

I'M PROUD OF YOU

Written by

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(Based on the memoir by Tim Madigan)

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EXT. A RESIDENTIAL STREET, IN MINIATURE - DAY

Balsawood and papier-mâché HOUSES of every size and color and PLASTIC blooming trees pepper the streets. MODEL CARS wait for the passing toy TROLLEY.

A familiar vibraphone chimes in.

Up ahead, a quaint YELLOW HOUSE comes into focus.

We are in the opening credits of MISTER ROGERS' NEIGHBORHOOD.

INT. MISTER ROGERS' NEIGHBORHOOD HOME - CONTINUOUS

FRED ROGERS (71), swings open the door, smiling.

FRED (SINGING)
*It's a beautiful day in this
neighborhood. A beautiful day for a
neighbor. Would you be mine? Could
you be mine?*

At the closet, Fred takes off his sport coat and hangs it up. His movements are slow - he's not as young as he once was.

FRED (SINGING) (CONT'D)
*It's a neighborly day in this
beauty wood. A neighborly day for a
beauty. Would you be mine? Could
you be mine?*

He plucks a RED CARDIGAN off the hanger.

FRED (SINGING) (CONT'D)
*I've always wanted to have a
neighbor just like you.*

Fred points right into the camera. You.

FRED (SINGING) (CONT'D)
*I've always wanted to live in a
neighborhood with you. So, let's
make the most of this beeeautiful
day.*

He playfully zips up the sweater before sitting on the bench.

FRED (SINGING) (CONT'D)
*Since we're together we might as
well say.*

Fred slips off his dress shoe and tosses it to his other hand. He replaces it with the BLUE BOAT SHOE and ties it tight before moving on to the next foot.

FRED (SINGING) (CONT'D)
*Would you be mine, could you be
mine? Won't you be my neighbor?
Won't you please, won't you please?
Please won't you be my neighbor?*

He smiles and settles in - then, that soft warm voice.

FRED (CONT'D)
Hello television neighbor...

Fred pulls a large WOODEN BOARD checkered with several little patterned DOORS.

FRED (CONT'D)
Do you see this big board that I
brought to show you? It has lots of
little doors on it. Different
material for each door. Behind
these doors are pictures of people.
Look who this one is.

Fred opens a door to reveal a soft-focus headshot of BETTY
ABERLIN (40s), brunette, then closes it.

FRED (CONT'D)
It's Betty Aberlin. Look here.

He opens another - this time, MISTER McFEELY (50s) in a white
wig, goatee, and hat.

FRED (CONT'D)
Who is that? It's Mister McFeely.
He says "speedy delivery," doesn't
he?

He closes it, then opens a couple more.

FRED (CONT'D)
All these are friends. You know
what it means? A friend? It means I
know that person. I know how that
person looks. And what kind of
things they do. And I like to be
with them. Most of these friends
are people that I've helped you to
know on television. Today I'd like
to introduce you to a new friend.

He opens the last door. TIM MADIGAN (37), with a fat bloody lip and the look of a spooked deer. Something awful happened to this guy.

FRED (CONT'D)

Tim Madigan. Tim lives in the state of Texas. We haven't known each other very long, but we have grown to be very close. Let's go say hello, shall we?

We travel out the window and into...

THE MINIATURE NEIGHBORHOOD

The same houses, cars, trees and trolley - in reverse.

We expand out to reveal much more than just Mister Rogers' Neighborhood. Now we see all of...

MINIATURE PITTSBURGH

And then further out, to the entire...

MINIATURE UNITED STATES

We stop over TEXAS, then DIP DOWN to a cul-de-sac of tract homes, passing a sign that reads "Welcome to Forth Worth."

Behind the sign, a comfortable three bedroom with the name MADIGAN carefully etched onto the tiny mailbox.

Through the BEDROOM WINDOW, we're suddenly in...

INT. MADIGAN HOME - BEDROOM - MORNING

Tim lies in bed awake, unblinking, staring at a hairline crack in wall. His paunch peeks out from under the sheets.

Very faintly, almost inaudibly, Tim MOANS.

Light pours in the window. The sound of TV News burbles in from downstairs.

Tim's wife CATHERINE (35) appears in the door. She's pretty, all-American, in an old bathrobe.

CATHERINE

Honey, I need get ready. Can you keep an eye on Patrick?

Nothing.

CATHERINE (CONT'D)
(louder)
Honey. Tim.

Tim stirs.

CATHERINE (CONT'D)
I need to get ready.

KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER

Cluttered. CNN drones from the small TV on the counter.

Tim pours milk onto some Crispix. His son Patrick (3) looks on - he's got a mop of brown hair, bright blue eyes and a perpetually runny nose.

TIM
Here you go bud. Grab yourself a spoon.

Patrick gets one from the drawer, takes the bowl and plops down in front of the TV in the LIVING ROOM.

PATRICK
Dad?

Tim hits the remote, turning the TV on, stopping on POKEMON.

The sound of cartoon violence intermingles with the news - it's a peaceful American morning.

Tim dumps Nescafe into a coffee mug, sits down at the kitchen table, unfurls the paper and settles in with the box scores.

The coffee's not mixed in, so he takes a sip of grounds and grimaces.

ANCHOR (ON TV)
Now, just two weeks after the horrific disaster at Columbine High School, our thoughts and prayers have turned to introspection and reflection. How did we let this happen to our children? I'll turn it over our panel...

Catherine hurries in, three bags on her shoulder.

CATHERINE
Can we talk about this wedding?

Tim doesn't look up. Catherine glances into the living room and frowns.

CATHERINE (CONT'D)
Patrick, sweetie.

Catherine opens a drawer and takes out a CHILD SPOON, then heads over to Patrick and replaces the LARGE WOODEN SERVING SPOON he was using.

PATRICK
Mom!

CATHERINE
Sensible spoons, P.

She kisses his forehead.

CATHERINE (CONT'D)
Three minutes.

She crosses back to the Kitchen, where Tim hasn't looked up.

CATHERINE (CONT'D)
He was eating with this.

Tim finally looks up.

TIM
(to Patrick)
C'mon, you're supposed to use regular spoons, buddy.

CATHERINE
I looked at the invitation, and the rehearsal dinner starts at five, so we're not gonna make it on time to sit down, but we can probably get there for toasts if we wear what we're gonna wear on the plane.

TIM
I'm thinking we skip the rehearsal dinner.

CATHERINE
Aren't you giving a toast?

TIM
Wasn't asked.

CATHERINE
(a little surprised)
It is her second wedding...
(MORE)

CATHERINE (CONT'D)
(then)
Is Steve giving one?

TIM
Don't know.

Patrick karate chops his hand in sync with a monster on the screen.

PATRICK
Slam!

CATHERINE
(to Patrick)
Come on honey, we gotta go.

PATRICK
Slam - slam!

Catherine turns the TV off. It's noticeably quieter - but the news continues to drone on the kitchen TV.

PATRICK (CONT'D)
Mom - I was *slamming*.

CATHERINE
We're late sweetie.

PATRICK
Nooo.

CATHERINE
(to Tim)
What was that?

Tim shrugs.

CATHERINE (CONT'D)
What was he watching?

TIM
(shrugs)
I was in here.

CATHERINE
Hug daddy.

Patrick hugs Tim.

TIM
See ya later, kiddo.

CATHERINE
What time are you home tonight?

TIM
Depends. Late probably.

She kisses him.

CATHERINE
Okay.

Catherine grabs her purse, work bag, Patrick's lunch box, her keys, and her travel mug of coffee, and fumbles with the doorknob. She finally gets it open, but -

CATHERINE (CONT'D)
Honey -

Now Catherine's caught between the door and the screen-door.

Patrick laughs. Catherine fumes.

Tim doesn't look up. Catherine maneuvers her way through the screen door, looking back at Tim - and losing a little more faith in him.

TITLE: BASED ON A TRUE STORY

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. MISTER ROGERS' NEIGHBORHOOD HOME - DAY

Fred stands by the door.

FRED
Welcome back, television friend.

There's a knock at the door.

FRED (CONT'D)
Is that knock in your pretend or is it right here in my place?

Another knock.

FRED (CONT'D)
It's here. Let's see who's at the door.

Fred looks out the window.

FRED (CONT'D)
Oh, it's Mr. McFeely.

He opens the door.

MR. MCFEELY
Speedy Delivery. Speedy *newspaper*
delivery.

Mr. McFeely hands Fred a newspaper.

FRED
Oh, newspapers are filled with all
sorts of interesting information.
Let's take a look.

Fred reads the paper. The headlines are all about Tim.

"TIM'S SISTER PICKS OUT WEDDING DRESS."

FRED (CONT'D)
Looks like Tim's sister has finally
picked out a special dress for her
wedding day.

"POKEMON SELLS OUT MADIGAN LIVING ROOM AGAIN"

"TIM PLANS WORK TRIP TO SAN DIEGO"

"CATHERINE'S FRIENDS SAY: LEAVE HIM!"

FRED (CONT'D)
Everyday, my friend Tim and a whole
group of people work very hard to
make a newspaper.

MR. MCFEELY
That reminds me. I have a video I
found, and I thought you and your
neighbor may like to see it.

FRED
What is it?

MR. MCFEELY
It's called "How People Make a
Newspaper." I know a lot of people
like newspapers so I thought you
might find this interesting.

FRED
I certainly would - do you have
time to show it to us?

MR. MCFEELY
I'd be glad to see it again.

FRED
Let's put it on Picture Picture.

Mr. McFeely takes the video out of the sleeve.

MR. MCFEELY
Here's the tape.

Fred takes the tape and slides it in the wall by the painting.

FRED
We'll take a look at Picture
Picture and see how people make a
newspaper.

In the painting: video of an historic four-story building. A green awning reads *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*. We push into the painting...

INT. FORT-WORTH STAR TELEGRAM - NEWSROOM - DAY

Busy and drab. Industrial carpeting underfoot, fluorescent lights overhead.

Tim sits in his small office, sipping more coffee. He looks at the brochure for SAN DIEGO OFFSHORE FISHING EXCURSIONS.

A shelf behind him contains a slew of plaques and statuettes from a lengthy and successful career.

On the walls: framed clippings, some Texas Rangers memorabilia, and a few of Patrick's finger-painted masterpieces.

On his desk: a picture of Tim and Catherine, giddily happy on some beach ten years ago.

The sweet sports editor GREG DRURY (40) appears.

GREG
Hey Tim.

TIM
Morning Greg.

Tim looks at this watch.

TIM (CONT'D)
Editorial?

GREG
Yep.

Tim grabs his notebook and coffee. They head down the hallway.

GREG (CONT'D)

So hey. Iván Rodríguez is throwing a benefit for his foundation next week, I was thinking you - the sports desk gets four tickets, and it's at the Four Seasons - maybe you and Catherine wanna come with Vicky and me. Free champagne and stuff.

TIM

I got my sister's wedding this weekend.

GREG

The event's next week, but...

Tim gives him a look - not gonna happen.

GREG (CONT'D)

Yeah, okay.

They walk into the...

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

The meeting's already in progress.

ELLEN THE EDITOR (40s) presides over her staff, a dozen REPORTERS, mostly middle-aged men.

ELLEN

We're pulling Kosovo coverage from Reuters for the lead, unless anyone wants to strap on a bullet proof vest and get me a human interest angle?

CHARLIE, the city writer, slaps his gut.

CHARLIE

I would, but I'm too big a target, boss.

Laughter.

ELLEN

And Dwayne's gonna get us copy for the appeal of the Clinton acquittal, right Dwayne?

A chirp from the phone on the table.

DWAYNE (O.S.)
You got it.

ELLEN
And that's the news. Features. Tim,
have at it.

There's a grudging respect for Tim in the room, but no one likes him.

Charlie mutters to NICOLE from the Business desk.

CHARLIE
(sotto)
A baby sloth is born...

NICOLE
(sotto)
A blind girl sees...hope.

Tim takes his time, milking a dramatic silence.

TIM
Obviously, the Daphne Reynolds
nursing home strangling was a big
hit for us...

ELLEN
Years ago.

TIM
Right, but remember her son Bob?
Well he and wife Lydia Reynolds
have relocated to San Diego, where
they run a botanical supply shop.

A beat.

TIM (CONT'D)
It's called Daphne's.

