

DIAGNOSIS MURDER

"The Healing Hands"

TEASER

FADE IN:

INT. ROOM - DAY

Or night. It's hard to tell, because the room is pitch black. We can barely make-out the silhouette of a person sleeping on a cot. Suddenly the DOOR is whipped open, bathing the room in the bright, fluerescent light of a hospital emergency room. Beautiful NURSE STACY QUINN, 20s, is framed in the doorway. DR. LORING STEPHENS, 20s, sits up in bed, his hair perfectly coiffed.

NURSE QUINN
(urgently:)
Cardiac arrest in E.R.!

Dr. Stephens leaps out of bed wearing only his surgical pants and charges out the door, the stethoscope bouncing off his naked, iron pecs.

INT. HOSPITAL - DAY

Our HAND-HELD CAMERA follows Dr. Stephens as he races shirtless down the hall, weaving through patients, to reveal a BIKINI CLAD woman on a gurney. Dashing DR. JED WILLENS, 20s, is about to apply the ELECTRIC PADDLES when Dr. Stephens pins him with a glare.

DR. STEPHENS
(to Willens:)
Her heart is in my hands.

Dr. Stephens leans over the woman, plants his hands in her ample cleavage, and begins aggressive CPR.

DR. STEPHENS (CONT'D)
Live, damn it. Live.

A VOICE suddenly cuts through the drama.

MANS VOICE
Cut!

Dr. Stephens looks up, furious, and looks right into CAMERA. The bikini babe sits up. All heads turn towards us.

DR. STEPHENS
Who said that?

WIDE ANGLE
 as we PULL BACK to reveal a FILM
 CREW is set up in Community General.
 The CONFUSED DIRECTOR looks around
 at the crew.

DIRECTOR
 I didn't say that. Who said that?

The director's gaze finally falls on...

MARK SLOAN
 who shrugs, a sheepish grin on his
 face. Norman, standing beside Mark,
 looks horrified.

MARK
 Me?

And on everyone glaring at Mark angrily, we FADE OUT.

END OF TEASER

MAIN TITLES
ACT ONE FADE IN:

EXT. COMMUNITY GENERAL - ESTABLISHING - DAY

INT. HOSPITAL - DAY

Everything is as we left it. DIXON GALLOW, aka "Dr. Loring
 Stephens," advances on Mark.

GALLOW
 What do you think you're doing?

MARK
 You're shooting your TV series here
 for realism, right?

GALLOW
 What does that have to do with
 interrupting the human drama of my
 scene?

Gallow looks past Mark to admire his reflection in a window.

MARK
 A doctor would be wearing a shirt.
 (then:)
 So would the patient.

GALLOW
 My character isn't here to look good,
 he's here to save lives.

NORMAN

Exactly.

(to Mark:)

Which is what you should be doing
Dr. Sloan, and let these fine young
actors ply their craft.

Norman hustles Mark away. Gallow turns to the director.

GALLOW

How did I look?

The director gives him the thumbs up.

INT. CORRIDOR - DAY

Norman hustles Mark down the hall.

NORMAN

Since when are you a TV critic?

MARK

Since "The Healing Hands" started
shooting in our hospital.

NORMAN

It's fiction, what do you care?

MARK

Because it inaccurately portrays
doctors and what we do. Millions of
people watch that show, Norman.

NORMAN

And they'll be seeing Community
General Hospital. As the new setting
for the hot new medical show, we're
going to be famous. Besides, they're
paying us \$10,000-a-day. We're making
money without having to deal with a
single sick person.

MARK

Something all hospitals should aspire
to.

NORMAN

Let's see how critical you are when
that money buys us a new MRI suite.

MARK

I see your point.

NORMAN

Good -- then you'll stay out of their
way?

MARK

Completely.

Norman heads off, a happy man. Mark continues down the hall, when Delores rushes by in the opposite direction. He stops her.

MARK (CONT'D)

Delores -- what's the hurry?

DELORES

I've got to get to the ER before they set up the next shot. They could need another nurse down there.

MARK

(stops her:)

I'm sure they can give vaccines without your help. Besides, you're not a nurse.

DELORES

The producers of "The Healing Hands" don't know that. A talented performer can play any part.

Mark gently turns her around in the direction she came.

MARK

I've just been asked to stay out of their way.

DELORES

(turns:)

I wasn't.

MARK

(turns her back:)

If you want to perform, you can start by portraying my assistant and typing up the Lofficier report.

She glares at him and marches off. He smiles to himself and continues on, when but a glance into an examination room stops him dead in his tracks.

INT. EXAMINATION ROOM - DAY

A Doctor, LYLE FAIRBANKS, 40s, lantern-jawed and rugged, is sticking a tongue depressor in a young man's mouth.

LYLE

Yes, those are definitely ventricular extrasystoles. It could be carcinoma of the larynx.

The young man looks concerned.

YOUNG MAN

Is it fatal?

LYLE

It can be -- but not in my hands.

Mark rushes in and pulls the doctor aside.

MARK

(to the doctor:)

We need to talk.

LYLE

(to patient:)

Excuse me, I'm needed for a consult.

I won't be a moment.

They go out in the hall, leaving the frightened patient to touch his throat.

INT. HALL - DAY

The doctor breaks into a broad grin. Mark is furious.

LYLE

Mark -- it's so good to see you again.
What it's been? Ten years?

MARK

Lyle, what are you doing masquerading
as a doctor?

LYLE

I am a doctor -- again. I'm the new
Chief of Surgery on "The Healing
Hands." Thought I'd practice my
bedside manner.

MARK

You can't examine patients. You're
an actor, not a doctor.

LYLE

Tell that to the legion of "Calling
Dr. Gale" fans. They would gladly
put their lives in my hands.

MARK

Just because you play a doctor,
doesn't mean you are one.

LYLE

The five years I starred in "Calling
Dr. Gale" were as good as medical
school.

(winks at Mark:)

Thanks to the best medical consultat
in the biz.

MARK

You told that man you saw ventricular extrasystoles in his throat.

LYLE

I broke it to him as gently as I could. But I felt I had to be honest.

MARK

Ventricular extrasystoles are in the heart.

LYLE

That's why it's so dangerous when you find them in the throat.

Lyle claps Mark on the back and heads off down the hall. Mark looks after him for a moment, then is joined by Amanda.

AMANDA

Wasn't that...
(reverently:)
Dr. Adam Gale?

MARK

No, it was Lyle Fairbanks, the actor.
(then:)
Would you mind seeing the young man in exam three? He has an mild case of tonsillitis and an acute case of panic.

Mark walks off, and on Amanda's confusion, we CUT TO:

INT. HOSPITAL CAFETERIA - DAY

Jack stands at the register, waiting patiently as the fifty-ish CASHIER struggles to replace the register tape. Bored, he looks around and spots THE ACTRESS WHO PLAYED NURSE QUINN, who we will come to know as SAMANTHA standing several people behind him, holding an unpleasant looking entree as if trying to make up her mind about it.

Jack catches her eye and, frowning, shakes his head warningly. She smiles seductively and puts down the plate, then points to another entree. He waves his hand -- so-so. She points to a third, and he gives her the thumbs up. She smiles even more seductively and puts it on her tray, and gestures confusedly towards the array of side-dishes. Before he can advise her further, the cashier interrupts.

CASHIER

Five dollars and eight cents.

Jack hands her a twenty and gestures towards Samantha.

JACK

Whatever that ethereal creature wants
is on me. I'll get the change later.

Smiling, he takes his tray and heads for a table, only to be
intercepted by an excited Amanda.

AMANDA

Do you have any idea who's here in
Community General? Doctor Adam Gale.

He takes a seat at an empty table. Amanda joins him.

JACK

That's pretty astonishing, finding a
doctor in a hospital.

AMANDA

He's not a doctor. He's Doctor Gale.

JACK

Glad we cleared that up. Now if you'll
excuse me, I'm expecting a friend
for lunch.

He looks for Samantha, but he can't see her.

