

******This script is copyrighted and the sole property of Colette Mazunik.
For information regarding rights and royalties contact
colette@blissstreetstudios.com.******

SHELTER

"THE INTERVIEW"

Pilot

by

Colette Mazunik

SHELTER—"The Interview"

24 March 2004

SHELTER
"THE INTERVIEW"
TEASER

FADE IN:

EXT. THE HOMELESS SHELTER RESOURCE CENTER - MORNING

A steady downpour. Homeless clients huddle around the awning of the door, waiting for the resource center to open for the day. Babies cry while their mothers try to calm them. A mentally ill woman is ranting at imaginary passers-by. SARAH, dressed in a suit, approaches the group.

SARAH

This is the homeless resource center, right?

HOMELESS WOMAN #1

Yeah. They're late opening.

HOMELESS MAN

Well, what have we here? You're a new one.

HOMELESS WOMAN

Ignore him.

HOMELESS MAN

Ignore me! Listen, honey, you have any trouble, you come to me.

SARAH

I'm sorry. I'm here for an interview—is there another entrance or . . . ?

HOMELESS WOMAN #2

Is she trying to cut in line? You can't cut in line. Tell her you can't cut in line.

SARAH

I'm sorry—is there a line?

HOMELESS WOMAN #1
They'll open in a minute.

SARAH
Thanks.

One baby is screaming louder than the rest. We see the baby's mother shaking him and yelling:

BABY'S MOTHER
I told you to shut up! Didn't I
tell you to shut up! You shut up
when I tell you to shut up!

SARAH looks around, expecting someone to do something about this abuse. As no one responds she approaches the BABY'S MOTHER and touches her on the arm.

SARAH
Excuse me.

BABY'S MOTHER
What do you want?

SARAH
You shouldn't shake him. It could
hurt him.

BABY'S MOTHER
Yeah, well I don't care if it
kills him—been crying all night.

SARAH
Is he sick?

BABY'S MOTHER
No, he's not sick—he just be
screaming to aggravate me.

SARAH reaches out to feel the baby -- check his temperature.

BABY'S MOTHER
(continued)

You want him? Here take him --
think you can shut him up, be my
guest.

SARAH reluctantly takes the baby that is thrust upon her.

SARAH
Oh, well, I don't know if . . .

And at this moment the doors of the resource center are
opened and CARLA, a social worker shouts out:

CARLA
Okay, now, one at a time. Don't
you all be crowding in here. Line
up. Make a line in there.

Sarah has turned to hear Carla, and when she turns back to
find the baby's mother--she is gone. Sarah scans the crowd,
while getting pushed forward to the door, still clutching
the crying child.

SARAH
Wait -- where is the mother? She
was just . . . Did you see where
this baby's mother went.

HOMELESS WOMAN #3
Get in line, you're holding us up!

SARAH
But I don't know where she went.
This is her baby.

FADE OUT

END OF TEASER

SHELTER—"The Interview"

24 March 2004

ACT ONE

FADE IN:

INT. RESOURCE CENTER LOBBY - MORNING

There is a long, impatient line stretching to the front desk, where each client must sign in. Sarah, still with baby in arms, tries to get Carla's attention.

SARAH
Excuse me, ma'am?

CARLA
You better hush your baby up.

SARAH
He's not mine. I'm here for an .
. .

CARLA
(interrupting)
I don't care what you're here for
-- tell them at the front desk.

And with that, CARLA is gone.

HOMELESS MAN
I reckon he's ripe.

SARAH
What?

HOMELESS MAN
The little tyke. Smells kind of
ripe. Might want to see to
changing him.

SARAH
Oh. Right. Do you know where his
mother is?

HOMELESS MAN
Whose?

SARAH

His

HOMELESS MAN

He's not yours?

SARAH

No, a woman just handed him to me.

HOMELESS MAN

You took him--I reckon he's yours.

SARAH

Great. I'm supposed to - I'm
already late for . . .

A little farther back in line a MENTALLY ILL WOMAN begins to yell:

MENTALLY ILL WOMAN

I told them not to. I told them
not to take upon themselves the
mark of the beast. But they
wouldn't listen to me, they
wouldn't listen to me. I warned
them of the wrath that falls down
on them that have upon them the
mark - telling me my son isn't
good enough for them - aren't I
saying what they want me to say?

JEREMY, the security guard has approached the screaming woman.

JEREMY

Donna-Mae, get a hold of yourself.
It's okay. It's okay. Nobody's
taking the mark of the beast
today.

The woman calms down, reaching out to stroke Jeremy's face.

DONNA-MAE

Don't worry. I'll take care of
you, baby.

JEREMY

That's okay Donna-Mae. Just stay calm.

SARAH
(an effort to get the security guard's attention)
Excuse me.

JEREMY
You're a new one.

SARAH
I was wondering if you could --

JEREMY
Nope. I can't. Just tell 'em at the desk. They'll help you.

Meanwhile, the line has been moving forward and:

INTAKE WORKER
Next.

It is Sarah's turn.

SARAH
Hi. I'm Sarah Turner.

INTAKE WORKER
I.D.?

SARAH
Sure. Here. I'm here to--

INTAKE WORKER
Here's your breakfast ticket.

SARAH
No. You don't . . . I'm here to interview with Judith for the Case Worker position.

INTAKE WORKER
Oh, honey, what are you doing in the line? You should have come right back. Come around, come around.

SARAH

And, um . . . this isn't my child.
Some woman handed him to me, and I
don't know where she went.

INTAKE WORKER

Well, you'd better give him back.
I think he needs a fresh diaper.

SARAH

I don't know where she . . .

INTAKE WORKER

Follow me, I'll take you back to
Judith.