CHARLIE
Gorgeous.

TIM
He named it after his mom.

ELLEN
You wanna go to San Diego for a
follow up with her kid?

TIM
Fort Worth still cares about the
Reynoldses.

ELLEN
I think I wanna stick with
Columbine.

TIM
Isn't it over?

NICOLE
It's all they talk about on TV.

ELLEN
How about that?

TIM
What?

ELLEN
TV. What if the angle is about all
the TV coverage?
(quickly)
No that's horrible.

DWAYNE (O.C.)
How about violence on TV again?

TIM
Wasn't it violence in *videogames*?

CHARLIE
It was Marilyn Manson. Case closed.

ELLEN
Okay, yes. We go way back, back to
what the shooters were watching
when they were young. Barney and
Sesame Street. Ask *them* about
violence on TV. Haven't seen that.

TIM
Just, okay here me out. The
Reynolds case-

ELLEN
I like this Tim.

TIM
Sesame Street?

ELLEN
People want to be comforted.

TIM
Come on, really?

ELLEN

No one does comfort like you do.

Ellen's moved on. Tim has his assignment.

ELLEN (CONT'D)

Okay. Arts and Leisure.

TIM'S DESK - LATER

The fishing brochure is in the trash.

Tim's leaving a phone message.

TIM

...with the Fort Worth Star
Telegram, and I'd love to do an
interview with the Captain. I mean,
Mr. Keeshan. Kangaroo. Captain
Kangaroo. Take care.

Tim hangs up, then dials another number.

Across the hall, Charlie bear-hugs Greg.

CHARLIE

Free champagne!

The phone rings in Tim's ear. A overly earnest SECRETARY
answers.

SECRETARY (O.S.)

Thank you so much for calling
Family Communications.

TIM

I'd like to schedule an interview
with Fred Rogers...

INT. TIM'S EXPLORER ON THE ROAD - CONTINUOUS

The Rangers' game is on the radio. Traffic is bad.

Tim turns the radio down and dials his cell phone. Catherine
answers.

CATHERINE (O.S.)

Hello.

TIM

Hey honey. I'm stuck at the office.

CATHERINE (O.S.)
Oh, okay..

TIM
They're making me do some awful
assignment.

CATHERINE (O.S.)
What is it -

TIM
Anyways, I don't want to bore you.
You gonna be okay with dinner and
everything?

The car behind Tim HONKS. He covers the receiver.

CATHERINE (O.S.)
Hello?

TIM
So hey, I need to jump in.

Tim pulls off, into the parking lot of a CRACKER BARREL
restaurant.

TIM (CONT'D)
Love you.

CATHERINE (O.S.)
Love you too.

INT. CRACKER BARREL - MOMENTS LATER

Chock full of knickknacks and flare.

Tim waits in line to be seated, behind two ELDERLY COUPLES
catching the early-bird special. They all wear cardigans.

Tim's cell phone rings.

TIM
Tim Madigan.

FRED (O.S.)
Hello, Tim. This is Fred Rogers.

That familiar voice. Very sweet, very slow.

TIM
Oh, Hi...that was fast.

FRED (O.S.)
Well, I figured if you wanted to
talk to me, I should want to talk
to you.

Tim snorts.

TIM
Can I set a time for an interview
with you, or should I go through
your office?

The PRETTY HOSTESS smiles at Tim.

PRETTY HOSTESS
How many?

Tim holds up a finger: just one.

PRETTY HOSTESS (CONT'D)
This way.

FRED (O.S.)
I'm happy to schedule something,
except for one thing.

TIM
What's that?

FRED (O.S.)
You have me here right now.

A beat.

TIM
Yeah, okay. One sec.

Tim grabs a pen and kids menu from the stand. The activity on
the back has a Trolley on it.

INT. MADIGAN HOME - KITCHEN - SAME

Catherine makes scrambled eggs and toast. Patrick whines at
her feet.

PATRICK
I need to poop.

CATHERINE
Okay, then go in and sit down and-

PATRICK
I want help.

CATHERINE
I'll come in and help you after you go.

PATRICK
I want help now.

CATHERINE
I can't help you up right now. I'm sorry, you're a big boy now and I need to make dinner.

PATRICK
That's eggs.

CATHERINE
I know. Sorry, I just...we're having breakfast for dinner.

Patrick grabs his behind.

PATRICK
Ahhh. Mommy, it's coming. The poop is coming.

Catherine quickly turns off the gas, pushes the pan off the heat, picks up Patrick and bolts to the bathroom.

We stay on the soupy, half-cooked eggs.

INT. CRACKER BARREL - SAME

A perfect bacon cheese burger and fries have just arrived at Tim's table.

FRED (O.S.)
I try to look through the camera, into the eyes of each child watching, and speak to them, as if individually, trying to be fully present to their feelings and needs.

TIM
Okay.

FRED (O.S.)
This is important when people of any age come together, under any circumstances.

Tim rolls his eyes.

TIM

Right.

Fred senses Tim's disbelief.

FRED (O.S.)

Do you know what the most important
thing in the world is to me, right
now?

TIM

Uh, no.

Tim takes a big bite.

FRED (O.S.)

Talking to Tim Madigan on the
telephone.

Tim stops chewing.

INT. MADIGAN HOME - PATRICK'S BEDROOM - LATER

Catherine tucks Patrick into bed.

CATHERINE

What song do you want to hear?

PATRICK

Rudolph.

CATHERINE

Christmas isn't for months, honey.

PATRICK

I like Rudolph.

CATHERINE

Okay.

(then, sings softly)

Rudolph the red nosed reindeer...

Patrick settles in.

TIM'S BEDROOM - LATER

Catherine's asleep. Tim climbs into bed and stares at the
hairline crack in the wall.

Patrick CRIES in the other room.

Tim doesn't move. Catherine gets up and heads out to comfort Patrick.

Off the chime of a VIBRAPHONE...

INT. DALLAS/FORTH WORTH AIRPORT - MORNING

Tim, Catherine and Patrick wait in the security line. Tim holds their bags and the carseat. He's on his phone.

TIM
(into phone)
Yes, that'd be great. Thanks. Look forward to it.

Tim hangs up.

TIM (CONT'D)
So, it looks you're gonna have to travel back from the wedding on your own.

CATHERINE
That's a bummer.

TIM
Mister Rogers invited me to meet him in person, in Pittsburgh.

CATHERINE
Really? Can you take Patrick? He'd love that.

Tim frowns.

TIM
It's work, you know?

CUT TO:

THE AMERICAN MIDWEST, IN MINIATURE

We lift off from Texas, coast over the flat green plains, until the sparkling lakes of Minnesota come into view - we dip down toward a tiny rental car on I-35, headed north.

INT. RENTAL CAR - FREEWAY - NIGHT

Rain pours down. Catherine and Patrick are asleep. Tim's eyes are locked on the road.

He takes the exit for DULUTH.

His jaw is clenched tight and his mind is elsewhere.
Suddenly, he sucks in a blast of air, then exhales quickly.
He's been holding his breath for miles.

Catherine stirs, eyes still closed, she reaches over and rubs
the back of Tim's neck.

INT. SHERATON - FRONT DESK - LATER

Tim checks in - he's agitated. Catherine holds a sleeping
Patrick.

Tim hands his license to the front desk ATTENDANT.

ATTENDANT
(looking at the card)
Thanks, Mr. Madigan.

The Attendant punches at the keyboard.

TIM
(to Catherine)
Did my sister say if anyone else is
staying here?

CATHERINE
It was the hotel on the invitation.

ATTENDANT
Looks like we have you in a king
bed for two nights.

TIM
Do you have two queens?
(turning to Catherine)
I'm sure we requested that.

Catherine nods.

ATTENDANT
Unfortunately, we are sold out
tonight - I can put a request in
for tomorrow -

TIM
No that's fine, it's fine. I don't
wanna have to move rooms.

CATHERINE
He can just sleep between us.

The sound of a group of DRUNK MIDDLE-AGERS cutting across the lobby pulls Tim's attention.

CATHERINE (CONT'D)
You know them?

TIM
Not sure.

ATTENDANT
Okay here are your keys and room number. Elevator is down the hall.

INT. HOTEL ROOM - LATER

Catherine and Tim get into their pajamas.

Patrick is stretched out in the middle of the bed, asleep.

CATHERINE
How long has it been since you've seen everybody?

TIM
I don't know.

CATHERINE
Was it Mason's christening?

TIM
Long time.
(then)
We can still back out.

CATHERINE
No.

CUT TO:

INT. SHERATON - RECEPTION HALL - EVENING

Pachelbel's Canon blasts through the PA system.

The GROOMSMEN in rented tuxes and a handful of BLONDE KIDS make up the wedding party up front. The groom, TODD (35), is a bearded and heavy-set guy who's nervous as hell.

The BRIDESMAIDS walk down the aisle.

Tim sits near the back in a suit but no tie. Catherine looks beautiful, but tense, by his side. Patrick rolls a toy car along the back of the seat in front of him.

The music changes. The small crowd stands and turns. Tim's sister, LORRAINE MADIGAN (35) processes down the aisle with STEVE MADIGAN (40s), his brother, who looks skinny and haunted.

Lorraine sees Tim and her smile brightens.

Steve shoots Tim a playful but menacing smile - the smile of an older brother.

OUTSIDE THE RECEPTION HALL - LATER

Lorraine and the Groom walk through the small greeting line, her TWO BLONDE KIDS by her side.

She works her way Tim and family.

LORRAINE

Tim! Ahh! I'm so glad you're here.

She leaps into his arms with a big hug.

TIM

Congrats, Lorraine.

LORRAINE

(to Catherine)

And, hi honey!

CATHERINE

You look so beautiful..

TIM

Yeah, Congrats.

LORRAINE

Second time's a charm!

Noticing the Groom.

TIM

To you both. I'm Tim, Lorraine's brother.

GROOM

I know. I'm the husband.

Lorraine gasps when she sees Patrick.

LORRAINE

And look at you! Last time I saw you, you were a peanut.

PATRICK
I'm not a peanut. I'm Patrick.

LORRAINE
Aww!

That's the cutest thing Lorraine's ever heard. The FLOWER GIRLS troop by.

LORRAINE (CONT'D)
Patrick, this is Mason and Maddy.

They couldn't care less.

Tim notices Steve on the other side of the room. He's lecturing his BOYS (7 and 9) about some rule they broke. Standing next to them is CALLY, his plump and pretty wife.

Tim meets his brother's eyes, and looks away quickly.

LORRAINE (CONT'D)
So, I have to work my way down the line, but I'm gonna see you later, right?
(adding, singsong)
We rented out the ba-ar.

Catherine keeps a smile plastered onto her face.

TIM
I have a flight out super early.

Lorraine looks genuinely sad.

LORRAINE
Oh. Okay.

CATHERINE
Of course we'll be there.

INT. SHERATON BAR - LATER

Crowded and festive. The Eagles blast through the PA system.

Catherine does the twist with Patrick.

Tim's at the bar nursing a beer. Steve approaches.

Steve sits down and nods to the BARTENDER, signaling another drink for Tim.

STEVE
He'll have another.

BARTENDER
You got it. And for you?

STEVE
Rootbeer.

TIM
Rootbeer?

STEVE
Glad you're here, Tim.

TIM
(nodding)
Glad to be here. How's the plumbing stuff?

STEVE
It's not *stuff*...

The Bartender sets down Tim's beer.

STEVE (CONT'D)
But, it's a mess. I mean I'm busy, not busy enough, but... It's just me and Cally. She's answering phones all day and people are always pissed at us, so we're pissed at each other.

The Bartender brings Steve's rootbeer.

STEVE (CONT'D)
They don't understand that I'm not the problem. I'm there to unclog the pipes. The roots busting through the pipes are the problem. People don't want to chop down the tree cause it's been there forever, and they don't want to pay to move the pipes, so food and crap keeps coming up their pipes over and over. It's good for me I guess cause it's work, but people think I didn't do the job like I'm supposed to, like I'm ripping 'em off but, it's the roots, or their wife's hair that keeps falling out. I'm not the problem.

TIM
(looking around)
Cally and the boys here?

STEVE
Over there.

Across the room Steve points out Cally - talking with Catherine.

ACROSS THE ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Cally and Catherine sip white wine. Cally's genuinely relieved.

CALLY
I'm so glad they're talking.

