

GOD'S PHOTO ALBUM

Written by

Susan Arnout Smith

Based on God's Photo Album by Shelly Mecum

2018 Grand Prize winner, International Faith in Film Screenwriting competition

2020 13th Annual StoryPro Awards Screenplay, 2nd place, Family/Teen/Animation category

06/22/20 WGA Registration 2063940  
saswriter1s@pacbell.net www.susanarnoutsmith.com (619)750-4143

The screen is black. A CLICK. A WHIR.

**SUPERIMPOSE: 1992 Ewa Beach, Oahu**

A glossy, blurred photo from an unseen 'instant camera' SPITS OUT into BLACK and comes into focus. We SEE:

A modest home with an American flag and a Navy flag.

A giant MOVING VAN is now in front of the house...then a BLIZZARD DROP of photos as light fades: Movers load boxes into the van. The flags are the last to go. Taken down and packed into a box. The van drives away.

The LAST PHOTO spits out and flutters: We see JOHN, age four. An early version of a Selfie. He wears a snorkeling mask and pj's. He's inside a tent lit by a lantern.

We HEAR: SOUNDS of a FIERCE fight.

A new photo emerges, a blurred chubby fist. JOEY's, age two.

INT. TENT (INSIDE MECUM'S LIVING ROOM) - NIGHT

We see the boys, tow-headed, grappling for the camera. The tent flap opens. SHELLY Mecum separates them and grabs it. Late twenties, she glows as though she's captured sunlight in a bottle and swallowed it. She radiates easy confidence.

SHELLY

Bed. Now. Early start tomorrow.

They crawl into sleeping bags. She tucks them in.

JOHN

Mommy, can God find us in Japan?

SHELLY

John, He could even find us on the moon. Which is where you'll go if you don't settle down.

JOEY

I don't want to leave Hawaii.

She pulls from her pocket treasures: capped tubes of sand. This is the cool mom, the one with the exact right surprises.

SHELLY

That's why Hawaii's coming with us.  
Do. Not. Open. These. Here. Hear?

She kisses heads and checks the time. She's running late.

SHELLY (CONT'D)

I have to pick up Daddy and drop  
the car. We'll be right back.  
Prayers. Be asleep when I get home.

She re-tucks in Joey and leaves them examining their bounty.

INT. MECUM'S LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Outside the tent her dad, RICHARD, sits on a folding chair. He's reading a book by flashlight. We catch a glimpse of luggage stacked. She dashes out.

SHELLY

Do prayers, okay? You'll need some,  
too, Dad. I gave 'em sand.

A roar of outrage bellows from the tent.

INT. TENT (INSIDE MECUM'S LIVING ROOM) - CONTINUOUS

Gleefully, Joey, now astride his brother's sleeping bag, shakes his sand out in a sparkling waterfall over John.

EXT. FREEWAY - NIGHT

Shelly speeds through the dark toward Pearl Harbor. A truck hauling furniture passes her, followed by a speeding taxi. CLOSE on the back of the truck. A CHAIR tumbles out.

The taxi SLAMS into the chair and spins. Shelly BRAKES as the taxi CRASHES into her car. A SHEARING sound. And now a line of cars SMASHES into each other. Her car crumples.

Shelly's gas tank RUPTURES. A thin line of flame LICKS toward the spilled gasoline. She struggles, trapped.

A giant of a man materializes. He CRACKS open the side of the car like he's peeling open a tin of sardines. He stares at her and VANISHES. A truck driver pulls her to safety as her car EXPLODES. A HAZE of fire and smoke and activity.

The SHRIEK of a siren fades under the sound of her BREATHING. It's jagged. The haze becomes mist. In the mist, we see Shelly wing walking. She's joyous, radiant. She inches her way over the wing, her arms wide. She looks other-worldly.

SHELLY (V.O.)

Once, I believed I could fly.

A GRINDING. She looks startled, confused. The wing BUCKS.



Bill is across the aisle. She glances down at Oahu. At the freeway. The cars. Bill catches her eye. What he reads there he doesn't like. He looks away.

WE HEAR the sound of her heartbeat. Soft, insistent. A QUICK SNIP of the accident. She grips the boys hands.

Her anxiety grows into a PANIC ATTACK as we see...

INT. HONOLULU AIRPORT

They make their way through a dizzying blur of people, signs, noises, everything crowding in on her.

We see her world: noisy, scattered, jumbled, CAR RENTAL arrows stabbing a staccato. When they turn toward the signs, she breaks from her family and runs for the exit and buses.

SHELLY

The bus. I'll take the bus.

She dashes into airport traffic, narrowly escaping being hit. A blare of HORNS follows her as she boards a battered local bus. It moves away. Now there's only...

Silence. Bill pulls himself together. He smiles at the boys. But they get it. There's something broken here, in Mom. He guides them toward the car rental.

We hear a BUS MOVING, VOICES, not all in English. Some are Tagalog, some Hawaiian. There are also squawking chickens.

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - DAY

Across the horizon, the battered bus moves against blue sky.

INT. BUS

The 'local' is jammed with locals. Shelly's by a cloudy window and shoves it open. She takes a deep draw of air.

INTERCUT COUNTRY ROAD AND BUS

The road cuts through the cracked red clay fields.

Through the window Shelly SEES... An OLD HAWAIIAN, walking by the road. He tracks her with his eyes. We pass a cane factory, boarded up. A dry field of withered stalks.

The bus moves past rural Hawaiian homes. This is not the Hawaii of tourist brochures.

The homes are humble, the yards swarm with dogs, clothes on lines, old people cooking outside and kids playing in the dirt. A few rusted For Sale signs.

LATER. Shelly gets off near a modest subdivision. The sun angles low. She checks an address and keeps walking.

A car WHIZZES by and she jerks back. Her HEARTBEAT RACES.

EXT. MECUM'S HOUSE - DUSK

Shelly walks up to a house as a moving van is leaving. Bill waves a short thanks. Shelly glances at her new home. Takes in Bill's thinly veiled anger.

BILL

I had 'em just pile stuff in rooms.  
Going for pizza.

A beat. That HEARTBEAT again. It's a small sound, insistent.

SHELLY

Save me a piece.

He regards her, this new 'what is'. He signals to the boys.

INT. MECUM'S KITCHEN - THAT NIGHT

Their first fight back in Hawaii, voices down, chest-high in boxes. Bill stores pizza in the fridge. She finds inside a packing box a faded photo of herself and her brother, Paul, as kids. And a scuffed baseball. The ball holds her focus.

BILL

Is this the way now? You never riding in a car again?

SHELLY

I'll be okay.

BILL

How? I'm serious. It's not like Japan, with subways. What about the beach? Or school supplies and a movie, that tradition. Even groceries. Simple stuff. Life.

SHELLY

It's not a big deal. We'll just--

BILL

No. There is no 'we'll just'.

He yanks the ball out of her hands to get her attention.

BILL (CONT'D)

You, Shelly. You need to fix this.  
I get orders, leave. What then?

The ball's an inconvenience. He jams it in a junk drawer.

EXT. MECUM'S HOUSE, A MONTH LATER - NIGHT

Lights on in the kitchen. The end of the birthday song.

BILL, JOEY AND JOHN OS

'...to you!'

INT. MECUM'S KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

The kitchen is homey now. Shelly blows out candles to family cheers. Next to her is a small wrapped gift.

JOHN

We've been working on it.

JOEY

Dad bought it from a marine.

She opens it. Car keys. HER HEARTBEAT is fast, immediate. They watch her face. She makes a choked sound.

And rushes out. John starts to follow. Bill stops him.

EXT. MECUM'S CARPORT - MIDNIGHT

We see Shelly in a robe, and the humped outline of her new car, caught in the glow of the porch light. It's next to Bill's truck. The keys in her hands RATTLE. Bill finds her there in her robe, tears streaking, UNABLE to FIT THE KEY into the lock.

He scoops her up, murmuring, kissing her, carries her inside.

EXT. MECUM'S CARPORT - DAY

The boys climb chattering into the truck with Bill.

JOEY

We get to see a movie, right?

JOHN

And tacos. I vote tacos.

SHELLY

Make sure you get number 2 pencils.

They ignore her, driving off. She looks very small.

INT. MECUM'S LIVING ROOM

Too quiet. She SEES framed selfies of Bill and the boys at the beach. And the framed photo of her and her brother, Paul. Pillows on the sofa, perfectly arranged. Her EYES SETTLE on car KEYS. A SOFT, INSISTENT heartbeat. She grabs the keys.

EXT. MECUM'S HOUSE

She grimly approaches her car. She's going to MAKE herself be well. She HEARS...A SQUEAL of tires, metal SHEARING, screams, sirens. The POUNDING of her heart speeding. She races for the grass and throws up.

EXT. BIKE PATH - DAY

Shelly rides a bike. A CAR ROARS past. The bike spills.

EXT. RURAL GROCERY STORE - DAY

A humble Hawaiian grocery. Shelly parks her bike.

INT. RURAL GROCERY STORE - DAY

She enters to door chimes, cradling her arm. Wooden shelves, plantation fans. She adjusts her eyes. IRENE shelves cans.

IRENE  
Be right there.

SHELLY  
Irene?

Irene turns. She has a broad face, beautiful from living. Polite blankness turns to joy. She beams.

IRENE  
Danny, come in here. It's Shelly.

DANNY, a wiry nine year-old, rushes from the back. Irene throws her arms wide. Shelly folds into them. Danny joins in.

IRENE (CONT'D)  
Good Lord, what happened to you?

INT. REAR OF RURAL GROCERY STORE - DAY

Irene fixes up Shelly's skinned arm. Danny's wandered off. They're amid a wreck of invoice papers, boxes, unpaid bills.

IRENE

Shelly, you're not the only one with troubles. The cane factory closed after you left. All the Mom-and-Pop's are shutting down. Folks with money live behind big gates while the rest of us--

Front door opens. Silhouette of a big guy. Irene tidies up.

IRENE (CONT'D)

In the back.

GRANDPA JOE is a Hawaiian with a ponytail streaked in grey. He comes to the back, shakes Shelly's hand, which is hard to do as he's holding a chicken. Danny runs in from outside.

GRANDPA JOE

They call me Grandpa Joe.

SHELLY

Shelly Mecum.

GRANDPA JOE

(formerly)

Shelly.

(easily)

Hey, Irene, trade?

Irene's resigned, good-natured. They move toward the yard.

IRENE

Sure. Got a list or just expect to take home everything?

GRANDPA JOE

Only the expensive stuff. Danny, can you help me out while I say goodbye to a chicken?

Danny starts to protest. Irene immediately hushes him, shocked at his bad manners. Grandpa Joe hands Danny a list as he and Irene go outside.

Danny looks like he can't breathe. Then sees Shelly watching.

He takes off down an aisle. Shelly stares after him.

She shops for paper goods. Glances down an aisle, sees him.

ANGLE: CANNED GOODS AISLE

He's standing facing rows of cans. Agonized. Basket empty. She comes down the aisle. Immediately spots the problem.

Gently she takes the paper. Turns it right side up.

DANNY  
I'm stupid.

SHELLY  
I'd say it takes a pretty smart kid  
to hide it for so long.

DANNY  
Don't tell Mom.

A beat. Shelly takes the list. Scans it. A pang.

SHELLY  
School supplies. Number 2 pencils.

EXT. RURAL GROCERY STORE, BACKYARD - DAY

The chicken is meeting its death.

GRANDPA JOE  
You smell good.

Irene rolls her eyes but she's pleased. They pluck feathers.

IRENE  
Where are the girls?

GRANDPA JOE  
Laundry mat. Who's the haole?

IRENE  
(gently, reproving)  
Joe. She's not bad. Husband's  
military. They just transferred  
back from Japan.

GRANDPA JOE  
Mecum. Why's that name familiar?

IRENE  
That bad accident on H-1.

GRANDPA JOE  
Right. That teacher. Didn't think  
she made it.

IRENE  
Not sure she has.

Grandpa Joe positions the bag so it's easier for her reach.

GRANDPA JOE

Oh, yeah. Forgot. Evelyn's leaving.  
Husband's crew found a job in Hilo.

He glances at her, plucking feathers.

GRANDPA JOE (CONT'D)

You're taking it well. I thought  
you wanted her for Danny's teacher.

Irene glances through the door at Shelly with Danny.

INT. RURAL GROCERY STORE - DAY

Irene rings up Shelly's order and Shelly stows it in a bag.

IRENE

There's a school by military  
housing. Close enough to bike. Or  
walk. Be Danny's homeroom teacher.

Shelly darts Danny a look. She could change a life. He feels  
it too. Embarrassed, he turns away.

EXT. OUR LADY OF PERPETUAL HELP SCHOOL - ESTABLISHING - DAY

The aging school shows signs of wear. PEGGY, a janitor,  
readies a welcome sign as Shelly rides up on her bike.

AUNTIE LOO LOO OC

Louise Haleiwa. Auntie Loo Loo.  
Like HAH-noo.

SHELLY OC

Auntie HAH-noo?

AUNTIE LOO LOO OC

Loo loo.

A pause. The joke is wasted.

INT. SCHOOL OFFICE - DAY

AUNTIE LOO LOO finally looks up. Motions to a door.

AUNTIE LOO LOO

He's pretty busy.

SHELLY

(the joke dawning)  
Oh! Auntie Loo Loo!

Auntie Loo Loo shakes her head. Points at a chair.

INT. PRINCIPAL'S OFFICE - DAY

LANNY frowns politely at Shelly. He looks exhausted.

LANNY

A half-year as a teacher's aide.

SHELLY

A teacher's helper. Title 1.

LANNY

Six years ago.

SHELLY

But it was in public school. That's like a decade in dog years.

LANNY

Look, it's great you graduated college. All that and a bag of chips. But with no teaching credentials...

SHELLY

You don't need credentials, not in private schools. You know that. You're out of time. School starts when, in two days? Nobody wants this job. I heard you on the phone. I do. I want this job.

LANNY

Sorry.

SHELLY

I need this job.

He looks at her. Opens his mouth to say no.

EXT. MECUM'S HOUSE - DAY

The boys and Bill shoot hoops. She bikes up.

SHELLY

I got a job.

INT. SHELLY'S CLASSROOM - DAY

The room EXPLODES with CHATTER from kids.

There are only eleven 9 year-old's. The kids wear simple uniforms and first-name tags. The parents wear uniforms too-- the uniforms of the marginalized. Maids, waitresses, busboys, military.

Shelly circulates, meeting and greeting. The room is cozy. A teacher from across the hall, MAGGIE, steps into the room. Maggie has an easy gift of making the world feel welcoming.

MAGGIE

Wow. You didn't get the memo about not bringing things from home you didn't want stolen? Maggie Santos.

Shelly shakes Maggie's outstretched hand.

SHELLY

Shelly Mecum. If they do, I figure they need it more than I do.

MAGGIE

Markers. You shelled out. I brought smoke and fire. So Catholic.

Maggie stares into her room at some sort of eruption.

MAGGIE (CONT'D)

And there they go.

She rushes out. Shelly spots Danny and grins. He grins back.

NICK

I hear school's about to close.

A dad holding a hard hat, NICK, stands with his son, TY.

SHELLY

Not until three this afternoon. I'm Mrs. Mecum. And you are?

NICK

A concerned parent. Nick Aiea. This is Ty.

SHELLY

Hello, Ty.

Ty smirks. The kid with the smug grin, every class has one.

NICK

FYI. Watch Frank. He's trouble.

They glance at Peggy fussing over FRANK. His uniform is threadbare. He looks pinched and anxious.

SHELLY

Trouble. Should be an amazing year.  
So were Einstein, Edison and Jesus.

The PARENTS fade from the shot. Leaving Shelly and milling kids. She lifts a big book, raises her voice. They quiet.

SHELLY (CONT'D)

We start and end the day together.  
And I see you in the middle for  
reading. And every day, first  
thing, they want us to read this.  
Religion. Warms the blood right up.

They look resigned. She drops the book with a BANG. She walks to the prayer corner, motions them to follow.