AMANDA

Adam Gale. The Nobel-prize winning
neurosurgeon who worked as a family
doctor so he wouldn't lose touch
with the human side of medicine.

(off his blank look:)

Didn't you ever watch television
when you were a kid?

JACK

Sorry, I had a life. And speaking of
which...

AMANDA

I never missed an episode of "Calling
Doctor Gale." I wanted to be just
like him. You may laugh, but that
show was one of my inspirations for
becoming a doctor.

JACK

I'll laugh later. Now if you don't
mind, I'm saving this table for Marcus
Welby and Doctor Kildare.

She gets up.

AMANDA

See if I ever share a heartfelt
emotional moment with you again.

Jack shrugs. He can live with that. She walks off. Jack looks for Samantha, but doesn't see her. That's when a shadow falls over him. He smiles to himself.

JACK

I thought you'd never get here.

He looks up to see it's not Samantha standing over him -- it's the cashier.

CASHIER

I missed you too. And the fourteen seventy-five you owe me.

JACK

I gave you a twenty.

CASHIER

The ethereal creature spent thirty.

The cashier gestures across the room to

A TABLE

where Samantha sits with the HANDSOME HUNK who played Dr. Willens in the teaser. She's surrounded by plates of food, mountains of food, and she's shovelling them all into her mouth. When she spots Jack looking at her, she smiles and waves gratefully to him. The hunk leans over to her, apparently asking a question.

BACK TO SCENE

Jack, more than a little stunned, digs into his pocket for more money.

CASHIER

It's no great loss, honey. The ones who can eat their body weight are nothing by trouble.

She takes his money and leaves. Jack's about to take a desultory bite of his sandwich when the hunk from Samantha's table pulls up a chair.

JACK

Hey, I didn't know she was with you --

HUNK

Don't get up, Doc. I know what it's like to spend forty-eight hours on your feet, desperately trying to save the mangled remains of what was once a human being.

(MORE)

HUNK (CONT'D)
 (then, thoughtfully)
 Yeah, I learned a lot from that guest
 shot on "Nurses."

It occurs to Jack that the hunk is not here to beat him up.

JACK
 For Amanda's sake, I really hope
 you're not Doctor Adam Gale.

HUNK
 Lincoln Cutter. Yeah, that Lincoln
 Cutter. I know you must be surprised
 to see me in a TV series, but frankly,
 the writing on "Healing Hands" is
 better than many features.
 (then:)
 Doc, I want you to call me Link. I
 have great respect for healers.

JACK
 How about healers who hit on your
 girlfriend?

CUTTER
 That?
 (dismissive)
 Day player.

JACK
 Then if you'll excuse me...

He gets up just in time to see Samantha being led away by an
 assistant director, carrying a couple of plates and cramming
 food into her mouth as she goes. Damn.

CUTTER
 Tell you what I need from you, Doc,
 is some truth. Some truth about
 healing. Sure, I could play the words
 in the script, play the hell out of
 them. But that's just craft. I want
 something deeper.

Jack's beeper goes off. He checks it -- he's got to go.

JACK
 You want some truth about doctors?

CUTTER
 Make it hard, make it gutsy. I can
 take it.

JACK
 Unless you're Bugs Bunny, we hate
 being called "doc."

And with that, he walks off to answer his page.

EXT. COMMUNITY HOSPITAL - NEXT DAY

as Mark drives in, negotiating a path between the various production vehicles and trailers to a parking spot. In the B.G. we see WORKERS scrubbing the PARKING LOT. Mark is barely out of his car when he hears:

NORMAN

Look what you've done.

Mark turns to see Norman standing behind the Jag, pointing to the ground.

NORMAN (CONT'D)

Your rust-bucket is leaking oil.
Look at those drops.

Mark squints at the pavement.

MARK

I don't have my electron microscope handy, but I'll take your word for it. I'll have my mechanic check the car out. Thanks.

Mark walks on. Norman chases after him.

NORMAN

Wait -- you're not leaving it here, are you? Your car is hemmoraging buckets of oil all over the pavement.

MARK

Norman, it's a parking lot.

NORMAN

It's the gateway to Community General.
It has to look clean enough to operate on.

That's when Mark notices a WORKMAN scrubbing the pavement. Mark turns to Norman.

MARK

(incredulous:)
You're cleaning the parking lot?
(off Norman's look:)
This wouldn't have anything to do with "The Healing Hands."

NORMAN

(defensive:)
We have an image to protect.

That's when the DOOR flies open on DIXON GALLOW'S TRAILER, and Samantha Bellows storms out, her hair tussled, buttoning up her disheveled nurse's uniform. She's SOBBING.

SAMANTHA
(to Gallow:)
You heartless pig.

She charges past Mark and Norman. A moment later, Dixon appears in the doorway of his trailer, wearing only a pair of shorts. He shoots Mark and Norman a grin.

GALLOW
What can I say? I'm a heartbreaker.

He disappears into his trailer. Mark shares a look with Norman.

MARK
Doesn't that guy ever wear a shirt?

And on their looks, we GO TO:

INT. OPERATING ROOM - DAY

The angle is ROUGH, RAGGED, HAND-HELD. Think "ER" or a documentary. The bikini babe from the teaser lies unconscious on the table as doctors and nurses buzz around and machines beep and flash. Jed Willens (aka Lincoln Cutter) monitors the anesthesia.

CUTTER
Her heart's stable, but it's weak.
Too weak.

Dr. Loring Stephens (Dixon Gallow) steps dramatically up to the table, scalpel flashing in the light.

GALLOW
Then I guess we'll just have to give her a new one.

CUTTER
But we've scoured the country looking for a heart. There isn't one available.

GALLOW
(grimly)
There is now.

He motions to Nurse Quinn (Samantha Bellows) who hands him the icebox containing the human heart.

GALLOW (CONT'D)
Prepare to operate.

That's when the operating room doors burst open and Dr. Ben Strobe (Lyle Fairbanks) explodes in. The scene's so tense you might not even notice the TRILLING SOUND under it.

LYLE

Who do you think you are? God?

GALLOW

In here, that's exactly who I am.
Because I can bring life. Or I can
bring death. Or --
(out of character)
Hold that thought.

He whips out a cell phone and flips it open.

LYLE

(into phone)

Talk to me.

BEHIND THE CAMERA

CYNTHIA HOLLING, the nervous young
writer/producer grabs the script
away from the script supervisor.

CYNTHIA

There's no cell phone in this scene.
I didn't write a cell phone in this
scene. Who put a cell phone in this
scene?

DIRECTOR

Cut!

The set dissolves into the usual chaos as the CHUBBY OLD PROP GUY moves through collecting the scalpels, sponges, etc. Lyle sighs wearily and grabs a cup of coffee. Cutter whips out his pages and starts working on his dialogue. Samantha sinks, exhausted, into a chair. And the bikini babe, still lying on the table, blows a gum bubble. Cynthia grabs the director.

CYNTHIA

Nobody touches my pages.

DIRECTOR

Nobody touched the scene. Your star
got a personal call and screwed up
the shot.

CYNTHIA

Oh. That's okay then.

That's when Dixon Gallow snaps his cell phone shut with a click that manages to get everyone's attention.

GALLOW

Good news, people. I've just landed the lead in the new Scorsese picture. We start shooting next Monday, so I'm leaving the series immediately.

Everybody is stunned. It's like Kennedy was just assassinated.

GALLOW (CONT'D)

But I want to let you know, you've all been like family to me. I love each and every one of you.

And with that, he heads for the door. The director throws down his script, but Lyle, Cutter, Amanda, and even the bikini girl are too shockd to move. Only Cynthia manages to collect herself enough to speak. She grabs his arm.

CYNTHIA

You can't walk out. This show made you a star.

GALLOW

Correction. I made this show. People were even willing to sit through your crappy stories to watch me.

CYNTHIA

You can do movies in your hiatus. We can shoot around your schedule. We can make it work for you.

(off his indifference)

This is a hit series.

He gives her his best star smile.