CATHERINE
Me too.

CALLY
Steve's been avoiding this.

Catherine raises her eyes, avoiding what?

CALLY (CONT'D)
I wish they'd talk all the time. I mean, those two jerks deserve each other.

Cally laughs. So does Catherine - unsure if it's a joke.

BACK AT THE BAR

Steve chuckles to himself.

STEVE
You coulda borrowed a tie, you know.

Tim takes a drink.

STEVE (CONT'D)
Surprised you're not wearing one of those cowboy string things, whatever they're called.

TIM
Huh?

STEVE
Feel good to be back in Duluth?

Tim nods.

UNCLE JERRY (60s, big hair) leans over.

UNCLE JERRY
Hey Stevie, you got a cig for me?

STEVE
Sorry Jer. There's a machine in
there I think.

UNCLE JERRY
But that ain't free.

Steve shrugs.

Uncle Jerry grunts and leans back to his conversation.

TIM
(to Steve)
You quit?

STEVE
He didn't recognize you.
(then)
Uncle Jer, this is *Tim*.

UNCLE JERRY
What? Well, I'm sorry about that -
blame it on the lack of free
nicotine. How are ya, son?

TIM
I'm fine.

UNCLE JERRY
Auntie Carol is over there.
Mickey's right there.

TIM
Yeah, I know that.

UNCLE JERRY
(calling out)
This is Timmy!

TIM
Know what, Steve, I'm gonna turn
in.

STEVE
Oh come, on. Don't get upset. They
don't ever see you and they're old.

TIM
It's okay, I'm beat.

STEVE

We just wish we saw more of you.

Tim is starting to boil.

TIM

Planes fly into Forth Worth.

STEVE

No, I know, but I can't really afford to miss work right now and, well, your whole family's *here*.

TIM

Sorry, that's where I got a job.

STEVE

Look, I'm not trying to rile you up.

Tim reaches for his wallet.

TIM

I'm fine, I'm fine.

STEVE

Sit down, please. I'm need to tell you something.

TIM

No really, it's okay, I should just get back to the room.

STEVE

Can you just shut up for a second?

TIM

(to the Bartender)

Can I have the bill please!

Tim rifles for some cash in his wallet.

UNCLE JERRY

It's open bar, son.

Uncle Jerry's been watching the whole thing.

STEVE

I want you to know my kids. They think you're pretend.

TIM

Where are they? They can pinch me.

STEVE

I want you to be here for them. I'm-
I'm trying to talk to you like a
man here, Tim. Can we just sit
down?

TIM

Steve - you don't get to push me
around. I'm a professional
journalist. You're a plumber.

Steve's angry now and in Tim's face.

STEVE

You're with your family for the
first time in years and all you can
think about is yourself. What's
wrong with you?

Tim explodes - throwing his hand under Steve's chin. Steve
grabs Tim's shirt as he falls back, bring them both down.

LORRAINE

Stop! Stop it!

Steve BANGS against Lorraine, who dumps her drink on her
dress.

TODD

Whoa, whoa! Knock it off!

Tim takes an awkward swing at Steve, who swats Tim's fist
away and shoves him back.

Catherine grabs Patrick and moves towards the door, shielding
his eyes.

Tim falls back against the bar. Steve swings a wild fist at
Tim and connects with his mouth.

Blood dumps out onto Tim's chin. Tim LUNGES for Steve - but
the Groom and Uncle Jerry pull them apart.

STEVE

What's wrong with you?

Tim looks around the room.

TIM

(panting)

I know! I know. My fault. It's my
fault everyone.

Silence.

Tim blinks. The walls of the bar suddenly seem thin - like they're made of cardboard. Faint vibraphone music streams in.

Tim's eyes land on Catherine, who is consoling Patrick - the violence sent him into hysterics.

PATRICK

Mom-my. Mom-my. Mom-my. Mom-my.

HALLWAY - MINUTES LATER

Catherine walks several feet in front of Tim. She holds Patrick, trying her best to comfort him. He's stopped crying but he's still gasping heavily as his little body calms down.

Tim staggers, holding a bloody bar towel to his mouth and chin.

INT. TIM'S HOTEL ROOM - LATER

Catherine positions Patrick on the bed.

She hears Tim wince as he cleans his wound in the bathroom.

Catherine takes off her earrings and steps out of her dress, then puts on a T-shirt.

She lays down next to Patrick, facing the wall.

Tim comes in. The cut on his lip is no joke. His eye is swelling.

TIM

Wish we had two queens. I'm getting up at four. Do you want to return the car?

Silence.

TIM (CONT'D)

Yeah, I can do it. Three-thirty, then.

Catherine eyes Tim as he sets the alarm clock.

CATHERINE

Tim.

Tim turns on ESPN. He leans back and tries to get comfortable.

TIM

Hmm.

Tears are welling in her eyes.

TIM (CONT'D)

What?

Catherine tries to gather the courage.

Unable to say what she wants to say, she shakes her head and rolls over.

We push in on Tim's face - his broken nose, swollen eye and split lip.

INT. MISTER ROGERS' NEIGHBORHOOD - LIVING ROOM - DAY

We pull out on the photo of that same face.

Fred sits beside the big wooden board with little patterned doors.

He stares at Tim's photo as a jazzy vibraphone riff floats in.

FRED (SINGING)

*What do you do with the mad that
you feel When you feel so mad you
could bite? When the whole wide
world seems oh, so wrong. And
nothing you do seems very right?
What do you do? Do you punch a bag?
Do you pound some clay or some
dough? Do you round up friends for
a game of tag? Or see how fast you
go?*

INT/EXT. RENTAL CAR - JUST OUTSIDE PITTSBURGH - MORNING

Tim speeds toward the Fort Pitt tunnel, the engine whirring.

In the rearview mirror, he notices his lip has started to bleed.

As the car enters the tunnel, Tim grabs a jacket and holds it up to his face.

He wipes the blood from his face and chin - then notices it's all down the front of his shirt.

TIM

Ah, man.

Driving out of the tunnel, the skyline of downtown Pittsburgh comes into view - the sun gleams off the towers of glass, the shimmering Monongahela River.

It's unexpected, almost magical - for a moment, it grabs Tim, taking his attention off himself.

EXT. WQED BUILDING - PITTSBURGH

Tim pulls up in front of the corrugated metal building.

He pulls clothes from his suitcase and changes in the street, trying his best to stay hidden behind the open car door.

Across the street, a HOMELESS WOMAN hollers at him.

HOMELESS WOMAN

That ain't right!

INT. WQED BUILDING - HALLWAY - MINUTES LATER

Tim checks his notes, glances up at a door: STUDIO A, then walks in.

INT. STUDIO A - CONTINUOUS

Tim spots a stocky, tattooed guy helping himself to a candy bar at craft service. This is NICK (45).

TIM

Excuse me, I'm looking for Fred Rogers?

NICK

Who?

TIM

I'm here for an interview with, um, Mister Rogers?

Nick shrugs. Never heard of him. He heads toward the Stage Door.

TIM (CONT'D)

I'm from the Forth Worth -

NICK

I'm messing with you, guy.

Nick kicks open the stage door.

NICK (CONT'D)
This way.

INT. STAGE B - CONTINUOUS

The sweet sound of JOHNNY COSTA noodling on the grand piano.

NICK
(re: Tim's face)
You're not gonna fight him are ya?

TIM
Oh, no. Softball league. Play at
the plate.

NICK
Cause Mister Rogers would mess ya
up.

Nick and Tim round the corner, and suddenly they're in the iconic set: The fish tank, the stop light, the closet full of cardigans, the boat shoes, and the magical Trolley that bridges Mister Rogers house with the "Neighborhood of Make Believe."

Everything is painstakingly checked and re-checked by a dozen PRODUCTION CREW.

Johnny Costa's BANDMATES chat while sipping coffee.

The CAMERA OPERATORS sit behind the cameras, ready.

On the famous brown couch, at the center of all the commotion, sits a very focused Fred Rogers.

He's deep in conversation with a severely disabled BOY and his MOM and DAD.

NICK (CONT'D)
(to Tim)
Sorry guy. Could be a minute.

TIM
Is this a Make-a-Wish thing?

Producer MARGY WHITMER (40s) stern, walks by. The FIRST AD trails her.

NICK
How we doing Margy?

She points to her watch.

MARGY
He's ruining my life.

NICK
How long?

MARGY
Half-hour already, which puts us
seventy...three minutes behind.

FIRST AD
Yikes.

MARGY
I gotta go in. Cover me.

Margy's face and body language transforms from stern to warm as she enters.

Tim observes as she points to her watch *most* apologetically.

The Dad lifts his Boy from the sofa as Mom stands and hugs Fred, tearful.

Fred pats her shoulder, comforting.

Fred watches the family walk off the set. Tim rolls his eyes. This must be an act for the crew.

TIM
(to Nick)
How often does this happen?

NICK
Everyday.

As soon as they are gone, Fred quickly moves to his mark in front of the couch.

A PRODUCTION ASSISTANT hands Fred a helium balloon.

FRED
Thank you.

Margy nods to the First AD.

FIRST AD
(calling out)
Okay here we go! Quiet please.
Everyone settle.

NICK
(whispering to Tim)
Just step back here.

Tim follows Nick, well behind the cameras.

FIRST AD
Roll sound.

SOUND GUY (O.C.)
Speed.

FIRST AD
Mark it.

The LOADER steps in front of the camera and snaps the slate.

FIRST AD (CONT'D)
And...

Fred spots Tim.

FRED
I'm sorry, one sec.

He leaves his mark, marching across the set, balloon in hand, grinning with delight.

FIRST AD
Hold please!

MARGY
We can't fire him can we?

FRED
You must be Tim! Welcome to our neighborhood.

Fred extends his hand. Tim shakes it. Behind Fred, a sea of glares.

TIM
Hi. We can chat afterward if that's better.

Fred notices his face.

FRED
Oh, dear. Are you all right?

TIM
Softball. Play at the plate.

FRED
It looks like it hurts.

MARGY
We *have* to keep moving Fred.

FRED
Can we have Evan look at him?

TIM
No, no - I'm fine. We can talk later.

MARGY
I'm sorry, Fred.

FRED
Yes, I know. Thank you for being here. I do look forward to talking with you.

He looks to Margy.

FRED (CONT'D)
After this. Everyone, that's Tim Madigan!

Silence.

MARGY
Thank you, Fred.

FIRST AD
Okay, resetting.

Fred stands at his mark.

FIRST AD (CONT'D)
Roll sound.

SOUND GUY (O.C.)
Speed.

FIRST AD
Mark it.

The Loader snaps the slate.

FIRST AD (CONT'D)
And action.

FRED
Do you know what this is? I'll bet you do. It's a balloon.
(MORE)

FRED (CONT'D)
And not just any kind of balloon.
It's a *hee-lee-um* balloon...

INT. WQED BUILDING - LUNCH - LATER

Tim lines up behind Fred, waiting behind the rest of the crew at the buffet.

Fred loads up on veggies and rice.

TIM
Are you a vegetarian?

FRED
I can't imagine eating anything
with a mother.

Tim holds back a chuckle, then helps himself to half a chicken.

FRED (CONT'D)
Let's take our lunch over to my
office so we can talk.

INT. FRED'S OFFICE - LATER

Small and cluttered. Rust carpet and old, cheap furniture.

The walls are filled with children's drawings sent from all over the nation.

Tim's tape recorder is running. Their plates are empty.

FRED
Oh yes, I've had to defend this
television program before. In 1969,
the US Senate held hearings about
the Corporation for Public
Broadcasting, which funds PBS. I
testified because there was a
proposal from Richard Nixon to cut
the budget in half.

TIM
What did you think of him?

FRED
I'm afraid I never had a chance to
meet him.

Above Fred's desk : *L'essentiel est invisible pour les yeux.*

TIM
The Little Prince.

FRED
Yes. A good daily reminder.

On a filing cabinet, Tim notices two gold statues, like neglected bookends.

TIM
Are those Emmys?

FRED
I don't know how to speak of it.

TIM
They're covered in dust.

FRED
If it's the outside stuff that's going to nourish you...

TIM
So, obviously Columbine is still on everyone's mind.

FRED
It hurts my heart.

TIM
And everyone is looking for someone else to blame.

