

THE DAY SHE AWAKENED
A Film Short

Written By

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INT. STUDIO APARTMENT BEDROOM- MORNING UNNAMED TOWN

Broad view of dimly lit room in unnamed Southern town.

A person is laying face down on top of a made bed, in wrinkled clothes from the night before.

A one-room studio apartment reflects a depressive mood. Modestly decorated with a small round dinette table and two chairs, a lonely calendar on the fridge reflecting the present date as past days are marked off, a bed, one nightstand and an alarm clock. Dark curtains are almost drawn with a sliver of light peeking through.

A spotlight reveals CARTER DELL COLLINSWORTH barely clinging to an empty pill bottle.

CARTER (O.S.)

The day I fell asleep was the day I awakened. My entire life has been a lie. I was terrified to come out as gay, especially livin in the South. I flew under the radar. My best and only friend is my Aunt Dolly. I have spent 19 years feeling like an empty shell with no meaning. No purpose. I just wanted to stop the pain cause no one will miss me.

Carter COUGHS, turns over and sits up on the bed. She looks down and is holding an empty pill bottle. Carter stumbles when trying to stand.

INT. STUDIO BATHROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Carter walks to the bathroom sink. More empty pill bottles flock the sink. She stares at her reflection in the mirror, fighting back tears and torn with emotions.

INT. STUDIO APARTMENT BEDROOM- MOMENTS LATER

INSERT: PHONE

Carter looks down at her iphone on the nightstand and picks it up. There are 5 missed calls from Momma and 3 voicemails from Momma. Shock hits her when she realizes how long she's been out.

CARTER

I was out for 18 hours?

Carter dials her voicemail and presses speaker. All three VOICEMAILS play from her Momma, JEAN ANN.

JEAN ANN (O.S.)

Carter, this is your Momma. You missed our lunch call.

Carter, I'm starting to get worried because you missed family dinner and I made your favorite. Please call me back.

Carter Dell Collinsworth, I'm worried sick. I'm using my key and comin over.

BACK TO SCENE

Carter SIGHS DEEP, fights back tears, dials her momma's number and lays back down on her bed. POV inside of her eyelids slowly dipping to close and shuts as she passes back out.

INT. STUDIO APARTMENT FRONT DOOR - SEVERAL MINUTES LATER

JANGLING KEYS. Jean Ann hurriedly UNLOCKS DOOR and swings it wide open. Carter is passed out on the bed as Jean Ann surveys the apartment.

INSERT: EMPTY PILL BOTTLES

An empty pill bottle is on the bed. The bathroom door is open to reveal additional empty pill bottles on the sink.

BACK TO SCENE

INT. STUDIO APARTMENT BEDROOM - SECONDS LATER

Jean Ann is frantically trying to wake Carter, fighting back tears.

INSERT: PHONE

Jean Ann dials 911 on her phone and puts it on speaker.

JEAN ANN

I found my daughter unconscious. I think she overdosed. Please hurry.

BACK TO SCENE

Jean Ann DROPS THE PHONE to cradle her daughter in her arms, rocking and holding her tight on the bed.

An AMBULANCE SIREN blares in the background growing louder as Jean Ann continues to hold her daughter, is silently praying and CRYING.

INT. HOSPITAL ER ROOM- AFTERNOON

NURSE KAM BECKETT is holding a chart standing next to Jean Ann in the corner of the ER room. Carter is in and out of consciousness laying in the hospital bed. HEART MONITOR BEEPING in the background. Nurse Kam speaks.

NURSE KAM

Can I get you anything Mrs. Collinsworth?

JEAN ANN

Coffee. A splash of vodka?

NURSE KAM

I'll see about that coffee.

Jean Ann nods her head yes while staring over at her daughter in the bed, disbelief this is happening. Reality is setting in.

Nurse Kam exits the room.

Jean Ann walks to Carter's bed and grabs Carter's hand, trying to fight back tears. HEART MONITOR BEEPING in the background as Jean Ann keeps glancing up at it.

Nurse Kam enters the room again.

NURSE KAM (CONT'D)

Your family has arrived in the waiting room.

Torn to leave her daughter's side, she bends down to KISS her forehead and inaudibly WHISPERS in her ear.

NURSE KAM (CONT'D)

I'm brewing a fresh pot of coffee.

Jean Ann looks up and nods ok to Nurse Kam.