SHELLY (CONT'D)

Go on. Find a seat on a beanbag.  
Double, triple up. Make room.

Over the jostling she passes out notebooks.

SHELLY (CONT'D)

Put your name in your notebook.

Ty presses his elbow into Frank. Hard. And pretends not to.

SHELLY (CONT'D)

Ty, if you prefer, I can have you  
sit with the girls.

The girls on their beanbag chairs look horrified. Ty eases his elbow. Frank settles in, wary, untrusting.

SHELLY (CONT'D)

This big book. All the saints. But  
what's religion really?

They ponder. VAL timidly raises her hand.

VAL

Talking to God?

SHELLY

Val wins the prize.

She offers markers. Val beams, picks one and passes them on.

SHELLY (CONT'D)

Six hundred and forty-one pages,  
and 2,000 years of church history  
boiled down to that brilliant,  
single sentence. Talking to God.

(MORE)

SHELLY (CONT'D)

Every day, we'll start by writing  
Him a letter.

(glancing at Danny)

And if you can't think of anything  
to write, draw God a picture.

She looks at their small faces. They bend and write.

INT. SCHOOL CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

LANNY and the nine teachers sit around the conference table.  
Outside, nuns supervise play.

LANNY

Everybody, this is Shelly Mecum.  
Reading-lit, 4th grade homeroom.

(murmured greetings)

It's a heck of a way to start, but  
we're in danger of closing before  
the end of the school year.

MATT shifts. Middle-aged, nut brown, he's the PE teacher and  
coach. He's uncomfortable, but it has to be addressed.

MATT

Lanny, I have a family. Should we  
be looking for other jobs?

LANNY

I'd understand. It's dollars and  
cents. Enrollment's down. Ideas?

ALEX, greying, shrugs. LISA, 40'ish, offers the obvious.

LISA

Raising tuition.

MAGGIE

We can't, Lisa. Some parents work  
three jobs and are on food stamps.  
Maybe bingo night? Sell cookies to  
folks passing by on the road?

Maggie reaches for the calendar. Scribbles on it.

LISA

Seriously? Like Squeegee guys in  
New York?

MAGGIE

I'll take this Friday. CAR...WASH.  
(spelling it out)

(MORE)

MAGGIE (CONT'D)

We rotate. Once a week. Write out your name and plan.

She passes around the calendar. Teachers sign it.

LANNY

We need attention in the media to get more kids. Shelly, any ideas?

SHELLY

On how to get attention? I don't. I guess. I'll just...love them. Yes. That's my idea. Love them. The kids.

LANNY

What? No. That's not a good idea. That's a very bad idea, actually. You can't. No. That's just not--  
(pulling himself together)  
Rules. I meant rules. Parents love rules. What are they?

MATT

No talking without being called on.

LISA

No gum. I'll do garage sale.

MAGGIE

Next month? Feet on the floor.

SHELLY

Okay. How about this. 'Our school will be a center of compassion where we endlessly forgive.'  
(defending)  
They're Mother Teresa's rules. I know all the kids here aren't Catholic but they don't need to be. These work for everybody.

LANNY

And here are mine. Law and order. Structure. Workbooks. Got it? Shelly, I'm not trying to embarrass you. But you're new. And you're staying here is provisional.

MAGGIE

Sounds like all our staying here is provisional, Lanny.

Shelly shoots her a grateful look. Friends.

INT. SCHOOL HALLWAY - DAY

Shelly and her class cluster next to an open classroom door, teacher droning. Shelly darts a look, waves her class past.

They SHOOT OUT the exit door to the school field. Shelly sees a glimpse of the Angel, on a swing. She blinks. He's gone.

EXT. SCHOOL FIELD - DAY

They collapse in giddiness and laughter. Shelly passes out markers and each kid's notebook to its owner.

SHELLY

Five minutes. Stay where I can see you. The hunt for God starts now!

The kids scatter, alone, and in clumps.

SHELLY (CONT'D)

Remember...He's here on these grounds...when you find Him, draw His picture or write about Him.

Danny lies on his back. He looks at clouds. One seems to be pointing like a finger...straight up to God. He gapes.

Frank sits near the fence. A sour-faced caretaker, BETTE, feeds rabbits outside a lanai next door. A PEBBLE bangs him.

TY

Rank.

FRANK

Quit it.

TY

Rank. Rank rank rank. That's your name because you stink.

Frank puts down his notebook, gets up, fists balled.

FRANK

Take it back.

TY

Rank.

Frank body slams him. Both boys go down. Shelly plows in.

SHELLY

Both of you. Stop. What happened?

TY  
For no reason he--

SHELLY  
Frank?

Frank shrugs, miserable. A bell RINGS. Kids rush outside.

SHELLY (CONT'D)  
Five minutes is up. Line up.  
Notebooks, markers in the bucket.  
Your lunch ticket? Tell me one  
thing you like to read. And you  
two. Join the line. And behave.

Ty and Frank scowl and join the class lining up. CAT, poised, plump, hands in her notebook.

CAT  
I'm Cat. I like reading record  
labels because I sing and someday  
my name will be on a record.  
(off the boys looks)  
Well, it will. I'll demonstrate.

She demonstrates. A full-out, hilariously inappropriate teen song. Here's a kid with no self-conscious off-switch. Shelly grins. Scattered hoots, claps. Cat curtsies, heads to lunch.

DANNY  
Danny. I like reading STOP signs--

Ty trips Frank. Frank attacks, teeth bared. A SHARP WHISTLE.

TY  
He tried to bite me.

MATT  
Frank, detention.

Matt collars Frank. Shelly hides her annoyance at Matt's intervention. She sees ALICIA inching away. She's a small Hawaiian with huge, expressive eyes. Shelly gently stops her.

SHELLY  
Alicia, one thing you like to read.

Alicia's notebook slides from her hands. She bolts.

DANNY  
No. She can't--you can't.

Danny runs after her. A second bell RINGS. The kids scatter.

SHELLY VO  
Alicia's never spoken?

EXT. SCHOOL COURTYARD, LUNCH DUTY - DAY

Shelly and Maggie on duty. The kids eat at outside tables.

MAGGIE

Not to teachers. And you asked about Frank. It's him and his mom. Cancer got his dad.

(as they watch the kids)

Alicia lost both of hers when she was four. The flu got them, but what really got them all was poverty. Anyway, the only adult Alicia talks to is a grandparent. And Frank's the kid teachers hope every year they don't get.

SHELLY

Ouch.

MAGGIE

Truth. Don't dream too big, Shelly. Why break their hearts over a life they can never hope to have?

MATT

Hey, Shelly. This reading thing.

Shelly looks up from the kids eating. It's Matt.

SHELLY

Matt, right?

MATT

Boys play after-school sports.

SHELLY

...and reading gets in the way...?

MATT

Glad we're on the same page. See, I made a little book-joke.

He moves on. He spots a kid messing up and uses his whistle.

INT. SHELLY'S CLASSROOM - DAY

A group of eighth-graders sits at the desks.

SHELLY

We will write every day. It isn't about cursive and neatness and grammar. It's about having fun.

A glance passes between the kids. Is she for real?

SHELLY (CONT'D)  
And that's not an oxymoron.

LEX turns to his buddy, RON. Ron's all feet and teeth.

LEX  
Ron. Psst. Ron. What did she say?

RON  
Don't know, man, but I'm pretty sure she called you stupid.

SHELLY  
Oxymoron. Two things that seem to rule each other out. Writing...fun.

The 8th graders FADE. END OF DAY. 4th-graders are leaving. They're high-fiving or fist bumping her on their way out. She's keeping up a steady warm series of good-byes.

SHELLY (CONT'D)  
Wait. Where's Alicia?

DANNY  
She went home. You embarrassed her.

Shelly absorbs it.

EXT. SCHOOL - DAY

Shelly, John and Joey bike out. Maggie stops her car.

MAGGIE  
Need a ride home?

	SHELLY	JOEY AND JOHN
No.		Yes.

JOHN  
Mom won't ride in cars. That's the whole problem right there.

SHELLY  
One of them. Another one is that I have a really chatty ten-year old.

JOHN  
You could just give us a ride.

The boys mime pleading. Shelly ignores them.

SHELLY  
Does Alicia live close by?

EXT. SHACK - DAY

Shelly bikes with her boys up to a shack. The face of poverty. The door's ajar. She looks inside. Flies buzz.

Shelly's POV: A simple Hawaiian shrine on a table. Nets.

SHELLY  
Hello?

No answer. She hikes to the back. Grandpa Joe weeds with Alicia and MABEL, age six. They don't see her.

GRANDPA JOE  
It was built by the Menehune.

ALICIA  
The little people?

They're suddenly aware of her. She's surprised to see him.

SHELLY  
Grandpa Joe. Alicia. I'm sorry I embarrassed you. Please give me a second chance to be a good teacher.

The silence grows. Shelly nods and backs away.

EXT. MECUM'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Bill and Shelly hang wash in the backyard. Moon rises.

SHELLY  
I don't know if I can do it, Bill. I've got a biter, a boy who can't read and a girl who won't speak. And those are just the ones I've met. Every hour I get a new class.

BILL  
I don't know why you're so bent on doing it anyway. It's expensive.

SHELLY  
Teachers get a break on tuition.

BILL  
Public school's free.

SHELLY

I'm getting out of the house.

BILL

I want you to drive. I've been trying to tell you for weeks. I got orders. I ship out tomorrow.

He flings down a towel and goes inside. The Angel is sitting on the steps. He has the scuffed ball in his hands, playing catch gently with himself. Shelly sits next to him.

ANGEL

You'll figure it out.

SHELLY

You have a lot of faith.

He cuts her a dry look. She hears herself; half-grins.

SHELLY (CONT'D)

Are you the only one?

ANGEL

Like me? Oh, Shelly. I'm just the one you see.

He tosses her the ball and vanishes in a sparkle of light.

INT. SCHOOL, BOY'S BATHROOM - NIGHT

Frank and Peggy are dressed in pajamas and robes. Peggy towel dries his hair as the water drains from one of the sinks.

PEGGY

God's got us, Frank. And I do, too.

She sees his despair, and wraps him in a fierce hug.

INT. SCHOOL HALLWAY - NIGHT

They move down the silent corridor holding blankets, pillows.

PEGGY

Want to sleep in a castle tonight?

He stops at a door with a castle over it. He looks small.

INT. CASTLE CLASSROOM - NIGHT

He builds his bed under a cardboard castle.

INT. ALICIA AND MABEL'S ROOM - NIGHT

Grandpa Joe is singing an Hawaiian lullaby strumming a uke. The girls are drowsy in their beds. He finishes the song.

MABEL  
'Night, Grandpa.

GRANDPA JOE  
Night, sweethearts.

He bends to kiss their foreheads and turns out the light.

ALICIA  
Do I have to go back to school?

We see her eyes wide and glowing in the moonlight.

GRANDPA JOE  
Alicia, your teacher was brave to apologize. It would be brave of you to go back.

Alicia ponders that as he gently closes the door.

INT. HOSPITAL WAITING ROOM - NIGHT

LIZZIE waits with her dad, HENRY, and older brother, Ron. A room crammed with suffering. The ER DOCTOR finds Henry.

ER DOCTOR  
Your wife's stable.

Relief and exhaustion are on their faces.

EXT. MECUM'S HOUSE - DAY

Bill reaches for Shelly one last time. She smiles bravely. A flurry of good-byes as a military truck takes Bill away.

EXT. SCHOOL - DAY

Steaming, hot day. Shelly and boys bike in. Mabel wilts on the steps, alone. Shelly and the boys lock up their bikes.

No Alicia. Shelly absorbs it like a blow but she tries.

SHELLY  
She's not here. That's okay. You're here. What's your name? Where's your Grandpa?

MABEL

Mabel. He buses tables in Waikiki today.

Mabel glances at a bus stop where Grandpa Joe boards a bus.

SHELLY

Let's get you inside.

MABEL

I have to wait. It's the rule.

SHELLY

Not anymore.

Alicia comes around the corner. Shelly can't hide her relief. Alicia darts close to Mabel, averts her eyes.

SHELLY (CONT'D)

Alicia. Okay. Everybody in.

She unlocks the door and guides them in.

ANGLE: HALLWAY. She's startled. Peggy's already there. And behind her, Frank. The women meet eyes. Peggy fades back.

INT. SHELLY'S CLASSROOM - DAY

A mobile of planets swirls gently above Shelly's desk.

SHELLY

'Literacy'. Any ideas?

Alicia whispers to Danny. He raises his hand. Shelly nods.

DANNY

Alicia says it means reading.

SHELLY

Alicia's right. It also means this.

She turns off the light. In blacklight, kids' shirts glow.

SHELLY (CONT'D)

Each one of you glows, but it takes special eyes to see. Never forget, children, in every blade of grass, in every particle of dust, in every thunder-bolt of lightning and in each molecule of you, there are infinite worlds. And when you turn the pages of a book, you find them.

The planets swirl, luminous. The kids stare, mesmerized.

LATER. Kids line up for Shelly's good-byes. Lizzie's troubled.

LIZZIE

Do we have to buy these books?

Shelly hasn't thought this through, the poverty. She shakes her head 'no'. Lizzie's shoulders relax.

EXT. ROAD NEAR SCHOOL - DAY

School carwash. She smiles with confidence she doesn't feel at her boys working as she takes a path close to the street.

Her HEARTBEAT SPEEDS a warning. She picks up her pace.

EXT. SMALL RURAL LIBRARY - DAY

The library shimmers like a mirage. Traffic WHIZZES by as her PANIC RISES. SFX, F/B of crash. She races on, collapses on the steps. The librarian, EKO Dashai, comes out, worried. She pulls herself together and pleads a case to Eko. A pause. He nods. She nods, sags in relief.

EXT. SCHOOL - NIGHT TO DAY

A night sky turns to dawn. Then to bright sun. Shelly and her boys bike up. Kids of all grades materialize. Mutely pleading. A beat. Inside they go, rule or no rule.

INT. SHELLY'S CLASSROOM - DAY

She writes on the board. Kids sprawl on chairs, beanbags.

SHELLY

Any allergies? No? Congrats.  
You're charter members of the  
Before School Club. Anybody here  
before school, is an automatic  
member. Today is September 13th,  
birthday of Milton Hershey, the man  
who made these.

She opens a bag of Kisses and offers candy, walking around.

SHELLY (CONT'D)

Three apiece. Mr. Hershey only  
finished 4th grade.

(MORE)

SHELLY (CONT'D)

The grade some of you are in right now. He was poor. That didn't stop him. He never gave up his dream.

The FACES fade from the room. Shelly grades papers. Outside we HEAR the sounds of gym class. Matt bursts in with Frank.

MATT

Rules. No gym shorts, no gym.

He leaves. Frank slinks into a chair. Shelly drops art supplies on his desk. He looks up, stony-faced, angry.

SHELLY

My rules? Sit. Draw. Surprise me. Don't move. I'll be back.

INT. TEACHERS LOUNGE - DAY

Shelly sorts through a LOST and FOUND box. Lisa and BARB wrap cookies. Shelly shows them a tag on a pair of gym shorts.

SHELLY

Anybody know a James...

BARB

Ott. Mine. Left when they heard the school's hemorrhaging students.

Shelly passes them a gym shirt tag to decipher.

LISA

Sam Laho. Same deal. Mine. Gone. The stampede for the door begins.

Shelly inks out the names and inks in Frank's.

SHELLY

Re-gifting.

EXT. SCHOOL COURTYARD - DAY

Shelly carries the gym clothes. Lanny falls into step.

LANNY

Mrs. Mecum. Perhaps I wasn't clear. School starts at a specific time. That's why you have keys.

SHELLY

They're kids. I'm bringing them in early. That's why we have hearts.

She enters her classroom wing and leaves him behind.

INT. SCHOOL HALLWAY - DAY

Auntie Loo Loo, grumpy, joins her in the hall with a box.

AUNTIE LOO LOO

This has been sitting on my front  
counter in the office for two days.  
I'm going to start charging rent.

INT. SHELLY'S CLASSROOM - DAY

Shelly puts the clothes on Frank's desk and the box on hers.