FRED
I tell the children there are many things you can do with your feelings that don't hurt yourself or anybody else, particularly the so-called negative feelings.

TIM
Like what?

FRED
Why, you can pound a lump of clay. Or kick a ball. Or play the lowest keys on the piano all together. (pretending to play)
BOOOOM BOOM-BOOM.

Tim laughs - but he's not buying it.

TIM
Pounding clay is one thing, but
sixteen-year-olds with assault
rifles-

FRED
(singing)
*What do you do with the mad you
feel when you feel so mad you could
bite?*

This startles Tim. Fred looks right into Tim's face.

FRED (CONT'D)
We can't give up on children.

Fred gestures to Tim's wedding ring.

FRED (CONT'D)
I see you're married.

TIM
I am.

FRED
Are you a father, Tim?

Nick knocks on the door frame.

NICK
We're back, Fred.

FRED
Oh, thank you.

Fred gets up. Tim shuts off the tape recorder.

FRED (CONT'D)
You know, Maggie Stewart taught me
the most beautiful piece of sign
language last week.

Fred interlocks his index fingers.

FRED (CONT'D)
It means "friend."
(then)
You will stick around, wont you?

INT. WQED - HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER

Tim's phone rings. The Caller ID reads "STEVE."

Tim snorts, ignoring it.

INT. STUDIO A - NEIGHBORHOOD OF MAKE BELIEVE - LATER

The whimsical fantasy land, crafted in cardboard around a flimsy looking CASTLE.

DANIEL TIGER (an aged, rugged, tiger puppet with a soft falsetto voice) sits on the ledge of a large Grandfather CLOCK.

The crew settles in.

Tim wanders to the side of the set. He runs his fingers along the Trolley. This place is ridiculous.

FIRST AD
Daniel, you set?

Daniel Tiger turns and responds to the First AD.

DANIEL
Set.

FIRST AD
Thank you, Daniel. Let me know when you're ready, Betty.

BETTY ABERLIN (50s), as Lady Aberlin, takes her mark.

LADY ABERLIN
Okay.

FIRST AD
Trolley... Action.

The Trolley comes out of the tunnel and into the Neighborhood of Make Believe. It glides by Lady Aberlin, spraying a VINTAGE PERFUME ATOMIZER. She sniffs between sprays.

She steps out next to Daniel's Clock.

DANIEL
Hi, Lady Aberlin.

LADY ABERLIN
Oh - Hi Daniel.

Tim comes around the back of the camera and stands next to Nick.

DANIEL
Are you making that funny smell?

LADY ABERLIN

Uh, you mean that *skunk* kinda smell?

DANIEL

Yes, I've been smelling it for a little while now.

LADY ABERLIN

No, I'm trying to help that smell go away.

DANIEL

By squirting another smell?

LADY ABERLIN

That's right. A sweet smelling smell. Wanna smell?

DANIEL

Okay.

Daniel leans in - she pulls the sprayer away from him.

LADY ABERLIN

Don't get too close.

Tim chuckles. He's warming up to it.

She sprays, and Daniel takes a few sniffs.

DANIEL

Hmm - that does smell good. Where did the bad smell come from?

LADY ABERLIN

That was mister skunk. He got scared and he just sprayed this smell - that's what skunks do when they get scared.

DANIEL

Did he spray it right on anybody?

LADY ABERLIN

Yes. He sprayed it right on Handyman Negri and Audrey Duck.

DANIEL

Oh no.

LADY ABERLIN

And they were all feeling pretty upset about it.

DANIEL
Especially Mister Skunk, I guess.

LADY ABERLIN
I'll say.

DANIEL
Did he say he was sorry?

LADY ABERLIN
Oh yes, and he knew it was a
mistake - and he was really feeling
ashamed about it.

From where Tim is, he can see Fred crouched under the
scenery, his hand reaching up into the Daniel Tiger Puppet.
Fred strains to stay crouched, he's probably too old for
this.

DANIEL
You know something Lady Aberlin?

LADY ABERLIN
What, Daniel?

DANIEL
I've been wondering something
myself.

LADY ABERLIN
Something about Mr. Skunk?

DANIEL
Something about mistakes.

LADY ABERLIN
What is it?

DANIEL
I've been wondering if *I* was a
mistake.

Tim is TRANSFIXED - his breathing quick and shallow.

LADY ABERLIN
If you were a mistake? What do you
mean Daniel?

DANIEL
Well, for one thing, I've never
seen a tiger that looks like me.

LADY ABERLIN
No.

DANIEL

And I've never heard a tiger that
talks like me.

LADY ABERLIN

No.

DANIEL

And I don't know any other Tiger
who lives in a clock.

LADY ABERLIN

No, neither do I.

DANIEL

Or loves people.

Tim gasps for air.

TIM

(to himself)

Oh, gosh.

LADY ABERLIN

Oh, Daniel.

Lady Aberlin takes Daniel's little hand.

DANIEL

Sometimes, I wonder if I'm too
tame.

Johnny Costa's band starts in.

DANIEL (SINGING) (CONT'D)

*Sometimes I wonder if I'm a
mistake. I'm not like anyone else I
know. When I'm asleep or even
awake, sometimes I get to dreaming
that I'm just a fake....*

Overcome, Tim slips out the stage door as the song
continues...

INT. WQED - HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Tim brushes by Nick.

NICK

Take care, guy.

EXT. WQED - CONTINUOUS

Tim staggers to his car.

The Homeless Woman across the street clucks at him disapproving.

HOMELESS WOMAN
You keep that shirt on.

INT. RENTAL CAR - CONTINUOUS

Tim sits at the wheel, catching his breath.

THE MIDWEST, IN MINIATURE

From Minnesota back over to Texas, then down.

AS THE MUSIC CONTINUES...

Tim exits the plane, back in Fort Worth.

INT. FORT WORTH STAR TELEGRAM - NEWSROOM - LATE AFTERNOON

Tim pulls up to his office, carrying a box filled with VHS tapes and DVDs.

It's the end of the work day. The newsroom is emptying out.

There are FIVE STICKY NOTES stuck to his computer. He grabs one.

1:45 - Your brother called.

Greg comes up.

GREG
Hey Tim, you know, the new hockey arena just opened and I thought maybe we could -

TIM
You know where the AV cart is?

GREG
Arts, usually.

Tim is gone, down the hall.

TIM
Thanks.

CONFERENCE ROOM - LATER

He drops the box on the table. He rolls the cart in and plugs it in. He puts in a DVD.

INT. MADIGAN HOME - PATRICK'S ROOM

Catherine searches through Patrick's closet.

Patrick sits on the floor, barefoot.

CATHERINE
Come on Patrick, we're in a hurry.
I need you to help find your shoes.

PATRICK
They're in the car.

CATHERINE
Did you take them off?

Patrick nods.

CATHERINE (CONT'D)
From after school? You walked
inside barefoot?

Patrick nods.

CATHERINE (CONT'D)
Honey.

PATRICK
Where's Dad?

CATHERINE
I don't know, honey.

Downstairs, the phone rings. Catherine bolts for it.

CATHERINE (CONT'D)
(calling)
Maybe that's him.

Before she can get there, the answering machine picks up.

Beep.

TIM (ON THE MACHINE)
Hi. This is the Madigans. Leave a message.

Patrick's face lights up.

PATRICK
That's dad.

CATHERINE
Honey, that's the machine. It's a recording.

Beep.

FRED (ON THE MACHINE)
Hello, this is Fred Rogers calling for Tim.

This stops her. She picks up Patrick.

FRED (ON THE MACHINE) (CONT'D)
And well, the rest of Tim's family as well over there in Texas. You see, I wanted to say how wonderful it was having you for a visit and sorry we didn't get a chance to say good-bye. I hope we can do it again. And to Tim's family, thanks so much for sharing him with me this past weekend.

She picks up.

CATHERINE
Hello.

FRED (O.S.)
Catherine?

INT. FORT WORTH STAR TELEGRAM - CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

Tim's sipping coffee, staring at the TV screen on a roll-away media cart. A stack of VHS tapes sits at his elbow.

It's old footage, black and white.

ON THE SCREEN: A MUCH YOUNGER Fred Rogers sits behind a microphone.

SENATOR PASTORE, a gruff man in his 50s, gets things started.

SENATOR PASTORE (ON SCREEN)
Alright Rogers, you've got the
floor.

Fred gestures to a document.

FRED (ON SCREEN)
Senator Pastore, this is a
philosophical statement and would
take about ten minutes to read, so
I'll not do that.

SENATOR PASTORE (ON SCREEN)
Will it make you happy if you read
it?

The audience laughs. Fred is unphased.

Charlie and Nicole barge in, Chik Fil-A in hand.

ELLEN
That Mister Rogers?

TIM
Yes.

CHARLIE
So you think he's a perv?

NICOLE
He was like my dad growing up.

TIM
Guys.

CHARLIE
You working?

TIM
Yes.

ELLEN
We're doing the city council
election preview. Need to spread
out. It's a news thing.

TIM
Sorry. I have the room checked out.

Tim half-hears an exchange on screen.

SENATOR PASTORE (ON SCREEN)
Do you narrate it?

FRED (ON SCREEN)
I'm the host, yes. And I do all the
puppets and I write all the music,
and I write all the scripts-

CHARLIE
Any idea when -

TIM
Can you guys - I mean, I'm in the
middle of something.

Charlie mouth-farts. Nicole giggles.

Tim turns his attention back to the TV.

FRED (ON SCREEN)
I give an expression of care every
day to each child, to help him
realize that he is unique. I end
the program by saying, "You've made
this day a special day, by just
your being you. There's no person
in the whole world like you, and I
like you, just the way you are."

SENATOR PASTORE (ON SCREEN)
Well, I'm supposed to be a pretty
tough guy, and this is the first
time I've had goose bumps for the
last two days.

The crowd laughs.

FRED (ON SCREEN)
Well, I'm grateful, not only for
your goose bumps, but for your
interest in - in our kind of
communication.

SENATOR PASTORE (ON SCREEN)
I think it's wonderful. It's
wonderful. Looks like you just
earned the 20 million dollars.

The crowd applauds.

Tim pauses the VCR, capturing Fred looking directly to
camera, smiling.

Charlie and Nicole stand behind Tim. They never left, and
they're floored.

CHARLIE

Wow.

NICOLE

Wow.

Tim ejects the disc and puts in another...

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM - THE MIDDLE OF THE NIGHT

The rest of the floor is empty and dark.

Tim's eyes are fixed on the screen: Mister Rogers goes shopping for a pair of galoshes.

FRED (ON SCREEN)

And would you look at this pair.
This is a shoe that you might wear
when it's raining out side and you
don't want your feet to get wet.

Tim feels a low rumble. Behind him, the RED TROLLY pulls up along the edge the table, and gives a friendly *TOOT TOOT!*

TIM

Shhh.

Tim looks back. The Trolley's gone.

He pushes his chair back. He's done for the night.

INT. MADIGAN HOME - MORNING

Tim enters, holding the box of tapes and DVDs.

He sits down on the couch and puts on the TV.

Catherine hurries around the corner from the hallway.

TIM

Hey honey.

CATHERINE

Tim! Are you okay?

TIM

Yeah, why?

CATHERINE

What do you mean why?

TIM
What's wrong?

Patrick runs in and jumps on Tim.

PATRICK
Dad!

CATHERINE
What's wrong? Your flight was
supposed to get in last night.

TIM
It did. I'm sorry. I slept at the
office. I mean, I didn't sleep
there.

CATHERINE
I've been calling you.

Tim looks at his phone.

TIM
Oh, sorry.

CATHERINE
You slept at the office?

TIM
I got caught up watching these old
Mister Rogers' videos.

PATRICK
Is Mister Rogers your friend?

TIM
I talk to him cause of work, bud.

Catherine swallows her anger.

CATHERINE
I'm gonna start the bath.
(then)
I'm glad you're okay.

She goes.

Tim leans into Patrick.

TIM
Watch this.

He reaches for a DVD.

INT. MADIGAN HOME - BATHROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Catherine draws a bath. Her hands tremble.

INT. LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Tim and Patrick sit on the couch watching an episode of Mister Rogers in which Fred learns break-dancing with a boy.

Patrick's snuggled up beside Tim, and he's staring with rapt attention.

FRED (O.S.)
That's a really neat way to move.