Sarah follows the INTAKE WORKER, still holding the child.

SARAH

No, you don't understand. I don't
know where she went.

INTAKE WORKER

Who?

SARAH

The baby's mother.

INTAKE WORKER

What was her name? I'll page her.

SARAH

I don't know.

INTAKE WORKER

Don't worry, I'm sure we'll find
her.

And with that she's at JUDITH'S door.

INT. JUDITH'S OFFICE

INTAKE WORKER (cont.)

Judith, this is Sarah.

JUDITH

Hi, come on in.

Judith glances at her watch, noting Sarah's lateness.

SARAH

I know. I'm sorry. I got stuck
in line.

INTAKE WORKER

I'll see if I can find the mother.

SARAH

Thank you.

(to Judith)

Hi. Sorry about this.

(the baby)

Not mine. It's uh--some woman
handed him to me and walked off.
I'm Sarah.

JUDITH

Have a seat. Have a seat. Some
woman handed him to you?

SARAH

Yeah, out front. I don't know
where she went.

JUDITH

I'll see if I can . . .

(on the intercom)

Would any woman missing her child
please come to the front desk?

Any woman missing her child,
please come to the front desk.

(to Sarah)

They'll let us know.

SARAH

Thank you. I'm sorry about . . .

JUDITH

Well, Sarah. Let's get started
here.

I was impressed with your resume.
You certainly have sufficient
education.

SARAH

Thank you.

JUDITH

The one thing that concerns me is your lack of practical experience.

SARAH

I know. I know that I don't have much hands-on experience in the field, but I'm a quick learner and I'm eager to get my feet wet. I can assure you that I will put forward whatever additional effort is needed to quickly surpass those who have more experience.

JUDITH

Okay. I understand that. But without practical experience, how do you know this is a type of job you'll want to stick with.

SARAH

I want to help people.

There is a knock at the door, Carla opens the door. By the way, Carla is a social worker, street-wise, outspoken, and very good at what she does.

CARLA

Excuse me -- sorry to interrupt, Judith, but there's some officers here who need to speak to you.

There are uniformed officials in the doorway behind Carla.

OFFICER 1

It will only take a few minutes, ma'am.

JUDITH

Oh. Absolutely. I'm sorry, Sarah, if you'll excuse me. Why don't you go with Carla, take a look around this place, and

we'll finish up after I'm done
with the officers.

SARAH

Okay. Sure. That's great.
Should I . . . ?

JUDITH

Leave your things here. Maybe you
can find the mother.

SARAH

Okay. Thank you.

Uniformed police officers enter as SARAH leaves with CARLA.
They walk from the office back to the front desk. As they
walk:

SARAH

Is everything okay?

CARLA

Yeah. They found a body -- need
to make an ID. Thought it was
maybe someone who comes here.

SARAH

A body?

CARLA

Some man. Froze to death.
Happens more often than you'd
think. Usually they don't do much
-- but I guess this one was on the
steps of city hall, so . . .
Listen. Why don't you change your
baby's diaper, make him a little
more comfortable.

SARAH

Oh, he's not mine. I lost the
mother.

CARLA

Umm-hmm.

SARAH

I didn't bring a diaper.

CARLA

We've got them at the front desk.

INT. FRONT DESK

And by now, they are at the front desk. Workers are busy answering telephones and handing out supplies -- meal tickets, tampons, toothbrushes, etc. CARLA hands a diaper to SARAH.

CARLA (continued)

Here you go. There's formula and bottles here too, if you want to .

. .

WORKER

Carla, I need you to sign off on these.

SARAH

Thanks. Is there a bathroom, or . . . ?

CARLA

Yeah. Sorry, I need to see to this. End of the hall. Just ask someone if you get lost.

Oh, and here -- key.

(Handing her a key.)

For when you come back. We keep everything locked.

SARAH

Thanks.

(to a worker)

Did this baby's mother come?

WORKER

What?

SARAH

This baby's mother -- they announced . . . Maybe you could announce again . . .

WORKER

Sorry. What?

The LOUDSPEAKER begins.

SARAH

Never mind.

JUDITH ON LOUDSPEAKER

Attention. Attention. The police have a photo of a man who froze to death last week. We will be posting the photo at the front desk. If anyone knew the man, we need your help in identifying him. Again, we will be posting a photo at the front desk. Please help us out on this one. Thank you.

While the LOUDSPEAKER chatters, SARAH goes to find the bathroom, carrying the baby with her. Crowded hallway, filled with clients. Some are high, others mentally-ill, still others look entirely professional. We see their faces as she walks by. As she nears the restroom, she hears a homeless man wailing, over and over.

HOMELESS MAN

Would someone open the bathroom?
Would someone open the bathroom?
Would someone open the bathroom?
Would someone open the bathroom?
Would someone open the bathroom?
(etc.)

It's become more of a mantra for him than a real question. He's already soiled himself and his excrement has run down his legs and puddled on the floor.

HOMELESS WOMAN

Shut up, John. Shut up. They're not gonna open it until they get a bathroom monitor.

SARAH

This is the restroom?

HOMELESS WOMAN

Don't bother. It's locked.

SARAH

Locked?

HOMELESS WOMAN

No monitor.

SARAH

I have a key, I don't know if . .
.

SARAH takes out her key and tries the lock. It opens like a charm.

HOMELESS MAN

Would someone open the bathroom?
Would someone open the bathroom?

SARAH

(to the man)

Do you need to . . .

HOMELESS WOMAN

Go ahead. He does this all the time.

SARAH

But doesn't he need . . .

HOMELESS WOMAN

You're new here, aren't you.
You'll get used to him. Don't worry. Jeremy will come by and kick him out pretty soon anyway.

SARAH

Is he sick?

