
 of the nest! Others try to fly
 before they are strong enough.
 Well, I'll have to trust you on
 that one! Biee Love ECC, Eileen
 Cinderella Crow.
 PS, congratulations to the Wailin'
 Mahalias on your new CD. You guys
 rock!

INT. CHICAGO - CHRISTINE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT (DREAM SEQUENCE)

Christine sleeps fitfully.

Fast disjointed views of fledgling crows flapping their wings while holding on to a tree limb; high pitched cawing; dog growling; crows swooping; a falling crow.

CHRISTINE (V.O.)
 Moshe, Moshe, HELP ME!

EXT. BEACH - DAY (DREAM, CONTINUED)

MOSHE FELDENKRAIS, plump, balding, rides gracefully on a dappled white horse up to Christine, smiling as if he knows her. She grabs his arm and jumps onto the back of the horse. They gracefully ride off at a gallop. A crow flies onto Christine's shoulder.

END DREAM SEQUENCE.

EXT. CHICAGO SUBURB - HORSE RIDING CORRAL - DAY

A disabled child rides on a small horse lead by Christine.

CHRISTINE
 Good work Brad, I hope you enjoyed
 your ride today!

EXT. CHICAGO SUBURB - NEARBY HORSE RIDING FIELD - DAY

Christine lies in the grass with a tape recorder and paper, gets up on her forearms and knees.

INT. HOLY HAVEN HOSPITAL - EILEEN'S ROOM - SAME DAY

Eileen is in bed, on her forearms and knees. An orangutan poster is behind her. Sound of computer keyboard accompanies voice-over.

EILEEN (V.O.)
So you got the moniker "Gorilla Girl" doing a routine for your Feldenkrais graduation?

Eileen shifts her weight from forearm to forearm. Sound of computer keyboard accompanies voice-over.

EILEEN (V.O.) (CONT'D)
Well, you know my affinity with primates. No wonder you have always felt like family to me!

Eileen looks down between her elbows, sees a black hair on the bed, picks it up surprised. Sound of computer keyboard accompanies voice-over.

EILEEN (V.O.) (CONT'D)
Excuse me while I have a quick look at my body.

She looks down her nightie at her chest. Sound of computer keyboard accompanies voice-over.

EILEEN (V.O.) (CONT'D)
Whew, safe so far, no hairs on my chest yet. I thought my affinity might have gone just one step further! Actually, my elbows are bending more now.

She practices shifting weight as she slides her knees alternately forward and back. Sound of computer keyboard accompanies voice-over.

EILEEN (V.O.) (CONT'D)
If I don't get offered the part of King Kong in the next remake, I'll want to know why!

She straightens each elbow alternately.

EXT. CHICAGO SUBURB - HORSE RIDING FIELD - CONTINUOUS

Imaginary Eileen and Christine crawl backwards on forearms and knees on the grass.

EILEEN

Now I realize that you and I are made differently, Christine. That is why lessons are easier for you. You keep telling me to get on my four arms and I must point out that I only have two arms!

Laughing, they both crawl forwards on their forearms and knees.

Eileen shifts weight to the left and extends her right elbow. She then extends her left elbow so as to be briefly on hands and knees.

INT. HOLY HAVEN HOSPITAL - EILEEN'S ROOM - DAY - CONTINUOUS

Eileen's left arm gives way and she falls onto her belly in the middle of the bed laughing.

EILEEN

I'm dead as a dodo, but don't feel sorry for me. I had a great time. A lovely adventure. Thanks! I didn't hurt myself. Err...do I get a parachute lesson soon?

INT. HOLY HAVEN HOSPITAL - EILEEN'S ROOM - NEXT DAY

Eileen crawls tentatively on her hands and knees backward down the bed, sliding the same side foot then hand. Her head bobs.

INT. CHICAGO - CHRISTINE'S BEDROOM - PREDAWN

Early morning birdsong comes through the open window while Christine sleeps.

Imaginary Eileen is on hands and knees on Christine's bed.

EILEEN

Pst! GG, Gorilla Girl! Wake up! Christine! I know you are in the Land of Nod but it is report time! Yippee! WAKE UP!