TIM
(to Patrick)
Try it.

PATRICK
I can't.

Patrick doesn't move.

Catherine appears.

CATHERINE
C'mon. Tub's ready.

On screen, Fred does the wave with his arms. It's incredibly awkward. Even the boy on screen knows he's not cool.

TIM
Fred's break-dancing. Pretty cool,
right?

PATRICK
Pretty cool!

CATHERINE
(ignoring)
Let's go, P.

Catherine moves over, lifts him up, and carries him upstairs.

PATRICK
Nooo!

CATHERINE
Sorry sweetie.

BATHROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Catherine bathes Patrick. She takes a handful of suds and puts it on his head. She rubs in the shampoo, hands still trembling.

CATHERINE

Okay, sweetie. Lean back. Let's rinse you out.

PATRICK

I don't like the rinse.

CATHERINE

I know, but we gotta do it. You wanna go slow or fast.

PATRICK

Fastest.

CATHERINE

Okay, I have your head.

She cradles the back of his head, supporting him. She uses her shoulder to wipe tears from her eyes.

CATHERINE (CONT'D)

Ready, fast... go.

She dips him back quickly...

PATRICK

Ahhh.

And back up.

CATHERINE

See. That was nothing.

Catherine's barely able to talk - she's losing it. Patrick doesn't notice.

CATHERINE (CONT'D)

Let's get you out. You want Buzz or Woody?

PATRICK

Buzz.

She wraps Patrick in the Buzz towel, hugs him tight. Tears stream down her face.

INT. LIVING ROOM - LATER

Catherine comes down the stairs and sits next to Tim - he is still deep in an episode, and barely acknowledges her.

TIM
He asleep?

She turns off the TV.

TIM (CONT'D)
I need to watch that, hon.

CATHERINE
I have to say something.

TIM
Can we do it after I finish this?

She shakes her head, no.

CATHERINE
I think you should get a place.

TIM
A place for what?

CATHERINE
For you.

TIM
What?

CATHERINE
I'm sorry but...

TIM
Why?

She's careful in choosing her words.

CATHERINE
I think you need to be by yourself.

TIM
Like a time out?

CATHERINE
Tim.

Another pause as Catherine measure it out.

CATHERINE (CONT'D)
You're hurting us.

TIM
Cath, what are you talking about?

CATHERINE
Well -

TIM
How am I hurting you? I provide for us. I haven't so much as looked at another woman since I met you.

CATHERINE
I'm exhausted.

TIM
Being a parent is hard.

CATHERINE
That's it. That's exactly it. What I want from you is to go through this together. I don't want you to tell me it's hard. I want you to know it's hard and to care that it's hard and to come out of it together.

TIM
What? Do you want to go on vacation? Do you want to go on a weekend by yourself? Do you want to be in counseling?

CATHERINE
Please listen to me.

TIM
I work late. I'm sorry, but that's the job. I mean, I can try -

CATHERINE
Listen.
(then)
Patrick loves you so much.

TIM
I know.

CATHERINE
He wants to be important.

Tim's not getting it.

CATHERINE (CONT'D)

To you.

TIM

He is...

CATHERINE

But?

TIM

If your problem is I'm not paying enough attention to him-

CATHERINE

It's not just that-

TIM

Then why would you want me to go away?

CATHERINE

Because-

TIM

That doesn't make sense.

CATHERINE

It's not fair for him to only have this part of you.

TIM

What part?

CATHERINE

The part that hides behind his laptop. The part that lies just to eat alone at some weird restaurant instead of coming home, to us. The part that doesn't think about calling home - to check in, to say hi, to say I love you. The part that, I pray, cares about something more than itself.

TIM

Honey-

CATHERINE

Tim. I need you to go.

Tim is worked up. He's sucking air.

TIM

Where am I supposed to go?

CATHERINE
I don't know.

TIM
Cath...

CATHERINE
You're choosing, for some reason,
not to participate in your own life
and-

Tim's mouth is moving like a fish.

CATHERINE (CONT'D)
I love you, Tim.
(then)
But, please get out of this house.

EXT. EXTENDED STAY AMERICA - NIGHT

Generic, by the highway.

INT. EXTENDED STAY AMERICA - MOMENTS LATER

Again, at a hotel front desk. He snaps his credit card down.

FRONT DESK CLERK
One bed or two?

Tim holds up one finger.

INT. TIM'S ROOM - LATER

Tim sits in bed typing on his laptop. Through his headphones
he listens to his voice recorder. He hears -

FRED (O.S.)
(singing)
*What do you do with the mad you
feel when you feel so mad you could
bite?*

Tim types.

FRED (O.S.) (CONT'D)
We can't give up on children.

A pause.

FRED (O.S.) (CONT'D)
I see you're married.

TIM (O.S.)

I am.

FRED (O.S.)

Are you a father, Tim?

The sound of a knock.

NICK (O.S.)

(barely audible)

We're back, Fred.

FRED

Oh, thank you.

The recording continues, but it's just static. Dead air.

Tim's heart is pounding. He presses his hands against his chest trying, somehow, to slow it down. He tries to calm himself with deep breaths.

He's having a panic attack.

Tim pushes the computer off his lap.

He falls to the floor, gasping.

TIM

I need air.

He pulls himself up and staggers to the window, pushing it open.

TIM (CONT'D)

I - I think I'm dying.

Suddenly - Fred is next to him, wearing pajamas.

FRED

Anything mentionable in manageable.

Fred lays a hand on Tim's shoulder.

Tim is now dressed as Daniel Tiger. Furry ears stick out of his head, and a banded tail drags on the floor.

Music floats in and Fred reprises "What If I Were A Mistake?"

FRED (SINGING) (CONT'D)

*Sometimes I wonder if I'm a
mistake. I think you are just fine
as you are. I really must tell you
I do like the person that you are
becoming.*

Tim looks out the window: it's not the highway. It's the Neighborhood of Make Believe.

Now, he's on the ledge of the Grandfather Clock.

Tim joins in.

FRED/TIM (SINGING)
*When you are sleeping, When you are
 waking, You are my friend.*

EXT. PITTSBURGH AIRPORT - MORNING

Tim exits, still dressed as Daniel Tiger.

FRED (O.S.)
 Well hello. This is Fred Rogers,
 please leave me a message and I'll
 try my best to return your call.

TIM (O.S.)
 (choking down tears)
 Hello, uh, Fred. This is - I'd like
 to come see you.

INT/EXT. RENTAL CAR - JUST OUTSIDE PITTSBURGH - MORNING

Tim drives.

TIM (O.S.)
 I realize it's very late, sorry,
 but I'm writing the article or I'm
 staring to...Anyway I was hoping I
 could speak to you again. If you
 might have some time to... anyway,
 sorry for calling so late. Bye. Oh,
 this is Tim Madigan. Wondering if I
 can come back to Pittsburgh.

Driving out of the tunnel, the skyline of Pittsburgh, the sun
 off the buildings, the river. It all seems smaller, further
 away than before.

The TROLLEY crosses on an overpass right in front of Tim.

EXT. WQED - STREET

Tim pulls the rental car up.

The building is no longer corrugated metal - it's BALSAWOOD.
 The trees are PLASTIC.

Across the street, the Homeless Woman BREAK-DANCES.

INT. MISTER ROGERS NEIGHBORHOOD SET

Tim staggers through the stage door, despite the flashing red filming light.

A few crew members toss concerned looks.

FIRST AD
And...action.

Fred bursts through the front door, wearing sunglasses.

The crew try their best not to laugh, but a few squeak out.

FIRST AD (CONT'D)
Okay, cut.

Everyone lets out a good solid laugh. Tim's unsure if that really happened.

FIRST AD (CONT'D)
Resetting.

Fred has a giant smile across his face as he goes back out the front door.

FIRST AD (CONT'D)
Okay, settle...

Tim looks over to Johnny Costa as the piano starts - except it's not Johnny, it's Gary Drury from the office playing the piano. His band is made up of other folks from the office.

FIRST AD (CONT'D)
And action.

Fred bursts through the door, again with sunglasses.

FRED
Hello neighbor. Do you know who I
am?

He slowly pulls his sunglasses off.

FRED (CONT'D)
I'm still Mister Rogers even when I
wear dark glasses.
(MORE)

FRED (CONT'D)

You know some very little children
get quite upset when they see their
mother or father wearing something
that's very different then what
they usually wear. Those little
children are afraid it's a
different person they're seeing.
You see I'm still myself with the
dark glasses on... And off

Tim's phone rings.

The crew turns to him.

FIRST AD

Cut!

Tim looks at his phone. Catherine.

Not realizing he's interrupted the shot, he walks toward the
back of the stage - and into...

THE NEIGHBORHOOD OF MAKE-BELIEVE

TIM

Hey honey.

It's Catherine - she's right in front of him, dressed as Lady
Aberlin.

CATHERINE

Hi, Tim.

TIM

Miss you.

CATHERINE

I miss you too.

TIM

I'm in Pittsburgh. I know you asked
me to tell you where I'd be...so.

CATHERINE

Mister Rogers?

TIM

He's...wearing sunglasses.

CATHERINE

Tim.

TIM
Have you changed your mind?

CATHERINE
No.

TIM
I've never been alone.

CATHERINE
I know.

TIM
I wanted to go to San Diego alone.

CATHERINE
Tim.

TIM
I wanna come home.

CATHERINE
I need to tell you something.

TIM
(hopeful)
Yes?

CATHERINE
Steve's been calling all week.

TIM
I don't want to hear him apologize,
and feel guilty and do it all
again. I have nothing to say to
him.

FIRST A.D. (O.S.)
And...Action!

TIM
I have to go.

Tim snaps his phone shut, hanging up on Catherine.

He starts back to towards the living room set.

CATHERINE
(calling)
Tim!

We pan over to-

INT. MISTER ROGERS' NEIGHBORHOOD - LIVING ROOM

Mister Rogers is sitting at the bench.

FRED

Welcome back neighbor. Our new
friend should be here any minute.
He's coming to ask me what it's
like to make television.

A knock at the door.

FRED (CONT'D)

Is that knock in your pretend or is
it right here in my place?

Fred moves to the window and looks out.

FRED (CONT'D)

It's our friend Tim.

Fred opens the door and Tim walks in.

FRED (CONT'D)

Hi Tim.

TIM

Fred.

FRED

What can I do for you?

TIM

(struggling)

I think I'm getting a divorce.

FRED

Oh, my dear. That can be so
difficult for a family.

TIM

I don't know what I'm going to do.

Fred leans into Tim and begins to sing.

FRED (SINGING)

You are my friend.

Fred signs the signal for "friend", inter-locking his
fingers, every time he sings the word.

FRED (SINGING) (CONT'D)

*You are special. You are my friend.
You're special to me.*

(MORE)

FRED (SINGING) (CONT'D)
*You are the only one like you. Like
 you, my friend, I like you.*

Cast and Crew gather in to sing along - but now they've all been transformed into people from Tim's life...

Catherine is Lady Aberlin. Steve is Mr. McFeely. Gary Drury is Johnny Costa. And Patrick is Nick the PA.

ALL (SINGING)
*In the daytime. In the nighttime.
 Any time that you feel's the right
 time. For a friendship with me, you
 see. F-R-I-E-N-D special/ You are
 my friend / You're special to me.*

Catherine/Aberlin steps forward.

CATHERINE
 I was trying to tell you
 something...

Steve/McFeely steps forward, his voice is raw and broken.

STEVE
 I was trying to tell you something.

FRED (SINGING)
You are special.

STEVE
 Something very serious. It's in my
 throat. It's about the size of a
 golf ball.

FRED
 I hate cancer. With everything I
 have.

Margy steps forward, pointing to her watch.

MARGY
 I'm sorry, but we have to keep
 moving Fred.

The room spins and Tim collapses - he's gasping for air - in a full fit of panic.

FRED
 It's okay, dear. Take deep breaths.

Fred kneels next to Tim and breathes.

FRED (CONT'D)
In and out.

Fred strokes Tim's hair, cradling his head.

FRED (CONT'D)
Breathe.

Tim's eyes roll back and he's out.

FADE OUT:

INT. ROGERS HOME - GUEST BEDROOM - EVENING

Tim lies on top of the bed.

A wet washcloth rests on his forehead. A glass of cool water sits on the nightstand.