HOMELESS WOMAN

Joe? Full blown AIDS.

The baby starts screaming, full-voiced again.

SARAH

Oh. Thanks, I'm gonna . . .

INT. BATHROOM

SARAH enters the bathroom. She locks the door behind her, and takes a moment, catching a breath in the midst of the chaos. Then she tends to the infant, changing his diaper.

In the warmth of Sarah's attention, the baby stops his crying and stares at Sarah with his large liquid eyes.

SARAH

(to the baby)

Look at you. Look at you. That's right. That feels better, doesn't it. And we're gonna get you something to eat. Take good care of you. Yes we are. Yes we are. Until we can find your mommy.

Sarah leaves the bathroom, leaving it unlocked and heads back toward the front desk. We see a client enter the bathroom as Sarah leaves.

INT. CARLA'S OFFICE.

CARLA is interviewing a client, a young woman, HOPE -- 14 years old and visibly pregnant.

CARLA

When was the last time you saw a doctor?

HOPE

I don't know. Maybe a couple of years ago?

CARLA

You haven't seen one since you've been pregnant?

HOPE

No.

CARLA

You didn't know you were supposed to see a doctor?

HOPE

I didn't want my mom to find out.

CARLA

Okay. Okay. So, how far along are you?

HOPE

I don't know.

CARLA

Well, how many months have you missed?

HOPE

I don't know.

CARLA

You don't know.

HOPE

I was never too regular.

CARLA

Okay. You listen to me. As soon as we get done here you are going to Mercy Mobile and get some pre-natal care. They'll refer you to a doctor—and you *will* go. No excuses.

Sarah opens the door tentatively and enters. She has a bottle and is feeding the baby.

CARLA

Sarah, good. You're back. Listen -- Ruth wanted me to tell you -- she had to go back with the police to the precinct to give a statement or something -- but she wants you to wait here, if you can.

SARAH

Sure. Sure.

CARLA

I'm supposed to show you around --
introduce you to people.

SARAH

Okay.

CARLA

I just finishing up here.

HOPE

You said you'd get me some
clothes, you know, what do you
call it clothes.

SARAH

Maternity?

HOPE

Yeah. You said you'd get me some
maternity clothes.

CARLA

No. I said you could get some
when the clothes closet is open.
No one's back there right now.

HOPE

But these are, you know, cutting
into my stomach.

Hope's jeans are unzipped, her burgeoning belly struggling
for room.

CARLA

I can not send you there when
there is no one supervising.

SARAH

Can I help? Supervise?

CARLA

You want to help? Yeah. Take
that key. Go to the clothes
closet. See if you can find some
maternity clothes and bring them
back here.

SARAH

Sure. What size are you?

HOPE

I don't know. I used to wear six.

CARLA

Thanks. If you can't find maternity clothes, just bring some big clothes.

SARAH

Where is the clothes closet?

CARLA

Straight back. At the end of the building. Walk till you run out of building.

SARAH

Okay.

(to Hope)

Can you . . . ? [hold the baby]

HOPE

Yeah.

Sarah passes the baby off to Hope, and leaves the office.

CARLA

(to Hope)

And while she's doing that . . .

The door closes as we follow Sarah to the end of the building. As Sarah walks we hear the loudspeaker.

LOUDSPEAKER

Clients, the van from Able-Body Temp service is here. If you are signed up to work with Able-Body Temp service, please come to the front and load the van.

Sarah finds what must be the clothes closet. Muffled sounds come from the interior. Sarah knocks. No reply. She tentatively turns the key in the lock and opens the

door. She sees a couple, engaged in intercourse. The couple, alarmed at the intrusion, reaches for clothes. Sarah doesn't know what to do.

SARAH

Is this the clothes closet?

MAN

Yeah.

SARAH

Okay. Just checking. Sorry to --
interrupt.

And with that she backs out of the room, and starts returning to the front of the building. Then she pauses, changes her mind and comes storming back. She opens the door and confronts the couple boldly.

SARAH

What's going on?
You heard me. What do you think
you're doing. How did you get in
here?

MAN

It was -- open.

SARAH

Right. I don't think so. Get up.
Get your clothes on. You're
coming with me. Now.

They get up, struggling to get clothed.

FADE OUT

END OF ACT ONE

SHELTER—"The Interview"

24 March 2004

ACT TWO

FADE IN:

INT. CARLA'S OFFICE

We see Hope leaving the office, we enter through the door she has exited and see the man and woman from the closet, sitting in chairs. Sarah and Carla stand. Sarah is holding the baby again. The baby is now asleep.

SARAH

I found them engaged in sexual activity.

WOMAN

That's not true. We were sorting clothes.

SARAH

Oh come on. I saw what I saw.

CARLA

We can check the security cameras.

(on intercom)

Jeremy, get in here.

(back to couple)

To tell you the truth, I don't care *what* you were doing in there. What I'm more interested in is *that* you were in the clothing closet at all -- when it was locked up.

WOMAN

It was open.

CARLA

No, it wasn't. That door locks automatically. How did you get in?

MAN

No. Like she said. It was open.

CARLA

Cut the crap. Do you have a key?

Silence.

CARLA (continued)

Cause I will not hesitate to ban your sorry asses for life if you don't start giving me some information.

Silence.

CARLA

Okay, I'll just ask Jeremy to escort you off the premises.

Carla reaches for the phone.

WOMAN

We picked the lock.

MAN

Janice!

JANICE

(to man)

What? Look, I'm sick of this -- okay? They would of found out anyway. Whole place is bugged with cameras.

(to Carla)

We picked the lock and we were in there "doing it".

(to man)

They know anyway, what's the point?

(to Carla)

Where else were we supposed to go? You think I can afford a room?

