

TOMORROW IS NEVER PROMISED

Written by

FADE IN:

EXT. FAST-FOOD RESTAURANT - DAY

A small, busy fast-food joint. Customers line up at the counter. Employees move fast behind the registers. The kitchen sizzles with activity.

Aaron flips burgers on the grill. Next to him, Austin watches him, arms crossed.

AUSTIN

Flip it faster, but don't smash it.
You're making hockey pucks.

Aaron grins, trying again.

AARON

You mean like this?

He flips one smoothly. Austin nods, impressed.

AUSTIN

Not bad, rookie.

Aaron smiles so bright and continues his task.

CUT TO:

EXT. HIGH SCHOOL - DAY

Aaron, SHANE (18) practical, easygoing, and ERICA (17) energetic, artistic stand in front of a half-dug hole. Nearby, bags of soil and young birch trees wait to be planted.

ERICA

These are going to look amazing by the
library.

Aaron kneels, adjusting the soil.

AARON

Only if we get them deep enough. Roots
gotta spread, or they'll die fast.

SHANE

You sound like my Aaron's Father .

AARON

Your Aaron's Father 's right. By the way I had a nice time making some hockey pucks, as Austin likes to call them.

SHANE

Congratulations chef, let's get to digging please.

He grabs a shovel, digs deeper.

MONTAGE:

- Aaron carefully lining up flowers.
- Erica placing a bush, stepping back to admire.
- Shane struggling with a weed eater, Aaron laughing.
- The three of them watering plants in the scorching sun.

CUT TO:

EXT. FAMILY HOME - DRIVEWAY - DAY

Aaron loads a garden plow into his pickup with help from Aaron's Father (mid-40s)

AARON'S FATHER

You sure you need this?

AARON

Gotta get the grass growing right.

AARON'S FATHER

Alright. Just bring it back in one piece.

AARON

Not making any promises. See ya. OH and Aaron's Father , we should go to the beach soon.
You love it there.

Aaron smirks, hops into the truck, and drives off.

CUT TO:

EXT. HIGH SCHOOL - DAY

DAYS LATER

Aaron, Shane, and Erica stand by the birch trees, now planted. The ground around them freshly plowed, grass seed scattered.

ERICA

Now we wait.

SHANE

And water. A lot.

(beat)

You guys got any plans. I'm a little bored.

ERICA

Don't the beautiful color of the plants give you satisfaction?

They share a tired but satisfied look.

AARON

We are going camping. The entire family's gonna be there.

Silence.

SHANE

All I know is that I am jealous.

They all start to laugh.

CUT TO:

EXT. MYRTLE BEACH - CAMPGROUND - EVENING

Waves crash in the distance. Campers sit around a bonfire. The FAMILY- Aaron's Father , MOM (SHERRI), AUSTIN, AARON-relax in beach chairs. Nearby, ALYSSA (16, independent, slightly annoyed) scrolls on her phone.

ALYSSA

I still think you planned this.

AARON'S FATHER

Well call it whatever you may, it's a beautiful day.

AUSTIN

More like luck. I really love coming out with you guys. Luck or not. Love ya.

They all laugh. The fire crackles. Aaron leans back, watching the ocean. A rare, peaceful moment.

LATER:

EXT. CAMPGROUND BATHHOUSE - LATE NIGHT

There are water puddles. Aaron walks to the bathhouse, yawning. Suddenly, he stops.

A snake slithers across the pathway.

AARON

Nope. Absolutely not.

He turns right around, walking briskly back to the tent. Erica and her family hear him coming.

ERICA'S AARON'S FATHER

What's the rush?

AARON

Bathhouse is closed for the night.
Permanently.

They laugh. Aaron shakes his head, still processing what he just saw.

CUT TO:

FADE IN:

EXT. SHERRI'S MOTHER'S BACKYARD - JULY 4TH - DAY

A lively family gathering. Kids splash in the pool, adults chat under a large patio umbrella, and a grill sizzles with burgers and hot dogs. Fireworks sit in a box nearby.

Aaron lounges by the pool, half-eaten plate of food beside him. Austin splashes him.

AUSTIN

You better eat fast, man. Clock's ticking.

AARON

I know. I'm making the most of it.

He grabs his burger, takes a huge bite.

Across the yard, MOM watches with Aaron's Father slightly amused.

SHERRI

First year he has to work on the Fourth.

AARON'S FATHER

Welcome to adulthood.

Aaron wipes his hands, glances at the time. He sighs, stands up, and stretches.

AARON

Alright, duty calls.

He high-fives Austin, hugs Sherri quickly, and nods at Aaron's Father .

AARON'S FATHER

We'll save some fireworks for you.

CUT TO:

EXT. SHERRI'S MOTHER'S HOUSE - NIGHT

A small group gathers in the backyard. Aaron, just off work, walks in with his uniform slightly wrinkled. He immediately spots the fireworks and grins.

AUSTIN

You ready?

Aaron picks up a firework, lights it. It hisses into the sky and explodes in a burst of color. He smiles, watching.

AARON
Not bad for a long day.

EXT. TABLE ROCK CAMPGROUND - NIGHT

A crackling fire, tents pitched around it. Crickets chirp in the humid summer air.

Aaron sits beside ERICA (17, adventurous, funny). She nudges him.

ERICA
I still can't believe you agreed to
sleep outside.

AARON
I can't either.

He shifts uncomfortably, listening to the deafening sounds of insects.

ERICA
You look... uneasy.

AARON
How do y'all sleep with all this noise?

Erica laughs.

ERICA
You live in the South! This is normal.

Aaron shakes his head but smirks. Then—a sudden rumble of thunder.

AARON
Great. Just what we need.

Erica grins, pulling her sleeping bag closer.

ERICA
You'll survive.

CUT TO:

INT. UNCLE KEN AND AUNT SHERRY'S HOUSE - NIGHT

A quiet suburban home. Aaron, alone, sits at the kitchen table, phone in hand. He dials.

AUNT SHERRY (V.O.)
Hey Aaron! Everything okay?

AARON
Uh... how do you wash clothes?

Beat.

AUNT SHERRY (V.O.)
Wait. You don't know?

AARON
Look, I just never had to do it. Mom
always—

AUNT SHERRY (V.O.)
Hold up, let me get your mom on the
line.

AARON
Wait, no—

A second later, Sherri's voice joins the call.

SHERRI (V.O.)
You're asking how to wash clothes?

AARON
Y'all are enjoying this way too much.

Laughter on the other end.

SHERRI (V.O.)
Alright, here's what you do...

CUT TO:

INT. USC-UPSTATE - ORIENTATION CHECK-IN - MORNING

A crowded university hall. Parents and students mill around, collecting ID badges and paperwork.

Aaron and Aaron's Father stand at a registration table.

STAFF MEMBER

Welcome to USC-Upstate! Here's your
schedule for the day.

Aaron takes it, scanning it over.

AARON'S FATHER

So this is it.

AARON

Yep. College life, here we come.

MONTAGE:

- Aaron and Aaron's Father sitting through orientation speeches.
- Aaron getting his student ID made.
- Aaron's Father looking at a booth offering family photos.

AARON'S FATHER

You want to take one?

Aaron meets his gaze. They shake their heads in sync.

AARON & AARON'S FATHER

Nah.

They chuckle and move on.

CUT TO:

INT. USC-UPSTATE DORM - NIGHT

Loud voices, laughter, video game sounds. A "Get to Know You" event is in full swing. Aaron plays Ping-Pong against another freshman, focused.

RANDOM STUDENT

You staying up all night?

AARON

Looks that way.

Hours later, Aaron stumbles into his dorm room, exhausted. He drops onto the bed, stares at the ceiling.

AARON
College is gonna be interesting.

INT. FAMILY HOME - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Aaron stands in front of Mom and Aaron's Father . His expression serious.

AARON
I need to sit down with y'all and tell
you something.

Sherri and Aaron's Father exchange looks. The tension rises.

AARON'S FATHER
Is something wrong?

AARON
No, it's about Erica.

Sherri leans forward, concerned.