A Chopin piano concerto wafts in from another room.

LIVING ROOM

Spacious and well appointed, but not showy in the least. The room is dominated by two GRAND PIANOS.

Tim ambles in, in socks.

JOANNE ROGERS (stout, late 60s) sits at the piano closest to the window playing effortlessly, her fingers light on the keys.

Light pours in as the sun sets.

Tim is confused. He tries to figure out where he is.

A wall of pictures. Fred with President Reagan. With Eddie Murphy backstage at SNL. With the entire cast of CATS.

Fred enters wearing a track suit.

FRED
(to Tim)
Oh good, you're up.

Joanne stops playing.

JOANNE
Goodness, I didn't know you were there, I would have stopped.

TIM
You're incredible.

FRED
She certainly is.

JOANNE
Hello, dear. Joanne Rogers.

TIM
Tim.

Joanne laughs.

JOANNE
I know who you are, darling, but
nice to officially meet all the
same.

Fred grabs a camera off the mantle and snaps a photo.

JOANNE (CONT'D)
Him with his pictures.

FRED
I'll bet you're hungry.

Tim shrugs.

FRED (CONT'D)
How about some Chinese food?

TIM
Okay.

JOANNE
Go, go. I need to practice.

INT. CHINESE RESTAURANT - LATER

A hole in the wall. Two couples and a small family eat beside Fred and Tim, who sip tea, menus out before them.

Everyone steals sidelong glances at the famous Mister Rogers. Fred's comfortable. Tim isn't.

FRED
Joanne really is a special person.
I'm not one to brag, but in this
case I think it's okay... we are
about to celebrate our fiftieth
wedding anniversary.

TIM

Fifty.

FRED

That's no small feat these days.

(then)

She's such a blessing to me and our two boys.

TIM

You have children?

FRED

James and John.

(then)

Brothers.

TIM

I never asked that.

FRED

(smiling)

Well. I have three-grandsons too.

TIM

Thank you...for...

Tim is frozen with hurt. Fred reaches for his hand.

FRED

We all have people who have helped us along the way. Who have helped us become who we are. Who cared about us and who wanted what's best for us in life. Even and especially you, Tim.

(then)

Let's try something, shall we?

Tim glances around - everyone's staring. Fred notices, but rather than whisper, he speaks a little louder.

FRED (CONT'D)

Together, let's take one minute to remember the people...

The patrons lean in.

FRED (CONT'D)

...who loved us into being.

Fred pulls back his sleeve and looks at his watch.

FRED (CONT'D)
One minute of silence. I'll watch
the time.

The WAITRESS approaches.

WAITRESS
Have you decided -

A WOMAN at a nearby table politely shushes her.

The Waitress freezes.

TIM
I can't do this.

FRED
Please, Tim.

Ten seconds in, Tim sniffs.

He sniffs again.

Now his eyes are welling.

His face contorts as the emotions build.

For once, finally, Tim experiences a brief moment of clarity.

FRED (CONT'D)
Thank you for doing that with me. I
feel much better.

Fred smiles at Tim, who is a mess. Tears falling.

The Woman nearby dabs her eyes with a napkin. The Waitress
clutches her hands to her chest.

TIM
Thank you.
(then, joking)
What you all looking at?

Laughter.

INT/EXT. FRED'S HONDA - PITTSBURGH HWY 79 - DAY

Fred's old, shabby car crossing the Sewickly Bridge in the
slow lane.

He probably should be driving faster - cars fly by him.

Tim doesn't mind - he looks out the passenger window, at the river shining through the slats of the bridge.

EXT. PITTSBURGH AIRPORT - DROP OFF - LATER

Tim waits by the curb.

Fred leans toward the open passenger window.

FRED
Will you ring me and let me know
you've arrived safely?

TIM
(laughs)
I will.

Fred snaps a PHOTO.

He pulls away - then hits the brakes too hard. *Screech.*

He turns back to Tim. He links his hands together making the sign for "FRIEND."

HONK! - traffic piles up.

However embarrassing, Tim returns the sign.

HONK!

Fred rights the car and putters off.

INT. FORT WORTH STAR TELEGRAM - DAY

Tim's at his desk, typing away. He's sitting up a little straighter.

Greg and Charlie walk by.

GREG
Hey, wanna eat?

TIM
Is it lunch?

Annoyed, Charlie nods and keeps walking.

TIM (CONT'D)
No thanks, guys.

Greg turns to go.

TIM (CONT'D)
Actually, yeah. I do. I want to eat
with you.

GREG
(surprised)
All right.

INT. MONGOLIAN BBQ - LATER

The COOKS stir-fry food, while Greg, Charlie and Tim sit side-by-side, awkwardly.

GREG
So, um. How's it going?

TIM
Not bad.

GREG
What seasoning did you get?

TIM
Chimichurri.

GREG
Same.

CHARLIE
Peanut Curry.

Another pause.

GREG
How's Patrick?

TIM
He's three.

GREG
Three! Oh man.

CHARLIE
Being a parent is hard.

GREG
They say terrible twos but really
three is the worst.

TIM
You have kids?

GREG AND CHARLIE

Nah.

TIM

We should do this everyday.

GREG

We do.

INT. TIM'S CAR - OUTSIDE THE MADIGAN HOME - NIGHT

Parked across the street. Tim calms his nerves.

With one final sigh, he leans to open the car door.

INT./EXT. MADIGAN HOME - MOMENTS LATER

Tim approaches the front door. He takes out his key - then decides to knock.

He hears laughing and music inside.

Catherine answers, surprised.

TIM

Hi.

CATHERINE

Hi.

Inside, a group of WOMEN drink wine, argue and laugh.

CATHERINE (CONT'D)

Book club.

Tim glances inside - the Women have quieted down. They're trying to eavesdrop. It's embarrassing.

TIM

Aw jeez. Hi Trisha.

TRISHA (O.C.)

Hi Tim.

Laughter from inside.

TIM

Anything good?

CATHERINE

Probably, but no one read the book.

TIM
Patrick asleep?

She nods.

TIM (CONT'D)
I know it's late, but I felt like I
needed to come here. I -

CATHERINE
This isn't the time.

TIM
Cath - it's sort of important?
Maybe we can sit in my car for a
second.

CATHERINE
I'm not going to do that.
(then)
Did you call Steve?

TIM
Actually, I'm going to see him.

This grabs her attention.

TIM (CONT'D)
Tomorrow.

CATHERINE
I'm glad.
(then)
How is he?

TIM
Not really sure.
(then)
The's actually why I'm here...

CATHERINE
Okay?

TIM
I'd like to bring Patrick with me.

Catherine steps out and closes the door behind her.

TIM (CONT'D)
I'm gonna drive. I thought he could
come with me.

CATHERINE
To Minnesota.

TIM
It'll take a couple of days, but I
thought -

Catherine smiles.

CATHERINE
Yes. I think that would be great.
Okay.

TIM
Okay.

INT. TIM'S HOTEL ROOM - LATER THAT NIGHT

He grips his cell phone. Gaining the courage, he dials.

TIM
(into the phone)
Hey, Cally. It's Tim.
(then)
Yeah, Tim.

EXT. MADIGAN HOME - THE NEXT MORNING

Tim's car is in the driveway - the doors and trunk are open.

Patrick runs in circles on the front lawn.

Tim's legs hang out of the back door - he struggles to get
the car seat latched in.

TIM
Come on.

He gives up.

TIM (CONT'D)
(calling)
Hey Cath?

Catherine comes out of the garage with several bags and a
suitcase.

TIM (CONT'D)
I can't get that thing to latch.
Where's it supposed to go - there's
a hole on this side, but -

CATHERINE
I'll do it.

There is still a coldness between them.

TIM

Where am I supposed to loop it
through on that side?

She sets down the bags and hops in the back seat of the car.

CATHERINE

He has snacks and his water bottle
in his rocket bag and he has plenty
of clothes if he has an accident.
But, remember, if he says he has to
go, he *has* to go. It's a matter of
seconds, till -

She puts a knee into the car seat, using all her weight to
press it down.

CATHERINE (CONT'D)

Blast off.

TIM

I know.

CATHERINE

And keep the toys where you can
reach them, so when he wants one
you can just hand it back.

TIM

Cath, I know this stuff.

CATHERINE

I know you do.
(to herself)
This is good.

She reaches behind the seat and loops the latch through the
base. Click. She pulls the strap tight and shakes the seat.
It doesn't budge.

Tim shakes his head - how did she do that?

TIM

(to Patrick)
Come on, bud.

PATRICK

Mom said we are a road trip, dad.

TIM

We are a road trip.

Catherine kneels and grabs Patrick, wrapping him up in a hug. She whispers something in his ear.

PATRICK

I will.

CATHERINE

(to Patrick)

I love you, sweetie.

Patrick grips her tight.

CATHERINE (CONT'D)

Come on, time to go.

TIM

Let's go bud, hop in.

Patrick climbs in the car and Tim straps him into the car seat.

CATHERINE

I'm gonna go inside, so he doesn't
freak.

Tim nods.

Catherine walks back inside. Tim begins to call out to her - but decides against it. There is still a coldness between them.

EXT. TIM'S CAR - ON THE ROAD - MINUTES LATER

Tim's car pulls on to the freeway.

We crane up on the long road ahead. Just as the car is about to disappear into the horizon, not more than a hundred yards from the on-ramp - Tim pulls over.

He runs out, opens Patrick's door, unlatches him, picks him up and hurries to the side of the road.

Patrick pees.

They get back in the car and pull back onto the freeway.

INT. TIM'S CAR - ON THE ROAD - LATER

Tim sees a Cracker Barrel up ahead. He looks to Patrick in the rearview mirror.

TIM
Hey bud, you hungry?

Patrick nods.

INT. CRACKER BARREL - MOMENTS LATER

Same as usual. Tim and Patrick wait behind an ELDERLY COUPLE.

HOSTESS
Hello there. How many?

Tim holds up two fingers.

TIM
Two please.

Patrick puts his two fingers up and points them at SINGLE MAN behind them in line.

PATRICK
That's two.

HOSTESS
(to Patrick)
Would you like some crayons?

AT THE TABLE - LATER

Patrick draws on his paper place mat.

Tim fiddles with the table's puzzle game.

TIM
Do you know where we are going?

PATRICK
Nimmesota.

TIM
Right. You know why?

Patrick shakes his head.

TIM (CONT'D)
To see Uncle Steve.
(then)
He's my brother.

PATRICK
Is he Mom's brother too?

TIM

No.

PATRICK

Will Mom be there?

TIM

No. It's just gonna be you and me.

Patrick lowers his eyes.

TIM (CONT'D)

You miss her?

Patrick shakes his head. Tim strokes his hair - as if to say "me too."

INT. TIM'S CAR - ON THE ROAD - LATE NIGHT

Tim drives in the RAIN. His mind wanders. Patrick sleeps in the back.

EXT/INT. TIM'S CAR - NEIGHBORHOOD - DULUTH, MN - DAY

Tim drives through the quaint neighborhood of simple tract homes.

He's looking for addresses.

PATRICK

Is that one it?

TIM

Nope.

PATRICK

Is that one it?

A beat-up plumbing van marked MADIGAN PLUMBING is parked in the driveway.

TIM

Actually...

He pulls in.

PATRICK

We're here!

EXT/INT. STEVE'S HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

Tim and Patrick are at the door. Luggage at their feet. Cally answers.

CALLY
Tim and Patrick!

She hugs Tim - he's rigid, nervous.

CALLY (CONT'D)
Come on in.

Cally gives Tim a real hug - a hug with meaning behind it.

CALLY (CONT'D)
I'm so grateful you're here.
(relaxes)
You're here.
(then)
Everyone's out back. I'll meet you
out there with some Arnold Palmers.

BACK PORCH - MOMENTS LATER

Steve is fragile, thin and bald. His voice is raw and dry.

STEVE
Scoot back. I'm gonna send it way
out there, so you gotta scoot.

Timmy (9) and Tyler (7) jockey for the best position. Tyler has random hockey pads on - he shoves his older brother.

TYLER
This one's mine. It's mine.

Steve swings a whiffle bat sending the ball over their heads into the yard.

STEVE
Go!

Patrick yells in excitement and runs past Steve - chasing the ball.

Steve sees Tim - a big grin appears on his face.

