

Love Beyond Accessibility

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l-6e1_S7pDQ

Narrator: We set out to make a documentary about accessibility. Our subject Shandi MacDonald lives her life visually impaired. We discovered that Shandi had a bigger obstacle than visual impairment.

Shandi MacDonald: Hello

Cody Bennett [at the same time]: Hello

SM: Hello, How are you?

CB [at the same time]: How are you?

SM: [laughs] I'm good, how are you?

CB: I'm good.

SM: I'm calling because I'm on a good bout right now and I was gonna say you should just surprise show up. [Shandi and Cody laugh] But I thought I should tell you, like, this time I'm good. I'm on a good bout right now. October's a terrible month for me, I'll be honest. This is something I've noticed in the last four years. For the whole month of October I'm always sick. So I should be okay to, like, do an interview soon, because I don't want to screw you guys. I don't want that to happen.

Title Card: Love Beyond Accessibility (also written in braille and ASL fingerspelling)

Audio Description: ASL hands appear, braille appears, both read "Love Beyond Accessibility". Fade in, footage of a tree in front of a house. Wooden camper decoration. Dead leaves over water.

Ann Daniels: I'm Ann Daniels. I'm Shandi's mother.

Chris Daniels: I'm Chris Daniels. I'm Shandi's step-father.

AD: We're sitting in our living room. The atmosphere is, like, something is living in it. There's a plant, there's a couple plants. So my mom was an artist and she used to take Shandi to art seminars for children, Shandi was pretty artistic. She used to spend hours drawing.

Audio Description: Ann looks at a photo album.

AD: She used to do all kinds of different things.

Amanda Potter: Amanda Potter, she's my sister. White walls, couch literally right in the middle of the room. She had't been in the hospital very much as a young child. It kind of turned around and she was in the hospital pretty much 2 weeks out of a month. So half the month she would be in the hospital.

CD: It was heartbreaking, like some days we'd have to give her, give her shots cause she was just, she'd go into convulsions, and everything else too. It was bad, it was a hard thing to watch.

Audio Description: Shandi in a child's ball pit.

AD: Typically, if you're going into kidney disease, they know that in advance. When Shandi was diagnosed, she was diagnosed immediate dialysis.

Audio Description: Shandi and a woman in black.

AD: She originally said that she wasn't going to do dialysis, she'd rather give up.

Audio Description: Photos of Shandi and her family.

CD: I'm so glad that she's got her transplant now after seeing all the stuff I've seen. Trips to the hospital, the having to give her epi-pens because she's going into convulsions, that kind of stuff. No person should see their kid do that,

AD: The vessels broke in the back of the brain causing her to lose her sight. She would spend a lot of time in the hospital, spend a lot of time sick in bed. So I don't think she really ever thought she'd meet anyone. So it was very shocking when she, you know, that she was having a guy come to the hospital to meet her.

Audio Description: Photo of Shandi in a corner looking dazed.

John MacKay MacDonald: I hadn't even seen this woman yet and I had already great feelings for her. The moment that I was texting with her I was at work and she asked me "what are you doing at work right now, texting me instead of working?" And I said "Well I'm rocking out some Black Sabbath." She texts me back with "Is that with Ronni James Dio or is that Ozzy Osbourne?" And my response to her was "the fact that you know know that there's more than just Ozzy Osbourne of Black Sabbath is fucking amazing," is what I said to her. My name is John MacKay MacDonald and my relationship to Shandi is I'm her husband.

Audio Description: Photos of John and Shandi.

JMM: It's a nice open concept. I'm sitting in this big comfy chair, of course. Mainly, in the floor, is just a coffee table which [sic, per captions] is would explain to Shand too.

Audio Description: John and Shandi on a bench.

JMM: The first time Shandi and I ever met was in a hospital. It was love at first sight. When she had sight of course, we love her very much but she -

Audio Description: John in wedding attire.

JMM: - the month I, the elevator door opened up and she looked at me and just gave me the "hey" and kept walking along. I just wandered along her side and [laughs] we sat down and we loved every moment ever since.

Audio Description: Polaroid photos of John and Shandi.

JMM: Basically, on her birthday weekend she started expressing to me how I made her happy. She had not known that I had actually went ahead and purchased a ring. Of course I can't keep a secret to save my life. I let it out in the bedroom. I said "well, I kinda bought you a ring Shand. I kinda want to spent the rest of my life with you," and she was like "What do you mean?" And I

was like “Well, I want to marry you, will you marry me?” She started to cry and then Ann and Amanda heard the crying from down the hall -

Audio Description: Wedding Photos

JMM: - bust into the room thinking there’s something wrong with her and “Oh my god Shandi, what’s wrong? What’s wrong?” and Shandi’s like “he asked me to marry like!” [laughs]

Narrator: We interviewed everyone in Shandi’s life, but whenever we set up an interview with her, she couldn’t let us in.

SM: That’s the thing like I honestly — it’s been taking me admitting the anxiety thing just now. Like I didn’t realize, I think it’s been — was hi-hiding. Like it was underlined, and I just hit my threshold of shit, right. Like I just finally hit it. [inhales, awkward laugh]

Audio Description: Photo of Shandi looking sick with John in wedding attire.

JMM: That’s why you guys are having such a hard time getting the filming done. It has nothing to do with the transplant, it has nothing to do with the sight being gone —

Audio Description: Photo of Shandi shocked.

JMM: — but that anxiety is what’s holding everything up.

AP: To go from “Oh yes, someday I’ll get to see my wedding” to “I don’t get to see my wedding” it went as well as it probably could have considering the circumstances. Shandi being sick that day, or starting to have an anxiety attack, it was just “Get her down the isle. Get her down the isle. Get her down the isle.”

Audio Description: Photo of Shandi puking.

JMM: We never actually did get out first dance. We didn’t get a lot of things at a wedding that people are accustomed to, would normally do.

Audio Description: John, Chris and Ann with wedding party.

JMM: She’s trying to make the best of every situation, of what she’s in, and now has discover that this anxiety demon is a lot bigger than what it used to be.

SM: You know I really wish I could grab Shandi’s confidence and personality I had in high school. Because I really — I was a different person then. I didn’t care what other people thought about me and stuff. And I wish I could carry that attitude and confidence with me now. Like really not give a fuck, but apparently, I do. But I don’t know.

JMM: We need to figure out how to get over that hurdle, that anxiety. We need to learn how to just fucking blow it out of the water, because that’s what’s stopping her right now from living life. It’s not her sight, it’s not the organ transplants, it’s the anxiety. Even her knowing that I’m not happy with her being anxious at the point where she makes herself sick, that makes it even worse for her because she sits there and then a day or two goes by and then she’s like, she’s like “I just feel like you’re going to leave me.” And I’m like “that just caused you a week of illness. That’s why we gotta keep pushing forward and stick together, and keep doing what we’ve been

doing and what we have done.” We’ve conquered every hurdle that’s been put before us, and we’ve proven a lot wrong. And that’s what we do best, and we’re going to keep on freaking doing it.

Audio Description: Shandi and John in wedding dress look across a lake.

SM: You gotta find a fucking light in the darkness these days [laughs].

Audio Description: Writer and Director, Cody Bennett. Producer, Vanessa Tang. Director of Photography, Patrick Duff. Camera Operator, Nicolas Zamanis. Sound Recordist, Randy Basdeo. Editor, Dante Gionfriddo. Music composer, Jessica Barker. Crawl begins.