Nurse Kam exits the room. Jean Ann looks at the HEART MONITOR BEEPING, looks down at Carter, squeezes her hand and exits the room. Carter is still unconscious.

INT. ER WAITING ROOM - SEVERAL MINUTES LATER

Jean Ann walks into the waiting room filled with family including her SISTERS and her other daughter SISSY.

INT. ER HOSPITAL WAITING ROOM DOORS - MOMENTS LATER

PASTOR RANDALL enters the ER doors and enters the waiting room, bible in hand.

INT. ER WAITING ROOM - SECONDS LATER

Pastor Randall removes his hat, nods, hugs Jean Ann and then hugs Sissy.

SISSY

Thank you for coming Pastor Randall.

PASTOR RANDALL

Of course. I have known your family since your grandfather and I were little boys. We are family darlin.

Pastor Randall is holding Sissy's hand. He turns to Jean Ann, giving his gentle warm look as she had seen many times in church and grabs her hand. Pastor Randall motions for the family to form a prayer circle.

PASTOR RANDALL (CONT'D)

Let us bow our heads in prayer.

The family all bow their heads, all holding hands in a circle as we see Pastor Randall leading them in an INAUDIBLE PRAYER.

Jean Ann is last to raise her head, family all staring at her, tears streaming down her face. The family all walk away but stay within earshot.

Pastor Randall hugs Jean Ann once more.

INSERT: BROCHURE

Pastor Randall hands a brochure to Jean Ann. She tries to focus on what it says.

PASTOR RANDALL (CONT'D)

I already called Camp Changeover and they saved a place for Carter.

The brochure displays bold Camp Changeover lettering with the phrases "Pray The Gay Away" and "Conversion Therapy Works."

BACK TO SCENE

Concerned and upset, Jean Ann keeps her composure to engage with Pastor Randall.

JEAN ANN
My daughter isn't broken Pastor
Randall.

Nurse Kam enters the ER waiting room, waiting for the right time in the conversation to hand Jean Ann her coffee.

PASTOR RANDALL
I know this is hard Jean Ann. Camp
Changeover has a 95% success rate.
She must repent.

Jean Ann semi smiles, takes a DEEP BREATH and collects her thoughts before replying.

JEAN ANN
Thank you for the prayers Pastor
Randall. Carter will not be going
to any conversion camp.

INSERT: BROCHURE

Jean Ann hands the brochure back to Pastor Randall.

PASTOR RANDALL
I'd like to pray over Carter before
I leave.

BACK TO SCENE

Nurse Kam CLEARS HER THROAT to purposefully interrupt the conversation. Jean Ann turns around to face Nurse Kam, unspoken language only another mother would understand. Jean Ann purposely puts her back to Pastor Randall.

INSERT: DISPOSABLE COFFEE CUP

Jean Ann SIGHS RELIEF as she gingerly accepts the cup of coffee from Nurse Kam like its liquid gold.

BACK TO SCENE

NURSE KAM
I have some paperwork from the
doctor.

Jean Ann gives a smile of relief and takes a much needed SIP of her coffee. She lets out a SIGH, smiles from the sip, takes a DEEP BREATH and turns back to face Pastor Randall.

She has caffeine courage and draws up her strength to speak respectfully.

JEAN ANN

Thank you, but no thank you Pastor.
Please drive safe going home.

INT. HOSPITAL HALLWAY - AN HOUR LATER

Nurse Kam walks with Jean Ann toward Carter's room.

NURSE KAM

My son is gay. I became a nurse
because I was in your exact shoes
10 years ago.

Jean Ann quickly looks up from her coffee to Nurse Kam. She feels like she made a new friend. She understands her pain.

JEAN ANN

And your son now?

NURSE KAM

Charlie and I went to therapy. He
moved to the city and became an
LGBTQ Youth Counselor at the non-
denominational church.

JEAN ANN

You have given me hope for my
Carter.

NURSE KAM

You know, our cafeteria and chapel
are just up the hall from the
waiting room if you need a break.

Jean Ann half smiles and nods to Nurse Kam because she noticed she needs an emotional break.

INT. HOSPITAL ER ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Jean Ann enters Carter's room and walks to her bedside. Carter is starting to STIR.

JEAN ANN

I have some of your clean clothes
in the car when we get out of here
baby girl.