STEVE (CONT'D)
I thought you might've crapped out
on me.

TIM
I wouldn't do that.

STEVE
(smiling)
Sure ya would.

Steve puts his hand out.

STEVE (CONT'D)
Great to see you.

Tim shakes his hand.

TIM
Oh, I got something for the boys.

Out of a bag, he pulls a Dallas Stars and Texas Rangers jersey.

STEVE
Nice.

Steve holds up the Stars jersey.

STEVE (CONT'D)
They'll fight over this one. Stars
used to be a Minnesota team, ya
know. Before moving to Texas.

Tim takes the shot with a smile.

TIM
I know.

Cally arrives with drinks, a bowl of pretzels and an Ensure weight-replacement drink for Steve.

STEVE
You spike it with Jack like I like?

CALLY
Oh shut up.

She heads back inside.

Tim and Steve watch their boys - full of energy and joy, running, falling and rolling in the grass.

TIM
I want to apologize for the
wedding.

STEVE

No need - there was a lot going on.

TIM

I punched you in the face.

STEVE

Hey, I got a few in too.

TIM

Of course there's a need.

STEVE

(a wry smile)

Done.

(then)

Should we just get this out of the way?

Apprehensive, Tim nods.

STEVE (CONT'D)

It's lung cancer. It's in my liver too. Inoperable. I'm about to finish my second round of chemo. I'm tired and I upchuck a lot but I'm okay.

TIM

Upchuck?

STEVE

Vomit? Puke? Barf? What do you like better? Honk?

Tim struggles to crack a smile.

TIM

Okay.

STEVE

Sit down. Watch this. Tyler loves him some Steve Miller Band.

Steve flips on old boom box - out blasts some tinny "Fly Like an Eagle."

TYLER

Yes!

Like clockwork - the boys start a dance off. Tyler has moves.

Patrick tries his best to break-dance like Fred in the video.

TIMMY

Mommy!

Cally comes out from the kitchen.

CALLY

Here comes Mama!

She joins in doing some hippy-mom-noodle dance.

Everyone is having a great time - but Tim's mind is elsewhere. He leans in to Steve, who is dancing in his own way.

TIM

I'm not really sure what to do,
Steve.

STEVE

About what?

TIM

You have a matter of weeks, months,
what?

STEVE

Years if I can help it.

TIM

"Inoperable" means years?

STEVE

Why not? I'm doing what I can.

(then)

Beyond that, I'm trying hard not to
think about it.

TIM

That's great, but...what do I do?
What does a brother do here?

STEVE

(incredulous)

You wanna help?

TIM

Anything.

Tim nods, so Steve takes Tim's hand...

STEVE

Here.

He puts it on Tim's hip.

STEVE (CONT'D)

And this one.

He takes Tim's other hand and puts it in the air, pointing his index finger to the sky.

STEVE (CONT'D)

Now shake it.

Tim does.

TIM

You're a moron, you know.

Trying to forget the seriousness of the situation.

STEVE

Now turn.

Tim turns slowly.

INT. STEVE'S HOUSE - KITCHEN TABLE

Tim and Patrick join the family for dinner.

Everybody scoops up Mac and cheese with cut-up hotdogs.

Steve pushes his food around the plate but he isn't eating. He's sweaty and wearied.

TIM

...so Fred is putting up this tent while the whole crew -

STEVE

Wait - you call him Fred?

TIM

Mmhmm.

STEVE

That's crazy.

TIM

Can I finish my story?

STEVE

It's your house, you can do what you like.

TIM

So as soon as the tent is up, it collapses - a pole goes flying.

(MORE)

TIM (CONT'D)
He puts it all together again and
SPROING! The tent does it again!

Tyler giggles.

TYLER
Sproing!

Patrick and Timmy join in.

TIMMY AND PATRICK
Sproing sproing!

TIM
And now the crew is calling to him -
"Need a hand? Let us help." He
waves them off and he holds the
pole in place, with all his might,
he's shaking and sweating, but his
temper never rises, but now he *has*
to keep it there. So we're all just
waiting to see if he can hold it
together.

The boys are DYING of laughter.

Steve leaves the table, hurrying to the bathroom to vomit.

Nobody seems to care, except Tim. He has to keep telling the
story.

TIM CONT'D)
Finally, he finishes his lines, and
they yell "cut" so he just let's
the thing go. Poles shoot
everywhere - one of them lands in
the lunch. Nick says "I guess we're
having shish kabob."

TYLER
Shish Kabob!

The boys can't breathe. Best story they ever heard.

TIM
(laughs)
The next weeks episode was about
"persistence." The guy's amazing.

CALLY
How does strawberry milk sound for
dessert? Or is that going to go up
everyone's noses?

TIMMY

Yes!

CALLY

But we have to clear the table.

Timmy and Tyler scoot out and grab plates.

Patrick follows their lead - already shadowing the boys' every move like a poodle.

Steve's out of the bathroom. He's sweaty and flushed.

STEVE

Do I get dessert?

CALLY

You didn't eat your dinner.

TIM

You all right?

STEVE

Routine upchuck.

The boys run by, Steve turns and chases them into the Living Room.

The home phone rings.

STEVE (CONT'D)

Money phone!

Cally answers in the makeshift office in the corner of the kitchen.

CALLY

Madigan Plumbing.

She jots down info.

CALLY (CONT'D)

Okay... It's after hours, so it's time and a half...He'll be there in about fifteen minutes.

Steve takes her note, grabs his work shirt.

STEVE

Time to pay the bills.

INT. KITCHEN - LATER

TV blares from the living room.

Tim washes dishes at the sink. Cally dries them and puts them in the cupboard.

She opens a cupboard next to the sink. Inside, Tim catches a glance at the dozen or so bottles of medication.

TIM

I can't believe he's still going on jobs.

CALLY

Yep.

INT. STEVE'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - LATE NIGHT

On the pullout couch, Tim types on his laptop, connected with an ethernet cable draped over a sleeping Patrick.

Tim gazes at the flashing cursor at the top of his article...then types the title, "Mister Nice Guy."

He emails it off.

Patrick whimpers in his sleep.

Tim rubs his back, soothing him.

Suddenly Patrick jolts awake in terror, screaming.

Tim sits up. He grabs the boy, holding him tight, trying his best to comfort him.

PATRICK

Mommy. Mommy. Mommy.

Tim picks him up and stands.

TIM

It's okay, it's okay. It's me. Take deep breathes, bud. In and out.

Patrick starts to calm down - but he's still gasping for air.

PATRICK

(quietly)

Mom.

TIM

You're okay. It's daddy.

Tim rocks him slowly.

Down the hall Tim hears Steve getting home.

Tim peaks out the door, waves. Steve throws a very tired hand up.

INT. HOCKEY RINK - THE NEXT DAY

Timmy practices with his team on the rink.

Steve hollers at the kids on the ice, still managing to coach.

STEVE

Keep your head up Cam! How are you
gonna stop him if you're staring at
your skates?! Set it up again!

Tim, Patrick and Tyler watch at the glass, sipping cokes.
Tyler still has his leg pads on from an earlier practice.

Tim notices a HOCKEY DAD going for a donut. None left. He
slams the box down in frustration. He looks to the other
parents.

HOCKEY DAD

Somebody take two donuts?

STEVE

That's a two on one! Give and go,
Timmy! Give and GO!

Steve blows the whistle and gets up. It takes some effort.

STEVE (CONT'D)

Alright guys, bring it in.

Steve's legs wobble and GIVE OUT. He goes to the ice hard,
his body falls limp.

TIM

Oh, no...

Cally screams and runs to Steve.

HOCKEY DAD

Call 911! Somebody.

Tim dials 911.

INT. HOSPITAL - OUTSIDE STEVE'S ROOM - LATER

Tim paces, Patrick sits in a hallway chair.

TIM
(into phone)
Yeah, the tumor's wrapped around
his spinal cord. He can use his
arms, but has no feeling below
that.

CATHERINE (O.S.)
Oh, honey.
(then)
Is that something he'll get back?

TIM
Probably not.

CATHERINE (O.S.)
Are you with him?

TIM
Cally's in there right now.

PATRICK
(to Tim)
Is that mommy?

CATHERINE
That P?

TIM
Yeah, he misses you.
(to Patrick)
You wanna say hi?

Patrick shakes his head no.

TIM (CONT'D)
You sure?

Tim holds the phone out. Patrick won't take it.

TIM (CONT'D)
Well, he's being shy.

CATHERINE
Kiss him for me.

TIM
I will.
(then)
(MORE)

TIM (CONT'D)

So, Cath, I know I was supposed to come back tomorrow, but think I'm gonna need to stay here. For a while.

CATHERINE

Okay.

TIM

He's gonna need my help.

CATHERINE

How long is a while?

TIM

I don't know. Steve's not gonna be able to work, so...

CATHERINE

How will Patrick get home?

TIM

Maybe, he could stay here too.

CATHERINE

He should come home.

Tim sighs.

TIM

I'll get a one way for him and the cheapest round trip I can find for me.

CATHERINE

He just needs to be -

Catherine's changing her mind.

CATHERINE (CONT'D)

I don't know. I just can't see him, so I don't know how he is.

TIM

It's awful to say, all things considered, but he's having the time of his life. He's got two older brothers who are off for summer break.

CATHERINE

That's a pretty good life.

TIM
Why don't you come up here?

CATHERINE
I don't think I'm ready for that.

TIM
It's okay. I'll wait for you to be ready.

Cally comes out of Steve's room. She's trying to stop her crying - her face is red and her eyes are swollen.

Timmy and Tyler trail behind.

TIM (CONT'D)
I have to go.

Tim hangs up and picks up Patrick.

TIM (CONT'D)
(to Cally)
You okay?

CALLY
We're gonna get some sleep.
(then)
Come on boys.

Cally and her boys and Patrick head down the hall.

Tim and Patrick poke their heads in the room.

Steve's body is covered. He's conscious, but weak.

TIM
You're awake.

STEVE
There he is.

TIM
How are you feeling?

STEVE
Sit, sit.

Tim takes a deep breath.

STEVE (CONT'D)
It's the weirdest thing.

Steve points to his chest.

STEVE (CONT'D)

It's like I stop right here. Like it's just empty space, but I can see it all down there.

TIM

You in pain?

STEVE

I'm not sure.

TIM

Cally gonna be okay?

STEVE

She's just worried. I'm expensive.

TIM

I know. Can I help you?

STEVE

Tim.

TIM

You're gonna need help. I'll give you whatever money I have, but it's not a lot. What about a fundraiser or something?

Steve starts to resist.

TIM (CONT'D)

You can be pissed at me, you can bitch and moan all you want, but I can totally beat you in a fight now. And I will. I will fight you.

(then)

Let me do this.

INT. DONUT SHOP - DAY

An EMPLOYEE packs up three large boxes for Tim, who's got his phone up to his ear - it's connecting.

ELLEN (O.S.)

So, Tim. This article...

TIM

Ellen - I know it wasn't what you wanted. The Columbine angle just didn't jive. There was just more to the story, something more personal, so I'm sorry, but-

ELLEN (O.S.)
 Oh dear. So you haven't been
 following? We printed it, Tim.

Tim pays for donuts and carries them outside in one hand.

ELLEN (O.S.) (CONT'D)
 AP picked it up, Reuters too.

TIM
 Oh. Wow, I um - that's great.

ELLEN (O.S.)
 You've got mail, Tim.

INT. FORT WORTH STAR TELEGRAM - TIM'S OFFICE

Ellen the Editor thumbs through a HUGE PILE of fan mail on
 Tim's desk.

ELLEN
 Mister-Rogers-saved-my-life-too
 mail. Some of them are bunk. A lot
 of them are...here in your office
 blotting out the sky. It's getting
 to be an issue.

Charlie and Gary walk by.

GARY
 Is it true that Mister Rogers was a
 green beret?

CHARLIE
 God, I hope so.

INT. HOCKEY RINK - THE NEXT DAY

Tim has a big box of coffee along with the donuts. He joins
 Cally and the other PARENTS in the stands.

TIM
 (to Cally)
 Hey there.

CALLY
 (re: the donuts)
 Wow, Tim.

He sets down the donuts. The Parents notice.

TIM

Time to make some friends.

He opens the box of donuts.

A Dad looks over. Tim reaches out and shakes his hand.