SHERRI
Okay...?

Aaron takes a breath.

AARON
I gave her a Promise Ring.

Silence.

AARON'S FATHER
Well... alright.

SHERRI
Aaron, do you think you're going to
spend the rest of your life with Erica?

Aaron doesn't hesitate.

AARON
Yes.

Sherri studies him. Then, a small smile.

SHERRI

Guess we just need to find one that fits.

Aaron exhales, relieved. Aaron's Father pats his shoulder. It's a moment of acceptance, change, and growing up.

FADE TO BLACK:

FADE IN:

EXT. FAMILY HOME - EARLY MORNING

The sun rises on a warm July morning. Birds chirp, the world waking up. Inside, the house is still quiet.

INT. AARON'S BEDROOM - MORNING

The alarm clock reads 8:30 AM. It buzzes, but no movement from the bed. A beat, then—AARON stirs. He groggily rubs his eyes, realizing he's overslept.

AARON

Crap.

He throws off the blanket, grabs his phone, and checks the time.

INT. FAMILY LIVING ROOM - MORNING

SHERRI and ALYSSA get ready to leave. They grab their purses, chatting.

SHERRI

We'll pick up Nana, do some shopping, and be back later.

Aaron rushes in, slipping on his shoes.

AARON

I was supposed to be up earlier.
Erica's surgery—

ALYSSA

You're always late. She'll forgive you.

Aaron shoots her a look but smirks. They all head to the door together, stepping out into the bright morning light.

FREEZE FRAME.

Narrator's voice fades in:

NARRATOR (AARON'S FATHER , V.O.)

They all walked out with smiles, no
worries. Just another day.

The image unfreezes, and they part ways—Sherri and Alyssa to the car, Aaron heading to his truck.

INT. FAMILY HOME - LATER THAT MORNING

The house is now quiet. Aaron's Father lounges in his recliner, flipping through channels. The phone rings.

He glances at it—a local number, unrecognized.

AARON'S FATHER

If it's important, they'll call back.

He lets it ring out. Silence. Then, twenty minutes later—the phone rings again.

This time, he answers.

AARON'S FATHER

Hello?

HOSPITAL REP (V.O.)

Mr. Philips this is ST. Stevens. Your
son, Aaron, has been in an accident.

A sudden stillness.

AARON'S FATHER

Is he okay?

HOSPITAL REP (V.O.)

We can't give that information over the
phone. You need to come immediately.

Aaron's Father grips the armrest. His face tightens, but he stays composed.

AARON'S FATHER
I'm on my way.

CUT TO:

INT. AARON'S FATHER'S CAR - HIGHWAY - MOMENTS LATER

Aaron's Father drives, gripping the wheel. His jaw is tight, but his breathing is heavy. His thoughts race.

Narrator (his voice) fades in:

NARRATOR (AARON'S FATHER , V.O.)
My stomach turned. I didn't know
anything yet—just uncertainty.
Do I call Sherri now? Or wait?

He exhales sharply.

NARRATOR (AARON'S FATHER , V.O.)
It might not be that bad. I didn't want
to panic her for nothing.

INT. HOSPITAL - EMERGENCY ROOM - MINUTES LATER

Aaron's Father enters, brisk but controlled. He approaches the RECEPTIONIST.

AARON'S FATHER
My son, Aaron. Car accident.

She nods, already expecting him. He's led to a small, quiet waiting room. A woman stands near the door, her face kind but tense.

HOSPITAL STAFF
Do you have someone who can be here
with you?

Aaron's Father studies her face. The weight in her eyes. His breathing quickens.

AARON'S FATHER
This is bad, isn't it?

Her lip trembles, but she holds it together. She nods slightly.

Aaron's Father closes his eyes briefly—then pulls out his phone. He dials.

INT. SHERRI'S CAR - HIGHWAY - SAME TIME

Sherri drives, Alyssa in the passenger seat, NANA in the back. The phone rings through Bluetooth.

SHERRI

Hey, hun.

AARON'S FATHER (V.O.)

Where are you?

His voice is calm. Too calm.

SHERRI

Just left the mall, heading down I-26.
Why?

AARON'S FATHER (V.O.)

Pull over. As soon as it's safe.

Sherri frowns, glancing at Alyssa. A beat.

SHERRI

What's wrong?

AARON'S FATHER (V.O.)

It's Aaron. He's been in a wreck. I'm
at the hospital.

Her grip on the wheel tightens. Alyssa sits up straighter.

SHERRI

Is he—?

AARON'S FATHER (V.O.)

I don't know yet. Just come. Now.

Sherri's foot presses harder on the gas.

INT. HOSPITAL WAITING ROOM - LATER

The door opens. THREE MEN enter. Aaron's Father looks up, his stomach dropping as his eyes lock onto one uniformed man at the front.

The word "CORONER" stands out like a beacon.

AARON'S FATHER

No...

He buries his face in his hands, the realization crashing down.

A gentle hand rests on his shoulder. The Coroner's Assistant sits next to him, soft but firm.

CORONER'S ASSISTANT

I'm so sorry. Aaron didn't make it.

A sound escapes Aaron's Father -part cry, part breath, part disbelief. His hands grip his knees as his world collapses.

The STATE TROOPER and HOSPITAL CHAPLAIN stand nearby, silent, respectful.

NARRATOR (AARON'S FATHER , V.O.)

It was the worst news I had ever
received. Nothing-nothing-
could compare.

The door to the waiting room opens again.

Through the glass, Sherri, Alyssa, and Nana walk toward the hospital, completely unaware.

INT. HOSPITAL WAITING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Sherri rushes in, eyes full of worry. She sits next to Aaron's Father , gripping his arm.

SHERRI

What's going on?

Alyssa sits beside her, wide-eyed. Nana beside Alyssa.

Aaron's Father struggles to find the words. His voice barely above a whisper.

AARON'S FATHER

Sherri... he didn't make it.

Silence.

Sherri stares, processing. Alyssa's face goes pale. Nana's hands cover her mouth.

A beat. Then—Sherri lets out a wail. Alyssa crumples into her hands. Nana sobs quietly.

MONTAGE:

- Aaron's Father standing in the hallway, staring at the floor, phone in hand.
- Sherri, curled up in a chair, silent tears falling.
- Alyssa clutching a crumpled tissue, staring blankly.
- Aaron's Father dialing a number—no answer. He tries again. Still no answer.
- A different phone ringing—a flip phone, left on a picnic table.

EXT. RIVERBANK - SAME TIME

A group of young men pull tubes onto the shore. AUSTIN stretches, his phone tucked in his backpack, unnoticed.

A car pulls up fast—CHRIS jumps out, scanning the group. His eyes land on Austin.

CHRIS

Austin! We need to talk.

Austin frowns, stepping forward. Something in Chris's face makes his stomach drop.

AUSTIN

What's wrong?

Chris swallows hard. A deep breath.

CHRIS

It's Aaron.

Austin's smile fades. The world shifts.

FADE TO BLACK:

FADE IN:

INT. FAMILY HOME - LIVING ROOM - AFTERNOON

A quiet, heavy silence lingers. The weight of grief settles over the house. The clock on the wall ticks loudly.

Aaron's Father sits in the recliner, staring blankly ahead. Through the window, CARS start arriving. One, then two—soon, a steady stream.

DING-DONG.

He exhales deeply, stands, and opens the door.

CUT TO:

MONTAGE - PEOPLE ARRIVE

- Family members hugging each other tightly, eyes red with tears.
- Close friends, colleagues, former teachers—they all come, whispering words of comfort.
- Teenagers from the high school arriving in groups, awkward in their grief. Some cry openly, others stand stiffly, unsure of what to say.
- Sherri and Alyssa sitting on the couch, nodding numbly as people speak, but not really hearing.

Narrator's voice (Aaron's Father) fades in:

AARON'S FATHER (V.O.)
They came from everywhere. Family.
Friends.
Students. Colleagues.
All with the same shock, disbelief, and
heartbreak.

EXT. BACK DECK - EVENING

Aaron's Father stands outside, gripping the railing. The hum of voices from inside drifts out, but he's detached from it all.

