

RESCUING MANNY

by
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OVER BLACK:

Sounds of breathing. Short, staccato. Muffled, then clear at times.

Faint crying, but it's in the distance.

The sounds grow closer. A tiny VOICE. It's young, like a toddler's.

TODDLER

Mommy. Mommy?

Whimpering.

FADE IN:

WHITE LIGHT.

The iris of the camera adjusts to its ancillary light turning on. We are inside a narrow tube, ten, maybe twelve inches in diameter.

The camera moves through the dirty, suffocating tube. The grainy view obscures what's ahead.

Another whimper, then something tiny, familiar. It looks like a hand. Fingers move slightly then, a FACE.

A TODDLER (3) writhes in the tight confines of the pipe.

The toddler's face pushes hard against the tube's surface and one arm points above his head at an awkward angle.

Dirty tear streaks line the boy's face. He blinks rapidly against the harsh, bright light.

He looks directly at the camera lens.

TODDLER (CONT'D)

Mommy!

Cheers echo down through the tube.

EXT. A FARMER'S FIELD - NIGHT

Flashlights dart all over as several MEN run toward a brightly lit spot.

Red and blue light from a Sheriff's Chevy Blazer cuts the black of night in the distance as it approaches the group.

A bright beam of light is focused on the ground where several MEN stand. A cable attached to the monitor snakes down the hole.

INSERT: TV MONITOR - The camera on the other end of the monitor inches down the drainage pipe closer toward the trapped little boy.

BACK TO SCENE

In the distance, multiple sirens approach.

Keys rattling, leather squeaking. Footsteps in the gravel.

SHERIFF WALLER

Well, boys.

All the flashlights, turn to...

Sheriff Karl Waller (30s), a barrel-chested man in a perfectly pressed uniform and polished buttons. He presides over the group.

The MEN almost come to attention in his presence.

He leans down and eyes the monitor.

SHERIFF WALLER (CONT'D)

That little guy's wedged in there good.

One MAN is still glued to the monitor, GARY NEWTON (20s), the town's EMT. Young and fresh, he's going to heal the world.

Gary leans in closer to the monitor that now frames the boy's face.

GARY

It's hard to tell. It looks like there some possible circulation issues from the pressure of the pipe.

Gary motions the sheriff over.

GARY (CONT'D)

Look, right here, puffiness around his eye. Fingers swelling, too.

Gary looks back to a very disinterested sheriff. OTHERS gather back around the monitor.

GARY (CONT'D)
We've got to get him out quick, or
he's not going to make it.

The sheriff casts questioning eyes on the young EMT.

SHERIFF WALLER
Now, just what makes you an expert
on rescues?

Gary turns back to the monitor, ignoring the sheriff.

RESCUER #1
I think Swenson's callin' Craig
Duncan on the CB. He could dig him
out.

The sheriff stands up, erect and commanding.

SHERIFF WALLER
Hold on, before we go and do
anything like that, is that boy
even gonna make it?

GARY
He will if we get off our asses and
get him out.

The Sheriff now hovers over Gary like a mountain.

SHERIFF WALLER
Like I asked, you an expert?

RESCUER #1
We just reached Craig on the CB.

The sheriff whips around to the group.

SHERIFF WALLER
I didn't authorize any...

MAN (O.S.)
I did. As far as I'm concerned
you're trespassing if you're not
here to help.

The sheriff slowly turns to the MAN.

SHERIFF WALLER
Swenson. Shoulda figured your pansy
ass was out here.

SWENSON

Craig's on the way.

(beat)

Oh, and sheriff, I called the Mayor, too. He said to get that boy out and that's what we're going to do.

SHERIFF WALLER

I'm not gonna waste my time rescuing some spic who fell into a pipe. I'm callin' this whole operation off!

Behind Sheriff Waller stands Maria Flores (30s), short on stature, but resolute as she stomps up the sheriff.

MARIA

You're going to rescue my boy, do you hear me, sheriff?

Sheriff Waller walks closer. He looms over her. She moves in as well, her face chest high on the sheriff.

MARIA (CONT'D)

Because if you don't, I'll make sure you never see another day of sheriffing here again.

EXT. FARM FIELD - NIGHT - LATER

A large truck approaches the group. Equipment rattles and shakes along the rough path.