SHELLY

Found your gym clothes. In Lost and Found. See? Name's right here.

She glances at his drawing. A family of three and a house.

SHELLY (CONT'D)

Frank. It's beautiful.

He blinks a tear. Scowls. A bell RINGS. He crumples the drawing and tosses it as kids spill in. He shoves the gym clothes into his desk. Shelly regroups, pulls books from the box, all the same copy. She passes them out.

SHELLY (CONT'D)

These are library books. And for the next three weeks they're yours.

The kids look stunned. Cat pats her book reverently.

EXT. SCHOOL COURTYARD - DAY

Kids play. All except Alicia, who is reading aloud to Danny.

SHELLY

Hey, Alicia. Mind if I take over?

Girls wait with a ball. Danny shrugs. She runs to join them.

SHELLY (CONT'D)

Danny, she reads for you, you talk for her. Let's get you reading. It means for now beginner books. Deal?

She extends her hand. A beat. He formally shakes it.

INT. SHELLY'S CLASSROOM - THANKSGIVING - DAY

A skit. Danny's dressed as a pilgrim. He reads one sentence.

SOUNDS OF SCHOOL CHOIR SINGING

INT. SCHOOL CHAPEL - NIGHT

Christmas. Full chapel. The choir ends a song Shelly directs. Danny haltingly reads a verse. He glows with pride. Shelly beams back. Irene nods on a pew, close to tears.

EXT. BUSINESS STREET, EWA BEACH - NIGHT

Shelly, Joey and John drag home a Christmas tree attached to a toy wagon. A car slows, GRANDMA is in the passenger seat.

GRANDMA

Want a lift?

They stop in their tracks. And rush the car.

JOEY

Grandpa!

JOHN

Grandma!

INT. SCIENCE CLASSROOM - NIGHT

Peggy is working, mopping. Frank is on a blanket, watching the fish. The tank is lit with Christmas lights.

PEGGY

We going to Lizzie's Christmas day.  
Mrs. Mecum left this. Open early.

She hands him a gift. She keeps mopping. He unwraps it. It's the picture he'd crumpled up of his family. It's framed.

SHELLY'S VOICE

Imagine. Charles Lindbergh flies  
alone across the vast Atlantic.

INT. SHELLY'S CLASSROOM - DAY

Written on the board: 'Before School Club.' Feb. 4, 1902  
Birthday of Charles Lindbergh! A blizzard of paper planes.

SHELLY

Nobody thinks he can. What will you  
try that's never been done?

Lanny comes in. Shelly snatches planes from the air. Kids dash for seats. He snags a plane and opens it up. Busted. Planes created out of school materials. He's apoplectic. He stuffs the plane in the pocket of his sweater.

LANNY

The workbook? Mrs. Mecum. My office. Ten minutes.

INT. SCHOOL CHAPEL - DAY

Shelly sits in a pew. The Angel sits next to her. He wears a baseball cap, a jersey, and eats sunflower seeds.

SHELLY

He's going to tell us the school's closing, I know it.

(a beat)

Peggy's always here. I think this is where she and Frank live. Alicia still doesn't talk. And Danny's just now reading. What's going to happen to them if the school closes?

The Angel offers a sunflower seed. Shelly takes it.

ANGEL

Shelly, most of the world's work is done by people who are tired, sick or afraid. Usually all three.

You're enough. You think you're not, but you are.

(wiping off his hands)

Gotta scoot. The Tar Heels need me.

He stands. Wings shoot out. He vaporizes, leaving behind a sparkle of seeds falling. A POUNDING comes from the roof.

LANNY V.O.

The bank's not willing to float us another loan. School closes in--

INT. SCHOOL CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

The teachers sit with Lanny. Pounding on the roof escalates.

LANNY

--it closes its doors in June.

SHELLY

Try another bank.

Lanny opens the window and yells up to Peggy.

LANNY  
Peggy, could you do that later?

He re-shuts the window. The pounding stops.

LANNY (CONT'D)  
There're no more banks. We're done.

SHELLY'S VOICE  
Everything has a cycle...Stars...

INT. SHELLY'S CLASSROOM - DAY

The kids look worried, anxious. They've already heard.

SHELLY  
People. Schools. But it's not over  
yet. And until it is...homework.

Amid groans, she holds up a copy of Under The Blood-Red Sun.

SHELLY (CONT'D)  
Today we finish book reports.  
Tomorrow books go back to the  
library. And we pick a new one.

She talks over the kids pulling out their library book.

SHELLY (CONT'D)  
Two boys see the attack on Pearl  
Harbor. You all know where that is.

She finds it on a wall map. The kids exchange glances. They don't meet her eyes. Shelly stops. Sees their shame. The work is shelved. Her voice is even, but inside she's dying.

SHELLY (CONT'D)  
Who has seen Pearl Harbor?

The kids won't look at her. They keep their hands down.

SHELLY (CONT'D)  
The Punchbowl? How about Nuana  
Pali? North Shore? Diamond Head?

Silence every time. She absorbs it. The reality of poverty.

SHELLY (CONT'D)  
Traveling is expensive.

She goes to the wall map and finds Ewa Beach.

SHELLY (CONT'D)  
 Here's us. Ewa Beach. A little dot  
 right here. Take a look.

They get up, crowd close.

SHELLY (CONT'D)  
 Not much to look at in the scheme  
 of things. But when you put your  
 finger right on it...go on...

One by one they do. Frank adds his finger last, gently.

SHELLY (CONT'D)  
 ...It's the center of the universe.

MECUM'S BACKYARD - NIGHT

WATER GUSHES into a trash can. Shelly is rinsing it out. The  
 Angel helps, improbably wearing rubber boots, an apron.

SHELLY  
 They haven't been anywhere.

John pokes his head out the screen door and looks at her.  
 POV JOHN: She's alone, by herself, muttering.

JOHN  
 You're talking to yourself again.

SHELLY  
 You're welcome to help, John.

JOHN  
 Ya' know, I'm good. Say whatever.

He smiles brightly, goes inside and shuts the door.

INT. MECUM'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Shelly's in her nightgown. She's praying.

SHELLY  
 God, only You can save our school.  
 But do You want it saved? If You  
 do, tell me what to do.

She waits a moment. Looks up. Nothing. She prays harder.  
 Crosses herself. A beat. She cracks an eye open. Nada. She  
 prays harder. Crosses herself emphatically. This should do  
 it. She looks up expectantly. A vast, cosmic...silence.

SHELLY (CONT'D)

Really?

Middle of the night. Shelly opens her eyes. Strung over her room like wet laundry...only higher than humanly possible... are glowing photos. The Angel hangs these with clothespins. He wears a kid's glitter halo, askew. The photos morph into 3-D animated cubes, shimmering, still hanging from the line.

ANGEL

It's a book.

Shelly sits up suddenly. Bedroom's quiet. Everything's gone.

EXT. SCHOOL PLAYGROUND - DAY

Lanny walks with Shelly through the crowded playground.

LANNY

A book?

SHELLY

Lanny--Mr. Nicio. Every teacher wants kids to fall in love with reading and writing. What better way than to have them write a book? We'll write a book in a single day--for literacy.

LANNY

You mean publish?

SHELLY

Exactly. The publishing house will be our educational partner.

LANNY

Wait. A real publishing house.

SHELLY

They'll teach the life cycle of a book. From the written word through the galleys--that's a paste-up--to when we see it on the shelf.

LANNY

We're a little school in a part of Oahu no tourists ever visit. What could our kids say that would be of any interest to anybody?

Before she can answer, a MOM hurries up with a child. She's holding papers.

MOM

Mr. Nicio. We're transferring schools. Found Tess a solid...They have a good program. Good set of rules.

The mom hands him papers and leaves with her daughter.

LANNY

A grant, Shelly. Get a grant.

He strides off, trying to compose himself.

INT. SHELLY'S CLASSROOM - DAY

On the board: March 6, 1475, Michelangelo's Birthday. It's the Before School club. Kids of all grades (K-8), lie on the floor, drawing on paper taped under seats. Shelly arranges books into a small library.

SHELLY

Imagine how tired his arms got,  
painting that ceiling all day long.

She glances at the spine of a book she's putting away. And out the window. As the local bus pulls away.

We see it on her face. She's thought of something.

EXT. MUTUAL PUBLISHING - AFTER SCHOOL, LATER THAT DAY

Shelly gets off a bus and goes inside past the Old Hawaiian.

STEVE O.S.

So you found out we're local and then what? Say again so I get it.

INT. MUTUAL PUBLISHING PRESSROOM - DAY

Shelly walks amid CLANGING presses with STEVE and TARA.

SHELLY

We're this little school, creating a book. A book you'll sell.

STEVE

Watch the ink level, Ike.  
Really? What kind of a book is that? That I just have to sell?

The pressman bends to his work. Shelly yells over the din.

SHELLY

The coolest one ever. They're going to find God. I mean, all over the island--and it's going to save the school--can we go someplace quiet?

INT. MUTUAL PUBLISHING HALLWAY - DAY

They walk toward a conference room.

SHELLY

They'll take His picture and then we'll write about it.

STEVE

Wait, what? God's picture?

SHELLY

I know. Isn't that cool?

INT. MUTUAL PUBLISHING CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

Steve gestures and Shelly sits, along with Tara.

TARA

Sorry, but if the school dies, who cares? There's plenty of public--

SHELLY

It's not just a school. If it dies, the community dies. This school is--

STEVE

You're sure it has to be about God. Why not Aloha? 'Finding Aloha in the Gathering Place.'

TARA

I like it.

SHELLY

No. Religions divide us. God brings us together. It's God.

STEVE

Hunh. I'm just not...

SHELLY

You know what belief is, Mr. Lee, when you come right down to it? Most of it is just showing up.

(MORE)

SHELLY (CONT'D)  
(standing up)  
And it's God. GodGodGodGodGod.

She starts out angrily.

STEVE  
A thousand copies. In stores at  
Christmas. That means I need it in  
6 1/2 weeks. Now go. Find God.

Tara and Steve half-laugh it's so crazy. Shelly shoots a prayer of thanks up.

EXT. RURAL GROCERY STORE - NIGHT

A 'Closed' sign is on the door but the lights are on. We hear GALES of LAUGHTER and voices coming from inside.

INT. RURAL GROCERY STORE - NIGHT

Impromptu party. Shelly, Irene, Danny, Joey, John eat cake, celebrating. Irene raises a glass of punch. They toast.

EXT. SCHOOL PLAYGROUND - DAY

Lanny spears trash. Shelly walks with him. Boys play a pick-up game of soccer. Across the fence, Bette tends rabbits.

LANNY  
I should fire you on the spot. You  
went behind my back. Why do you  
think we have rules, Shelly? Rules  
keep everybody going. Safe.

SHELLY  
They're publishing a 1,000 copies,  
Lanny. That's going to put the  
school on the map. Come on.

Silence. Must mean 'yes'. She lunges at him to hug him.

LANNY	SHELLY (CONT'D)
It can't affect teaching. If	I'll call everybody together.
you slack off even for an	We'll have tiki torches.
instant. Don't hug me don't	It'll be fun. Thank you
thank me.	thank you.

The ball ricochets and bangs off Frank's head, over the fence. And FELLs a bunny. It's still. Too still. Frank rushes to the fence. He wills it to move. It's dead. Bette stares. Shrieks. Frank bolts. Shelly follows him.

SHELLY (CONT'D)

Frank.

INT. SCHOOL HALLWAY - DAY

Between bathrooms at the end of the hall is a now unlocked supply cabinet. The crying is coming from INSIDE. Shelly pulls it open. All Frank and Peggy's things are there: meager clothes on hangers, quilts, pillows, towels. Frank is curled up on the quilt, crying. His life is in that cabinet. And hanging from a hook is the framed drawing of his old home. She kneels down, puts her arms around him, comforts him.

SHELLY

It was an accident, Frank.

EXT. SCHOOL PLAYGROUND - DAY

Shelly digs a hole with a shovel. Val holds a painted box. The boys shoot Frank looks. Nearby, Peggy repairs a swingset.

SHELLY

Any last words about Bunny?

The group gathers, Frank still an outcast. Shelly begins.

SHELLY (CONT'D)

Okay. I know he's in Heaven.

The girls look close to tears. A few sniffles.

CAT

How do we know it's a he?

SHELLY

We don't, Cat. That's a figure of speech. Anybody else?

FRANK

It was quick. There's that.

TY

It shouldn't have happened.

Muttered agreement. Frank blinks back angry tears.

FRANK

Are you saying I did it on purpose?

TY

You can't do anything right. Hey.

SHELLY

TY (CONT'D)  
You're a loser. Always will be.

A hard wave of judgement--hoots, catcalls--breaks over him. It's split second, too fast for Shelly to stop. He runs.

SHELLY  
How does it feel, hurting somebody's heart?

TY  
He smells bad. He killed a bunny.

SHELLY  
(deadly cold)  
I don't care if you never learn the names of the States or how to do fractions. You will be kind to each other. Is that clear?

They want to be anyplace but there. She freezes them with a look. Goes to Frank and Peggy. He's weeping.

SHELLY (CONT'D)  
You okay?

PEGGY  
What do you think?

SHELLY  
Stay. I'll be back.

She takes Peggy's toolkit and a wood scrap, goes to the kids.

SHELLY (CONT'D)  
Ty, take one of these nails and pound it into this piece of wood. Carefully. Watch my fingers.

They're subdued. Ty pounds the nail into the wood.

SHELLY (CONT'D)  
This is what happens...any of you...when you say something mean to Frank. You're pounding a nail.

TY  
I'm sorry.

SHELLY  
Sorry? Fine. Pull it out.

Ty awkwardly pulls it out. Shelly holds up the wood. Shows the gouge where the nail had been.

SHELLY (CONT'D)

Here's what's left when you say you're sorry. You hurt someone, you apologize, you leave this. Only it's inside. Nobody gangs up on anybody, not here. Not ever.

Shelly picks up the toolkit, walks back to Frank and Peggy.

SHELLY (CONT'D)

I'm not saying you're perfect. But your light's so bright I need sunglasses. Frank, you didn't do that on purpose. An accident's just a way of learning.

(a beat)

Lizzie's mom has cancer. You know how that feels. Maybe you can help.

FRANK

Nobody helped me when Dad got sick.

SHELLY

Then maybe you can do something for her that everybody in the world should have been doing for you.

Ty comes up, trailed by the others.

TY

Sorry, man. How we--. I.

He looks miserable. A chorus of sorry's. Frank nods.

TY (CONT'D)

Come on. The bunny's getting cold.

Boy humor. They return as a pack to the grave site.

INT. AEIA KITCHEN - NIGHT

Nick, Ty and Ty's mother, JANE, sit eating. It's silent.

NICK

So. Staying away from Frank?

TY

He's not bad.

Jane shoots Ty a warning look. Nick puts down his fork.

NICK

I thought I told you--

TY (CONT'D)

Mrs. Mecum says 'get along.'

Nick gets up, talking casually.

NICK (CONT'D)  
I did a house over in military housing. I know exactly where she lives. This won't take long.

TY  
Dad. I like him.

NICK  
That's just it, son. You can't.

Nick grabs his jacket and walks out.

INT. MECUM'S KITCHEN/INTERCUT WITH OUTSIDE THE DOOR - NIGHT  
Joey and John do homework as Shelly loudly types and speaks.

SHELLY  
The. Only. The only school to go on a hunt to. A search to find...

Joey looks up, long-suffering, and makes a strangled sound.

SHELLY (CONT'D)  
Sorry. Inside voice.

She clacks away. A knock. Nick's outside the screen door.

SHELLY (CONT'D)  
Mr. Aeia. It's late.

NICK  
I'll make it short.

SHELLY  
Boys. Time for bed.

They gather up their books and leave. She opens the screen.

NICK  
I'll make it short. Mrs. Mecum. Keep Frank away from my son.

They study each other. He's lethally calm.

SHELLY  
Mr. Aeia. Just wondering. How can we get along with people we've never met if we do such a bad job with people we know

NICK

I've heard you're a trouble-maker.  
I'd advise you to watch your back.