SHERRI steps outside, hesitant.

SHERRI
Austin's here.

Aaron's Father tenses. A long beat.

AARON'S FATHER

I'll wait here. Let him come when he's ready.

A moment later, the back door creaks open again. AUSTIN, usually strong, now shattered, steps out. His face is streaked with tears.

For a beat, neither of them speak.

Then Aaron's Father turns, steps forward, and wraps Austin in a tight embrace. Austin grips him back, shoulders shaking.

AARON'S FATHER

I love you, son.

AUSTIN

I—

I lost my brother.

Aaron's Father 's throat tightens. He grips Austin's head, pressing his forehead against his son's.

AARON'S FATHER

I know.

INT. FAMILY HOME - NIGHT

The house is still filled with quiet murmurs of visitors. The exhaustion is overwhelming.

Sherri sits in the dim light of the kitchen, untouched tea in front of her. Aaron's Father enters, standing beside her.

AARON'S FATHER

Mortuary. Tomorrow morning.

She nods. They both know sleep won't come tonight.

INT. MORTUARY - SATURDAY MORNING

The funeral home is cold and sterile, the scent of flowers in the air.

Aaron's Father , SHERRI, AUSTIN, and ALYSSA sit across from MRS. NANCY (60s, kind, compassionate), who speaks softly.

MRS. NANCY
I know this is difficult.
We'll take care of everything for you.

Narrator fades in:

AARON'S FATHER (V.O.)
She was an angel on Earth.
Made the unbearable... bearable.

The family gives information for the obituary. Mrs. Nancy steps away to retrieve paperwork. Silence settles.

Aaron's Father looks at Austin and Alyssa.

AARON'S FATHER
I'm sorry you have to sit through this.

Alyssa squeezes his hand. Austin nods, his jaw tight.

AUSTIN
We want to be here.

Narrator (Aaron's Father) fades in again:

AARON'S FATHER (V.O.)
They handled it better than I did.

EXT. FAMILY HOME - AFTERNOON

People continue to arrive, bringing food, drinks, more condolences. The porch now holds a white bouquet of flowers.

Aaron's Father stares at it for a long time.

AARON'S FATHER (V.O.)
Never thought I'd see one of those
on my porch for one of my children.

INT. MORTUARY - AFTERNOON

The family enters slowly, dreading what's next. Mrs. Nancy meets them, her eyes gentle.

MRS. NANCY
He's ready.

She leads them inside. The air is thick. Their breaths are shallow.

And then—they see Aaron. Peaceful. Still. The truth, undeniable.

AARON'S FATHER (V.O.)

Up until that moment,
I think we all hoped it was a mistake.

SHERRI lets out a strangled sob. Austin grips the side of the casket, knuckles white. Alyssa leans into Aaron's Father , silent tears falling.

EXT. FRONT PORCH - EVENING

Sherri steps outside, phone to her ear. Her voice is soft, steady, but there's an ache in it.

SHERRI

I need a spray for his casket.

A long pause. Then—her eyes well up.

FLORIST (V.O.)

I lost my son too.

A beat.

FLORIST (V.O.)

I'll make sure it's special.
A little extra love.

Sherri clutches the phone tighter, tears slipping down her cheeks.

SHERRI

Thank you.

INT. MORTUARY - SUNDAY NIGHT - VISITATION

CARS fill the parking lot. The line of people stretches out the door.

AARON'S FATHER (V.O.)

We expected a big crowd.
But this... this was overwhelming.

For two hours, the family greets old friends, classmates, strangers with kind eyes.

INT. MORTUARY - LATER THAT NIGHT

A man approaches Aaron's Father and Sherri. A MIDDLE-AGED MAN introduces himself, voice low.

MAN

I was there. At the accident.

Aaron's Father stiffens. Sherri grips his hand.

MAN

I did everything I could.
I stayed with him until the
firefighters arrived.

His face darkens.

MAN

There was a fire.

A shuddering breath from Sherri.

The man's eyes turn distant, remembering.

MAN

A firefighter walked up and asked me,
"Sir, is that your son?"

Beat.

MAN

And I said—

His voice catches. He swallows hard.

MAN

No. But it's somebody's son.

Aaron's Father and Sherri stare at him, tears filling their eyes. Without words, they pull him into an embrace.

Narrator fades in:

AARON'S FATHER (V.O.)

At the end of that night,
this was the one story I told our
family.
Because I hoped it would bring them the
same comfort it brought me.

FADE TO BLACK:

FADE IN:

INT. FAMILY HOME - EARLY MORNING

The house is silent. The weight of the day presses down on everything.

Austin sits at the kitchen table, staring at a blank sheet of stationery. Across from him, Alyssa teary-eyed, grips her pen but hasn't written a word.

Sherri is exhausted, she folds a note into an envelope, seals it. Aaron's Father does the same. No one speaks.

The black funeral car pulls up outside.

EXT. FAMILY HOME - DRIVEWAY - MOMENTS LATER

The family steps outside. The DRIVER (formal, respectful) opens the car door. They hesitate for a moment before getting in.

CUT TO:

INT. FUNERAL HOME - FAMILY ROOM - LATER

Muted conversations. Gentle sobs. Family and close friends fill the space, some standing, some seated, all grieving.

Aaron's casket sits at the front, open. Aaron's Father, Sherri, Austin, and Alyssa step forward—one last goodbye.

Austin clenches his fists, struggling to breathe. Alyssa grips Sherri's hand tight. Aaron's Father exhales slowly, fighting to keep his composure.

One by one, others come forward, whispering their goodbyes. The room is heavy with loss.

CUT TO:

INT. FUNERAL CHAPEL - LATER

The chapel is full. Friends, classmates, coaches, teachers—so many lives Aaron touched, all gathered in silence.

CHUCK (50s, warm but grieving) stands at the front, speaking softly.

CHUCK

Aaron was competitive. Loyal.
He loved deeply—especially Erica.

He looks at Aaron's Father .

CHUCK

And his father... was his rock.

Aaron's Father looks down. His hands grip his knees. He feels anything but strong.

EXT. CEMETERY - LATER

The hearse arrives. The pallbearers—Aaron's teammates and best friends—carry the casket with quiet reverence.

The July heat is relentless. The family waits in the car until the casket is placed at the gravesite. Then, they step out, walking slowly to their seats under the tent.

PASTOR BILL (60s, steady, compassionate) speaks words of faith, love, and promise. The service ends.

Aaron's Father stands, turning to leave when UNCLE CHRIS (50s, serious, protective) steps forward, leading a stranger.

EXT. CEMETERY - GRAVESITE - MOMENTS LATER

Aaron's Father faces a MAN (late 40s) and his WIFE quiet, eyes full of sorrow. The moment is thick with emotion.

LANDSCAPING TRUCK OWNER

I- I just wanted to say... I'm sorry.

Aaron's Father studies him, then nods.

AARON'S FATHER

You didn't have to come.

LANDSCAPING TRUCK OWNER

I know. But we needed to.

A long beat.

AARON'S FATHER

It was an accident. A terrible accident.

I hold no anger toward you.

The man exhales shakily, his wife pressing a hand to his arm.

AARON'S FATHER

I'm just grateful no one else lost their life.

The man nods, swallows hard. They step away, giving space.

A moment later, another couple approaches.

WOMAN

We live where... where the accident happened.

Aaron's Father and Sherri turn to them. The woman takes a breath, her voice trembling.

WOMAN

We stayed with him.
Until the ambulance took him.

Sherri grips Aaron's Father's arm, tears in her eyes.

AARON'S FATHER

Thank you.

A pause. The woman nods, then steps back, wiping her eyes.

EXT. CEMETERY - LATER THAT AFTERNOON

Back home, the family tries to breathe, but after a few hours, they know they need to go back. They gather in the driveway.

AARON'S FATHER

Anyone who wants to come is welcome.

Some stay. Others join them. They return to the grave, now covered in flowers.

No one speaks. They stand, looking. Hugging. Crying.