Jeremy enters the room.

CARLA

Listen, honey, I don't care where you sell yourself, just as long as

you and your johns don't do it on our property.

JEREMY

Hey, what do you need?

MAN

No -- you don't understand.

CARLA

(to Jeremy)

We don't need you anymore.
Thanks, Jeremy.

JANICE

You . . . He's my husband, you bitch.

JEREMY

Whoa, okay.

JANICE

Who do you think I am? Just cause I'm homeless --you think I'm a ho? You self-righteous bastard. This is my husband. And cause we're homeless, you don't even let us sleep together. We're separated into different shelters--can't have the men and women mixed. Never mind you've got men sleeping with men and women sleeping with women all the time. No -- the faggots, that's fine. They have all the access they could want. But not us. We're married and we can't even see each other. What are we supposed to do? Huh?

CARLA

You cannot speak to me that way.

JANICE

Why the hell not?

CARLA

You should learn to control yourselves.

JANICE

Oh cause only the gays and the rich people can make love, right?

MAN

Janice, it's okay.

JANICE

No it's not. They're such hypocrites. I'm so sick of this. At least on the street we can be together. Come on, lets go.

(to Carla)

We can go, right?

CARLA

Yeah. You can go.

Janice and her husband leave Carla's office.

JEREMY

What was that about?

CARLA

Oh. Sarah caught them shacking up in the clothes closet. They say they're hitched, but I don't know. Didn't see no ring. Still think we might have a working girl trying to use the premises.

Sarah and Jeremy are exchanging looks. There's a tentative attraction.

JEREMY

I'll keep an eye out.

(to Sarah)

So you're, uh . . .

CARLA

Oh, sorry. Sarah -- Jeremy, Jeremy - Sarah. Jeremy's our security guard. Sarah's here

interviewing for that Case Worker position.

They shake hands, holding on a little longer than usual.

JEREMY

Yeah -- I saw you this morning in line, right.

SARAH

Right.

JEREMY

Sorry, I guess I thought you were a client.

SARAH

No, I, um, I'm not.

JEREMY

You got a cute kid.

SARAH

Oh, no. Thanks, but, he's not mine. No. Some lady handed him to me and disappeared. Poof. So, um. But he's cute, right?

JEREMY

Yeah.

CARLA

Hey, so . . . I'm supposed to be showing Sarah around -- but maybe, I've got quite a few people to see so, Jeremy, do you think you could . . .

JEREMY

Yeah. Yeah. I'm doing rounds anyway. Come on. Let's show you this place.

SARAH

Okay.

(to Carla)

Bye.

INT. THE HOMELESS SHELTER—LATER

Jeremy is giving Sarah the tour. They are in the women's sleeping area. Plain wooden bunks stacked three high. Just feet between the beds. It's empty now. Sarah is carrying the baby, still asleep, in a makeshift sling. The baby is securely tied and nestled against her chest.

JEREMY

This is where we keep the women. It's nicer than the men's area, but the noise at night is bad. Don't see how anyone can sleep. Cause the kids are here, you know. And one of 'em starts crying, sets the whole lot off. Before I started the day shift, I used to work nights. Never heard so many fussy babies crying all at once.

SARAH

How long do people stay here?

JEREMY

Well, they've got a month, tops. If they haven't worked out something else by then too bad. Although -- they can appeal and Judith is pretty kind hearted if you ask me. So there's a few that have been here for over a year. Mostly it's a couple of weeks, though.

SARAH

Then where do they go?

JEREMY

The truth or what we say?

SARAH

Um . . .

JEREMY

No -- the goal is to find them more permanent housing - that

works for some -- if they can get a job, or get connected with family. Too often though they just go back to the problem -- abuser, streets, drugs. Anyway, they have to be out of here by eight a.m. - beds stripped -- we start the laundry.

SARAH

You wash the sheets every day?

JEREMY

Not me.

No. We have too. Never know for sure who's gonna be here each night. Seriously though, you wouldn't want to touch these sheets after these women have slept in them. I mean, we offer showers - but some people got some kind of fear of being clean or something.

Sarah sees something on the floor under one of the beds.

SARAH

What's that? Did someone leave .
. . ?

She reaches down and pulls out the object. It's a crack pipe.

JEREMY

Oh, no.

SARAH

Is this what I think it is?

JEREMY

If what you think it is is a crack pipe -- yeah.
Shit. They're not supposed to bring it in here. Shit. We've got kids in here.
Okay. Put it in here.

Jeremy has pulled out a zip-lock plastic bag. Sarah deposits the crack pipe into the bag.

SARAH

It's got my fingerprints on it.

JEREMY

(smiling)

Don't worry. Don't think we'll be dusting for fingerprints. Look, I've gotta deal with this.

SARAH

That's okay.

JEREMY

Why don't you -- um, you wanna see some of the clients?

SARAH

Sure.

JEREMY

Why don't you see if you can sit in with Stewart. He's our psychologist -- the office next to Carla's.

SARAH

Okay.

JEREMY

Think you can find your way back there?

SARAH

Yeah. I'll be fine.

JEREMY

Hey, I hope you get the job.

SARAH

Thanks.

INT. CONSULTING ROOM - DAY

Stewart, the staff psychologist, is interviewing a client. Stewart is from the old school of psychologists. No one would guess that he has emotions. He's been here almost as long as the building itself.

STEWART

Tracey, have you been taking your meds?

TRACEY

Yes.

STEWART

Now, Tracey, I ask that because your behavior indicates to me that you haven't been taking your meds.

TRACEY

I've been taking them.

STEWART

And, we got a letter from your pharmacy indicating you haven't filled your prescription this month.

TRACEY

(after a pause)

I'm fine -- I don't need them. I got better.