CRAIG DUNCAN (30s) pulls up in his "Duncan Drilling and Excavating" truck.

The truck is rigged with drilling equipment and it's pulling a backhoe and trailer.

Craig walks over to assess the situation. The monitor of the little boy glows in the night.

GARY

He's about 15 feet down or so.

CRAIG

Well, that's a two to three-hour dig, maybe longer. Better get started.

EXT. FARM FIELD - NIGHT - LATER

Craig works the backhoe like a surgeon works with a scalpel, each move precise and purposeful.

Craig cuts the power and waves Swenson over.

CRAIG

We're two hours in and only a few feet down. We're still 10 hours away from that boy, maybe longer.

Headlights bounce in the distance as another large truck makes it way across the field.

SWENSON

You got more gear showing up?

CRAIG

Not my truck.

The giant, white vehicle comes to a dusty stop. Large red "GNN" letters are emblazoned on the door. A pole and satellite poke out of the top.

SWENSON

What the hell is GNN?

The other men shrug their shoulders.

Out of the truck steps CATHERINE CARPENTER (20s) into the field. She's make-up pretty with a red business suit and heels. She teeters across the rough terrain toward the men.

A technician gets out of the driver's side and begins raising a boom lifting the dish high into the Texan night sky.

CATHERINE

I'm Catherine Carpenter with Global News Network. Who's in charge here?

Each man points in a different direction to a different man.

CATHERINE (CONT'D)

We're going live in seven minutes. One of you is going on air.

The men look at each other concerned.

Gary approaches Swenson.

GARY

It's so hard to see on the monitor, but the little boy...

SWENSON
Is he still alive?

GARY
Yes.. he's starting to shut down.
We don't have 10 hours to get him
out.

Swenson eyes Craig, who's heard every word. He looks over at the drill rig on his truck.

GNN CAMERAMAN
Tower's up, Catherine. We've got a
link and we go live in three.

Now the group shares an even more concerned look. They huddle as the cameraman lights up the night with the video strobes.

Catherine readies herself.

GNN CAMERAMAN (CONT'D)
Shit! We lost the link.

CATHERINE
Get it back! We need to be live
with this ASAP.

The cameraman turns dials and flips switches on the truck to reconnect with the satellite.

CRAIG
We're drillin'. It's quicker and we
can get closer to him.

EXT. FARM FIELD - NIGHT - LATER

Craig mans the controls of the drill as it pungenes thgrough the earth. Swenson scurries over to the rig in the dark.

SWENSON
This has got to work. We're on live
TV.

CRAIG
I could give a shit about the TV.
We're here to save that boy.

Lights come up bright in the background near where Craig digs.

CATHERINE

This is Catherine Carpenter reporting live from just outside El Paso, Texas, where a small contingency has gathered to rescue...

The word "rescue" echoes, then fades.

SUPER: 30 Years Later

EXT. FRONT PORCH OF A TYPICAL SUBURBAN HOME - NIGHT

MANNY FLORES (30s), pudgy, anxious, shuffles his feet uncomfortably on the porch steps.

Sweat beads slide down his sickly, pale-looking face. He's nervous as hell.

His index finger hovers over the doorbell to his own home. A wedding band tightly secured on his ring finger.

Manny looks up at the sign above the threshold and sighs deeply.

It reads: "Home of the Flores Family"

INT. DINING ROOM OF THE FLORES HOME - NIGHT

Fresh, crisp linens, polished silverware, and shiny water goblets.

Sounds of a family preparing the meal edge into the room from the adjacent kitchen. An evening breeze pushes through the curtains.

DING DONG!

Children, CHRISTOPHER (8), and OLIVIA (5), rush the front door. It flies open!

CHILDREN

Daddy!

RACHEL (11), hangs back as the other two, shower him with hugs and kisses.

CHRISTOPHER

Papa, watch! I can do eight push ups now!

The boy drops to the floor and begins pumping away.

CHRISTOPHER (CONT'D)

Papa, I got an A on my math test!
Rachel got a C in Spanish.

RACHEL

Shut up, butthead!

Matriarch LUCIA FLORES (late 30s) yells from the kitchen.

LUCIA (O.S.)

RACHEL! Apologize to your brother
this instant!

RACHEL

Sorry
(beat)
Butthead!
(whispers)

OLIVIA

Daddy, Roger Howell pooped in his
pants today in class.