Aaron's Father steps back, watching their lost faces. He slowly raises his camera... and takes a picture.

EXT. CEMETERY - EVENING

UNCLE KEN (50s, quiet, strong) stops by the cemetery on his way home. The sky is darkening. The air is still.

But the storm earlier wasn't kind. Flowers are scattered across the grass.

Ken pauses, then kneels, carefully placing each flower back where it belongs. Adjusting. Fixing. Making it right again.

When he gets home, his WIFE looks up.

WIFE

What took so long?

Ken exhales, voice soft.

KEN

I had to arrange Aaron's flowers back on his grave.

INT. FAMILY HOME - NIGHT

AUSTIN'S PHONE buzzes. He glances at the screen, then stops. A message. A picture. He opens it. His breath catches.

His grip tightens on the phone as he stares at the image. His throat works, his eyes glistening.

AARON'S FATHER (O.S.)

What is it?

Austin turns the phone, showing Aaron's Father . Sherri leans in, her lips parting. Alyssa lets out a soft sob.

The picture says everything. Aaron's Father closes his eyes, exhales.

AARON'S FATHER

It's perfect.

A long beat. The family sits together, the silence heavy but somehow lighter.

CUT TO:

FADE IN:

INT. FAMILY HOME - LIVING ROOM - EVENING

The house feels emptier now. Too quiet. A stack of sympathy cards sits on the coffee table, some opened, some untouched.

Aaron's Father , tired, picks up a card, runs his fingers over the envelope before slowly pulling out the message inside. His eyes scan the words:

CARD (V.O.)

"There's a place I've never seen,
beyond this world we know..."

His breath catches. He grips the card tighter, forcing himself to read on.

CARD (V.O.)

"And though I understand some may be
saddened when I leave,
one day, we all will meet again—that's
what I believe."

Sherri enters, carrying a few more cards in her hands. She pauses when she sees the look on Aaron's Father 's face.

SHERRI

Another tough one?

Aaron's Father swallows hard, nods. He hands her the card. She reads, blinking back tears.

SHERRI

It's beautiful.

AUSTIN walks past, heading for the door.

AARON'S FATHER

Where are you going?

AUSTIN

Just out.

AARON'S FATHER

Be careful.

Austin hesitates—wants to say something, but doesn't. He nods and walks out.

INT. GROCERY STORE - WEEKEND

Aaron's Father pushes a cart aimlessly down an aisle. His mind is somewhere else. He turns the corner and—RHONDA (40s, kind, familiar) steps out of the opposite aisle. Their eyes meet.

A beat. Then—they rush to each other, hugging tight. The tears come instantly.

Shoppers move around them, glancing but not intruding. Their grief exists in its own space.

RHONDA

I'm so sorry...

AARON'S FATHER

I know...

No more words. Just two people holding each other, letting the sorrow out.

INT. CLASSROOM - DAY

A stack of freshly written essays sits on a teacher's desk. The camera pans across the top page. Neatly written at the top: "The

Definition of Courage." The words are handwritten, slightly uneven, belonging to an 11-year-old boy.

NEPHEW (V.O.)

"The definition of courage is strength of mind to carry on in difficulty. I think it is very hard to be courageous..."

The camera zooms in as the words come to life on screen.

NEPHEW (V.O.)

"I first knew what courage meant when my cousin died. It was hard to be strong. It was hard to be brave. It was hard not to ask God, 'Why?'"

A pause. Then:

NEPHEW (V.O.)

"But I didn't let it stop me from going on with my life."

INT. CORONER'S OFFICE - DAY

Aaron's Father sits across from THE CORONER'S ASSISTANT (50s, solemn, carrying his own weight of grief). A small box sits between them. The room is quiet.

The assistant slides a release form across the desk. Aaron's Father picks up the pen, staring at the paper for a moment before signing.

The assistant carefully places Aaron's wallet on the table in front of him.

CORONER'S ASSISTANT

I just want you to know...
That day at the hospital—
it was the hardest thing I've ever had to do.

Aaron's Father looks up. Their eyes meet—both red, both tired.

AARON'S FATHER

I wouldn't wish that job on anyone.

The assistant nods, then looks away, clearing his throat.

CORONER'S ASSISTANT

I'm truly sorry for your loss.

Aaron's Father picks up the wallet, feeling the worn leather in his hands. He nods, voice tight.

AARON'S FATHER

Thank you.

He stands, turns to leave, then hesitates.

AARON'S FATHER

If you ever see me somewhere—
don't just pass by. Speak.

The assistant nods, eyes glossy. Aaron's Father exits.

INT. AARON'S FATHER'S TRUCK - PARKED OUTSIDE CORONER'S OFFICE -
MOMENTS LATER

Aaron's Father sits, gripping Aaron's wallet. He takes a breath and opens it.

Inside, tucked neatly behind his license, is Aaron's college ID card. The one he never got to use.

Aaron's Father stares at it, his vision blurring. His thumb traces over Aaron's photo. The silence in the truck feels heavier than the world outside.

His chest tightens. He closes the wallet, pressing it against his forehead for a brief moment before setting it gently in the passenger seat.

He exhales slowly, starts the engine, and pulls away.

FADE TO:

FADE IN:

EXT. OLD FURNACE ROAD - MORNING

A narrow road lined with trees. A red sedan moves steadily down the road. Inside, Alyssa (16, focused, hands tight on the wheel) drives with Sherri in the passenger seat. NANA (early 70s, calm, looking out the window) sits in the back.

SHERRI

We'll grab some lunch after the mall.

NANA

As long as it's not that sushi place again.

Alyssa smiles slightly but suddenly stiffens.

Up ahead—flashing emergency lights. A fire truck blocks the road.

ALYSSA

What happened?

SHERRI

Looks like a wreck. Take the detour.

Alyssa hesitates before turning onto a side street. As they pass, the fire truck completely obscures the accident scene. They don't see the crushed silver truck beyond it.

Alyssa grips the wheel tighter. Something in her gut feels... wrong.

EXT. OLD FURNACE ROAD - ACCIDENT SCENE - SAME TIME

A line of cars waits behind the wreckage. A YOUNG MAN (18, athletic, sitting in his car, stunned) stares ahead.

He squints at a high school parking permit dangling from the rearview mirror of the crashed truck.

His breath catches. He fumbles for his phone, dialing fast.

YOUNG MAN

I think I know whose truck that is...

INT. HOSPITAL - EMERGENCY ROOM - LATER

A NURSE (30s, professional, but visibly shaken) walks quickly down the hallway. She stops at the nurse's station, swallowing hard before looking at her colleague.

NURSE

I know him.

Her coworker looks at her, uncertain.

COWORKER

You sure?

The nurse nods, eyes damp.

NURSE

It's Aaron.

A long silence. No family member ever has to identify the body.
It's already been done.

INT. MORTUARY - VIEWING ROOM - DAY

MRS. NANCY (60s, compassionate) leads Aaron's Father (late 40s, exhausted), SHERRI, AUSTIN (19, quiet, distant), and ALYSSA into the office.

MRS. NANCY

There's someone I'd like you to meet.

A young woman steps forward—EMILY. She makes eye contact with Aaron's Father and offers a small smile.

EMILY

Mr. ... I was in your class.

Aaron's Father blinks, recognizing her now. A former student.

Somehow, a familiar face makes this unbearable process just a little easier.

EXT. FAMILY HOME - DRIVEWAY - AFTER FUNERAL

A mortuary van pulls up. A DRIVER (late 50s, warm but reserved) steps out, holding a business card.

DRIVER

Mr. (Last Name)... I think you know my son.

Aaron's Father looks at the name on the card, then back up at the man.

AARON'S FATHER

Wait—your son is—?

DRIVER

We worked together for years.

A pause. The connection settles in.

DRIVER

And my grandson... he played baseball
for you.

Aaron's Father exhales, shaken. The driver glances at the house, then back at him.

DRIVER

I was also the one who took your call
that day. From the hospital.

Aaron's Father 's throat tightens. The universe keeps threading things together in impossible ways.