STEWART

Now, Tracey, you know that you got better *because* you were taking your meds. And that being better is not going to continue if you stop them.

TRACEY

I'm fine.

STEWART

Why did you stop? Tracey, we can talk about this.

TRACEY

I'm fine. I don't like them.

STEWART

You wanna be hospitalized again?
Is that what you want? You wanna
be taken into the thirteenth floor
of Grady? Cause that's what's
gonna happen.

A knock on the door.

STEWART

Yes. Come in.

Sarah peeks her head in.

SARAH

Hi. Sorry if I'm . . . I'm Sarah.
I'm here interviewing for the Case
Worker position. And, um, Judith
wanted me to look around -- to
meet everyone. And Jeremy said I
should, maybe, I could maybe sit
in with you and observe . . .

STEWART

Absolutely, come on in Sarah. I'm
Stewart. This is Tracey. All of
our meetings are technically
confidential -- but if Tracey is
okay with you sitting in . . .

TRACEY

Whatever. I don't know what I'm
doing here anyway.

STEWART

Tracey has a diagnosis of bipolar
disorder, and has not been taking
her medication.

TRACEY

Cause I'm cured. I told you that.

STEWART

You don't become cured of bipolar
disorder, Tracey. It's like
herpes. I mean, you can control

the symptoms, but you'll always have it.

TRACEY

You're just saying that cause you don't have faith.

SARAH

What do you mean?

TRACEY

I'm cured. I told you. I told you. The meds just made me feel sick -- I didn't need meds, I needed healing. Some of the ladies here told me about a church they went to. Brought me along. Brother Jackson. Tells us that if we have enough faith we can be healed. See it's all about the faith. You people be telling us we need your medicine, but that's just your way of controlling us -- by making us believe we don't have power over our situation. But that is a lie. A lie that the devil is all too eager to have us believe. Because if we have faith, if we tap in to the power of faith, there is no end to the healing we can see. Disease, sickness -- that's all in the mind, see. But with faith, we can channel the power of the mind, and we can deny the lies of sickness and claim the health of holiness.

STEWART

Tracey, you know that you are particularly susceptible to these kinds of -- quacks when you're in your manic phase.

TRACEY

No. You're just saying that because you don't understand the power of faith.

STEWART

Tracey. You're saying all of this because your sickness is taking over. The Tracey I know is smarter than this.

TRACEY

I don't have to be shackled to your drugs that you use to keep me in fear.

STEWART

Tracey, you're not thinking rationally. Think back. Think of when you were taking your meds. You were fine. They weren't controlling you -- they were allowing you to finally be in control. You got a job, you were on your way to getting an apartment of your own. Those are good things.

SARAH

I don't know if this helps, but I take medication for depression.

TRACEY

You do?

SARAH

Yeah. I've been on it for three years.

TRACEY

You?

SARAH

Yeah.

TRACEY

You could . . . You should go see Brother Jackson. He could help you get off them.

SARAH

I don't want to get off them.

TRACEY

You don't?

SARAH

No.

TRACEY

Why not?

SARAH

Because they help me.
I believe that sometimes God heals
through miracles -- and other
times he heals through doctors and
medicine.

STEWART

Tracey, the bottom line is, I
cannot approve an extension of
your stay here if you're not
taking your meds.

Silence. Then:

TRACEY

Fine. I'll take them.

STEWART

Really?

TRACEY

Yeah, really. If that's what it
takes to get my extension.

Tracey pushes a paper over the desk to Stewart. Stewart
hands it back.

STEWART

No. Get your prescription filled
first. Then I'll sign it.

TRACEY

You just want to keep me chained
to this poison.

STEWART
It's not poison.

TRACEY
Whatever.

Tracey gets up the leave the office.

STEWART
Good luck.

And she leaves. Stewart turns to Sarah. Neither is sure what to say.

STEWART
Depression, huh.

SARAH
Yeah. But it's under control.

STEWART
This can be a pretty stressful place to work.

SARAH
I said it's under control.

STEWART
Sorry.

SARAH
That's okay.
So how many people here struggle with . . . mental illness?

STEWART
A lot. It's hard to say how many for sure. I'd say about 40% of our clients struggle with some form of psychiatric abnormality. It's complicated. Most of them would be able to function fine if they were able to take their medication. But meds have some unpleasant side effects, and as soon as they start feeling better, it's easy to stop.

SARAH

I'm sure.

STEWART

Without their meds, their life looks pretty hopeless. Can't hold down a job. Forty years ago they would have been institutionalized. Which obviously had it's abuses and downfalls. Now we can't institutionalize anyone unless it can be proved that they are a danger to themselves or others. Problem is -- how do you define what a danger to themselves is?

Jeremy sticks his head in the door.

JEREMY

Hey. Thought I might find you here. You taking good care of her?

STEWART

Hello, Jeremy.

JEREMY

I was just going to see if Sarah wanted some lunch.

SARAH

Oh, I . . .

JEREMY

A group of us eat back in the staff lounge.

SARAH

Sure, I . . .

JEREMY

Great.

SARAH

(to Stewart)

Thanks for letting me sit in.

STEWART

Sure.

Sarah gets up to go with Jeremy.

SARAH

(to Jeremy)

I didn't bring a lunch.

JEREMY

No. That's cool. We always eat the same food as the clients.

SARAH

Okay.

Sarah and Jeremy step out into the hallway. Two homeless men are shouting at one another.

HOMELESS MAN #1

I told you to keep your hands off my stuff. How often do I have to tell you that?

Jeremy goes over to the yelling men.

HOMELESS MAN #2

I wouldn't want your crappy stuff if you offered it too me.

JEREMY

Hey, break it up. Let's keep it down.