Distracted with hearing Lucia's voice, Manny replies to
Olivia unaware of what she said.

MANNY

That's great, sweetie! That's just
great!

The confused little girl wanders to the dinner table.

Manny finds a seat at the table that now seems foreign to
him.

The children exit into the kitchen and reappear, each with a
dish of delicious-looking food.

Enter Lucia, a cross between June Cleever and Eisenhower, if
Eisenhower wore a flower-print apron. Loving, caring, and
runs a tight ship!

She carries the main dish - homemade pork tamales.

The chatter stops and everyone gazes at the platter of food.

They take their places at the table. Lucia barely makes eye
contact with Manny. Rachel sits in the one furthest from
Manny.

The family bows their heads to say grace. Lucia nods to Manny
to say the blessing.

MANNY (CONT'D)
 Bless us, Oh Lord, and these thy
 gifts, which we are about to...

The phone in the kitchen RINGS - loud. Manny pauses, as he and Lucia and share a look. Lucia nods to Manny to continue.

MANNY (CONT'D)
 ...to receive, from thy bounty,
 through Christ our lord, Amen.

In unison, the family hurriedly says amen, then digs in.

RING!

Manny and Lucia share a more concerned look. Lucia knows who it is.

LUCIA
 She's been calling all week!

MANNY
 I should go answer it.

Lucia nods, and Manny goes to the kitchen to get the call.

LUCIA
 Tell her "no."

MANNY (O.S.)
 Hi, Catherine. Yes, it's getting
 close to that time again, isn't it?

Now, Lucia looks perturbed and the children stop eating and perk up at the conversation in the kitchen.

LUCIA
 CHILDREN! Please eat and let your
 papa be.

Olivia pipes up with a question.

OLIVIA
 Mama, is papa going to be on the TV
 again?

LUCIA
 No, dear, your papa is done with
 that.

Christopher and Rachel watch Lucia for a reaction before wading into the conversation. Thinking it's safe, they begin peppering her with questions.

RACHEL
 Why is that lady calling again? I
 DO NOT like her.

CHRISTOPHER
 Papa is a TV star. Like reality TV.

Even more perturbed, Lucia tries to regain control of dinner.

LUCIA
 CHILDREN!. Please, let's focus on
 our meals.

The table calms down, but the children eye each other to see
 who's going to say something next.

OLIVIA
 Papa's like the Kardashington lady.
 Really famous!

LUCIA
 Papa is nothing like those people.
 Your daddy sometimes tries very
 hard for this family. Those people
 don't really do anything but..

CHRISTOPHER
 I heard one of them injects stuff
 in her butt to make it look bigger.

LUCIA
 CHRISTOPHER MICHAEL!

The kids snicker, Lucia tries to mask her smile with a frown
 - not successfully.

CHRISTOPHER
 Sorry, mama. Rachel read it in one
 of your magazines.

Rachel glares at Christopher.

RACHEL
 I did not!

MANNY (O.S.)
 Let me think about it, Catherine. I
 know, it's 30 years but... OK, let
 me call you in a day or two.

Manny enters the dining room. The table chatter stops quiet,
 again as all eyes are on him.

MANNY (CONT'D)
Please eat, everyone. Lucia, these
tamales look great!

INT. KITCHEN OF THE FLORES HOME - NIGHT - LATER

Lucia and Manny finish dishes. The kids work on homework at the dining room table, but their chatter indicates anything but school studies. The two listen in.

CHRISTOPHER (O.S.)
Why did that lady ask Papa if he
should have been rescued?

RACHEL (O.S.)
Sshhh! We're trying to do our
homework.
(beat)
She doesn't think papa's life has
been important.

OLIVIA (O.S.)
Is it supposed to be important?

RACHEL (O.S.)
Yes, and you're supposed to try
hard and care for your family.

Lucia gives Manny the I-told-you-so look.

LUCIA
You're not seriously thinking of
doing this again, are you?

MANNY
I don't know. Catherine said it was
an important year.

Lucia bluntly turns away.

LUCIA
THAT is why you're not living here
anymore. You have no clue how to
say no and you continue to let
people walk all over you and this
family!

Manny continues to dry the dishes and nods in agreement.

MANNY
Thank you for letting me come to
dinner and see the kids.