INT. CHURCH - FUNERAL SERVICE - NIGHT

A nearly silent chapel. The weight of grief presses down. The lights are dim.

A microphone stands alone. The pianist begins to play softly. Then—a voice.

NATALIE (18, beautiful but solemn) stands at the front. Her voice, trembling but angelic, fills the room.

Aaron's former classmate. His one-time love. And now—she sings for him.

Her eyes close. Her voice soars. The audience sits in stillness, overwhelmed.

Aaron's Father watches from the front row, barely breathing. Her voice isn't just strong—it's a gift. A final act of love.

EXT. ACCIDENT SITE - NIGHT

A small, quiet house. Beyond the porch, in the yard—a cross. Flowers surround it, fresh, tended to with care.

A CANDLE flickers beside it. The HOMEOWNERS (50s, kind, thoughtful) stand just inside their door, looking out at the site.

A moment. Then—the man steps outside, lights a new candle.

He does this every night. No one asked him to. But he does it anyway.

EXT. ACCIDENT SITE - ONE YEAR LATER

Family members gather. The air is thick with emotion, but there is peace here now.

A cross stands where the accident happened. Flowers placed gently around it.

Aaron's Father steps forward. He places his hand on the wood, closing his eyes for a moment. He whispers:

AARON'S FATHER

We still remember.

He steps back. Sherri takes his hand. The family stands together, looking at the cross, the flowers, and the place where everything changed.

CUT TO:

FADE IN:

INT. FAMILY HOME - LIVING ROOM - EVENING

A stack of sympathy cards sits on the coffee table. Some opened, some still sealed. Aaron's Father (late 40s) exhausted, holding a card in his hands reads silently, his thumb tracing over the words.

Sherri is quiet, lost in thought, she enters, carrying a fresh stack of cards. She sets them down gently, sitting beside him.

SHERRI

More came today.

Aaron's Father exhales, nodding.

AARON'S FATHER

I didn't think people sent this many
anymore.

Sherri picks one up, her eyes welling with tears as she reads.

SHERRI

"You are not alone in your grief.
Aaron was loved by so many."

A long pause. They sit together, the weight of the words settling
in.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

The table is lined with foil-covered dishes and containers. Too
much food for the appetite grief allows.

AUSTIN (19, distant, sitting at the table) pokes at his plate,
barely eating. ALYSSA (16, quiet) sits across from him, staring
at hers.

AARON'S FATHER

Who brought dinner tonight?

SHERRI

The church, I think. Maybe one of the
schools.

AUSTIN

It's been, what-weeks now? And people
are still-

SHERRI

Helping.

A beat.

AUSTIN

I guess we need it.

They all stare at their plates. No one is truly hungry, but they eat anyway.

INT. OFFICE - NIGHT

Aaron's Father sits at the computer, scrolling through Aaron's memorial website. Messages flood the page. Words from old friends, teammates, teachers.

MESSAGE (V.O.)

"I miss you, man. Still can't believe you're gone."

MESSAGE (V.O.)

"You changed my life in ways you never knew."

He exhales, rubbing his forehead. A small comfort, but a comfort nonetheless.

INT. HIGH SCHOOL - CLASSROOM - DAY

A teacher's desk. A small, elegant box sits on top. Aaron's Father, Sherri, Austin, and Alyssa stand before it. The teacher, MISS KENNEDY (50s, kind, deeply sympathetic), opens the lid.

Inside, four silver necklaces.

MISS KENNEDY

We wanted you to have these.

She lifts one, turning it over. On one side, Aaron's name and dates. On the other—his fingerprint.

Sherri's breath catches as she reaches for hers, running her thumb over the grooves. Tears well in her eyes.

SHERRI

His fingerprint...

Austin swallows hard, gripping his tightly.

AUSTIN

This is... real.

Aaron's Father clutches his necklace, nodding at Miss Kennedy, his voice thick.

AARON'S FATHER

Thank you.

They hold onto them tightly, as if they're holding onto Aaron himself.

INT. FAMILY HOME - DAY

A package sits on the kitchen table. Sherri carefully opens it. Inside—a memorial album.

Scriptures and blank spaces for memories fill the pages. A letter sits on top.

Aaron's Father reads aloud.

AARON'S FATHER

"This book is for you, from the businesses in our community. Some you know. Some you don't. But we all wanted to do this for you."

Sherri flips through the pages, her eyes filled with gratitude.

SHERRI

People keep surprising me.

EXT. HIGH SCHOOL - COURTYARD - AFTERNOON

A Japanese Maple stands in the soil, young but strong. A crowd gathers—family, school faculty, friends, teammates.

A LANDSCAPING WORKER (50s, nervous but respectful) stands beside Aaron's Father

WORKER

We wanted to do something. Something that lasts.

Aaron's Father nods, eyes damp. The tree had been planted by the very same landscaping company involved in the accident.

Shovels are passed. One by one, people take turns adding dirt, each motion an unspoken tribute.

PASTOR BILL places a hand on the tree and blesses it. Sherri wipes away a tear.

AARON'S FATHER

I've planted a lot of trees before.
But this is the first time it's ever
made me cry.

INT. RESTAURANT - NIGHT

A booth in a quiet corner. Aaron's Father, Sherri, and CATHY (late 40s, supportive, Sherri's sister-in-law) finish their meal.

CATHY

I have something for you.

She steps outside, returns with a wrapped package.

CATHY

It's from Samantha.

They take it carefully, exchanging a glance before unwrapping it.

A hand-drawn portrait of Aaron. Detailed. Alive on the page. His last photo, captured in charcoal.

Sherri gasps, covering her mouth. Aaron's Father blinks hard, running a trembling hand over the image.

SHERRI

She drew this...?

CATHY

Before she left for school. She wanted
you to have it.

Austin and Alyssa lean in, staring at their brother's face on the canvas.

A long silence. Then— Aaron's Father exhales, his voice barely above a whisper.

AARON'S FATHER

Her first masterpiece.

INT. FAMILY HOME - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

The portrait hangs on the wall. Aaron's eyes, frozen in time, watching over them.

Aaron's Father and Sherri stand together, looking up at it. Hand in hand. The silence no longer feels empty—just full of memories.

INT. FAMILY HOME - LIVING ROOM - DECEMBER - NIGHT

A soft glow from the Christmas tree fills the dim room. Ornaments glisten in the light. SHERRI carefully unpacks a small box. Inside, a set of white metal angel wings with a heart in the center. Aaron's initials are engraved inside the heart.

A red ribbon dangles from the top, meant for hanging.

Aaron's Father watches from the couch, his eyes heavy with emotion. Sherri gently lifts the ornament, turning it in her hands.

SHERRI

They made these for everyone.

She crosses to the tree and carefully places the wings on a branch. It sways slightly before settling into place.

Austin and Alyssa enter, pausing when they see it. A long beat. Then—Alyssa steps forward and touches it gently.

ALYSSA

It's perfect.

INT. FAMILY HOME - NIGHT

The coffee table is covered with a leather-bound album. A brown cover, sleek, elegant. A cut-out rectangle in the front reveals a photo—Aaron's angel wings ornament hanging on the tree.

Aaron's Father sits across from it, staring at the book, hesitant to open it. AUSTIN and ALYSSA sit nearby, watching quietly.

AUSTIN
Aunt Dee made this?

SHERRI
Every page.

Aaron's Father slowly reaches forward, flipping open the cover. The first page—a large portrait of Aaron. Below it, one of his favorite quotes.

Page after page—family photos, handwritten memories, quotes from teammates, old coaches, best friends.

Aaron's Father stops at a photo of Aaron as a child, sitting on his bike, grinning. He exhales shakily and closes the book.

AARON'S FATHER
I need time.

Sherri nods, placing a comforting hand on his arm. The book remains on the table, waiting to be revisited.

EXT. BASEBALL FIELD - NIGHT

A packed stadium. The varsity baseball team stands along the first-base line. The scoreboard glows against the night sky. A large banner on the outfield fence reads:

"Forever in Our Hearts - Aaron C. Brown - #7."