GALLOW

Not anymore.

And with that, he's gone.

EXT. COMMUNITY GENERAL - ESTABLISHING - DAY

INT. HALLWAY - DAY

Amanda is going down the hall, looking pained. Lincoln Cutter at her side.

CUTTER

Why are we walking down the hall?

AMANDA

To get to the examination rooms.

CUTTER

To...?

AMANDA
Examine patients.

CUTTER
Right. Just wanted to understand my
motivation, Doc. To embrace the raw
truth of the moment.

AMANDA
Can't you embrace someone else's
moment? I can't do my job with you
following me around.

CUTTER
Norman Briggs said you'd show me the
harsh realities of medicine, and I'm
ready for it. With Dixon Gallow
out, I become the emotional core of
the show. I've got to exude truth.

That's when Amanda spots Jack at the counter. She motions to
him.

AMANDA
Couldn't you exude on "Doc" Stewart?

JACK
(to Cutter:)
Excuse us.

Jack pulls Amanda aside.

JACK (CONT'D)
Weren't you the one who told me what
a strong influence Dr. Adam Gale was
on you?

AMANDA
Yes, but--

JACK
Maybe there's another girl out there
looking for inspiration from this TV
doctor...

Jack glances at Cutter. So does Amanda. Cutter gives his
best needy look. Amanda relents.

AMANDA
Fine.
(to Cutter:)
But stay out of my way.

Jack hurries away, smiling to himself.

CUTTER

Go ahead, confront death, heal the sick, bring new life into the world, as if I wasn't here.

Amanda gives him a look, then is distracted by the sound of wheezing. He rushes into

INT. OPERATING ROOM - DAY

The same operating room where they were shooting the "Healing Hands" scene. The CHUBBY PROP GUY is slumped on the floor. Amanda crouches beside him, so does Cutter.

AMANDA

He's not breathing.

CUTTER

Smells like he's choking on a clove of garlic.

Amanda pushes Cutter out of the way, punches a BUTTON on the wall and yells:

AMANDA

Respirator! Stat!

CUTTER

(to himself:)
Stat. I love it.

AMANDA

Go away.

Amanda pushes Cutter away again and starts mouth-to-mouth. Cutter, fascinated, whips out a pad and hurriedly takes notes. A TEAM OF NURSES rush in with a respirator. Amanda, intense and focused, inserts the artificial airway and glances at the respirator. The bag inflates and deflates...Amanda sags with relief.

AMANDA (CONT'D)

He's breathing.

And on Cutter, very impressed, we GO TO:

INT. MARK'S OFFICE - DAY

TIGHT on a BOTTLE OF CHAMPAGNE. The card on it says "Thanks, Dr. Sloan, for Bringing Emily into the world." We follow as the bottle is raised to the mouth of Lyle Fairbanks, who is sitting behind Mark's desk. He takes a big swig just as Mark comes in.

MARK

I see you're celebrating the Dinino's baby for me.

LYLE

If God expected doctors to decide who lives and dies, he shouldn't have made us so human.

MARK

"Physician, Heal Thyself," episode of 27 of "Calling Dr. Gale," if I recall.

LYLE

You have a good memory. Until "The Healing Hands," you needed one to remember when I had a career.

Lyle, already tipsy, takes another swig. That's when Delores comes in with a message for Mark.

DELORES

Dr. Catoline would like your thoughts on the Grace biopsy.

(spots Lyle:)

Which reminds me of a song...

(sings:)

"Amazing Grace, how sweet--"

MARK

(interrupts:)

Thank you, Delores.

Mark gently closes the door on her, then turns to Lyle.

MARK (CONT'D)

You're a star, Lyle. You always have been.

LYLE

You got the has-been part right. Before this show came along, I was doing "Brigadoon" at the Chuck Wagon Smorgasboard Dinner Theatre.

There's a knock at the door. Delores comes in.

DELORES

Cardiology called. They'd like you on the panel at Wednesday's heart symposium.

MARK

I'll be there. Bye, Delores.

She glances at Lyle, then does a soft shoe to the door, which Mark slams on her exit. He turns to Lyle.

MARK (CONT'D)

That's in the past, Lyle. You're back on top again.

LYLE

The show is a hit -- because of Dixon Gallow, not me. Once that arrogant runt finishes this episode, it's over for all of us. I could be back doing "Kiss Me, Kate" at the Beef n' Song next week.

The phone rings. Mark hits the intercom.

MARK

Yes?

DELORES VOICE

Just wanted to remind you to call back Dr. Winter. Winter, as in--
(then, dramatically:)
"Now is the winter of our discontent,
made glorious summer--"

Mark switches off the intercom and unplugs it from the wall.

LYLE

It took me ten years to get a second chance. He has no idea what he's throwing away. The thoughtless, fat-headed jerk.

MARK

He's young, brash, arrogant and the star of a hit medical show. Sound familiar?

LYLE

I was nothing like that.

MARK

You were exactly like that. You were just as insufferable as he is. But people put up with you because you had the talent.

(then:)

You still have it, Lyle. But now you have the experience and maturity to make something of it. You don't need Dixon Gallow to get a second chance.

Lyle sets down the bottle and looks at Mark.

LYLE

You know something? You're right. The show must go on, and I'm just the phenomenal talent to carry it.

Lyle marches out the door, Mark smiling after him.

EXT. COMMUNITY GENERAL HOSPITAL - DAY

LYLE (O.S.)

Who do you think you are? God?

INT. OPERATING ROOM - DAY

The room is set up exactly as it was the last time they tried to shoot this scene. The HAND-HELD CAMERA finds the bikini babe lying unconscious on the table, Samantha (as Nurse Quinn) stands by, arranging medical instruments. Lyle Fairbanks has just burst into the room. Dixon Gallow (as Dr. Stephens) stands over the patient, scalpel in hand. Cutter (as Dr. Willens) is assisting.

GALLOW

In here, that's exactly who I am.
Because I can bring life. Or I can
bring death. Or I can turn a blind
eye and let fate take its course --
if I can live with the consequences.

Gritty, tough, the camera is moving around so much, viewers may need airsickness bags. Darrow begins to operate. Nurse Quinn hands him instruments.

LYLE

Achmed Sabib died on your operating
table ten minutes ago, and now you're
putting his heart in another body.
Do you know what this looks like?

GALLOW

Yeah. Justice.

DIRECTOR

Cut!

Gallow fixes the director and Cynthia Holling with an icy stare.

GALLOW

Why?

DIRECTOR

It wasn't working for me. I thought--

GALLOW

I don't care what you thought.

Gallow pulls a blue subpoena out of his pocket and tears it in half, glaring at Cynthia.

GALLOW (CONT'D)

You've got me for the rest of this
episode, babe. After that, your

(MORE)

GALLOW (CONT'D)
 lawyers can contact me through
 Scorsese.
 (then, to director:)
 Now let's finish this crap.

Gallow assumes his position. The director casts an inquiring eye at Cynthia. She nods.

DIRECTOR
 Action!

Gallow begins to "operate." Nurse Quinn mops the sweat out of his eyes continuously.

GALLOW
 Achmed Sabib spent his whole miserable
 existence taking the lives of innocent
 people. How ironic that his death is
 going to give one of them life.

LYLE
 My God, man. Are you saying you let
 him die?

Gallow stops operating, shaken to the core by this thought. Nurse Quinn mops his brow.

GALLOW
 Did I? I don't know. Damn it, I just
 don't know.

DIRECTOR
 Cut! Perfect! Move on to the next
 setup.

The actors relax. Cutter slinks off the set. Gallow helps the bikini girl off the table.

CYNTHIA
 You were brilliant, Dixon. The part
 was made for you.

GALLOW
 (to Cynthia)
 Yeah, yeah, yeah. When you're ready,
 I'll be in my trailer helping Tahnee
 learn her lines.

CYNTHIA
 She doesn't have any lines.

GALLOW
 She does now.

The bikini girls beams as he leads her out of there.

