

FLETCHER

I guess we could start with interviewing the staff. And getting some shots of the...

CATHERINE

Guests?

FLETCHER

Yeah.

CATHERINE

Well, how about you start with Donnie! He'll give you a good sense of both experiences- he used to be afflicted with homelessness, and now he's our facilities manager.

FLETCHER

Excellent. *(to Manny)* See, now we're talking. *(to Catherine)* Where can we find-

The scene transitions to an interview with Donald Lawrence, a contemplative, world-wise man in his early 60's. Donald replaces where Catherine was on stage, Fletcher stays exactly where he was and continues his last sentence.

FLETCHER

-Donnie Lawrence. D-O-N-N-I-E L-A-W-R-E-N-C-E. First day of shooting. Camera is rolling. *(He repositions the camera to face Donnie)* Sound speeds, Manny?

MANNY

Speeding.

FLETCHER

Hi Donnie, we're just going to be asking a few questions about your experience here at New Vision.

A few beats of silence.

DONNIE

Am I supposed to talk-

FLETCHER

So, what do you got for me? You were homeless, right?

DONNIE

(he's done this before)

Yeah, I used to be one of those people sleeping on the floor.

FLETCHER

And now you're the facilities manager?

DONNIE

That's right. I'm in charge of maintaining the peace between our guests, and ensuring they understand and have access to our services, as well as overlooking th-

FLETCHER

How did you become homeless?

DONNIE

(laughing)

Alright, it's gonna be like that. You say you're making this film to talk about our stories, people like me?

FLETCHER

I just want to show what it's like to be homeless.

DONNIE

Well here's my story.

At this point, the ensemble enters and surrounds Donnie. They perform movement that represent and act out his narrative, punctuated by the lines of ensemble dialogue during his story. These lines are marked with asterisks.

DONNIE (CONT)

So, I got, like 40 years of my life riddled with drug addiction, in and out of prison. I dried up all the support from my friends and family because of my addiction.

A WOMAN*

We can't give you anything else, Donnie, you did this. Now go out there and fucking help yourself.

DONNIE

I- it was rough. I lived on and off the street for a while. Like, I had houses to go to, but often they wouldn't want me. My family, they

would reject me. So, at one point, there was a time in my life where I realized I have to- I have to stop this. And I was fifty years old. I hadn't realized it until then. So I got a job. I had an address, knew some people, I worked it out. It was a shitty job, at a 7-Eleven, but it payed.

TEENAGE 7-ELEVEN EMPLOYEE*

You can take showers, right? You won't come into work smelling like this... like, uh, skunk roadkill, or something... look, It's not my business what you do in your free time, just be clean, dude.

DONNIE

And then, after working there for a bit, I came here, to New Vision, looking for a better job or whatever they could give me, and I'll admit, at first I was thinking of ways to manipulate the system to help myself. I thought I could take food, clothes, I could do whatever I wanted and they wouldn't know. But then something happened.

FLETCHER

What happened?

DONNIE

I- I saw the people. I don't know how to say this, I mean I just spoke to the people, and I was like, I was you- I still *am* you, and I realized... my experience could help them. I speak their language, right, like I know what they're going through. For the first time in my life, I felt my own worth because of what I realized I could do for them. And you look at people who come in here and try to mess around, do stuff, like a person might come in twice in one day and ask for a pair of pants, and even though that's not what we do, I get it. I've been there. They do stuff because they have a need, not a want, a *need*, to have stuff. Tomorrow, they might be on the other side of the city, and they might need another pair of pants- clean pants, so maybe they can use the restroom in a hotel lobby, or maybe a relative will let them in for some food.

A MAN*

If I'm wearing clean clothes, they might think I'm staying at the hotel, and I can probably use their lobby bathroom. It's much cleaner than the one at 14th street station.

DONNIE

But, well, it got to the point where I got so passionate about what I do here, that I got offered other jobs, but I knew I couldn't move. I did so many firsts here. I sent my first email in this building- that was crazy. Text message, I sent my first one here. *(he laughs)* I was illiterate to that kind of life, going in and out of jail, the only phones I ever saw were just talk phones. My whole life has changed since I've been here.

FLETCHER

Talk more about that. How has it changed?

DONNIE

(his tone softens)

I- I never even had a first name. For over 62 years, my birth certificate just said "Male Lawrence." And I didn't know that. So what happened is my mother and father, they had passed away, and I fell in love with this woman, all when I was working here, and she wanted to take a vacation. She comes from a background- well, let's just say that her life was filled with education, she's an *(with awe)* *academic administrator*, and she told me that I needed a passport if I wanted to go. And, well, when I went to get my passport, they told me I couldn't get a passport because I didn't have a first name. So the people here got me an attorney, they called the hospital where I was born, got school records, everything, and so now at the age of 63, I was officially born. Donald Lawrence.

END EXCERPT