SHELLY

(a beat)

It's late. School night.

She gently closes the door. Locks it. She sags, blinks back tears.

INT. MECUM'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Shelly sits holding a framed wedding photo, face soft.

SHELLY

Happy anniversary, honey.

JOHN (OS)

Mom?

The boys find her. They're in pj's. She pulls them close.

SFX: THE MOODY SOUND OF A CONCH....

EXT. SCHOOL COURTYARD - NIGHT

Lit by tiki torches, Grandpa Joe blows the conch. The school community gathers, Shelly notes. All except Ty and his folks.

SHELLY

You've all heard the news. The school closes at the end of the year unless there's a miracle. Six weeks from today, on this very spot, there will be.

They cut glances her way, not sure what to make of her.

SHELLY (CONT'D)

We're going to write a book. In a single day. All of us. Traveling out across the island of Oahu.

Excited murmurs followed by disbelief, doubt.

IRENE

Gas is expensive.

GRANDPA JOE

I can't afford that, Shelly. None of us can.

SHELLY

That's where the miracle comes in.  
It's all going to be donated.

Lanny stares as she riffs. She's clearly lost her mind.

SHELLY (CONT'D)

We'll ride in buses. Big, air-  
conditioned buses, the kind the  
tourists ride...

LANNY

Okay, people. Mrs. Mecum and I need  
to chat.

He starts across the courtyard, working his way toward her.

SHELLY

We'll each have a notebook and a  
camera and a single task: To find  
God. And when we find Him, we'll  
take His picture and write about  
it. We'll go by helicopter...  
sailboat...submarine...

The murmur of voices drowns her out.

GRANDPA JOE

I've lived here almost seventy  
years, and the only thing I've ever  
gotten for free was head lice.

Shelly ignores Lanny, who's now almost within reach.

SHELLY

And the best part, it's going to be  
a real book. Published by Mutual  
Publishing. They're going to  
publish a thousand copies. At  
Christmas, this next Christmas,  
when you walk into town, our book  
will be there. In the bookstore  
window. And the story of this  
school that went to find God will  
save the school.

PEGGY

Who would want to donate to us?

Muttered agreement mixed with the pain of poverty.

LANNY

None of this was approved, this  
needs to be discussed. Privately.

SARAH

Come on, I've heard enough.

SARAH, in a maid's uniform, pushes along Cat and her brother. She's certain Shelly is making fun of them.

SHELLY

I know some of you work three jobs  
so you can send your kids here.

(as Sarah hesitates)

I know some of you, like Grandpa  
Joe, drop them early in the morning  
because you have a bus to catch, or  
like Peggy, you clean the floors,  
fix the roof. The question is why.

(a beat)

This school is special. We teach  
kindness, compassion, connection.

AUNTIE LOO LOO

Is this the part where we join  
hands and sing Kumbaya?

GRANDPA JOE

Say we get everything donated, and  
no offense, Shelly, but a  
submarine? A helicopter? Come on.  
But even if we could, why would  
anybody want to hear what we have  
to say? We're ordinary people.

The grandmothers nod, humbled. He speaks truth. Shelly studies their faces. She needs to get this right.

SHELLY

Ordinary people survived the  
bombing of Pearl Harbor and won the  
war.

They look at her. A sea of worn faces.

SHELLY (CONT'D)

Ordinary people lived through  
Hurricane Iwa and Estelle and Iniki  
and rebuilt the islands when nobody  
thought it was possible. . .

They shift. Glance sideways at scarred faces, scuffed hands.

SHELLY (CONT'D)

And ordinary people are going to  
save this school. Are you with me?

She's got the energy of a revival tent barker. They answer.

CROWD  
Yes.

SHELLY  
Louder.

CROWD  
(they're with her)  
Yes.

SHELLY  
Like you believe!

CROWD  
(a roar)  
Yes.

Leis wave like colored streamers. Shelly opens her arms wide in a sea of colors, and falls back into the crowd. Ecstasy.

The courtyard is EMPTY except for Shelly. She's spread out amid flowers, arms wide. She SNAPS open her EYES.

SHELLY  
What have I done?

A BROOM sweeps. It's the Angel, wearing janitor clothes.

ANGEL  
Oh, I don't know, the right thing?  
Given them hope? Squirted Wesson  
Oil in the eye of God?

SHELLY  
What if I fail?

ANGEL  
What if you don't?

He keeps sweeping the flowers as he moves out of frame.

INT. PRINCIPAL'S OFFICE - DAY

Lanny screws in a ceiling bulb as Shelly holds a ladder.

LANNY  
No, I haven't calmed down.

He glares at her. And starts down.

LANNY (CONT'D)  
Do you know how often they've been  
kicked in the teeth?

SHELLY  
I'll plan it out.

LANNY  
When? Middle of the night?

The BELL RINGS and the hallway fills. She becomes a teacher.

INT. SCIENCE CLASSROOM - LATER

Maggie feeds fish in a tank, a rote task.

MAGGIE  
You honestly think you can do it?

SHELLY  
No. But God does. Although God  
alone knows why.

MAGGIE  
At least He talks to you.

SHELLY  
He talks to everybody, Maggie.

MAGGIE  
Au contraire, my little believer  
friend. The closest God ever came  
to talking to me was during my  
divorce when it occurred to me that  
maybe I needed my own attorney.

Maggie puts the fish food away.

MAGGIE (CONT'D)  
Here's what I don't get. You don't  
drive. You don't even walk your 4th  
graders to the library, because  
it's next to the road. And yet  
you're planning to take the entire  
school all over the island. What's  
up with that?

SHELLY  
I told you God talks to me. I never  
said He made any sense.

The door bursts open with chattering 6th graders.

EXT. ROAD NEAR SCHOOL - DAY

Shelly walks her 4th graders next to whizzing traffic.

The library is up ahead. She's upbeat and terrified. She HEARS her WARNING HEARTBEAT...and pushes it down.

SHELLY  
Two straight lines. Hold hands.  
Just like Madeline.

EXT. LIBRARY - ESTABLISHING SHOT - DAY

SHELLY'S VOICE  
Mr. Daishi Thank you.

INT. SMALL RURAL LIBRARY - DAY

The kids chorus THANK YOU'S and THANKS. He smiles, pleased.

SHELLY  
We've come check out travel books  
about Oahu. And to say someday our  
book will be here on these shelves.

TIME CUT

They're in line. Frank reads quietly. Shelly notes his book. Valley of the Temples, with architectural drawings of the buildings. He feels her eyes and glances up.

A RINGING BELL takes us to...

INT. SHELLY'S CLASSROOM - DAY

A class of 8th graders is leaving, gathering up books. She stops Ron, Lizzie's older brother. She raises her voice.

SHELLY  
Final book reports on my desk,  
tomorrow.  
(to Ron)  
Ron. How's your mom?

Ron shrugs in pain. She shows him his book report. Marked up.

SHELLY (CONT'D)  
Just curious. Which part of this  
did you actually write?

The look on his face says it all. Busted. He points.

RON  
Coach said I could copy the back.

SHELLY

Coach Iso was wrong. Ron, when we go to find God do you think you can just copy somebody else?

That's exactly what he thinks.

SHELLY (CONT'D)

Your words. Your book report. On my desk. Tomorrow.

EXT. SCHOOL PLAYGROUND - DAY

Matt runs drills with his team. Shelly stops the ball with her foot and picks it up.

MATT

What the heck. I'm running drills.

SHELLY

Don't you ever tell one of my kids they can skimp on an assignment.

She tosses the ball to a kid and he stops it with his foot.

SHELLY (CONT'D)

You're off-side.

She strides off.

INT. PRINCIPAL'S OFFICE - DAY

Matt and Shelly sit side by side, chastened, like kids.

LANNY

Really? In front of kids?

SHELLY

But he--

MATT

But she--

MATT (CONT'D)

I'll make it easy, Lanny.

He stands up.

MATT (CONT'D)

I quit. There, Shelly. Happy?

EXT. ROAD NEAR SCHOOL - DAY

Shelly walks home with her two angry boys.

JOHN

Thanks, Mom. I was going to try out  
for the team next year.

JOEY

There is no 'next year.'

The boys walk on. She pulls them struggling to her in a hug.

INT. MECUM'S KITCHEN - NIGHT

It's late. Shelly's in her robe, a scratched-up yellow pad nearby. She's studying the calendar. The circled date. The pristine Hawaiian beach pictured. She's drained. Scared.

INT. SHELLY'S CLASSROOM - DAY

She passes out paper to her 4th graders.

SHELLY

Today's the day we touch a heart.

EXT. LOLANI'S HOUSE - DAY

Auntie Loo Loo weeds the schoolyard and sees the class walking to Lolani's lanai. They hold letters. Shelly knocks. Bette flings open the door. She's abrupt.

BETTE

What?

SHELLY

First, an apology for the Bunny. We didn't mean to kill it. And, we're going to find God. We need prayers.

BETTE

Lolani is seeing no-one.

Bette slams the door. The kids stand, gape-jawed. Shelly guides them to put the letters in a stack at the door.

EXT. SCHOOL - DAY

Kids trudge toward the school door. They look shell-shocked by Bette's anger. Auntie Loo Loo catches up.

AUNTIE LOO LOO

A hundred and sixty-eight kids, K through 8, plus teachers, staff.

Shelly motions to the kids to wait.

AUNTIE LOO LOO (CONT'D)  
Add in parents, sibs, grandparents.

SHELLY  
What are you talking about?

AUNTIE LOO LOO  
You need buses for three hundred.  
(a beat)  
I saw what you did. Bette lives  
there. But except for me, Lolani  
hasn't had a visitor in years.

SHELLY  
Thank you. I told the kids today's  
the day we touch a heart. I didn't  
know it would be yours.

AUNTIE LOO LOO  
(pleased by grumpy)  
You still have to get buses.

EXT. SCHOOL - AFTER SCHOOL

Kids burst out the door. Her boys leave with Irene and Danny.  
Shelly holds a stack of papers. She climbs on a local bus.

INT. BUS - CITY

The bus pulls into Honolulu. Shelly is busy grading papers on  
a crowded seat. She glances up, does a double-take, pulls the  
cord, scoops up everything and hurries to the opening door.

INT. SMALL TOUR BUS COMPANY

A one-desk shop. Shelly makes a case pointing at posters. The  
owner chimes in. Pleased, she turns. Realizes he's not  
talking to her. He's taking a phone call.

EXT. TOUR BUS COMPANY #2 - DAY

Low-end buses. Shelly talks to a man's feet. He wheels out  
from under a bus. Genially waves her off with a wrench.

EXT. NEW DOWNTOWN STREET - LATE DAY

Shelly checks an address. Storefront decorated with posters.

INT. TOUR BUS COMPANY -

BRENDA gathers up her purse. Shelly enters. The agency is upscale with huge map with pins. Brenda smiles, detached.

BRENDA  
Sorry. Closed. Come back at ten.

SHELLY  
I need buses for three hundred.

Brenda stops cold. There's something slightly theatrical about her. She smiles brilliantly.

BRENDA  
A large trip, lovely.

Brenda gestures. Shelly sits. Brenda uses the calculator.

BRENDA (CONT'D)  
Trips with groups are so--Fourteen.

SHELLY  
They're all air-conditioned, right?

BRENDA  
You could freeze popsicles in them.  
And you need them by...?

Brenda's turning to her computer, her fingers clacking.

SHELLY  
In five weeks and a half weeks.

BRENDA  
That will put it at...

SHELLY  
A week after Easter break. It's an all day trip. We start in Ewa Beach, and go all over the island, each bus to a different place.

BRENDA  
(as she calculates)  
Ewa Beach is a distance away and of course there's the cost of gas. So high right now, with tax, that's nine thousand dollars. We ask for half now on a major card, the rest payable the morning of the event. Which card would you like to use?

She smiles brightly. Shelly has trouble breathing.

SHELLY  
 Nine. Nine thousand dollars?

BRENDA  
 They're very good buses. Problem?

Several, but Shelly focuses on the most immediate.

SHELLY  
 I was hoping you could donate them.

BRENDA  
 Donate. Oh. I get it. Candid  
 Camera? My God, you're serious.

EXT. BUSINESS HIGHRISE - DAY

Shelly faces a gleaming high rise.

SAM'S VOICE  
 I'm sorry.

INT. SAM'S OFFICE - DAY

Shelly sits in SAM's office. Sam's sleekly dressed.

SAM  
 Our requests are filled years in  
 advance.

SHELLY  
 At least give me the paperwork.

SAM  
 Sure.

She pulls from a filing cabinet a thick wad of paper and hands it over. It's the size of a phone book. A fat one. Shelly leaves. Dashes back and scoops up her school papers.

INT. RURAL GROCERY STORE - NIGHT

Irene rings up Shelly's groceries. The boys yawn, ready for home.

SHELLY  
 I guess I thought I'd walk in  
 someplace and come out fourteen  
 buses later.

IRENE

Have you talked to Matt Iso?  
He used to be a travel agent.

SHELLY

Of course it has to be Matt.

EXT. RIDING STABLES - DAY

Rural road. Shelly, Joey and John ride up on bikes. It's just after a ride. Matt unsaddles a horse against a fence.

MATT

I heard.

SHELLY

Look, about what happened.

MATT

I was ready to go. I used it as an  
excuse. It was wrong.

(raising his voice)

Listen up, boys. It's okay to 'fess  
up when you mess up. John, Joey.  
You ever groom a horse?

They shake their heads. Matt gives them brushes.

MATT (CONT'D)

Joey, you use this one on his neck.  
And John, you do what I do. Stay  
away from his rear end. He's not a  
kicker, but you never know.

He demonstrates. The boys get busy.

MATT (CONT'D)

Move the brush down, Joey. Lift the  
brush on the way up.

Joey adjusts his stroke.

MATT (CONT'D)

Big trip, but not impossible.

WE SEE in the dirt a STICK outline. Matt draws a map.

MATT (CONT'D)

The key is how far a bus can go in  
a day and what they can see. Each  
one has to have a big destination.  
Basics. Oahu's divided into four  
sections. Town, mountain, leeward.

EXT. SCHOOL PLAYGROUND - DAY

The class sits on the grass as Shelly draws on a board.

SHELLY

...that's the desert, and windward.  
Only the drivers will know where  
your bus is going to find God.  
You've all be reading travel books.  
Who's got ideas?

A flurry of excited voices calling out places as Shelly laughs and writes them down. Bette calls over the fence:

BETTE

Yoohoo. You. Yes, you.

INT. LOLANI'S LIVING ROOM - DAY

The kids and Shelly sit. LOLANI is propped in a hospital day-bed, snapping like an ancient, predatory bird. Bette hovers. The kids have uneaten cookies. They look terrified.

LOLANI

Which one of you children killed  
Mopsy with a soccer ball?

Frank blinks. Slowly he gets to his feet.

LOLANI (CONT'D)

And you are?

FRANK

Sorry.

LOLANI

(snaps)  
Of course you're sorry. Your name.

FRANK

Oh. Frank.

She searches for his through the letters strewn on her bed.

LOLANI

Frank, there's nothing you can do,  
(cementing his name)  
Frank, to make up for what  
happened. But nonetheless, you will  
spend your time in purgatory,  
visiting me. Ah, here. Sit sit.

It's an order. He sits heavily. She addresses the group.

LOLANI (CONT'D)

I have lived in this room for thirty years. The only scrap of sky I see now is the one through my window. Eat your treat.

A command. They duck their heads and eat quickly.

LOLANI (CONT'D)

I understand you're off in five weeks to find God. That's one thing I haven't found in eighty-two years of living on this planet. You have hope. I don't know if that calls for envy on my part, or pity.  
(revealing too much)  
Out. All of you. Take the crumbs.

They scramble to leave, taking the treats with them.

INT. TEACHERS LOUNGE - DAY

Oprah's show is ending on TV. Lisa, Barb, Maggie and Auntie Loo Loo feverishly take notes as the credits roll. Shelly comes in with an armful of wrapped notebooks. She's ignored.