INT. MOTORHOME - DAY

The nicest motor home studio dollars can buy. Dixon is cozying up to the bikini babe, moving in for a kiss.

TAHNEE

Are you afraid I'll suck your blood?

GALLOW

You can suck anything you want.

TAHNEE

Then why's it smell like you're wearing a wreath of garlic?

He suddenly freezes, clutches his chest, and drops to the floor. She smiles.

TAHNEE (CONT'D)

It was nothing personal.

She leans over him.

TAHNEE (CONT'D)

Dixon?

She feels his pulse. He's dead. And on her HORROR, we FADE OUT.

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

FADE IN:

EXT. COMMUNITY GENERAL - ESTABLISHING - DAY

EXT. GALLOW'S TRAILER - DAY

STEVES VOICE

This trailer is nicer than my house.

INT. TRAILER - DAY

Steve has his head stuck in Gallow's bathroom while Mark examines the surroundings.

STEVE

Did you know he's got a marble jacuzzi in here?

MARK

Maybe it was the opulence that killed him.

STEVE

Maybe it was, maybe it wasn't. The Medical Examiner saw no obvious signs of trauma, but he suspects poisoning. We'll know once the lab tests get back.

(then, spotting sink:)

Did you see this? Brass fixtures.

Mark notices a HIGH SCHOOL YEARBOOK still laying in TORN GIFT WRAPPING on the table. It's open to the CLASS OF 1988 photo.

MARK'S POV

It's teenage DIXON GALLOW. And he must weight 300 pounds.

MARK

Dixon Gallow has sure changed since high school.

BACK TO SCENE

Steve looks over Mark's shoulder.

STEVE

Yeah, he's thin and he's dead.

Steve stands up straight and hits his head on a chandelier. Then examines it.

STEVE (CONT'D)

Wow. Bacarat.

MARK

Something isn't right about this.

STEVE

I'll say. I've never seen a motor home look so good. Why am I paying a mortgage when I could have all this?

MARK

I'm talking about Gallow's death. Too many people would have liked him dead for me to believe it was "natural causes."

STEVE

Well, until the lab results come back, I've got no reason to poke around.

(then, hinting:)

But it's your hospital, and they're still shooting...

They share a conspiratorial smile, and step out...

EXT. TRAILER - DAY

...nearly colliding with a hurried Delores, who slips on the slick asphalt, breaking the fall with her hands. Mark and Steve immediately rush to her aid, helping her to her feet.

STEVE

Are you all right?

DELORES

Fine -- why's the parking lot so slippery?

MARK

Norman is having it cleaned. Where are you off to in such a hurry?

DELORES

Lunch.

(then, covering:)

With a long-lost Uncle. I might be a little late, you know, getting reacquainted.

MARK

Take all the time you need.

She hurries off. Steve turns to Mark.

STEVE

Good luck snooping, Dad. I'm off.

MARK

To unmask another killer.

STEVE

To price motorhomes.

And on Mark's look, GO TO:

EXT. COMMUNITY GENERAL HOSPITAL - ESTABLISHING

AMANDA (O.S.)

The good news is, there's nothing wrong with your heart.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

Amanda checks a chart hanging on the bed in which CLIFF EISENSEN, the chubby prop guy, lies.

EISENSEN

The hell with my heart. How's my health insurance?

AMANDA

You'll have to take that up with the billing office. But if you want to spare yourself and your insurance some grief, next time you set mouse traps, wash your hands afterwards.

EISENSEN

Mouse traps? Is that covered?

AMANDA

The lab found metallicide in your blood. It's a common rat poison and --

That's when the door flies open and Lincoln Cutter bursts in.

CUTTER

Doc, where've you been hiding yourself?

AMANDA

(guiltily)

Hiding? What makes you think I was hiding from you?

Cutter, oblivious, comes up to the bed.

CUTTER

(to Eisenenson)

Gotta talk to the Doc.

He closes the curtain, separating Amanda from her patient.

EISENSEN

Hey!

CUTTER

I can't stop thinking about what you did the other day, Doc. The way you saved that man's life. I've never been so moved.

AMANDA

Oh, that. Just part of the job. A job I kind of have to get back to...

She turns to open the curtain. Cutter pulls it shut.

CUTTER

I've never seen so clearly before how precious life is. We are all brief candles burning bright, and yet we can be snuffed out so easily. It's made me treasure every human life so much more.

Amanda is almost moved by this. She may have to rethink Lincoln Cutter.

AMANDA

That's beautiful.

CUTTER

Yeah. Anyway, I talked to Cynthia Holling, and she agreed to put your life-or-death rescue into the current episode.

AMANDA

(flattered:)

Then there's someone here you might like to talk to.

She whips the curtain back, revealing Cliff Eisenson.

EISENSEN

What am I, a peep show?

AMANDA

You have a visitor, Mr. Eisenson.

EISENSEN

I don't want visitors. My policy guarantees me a semi-private room.

CUTTER

Who's the old gasbag?

Amanda decides not to rethink Cutter after all.

AMANDA

Cliff Eisenson. The brief candle I saved from snuffing. The individual human life you treasure so much more now.

(off his blank look)

The prop guy who keeled over on the set.

CUTTER

Oh, the prop guy. Thanks, I do want to talk to him.

AMANDA

I thought you might.

(to Eisenson)

I'll check in on you again.

She heads for the door as Cutter takes a seat at the foot of the bed.

She starts to leave.

CUTTER

So why is it that Dixon Gallow's scalpels are always so much shinier than mine? Don't deny it.

Eisenson calls after her.

EISENSEN

Doesn't anyone know the meaning of semi-private anymore?

INT. HOSPITAL CORRIDOR - DAY

Amanda slips out of Eisenson's room and breathes a sigh of relief. That's when she looks up and sees Lyle Fairbanks, in white coat and stethoscope, coming down the corridor, carrying a doctor's bag. She stares at him.

AMANDA

Doctor Gale...

LYLE

I'm not a doctor. But I play one on TV. Again.
(holds out a hand)
Lyle Fairbanks.

He smiles warmly. Embarrassed, she shakes his hand.

AMANDA

Of course, I knew that. It's just that when I was growing up, you were everything I wanted to be -- warm, gentle, wise, firm.

LYLE

You're too kind--
(reads her nametag:)
Dr. Bentley.

Lyle is glowing under the praise -- until he sees Lincoln Cutter emerging behind Amanda. His face falls.

LYLE (CONT'D)

Shouldn't you be off somewhere sucking up to the writer? There are still a couple of the lines in the script you haven't stolen.

CUTTER

That's okay. I'll just wait 'til you blow them on the set and grab 'em then.

AMANDA

I guess I'll go on about my rounds, "doctors."

But she's caught between them and can't move.

LYLE

You little punk. I was acting when you were in diapers.

CUTTER

And I'll be acting when you are.
Which will probably be in about two weeks.

Enraged, Lyle lets fly with his medical bag, slamming Cutter in the chest, Amanda barely ducking out of the way in time. Cutter grabs Lyle and slams him against a wall as Amanda runs to a phone on the wall.

AMANDA

(into phone)
Security!

And as Amanda watches the two "doctors" pummel each other:

EXT. MOVIE STUDIO - ESTABLISHING - DAY

INT. BUILDING - DAY

Mark follows a series of handwritten signs that say "The Healing Hands" with ARROWS that he follows to a door. He enters...

INT. WAITING ROOM - DAY

... to see a DOZEN "Doctors" and "Nurses" in medical garb, studying SCRIPTS. A WOMAN, 40s, self-absorbed and hurried, emerges from an adjoining room and closes the door behind her. She refers to a clipboard. This is HENRIETTA.

MARK

Excuse me, I'd like to see the producer, Cynthia Holling.

HENRIETTA

Regarding?

MARK

It's a medical matter.

HENRIETTA

Are you ready, or do you need time to prepare?

MARK

I think I can handle it.

HENRIETTA

Then you're up next.

Henrietta motions to a seat and disappears behind the door. Mark shares a smile with the "doctor" next to him, then glances at a manuscript on the table. He picks it up.