HOMELESS MAN #1

Then how'd you get that, huh? How'd you get that?

HOMELESS MAN #2

You best not be accusing me-- Mister Charlie.

And with that, the first man pulls a knife, swiftly stabbing the second man.

HOMELESS MAN #1

Take that, you nigger.

Jeremy restrains the first man, but it's too late. The second man is on the floor, holding his wound and screaming in pain.

JEREMY

Call 911, somebody call 911.

Sarah looks around in panic, heads for the phone at the front desk.

FADE OUT

END OF ACT TWO

SHELTER—"The Interview"

24 March 2004

ACT THREE

FADE IN:

EXT. THE CENTER

A ambulance. The ambulance crew is loading the stabbed man into the back of the vehicle. Meanwhile the other man is being helped into the back of a police car. Jeremy, Sarah, and a group of homeless men and women stand watching.

SARAH

How often does something like this happen?

JEREMY

I was so close. I could have stopped him. I hesitated. I don't know why.

SARAH

You couldn't have known he had a knife.

JEREMY

Yeah, but this is my job. I'm here so things like this don't happen.

SARAH

You did what you could.

After a pause, Jeremy turns back to the center.

JEREMY

Yeah.
Come on -- let's get some lunch.
(to the clients)
Let's go back inside, people.
Nothing more to see.

Judith pulls into the parking lot and gets out of her car. She sees Sarah starting to enter the building.

JUDITH

Sarah. Sarah.

SARAH

Hi.

JUDITH

Good. I see you've met Jeremy.
I'm so sorry I had to leave --
shall we finish up your interview?

SARAH

I, uh -- yes. Absolutely.
(to Jeremy)
Sorry I . . .

JEREMY

No. No. I --

SARAH

Thanks for . . .

JEREMY

Sure. Good luck.

And Sarah follows Judith back into the building, and they
wind their way back to Judith's office. As they walk:

JUDITH

I feel so bad about running out on
you like that, but the police
needed me to come down.

SARAH

That's fine.

JUDITH

I didn't keep you from being
someplace you needed to be, did I?

SARAH

No. No.

JUDITH

So you were able to look around?

SARAH

Yeah. I saw the clothes closet,
met some people.

JUDITH

Did you see our computer lab?

SARAH

No. A computer lab?

JUDITH

Yes. For the clients. We have
computer classes every afternoon.
Just teaching the basic skills.
Knowing those can mean the
difference between minimum wage
and a livable wage. We're hoping
to start up an advanced class in
the mornings, but we haven't found
a teacher yet.

They have reached Judith's office. They sit.

SARAH

That's great. Computer classes.

JUDITH

How are your computer skills?

SARAH

Um. Good. Good. I mean, what
program do you . . .

JUDITH

You know how to use the internet,
type?

SARAH

Of course.

JUDITH

Your generation. Of course.
(referring to the sleeping
child)
You still haven't found the
mother?

SARAH

No. What should I do?

JUDITH
She just left?

SARAH
I don't know. I just turned
around and she wasn't there.

JUDITH
We'll have to call DFACS, if she
doesn't show up.

SARAH
DFACS?

JUDITH
Department of Family and Children
Services.

SARAH
Right. I know. But they'll . . .
What will they do?

JUDITH
Foster home?

SARAH
He's so small.

JUDITH
Let me try again.
(on the loudspeaker)
Listen up, clients. We have a
baby whose mother has left. If
you left your baby with someone
this morning -- you must come and
claim your child. We will be
calling DFACS if you do not claim
your child.

(picking up Sarah's resume)
Well, hopefully someone will come.
So, where were we before we got
interrupted?

SARAH

I um . . . you were saying that I didn't have much experience.

(a small laugh)

I probably shouldn't remind you of that, huh?

JUDITH

What draws you to social work, Sarah?

SARAH

I, I wanna do something that makes a difference, you know -- something that can actually benefit peoples lives -- something other than spending my life trying to sell people products or, or, you know -- something worthwhile. I'm sure that's what everyone says, right? I wanna "help people". You're probably sick of hearing it. But I do.

JUDITH

Why?

SARAH

Why? Why do I want to help people?

JUDITH

Yes.

SARAH

Um. Uh.

(a small laugh)

Uhh. Well. I don't know if this is an answer, exactly, but, um, my mom used to say to me, when I was a girl and I'd come home upset or sad . . . She'd say - stop feeling sorry for yourself. Instead of focusing on yourself, focus on others. Find someone who looks lonely and be their friend. Find someone who looks sad, and try to cheer them up. That's the secret,

she'd say. That's how to get away from the trap of yourself. See how you can help someone else. And I'd get mad at her, because I was coming to her looking for a little sympathy, you know. I didn't want to be told what to do. But - um, I do think there's truth in what she said.

Judith's telephone beeps and a voice of a worker comes over the intercom.

WORKER

Judith.

JUDITH

(into telephone)

I'm in a meeting.

WORKER

I'm sorry, Judith, but the people from the foundation are here.

JUDITH

They weren't supposed to be here until . . .

She looks at her watch. It's later than she had thought.

JUDITH (continued)

Okay. Keep them busy for a minute. I'll be with them in a minute.

WORKER

All right. And Judith?

JUDITH

Yeah.

WORKER

That baby with the missing mother?

JUDITH

Yeah.

WORKER

Someone came to the front desk.
They think it's maybe Gussie's
baby. Said she left on the Able
Body temp service van.

JUDITH

Okay. Thank you.

(to Sarah)

Well, the van should be coming
back -- if you can hold on to him
for a little longer.

SARAH

Sure.

JUDITH

Sarah, Sarah, Sarah. I'm so
sorry. I've got potential donors
here. I really can't ask them to
wait. Would you mind terribly?