SHELLY

Notebooks. First big donation.

AUNTIE LOO LOO

Yes! I win.

Auntie Loo Loo shows them a name on her pad. Good-natured groans. Shelly puts down the box, confused.

MAGGIE

The Oprah Lottery. Whoever got the producer's entire name gets to call and tell the producer about the trip to find God.

LISA

It's the perfect show.

BARB

Oprah just doesn't know it yet.

SHELLY

Let me get this straight. Nobody wants to help get cameras or buses. But you're on board after. For Oprah.

LISA

Well, duh. You just do the little pesky part about setting everything up. We'll be happy to help you out with the talking to Oprah part.

They high-five each other. Shelly shakes her head amused.

INT. MECUM'S KITCHEN - DAY

Shelly pops corn on the stove, while talking on the phone.

SHELLY

Mr. Koloa? Instant Camera division?  
What do you mean he's on vacation?  
Since this morning? Hello?

The LID is LOOSE. Popcorn EXPLODES ALL over the kitchen. She frantically tries to contain things. A RAP on the screen door. It's Lanny. She opens the door. He surveys the damage.

SHELLY (CONT'D)

My fund-raiser. Was. Popcorn balls.

She tidies up. He grazes and studies postcards taped to the wall. Fourteen gorgeous location shots. She sells it.

SHELLY (CONT'D)

Each bus goes someplace incredible.

He rips them down like a machine and hands them to her.

LANNY

Buses you don't have yet. Locations you haven't set up. You said you could do this on your own. And teach. That was the deal. I'm not seeing it. I *am* seeing stupid stuff-teachers trying to call Oprah.

SHELLY

Producer. Oprah's producer.

He waves it away.

SHELLY (CONT'D)

Tomorrow's Open House. You need to pull the plug on this. Tell them.

Quick SNAPS as if these are printed on her heart:

She's alone. She picks up popcorn.

She makes dinner and feeds the kids.  
 The kids do homework with her help.  
 She sits in the dark in her robe and stares out the window.  
 She's still sitting there at dawn.  
 She puts down the postcards she was holding.  
 Joey wanders in, still waking up. Sees her.

JOEY

Mommy?

He comes into her arms. She hugs him fiercely.

EXT. SCHOOL COURTYARD - NIGHT

Some forty parents and grandparents stand in front of Shelly. She holds a clipboard. We focus on their expressions as she tells them it's not happening. Resignation. Bitterness. Disappointment. We can't hear her. She stops. Powers up.

SHELLY

I was wrong. I can't do this...But we can. I need your help.

PEGGY

I'm stretched thin already.

SHELLY

See if there's anything on this list you can help us get. Somebody you might know.

No one looks at the clipboard. Everyone's uncomfortable.

GRANDPA JOE

Shelly, I farm taro and work at a warehouse. Sometimes I even bus tables at a restaurant in Waikiki. Nobody's going to want to come to my work to find God.

She sees it on their faces. That's the core. Their shame.

SHELLY

You want your kids to have a better life? It starts here. By each one of us being less afraid.

(MORE)

SHELLY (CONT'D)

Have this be the day you do one thing to change your life, the lives of your kids. Someplace. Somewhere. There's something you can do to help. God doesn't ask us to be fearless. He asks us to be brave.

(simply)

I need you to be brave.

A long beat. They slowly gather around the clipboard.

EXT. PRICEY HOTEL - DAY

A dolphin splashes the water. A crowd claps.

INT. ROOM AT PRICEY HOTEL - CONTINUOUS

Sarah makes a bed. Out the window, she sees the dolphin.

EXT. PRICEY HOTEL - LATER

Sarah makes her way through sunning tourists. She finds MAX, a brisk manager. He's dolphin-poolside with an assistant.

MAX

Four groups tomorrow and then--  
(cutting off; to Sarah)  
Housekeeping questions go to Ann.

SARAH

I've been looking out at this show for five years. I've never been.

MAX

Employee discount. Go to. . .

SARAH (CONT'D)

Free, has to be free. Not for me.

MAX (CONT'D)

(to assistant, then Sarah)  
A moment. I'm not following.

SARAH

My kids' school. We have grandmothers. Been here their whole lives. Never seen a dolphin up close. Not once. They're looking for God. The school.

She looks out at the water. The dolphins, the light.

MAX

And you think He's here.

SARAH

We won't know unless you say yes.

A beat. He smiles a yes. Her face softens with tears.

INT. FLOWER SHOP - DAY

Orchids in a case. The OWNER faces three tiny, grey-haired grandmothers. They're not going anywhere. She sighs.

FLOWER SHOP OWNER

I can give you day-old ones we  
can't sell. You can take them apart  
and make smaller ones for the kids.

The grandmothers grab hands and high five each other.

EXT. OCEAN BEACH - DAY

Grandpa Joe is in water up to his waist. Grueling work, he pulls in kelp. Other are there, but we focus on Joe.

THE SHOT WIDENS

We see now the other men are pulling in a sailboat. Grandpa Joe debates silently. Not his world. GORDIE, the captain, jumps out. He's silver-haired, tanned. Joe goes to help.

GORDIE

Thanks.

GRANDPA JOE

I need to ask you something about  
your boat. Ever give free trips?

GORDIE

Depends.

GRANDPA JOE

These kids. They want to find God.

GORDIE

Why did you pick me? My boat?

GRANDPA JOE

Guess that's a no.

He nods, resigned, and starts to wade toward shore. He stops when he hears Gordie's voice.

GORDIE

I refitted this keel 5 years ago. I stuck a Bible in there. In the keel. This boat sails on the Word.

GRANDPA JOE

They're not all Christian.

GORDIE

They're all seeking God, right?

GRANDPA JOE

(almost not believing)

They're all seeking God.

Gordie extends his hand. Grandpa Joe hesitates, clasps it.

EXT. LIZZIE'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Night sounds. A lit lanai. Peggy comes out with cleaning supplies followed by Henry, Lizzie and Ron's dad. A once handsome man, he looks exhausted, shredded by his wife's illness. In the soft light, Peggy looks beautiful.

HENRY

Peggy, thanks. What a gift, cleaning. Wanted you to see. Frank did this. For Lizzie. No it's good.

He stops her alarm and shows her a homemade card: I Hope You Feel Better! signed Frank. Peggy looks close to tears.

HENRY (CONT'D)

You raised a good kid there, Peggy.

She lets it in. Henry smiles, two frayed parents, connecting. He goes inside. Now she sees Shelly. Her bike parked nearby. Shelly observed, but didn't intrude.

PEGGY

Emma's got maybe six months.

A moment. It's clear Peggy has something on her mind.

PEGGY (CONT'D)

When Herb died. We lost the house, I lost my faith. I've never told anybody that. I guess I'm saying I don't know if this trip to find God is the right thing for me.

SHELLY

Frank's hoping you'll go.

PEGGY  
He said that?

SHELLY  
No, Peggy. He didn't. But he is.

INT. EMMA'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

EMMA looks frail. Her family crowds near. She wears a worn nightgown and a pink heart necklace, small, very delicate.

SHELLY  
It's a joy, having Lizzie and Ron  
in class.

They beam. Emma smiles painfully. Shelly strains to hear.

EMMA  
Makapuu Point. On the list?

SHELLY  
South Shore. I'll make sure.

Emma closes her eyes. She grips the necklace.

EMMA  
Good. Big rainbows. I hear. Always  
wanted to go.

EXT. MECUM'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Moths BANG into the porch light. Shelly rides up to the house on her bike. Joey and John wait on the steps, exhausted, mad.

<p>SHELLY What happened? What's going on?</p>	<p>JOHN I lost my key and Einstein here--</p>
---	---

JOEY  
You stop.

She unlocks the door and they storm into the house.

EXT. SCHOOL - END OF DAY

The doors open and kids spill out. We HEAR a LOUD KNOCK.

INT. LOLANI'S LIVING ROOM - DAY

Bette opens the door. Frank stands there uncomfortably.

He glances at his mom. She smiles encouragement and leaves. He slowly enters. The room feels dim. Lolani gestures for him to sit. Frank hesitantly approaches her hospital bed and sits next to it.

LOLANI

Do you know why I asked you here?

FRANK

Punishment?

LOLANI

You're here as my guest.

(unexpectedly moved)

My guest.

Bette brings a Spam and rice sandwich and milk. Lolani presents them. He digs in. Then remembers his manners.

FRANK

Thank you.

LOLANI

You're welcome. Spam musubi, every schoolboy's favorite.

A bunny hops in. Frank eyes it.

LOLANI (CONT'D)

Go on. You can pet her. Tell me about this trip to find God. It's in twenty-seven days. I'm counting.

He wolfs his Spam and rice cake before crouching to pet it.

LOLANI (CONT'D)

Where do you think you'll go?

FRANK

Mrs. Mecum tells us it's not important where we go, only Who we find when we get there.

LOLANI

That must mean you're not going anyplace exciting. That's Flopsy.

(suddenly)

You can take her home.

FRANK

No. No.

LOLANI

I trust you.

FRANK

I can't. No. We don't.

On his face is shame, pain. Lolani looks at him shrewdly.

LOLANI

When you can give her a good home.

FRANK

Why do you stay inside?

LOLANI

I have a muscular--problem. My bed's too big to get through the door. What's directly outside that window that I can't see?

He stops petting the bunny. He does his best.

FRANK

Trees. Bunch of kids. Flowers.

Lolani swallows hard, nods.

EXT. SCHOOL - NIGHT

A light is on. Peggy's at work, washing the floor.

INT. SHELLY'S CLASSROOM - CONTINUOUS

Frank's in pj's, in his makeshift bed. He reading the library book about the Valley of the Temples.

FRANK

Mom, where does Ty's dad work?

INT. MECUM'S KITCHEN - NIGHT

Very late. On the kitchen table are fourteen boxes, labeled TRIP ONE through TRIP FOURTEEN. The lids are off. Each box has taped to it its postcard: the 'something special' that group will be doing.

HER POV INSIDE the boxes. Sparse pickings. She's looking at failure.

The Angel sits next to her in pj's. He's folding an Oragami.

ANGEL

You're making too much out of this.  
You fold it. And fold it again.

He folds its deftly. It's a peacock.

The PEACOCK becomes real. The kitchen wall becomes porous.  
The bird struts through...

INT. VALLEY OF THE TEMPLES - DAY

...into a dim interior. Through the slats, a view of the  
green lawn and pond.

EXT. VALLEY OF THE TEMPLES - DAY

The peacock joins its muster on the lawn.

INTERCUT INTERIOR, EXTERIOR VALLEY OF THE TEMPLES

Shelly approaches a seated figure. The DALAI LAMA. It cannot  
be. And yet it is. She kneels. Holy light seems to bathe him.

DALAI LAMA

And your mission is?

SHELLY

I want them to find God, your  
Holiness.

DALAI LAMA

Life's most important work. They  
do. And they will be guides to show  
others. Shelly, this is bigger than  
you even know. Trust it.

(shrewdly)

I see you have a question for me.

SHELLY

If we take a whole bus here, do we  
have to pay to get in?

DALAI LAMA

That's your question? You could ask  
me anything.

SHELLY

It's kind of the most pressing  
thing on my mind right now.

DALAI LAMA

(drily)

My people will talk to your people.

Across the grounds, a monk stands before a giant GONG.  
CLOSE as he strikes it. The sound reverbs and morphs into:

INT. MECUM'S KITCHEN - DAY

Shelly's deeply asleep at the table filled with trip boxes.  
OS the ALARM gongs. Joey's tugging at her elbow.

JOEY

Mom. Mom.

She wakes up groggily.

OS: A CONSTRUCTION SITE BANGING HAMMER.

EXT. BUILDING SITE - DAY

Nick hammers a nail into a cross beam. BUCK approaches.

BUCK

Nick, company.

It's Peggy and Frank. Nick jumps down, wary, defensive.

NICK

What do you want?

PEGGY

For starters, a different attitude.

FRANK

Mom.

With effort, Peggy stops talking. Frank plows ahead.

FRANK (CONT'D)

You think I'm one way but I'm not.

NICK

I'll ask again, what do you want?

INT. AEIA KITCHEN - NIGHT

Ty sits between his parents eating.

NICK

Never guess who came by work today.  
That kid Frank and his mom. Pass  
the rolls, son.

Ty passes the rolls. Nick chews and swallows a piece. Jane  
shoots Ty a warning glance.

TY

Why? What did he want?

NICK  
Stupid. Nothing I'm going to do.

Ty shoves back his chair and stands up. Nick keeps eating.

NICK (CONT'D)  
Ty, sit down.

TY  
No. I'm tired of being mean to people because you want me to.

Nick stands up. Ty bravely stands his ground. Jane stands. She puts her hand on Ty and looks her husband in the eye.

JANE  
I'm taking him to my sister's. And we're going on that trip. To find God.

EXT. MECUM'S BACKYARD - DAY

Matt, Shelly and Maggie pore over a map. The trips boxes are stacked nearby. OS PHONE rings.

MATT  
Wahiawa Botanic Gardens isn't free.

John comes outside with the phone on a long cord.

JOHN  
Mom, phone.

MATT (CONT'D)  
Goes on the 'to do' list--

SHELLY  
Hello? Yes. Yes. Oh. Oh. Yes, but-  
(heavily)  
I understand.

INT. LOLANI'S LIVING ROOM - DAY

Shelly sits next to Lolani's bed.

SHELLY  
Nobody wants to give us buses. Or cameras. Trip's in twenty-one days.

LOLANI  
Have you tried Japan? For the cameras. Go to the guy who can say 'yes'. Oh, and Shelly. I'm here. When you're ready to tell me.

SHELLY

What?

LOLANI

Your truth.

INT. MECUM'S KITCHEN - NIGHT

Middle of the night. Shelly's in her robe on the telephone. At the table, the Angel wears pajamas, sips camomile tea.

ANGEL

Shoulders back. Strong. Big voice.

She throws her shoulders back, uses a bigger voice.

SHELLY

Yes. Calling long distance?  
From Hawaii? Mr. Ohnishi?

ANGEL (CONT'D)

It's not a question. Be  
certain. Strong.

SHELLY (CONT'D)

CEO of Fuji Film?  
(adjusts after coaching)  
Film.

INT. FUJI OFFICE, JAPAN - DAY

In a Japanese high rise. A well-groomed Japanese woman is on the telephone at a gleaming desk.

SURI

Hold please for Assistant Tomonoh.

Shelly covers the phone, marveling, a little nervous.

SHELLY

His assistant.

She turns to share with the Angel. He's gone.

EXT. JAPANESE STREET - DAY

Edo kite flying day. Floats and high flying kites. MR. TOMONOH uses a phone ear pod. He's with his family.

MR. TOMONOH

Mr. Tomonoh.

SHELLY'S VOICE

Mr. Tomonoh, I'm a teacher...Shelly  
Mecum. In a small school in Oahu.

INT. MECUM'S KITCHEN - NIGHT

The words pour out.

SHELLY

In a place nobody's heard of. It's poor here, Mr. Tomonoh, but there's so much love. And, well the thing is, the school's going to close unless we pull off this miracle.

INTERCUT BETWEEN SHELLY AND MR. TOMONOH

MR. TOMONOH

Go on.

SHELLY

We're writing a book. We're going out to find God. And when we find Him, we're going to take His picture and bring it back.

In Japan, kites and floats are bursts of color passing by.

MR. TOMONOH

How am I involved?

SHELLY

Nobody wants to give me the cameras and the parents are strapped and I can't afford three hundred. . .

(breaking down)

I've been routed through every camera place in Hawaii at least twice and nobody can. . .

MR. TOMONOH

Do you mean to tell me, the only thing standing in the way of your children realizing their dream is the price of three hundred cameras and developing costs?

CLOSE ON Shelly's face. She's stunned. She nods.

MR. TOMONOH (CONT'D)

Are you there?

SHELLY

That's exactly what I'm saying.

MR. TOMONOH

Fax me information. You'll hear from Fuji Hawaii in the morning.