Christine stirs. Sweaty Eileen crawls on her hands and knees, sliding alternate hand and knee forwards.

EILEEN (CONT'D)

I CAN CRAWL! OK, maybe not far and a little slow, but it is at least as good as any two-year-old! I CAN CRAWL! I'm really getting it.

Christine half opens one eye to watch Eileen's energetic crawling up and down her bed.

EILEEN (CONT'D)

You must have misread a previous e-mail. I said I wanted to ride a horse again. I never said I wanted to walk like one! It won't be long and I'll have to give a neigh at the end of the lesson.

Eileen shakes her finger!

EILEEN (CONT'D)

Mark my words! You are going to have to take out a mortgage on your house to pay for all the coffee you owe me now! Tatty bye for now! ECC.

Christine pulls her pillow over her head!

INT. HOLY HAVEN HOSPITAL - EILEEN'S ROOM - AFTERNOON

Moira jams clean clothes into drawers and wardrobe shelves. She glances at the TV, seeing a montage of heroic first responders rescuing people after the 9/11 attack.

MOIRA

It has been emotionally draining. The three minutes of silence by everyone the length and breadth of Europe was quite moving.

Eileen rolls on her belly, gets onto hands and knees, then crawls toward the head of the bed.

Moira and Sheldon are amazed.

SHELDON

COR BLIMEY!

MOIRA

OH MY GOD!

SHELDON
COR BLIMEY!

MOIRA
MY GOD, EILEEN!

Simultaneously.

SHELDON AND MOIRA
BLIMEY! MY GOD!

Eileen smiles from ear to ear, kneeling, while holding onto the headboard.

MOIRA
Eileen Wilson, others get on their knees to pray, but you have prayed to get on your knees! My God, I just can't believe it!

Eileen puts her hands back down on the bed, grinning, head bobbing steadily, crawls backward, and drops to her belly exhausted.

INT. CAB - HOLY HAVEN HOSPITAL DRIVEWAY - DAY (2001)

November. Off-screen women SING sacred chants. Christine reads a book titled *Eileen's Story*. As they approach she looks out the window uphill. A cab passes the outdoor enclosed aviary containing budgerigars and cockatiels. The birds startle and fly. The cab arrives at a modern-looking building complex.

INT. HOLY HAVEN HOSPITAL - HALLWAY - LATER

Christine rolls a suitcase and carries a large video camera case and carrier bag through a white unadorned hallway.

INT. HOLY HAVEN HOSPITAL - EILEEN'S ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Christine KNOCKS, enters. Eileen, dressed in polo shirt and shorts, salt and pepper hair lies on her bed.

EILEEN
D-day! You made it in one piece.
Wow, you look shattered.

Christine and Eileen lock eyes in longing disbelief.

EILEEN (CONT'D)
Come here and give me a cuddle.

Christine puts down her gear. Eileen pulls forward as they embrace. With deep sighs, Christine feels Eileen's arms, back, and head to ensure they are real.

They pull apart staring incredulously. Christine tears up.

CHRISTINE

God, to finally see you in the flesh, hear your warm voice. After almost 12 years! So real so vital. The Internet is great, but...

EILEEN

It feels to me for the last 16 months you've been with me every day. Yet, it is very surreal to actually see you, feel you, in the flesh.

Christine looks around the cramped room, not recognizing it.

CHRISTINE

Is this a different room?

EILEEN

Yes, the whole place was remodeled with smaller rooms. I can't wait for the day I bust out of here!

CHRISTINE

Well, that is why I'm here! You've got to show them you can sit up in a wheelchair and join the world of the upright and roll out of here! But first things first. Are you ready for a real cup of coffee?

Christine pulls out a bag of ground coffee and a drip carafe from the carrier bag. They laugh.

CHRISTINE (CONT'D)

I'll go make the coffee!

INT. HOLY HAVEN HOSPITAL - EILEEN'S ROOM - NEXT DAY

Christine walks away from the video camera, which is on a stool, at the foot of the bed.

CHRISTINE

(to the camera)

Eileen has been working, often twice a day, for the past 16 months on 29 different Feldenkrais movement lessons. We've been e-mailing each other one to five times a day, but I've never actually seen her do any of the movements. So this will be a treat!