Jean Ann brushes her daughter's bed hair back and uncovers a gay pride flag tattoo on her neck. Carter struggles to open her eyes, blinking frequently.

Carter slightly opens her eyes to convey sorrow for her actions. Staring up at her Momma with tears filling her eyes.

Jean Ann is fighting back tears, trying to stay strong for Carter, her family and to keep her composure.

Carter starts LICKING her dry lips, a sign of her thirst for water.

Jean Ann grabs the cup of water off the bed tray, inserts a straw and puts it to Carter's mouth to DRINK. She grabs the lip salve from her purse and puts some on Carter's lips.

Carter struggles to find her voice and CLEARS HER THROAT.

CARTER

Momma, I'm sorry. I didn't mean to disappoint you. Because. Well. I'm gay.

JEAN ANN

I've always known and you could never disappoint me.

Jean Ann strokes her daughter's hair again, smiling down at her.

CARTER

You didn't say anything.

JEAN ANN

Not my story to tell. You had to be ready. I do wish you would have come to me sooner so we could talk.

CARTER

I love you. I'm tired.

Carter closes her eyes and drifts back asleep.

JEAN ANN

Rest baby girl.

Jean Ann KISSES Carter's forehead. She looks at the BEEPING HEART MONITOR to check before she exits the room.

INT. JUST OUTSIDE HOSPITAL ER ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Outside Carter's room Jean Ann stops, leans against the wall. She takes a DEEP BREATH, pauses and pulls out her makeup compact to check herself. She gains composure and returns the compact to her purse as she heads toward the waiting room.

INT. HOSPITAL ER ROOM - AN HOUR LATER

Carter SCREECHES in her sleep and wakes up, she FIDGETS in the bed and realizes she is strapped down to the bed rails. Suicide attempt protocol. She stops struggling as she fights back tears.

INT. ER WAITING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Jean Ann walks into the ER waiting room as family advances on her. Sissy quickly pulls Jean Ann aside.

SISSY

What really happened? The whole town is talkin Momma.

JEAN ANN

I don't give a month of Sundays what anyone says because we are not sending your sister away.

SISSY

We have to nip behavioral choices in the bud Momma. She just needs a good man like my Jimmy Don.

JEAN ANN

That's your life, not hers.

Jean Ann gives a stern and warning look at Sissy as she starts to walk away.

SISSY

I'll go with you.

Jean Ann spins around on her heels and holds her hand up to say stop to Sissy. She gives a harder look that Sissy knows to leave her alone. Jean Ann pushes through the waiting room doors and heads toward the cafeteria.

INT. HOSPITAL CAFETERIA - MOMENTS LATER

Jean Ann quickly gets another cup of coffee and eyes the chapel sign through the cafeteria windows.

INT. HOSPITAL CHAPEL - MOMENTS LATER

Jean Ann quietly enters the empty chapel and chooses a bench seat near the front of the room.

Jean Ann takes a SIP of coffee, CLEARS HER THROAT, continues to fight back tears, takes a DEEP BREATH and looks toward the altar at the front of the room. She is fighting back emotions and WHISPERING silent prayers to God, clutching her coffee.

INT. ER NURSE'S DESK - 2 HOURS LATER IN AFTERNOON

Quick change to Sissy snooping and spots her sisters chart after the nurse quickly leaves her station for a CODE BLUE announced overhead.

INSERT: MEDICAL CHART FOLDER

Sissy reads diagnosis of suicidal overdose in bold letters on her sister's chart.

SISSY

What the H-E double hockey sticks.

BACK TO SCENE

Shocked, Sissy goes looking for her Momma.

INT. HOSPITAL CHAPEL - 30 MINUTES LATER IN AFTERNOON

Sissy discovers Jean Ann in the chapel and sits next to her.

SISSY

Carter overdosed?

JEAN ANN

Shut your mouth.

SISSY

I don't want my baby sister to burn in Hell.

JEAN ANN

Where's your compassion Sissy? And I said I wanted to be alone.

SISSY

But, people are talkin.

Jean Ann gives a warning look to Sissy, letting her know she is overstepping boundaries and pushing her patience.

JEAN ANN
Focus on your own life Sissy.

SISSY
Carter is choosin to live in sin,
Momma. She overdosed, a sin. She's
a liar, another sin.

Jean Ann reacts and SLAPS Sissy hard in the face. Shocked look on both of their faces as Jean Ann abruptly gets up and exits the chapel, leaving Sissy sitting alone and fighting back tears.