SHELLY

Thank you, Mr. Tomonoh. Thank you.

INT. SHELLY'S CLASSROOM - DAY

Shelly whips a towel off her desk with a flourish. The kids are giddy with joy. There sit 300 cameras in sealed packets.

SHELLY

Cameras. We have cameras.

A joyous group hug. Interrupted by Henry and Lizzie's brother, Ron, in the doorway. Lizzie looks at them.

LIZZIE

No. She was supposed to come. No.

Henry grabs her as she collapses, sobbing, into his arms.

A DEEP ROCKING HUM of male voices. Joined by a knock-it-out-of-the-park Hawaiian funeral song. It's Cat singing.

EXT. CEMETERY - DAY

The song continues. Mourners leave the church, silhouetted against the blue sky. Strong Hawaiians carry a coffin. Lizzie's family follows. Shelly gently herds her boys along. Frank finds Lizzie.

FRANK

I'm sorry. Maybe. We can do something. Help somebody. Sort of. I don't know. Honor your mom.

EXT. SCHOOL PLAYGROUND - DAY

The entire 4th grade class dumps treasures into a pile. Each child acknowledges Lizzie and her pain. Shelly, her boys, Auntie Loo Loo, Ty's mom, Jane, and Irene add to the heap. Peggy adds an assortment of nails and a can of paint.

A flatbed turns into the lot. It's Nick. In the back is real glass, real lumber. Ty bites his lip. Jane tears up.

NICK

Frank. Heard you needed this.

Frank straightens a little. Nods at Nick.

WE HEAR a joy-filled Hawaiian song.

INT. LOLANI'S LIVING ROOM - VARIOUS SHOTS - DAY

Lolani wears a blindfold and headphones. We SEE...

A wall smashed down by Nick and kids.

Ty and Frank work side by side, under Nick's approving eye.

Plywood is hammered into the shape of a French door frame.  
And lifted into place by willing hands.

While others hammer planks into a ramp.

Frank holds a ladder for Lizzie and she hangs a rainbow.

LATER. Lolani's room is crowded with everybody who helped.

Frank and Ty stand near Lolani, still wearing her blindfold.

The tape recorder is pressed OFF and the song we've been  
hearing ENDS. Frank lifts off her headphones.

Frank and Ty turn her bed so it faces the open French doors.

LOLANI

Is that wind I feel on my cheek?

They guide the bed down the ramp into the back yard. Frank  
removes her blindfold. Lolani reaches for Frank's hand.

FRANK

You couldn't come on the trip with  
us to find God. So we brought God  
here. To find you.

Lolani looks up, at the sky. Tears course down her face.

TY

And now...this one's for Frank.

Frank turns...and realizes that ALL his classmates...and the  
adults...are wearing sunglasses.

EXT. SHACK - DAY

Grandpa Joe, Alicia and Mabel pull taro.

GRANDPA JOE

Boss won't let me off to find God.

ALICIA

It's in twelve days. You're  
supposed to come. You have to.

GRANDPA JOE  
I'm sorry, honey.

He turns away, ashamed. At his lack of power.

EXT. SCHOOL - DAY

Kids rush outside, sprung loose. Maggie loads her backseat with school stuff. Shelly and her boys help. Parents mill.

LANNY  
Happy Easter everybody.

He asks Shelly a silent question. She shakes her head.

SHELLY  
(low, to Maggie)  
It's in ten days. Still no buses.

Maggie goes to the trunk and opens it. Shelly stares.

MAGGIE  
It's a fax machine. Got it on the cheap. My way of, you know, what you said. Okay, who wants to go with Auntie Maggie to the beach during Easter break?

A clamor of 'I do's from Shelly's boys. Shelly mouths thanks.

INT. MECUM'S KITCHEN - DAY

Shelly's on the phone and making sandwiches as Maggie corrals the boys. Shelly reins them in for towels, sandwiches, hugs.

EXT./INT. LOCAL BUS - DAY

The bus passes the site of the accident.

SFX: Crash, screams, sirens. Shelly breathes through it.

EXT. BUSINESS HIGHRISE, WAIKIKI - DAY

Shelly climbs off a bus and heads into a gleaming high rise.

SHELLY'S VOICE  
You got my letter, Ms. Shenkus.

INT. SAM'S OFFICE - DAY

Shelly sits in SAM's office. Sam's sleekly dressed.

SAM

Sam. And the three phone messages.  
And the faxes. Five of them. The  
answer's still no. All our school  
buses are committed.

SHELLY

Oh. No, no, no, not school buses.  
Big, air-conditioned luxury buses.  
The kind the tourists use. You have  
a thousand of those. I looked it  
up. All we need is fourteen.  
You're the biggest on the island.

SAM

I just said.

SHELLY

It's next Friday. You have to.

Sam regards her. Her face is unreadable.

EXT. SCHOOL CHAPEL - (EASTER) DAY

People pour out dressed in Easter finery, greeted by the  
priest. Some carry Easter lilies. Lanny joins Shelly.

SHELLY

I'll get the parents to drive.

LANNY

We don't have that kind of  
insurance, Shelly. You tried.

SHELLY

No. It can't be.

LANNY

You have to tell them.

SHELLY

They need this trip, Lanny. They  
believed. It has to happen.

LANNY

I've been here thirty-one years.  
You think I want the school to  
close on my watch? Tomorrow. You  
tell them.

Lanny joins his wife and children. Grandpa Joe's overheard what Lanny said. He smiles at John and Joey.

GRANDPA JOE

Hang with us. We're having a luau.  
(off their concern)  
Your mom's fine. She's got 'stuff.'

Shelly gathers up the two families--hers and Grandpa Joe's, mimes prayers. They close their eyes, drop their heads.

SHELLY

Dear Lord, I'm underwater. Can't see a thing. But You know that. I know you're sending light. Bright colors. But even if you don't. Help me learn to appreciate the dark. But if you could...Anyway. Thank you. Amen.

GRANDPA JOE

(conversationally)  
Worst prayer ever.

SHELLY

Pretty much.

A van passes, a BUNNY painted on its side.

EXT. LOLANI'S HOUSE, BACKYARD - DAY

BUNNIES hop. Lolani's in bed outside. Shelly's by her side.

SHELLY

I've tried to drive. I'll go outside in the middle of the night, or when the kids are with friends.

Shelly takes a seat. Puts down the scuffed ball on the bed.

SHELLY (CONT'D)

He taught me how to play ball. My brother. Paul. This was his. He fell asleep at the wheel. I was fifteen.

(evenly)

We lost Mom that day, too. She never quite came back. So my job--my entire job from then on--was staying safe. So Dad would never have to bury his only daughter. Then six years ago...

LOLANI

Six years ago, you were in a car crash and everything changed.

SHELLY

When I try to drive, all I see is my mother's face. The sound she made, the moment she found out about Paul. It was this cry. So high and soft at first I thought it was the wind.

LOLANI

Well, that's convenient.

Shelly snaps her a shocked look.

LOLANI (CONT'D)

How lucky for you, you have an out.

SHELLY

What are you talking about?

LOLANI

Wheel in the dead brother story. Works every time.

SHELLY

You don't know how hard--

LOLANI

I don't? I can't walk.

SHELLY

That's different.

LOLANI

How? Because from where I sit, you have it easy.

SHELLY

That's ridiculous.

LOLANI

When I learned what was coming, do you think I sat in my bed and waited for it? I climbed mountains, Shelly, I dropped out of planes. I ran. I dove under the ocean. I hiked the entire Pacific Trail.

SHELLY

And I moved heaven and earth and I can't get the buses and it's done.

LOLANI

Really? Because you've told these kids about God and damn it, now you've got me believing, too, and do you honestly think this is the last thing God has planned for you? What if this project is just this small piece? The big project--the one after this--is still out there? What's going to happen to that? Who's going to work on that if you can't even manage this?

SHELLY

I tried.

LOLANI

Not everything. There's always another way. And you know who taught me that? A scrappy nine-year old kid named Frank who busted a hole through this wall and got me outside. Bust a hole through your wall and get going. I need a nap.

EXT. SCHOOL - DAY

Bette's car jerks around the parking lot. Shelly drives, Bette next to her. Lolani yells praise from her backyard.

INT. MECUM'S KITCHEN - DAY

The boys rinse their cereal bowls and grab their backpacks.

JOHN

Do I have to go? I don't want to be there when you tell them.

She pulls the car key off a hook. The boys look stunned. This is the world tipping on its axis, light breaking.

SHELLY

Seat belts.

EXT. SCHOOL - DAY

Shelly pulls her car into the parking lot, braking hard. The boys look shell-shocked. They spill out. The boys rush to join friends. Even their friends are shocked when they see the car. Shelly joins Lanny walking. He looks back at the car, then at her.

LANNY

What are you doing?

SHELLY

I'm going to get in that car and drive to downtown Waikiki.

LANNY

That's the H-1.

(off her silence)

We all know about the accident. Where it happened.

SHELLY

I need you to teach my class today. I need you to not give up on this project, on this school. I need you to pray, Lanny. For me. For the kids. For the school. Just everybody. Pray.

MONTAGE OF PRAYERS...Each group praying seems to spark the next group, until it feels that the entire world is praying.

--All school assembly. Lanny leads the school in praying as outside the window a grandma passes by carrying orchid leis.

--The grandmothers pause in prayer in a humble backyard as they string leis.

--A trucker stops at a light. He sees them praying.

--At a truck stop, filling up, he bows in prayer...

--As a biker races past the gas station and sees him...

--Now a group of bikers pray on a highway shoulder overlooking the sea as kayakers pass in the water below them.

--Those kayakers bow their heads in prayer as...

--a group of monks at a Hawaiian temple seem to see something only they can see. They fold into lotus positions and pray.

--A nun stops on a Calcutta street and raises her head as if hearing something only she can hear. She bows her head and prays...

--The images on screen multiply with images of the most ordinary people praying. It can be real documentary footage. The whole world seems to be praying for this to succeed.

Inside the school chapel, Alicia and Danny slip out with an 8th grader who acts as a chaperone to the two younger ones.

EXT. SCHOOL - DAY

The light is golden, magical. The three kids board a bus.

EXT. SURFACE ROAD - DAY

Shelly drives, weaving slightly. The on ramp for H-1 looms. The Angel sits next to her.

EXT. FREEWAY - DAY

Shelly takes the exit. Her HEART starts to SPEED UP.  
INTERCUT SHELLY IN CAR AND FREEWAY

Traffic whizzes. The PANIC ATTACK grows into a ROAR. She's passing the place where she had her crash.

FLASHBACK (B & W): A GRINDING, splintering crash, a cry. A cascade of images, noise, the Angel pulling her free.

She's terrified. Her lips move, praying.

Suddenly, her vision clears as a PURE SOUND of PEACE, CELESTIAL SOUNDS wash over her and TAKE OUT THE ATTACK.

She scrubs a tear and keeps driving. The Angel fades.

EXT. DOWNTOWN HONOLULU, HIGH RISE - DAY

A spot opens at the curb as she pulls up. Shelly pulls in.

SHELLY

Wow, parking. That is a miracle.

EXT. BAKERY WAREHOUSE - DAY

The local bus stops in front of a bakery. The kids get off.

INT. WAREHOUSE - DAY

Canyons of boxes. MR. WONG comes over to the three kids.

MR. WONG

Yes? Can I help you?

Alicia looks unnerved. She opens her mouth. Nothing emerges.

MR. WONG (CONT'D)

Speak up.

A beat. She tries again. Nothing. He turns away, irritated.

ALICIA

My name is Alicia Alapi.

(as he pauses)

Everybody at my school is going to find God.

(strong now)

...and my Grandpa, Grandpa Joe, he needs the day off so he can find God, too.

GRANDPA JOE

Alicia? What are you doing here?

Grandpa Joe stops pushing a load of boxes.

GRANDPA JOE (CONT'D)

Sorry, Mr. Wong. I had no idea--

MR. WONG

I've never had a child petition for a day off before, that's all.

GRANDPA JOE

She talked?

MR. WONG

Eloquently.

Grandpa Joe sweeps her into a hug.

GRANDPA JOE

Oh my God you spoke. She doesn't.

MR. WONG

Well, she came all this way and spoke to me. Which day are you going to find God?

ALICIA

Friday.

MR. WONG

Well, Joe, look like you've got more important things to do Friday than hang out here.

Alicia beams up at her grandfather. His eyes glisten.

SAM V.O.

Shelly. You're back.

INT. ROBERTS HAWAII HALLWAY - DAY

Shelly's blocking the elevator. Sam punches the DOWN button.

SHELLY

Three hundred lives, Sam. All of them hoping--praying--you'll change your 'no' into a yes.

The elevator opens. Shelly crowds in after Sam.

INT. ELEVATOR - CONTINUOUS

Sam looks straight ahead. It's a packed elevator. It moves.

SHELLY

You're a good company, but how great could you have been if you'd been generous? Sam, I can't go back and tell those kids it's over.

The people in the elevator are looking at Sam. The door opens. A BUSINESSMAN gets out. He turns to Sam.

BUSINESSMAN

It's good PR, Sam.

SAM

Thanks for weighing in, Stan.

The doors close, the elevator goes down, everyone listening.

SHELLY

Please, Sam.

MAN IN SHORTS

Yeah, please, Sam.

It's echoed by others. Sam's taken aback.

SAM

You don't even know what this is.

MAN IN SHORTS

I have a pretty good idea it's about a bunch of kids needing buses and you're a bus company.

The door opens. First floor. He puts his hand in the door.

MAN IN SHORTS (CONT'D)

We'll wait.

SAM

Alright, fine. Half. I'll donate half and all the drivers but you have to raise the rest.

Cheers erupt, high-fives all around.

SHELLY

Half is good, half is perfect.

EXT. SCHOOL - DAY

Shelly gets out of her car, mobbed by Lanny and kids.

LANNY

Hawaii Visitors and Convention Bureau is donating a thousand dollars toward the buses and nuns from the Augustine Foundation are inside. They won't say why.

Shelly leads the parade inside.

INT. SCHOOL OFFICE - DAY

They throng her. Shelly faces SISTER MARIA and other nuns.

SISTER MARIA

We're willing to donate up to the full amount for the buses.

Shelly lets it in. Sister Maria frowns.

SISTER MARIA (CONT'D)

Are we too late?

Shelly face breaks into a grin. The crowd erupts in joy. She grabs her boys, holds them close. WE HEAR luminous voices sing something like Eric Whittaker's 'Alleluia' as...

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - DAY

Fourteen gleaming tour buses move across the horizon. The same path Shelly's battered local bus took at the start. On the buses are written the words: The Best For The Best.

EXT. SCHOOL - DAY

The buses pull in. The drivers stride down like cowboys. The grandmothers give each child a lei.

The God-seekers bow their heads as Lanny prays. Teachers hand out cameras, pads. Checking clipboards, they direct families toward the right buses. Shelly boards...and sees Frank, alone, waiting.

She gets off and waits with him. Suddenly, Peggy appears.

Frank flies to her. Peggy follows him onto their bus. Shelly climbs back onto hers and the buses roar to life.

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - DAY

The buses glide past rural homes. People line the road, waving, throwing flowers, carrying signs: GOOD LUCK FINDING GOD. We see awed faces of the riders as they go by crowds. Auntie Loo Loo fights tears.

Mingled among those on the road are cameramen with reporters, shooting footage as the buses pass.

EXT. VARIOUS SHOTS - DAY

We see glimpses of the miraculous: Dew glistens on an orchid. A newborn's fist around his mother's finger. A foaming wave sprays drops of gold against an extinct volcano. Light filters through latched palms.

A surreal edge to the scenes. Many God seekers, but we focus on the ones we've come to know. A glowing world of light. Small beats set up earlier are paying off here:

EXT. CORAL REEF, GLASS-BOTTOMED BOAT - DAY

Maggie's classroom fishbowl on steroids. Red coral, darting bright fish. The fish gulp as though some unseen hand is dropping fish food. What used to be a rote chore for Maggie becomes wonder.