Aaron's Father, SHERRI, AUSTIN, and ALYSSA stand near home plate. The Athletic Director steps forward, microphone in hand.

ATHLETIC DIRECTOR
Tonight, we honor a teammate, a competitor, and a friend. Aaron was part of this family, and he always will be.

He gestures toward the dugout. Hanging inside, Aaron's jersey—his number, his name—placed where it will remain all season long.

A wave of emotion crashes over Aaron's Father . He clenches his jaw, struggling to hold it together.

ATHLETIC DIRECTOR

And tonight, on behalf of the Boiling Springs baseball team, we'd like to present this to Aaron's family.

A senior player, one of Aaron's closest friends, steps forward, holding one of Aaron's jerseys, neatly folded. He hands it to Aaron's Father .

Aaron's Father grips it tightly, his throat closing. The entire baseball team and coaching staff line up, shaking hands with the family one by one.

By the time Aaron's Father reaches the end of the line, his vision blurs. He turns slightly to Sherri, voice hoarse.

AARON'S FATHER

I need to go.

Sherri nods, understanding. They step away, Aaron's jersey clutched in Aaron's Father 's hands.

INT. FAMILY HOME - NIGHT

The jersey now rests in a glass display case on the wall. Framed. Preserved. A piece of Aaron, forever home.

INT. STUDY - NIGHT

Aaron's Father sits at his desk, a blank page in front of him. A deep breath. He picks up a pen and begins writing.

AARON'S FATHER (V.O.)

This isn't about bragging.
This isn't about saying, "Look what people did for us."
It's about gratitude.

Sherri enters, standing quietly behind him, reading over his shoulder.

AARON'S FATHER (V.O.)
It's about hope.
About what it means to still have
goodness in the world.
To know that, after tragedy, people
step up.

Sherri leans down, wrapping her arms around his shoulders. He places a hand over hers.

EXT. PARK - DAY

A group of volunteers helps build a Habitat for Humanity house. Among them—AUSTIN and ALYSSA. They hammer, paint, carry supplies. Smiling, laughing. Giving back.

Narrator fades in:

AARON'S FATHER (V.O.)
I hope this story does for others
what so many did for us.

INT. CHURCH - SUNDAY MORNING

Aaron's Father sits in a pew, Bible in hand. The pastor's voice echoes, but he isn't listening. His fingers brush over a page, stopping at a highlighted verse.

AARON'S FATHER (V.O.)
I've been told losing a child is the
hardest thing
a human being can endure.
I believe that now.

Sherri, beside him, squeezes his hand gently.

AARON'S FATHER (V.O.)
But faith...
And good people...
They make it bearable.

INT. FAMILY HOME - NIGHT

The house is quiet. In the living room, the portrait of Aaron hangs, watching over them.

On the Christmas tree, his angel wings ornament still sways slightly from an earlier touch.

Aaron's Father stands alone for a moment, taking it all in. Then—he exhales softly, turning off the lights.

FADE TO BLACK.

FADE IN:

INT. HIGH SCHOOL - AUDITORIUM - DAY (FLASHBACK)

A large assembly hall. Students fill the seats, talking among themselves. On stage, a Habitat for Humanity representative speaks passionately about their mission.

AARON (17) sits in the crowd, listening intently. His jaw tightens. His eyes sharpen. Something clicks.

The speaker finishes. Applause. The crowd begins to shuffle out, but Aaron remains, staring ahead, deep in thought.

STUDENT (O.S.)

You good, man?

Aaron blinks, snapping back. He nods, slowly standing.

AARON

Yeah... I just got an idea.

INT. HIGH SCHOOL - PRINCIPAL'S OFFICE - DAY

PRINCIPAL (50s, skeptical but listening) leans back in his chair as Aaron stands across from him, animated, determined.

AARON

Sixty-five thousand dollars. That's all we need.
We raise it, and we build the house.

PRINCIPAL
Aaron, that's—

AARON
It's big. I know. But we can do it.

The principal studies him, intrigued despite himself.

PRINCIPAL
You really believe that?

AARON
Yeah. And by the time we're done, you will too.

A beat. Then—the principal smirks. He extends a hand.

PRINCIPAL
Alright. Let's make history.

Aaron grips it, shaking firmly.

INT. TEACHERS' LOUNGE - AFTERNOON

Faculty members sit, chatting among themselves. The room quiets as Aaron steps forward, no notes, no script—just heart. He takes a breath and speaks.

AARON
This isn't just about a house.
It's about proving what we can do when we come together.
It's about changing someone's life.

Teachers exchange looks, some already nodding. Others, skeptical. But Aaron presses on.

AARON
If we do this, we're making history.
We're making a difference.
And I promise you—we will finish it.

A hush lingers. Then—applause. Some teachers wipe their eyes. Aaron steps back, heart pounding. He sees Mrs. PEDEN (40s, emotional, inspired) dabbing her eyes.

MRS. PEDEN

We will build that house for you, baby.

Aaron smiles, victorious.

EXT. BASEBALL FIELD - NIGHT (FLASHFORWARD - AFTER AARON'S PASSING)

A large crowd gathers on the field. A BANNER hangs in the outfield—Aaron's name, his number. The project he started, now a mission to be fulfilled.

Austin, standing with Aaron's Father , staring at the banner exhales, shaking his head.

AUSTIN

He would've loved this.

AARON'S FATHER

He still does.

EXT. HIGH SCHOOL - PARKING LOT - MORNING (GROUND-BREAKING CEREMONY)

A crowd gathers at the Habitat for Humanity site, right next to the high school. Faculty, students, volunteers, and family stand bundled in the cold morning air.

MR. TOM (Habitat representative, 60s, warm, proud) steps up to a makeshift podium. He greets the crowd.

MR. TOM

This house began as a dream..
but it became a promise.
And today, that promise starts to take
shape.

Sherri stands beside Aaron's Father , gripping his arm. He steps forward, hesitant. This is his first time speaking publicly about Aaron.

He exhales, looks at the crowd. Eyes fill with tears, but he steadies himself.

AARON'S FATHER

Somewhere along the line, someone came
up with a dream.
That dream became a goal.
And after tragedy, that goal became a
mission.
A mission that would not be denied.

The crowd listens, silent. He takes a breath, voice stronger now.

AARON'S FATHER

Today, it all becomes reality.
And if you don't know it yet, you will
before it's done—
you are part of something special.

A beat. Then—applause. Some wipe their eyes. Aaron's Father steps back, breath unsteady, but he did it.

EXT. HABITAT SITE - LATER THAT DAY

A large wooden wall panel is carried by volunteers. Hands—young and old, student and teacher, family and stranger—lift together.

MR. TOM

Alright, on three—one, two, three!

The wall raises. People cheer. The first piece of Aaron's dream stands tall.

Markers are passed around. Volunteers write messages along the beams—words of love, hope, faith.

Sherri runs a hand over the fresh wood, tears slipping down her face.

SHERRI

He'd be so proud.

Austin grips a marker, staring at the open space. He writes:
"Aaron—this one's for you, brother."

MONTAGE - CONSTRUCTION PROGRESS

- Church groups arrive, hammering nails, painting walls.
- Businesses sponsor materials, students mix cement, teachers haul supplies.
- The house takes shape—faster than expected.

EXT. HABITAT SITE - FINAL TOUCHES - DAY

Landscaping begins. CHRIS (50s, precise, deeply focused) oversees the work. Chuck and Austin assist. Every bush, every flower—perfectly placed.

Chris steps back, satisfied. He looks at Aaron's Father .

CHRIS

He'd approve.

Aaron's Father nods, voice thick.

AARON'S FATHER

Yeah. He would.

EXT. HABITAT HOUSE - DEDICATION CEREMONY

A crowd gathers in front of the finished home. A new life, a new beginning.

KENISHA (mid-20s, humble, overwhelmed) stands at the front, eyes shining with gratitude.

Mr. Tom steps forward, microphone in hand.

MR. TOM

This house stands today because of
love.

Because of a young man's dream.

Because of every person here who made
it happen.