HIS POV - THE MANUSCRIPT

It's a script for the "The Healing Hands," and an episode entitled "A Medical Matter."

BACK TO SCENE

Mark looks up just as Henrietta returns. Mark approaches her with the script.

MARK

I think there's been a misunderstanding. When I said a medical matter, I meant--

She ignores him, hustling him through the door to:

CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

Cynthia sits behind a table with the DIRECTOR and two ND producers. And ashtray full of smoldering cigarettes is in front of Cynthia. In the center of the room, is a table with a MANNEQUIN laid atop it and some SURGICAL TOOLS.

CYNTHIA

Do you have a picture and resume for us?

MARK

No, I'm Dr. Mark Sloan--

CYNTHIA

Getting into character is one thing, but it's a little early to be rewriting my script, don't you think, Dr. Darrow?

MARK

Excuse me, but there's been a terrible--

CYNTHIA

You'll be reading with a prospective Nurse Chapman. Are you ready Ms. Mitchel?

Mark whirls around to see Delores emerge from an adjoining door, clutching a script. She looks at him imploringly, before replying to Holling.

DELORES

Yes, ma'am.

Mark leans close to Delores.

MARK

(low:)

What happened to your long-lost Uncle?

DELORES

(low:)

He got lost.

Cynthia turns to Mark.

CYNTHIA

Okay, people, let's go. Feel free to use the props.

Mark opens his script and moves over to the table. He reads his lines stiffly, while Delores gives milks every word -- every punctuation point -- for as much drama as she can.

DELORES

"Loring Stephens knows what drugs do to people. He sees the human wreckage every day. So how could he let himself become a drug addict?"

MARK

"I'm a brain surgeon, that doesn't make me a psychiatrist."

Mark picks up a scalpel and mimes making an incision. He abruptly drops the scalpel and turns to the producers.

MARK (CONT'D)

Excuse me, but the proper instrument would be a cranial saw.

CYNTHIA

(to others:)

Put an actor in a white jacket, and he thinks he's a doctor.

(to Mark, firm:)

Let me worry about that.

MARK

But it's not accurate.

CYNTHIA

I don't care. Now are you going to play the scene or not?

Delores looks imploringly at Mark. He shrugs and continues, only instead of "cutting" with the scalpel, he "saws" with it. Cynthia simmers.

MARK

"But when you wade in blood, and misery and pain every day, it's hard to stop thinking about it. Maybe the drugs keep him from thinking at all."

DELORES

"He doesn't need drugs, he needs love."

He mimes opening the head and pulling the brain out. Now Cynthia is really getting pissed. Delores shoots Mark a few angry glares of her own.

MARK

"Your love, I suppose."

DELORES

"What's wrong with that? We could be good for each other."

MARK

"And what about your husband?"

He mimes tossing the brain over his shoulder, reaching into a box, grabbing a new brain, and jamming it into the head. That's the last straw for Cynthia.

DELORES

"I married a man, not a vegetable. Even if this operation is a success, he'll still be dribbling on his chin the rest of his life."

CYNTHIA

(interrupting:)

I've seen enough. Thank you, we'll be in touch.

Delores smiles and heads for the door. Mark holds his ground.

MARK

I need to talk to you now.

CYNTHIA

Okay, if you insist. You're not getting the part. I just don't find you believable as a doctor.

MARK

But I am.
(then, offers his card:)
I'm Dr. Mark Sloan, Chief of Surgery at Community General and special consultant to the police.

CYNTHIA

The police?

MARK

I want to talk with you about Dixon Gallow's death.

And on her dread, and Mark's smile, we CUT TO:

INT. CYNTHIA'S OFFICE - DAY

She sits at her desk, watching DAILIES of the HEART TRANSPLANT SCENE (the last scene Dixon did before he died) as Mark talks with her. He, too, shoots an occasional glance at the screen.

MARK

I didn't know Dr. Stephens was a drug addict.

CYNTHIA

Neither did I until Dixon decided to walk. Now he's going to die of an overdose.

She smiles to herself. Mark steals a glance at the papers on her desk.

MARK

Isn't that in bad taste, considering the circumstances?

CYNTHIA

I've got nothing to lose. We could have run for years. Now we'll be lucky to last the month. If killing his character can give us a ratings point or two, I'll live with the criticism.

MARK

You must have been furious when he decided to quit.

CYNTHIA

He was a complete unknown before "The Healing Hands." I cast him, I fought for him, I even slept with him.

MARK

That's dedication.

CYNTHIA

And how does he thank me? He quits four episodes into our second season. Furious? That's an understatement.

MARK

Sounds like a motive for murder.

CYNTHIA

No one said he was murdered.

MARK

No one said he wasn't. We're waiting for the toxicological tests to come in.

CYNTHIA

He was leaving the show anyway -- what could I possibly gain by killing him?

MARK

Revenge -- and \$4 million insurance company pay-off.

CYNTHIA

What makes you think I had insurance on him?

Mark pulls the INSURANCE POLICY out off her desk. And on his winning smile, we CUT TO:

EXT. COMMUNITY GENERAL HOSPITAL - ESTABLISHING

INT. CAFETERIA - DAY

Jack and Amanda stand in line. Amanda's still upset.

AMANDA

Can you imagine what it's like to see your childhood idol fighting like a street hood right under your nose?

JACK

(likes the idea)

Yeah.

(off her look)

Sorry. All my childhood idols were boxers.

AMANDA

Well, mine was a little more civilized. At least I thought he was. Now I don't know what to think.

JACK

Maybe that it's not a good idea to confuse an actor with the role he plays?

AMANDA

Try telling that to an eight year-old girl who's hopelessly in love with the doctor she sees on TV every week.

JACK

Try telling that to him.

AMANDA

I will. The next time I run into him. Which I probably won't, since this is such a big hospital. But I would.

JACK

Good. He's at the second table to the right.

He points to a TABLE where Lyle is studying a cup of coffee.

AMANDA

As I said, I'll talk to him the next time I run into him.

JACK

Right. Don't think of that eight year-old girl taking inspiration from The Healing Hands...

Amanda glares at him.

AMANDA

You really are a jerk.

And with that, she puts down her food and walks over to Lyle's table. Jack grins as he steps up to the cashier.

CASHIER

It's paid for.

She gestures over to the SALAD BAR, where Samantha looks up from the small, simple salad she's fixing and gives him a wave. He waves back.

AT LYLES TABLE

Amanda walks up to Lyle, who seems completely transfixed by the cup of coffee he's stirring.

AMANDA

I hope you're proud of yourself.

LYLE

Rarely.

AMANDA

I idolized you. I wanted to be just like you.

LYLE

No, you didn't. You wanted to be Dr. Gale.

AMANDA

Well, yes, but...

LYLE

Then you and I have a great deal in common, Doctor. Please, sit.

Confused, Amanda hesitates for a moment, then sits.

AT THE SALAD BAR

Jack, carrying his tray, comes up to Samantha, who is putting the final, very healthy, finishing touches on her small salad.

JACK

Usually I like to actually meet a woman before our second date, but in your case I'll make an exception.

SAMANTHA

I'm Samantha Bellows. And I'm sitting over here, if you want to join me.

She leads him towards a table.

JACK

Jack Stewart. And I'd be delighted to join you.

SAMANTHA

After the last time, I had a feeling we'd meet again.

JACK

Me, too. Although I wasn't sure it if would be personal or professional.
(off her look)
The way you were eating.

SAMANTHA

(icing over)
What about it?

JACK

It's just that there was so much food. I didn't see how anyone could eat like that regularly and maintain such a gorgeous figure.
(trying to find a way out)

But I guess after a couple weeks of salads, it all balances out.

SAMANTHA

(icier)
Something like that.

JACK

Not that it's really any of my business what you eat.

SAMANTHA

Glad you feel that way. Because I'm really hungry, and I don't like being judged.