EILEEN

It's a good thing I didn't lie!

INT. AUDITORIUM - STAGE - DAY - CONTINUOUS

Stage lights are out. Moshe Feldenkrais, Moira and Sheldon sit in the front row. The house lights dim.

Only Eileen illuminated, she enters lying flat on her electric trolley, which travels sideways stopping, as if it hits a blockade, spins, rolls to the other side, hits invisible blockade. The trolley spins in circles, the head portion stationary, the foot portion circling. It stops.

Christine, now illuminated, stands with arms in cross formation. She walks to the head of the trolley. Eileen reaches back, grabs onto her arms and neck. Christine pulls her off the trolley with Eileen's body horizontal, slowly softening to meld with Christine's. They both sink to the floor.

The dance movement begins with Christine leading fundamental motions like rolling, Eileen following. Moves extend to rolling onto tripod arms side lying; side sitting on extended elbows; then extended arms in long sitting; choo-choo motions; commando crawling; crawling; half kneel to kneeling. There is interplay, intertwining, and more independence in Eileen's moves through the dance.

This "Pas de Deux" is a scene of magical realism, performed beautifully in time with music. It has natural phrases which swell and diminish.

Finale includes them each raising one arm as if to say "Voila!"

Thunderous applause. Moira, Moshe, and Sheldon clap with tears in their eyes.

INT. HOLY HAVEN HOSPITAL - EILEEN'S ROOM - NEXT DAY

Eileen props herself up on elbows, then hands. She walks her hands around so that her back is up against the left bed-rail. Sheldon puts pillows against the railing.

Christine helps Eileen slide her legs so that her feet are off the side of the bed. Christine holds onto the front of Eileen's shirt.

With her arms jacking her up from behind, she leans forward to about 70 degrees (legs to body).

Unnoticed, a GARDENER on a ladder prunes a tree outside her window. He glances with increasing interest.

EXT. HOLY HAVEN HOSPITAL - TREE - CONTINUOUS

P.O.V. GARDENER ON EILEEN'S ROOM

Intrigued, the gardener stops pruning. Moira and Christine set a wooden horse next to Eileen's bed. Eileen dangles her feet over the edge of the bed and leans back against the bed rail.

Christine puts a blood-pressure cuff around Eileen's right arm; a safety belt with handles around her waist.

Christine elevates the bed to the level of the seat of the wooden horse. Moira and Christine push the horse against the bed. Each takes a leg as Eileen scoots forward onto the horse. They lock arms behind Eileen's back to steady her. Both slowly lower Eileen's legs from horizontal to vertical. Eileen smiles. Moira and Christine hold on to the handles of the belt with their front hand. Christine looks at her watch.

Looking more closely, the gardener loses balance, scrambles down the ladder, and runs.

INT. SISTER MARY THOMAS'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Out of breath, the gardener knocks on Sister Mary Thomas's door. She looks up from her paperwork.

SISTER MARY THOMAS

Yes?

GARDENER

Sister, there is something going on in Ms. Wilson's room you ought to see!

SISTER MARY THOMAS

Is there?

INT. HOLY HAVEN HOSPITAL - HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Sister Mary Thomas walks briskly, and with resolve. White robes furl in rhythm with her strides.

INT. EILEEN'S HOLY HAVEN ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Eileen's eyes are open. Her body sways slightly. Christine checks the blood pressure and her watch.

Christine sees Eileen's eyes flutter.

Christine and Moira lock arms to catch Eileen as she passes out.

INT. HOLY HAVEN HOSPITAL - HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Sister Mary Thomas takes one last turn around a corner as she approaches Eileen's closed door.

INT. HOLY HAVEN HOSPITAL - EILEEN'S ROOM - CONTINUOUS

The door bursts open. Eileen, lying down, eyes open, looking relaxed, has her left hand under her head. The horse is folded behind the door. Wide-eyed Sister Mary Thomas looks around the room, her face changes from determined to befuddled then embarrassed for barging in.

EILEEN

Do come in, Sister. I'd like you to meet my friend Christine from Chicago, the one I mentioned was coming for a visit.