Lisa, a Habitat volunteer, hands Kenisha a Bible and a basket of
housewarming gifts.

LISA

A home is more than walls.
It's the love inside them.
May this house be filled with love.

Kenisha wipes her eyes, then turns to the crowd.

KENISHA

Thank you.
For everything.
I promise to be a good neighbor, a hard
worker.
And if you ever want to visit...
my door is always open.

Applause. Smiles through tears. A house—a home—completed.

EXT. HABITAT HOUSE - AFTER THE CEREMONY

Aaron's Father stands near the porch, looking up. The sky is
bright, clear. Something about it feels... meaningful.

A YOUNG MAN (mid-30s, uncertain but familiar) approaches,
hesitant.

YOUNG MAN

Coach Brown?

Aaron's Father turns, surprised.

AARON'S FATHER

Yes?

YOUNG MAN

I'm Willie.
I graduated in '94.
I don't know if you remember me... but
this is my daughter's house.

Aaron's Father 's breath catches. A full-circle moment. He shakes Willie's hand, overwhelmed.

A glance back at the house. Aaron's dream—complete.

FADE TO BLACK.

FADE IN:

EXT. FAMILY BACKYARD - AFTERNOON

A newly planted Birch tree stands in the yard. Aaron's Father grieving and Sherri kneel beside it, patting down the last bit of soil.

Austin and Alyssa stand nearby, watching quietly. The wind rustles the leaves above them.

AARON'S FATHER

He planted these at school.
Feels right to have one here.

Sherri nods, eyes welling up.

SHERRI

It's like a piece of him growing with
us.

INT. GARDEN STORE - NORTH CAROLINA - DAY

Sherri stiffens, eyes filling with tears. She stares at a garden stone among the displays.

AARON'S FATHER

Sherri?

She turns away quickly, wiping her eyes.

SHERRI

I'm fine. Let's just go.

EXT. FAMILY BACKYARD - DAYS LATER

A larger stone sits at the foot of the Birch tree. The inscription reads:

"No farewell words were spoken, no time to say goodbye..."

Aaron's Father runs his fingers over the words, his throat tight. He exhales slowly, then stands beside Sherri, hands in his pockets.

AARON'S FATHER

He'd like it here.

SHERRI

He does like it here.

INT. FAMILY LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

A framed drawing of a sunset hangs on the wall. Aaron's artwork.

Aaron's Father sits on the couch, staring at it. His face softens, something calm, peaceful settling over him.

AARON'S FATHER

Heaven must be a lot like that.

INT. TATTOO SHOP - AFTERNOON

Aaron's Father and Sherri step inside. Bibles verses line the walls. Aaron's Father's eyes land on Philippians 4:13.

AARON'S FATHER

I'm in the right place.

A tattoo artist, RANDY (40s, skilled, patient), approaches.

RANDY

Got something in mind?

Aaron's Father pulls out his phone, shows Aaron's sunset. Randy studies it, nods.

RANDY

That's beautiful. Let's do it.

INT. TATTOO SHOP - LATER

Aaron's Father sits, gritting through the pain. The tattoo comes to life on his arm—Aaron's sunset, his initials replacing the sailboat, a single star added to the sky.

Sherri watches from the side, a small, knowing smile on her face.

SHERRI

He'd be shaking his head at you right now.

AARON'S FATHER

Yeah... but he'd love it.

FADE TO BLACK.

FADE IN:

EXT. CEMETERY - AARON'S GRAVE - DAY

A cool autumn breeze. Balloons rest against the headstone. Aaron's 19th birthday.

Sherri, Austin, Alyssa, and Aaron's Father stand together, silent. Alyssa's voice breaks the air.

ALYSSA

It's his birthday...
and he's not even here to enjoy it.

No one speaks. Sherri reaches out, squeezes Alyssa's hand. A long, painful moment. Then, quietly—

AARON'S FATHER
Happy Birthday, son.

INT. FAMILY DINING ROOM - THANKSGIVING DAY

The table is full, but there's an empty seat. The usual laughter is quieter. Forks scrape against plates.

Austin picks at his food, pushing it around. Alyssa chews slowly, not really tasting anything.

Aaron's Father glances at Aaron's chair, his jaw tightening. Across from him, Sherri does the same.

AARON'S FATHER
He'd be getting seconds by now.

A small smile from Sherri, but her eyes glisten with unshed tears.

INT. LIVING ROOM - CHRISTMAS EVE

A dimly lit Christmas tree. Sherri sits on the couch, staring at Aaron's angel wings ornament. Aaron's Father watches her from the doorway, hesitant.

AARON'S FATHER
You alright?

SHERRI
I thought I was.

Aaron's Father sits beside her, silent. The weight of the holiday presses down.

AARON'S FATHER
We'll get through it.

SHERRI
I know.

She leans her head against his shoulder. The tree lights flicker softly.

INT. FAMILY GARAGE - SUMMER AFTERNOON

Aaron's Father rummages through old boxes. He moves a bag—two baseball gloves fall out.

A baseball rolls across the floor, stopping at his foot.

He stares at it. Memories flood in—Aaron's laughter, the sound of a ball smacking into a glove.

His chest tightens. He grips the ball, his fingers trembling. Then—he sits down, covering his face.

The garage is silent. Except for his quiet, uncontrollable sobs.

EXT. CEMETERY - JULY 13, 2013 - EVENING

One year later. Sherri, Austin, Alyssa, and Aaron's Father stand by Aaron's grave. The air is heavy.

No one speaks. No one moves. Just quiet tears, memories, and the ache of time passing.

AUSTIN kneels, adjusting the flowers. Alyssa wraps her arms around herself.

Aaron's Father clears his throat, his voice barely above a whisper.

AARON'S FATHER

A year.

Sherri nods. A long silence.

AARON'S FATHER

But we made it through.

CUT TO BLACK:

FADE IN:

INT. CHURCH - SUNDAY SERVICE - MORNING

A large congregation sits in the pews. Some hold tissues, some bow their heads. The air is heavy but hopeful.

Aaron's Father, deeply emotional stands at the pulpit. His hands rest on the sides, gripping gently for balance. He takes a breath, looks out at the grieving faces before him.

AARON'S FATHER

Things have gotten better, although
much slower than I ever thought
possible.

Grief is a process—a slow, painful
process.

But I want to share some things that
have helped me get through.

He pauses, gathering himself. The room is silent, hanging onto his words.

AARON'S FATHER

First... take time to grieve.

There is no timetable.

No right or wrong way to do it.

I have seen this firsthand in my own
family.

We all grieve differently.

Some talk, some withdraw, some cry in
private.

And that's okay.

What's not okay—

is letting it destroy the ones left
behind.

One tragedy is enough.

We cannot let grief create another.

The audience nods softly, some dabbing their eyes.

AARON'S FATHER

Second... learn to laugh again.

The first time it happens, you might
feel guilty.

You might wonder—

"How can I laugh when my loved one is
gone?"

But I promise you—

laughter doesn't mean you've forgotten
them.

It means you're carrying them with you...

and finding joy in the life they would want you to live.

He exhales, shifts slightly, looking down before continuing.

AARON'S FATHER

Third... don't be afraid to ask for help.
If you need to see a doctor, go.
If you need to talk to a friend, do it.
If you need a pastor, seek one.
If you need a counselor, find one.
We questioned if our pain was normal,
if this unbearable weight would ever lift.
So as a family, we went to a grief counselor.
I didn't want to go.
But I did it for my family.

A pause. His voice deepens with emotion.

AARON'S FATHER

And I'm glad I did.
The counselor told me something I will never forget.
He said—
"You will live with pain for the rest of your life,
but you can choose not to be miserable."

He scans the room, letting the words sink in.

AARON'S FATHER

I choose not to be miserable.

CUT TO: FLASHBACK - INT. COUNSELOR'S OFFICE - EVENING

A soft-lit room. Aaron's father sits across from a GRIEF COUNSELOR (60s, kind, understanding).

GRIEF COUNSELOR

The pain will never leave you.
But you can choose how you live with it.

Aaron's father nods slowly, absorbing the truth.