And with that, she takes her seat -- in front of a huge array of foods she's already brought here. Jack stares, and we go to

LYLES TABLE

where Amanda is transfixed by Lyle's emotional words.

LYLE

I'm deeply flawed. If it weren't for the talent that some providence has blessed me with, I might be considered completely worthless.

AMANDA

Oh, no, don't say that.

LYLE

Can imagine what it's been like, trying to live up to Adam Gale? Trying to be the ideal of perfection people expect me to be. That even I expect me to be.

AMANDA

You poor, poor man.

She touches his shoulder comfortingly. We go back to:

SAMANTHAS TABLE

where Jack watches in awe as Samantha packs it away.

SAMANTHA

I love to eat, it's that simple. If I have to reverse the process later, that's the price I pay for this figure.

JACK

Do you have any idea how unhealthy that is?

SAMANTHA

I don't care. I was fat all through high school. The only guy I ever dated was the one person in North Platte even fatter than I was -- and he dumped me as soon as he dropped a few pounds. Now look at me.

JACK

I have been.

SAMANTHA

I know. And I like it. Before, the only job I could get was as a receptionist for some quack physical therapist. Now I'm an actress. So tell me again why I should stop purging.

JACK

Because it's terrible for you. It weakens the heart, ruins your stomach --

SAMANTHA

Let me rephrase that: Don't tell me. If you want to be with me, just ignore the way I eat. Can you handle that?

JACK

I hope so.

SAMANTHA

Me, too. Because there's only one thing I like more than eating.

She gives him a sexy smile.

JACK

So, how's the pot roast?

LYLES TABLE

Lyle has worked himself up nearly to tears. Amanda feels terrible.

AMANDA

No one expects you to be like Dr. Gale. Really.

LYLE

You did.

AMANDA

Never. I would never --

That's when Lincoln Cutter comes up to them, and it's a good thing -- because Lyle is having a hard time keeping from breaking into a grin.

CUTTER

Great news, Doc. I just looked over the revised pages, and we're about to shoot your scene. And it's the best scene in the script.

(eying Lyle)

Especially since there are no washed-up old has-beens in it.

Amanda looks at Lyle, but he just smiles beatifically.

LYLE

With you at the center, it couldn't be anything but great.

Cutter gives him a suspicious look, then turns back to Amanda.

CUTTER

So what do you say, Doc? Want to come see me play you?

AMANDA

I'd like to -- but I was right in the middle of something.

LYLE

No, go. This is an honor you don't want to miss.

Now Cutter is really suspicious. He studies Lyle closely.

CUTTER

You were in this scene, you know. I had Cynthia write you out.

LYLE

In a way, I'm in every scene. This is our series now, and we should work together, not against each other. Dr. Bentley reminded me of that -- and of so much more.

CUTTER

You mean that?

Lyle nods, seriously. Cutter studies him again -- then throws his arms around Lyle in a big bear hug. Amanda watches, astonished.

CUTTER (CONT'D)

We have so much to talk about. Let me grab a cup of coffee, and we can start thinking about how to save this series.

Lyle hands him his coffee.

LYLE

Take mine. You have a scene to shoot -- and that's going to do more for this series than any mere words we can come up with.

Cutter takes a hefty swig out of the coffee.

CUTTER

C'mon, Doc. We've got medical history to make.

He shoots Lyle a grin and drags Amanda away. Lyle watches them go, an odd smile on his face.

INT. EMERGENCY ROOM - DAY

It's HAND-HELD, it's gritty, it's "The Healing Hands." The Emergency Room is chaos, injured people, frantic relatives, frenzied medical personnel run to and fro. Weaving through the chaos is Cutter (as Dr. Willens) when he's met by Samantha (as Nurse Quinn).

CUTTER

I need that blood, and I need it now.

SAMANTHA

A bus hit by a drunk driver skidded through a railroad crossing and collided with the Goldenrail Express. Every hospital in town needs blood.

CUTTER

Tell the staff to roll up their sleeves. If we can't find blood, we're going to give these people our own.

INTERCUT WITH:

AMANDA AND JACK who watch from behind the camera, and share a pained look.

JACK

(whispers:)

Cutter's right. It certainly exudes something.

Cutter is stopped by the sound of wheezing. A BEAUTIFUL WOMAN lays unconscious on a gurney. Cutter leans over her.

CUTTER

This woman isn't breathing.

SAMANTHA

(yells out:)

Respirator! Stat!

Cutter tears off open unconscious woman's shirt, the BUTTONS FLYING.

CUTTER

(to Samantha:)

Forget the damn machine. This woman needs the breath of life.

He leans over her and gives her mouth-to-mouth. The woman regains consciousness, wraps her arms around Cutter, and the mouth-to-mouth turns into a DEEP KISS.

Amanda is horrified. Jack is amused.

JACK
I can't tell you how many times that
has happened to me.

Cutter abruptly pulls away from the woman and clutches his stomach, grimacing with pain.

CUTTER
Somebody...help.

And then he drops to the floor, writhing in pain. The director whispers to the script supervisor.

DIRECTOR
Is that in the script?

The script supervisor shakes her head "no." Jack and Amanda rush up to Cutter and, on their genuine concern, we FADE OUT.

END OF ACT TWO

ACT THREE

FADE IN:

EXT. COMMUNITY GENERAL - ESTABLISHING - DAY

INT. MARK'S OFFICE - OUTER OFFICE - DAY

Mark comes in to find Delores emptying her purse on her desk.

MARK
I'm sorry about ruining your casting session.

DELORES
You have nothing to apologize for -- I got a call-back for a different part. I'm on my way to talk to the casting director about it.

MARK
Lose your car keys?

DELORES
Breath mints. I can still taste the pasta I had for lunch.

MARK
Here.

He reaches into his pocket and hands a stick of gum.

DELORES
Bumble gum?

MARK

We all have our vices.

Delores heads off, nearly colliding with Jack and Amanda as they come in.

AMANDA

Mine is television. I'm never watching another doctor show.

JACK

(off Mark's look:)
She's been exploited and disillusioned.

MARK

By television?

AMANDA

By Lincoln Cutter and Lyle Fairbanks.

JACK

Cutter plagiarized her life and Fairbanks isn't Dr. Adam Gale.

MARK

Speaking of Cutter, how is he?

AMANDA

He must have been nervous about his bigger role. He took enough laxative to settle an elephant's stomach.

A look of realization grows on Mark's face. Meanwhile, Amanda notices GALLOW'S YEARBOOK on Mark's desk.

AMANDA (CONT'D)

I didn't know Steve went to high school in North Platte.

MARK

He didn't -- Dixon Gallow did.

JACK

And so did Samantha Bellows.

Jack takes the yearbook and flips through the pages, finding a PICTURE of Samantha...a much FATTER Samantha.

MARK

Small world.

And on their shared looks, we GO TO:

EXT. COMMUNITY GENERAL HOSPITAL - DAY

Jack walks out among the trailers, searching for the right one. He knocks on a door marked "Nurse Quinn" -- one of

several doors on this trailer. The door opens and Samantha's voice comes out.

SAMANTHA

My call isn't for fifteen minutes.

JACK

That's okay. Take your time.

Now Samantha emerges, dressed in a plain robe. She beams at him.

SAMANTHA

Sorry, thought you were the AD. Come on in.

She lets the door swing open as she disappears inside. Jack follows her into

INT. SAMANTHAS PORTABLE DRESSING ROOM - DAY

Unlike Gallow's private retreat, this is a cramped, functional space with barely room for one person to move. Jack comes in and practically has to press his body against hers just to fit in. She doesn't seem to mind.

JACK

Maybe I should wait outside.

SAMANTHA

No, stay -- as long as you don't mind if I keep dressing while we talk. I've got to be on set in a little bit.

She drops her robe, revealing herself to be dressed in lingerie so sexy it could single-handedly lower our demographics twenty years. Jack tries not to stare.

JACK

Hey, work is work.
 (trying to keep his
 mind on business)
 So, there's something I wanted to talk about. It's a little awkward...