INT. HARD ROCK CAFE - DAY

Busy place. 'Hard Rock Cafe' sign pulses with lights. We focus on Cat, as close to Hollywood as her imagination can fly. She's awestruck. On the wall is: God Is Here.

EXT. NORTH SHORE - DAY

Lanny stands watching the waves, hands in his pockets. Finds the crumpled paper plane he's stuffed there, made from a workbook in Shelly's class. Wind snaps the plane skyward.

Where it joins hang gliders riding wind.

EXT. OCEAN, ON SAILBOAT - DAY

Ty steers the sails under the captain's eye. Ty's dad observes, moved. His son, captain of his own ship.

EXT. PRICEY HOTEL

Dolphins arc poolside. The grandmothers clap, delighted.

EXT./INT. HELICOPTER IN THE SKY - DAY

Oahu from the air. Auntie Loo Loo in tears.

EXT. MAKAPUU POINT, SOUTH SHORE - DAY

Lizzie scuffs sand. Finds a shell. Pink, shaped like a heart. Ron points up. At a full rainbow. Their mom's presence.

EXT. NUUANU PALI LOOKOUT - DAY

Rainbows, mist, mountains of green, lush valleys below. Danny's mouth gapes. His gaze tracks a mountain. The peak ends in a jagged beautiful finger...pointing up toward God. Like the cloud he'd seen the first day of school.

EXT. HEIAU STATE PARK - DAY

Grandpa Joe, Alicia and Mabel climb a path. It leads up to a sacred lava rock monument. A darting shadow. A Menehune?

Grandpa Joe pulls the girls close. A 100 hand-made shrines of stones, sticks, similar to theirs, adorn the sacred site.

EXT. VALLEY OF THE TEMPLES - DAY

Frank moves through the temple, Peggy nearby. It's shadowed, serene, exactly like the book. A monk sees Frank and seems to know his heart. Knows the man he will become. He bows in Namaste. Frank bows back. Straightens. Somehow taller.

INT. SUBMARINE - DAY

Shelly and her boys stare out into the solid underwater dark.

INT. DEEP OCEAN - DAY

Suddenly, light cracks through. Bright colors, dazzling displays of fish. There all the time. And now seen.

EXT. SCHOOL FIELD, VARIOUS SHOTS - DAY

Exhausted, happy throng of God-seekers forms a giant heart. A helicopter hovers, the photographer leans out, snaps a shot. A crush of TV news reporters interviews kids.

Frank animatedly talks to Lolani. She's eating luau food in her bed, wheeled close to the fence line.

CLOSE on luau line. Lanny and Shelly's plates are filled. A NEW PARENT approaches.

NEW PARENT

Excuse me. Is this the school  
that's writing the book?

Silence ripples out over the crowd, sensing something big.

SHELLY

Yes.

Real silence now, as the group waits and hopes.

NEW PARENT

I'd like to register my kids.

Cheers erupt. Hugs all around.

BEN V.O.

Two ninety-nine...three hundred.

INT. CAMERA STORE - DAY

BEN writes a receipt. He answers Shelly's unasked question.

BEN

It's paid for. Fuji National.

SHELLY

Thank you.

BEN

Thank you. We'll be the first ones  
to see what God looks like.

A group of coworkers stands in the doorway, shyly beaming.

AUNTIE LOO LOO (V.O.)  
Shelly, Shelly, Shelly.

INT. SCHOOL HALLWAY - DAY

Auntie Loo Loo runs down the hall to Shelly's class.

INT. SHELLY'S CLASSROOM - A MOMENT LATER

Kids construct forts at desks as Auntie Loo Loo rushes in.

SHELLY  
As you build your Gothic cathedral  
out of popsicle sticks keep in  
mind. . .

AUNTIE LOO LOO  
(interrupting, breathless)  
You have a call from the Oprah  
Winfrey Show.

INT. MUTUAL PUBLISHING CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

Shelly, Tara and Steve sit at the conference table.

SHELLY  
But that's good news.

STEVE  
For you.

Shelly looks around. Their reactions are off.

SHELLY  
For us all. The Executive producer  
in charge of booking authors called  
back and wants a galley of God's  
Photo Album.  
(off his silence)  
They said they've never seen God  
before. They want to know what He  
looks like. This is huge. We  
should be celebrating.

STEVE  
We're a local publisher. There's no  
way we could handle a book that  
gets that kind of attention.

SHELLY  
What do you mean?

STEVE

We're not set up for that.

SHELLY

Add more presses.

STEVE

And have them go to waste after?  
No, we're local--

SHELLY

This is your chance to be big.

STEVE

Who says I want to be big, Shelly?  
Look. I promised you a thousand  
books. In stores here. At  
Christmas. Local stores. You walk  
into the Ewa Beach bookstore, God's  
Photo Album will be in the window.  
People will buy this book. You want  
to save your school, that's how.

TARA

There's no guarantee you'd be on  
Oprah anyway, just because they  
asked for a galley.

STEVE

And there's no galley without a  
publisher. So pull the book...

TARA

Look for a national publisher...

STEVE

And if you get one, then by all  
means, go on Mister Rogers or  
Geraldo, for all we care. But  
that's not happeniung unless you  
have a publisher. Are you willing  
to risk losing that? Losing us?

INT. SHELLY'S CLASSROOM - DAY

She faces bewildered, disappointed 4th graders.

CAT

What do you mean, we don't have a  
publisher?

DANNY

You said no? You took it away?

SHELLY

Children, you have no idea how powerful your photos and words are going to be. This book deserves to be read by the world. We just have to find the right home for it.

LIZZIE

But how, Mrs. Mecum?

Frank springs to his feet, distraught.

FRANK

You promised.

SHELLY

Frank.

FRANK

No, you promised.

He bangs his fist against the wall and races out of the room.

EXT. SCHOOL - LATE DAY

Recess. Kids play. The principal catches up to Shelly.

LANNY

What's this I hear about us losing the publisher?

SHELLY

I'll get another one.

LANNY

Where?

SHELLY

We're still the school that went to find God. And we found Him. Enrollment's up.

LANNY

You pulled the only publisher we had, Shelly. Fix it.

He walks away. Maggie joins Shelly.

SHELLY

You heard.

MAGGIE

My Mom pre-ordered the book.

SHELLY  
I'll find a national--

MAGGIE  
She's in beginning Alzheimer's.

Shelly stops cold.

MAGGIE (CONT'D)  
I don't know how long you think  
it's going to take to find this  
mythical national publisher  
interested in a tiny school  
nobody's heard of, but my mom, for  
one, doesn't have that kind of  
time.

Maggie walks off. Shelly calls after her.

SHELLY  
I'll work. I'll work on it through  
the summer. I'm picking the photos  
up today. I'll start.

John overhears that. A look of pure pain on his face.

JOHN  
Thanks, Mom.

He walks off. The Angel slips his arm around Shelly.

ANGEL  
Well, that sucks.

INT. MECUM KIDS' BEDROOM - NIGHT

She's tucking in the boys. They look subdued, angry.

JOHN  
Mom, do we even matter?

SHELLY  
Look, I know it's been hard.

JOEY  
No, you don't. How can you know  
that? You're never here.

Joey looks close to tears. John turns and faces the wall.

JOHN  
I can't wait for Dad to get home.  
Good night. Just go.

She turns out the light, her face soft with regret, pain.

EXT. SCHOOL PARKING LOT - DAY

Last day of school before summer vacation. Kids whoop, excitedly dash off with friends, find their parents.

Shelly and the boys are pointedly shunned. Shelly gently guides them to the car.

EXT. PEARL HARBOR - DAY

Families wait as the ship pulls in, men lined up on deck.

JOEY		JOHN
Do you see you him? see Daddy?	Do you	Dad! He's right there. He's there.

Coming down the ramp, amid a throng of others, is Bill.

JOEY (CONT'D)		JOHN (CONT'D)
Dad. Dad!		Over here!

He stops, shocked. Searches faces. Finds them. He rushes down the ramp. They come together in a great glad embrace.

BILL		SHELLY
How did you--		I did it, Bill. I did it.

INT. MECUM'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

They're naked, relaxed.

BILL  
Let's go to Lanikai Beach.

SHELLY  
Today?

BILL  
It's summer, I'm home. Yes, today.  
Lanikai.  
(off her reaction)  
What?

SHELLY  
(evenly)  
I promised the kids I'd work all  
summer on finding a new publisher.

BILL

Really? Which kids? Because it doesn't sound like any promise our kids would ask you to make or keep.

She rolls over and gets up, puts on a robe.

BILL (CONT'D)

You said when I came home, it would be at the publisher's.

SHELLY

They wanted to keep it small. I couldn't settle for that.

BILL

Couldn't or wouldn't? The whole time I was gone, all I thought about was you. And the kids. Our kids. I just wish you'd have done the same with us.

A direct hit to the heart.

INT. MECUM'S LIVING ROOM - DAY

Boxes jam a wall. It's the photo boxes from the search for God. There are over seven thousand photos and three hundred notebooks. Bill and boys are dressed for the beach.

BILL

Sunscreen.

JOEY

Check.

BILL

Hats.

JOHN

Check.

BILL

What are we forgetting? Towels.

Shelly emerges from the hall in a swimsuit holding towels.

JOHN AND JOEY

Mom.

SHELLY

Check.

She distributes towels.

SHELLY (CONT'D)  
And check.

She looks fabulous. Bill drinks it in.

BILL  
What about...?

She glances at the wall of work and turns toward her family.

SHELLY  
Not today.

EXT. LANIKAI BEACH - DAY

Shelly and Bill are in the water with the boys, having fun.

INT. MECUM'S LIVING ROOM - DAY

We see the passage of an entire summer in the unopened boxes.

They're used to:

--Build a fort.

--Create a puppet stage.

--As cover, during a Jedi sword fight.

--As a shelf for beach buckets, boogie boards, swim fins.

--Then to hold school supplies.

Shelly and the boys are dressed for school, Bill's in uniform. The kids move down the line, stuffing backpacks with school supplies. He kisses her, heads out.

BILL  
Remember I've got the NCO briefing.

SHELLY  
Too bad. Missing meatloaf night.

He laughs. She hands overlooked erasers to the boys.

INT. SCHOOL HALLWAY - DAY

Kids and parents swarm the hall looking for classrooms. Maggie and Shelly bump into each other. Maggie's distant.

SHELLY  
Maggie. How's your mom?

MAGGIE  
She passed a few weeks' back.

SHELLY  
I'm sorry. When's the service?

MAGGIE  
Already been.

Maggie smiles briefly and greets a parent and child. Shelly reacts, takes a step back as if she's been sucker-punched.

INT. SHELLY'S CLASSROOM - DAY

Shelly greets twelve new 4th graders. BOBBY waves his hand.

SHELLY  
Welcome, 4th graders. What a year  
we're going to have. Yes, Bobby?

BOBBY  
Is there even going to be a book?

INT. SCHOOL CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

Nine teachers sit at a table with Lanny. Kids play outside.

LANNY  
Any update?

SHELLY  
I took the summer off.

Maggie looks away. Shelly raises her chin. A beat.

LANNY  
Shelly, you'll handle grants and  
special projects.

He hands her an enormous stack of papers.

SHELLY  
But I'm still teaching.

LANNY  
The book didn't happen. Use the  
time you would have put into that.  
(moving on, ignoring her)  
(MORE)

LANNY (CONT'D)

Okay. Order, rules, regs. Turn to page 22 in the manual...

EXT. SCHOOL - DAY

Halloween decorations are up. John's fighting a boy on the playground. Shelly stops it. John's nose is bloody.

JOHN

He was making fun of you, Mom.  
Don't do anything. Promise.

INT. MECUM'S LIVING ROOM - DAY

Bill is moving boxes irritably. Shelly's protesting.

BILL

They're going into the carport.

He hefts a box to his shoulders and takes it outside.

INT. RURAL GROCERY STORE - DAY

Thanksgiving cutouts. Irene rings up Shelly's turkey.

IRENE

We would have been happy with a thousand books. You let us down.

SHELLY

Line forms to the left.

EXT. SCHOOL COURTYARD - DAY

Wreaths adorn the courtyard. Alicia and her posse stop.

ALICIA

Mrs. Mecum. Are you a haole?

A shockingly rude thing to say. The girls snicker.

SHELLY

A haole is someone who does not share the breath of life. Alicia, am I not willing to share the breath of life?

ALICIA

Haoles lie. You promised a book.

INT. MECUM'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

A tree, undecorated. Shelly and Bill sort out the lights.

SHELLY

It was almost better when she wasn't talking. I've wasted most of a year, Bill. I feel sick.

BILL

No, you didn't, and you didn't lie, either, at least not to Alicia.

(a beat)

That's burned out. Shelly, no offense. But you don't know how to publish a book. You tried. Stop beating yourself up.

She swaps in a fresh bulb.

BILL (CONT'D)

(gently)

That's all I want for Christmas.

He switches on the string. It lights up, revealing her face.

SHELLY

I'll get the ornaments. Let the kids know we're ready to decorate.

She waves off his help and rushes out, face contorted.

EXT. MECUM'S HOUSE - NIGHT

In the carport, the ornament box is behind a box of photos. She lifts a photo box to the side. A beat. She opens the box. Riffles through photos, heartbreak on her face. The voices of the boys pulls her back.

SHELLY

I'm coming.

EXT. BUSINESS STREET, EWA BEACH - DAY

Street decorations. Shelly leaves a store with a purchase. And there it is, the bookstore. A book by a local writer is featured, a line waiting as he signs. She breaks into a run.

EXT. LOLANI'S HOUSE - DAY

She doesn't stop until she reaches Lolani's house, gasping.

INT. LOLANI'S LIVING ROOM - DAY

Shelly has just recounted her pain. Lolani regards her.

SHELLY

I made the wrong choice. I let down  
the kids. The community.

LOLANI

How? I'm serious. How. By not  
settling for something that was  
almost right but wasn't?

SHELLY

Bill wants me to quit.

LOLANI

What do you want?

SHELLY

Everybody happy.

LOLANI

As if. Shelly, the reason Bill  
doesn't understand your dream is  
this. God didn't give Bill this  
dream. God gave this dream to you.

Bette brings in steaming mugs of cocoa and leaves.

LOLANI (CONT'D)

Thanks, Bette.

Lolani hands a cup to Shelly.

LOLANI (CONT'D)

So you can run around writing  
grants and doing stupid extra  
projects pretending they matter and  
you don't have great work to do. Or  
you can simply just get on with it.

INT. MECUM'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

The tree is decorated. On the kitchen table is the advent  
wreath. Two candles are lit. The family is praying.

IN UNISON

...in the unity of the Holy Ghost,  
God, world without end Amen.

They cross themselves and open their eyes. Bill hands her a  
candle. She lights it off the center one.

JOEY

What's your prayer, Mom?

She studies their dear faces. No way around it.

SHELLY

That God helps me get out of my own way so I can do the work I was put here to do.

JOEY

You're talking about the book.

JOHN

Mom, that would take a miracle.

SHELLY

Yeah, well, John, He happens to be spectacularly good at those.

She puts the candle in the advent wreath.

INT. MECUM'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

SHELLY

God gave me this. I have to hope.

Bill and Shelly get ready for bed.

BILL

Wow. Hope. Great plan, Shel.

SHELLY

Got a better one? And for what it's worth, hope can be sitting around wanting something to happen. Or it can be action. Unfailing hope...is trust. Trust is believing, and that takes work. Nothing easy about that kind of hope.

She gets into bed and yanks the covers up. She's seething.

BILL

Well, just listen to the little reading and resource teacher.

SHELLY

Lit. It's. Reading. And. Lit.

She snaps off the light. He climbs in. Silence.

SHELLY (CONT'D)  
I need to believe in my dream,  
Bill. Even if nobody else does.

In the dark he reaches for her hand. Shrill RINGING O.S.

INT. JELLINEK BEDROOM - DAY

A well-appointed bedroom. EDEN, groggy, pats for the phone and grunts hello. She's beautiful, middle-aged, not happy.

INT. MECUM'S KITCHEN - DAY

Shelly's in her robe on the phone. Next to an open book.