SARAH

No, I . . .

JUDITH

I do want to be able to talk with
you.

SARAH

It's not a problem. I can wait.

JUDITH

Thank you. Thank you so much.

Sarah gets up to leave.

SARAH

Jeremy had mentioned a staff
lounge -- could you tell me where
I could find that?

JUDITH

Absolutely. Right through here
and make a left. Thank you,
Sarah.

SARAH

Thanks.

Sarah leaves. As she is leaving, Judith gets on the intercom.

JUDITH

You can send the foundation people in now.

Sarah enters the staff lounge. Jeremy is there with a couple of other workers. One of the workers, Anthony, is the computer teacher.

SARAH

Hey.

JEREMY

Hey, Sarah. That was quick.

SARAH

Yeah. Actually -- some foundation people? came so we haven't really finished yet.

CHANDRA

The foundation people are here? That could take a while.

SARAH

Yeah?

JEREMY

Hey, have you met everyone here?

SARAH

Not yet.

JEREMY

This is Chandra, Anthony. Sarah is here interviewing for the Case Worker position.

ANTHONY

Hey Sarah.

CHANDRA

Sarah.

JEREMY

Anthony teaches our computer classes. Chandra works with Mercy Mobile.

CHANDRA

(to Sarah's confused look)
It's our medical center, here. We're like an offshoot from the hospital. Do things like -- you know, HIV tests, pap smears, pregnancy tests.

SARAH

Sure, sure. That's great. Oh, no.

JEREMY

What?

SARAH

I was supposed to get, uh, maternity clothes for one of the, uh, the, the clients. I totally forgot.

JEREMY

You want something to eat?

SARAH

No, I'm gonna, thanks, but I -- I need to get those clothes.

(starting to leave)

Thanks. Nice to meet you.

ANTHONY

Hey, our class starts in a few minutes. If you want to stop by.

SARAH

Thanks.

CHANDRA

Come by the clinic too.

SARAH

Okay. Thanks.

Sarah heads out of the staff lounge, headed for the clothing closet.

INT. THE CENTER -- A LITTLE LATER

Sarah, carrying clothing, looks for Hope. She weaves her way throughout the building, and as she goes we overhear multiple ad-lib conversations between clients.

Finally Sarah spots Hope, asleep on a couch in a large room. All around her are homeless men and women, some dozing off, some talking to themselves -- piles of bags all around. In the midst of it all, Hope looks beautiful, peacefully asleep.

Sarah looks at her, smiles and sets the clothes down gently on the sleeping girl's lap

INT. COMPUTER LAB -- LATER

Sarah enters the lab, as the class is in progress. She waves to Anthony.

ANTHONY

And what information should go on the top of your resume?

STUDENT

Your contact information.

ANTHONY

Yes. Good. Yes, Edith?

EDITH

What if you don't got no address and telephone number? Should I put that? Should I put that down?

ANTHONY

Where do you receive your mail?

EDITH

Here.

ANTHONY

At the shelter.

EDITH

Yeah.

ANTHONY

Okay then -- you can put this down as your address. But *do not* put this number down as your telephone number. You can go to the job counseling center - and get your name put on the waiting list for a voice mail account. When one opens up you'll be given a number that you can use for two weeks.

A client bursts into the class.

CLIENT

Someone come. Help. Tracey's laying in the, in the hallway. She's unconscious.

Everyone stands up, starts moving to the hall.

ANTHONY

Okay. Let's remain calm. Let's remain calm.

Sarah is one of the first into the hallway. There, laying on the floor, unconscious, is Tracey, the woman who Sarah had met with the psychiatrist.

FADE OUT

END OF ACT THREE

SHELTER—"The Interview"

24 March 2004

ACT FOUR

FADE IN:

INT. - THE CENTER'S MEDICAL CLINIC

Tracey is lying down in an examining room. Chandra leaves the examining room and comes into the clinics small office area. Sarah is waiting for her.

SARAH

Is she okay?

CHANDRA

Yeah. She should be. We induced vomiting. Not much else anyone can do.

SARAH

I just met her earlier today. She seemed okay. I mean she didn't seem okay, but she didn't seem . . . She was gonna get back on her meds.

CHANDRA

Well, she did that.

SARAH

Yeah.

CHANDRA

You can't always see the signs.

SARAH

How long have you worked here, Chandra?

CHANDRA

Oh. A little over a two years now. I came here as soon as I finished my training.

SARAH

Here. Why?

CHANDRA

Well. You asked how long I'd worked here. But I'd been here before. About eight years ago. We weren't in this building then, but . . .

SARAH

So, you had volunteered before?

CHANDRA

No.
I was a client. This place saved my life.

SARAH

You were homeless?

CHANDRA

Don't looked so shocked, girl. I'm not the only one. Anthony, who teaches the computer class - he used to be homeless too.

SARAH

Really?

CHANDRA

Yeah, really. When I first came to this place I had run away from home, was . . . addicted to drugs and, well, you can imagine. This place gave me a second chance. And when I messed that up, they gave me a third chance. I really believe that I would be dead or in jail today if it weren't for this place.

SARAH

Wow.

CHANDRA

I told myself that if I was ever in a position to help someone else out, this is where I'd do it.

SARAH
That's great.

The baby wakes up and begins to fuss.

CHANDRA
Oh, your little one's up.

SARAH
(to baby)
Shh, shh, shh.
(to Chandra)
No, he's not mine. A lady left
him with me this morning and kind
of disappeared.

CHANDRA
And you've had him all day?

SARAH
Yeah.
(to baby)
It's okay, baby. Shh.

CHANDRA
Somebody should probably call
DFACS.