SAMANTHA

Anything. Could you close the door first?
 (as he tries to turn)
 Nevermind. I've got it.

She reaches past him -- a feat that involves pressing her body against his -- to pull the door shut. It takes all of Jack's resolve to keep from grabbing her and throwing her to the floor -- that and the fact there isn't enough floor space.

SAMANTHA (CONT'D)

So what did you want to talk about?

She turns back, rubbing him again. Now her face is right up against his.

JACK

Ummm....

SAMANTHA

Keeping in mind that I have to be on set in fifteen minutes and directness is a definite plus.

He tries to focus, finally gets a grip.

JACK

That fat guy you used to date in high school. The one who dumped you when he lost weight...

SAMANTHA

(purring in his ear)

Mm-hmmm.

JACK

...that was Dixon Gallow, wasn't it?

She's surprised, but she covers.

SAMANTHA

You must have seen the yearbook I gave him. Hope that disgusting picture of me didn't turn you off completely.

JACK

Not... completely.

SAMANTHA

I owe Dixon my life. It was being dumped by him that made me realize I had to lose weight, no matter what. That's why I was so happy to get a role on "The Healing Hands."

JACK

So you could thank him for dumping you?

SAMANTHA

We looked at our yearbook pictures and laughed. It was like we never stopped being friends.

JACK

Someone told me he saw you leaving Gallow's trailer in tears, shouting that he was a pig.

SAMANTHA

Okay, I got a little mad when he ate the last Twinkie. Still, I'm glad we had that time together before...

She breaks off, suddenly stricken with emotion. She presses herself against him.

SAMANTHA (CONT'D)

Hold me, Jack. Hold me close.

She pulls him to her. After a moment, she leans up and kisses him. He's just starting to get into it when there's a POUNDING on the door.

ADS VOICE

Miss Bellows on the set!

She breaks off from him and pulls away -- as far away as she can in here. She pulls her nurse's uniform on.

SAMANTHA

Sorry, got to run. You don't mind?

JACK

It's okay -- I'll find my own way out.

And with that, she squeezes past him out of the trailer, leaving him to try to catch his breath.

INT. HOSPITAL - DAY

HAND-HELD and GRITTY, the same scene that Cutter was shooting before he got sick. Lyle (as Dr. Strobe) tears open the unconscious woman's shirt, the buttons flying, and turns to Nurse Quinn.

LYLE

Forget the damn machine. This woman needs the breath of life.

He leans over her and gives her mouth-to-mouth. The woman regains consciousness and the mouth-to-mouth becomes a deep kiss. And after a long moment of kissing, the DIRECTOR yells:

DIRECTOR

Cut! Print.

Lyle reluctantly breaks away from the woman and turns to the director. Mark stands nearby, watching.

LYLE

Are you sure? The bit where I tore open her shirt didn't seem urgent enough to me. Maybe we should do it again.

DIRECTOR

(wearily:)

We've already done it five times.

LYLE

I'm willing to do whatever's necessary to get it right, even if it means tearing open her shirt all day.

The craft services lady goes around, passing out cups of coffee. Lyle notices Mark.

LYLE (CONT'D)

(to Mark:)

What do you think of the scene?

MARK

That it should have been Lincoln Cutter's.

LYLE

It was always meant for me, but he slept with Cynthia Hollings before I got a chance.

(then, excited:)

I'm center stage again, Mark. The action. The drama. The emotion. Just like old times, isn't it?

The director takes a coffee and is bringing it to his lips when:

MARK

Like the time you spiked a director's coffee with laxative -- and he was dragged off the set, doubled-over in agony.

The director abruptly stops, stares at his cup, and sets it aside as if it was radioactive.

MARK (CONT'D)

Sure was nice of you to buy Cutter a cup of coffee.

LYLE

I'm a nice guy.

(then:)

I'd love to chat, but I have to rip open this lady's shirt.

He starts to go, but Mark stops him.

MARK

You spiked Cutter's coffee so you could steal his scene.

LYLE

It was always my scene, until the slug had it re-written.

(then, resigned:)

It was an innocent prank. No one got hurt.

MARK

Not like Dixon Gallow.

All heads turn. Lyle forces a smile and pulls Mark aside.

LYLE

You loveable jokester.

(then, low:)

I had nothing to do with that tragedy.

MARK

You resented Gallow for walking off the show, and putting your comeback at risk. You've poisoned people for less.

LYLE

I reached out to you, and this is how you reward my trust.

(off Mark's look:)

I admit I was desperate -- okay, terrified -- but I'm not a killer. You know that.

STEVES VOICE

I'm not so sure.

They turn to see Steve approaching, holding a file.

STEVE

The lab results on Dixon Gallow just came in. It's murder. Metalicide poisoning.

LYLE

Rat poison -- how fitting.

(off their looks:)

But I loved him like a brother.

He stifles a sob and quickly shuffles away. Neither Steve nor Mark are much impressed with his bad acting.

STEVE

I need your help, Dad. The test results don't make any sense.

MARK

Metalicide poisoning seems pretty straight-forward to me.

STEVE

Except we can't figure out it got in his system. There are no punctures on his skin, and his stomach contents were clean. The strange thing is, his last meal was fruit.

MARK

So?

STEVE

The actress he was with when he died complained about his garlic breath.

Suddenly Mark's eyes light up. Steve notices.

STEVE (CONT'D)

What?

MARK

Of course! Delores!

STEVE

You're accusing Delores of murder?

MARK

No, I'm accusing the parking lot.

Mark rushes off. And on Steve's confusion, we FADE OUT.

END OF ACT THREE

ACT FOUR

FADE IN:

EXT. PARKING LOT - DAY

Mark hurries out, Steve at his side.

STEVE

What's the parking lot have to do with Dixon Gallow's murder?

MARK

It was the murder weapon.

STEVE

Oh. Why didn't I think of that.

Mark goes to one of the WORKMEN scrubbing the asphalt and picks up a can of cleanser.

MARK

DMSO. Dimethyl sulfoxide. It's a solvent.

STEVE

Yes. I can see that. On the label.

MARK

Norman is having the parking lot cleaned for the show.

STEVE

And it looks terrific. But what does it have to do with how Dixon Gallow was killed?

MARK

DMSO is also used, illegally, as a deep muscle relaxant. Because it penetrates the skin so quickly, it can be combined with other drugs...or poisons ... to accelerate absorption.

(then:)

One of the symptoms is garlic breath.

STEVE

Where does Delores figure into all this?

MARK

Remember when we were coming out of Gallow's trailer? Delores slipped on the pavement and got the solvent on her hands. Now she can't the garlic taste out of her mouth.

Steve examines the bottle in a new light.

STEVE

We know the way he got poisoned, but that still leaves how... and who.

MARK

If we figure out how, we'll know who.

And on his look, we CUT TO:

EXT. COMMUNITY GENERAL - ESTABLISHING

JACK (O.S.)

So you figured out who killed Dixon Gallow yet?

INT. CORRIDOR - DAY

Mark, Steve, and Jack walk briskly down the hall.

JACK

'Cause I'm really hoping you don't find out it's Samantha Bellows. At least, not until after tonight.

STEVE
As a wise man said, if we know how,
we'll know who.

JACK
Why?

STEVE
What?

JACK
Why will we know who if we know how?

STEVE
Dad?

MARK
You see, if we figure out exactly
how the DMSO was applied, we'll know
which of the suspects could have
done it.

JACK
(to Steve)
Why didn't you just say that?

Steve glares at him. Amanda comes out of a room and joins them.

AMANDA
What's up?

JACK
Not what. Who. Or is it how?

STEVE
It's why. As in, why don't you go
save a life or something?

AMANDA
Mark?

MARK
Dixon Gallow was killed by a massive
dose of metallicide mixed with DMSO.
And if we know how he was poisoned --

AMANDA
(interrupting)
Metallicide. Cliff Eisenson had
metallicide in his blood.

STEVE
Who had metallicide in his blood?

JACK
No, who's on first.