SISTER MARY THOMAS

(re-focusing)

Pleased to meet you.

Sister Mary Thomas and Christine reach across the foot of the bed to shake hands.

CHRISTINE

Nice to meet you, Sister.

SISTER MARY THOMAS

Well...I...if there is anything I can do to make your stay more comfortable, just let me know, won't you?

EILEEN

Thank you, Sister, and just so the staff knows, Christine and I will be going out to the shops tomorrow. I'd like to show her around town.

Eileen, Christine, and Moira look at each other, take a deep breath, and smile as they look at Sister Mary Thomas.

INT. HOLY HAVEN - EILEEN'S ROOM - DAY

Christine and Eileen finish breakfast, drink coffee.

CHRISTINE

So, Eileen, I've enjoyed reading your story but I have one question for you. What ever happened to you and Peter?

EILEEN

Well, he was very special to me, taught me how to shoot a gun, dance, drive a car, and my mother adored him. I did leave out the painful part from my story didn't I?

FLASHBACK BEGINS:

INT. THE WILSON FAMILY HOME - NIGHT

Eileen and Peter enter, put down suitcases, and shake off their snow-covered boots and coats. An aged Thelma sleeps on the sofa in front of the fire. Cheetah, now very grey, rests her chin on Thelma's foot, mouth open to breathe.

Peter and Eileen walk over to Thelma. Eileen sees how bad Cheetah looks. Cheetah wakes and lets out a strained bark. Thelma wakes, a little disoriented.

THELMA

There you are. You finally made it through the storm.

Eileen bends down and pets Cheetah, who looks up at her with cloudy eyes.

EILEEN

It was white knuckles there for a while, but here we are.

Eileen stands, leans over to kiss Thelma.

Thelma whispers, winks.

THELMA

You'd have my blessing with him.

EILEEN

Happy Christmas, Mam.

Peter approaches, gives Thelma a kiss.

PETER

Good to see you again, Mrs. Wilson

THELMA

Always my pleasure. You two must be starving. I've held supper for you.

INT. VETERINARY ROOM - DAY

Eileen sits with Cheetah on the treatment table stroking her. Cheetah's chin rests open on Eileen's lap. Peter stands by her with his hands on her shoulders. DOCTOR GOODMAN enters with a tray of two syringes. Eileen nods.

EILEEN

Good night good girl. I love you.

Peter comforts her.

INT./EXT. LAND ROVER PARKED OUTSIDE THE WILSON HOME - DAY

Peter is in the driver's seat. Eileen looks lost as she fondles Cheetah's collar. He puts his arms around her as she breaks into deep sobs. Peter tenderly hoovers the tears on her cheeks with his lips. Eileen melts. They kiss.

PETER

It could be my job to always do the Hoovering?

Eileen's giggles turn to sadness.

EILEEN

If anyone could, you'd be...

Peter looks hopeful. Eileen grows distant. Concerned, he leans closer.

PETER

Say, would it cheer you up if we requested our next posting in Ireland this summer? It's near my family...

EILEEN

I...I...can't.

PETER

Darling I know you are upset now --

EILEEN

I've already gotten a posting in Cyprus.

Eileen stiffens.

EILEEN (CONT'D)

Look, we both love the military life. You know how it is. A man can have it all, but a woman...

Eileen shakes Cheetah's collar.

EILEEN (CONT'D)

...either has a military life or she is a military wife. I'm sorry. I'm just not ready.

PETER

I see.

Eileen slowly gets out, then Peter. They walk to the Wilson home in silence.

END FLASHBACK.

INT. HOLY HAVEN HOSPITAL - EILEEN'S ROOM - DAY

Eileen sniffing back tears.

CHRISTINE

Wow, tough choice.

EILEEN

It wasn't meant to be. What kind of a wife would I have been to him like this?

Eileen wipes a tear.

EILEEN (CONT'D)

How about you? How is it going with Cathy?

CHRISTINE

Ooh, well, at last we spoke, she was moving out an unhappy mother. Unhappy with us, that is. In my heart I believe she's the one for me, but I don't know if it will work out. It is in God's hands.