INT. OUTSIDE HOSPITAL CHAPEL DOORS - MOMENTS LATER

Jean Ann stops outside the chapel doors, silent tears streaming down her face. She spots her meddlesome SISTER CLARA and dashes for the bathroom.

INT. HOSPITAL CHAPEL - SECONDS LATER

Sissy is down on her knees at the chapel alter praying and clutching her bible to her chest.

SISSY
Please lay hands on my sister. She
just needs a good man to straighten
her up.

Sissy is CRYING at the alter as the chapel doors open and AUNT CLARA, AUNT DOLLY and AUNT PATSY rush in toward Sissy. They pull Sissy up and all go sit in one of the pews.

AUNT CLARA
We've been lookin for you.

AUNT PATSY
Where's your Momma?

SISSY
We had a fight. She stormed out.

INSERT: BROCHURE

AUNT CLARA
Did she read the brochure? Uncle
Lloyd and I will pay for the camp.

BACK TO SCENE

Aunt Clara is clutching the brochure like it is her bible. Adamant it's the cure Carter needs. Frustrated Jean Ann won't consider it.

AUNT PATSY

I can talk to her? I'll take her shoppin.

Aunt Patsy wants to be the peacekeeper, lighten the energy, care for Jean Ann as she thinks shoppin cures everything as retail therapy.

AUNT DOLLY

Do y'all hear yourselves? You know Carter is like a daughter to me since I couldn't have my own children.

The sisters are inaudibly CHATTERING while trying to console Sissy and not judge Carter's actions or Jean Ann's inactions.

Aunt Dolly has an angelic smile, a compassionate spirit just like Dolly Parton, her namesake with understanding eyes.

Aunt Clara has a look of disapproval, concern and stern face resembling the school teacher face when you are in trouble.

Aunt Patsy mimics Aunt Clara's emotional reactions and yet mouths a silent apology behind Clara's back to Dolly. Aunt Patsy wants everyone to get along and is fighting inner turmoil about what Clara and the bible says.

AUNT CLARA

We are just...

Feeling dismissed by Dolly, Clara crosses her arms, pouts. She is not convincing Dolly that Carter's soul needs saved.

AUNT DOLLY

Meddlin where you shouldn't. The Lord don't make mistakes.

Dolly gives a stern yet sweet look that says stop and be quiet. The sisters and Sissy are trying to listen, but are grappling with their own thoughts.

Sissy goes to speak, stops, looks at Aunt Dolly and swallows hard.

SISSY

I said some awful things to Momma.

Regret and worry on Sissy's face as she fights back tears.

AUNT DOLLY

You should go find her darlin.

Sissy squeezes Aunt Dolly's hand, KISSES each Aunt on the cheek and exits the chapel.

AUNT DOLLY (CONT'D)

I'm the oldest, so listen good. The Bible is against judgments. The point is rooted in love. What does anyone else's life have to do with yours or mine? You both know what it's like to have fingers pointed at you. We are sayin more prayers with love and standing united beside our baby sister. No arguments. Am I clear?

Dolly grabs each sister's hand, gives her stern yet loving look as she is sitting in the middle and they begin to silently pray together.

INT. HOSPITAL ER ROOM - HOURS LATER IN THE EVENING

Carter's bright white socks exposed subtly point to Sissy sitting in the corner reading her bible. Carter's voice is heard while focus is on Sissy.

CARTER (O.S.)

Lifestyle is a word thrown in your face like a weapon, as a word describing gays that won't live a straight life. Like anyone chooses to be gay. I didn't choose this. You choose what color shirt to wear or the foods you eat.

Jean Ann enters Carter's quiet ER hospital room and spots Sissy in the corner.

Sissy stands up to leave. Jean Ann puts a hand on her shoulder to sit her back down. They both stare off in Carter's direction as Jean Ann fights back tears.

SISSY

I'm sorry Momma. I was outta line.

JEAN ANN

I should have known your sister was hurtin.

SISSY

You didn't know Momma. None of us did.

JEAN ANN

Carter was about 5 when I noticed she didn't take a liking to boys. I saw her kiss Barbie Sue when they were about 10 and didn't say anything cause I figured she would tell me when she was ready.

SISSY

It's a phase and bad choices.

JEAN ANN

No Sissy. Your sister is gay and I don't give a rat's ass who she loves.