They all glare at Jack. He shuts up.

AMANDA

Cliff Eisenson. The prop guy. He keeled over in the operating room the day before Gallow died.

Mark stops dead. The others stop, too.

MARK

I can't believe this. I was all wrong.

JACK

When?

MARK

Exactly!

STEVE

What?

MARK

(realizing:)

It's not who or how. It's when.

AMANDA

Why?

And on a lot of puzzled looks, we DISSOLVE TO:

TIGHT ON A TV

as we watch the final moments of Dixon Gallow's last scene on "The Healing Hands." Pull back to REVEAL:

INT. OPERATING ROOM - DAY

Mark, Steve and the entire surviving cast and crew of "The Healing Hands" are gathered around the television. The actors are in the same wardrobe as they were in that final scene.

LYLE

Now that's television.

MARK

No, that's murder.

CYNTHIA

I thought Dixon Gallow died in his trailer.

MARK

He did -- but the murder was committed here, during the filming of that scene.

STEVE

So we're going to re-enact it, right here, right now.

LYLE

I don't think I could give a better performance.

CUTTER

You certainly couldn't do worse.

MARK

Everything is exactly as it was before -- right down to the original props.

All you have to do play your parts.

(then:)

I'll be Dr. Loring Stephens.

Mark takes his place at the operating table. Tahee, aka The Bikini babe, gets on the table.

CYNTHIA

(to the director:)

I've seen him act. The only thing that's going to get murdered is the dialog.

Everyone settles into his role, the director surveys the scene, then cues the CAMERAMAN.

DIRECTOR

Action!

INT. OPERATING ROOM - DAY

But now from the HAND-HELD, gritty perspective of "The Healing Hands." Gritty, tough, uncompromising. Mark (as Dr. Stephens) leans over Tahnee, scalpel in hand when Lyle (as Dr. Strobe) bursts in.

LYLE

Who do you think you are? God?

MARK

In here, that's exactly who I am. Because I can bring life, or I can bring death. Or I can turn a blind eye and let fate take its course -- if I can live with the consequences.

Samantha (as Nurse Quinn) exchanges the scalpel for another instrument and hands it to Mark.

LYLE

Achmed Sabib died on your operating table ten minutes ago, and now you're putting his heart in another body. Do you know what this looks like?

MARK

Yeah. Justice.

Mark starts to operate. Samantha reaches for a towel to dab his forehead and stops--

SAMANTHA

Wait -- this isn't right.

INT. OPERATING ROOM - DAY

We are back to a NORMAL ANGLE as Samantha looks at the tray of towels.

SAMANTHA

When we did the scene, we had rubber operating gloves.

MARK

That doesn't matter. Mop my brow and let's go on.

Mark turns back to the bikini girl, but Samantha hesitates.

SAMANTHA

I really think, for the sake of accuracy, that we should be wearing the gloves.

MARK

Don't worry, it's not important.
(to director:)
Where were we?

DIRECTOR

Let's pick up from Lyle's last line.

The director motions to the cameraman.

DIRECTOR (CONT'D)

Action!

LYLE

Do you know what this looks like?

MARK

Yeah. Justice.

Samantha still won't pick up the rag. Mark turns to her.

MARK (CONT'D)

Something wrong?

SAMANTHA

I can't do it.

MARK

Because you know the rag you used to mop Dixon Gallow's brow is soaked in DMSO and rat poison.

Everyone is shocked. She turns on Mark.

SAMANTHA

No, because I'm a stickler for accuracy.

MARK

I don't blame you. The gloves protected you from getting poisoned yourself.

SAMANTHA

We were all wearing gloves. And anyone could have poisoned the rag, everyone here was furious at Gallow for quitting.

MARK

Yes, but only you had a motive before that.

(then:)

You tried to kill Gallow the day before his announcement, that's why the prop man got sick. He handled the rag you were going to mop Dixon's brow with... but he walked off the set before you got the chance.

Samantha breaks down in tears, much to the astonishment of all around.

SAMANTHA

He dumped me in high school because I was too fat. So I lost weight, became an actress, and finally got on his show. But he didn't recognize me, not even after we went to bed together.

MARK

Then you gave him the yearbook as a gift -- and told him who you were.

SAMANTHA

He didn't care. He laughed at me. Told me I was pathetic, that I should get a life.

MARK

So you took his.

Samantha nods.

MARK (CONT'D)

Well, I'm glad that's over. I'm beat.

Mark reaches for the towel and dabs his head. Samantha gasps -- in fact, everyone is shocked.

STEVE

(concerned:)

Dad, are you crazy? That rag is soaked in DMSO and rat poison!

MARK

Oh my. You didn't think I had the actual rag did you?

(smiles, to Samantha:)

That rag was probably destroyed days ago.

Samantha stares at him... and the rag... in shock. Steve motions to TWO UNIFORMED OFFICERS who leads Samantha away, then he turns to his father.

STEVE

One thing I don't get. How did she know about DMSO?

MARK

She was a receptionist for a physical therapist before she became an actress. DMSO is often used on the black market as a muscle relaxant.

Cynthia is inspired.

CYNTHIA

A doctor who solves murder. Now that's a great idea.

She wanders off. Lyle chases after her.

LYLE

And perfect for my character.

CUTTER

No, my character.

Cutter quickly follows. And on Steve and Mark's look, we DISSOLVE TO:

INT. CORRIDOR - DAY

It's gritty, it's hand-held -- it must be a scene from "The Healing Hands." Lincoln Cutter is pushing a gurney with a BODY BAG on it down the hall when Lyle Fairbanks steps out in front of it, jarring it to a halt.

LYLE

You used to deal in life. Not death.

Cutter tries to shake the gurney free, but can't.

CUTTER

And if I can turn death into life,
don't I have the obligation to try?

LYLE

Whose death? Whose life? And what
gives you the right to choose?

CUTTER

(Pointing to his heart)
This does...
(to his heart)
and this does...
(holding up his hands)
and these do.

LYLE

That's exactly what a psychopathic
killer would say.

CUTTER

Yeah. Or a doctor.

BEHIND THE CAMERA

Mark stands with Jack and Amanda,
watching.

JACK

(to Amanda)
You know, Mark and I were having
exactly this conversation just
yesterday.

Amanda glares at him.

MARK

Where's Delores? She was so excited
about getting a part, and she's
nowhere in sight.

AMANDA

I can't believe I used to watch this
stuff. I don't know how much more I
can stand.

JACK

The show's been picked up for thirteen
more episodes, so you'll have plenty
of chances to find out.

Mark checks his watch.

MARK

I'm sure she said this was her big
scene. And she knows about big scenes.
Oh, does she know.

HAND-HELD

Lyle grabs the gurney and tries to wheel it away.

LYLE

It's one thing to steal the organs from a terrorist like Achmed Sabib. But this woman did nothing wrong besides die in an auto accident.

CUTTER

A corpse has no guilt or innocence. It's useful or it isn't.

BEHIND THE CAMERAS

Mark checks his watch again.

MARK

They said this was the last shot of the day.

AMANDA

I hope she wasn't written out.

MARK

You hope. I have to share an office with her.

HAND-HELD

Cutter and Lyle grapple over the gurney.

LYLE

Useful? How would you feel if that useful body was your wife's?

CUTTER

It is my wife. She was hit by a drunk driver on the way to her pre-natal exam.

There's a tense, tragic moment between them, then

DIRECTOR

Cut! That's a wrap.

BEHIND THE CAMERA

Mark, Jack, and Amanda share a doleful look.

JACK

Maybe she decided not to take the part.

AMANDA

Maybe they liked her so much, they're giving her a bigger part in the next episode.

MARK

Maybe they need me to help battle
the plague in India.

They're about to turn to go when they hear a muffled cry.

DELORES

Hey!

They turn back to see the body bag sitting up on the gurney.
The zipper comes down and Delores pops her head out.

DELORES (CONT'D)

So what do you think?

And as the four of them start to laugh, FADE OUT.

THE END