

FADE IN:

EXT. O'HARE AIRPORT - NIGHT

Chicago in all its winter misery. The AIRPORT is deserted, aside from the odd CAB idling in Arrivals.

Footprints march across the ice-crusting sidewalk, mostly headed towards cabs, loved ones, home. But one set heads into...

INT. O'HARE AIRPORT - NIGHT

The muddy FOOTPRINTS continue. Next to each left foot print... a DROP OF BLOOD, smaller than a dime, but bright red on the linoleum. We follow the prints past baggage claim to a door, held open by a "RESTROOM BEING SERVICED" sign, and into...

INT. O'HARE AIRPORT - PUBLIC RESTROOM - NIGHT

The trail vanishes under the mop of a CLEANING WOMAN, swiping in and out of toilet stalls -- until the last, locked stall.

She glances under the door. No feet, but... she sniffs. L'eau de street person. Screw it. She leaves.

Under the last stall door, a SPOT OF BLOOD drips onto the tile. Then another. Then two FILTHY RED CLOGS -- the kind of practical shoe favored by social workers -- lower into view. A blood-stained BANDAGE bunched at the left ankle.

The bolt CLICKS open. The CLOGS shuffle towards the sinks. They belong to a HOMELESS WOMAN, wrapped in filth-caked layers, more like a bedraggled bird than a person. She washes her face with one eye on the door, as if expecting trouble.

Under the dirt, she's young -- early 30s maybe. And not that long ago, her rags were a cute outfit -- a cardigan, khakis, pashmina scarf. What the hell happened?

The woman startles at a DRONING ELECTRIC NOISE from outside.

INTERCUT WITH:

INT. O'HARE AIRPORT - CORRIDOR - CONTINUOUS

The Cleaning Woman flags down an ELECTRIC CART, carrying two AIRPORT COPS. They slow to a stop just before the restroom.

CLEANING WOMAN

(in Spanish)

[There's a camper in there.]

AIRPORT COP #1

[Nutbar? Or making herself at home?]

IN THE BATHROOM

The woman listens, uncomprehending, to the voices. She stares at the door, her face a mask of fear as we...

FADE TO BLACK

TITLE CARD: DENIAL

INT. WILLA STUDIO - CONTROL ROOM - DAY

COREY RYAN sits at a desk, surrounded by CONTROL ROOM CREW -- you'd never guess that a month from now, she's going to be covered in filth and hiding in an airport bathroom. In the next chair, her boss, producer JAMES FRENCH (late 30s, African-American, prim) snuffles into a Kleenex.

COREY
You're unbelievable.

JAMES
She has a great story.

In front of them, the director ARTHUR (50s), calls the camera angles. He seems immune to the heartache on the monitors.

WOMAN (PRELAP)
I know. I know.

INTERCUT WITH:

INT. WILLA STUDIO - DAY

This voice belongs to self-help author/TV host WILLA LEAR (late 40s, intensely maternal). And no, it's not your imagination -- her clothes, the stage, everything echoes the taste of Willa's idol, Oprah. Willa sits with KRISTA, an emotional young woman, in front of an audience and cameras.

KRISTA
I felt so stupid, you know? I thought: He's going to kill me and it's all my fault.

WILLA
But you didn't die. You fought back.

Krista shakes her head. Willa squeezes Krista's hand.

WILLA
(to the audience)
We'll hear how Krista managed to save her life, right after this.

As the female FLOOR PRODUCER announces the commercial break, Willa rubs Krista's arm encouragingly.

The Floor Producer leans into Willa's ear.

FLOOR PRODUCER
We've got about six minutes left.

IN THE CONTROL ROOM

JAMES
I know that look. Miss Dub is thinking: If there's only time for Krista or Sean, but not both...

COREY
She wouldn't do that --

JAMES
You sweet girl. You really believe this time's gonna be different.

COREY
Krista fought off her rapist with the key to her Honda Civic. She's a complete badass. Willa can't just skip over --

JAMES
If Willa doesn't get to Sean, she can't announce the free gift.

IN THE STUDIO

Back from commercial, a poised Willa smiles at the cameras.

WILLA
Defenseless and alone, Krista realized she didn't have time to second-guess herself.

Krista leans forward, expecting to continue her story.

IN THE CONTROL ROOM

JAMES
(re: Krista)
You're done, sweetie. Mama wants to hand out some goodies.

WILLA (O.S.)
Here with us to talk about Krista's experience is Sean Osbourne, author of "Life and Death: Sixty Seconds That Could Save Your Life."

On the monitors, SEAN OSBOURNE (late 20s, muscled) bounds onstage as his BOOK flashes on the stage screen.