TIM (CONT'D)

Tim Madigan - I'm Tyler and Timmy's
uncle...

INT. STEVE'S NEIGHBOR'S HOUSE - DAY

Tim knocks on the door, with a flyer and a donut. The
NEIGHBOR opens the door.

TIM

Hi, I'm Steve's brother, Tim. We're
having a little party to help raise
some money.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. STEVE'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - LATER

There's a huge potluck set up in the kitchen. Kids and
parents everywhere.

A hospital bed is set up in front of the TV, where Steve sips
a beer from a straw. There's a tight huddle round him. He's
animated, but gaunt and wasted, much worse than when we last
saw him.

A stack of *Minneapolis Tribunes* rest at the foot of Steve's
bed. The top issue is turned to the Style section, where
TIM'S ARTICLE appears on the front page.

Lorraine and Todd enter bearing two tubs of ice cream.

Lorraine gives Tim a big hug.

LORRAINE

Thanks for doing this.

STEVE

You see this?

Steve holds up the paper, proud as can be.

LORRAINE

I bought copies for everyone at the
office.

TODD
Pretty cool, man.

TIM
You bring rocky road?

TODD
And bubble gum.

Lorraine turns to Cally, stricken.

LORRAINE
How is he?

STEVE
He's right here with perfect hearing.

LORRAINE
And he's a liar who won't give me a straight answer.

Steve grumbles.

STEVE
(to Tyler)
Go get us some spoons, bud.

Tim's phone rings.

TIM
Hello?

FRED (O.S.)
Tim I am so thrilled with the article, as was everyone in Pittsburgh.

TIM
Thanks, Fred.

Everyone stops cold. They're mouthing to each other "that's Mister Rogers!"

FRED (O.S.)
Tell me how you are.

TIM
Well -

PATRICK
Mister Rogers!

TIM
Excuse me for a second...

Tim walks out.

STEVE
(to Patrick)
Your dad is so cool.

EXT. STEVE'S HOUSE - DAY

Sunny and bright.

The street is jammed with cars. Friends and family pour inside.

A taxi putters up to the driveway.

INT. STEVE'S HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

Tim enters the front door, light pouring in.

TIM
Look who I found.

FRED follows behind Tim. He's got a backpack, and he's wearing a heavy jacket despite the warm weather.

CALLY
Holy shit.

Fred laughs. Then, so does everyone.

CALLY (CONT'D)
I'm sorry, I mean, I'm Cally.

FRED
Hello to you. I'm Fred Rogers.

Fred turns to Lorraine and Todd.

FRED (CONT'D)
Hello, and congratulations on your wedding.

LORRAINE
Thanks.

FRED
May I take your picture?

CALLY
Oh my god, yes.

Cally, Lorraine, Todd and Tim smush together awkwardly.
Click.

FRED
Lovely. And where is Steve?

Steve waves.

STEVE
The invalid.
(then)
I thought Tim was making things up.

FRED
Certainly not. Thank you so much
for inviting me. Look at all of
these people here to be with you
today.

The party quiets down as the news of the guest of honor
spreads.

Fred notices, and seizes the moment.

FRED (CONT'D)
Can everyone gather together? I'd
love to snap of a picture of
everyone.

The entire family obliges, gathering around Steve.

STEVE
See? No need to hire a
photographer.

CLICK.

THE HALLWAY - LATER

A few Hockey Dads chat. A few people bid on items at the
SILENT AUCTION in the Kitchen.

Fred and Tim have a lemonade. Patrick can't stop staring at
Fred.

TYLER
Are you the real Mister Rogers?

FRED
I am.

Tyler runs to Patrick and Timmy who are waiting nearby.

TYLER
(calling)
I told you!

Tim looks to Fred.

TIM
I didn't think you'd come.

FRED
It was important for me to be here.
Is Catherine here?

Tim shakes his head, no.

FRED (CONT'D)
Look at these...

Fred studies the family photos on the wall. A small one in the corner grabs his attention: Two young boys, on the lawn, arms around each other.

FRED (CONT'D)
That's you, Tim?

Tim takes a close look.

TIM
And Steve.

FRED
You look inseparable. It's wonderful.

A MOM exits the bathroom.

FRED (CONT'D)
If you'll excuse me.

Fred enters the bathroom.

HOCKEY DAD
Mister Rogers takes a leak?

TIM
I know what you mean.

KITCHEN - LATER

The massive clean-up effort is nearly complete, the party over.

Cally transfers a tea-bag from one cup to the next, and sets the steeped tea on the table beside Tim, who's adding up the checks.

CALLY
Good news?

TIM
Eight thousand and change.

CALLY
That's unbelievable.

Tim notices Fred sitting with Steve in the Living Room. He's leaning in close, intimate, speaking softly.

Tim can't make out what they're saying.

Steve looks confused.

Finally, Fred stands up and walks to the kitchen.

Steve wrinkles his nose, moved.

EXT. STEVE'S HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

Tim walks Fred to the waiting cab.

TIM
Thank you for being here.

Fred gives him a big hug.

TIM (CONT'D)
Can I ask you... What did you say to Steve?

FRED
I asked him to pray for me.

TIM
For you?

FRED
I figure anyone who's been what he's been through must be very close to god.

TIM
Thank you.

Fred reaches into his pocket and hands Tim an envelope.

FRED
My contribution.

TIM
You don't have to do that.

Fred struggles to get into the cab.

FRED
Oh, brittle bones.
(then)
You're a good man. I'm glad you're
my friend.

Fred shuts the door and waves as it drives away.

Tim glances in the envelope.

TIM
Wow.

INT. STEVE'S HOUSE - GUEST BEDROOM - 4AM

Tim and Patrick lie next to each other in bed. Tim's wide awake.

INT. STEVE'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - 4AM

It's dark and quiet except for the oxygen machine breathing in and out, next to Steve's bed.

Tim walks across the hall, on his way to pee - Steve waves.

TIM
What are you doing awake?

STEVE
Just lying here. What else? Sit
with me.

TIM
It's 4am.
(then)
Can I pee first?

STEVE
I'm not going anywhere.

The sound of Tim peeing joins the oxygen machine. Flush.

Tim sits next to Steve.

STEVE (CONT'D)
You didn't wash your hands.

TIM
Sorry.

STEVE
Gross.
(then)
I can't believe Mister Rogers was
here.

Tim nods.

STEVE (CONT'D)
He's a good guy.

TIM
Pretty amazing - but he's got
nothing on ya.

The birds begin to chirp. Morning.

Tim puts his hand on Steve's.

TIM (CONT'D)
I don't know how I can say this
right now, but...life is good.

STEVE
Good.

Tim leans over and kisses Steve on the forehead.

STEVE (CONT'D)
Tim.
(then)
This really can be a new beginning
for us all.

Tim smiles.

STEVE (CONT'D)
Were you gonna tell me you're
living in hotel? Why wouldn't you
tell me that?

TIM
Didn't think it mattered, with
everything going on.

STEVE
Okay.

TIM

Okay.

STEVE

Can I help?

Tim shrugs.

STEVE (CONT'D)

Do whatever she says. There, I'm helping.

They chuckle.

TIM

I don't know if she wants me back.
It's hard.

STEVE

Lean into it.

TIM

(whispers)

You know I've loved you longer than
I've loved anyone else in the
world?

STEVE

I love you too.

Tim leans back.

Steve closes his eyes.

FADE TO BLACK:

EXT. MISTER ROGERS' NEIGHBORHOOD - YARD

Fred sits on a grassy patch next to a house. He talks to camera, slow and introspective.

FRED

When I was very young I had a dog
that I loved very much. Her name
was Mitzi. And she got to be old,
and she died. I was very sad when
she died, because she and I were
good pals. And when she died, I
cried. And my grandmother heard me
crying, I remember, and she came
and just put her arm around me,
because she knew I was sad. She
knew how much I loved that dog.

(MORE)

FRED (CONT'D)

And my dad said we'd have to bury Mitzi, and I didn't want to. I didn't want to bury her because I thought I'd just pretend that she was still alive. But my dad said that her body was dead and we'd have to bury her. So we did.

Soft music starts.

FRED (SINGING) (CONT'D)

Sometimes people get sad and they really do feel bad, but the very same people who are sad sometimes are the very same people who are glad sometimes. It's funny but it's true. Its the same isn't it, for me, isn't it the same for you.

INT. MADIGAN HOME - NIGHT

Catherine folds laundry, the phone rings.

She picks it up.

CATHERINE

Hello.

INT. CEMETERY - DULUTH

Friends and family walk to the grave site, where Tim, Lorraine, and Cally greet people.

At the end of a line of cars, a taxi. Catherine gets out.

Tim spots her.

TIM

(to the Hockey Dads)

Excuse me one sec.

PATRICK

(spotting Catherine)

Mommy!

Patrick runs over, Tim follows.

Catherine showers Patrick with kisses.

CATHERINE

I missed you so much!

PATRICK
My cousin Tyler plays hockey.

CATHERINE
He does?! That's so cool.

PATRICK
Tyler!

TIM
He's obsessed with Tyler.

Catherine hugs Tim. He hugs her back.

CATHERINE
Fred told me to give you an extra hug.

TIM
Thank you both.

LATER

As the Pastor delivers the eulogy, Tim notices Patrick's not there.

He gets up and finds him.

TIM (CONT'D)
Hey bud.

PATRICK
Grandma and Grampa are dead.

TIM
That's right.

PATRICK
And Uncle Steve is dead.

TIM
He is.

A pause.

PATRICK
Can I be dead someday?

Tim smiles.

TIM
Not for a long, long time.

INT. AIRPLANE - DAY

Patrick sleeps between Tim and Catherine.

TIM
I was thinking.

CATHERINE
Hmm?

TIM
I was thinking - that when we get back, for the time being, I should keep my hotel room.

CATHERINE
Okay.

TIM
And we should get a sitter...and go to dinner. On a date.

Catherine grins.

CATHERINE
Yes.

Tim looks away...and allows himself to smile.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. MISTER ROGERS' NEIGHBORHOOD - DAY

Fred's back with the cardboard with a window for each of his friends. He looks at Tim's photo - bruised and bloodied.

FRED
I wonder if you realize how special you really are. Your place in this life is unique, absolutely unique.
(the)
This is my friend Tim.

He turns the board over, revealing one large "window."

FRED (CONT'D)
And these are my new friends. The Madigans.

He opens the window to reveal the group photo from Steve's party - everyone gathered around, smiling.

TROLLEY (O.S.)

Toot toot.

The Trolley passes by, then stops and comes back.

FRED

What's that?

TROLLEY

Toot. Toot. Toot.

Fred chuckles - Trolley is such a kidder.

FRED

Oh, I will, thank you.

The Trolley speeds away as Johnny Costa noodles on the vibes.

FRED (SINGING) (CONT'D)

*It's such a good feeling to know
you're alive. It's such a happy
feeling.*

Fred takes off his blue boat shoes, one at a time.

FRED (SINGING) (CONT'D)

*You're growing inside. And when you
wake up ready to say...*

He stands and unzips his Red Cardigan, then moves to the closet and opens the door.

FRED (SINGING) (CONT'D)

*"I think I'll make a snappy new
day."*

Fred snaps twice, once with each hand.

FRED (SINGING) (CONT'D)

*It's such a good feeling, a very
good feeling, the feeling you know
that I'll be back when the week is
new.*

He carefully hangs up the sweater, then pulls his gray sport coat off a hanger.

FRED (SINGING) (CONT'D)

*And I'll have more ideas for you.
And you'll have things you'll want
to talk about. I will too.*

He grabs the board with windows on it from the bench.

FRED (CONT'D)
Be back next time.

He waves moves toward the front door.

FRED (CONT'D)
Bye bye.

He goes, smiling.

FADE TO BLACK:

CLOSING CREDITS

The show logo over the Miniature Version of Fred's house.
Credits roll as we pan out over the small mini neighborhood.

Then, a snapshot of the real Tim Madigan and Fred Rogers.

SUPER: From 1968 to 2001, Fred Rogers wrote, produced, and performed in 995 episodes of *Mister Rogers Neighborhood*.

He died in 2003, at the age of 74.

His red cardigan hangs in the Smithsonian. It was knitted by his mother.

SUPER: Tim and Catherine are still married. Today, they are the happiest couple they know.

The END.