SARAH
No. I mean, someone said the
mother left on some kind of work
van. They said she'll be coming
back.

CHANDRA
If she abandoned her child,
someone should call DFACS.

SARAH
I didn't know if . . . She was
shaking him when I took him from
her.

CHANDRA
I'll call DFACS.

SARAH
He's so small.

CHANDRA
I know.

SARAH
I hate to think of him being sent
to strangers.

CHANDRA
I uh . . . I don't know why I'm
telling you this. People here
don't know, and I'd like to keep
it that way.
But, before I was here - when I
was on the streets, I had a kid.
I wasn't much of a mother to her.
I was pretty focused on, you know,
staying alive -- and my next hit.
DFACS took her from me. That's
what brought me here. I realized
just how messed up I was if they
would take my child away cause
they thought I would hurt her.
(pause)
I'm gonna make that call.

Chandra goes to the desk in the office, flips through her Rolodex, and dials a number.

The baby has cheered up and smiles at Sarah, reaching a small hand up to her face.

SARAH
(to baby)
It's gonna be okay, baby. It's
gonna be okay. I hope.

CHANDRA
(on telephone)
Hello. Yes, I can hold.

LOUDSPEAKER
Would Sarah Turner please come to
the front desk - Sarah Turner,

please come to the front desk.
Judith is ready to see you.

SARAH
That's me, should I . . . ?

CHANDRA
You can leave him here.

SARAH
Okay.

Sarah hands Chandra the baby.

SARAH (continued)
Goodbye, baby.

LOUDSPEAKER
Sarah Turner, please come to the
front desk.

Sarah leaves the medical clinic and makes her way to the front desk. She passes homeless men and women, some are talking at a row of pay phones - some women are braiding extensions into their hair. A mentally ill man is rocking back and forth in the corner.

As Sarah approaches the front desk, she meets Jeremy.

JEREMY
Hey, I heard them calling you.
Good luck.

SARAH
Thanks!

Sarah continues on and arrives at the front desk. The intake worker she met at the beginning of the day greets here.

INTAKE WORKER
Hi, there you are. Come around.

Sarah follows the intake worker back to Judith's office. On the way back she can see into Carla's office. Carla is talking on the telephone.

They are at Judith's door.

INTAKE WORKER
Good luck, Sarah.

SARAH
Thanks.

Sarah knocks on the door.

JUDITH
Come in.

Sarah opens the door and enters.

SARAH
Hi again.

JUDITH
Sarah. Thanks for your patience
today. Have a seat.
Did you find the mother?

SARAH
No. Chandra's got him. She's
calling DFACS.

JUDITH
Well. I suppose that's . . .
(changing the subject)
So, you've been able to see the
center.

SARAH
Most of it -- yeah.

JUDITH
We've been blessed. We have one
of the best facilities in the
city. And you met the staff.

SARAH
Yeah.

JUDITH
What do you think?

SARAH
Of the staff?

JUDITH
Of everything.

SARAH
It's, um, it's different than I
thought it would be. It's
different than school. I mean,
it's different than studying about
it.

JUDITH
Yes it is. Yes it is.
So, Sarah, do you still think this
would be the right job for you?

We see a quick flashback of Sarah's day:

1. The woman shaking her baby
2. The man who defecated in the hallway
3. The stabbing
4. Hope sleeping
5. Jeremy's smile
6. Tracey lying on the floor
7. And the baby, looking up into Sarah's face

SARAH
I do. I think it's a perfect job
for me.

(Pause.)

JUDITH
I think so too.

SARAH
Yeah?

JUDITH

Yeah. I've, uh . . . I'd like to go ahead and offer you this position. I'd be happy to have you join our staff.

SARAH

Great.

(she is surprised to hear this soon)

Great. When would I start?

JUDITH

Um. We can give you some time if you need it, but if you can you be here tomorrow?

SARAH

Tomorrow?

JUDITH

If you can.

SARAH

Sure.

JUDITH

Okay, then. Okay. We can fill out the paperwork tomorrow. Pay is - what we advertised, um, it's pretty standard health insurance. Oh, and I'll need you to get a TB test. You can do that in our clinic. And, we'll do the paperwork . . . tomorrow. I'll see you tomorrow.

SARAH

Yes. Yes. I'll see you tomorrow.

FADE OUT

END OF ACT FOUR

SHELTER—"The Interview"

24 March 2004

TAG

Sarah approaches the door to exit the center and is meet by the baby's mother. Sarah does not at first recognize her.

BABY'S MOTHER

Where is he?

SARAH

I'm sorry, what?

BABY'S MOTHER

My kid - where is he?

SARAH

You're the . . . Where did you go?

BABY'S MOTHER

I gave him to you, what'd you do with him?

SARAH

I . . . DFACS.

BABY'S MOTHER

What! What? You're supposed to take care of him, not give him away.

SARAH

I did take . . . Where were you?

BABY'S MOTHER

I was doing some work so I could pay for a place to stay tonight. You can't bring kids along.

SARAH

What's his name?

BABY'S MOTHER

What?

SARAH

Your baby. I've been holding him
all day. What's his name?

BABY'S MOTHER

Jordan.

SARAH

He's back in the clinic.

BABY'S MOTHER

But you said . . .

SARAH

We just called. He should still
be there. I don't know if they're
gonna let you keep him.

BABY'S MOTHER

The clinic?

SARAH

Yeah.

The baby's mother starts toward the clinic. As she leaves:

BABY'S MOTHER

You self-righteous bitch.

Sarah is stung by the words. She faces back to the door
and exits the center.

EXT. THE HOMELESS SHELTER RESOURCE CENTER - AFTERNOON

Sarah walks away, and turns back to look at the front of
the center.

FADE OUT

END OF TAG