Christine clears the dishes, looks at her watch.

CHRISTINE (CONT'D)

You've come so far these last few days. Shall we try to get you sitting all the way up?

They both smile.

EILEEN

Let's have a go.

INT. HOLY HAVEN HOSPITAL - EILEEN'S ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Eileen rests up on extended arms, legs dangling. In slow motion she moves all the way forward to 90 degrees (full upright sitting). Her head bobs slightly.

Eileen's eye wide open and triumphal. Return to normal speed.

CHRISTINE

YOU DID IT, WOW, ALL THE WAY, YOU CAN SIT IN A WHEELCHAIR NOW!

Christine moves to assist her as Eileen's eyes flutter closed. Christine lies her down, lightly slaps her face.

CHRISTINE (CONT'D)

EILEEN, EILEEN, WAKE UP!

INT. HOSPITAL HALLWAY - DAY

Gauzy view of Eileen being wheeled through bright white hospital hallways on a gurney, an IV in her arm, face not visible.

EILEEN (V.O.)

(faintly)

Christine, I want you to know that you didn't push me too much in any way. I did that myself.

The gurney turns.

EILEEN (V.O.)

I know you are thinking we should have left well enough alone. No, my dear GG, we should not have left well enough alone. I wasn't happy with the way I was.

The gurney turns again.

EILEEN (V.O.)

I have no regrets whatsoever, apart from the distress I may have caused you. If I had "popped my clogs" or do so in the future for any reason, then I would die in a very hopeful and happy state. HEY, WHAT A WAY TO GO!

The gurney goes through two doors. They swing open, then close.

EILEEN (V.O.)

(stronger)

God brought us together, to go beyond what anyone would have ever expected. You have gone way beyond what any therapist would have. We are bonded as friends forever.

FADE TO WHITE.

INT. HOLY HAVEN HOSPITAL - EILEEN'S ROOM - DAY (DREAM)

Christine and Eileen share an eye-to-eye moment of silence. Eileen holds back tears.

EILEEN

Go now.

Christine grabs her luggage, turns, walks out the door. Eileen breaks into silent tears. She reaches her left hand out as if to say "Wait don't go." Both of Eileen's eyes shed tears.

EILEEN (CONT'D)

One thing, though, I should have told you is that...I love you, kiddo and Fidge owes you a caress...

Eileen caresses the right then left side of her face with her left hand in a gentle and loving manner. She melts with tenderness and cries.

DREAM ENDS.

INT. HOSPITAL - DAY

Eileen's gurney bursts through swinging surgery doors, down the hall into BRIGHT LIGHT. Moira and Christine hold hands, sitting nervously in the waiting area. They stand up abruptly with a questioning look on her faces.

EILEEN (V.O.)
I'm back and in one piece.

INT. HOLY HAVEN HOSPITAL - EILEEN'S ROOM - DAY

The open door is decorated for St. Patrick's Day. Birthday cards on nightstand.

Sister Mary Thomas KNOCKS.

EILEEN
Do come in, Sister.

She enters.

SISTER MARY THOMAS
Here is your mail.

Sister Mary Thomas intentionally hands the mail to Eileen's left hand. Eileen takes it. Sister sees how deftly she reaches and handles the mail.

EILEEN
Thank you, Sister. I'm glad you stopped by as I wanted to tell you myself that I am on a waiting list for housing in the community. There is really no telling how long that could take, but I will keep you informed.

Eileen places her mail on her nightstand and grabs a glass of water to drink. Sister Mary Thomas scans the room noticing how jam-packed it is.

SISTER MARY THOMAS
Well, Eileen, perhaps this place is too small to contain you.

INT. SISTER MARY THOMAS'S OFFICE - DAY

Winter. Window ledge coated with snow. Eileen in her electric trolley (head of chair up 30 degrees) arrives, KNOCKS.

SISTER MARY THOMAS
Yes, Eileen, do come in.

Eileen backs up and makes a wide turn into the office and parks her trolley with its left side flanking the desk next to Sister Mary Thomas.