BACK TO CHURCH

AARON'S FATHER

Fourth... get back to your routines.
It will feel impossible at first.
You'll wake up and think—
"How can I go to work? How can I go to
the grocery store?
How can I smile at people when my world
has fallen apart?"
But you still have a life to live.
And your loved one—
they would want you to live it.

CUT TO: FLASHBACK - INT. GROCERY STORE - DAY

AARON'S FATHER stands in the middle of an aisle, frozen. A woman walks by, smiling.

WOMAN

Good morning!

He nods back, but his face is empty. The normal world feels unreal. He grips the cart, swallows hard, and keeps walking.

BACK TO CHURCH

AARON'S FATHER

Fifth... accept kindness.
When people want to help you, let them.
When they bring you food, say thank
you.
When they offer words of comfort,
accept them.
Even when you don't feel like it—
be gracious.

He pauses, his voice catching slightly.

AARON'S FATHER

Sometimes, kindness comes from
unexpected places.

Last year, after presenting Aaron's memorial scholarship,
a man I had never met approached me.
He said—
"I didn't know your son,
but I think what you're doing in his name is a beautiful thing."

A deep breath. His voice thickens.

AARON'S FATHER

Another man—a former student, now a teacher—
walked up to me that same night.
Tears in his eyes,
and said—
"My heart ached for you and your wife when I heard about Aaron."
Those words—
they meant everything.

A hush falls over the church. People nod, some weeping silently.

AARON'S FATHER

Sixth... be thankful for what you still have.
That may sound impossible.
But look around you—
at the people still here.
At the love that remains.

He glances at his family sitting in the front row—Sherri, Austin, Alyssa. They hold hands, listening intently.

AARON'S FATHER

And finally... do something positive in their memory.
Find a way to honor them.
Find a way to let their name continue.
Because as long as we speak their names, they are never truly gone.

CUT TO: FLASHBACK - EXT. HABITAT HOUSE DEDICATION - DAY

A large banner "Aaron's Bulldog Habitat House." Volunteers stand proudly.

AARON'S FATHER holds a hammer, drives the first nail into the final wall. His eyes shine with grief and pride.

AARON'S FATHER (V.O.)

If we can turn our pain into something
good—
we win.

BACK TO CHURCH

Aaron's father steps back from the pulpit. His voice lowers, but his conviction deepens.

AARON'S FATHER

I stand before you today,
not as a man who has overcome grief—
but as a man still walking through it.
Some days are easier.
Some days are unbearable.
But I have faith.
And faith is what carries me.

A beat. He scans the room—faces of loss, of pain, of understanding.

AARON'S FATHER

If you are grieving, you are not alone.
If you are struggling, you are not
alone.
If you don't know how to keep going,
I promise you—
you can.

A long, silent pause. The church is still. Then—someone sobs softly. A few nod. Others whisper "Amen."

Aaron's father exhales. The weight is still there... but lighter. He steps down from the pulpit.

FADE TO BLACK.

FADE IN:

INT. HIGH SCHOOL AUDITORIUM - DAY

The auditorium is packed with high school juniors and seniors. Some whisper, some glance at their phones, but most sit attentively.

At the front, a HIGHWAY PATROL OFFICER stands at the podium. Beside him, AARON'S FATHER sits, waiting.

BILL speaks first, addressing the crowd.

BILL

Every time I give these talks, I hope—
just one of you takes it seriously.
Because one of you taking it seriously
could mean one of you is still alive
next year.

A heavy silence.

Then—BILL turns to Aaron's father, gesturing him forward.

BILL

Today, I have someone very special
here.
He's not an officer.
He's not a teacher.
He's a father.
And he has a story you need to hear.

Aaron's father stands. The students whisper, recognizing him.

He walks to the podium, adjusting the microphone. Deep breath.
He looks out over the crowd—some familiar faces, some strangers.

AARON'S FATHER

What I'm about to do—
is harder than writing a book.

A few chuckles, but they fade quickly.

AARON'S FATHER

You don't realize how quickly
your world can be turned upside down
until it happens.

His voice is steady, but his hands tighten slightly on the podium.

AARON'S FATHER

That Friday morning started out
like any other.
My wife, my daughter, my son—
we all left the house around 9:15 a.m.
Aaron was going to buy a gift
for his girlfriend.
Sherri and Alyssa were going shopping.

He pauses, grips the podium tighter.

AARON'S FATHER

At 11:15 a.m.,
I got a call from the hospital.

Some students shift uncomfortably.

AARON'S FATHER

A woman told me—
Aaron had been in an accident.
He had already been there almost an
hour.

Deep breath. His voice lowers.

AARON'S FATHER

At 11:45 a.m.,
I was told my son didn't make it.

The room is silent. No whispers. No movement.

AARON'S FATHER

In just a few hours,
my life changed forever.

FLASHBACK - EXT. CRASH SITE - RAINY MORNING

A crashed Nissan truck, crushed and smoking. Paramedics work
quickly.

Rain drizzles on the wreckage.

A pair of work boots stop just outside the scene. Aaron's Father
stands frozen, watching.

AARON'S FATHER (V.O.)

Aaron was wearing his seatbelt.

He wasn't texting.
He wasn't speeding.

A mangled backpack sits on the pavement, soaked.

AARON'S FATHER (V.O.)
But it had been raining.
He ran off the road. Overcorrected.
And crossed into another lane.

A landscaping truck, dented but intact. Two WORKERS stand nearby, shaken.

AARON'S FATHER (V.O.)
A split second.
That's all it took.

BACK TO AUDITORIUM

Aaron's father exhales, gripping the podium.

AARON'S FATHER
Driving is a responsibility.
It doesn't matter how short your trip
is.
It doesn't matter where you're going.
It only takes one second
to change your life forever.

He scans the crowd, locking eyes with students.

AARON'S FATHER
Don't put your parents through what I
have been through.
I have looked for Aaron every single
day since that accident.
But I have not seen him yet.

A few students wipe their eyes.

AARON'S FATHER
I don't just think about him every day.
I think about him every hour.
Every minute.

A beat. His voice shakes, but remains strong.

AARON'S FATHER

If you have brothers or sisters—
think about them.
Think about what losing you
would do to them.

FLASHBACK - INT. FAMILY LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

AUSTIN and ALYSSA sit on the couch, staring at nothing. Eyes red,
faces empty.

AARON'S FATHER (V.O.)

I have watched my other children
suffer.
It has taken them a long time
to even act somewhat normal again.

Sherri watches them from the doorway, hand covering her mouth,
sobbing silently.

BACK TO AUDITORIUM

AARON'S FATHER

And for God's sake,
don't be stupid when you have someone
else in the car.

A few students shift, uncomfortable.

AARON'S FATHER

Think about being the cause of a wreck.
Being responsible for someone else
losing their life.

A pause.

AARON'S FATHER

One lifetime is not long enough
to make up for that.

FLASHBACK - EXT. DRIVEWAY - SUNDAY AFTERNOON

A teenage boy (17, nervous, guilty) stands at the door.

TEEN

Sir... I hit your mailbox.

Aaron's father steps outside. The mailbox is in pieces.

AARON'S FATHER

What were you doing?

TEEN

...Messing with my phone.

A long beat. Then—Aaron's father softens, exhales.

AARON'S FATHER

You're lucky it wasn't a tree.

Or another car.

Or another person.

The teen's eyes well with tears. He nods, swallowing hard.

AARON'S FATHER

Learn from this.

BACK TO AUDITORIUM

AARON'S FATHER

I closed by reading something
Aaron had posted on his Facebook page
during his senior year.

He pulls out a piece of paper. His voice steady.

AARON'S FATHER

"You have the ability to make life
whatever you want to make it,
regardless of how bad things may get.
It is your choice."

A moment of profound silence.

AARON'S FATHER

Don't take that choice for granted.

A long pause. Then—applause. Not forced. Not obligatory. Just real.

Aaron's father steps back, eyes glistening, but a small, grateful nod.

Bill clasps his shoulder. The message ended.

FADE TO BLACK.