Jean Ann puts up a hand up to let Sissy know she won't hear anymore of what's coming out of her mouth.

SISSY

How can you be ok with this?

JEAN ANN

Put your religion aside Sissy and be here for your sister. You are entitled to believe whatever you want, but I won't let you judge or push your beliefs onto your sister.

SISSY

The Bible...

Stern look on Jean Ann's face lets Sissy know she is way out of line and being disrespectful.

JEAN ANN

I read the same book Sissy.

Several moments of silence go by as Sissy suddenly straightens up. She is having her own awakening moment.

SISSY

We almost lost her today.

Tears stream down Sissy's face, she softens.

Sissy JUMPS up and throws her arms around her Momma's neck, SOBBING.

Jean Ann softens too as she holds Sissy tight in her arms.

The room is quiet as Carter suddenly speaks.

CARTER
I'm thirsty.

Jean Ann and Sissy break their embrace to hurriedly go stand on either side of Carter's bed, each taking one of Carter's hands.

Jean Ann pulls Carter's pillow up, grabs the cup of water off the bedside tray, bends the straw to let her take a DRINK.

JEAN ANN
You scared us to death.

SISSY
We are all here. I'm gonna go
update the family. Give you some
time alone with Momma. I love you
lil sis.

Sissy KISSES Carter's cheek, then KISSES Jean Ann's cheek and exits the hospital room.

Carter keeps her eyes on her Momma as she continues to DRINK from the straw and fights back tears.

Jean Ann lovingly smiles at her daughter as she strokes her hair.

Mother and daughter stay present just looking into each other's eyes, conveying all the emotions without words.

INT. ER WAITING ROOM - LATE EVENING

Jean Ann and Sissy are the last two people in the waiting room, both asleep and slumped into one another. A NOISE startles Jean Ann, she JUMPS and it startles Sissy awake.

JEAN ANN
You should go home. Get some rest.

SISSY
I don't want to leave you.

JEAN ANN
Go. I'll be fine.

SISSY
I'll call you in the morning. I
love you momma.

JEAN ANN

I love you too.

Sissy stands and bends down to KISS her mother's cheek. She hesitates before grabbing her bible, picks it up and reluctantly exits the waiting room.

INT. STUDIO APARTMENT - A WEEK LATER IN THE AFTERNOON

Jean Ann is asleep on Carter's couch. She slowly awakes from the bright sunlight shining in, sits up and turns to look in the direction of Carter's bed blurred out by the sunlight. Detailed focus is on Jean Ann.

Jean Ann groggily rises to move into the kitchen.

INT. STUDIO KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER

Jean Ann makes herself some coffee, marks off another day on the calendar that now reflects one week later.

Jean Ann sits at the quaint dinette table clutching to a red coffee mug. Slight edge of Carter's bright white shirt faces Jean Ann across the table.

JEAN ANN

I seem to sleep better here. (Beat)
But, I'm ready to take you home.
Where you belong.

There is a KNOCK at the door.

INT. STUDIO FRONT DOOR - SECONDS LATER

Jean Ann walks to the front door to let the movers in. The two movers enter. Jean Ann points and gives brief inaudible instructions to take the dozen or so packed boxes and everything except the dinette set.

INT. STUDIO APARTMENT KITCHEN - AN HOUR LATER

Jean Ann is standing in front of the fridge and reluctantly removes the calendar. She turns to face the dinette table with the lone red mug.

Jean Ann looks over at Carter's chair that reveals the white shirt is actually draped over the chair. Carter isn't sitting there.

Jean Ann slowly stands, removes the white shirt from Carter's chair, SMELLS it and gingerly drapes it over her arm.

Jean Ann then picks up a clear PLASTIC BAG of Carter's minimal belongings from the night in the ER. Carter's name is written on it. She CLUTCHES it to her chest as it crunches.

Jean Ann bends down to pick up the urn sitting in Carter's chair that was hidden out of sight.

Jean Ann clutches the urn, plastic bag and the calendar and slowly looks around at her daughter's empty apartment. She takes a DEEP BREATH and releases a DEEP SIGH.

JEAN ANN

Time for us all to awaken.

Jean Ann turns to face the front door, SWITCHES off the lights and exits.

The front DOOR SHUTS for the last time leaving only the lone red mug on the dinette table. Total silence.

FADE OUT