SHELLY  
Hello? Yes. This is Shelly Mecum.  
May I speak to Roger Jellinek?

INTERCUT JELLINEK BEDROOM AND MECUM'S KITCHEN

EDEN  
Do you know what time it is here?

SHELLY  
(glancing at clock)  
Six o'clock. I live in Ewa Beach. I  
found Roger's name in the library  
in this book of literary agents.

EDEN  
You live here and you're calling at  
six a.m. Who is this again?

Eden fumbles up to a sitting up position. O.S., Roger calls.

SHELLY  
I figured he'd be up.  
Calling New York. Or them  
calling him.

EDEN (CONT'D)  
Never call this early again.  
(to Roger OS, calling)  
No idea. She wants you.

ROGER O.S. (ON PHONE)  
Roger Jellinek.

INT. ROGER'S STUDY - DAY

ROGER stares at the ocean view. She's pitched her hardest.  
He turns. He's attractive, middle-aged, with a killer smile.

ROGER  
There's no money up front.

SHELLY

Wait. No mon--does that mean you're taking me on as a client?

She steps away, does a happy dance, pulls herself together.

INT. MECUM'S KITCHEN - NIGHT

Bill works on bills. He looks up as she comes in.

BILL

How'd it go?

SHELLY

Have I told you you're wonderful?

BILL

Only every time right before I deploy. What's up with that?

SHELLY

You're wonderful.

BILL

I know. I'm deploying.

She crawls into his lap. She looks subdued. A silence.

BILL (CONT'D)

You didn't get him.

SHELLY

I got him.

He grabs her hard, hugs her, then realizes she's 'off'. He turns her to face him. Her eyes slide to the bills.

BILL

What is it? Shelly?

SHELLY

I need to take a year off teaching.

He slides her off his lap.

BILL

Whoa, whoa, whoa. You do know after this tour I'm retiring. We need that second income.

SHELLY

He gave me this list.

EXT. PEARL HARBOR - DAWN

Ghostly fog. A ship looms. Other families say their good-bye's. Bill hugs the boys, releases them. Shelly's turn.

BILL

If it's going to bankrupt us, write  
the best blasted book you can  
write. Do it, Shelly. Do it.

He's fierce with love. She comes into his arms.

EXT. SCHOOL - DAY

Lanny paints the building. Others paint a distance away.

LANNY

A year off teaching?

SHELLY

Without pay. Starting next fall.  
I have to buy liability insurance.  
My agent says somebody has to be  
responsible and that somebody's me.

EXT. VARIOUS DOORS - DAY

Shelly STANDS at one DOOR after ANOTHER, with a clipboard.

She gets signatures, head shakes, directions to nearby doors. Reluctantly, she parts with checks as they sign. Three times she's chased by dogs and once by a cat. And then a peacock.

SHELLY V.O.

I have to track down all 300 people  
and get them to sign over their  
rights and then pay them. Myself.

LANNY V.O.

The trip was over a year ago.  
They've moved to other islands.  
States. Countries.

INT. MECUM'S KITCHEN - DAY

Shelly types, consulting a notebook amid murmuring VOICES.

SHELLY V.O.

And then I have to go through all  
the photos, transcribe all the  
journals. And then write it.

JOHN

Mom. Mom.

The book voices vanish. John presses a towel to Joey's head. The towel is bright red with blood. Shelly springs up.

INT. URGENT CARE STALL - DAY

Shelly soothes Joey as he whimpers and is stitched up.

INT. RURAL GROCERY STORE - DAY

Shelly is checking out. Ron wheels in a dolly of crated eggs.

RON

Mrs. M!

SHELLY

Ron. How's high school?

RON

Good. Lizzie says you quit.

SHELLY

I'm writing the book.

IRENE

Ron. Put those eggs away.

At her tone, he peels away. Irene finishes ringing up.

IRENE (CONT'D)

Twenty-five oh two. Must be sweet, getting paid for not teaching.

SHELLY

What are you talking about?

IRENE

Your sabbatical.

SHELLY

My sub--they're not paying me.

IRENE

Talk to the hand.

Irene makes a blah blah hand motion. Shelly stares at her former friend. Then grabs her bag and moves quickly away.

INT. MECUM'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Shelly looks exhausted. It's late. She's faxing something. The sound wakes up Joey. The stack is huge.

SHELLY

I'll stop. Just a little more.

There's a SOFT RAP on the door. She pulls her robe tighter, looks through the door peephole, and throws the door open.

SHELLY (CONT'D)

Daddy.

He folds her close. She starts to cry.

INT. MECUM'S KITCHEN - VARIOUS DAYS

Shelly types into a typewriter from a journal.

PASSING through her kitchen we SEE a CONSTANT FLOW of the boys and Richard, dressed in various ways, enjoying summer.

A MAIL BAG of releases is DUMPED on the floor by the mailman.

She opens releases and puts them into a stack. The stack grows. It tips over. She types away. Richard hugs her, leaves with suitcases. She keeps typing. The stack grows. Her agent, Roger, pokes his head in.

ROGER

Do you even know what day it is?

SHELLY

(pondering)

August?

He moves a stack of unopened release envelopes and sits.

ROGER

How are you coming with those releases? You can't use anybody's stuff without a release.

She rolls her eyes. The 100th time she's heard this.

ROGER (CONT'D)

In December you go to San Francisco and New York. On your dime. Get a good suit. You meet editors. That means you need something to bring.

(off her shocked look)

(MORE)

ROGER (CONT'D)

Three chapters, not the whole thing. But Shelly, this is the big leagues.

EXT. BUSY SAN FRANCISCO STREET - DAY

**Title: San Francisco**

Holiday decorations. Shelly exits a cab at the HarperCollins building. She's in a good coat, carries a bulging briefcase.

ROGER V.O.

HarperCollins gets about 10,000 new submissions a year. They all do.

INT. HARPERCOLLINS CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

In her good suit, Shelly pitches to execs, hands out chapters.

ROGER V.O.

Last year HarperCollins picked 45 books. Total. Only one by a new writer.

**Title: New York City**

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM NY PUBLISHING HOUSE - DAY

Startling view. Shelly pitches to a new roomful of execs.

ROGER VO

That means there's better odds of having your house struck by lightning than getting any major publisher to take your book.

SCENE repeats in VARIOUS ROOMS, and her briefcase goes flat.

INT. SCHOOL CHAPEL - DAY

Lent. Full church. Shelly kneels to receive ashes. She guides John and Joey toward their pew. Grandpa Richard stands in the door. They race to him.

INT. MECUM'S HOUSE - NIGHT

A BANGING. She opens the door. Roger waves a contract.

ROGER  
We have an offer.

EXT. MECUM'S KITCHEN, VERY LATE - NIGHT

Shelly sits at table, contract unsigned. The phone RINGS O.S.  
Her dad comes in, in his robe. He makes coffee.

RICHARD  
Mom called. Pipe broke. She needs  
me home. I leave in the morning.

SHELLY  
It took three months to write three  
chapters. I have twelve chapters to  
go. It's going to take me a year,  
Dad. Look at it.

She waves her hand toward the mountain of photos, still in  
packets, the unread journals. It's a tall mountain.

SHELLY (CONT'D)  
I have to deliver it in six weeks.  
That's what the contract says. If I  
sign this, and I'm late by even one  
day, they fine me \$45,000. Forty-  
five thousand. That's all we have  
in the world, Dad. Everything we  
saved all these years.

RICHARD  
Have you talked to God?

SHELLY  
He's not answering.

RICHARD  
Look for the miracle. It's always--

SHELLY  
Stop. Stop, Dad. Just. Stop.

She zips up her jacket, starts out. She breaks into a run.

EXT. EWA BEACH - NIGHT

Shelly rushes to the water's edge. She starts to cry. It  
turns into a howl. Too late, she sees the Old Hawaiian  
pulling in a fishing line.

SHELLY  
Sorry. I thought I was alone.

OLD HAWAIIAN

You want the cosmic response or  
should we leave it at that?

He sits heavily down on the sand next to her.

SHELLY

I'm wondering whose hearts to  
break. I've worked on a dream. But  
if I do it, I'd be bankrupting my  
family. Hurting my own kids. And if  
I don't, I break the hearts of an  
entire community. It's an  
impossible choice and I have to  
make it. I promised everybody at  
Our Lady of Perpetual Help School a  
miracle and I failed.

OLD HAWAIIAN

That's not what you're saying.

SHELLY

It isn't? Then what? That God  
failed? That this one's on God?  
Because see, there's plenty already  
I can blame Him for. But the truth  
is, I wasn't big enough or strong  
enough or together enough to do the  
job myself. I'm just this--

It ends in a sob. The old Hawaiian looks out to sea.

OLD HAWAIIAN

That's odd, because God picked you.  
For this one. God. Picked. You. So  
what does that say about God?

SHELLY

He occasionally makes really bad  
mistakes?

He rolls his eyes, pulls out a cookie from his pocket.

OLD HAWAIIAN

Here. Have a thin mint.

Startled, she takes it and nibbles. He eats one too.

OLD HAWAIIAN (CONT'D)

My granddaughter's a Girl Scout.  
My wife buys about twenty boxes of  
these and we freeze them through  
the year. I was reading about  
Catholic saints the other day.

(MORE)

OLD HAWAIIAN (CONT'D)

I'm not Catholic, myself, but you know how it is in those doctors waiting rooms. Nothing to read. Anyway. Know what Our Lady of Perpetual Help is the patron saint of?

(a beat; gently)

Shelly, she's the patron saint of unflinching hope.

On the water there's SPLASHING. A boat approaches through the mist. It's her Angel, luminous, fierce, he's standing up, poling the boat closer through the waves.

OLD HAWAIIAN (CONT'D)

My ride's here.

He uses her shoulder to help get to his feet.

SHELLY

You can see him?

OLD HAWAIIAN

Of course, Shelly.

He wades into the water. Then ON the water.

Then he's on the boat. Suddenly Shelly runs to water's edge.

SHELLY

Wait. Wait. How did you know my name was Shelly?

The Old Hawaiian smiles with complete tenderness. Suddenly, a ball SAILS into view and lands on the beach. She runs over, picks it up. It's HER ball. The scuffed ball. She stares back at the boat. They're fading now. For one moment, the Angel's face morphs into the face of her brother, Paul.

SHELLY (CONT'D)

Paul? You're my Angel? Paul?

He beams back with love, morphs into her Angel, and fades.

SHELLY (CONT'D)

Wait, wait. Paul, Paul, don't go.

She wades out. There's something new, fierce. She yells.

SHELLY (CONT'D)

It's Lent, God. Ash Wednesday. Everyone has said yes and their yes was as scary for them to grant as this one is for me.

(MORE)

## SHELLY (CONT'D)

And now it's my 'yes' to give to You. And I'm so afraid I can't do this and I also know that nothing is impossible with You, so You and I are going to have to finish this one together. Because I can't do it on my own. So what I'm giving up this year, what I'm offering up to You for Lent is this. I'm giving up fear.

She throws the ball. It arcs in a spiral of light and dips into a silvery sea. She takes a breath. At peace.

## INT. ROGER'S STUDY - DAY

She signs the contracts in Roger's office.

## INT. MECUM'S KITCHEN - DAY

A cork board with the words '**Bus 4**' and photos. We HEAR VOICES as she types and SEE QUICK FLASHES of PHOTOS.

## VOICES OVERLAPPING

'The mountain is pointing at God.'  
 'I see God in the great vines.'  
 'I took a picture of an Army standing with God.' 'God always lights the way to heaven.'  
 'Dolphins are God's pets.'

Gradually, we hear a sound we come to identify. A lawn mower, the GRATING NOISE all she hears. She stops writing.

## SHELLY

John. Joey. John.

It gets LOUDER. Shelly goes to the door, exasperated.

## SHELLY (CONT'D)

Joh--

She stops. It's Ron, mowing her lawn. Joey and John weed.

## RON

Mrs. M.

From around the corner come Irene and Danny holding a basket of treats from the store. And then from all sides...come Maggie, Grandpa Joe, Mabel, Alicia, Peggy, Frank, Ty, Nick, Jane, Lizzie, Henry. They hold buckets, sponges, casseroles. Lanny's there, too, along with Auntie Loo Loo.

RON (CONT'D)  
Mrs. M. Community...caring. And  
that's not an oxymoron.

He peels away. Irene faces her.

IRENE  
I'm sorry. You needed me and I  
wasn't there. I am now.

She reaches for Shelly, hugs her. It's Grandpa Joe's turn.

GRANDPA JOE  
I taught Alicia to say haole. I  
need to unteach that.

Shelly grips his hand. Next Maggie stands there. And grins.

MAGGIE  
Alright, enough. Let's break open  
the bag of chips and get to work.

EXT. MECUM'S HOUSE - DAY

Grandpa Joe organizes a group of kids to wash the windows.

INT. MECUM'S KITCHEN - DAY

Peggy washes the floor as Shelly types, moving her feet.  
Peggy picks up a bucket. Henry's hand takes it. A look.

A tender connection that's growing.

DIFFERENT DAY. Maggie makes dinner for the boys as Irene  
folds laundry. The paper stack grows next to the computer.

MIDDLE OF THE NIGHT. In her robe, she works. Maggie, in her  
robe, places a cup of coffee down. Shelly waves her thanks.

DAWN. Shelly's head is mashed to the photos and journals.  
Irene covers her up with a blanket, the manuscript nearby.  
Roger gently wakes her. She hands him the book-to-be.

EXT. SCHOOL COURTYARD - DAY

SOUND OF CONCH. Grandpa Joe blows.

ALICIA V.O.  
Harper San Francisco bought the  
book. But it was the story that  
saved our school.

The moody conch sound is heard . . .

EXT. LIZZIE'S HOUSE - DAY

By Lizzie and Frank, rushing past a bunny in the yard. We SEE: The bunny wears a collar and tag: FLOPSY.

Ron, Henry and Peggy come outside of the house. Henry reaches for Peggy's hand. They both wear wedding rings. We see now Peggy is pregnant.

DANNY V.O.

Our little school, smallest on the whole island, created a miracle.

INT. RURAL GROCERY STORE - DAY

Irene and Danny hurry out, changing the sign to 'CLOSED.'

EXT. GRANDMA'S HOUSE - DAY

The Hawaiian grandmothers hear the sound and rush out.

EXT. SCHOOL CHAPEL - DAY

The courtyard fills with the school community. Grandpa Joe lowers the conch. Shelly holds aloft a real copy.

INSERT/STILL: COVER GOD'S PHOTO ALBUM BOOK

The crowd erupts.

INT. STATE CAPITOL ROTUNDA - DAY

Alicia and Danny are at a mike, reading aloud. In the audience legislators, parents, students and teachers beam.

ALICIA

And today we're being honored here by all of you legislators.

INT. LOLANI'S HOUSE - DAY

Lolani and Bette are listening intently to the radio. Lolani grips a copy of God's Photo Album as...

DANNY OS (RADIO)

So now we'd like to tell you...

INT. STATE CAPITOL ROTUNDA - DAY

DANNY

...what we learned on our big  
adventure.

They step back. Cat sings a cappella a song like 'When You Believe,' joined by the school choir, Shelly directing.

OVER SINGING WE SEE...

FOOTAGE of the REAL SHELLY and KIDS, honored at the Hawaiian Rotunda by the legislators.

Followed by a SERIES OF SNAPS...

THE REAL SHELLY AND KIDS

Signing books at a store with a line waiting.

Another store...another line...

A blizzard of photos, all of BEAMING KIDS HOLDING BOOKS.

TO BLACK:

God's Photo Album was the lead title for Harper San Francisco, a division of HarperCollins.

It was chosen by One Spirit as a Main Selection book.

Over twenty internationally famous writers endorsed God's Photo Album. Before it was ever written. An unprecedented occurrence.

The first print run was 100,000 copies.

Our Lady of Perpetual Help School, 'the school that wrote the book', is still operating in Ewa Beach.

God's Photo Album launched a movement for families of all faiths to go looking for God. And find Him.

The book is now found all over the world.

FADE OUT