EILEEN
Sister, I know it has been a year since I was put on the waiting list, but my prayers have finally been answered! You won't believe it, but I've been offered a ground-level flat just five doors from Moira! I'll be moving in at the end of next month.

SISTER MARY THOMAS
Well, I do hope that it works out well for you, Eileen.

EILEEN
Sister, I want to thank you and the wonderful staff for all you have done for me. I'm not the same person that came here 15 years ago. God has brought me through so much, and I do believe he has a plan for my life. I don't know what it is yet, but I can feel it pulling me forward.

SISTER MARY THOMAS
I must admit, I underestimated you. I guess I've been a bit of a doubting Thomas! Perhaps I should have had more faith in you?

EILEEN
In Him, Sister!

Sister Mary Thomas touches the crucifix on her chest.

SISTER MARY THOMAS
You have my blessing, and I will pray that you make a gentle and swift adjustment to your new home and new life.

Sister Mary Thomas reaches over and touches Eileen's left hand fondly. They lock eyes, get misty.

INT. HOLY HAVEN HOSPITAL - OUTSIDE EILEEN'S ROOM - DAY

Nurses walk by Eileen's door and read a sign decorated with balloons which says: "ROOM FOR LET, Farewell to Eileen at the Whitehorse Pub March 23rd 2003."

EXT. CANINE PARTNERS TRAINING BARRACKS - COURTYARD - DAY

Eileen and two other TRAINEES are lined up. Two trainees have a certificate and their dog. Eileen waits in her electric trolley (sitting up to 60 degrees).

CANINE PARTNERS TRAINING OFFICER
EILEEN WILSON! SAILOR!

The Training Officer hands Eileen her certificate. A handler brings her a golden retriever, SAILOR. Eileen beams as "Sailor" looks at Eileen, wagging his tail.

EXT. CHICAGO - CHRISTINE'S BACKYARD - DAY

Christine looks up to see Cathy's car pulling up in front. Cathy grabs two buckets of plants, and she walks down the sidewalk to the backyard.

Christine stands, and smiles curiously.

CATHY
Hey, I've got here a couple of
tired bleeding hearts.

Christine looks in the buckets.

CHRISTINE
So, what's the prognosis, doc?

CATHY
If we plant them now, I do believe
they've got a chance!

Christine and Cathy embrace and kiss tenderly.

BEGIN MONTAGE:

INT. ANGLICAN CHURCH - DAY

Eileen sings in a small choir while her dog, Sailor, lies quietly by her side.

Caption: "Eileen and Sailor are active members of their local church."

INT. LAKE STREET CHURCH SANCTUARY - DAY

Christine and her band, the Wailin' Mahalias perform gospel tune "What Could I Do?"

Caption: "Christine and her band, the Wailin' Mahalias, inspire audiences with their music."

INT. BUCKINGHAM PALACE - CANINE PARTNERS EXPO - DAY

Eileen, elegantly dressed, socializes. Prince Harry approaches and introduces himself. He shakes Eileen's hand and bends down to speak to Sailor.

Caption: "Eileen and Sailor are tireless advocates for Canine Partners."

INT. COURTHOUSE - DAY

Christine and Cathy hold hands in front of the JUDGE.

Caption: "Christine marries her partner, September 22, 2015."

EXT. LONDON - DAY (2012)

Crowds line the street. Eileen, in an upright electric wheelchair, with Sailor leashed to her left, controls the wheelchair with a joystick with right hand, holds the Olympic Torch in her left.

INT - CHICAGO - CHRISTINE'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Christine watches Eileen carry the torch on the computer screen's "Torch Cam." Christine sheds proud tears.

Caption: "Eileen and Sailor carried the Olympic Torch in London, 2012."

END MONTAGE.

EXT. LONDON - LOCAL PARK - DAY

Moira and Christine walk on Eileen's right side (Eileen sitting full upright in power chair), Sailor to left. Eileen gives a hand signal to stop and stay; Sailor obeys.

Eileen unleashes him, leaving her left hand in front of his face before removing it.

EILEEN

RELEASE!

Sailor bolts. Eileen throws a tennis ball with a device. Sailor jumps and catches it in his mouth mid-air.

FREEZE FRAME.

FADE OUT.

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