

THE KIDS ARE ALL OKAY

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FADE IN

EXT. K-MART/STRIP MALL - AFTERNOON

A police car, lights flashing, pulls up to the curb. STEVENS (the veteran) and BURNS (the rookie) jump out and push through a CROWD surrounding a hysterical MOTHER who screams for her son.

MOTHER

Jamie! Jamie please, where are you?

She grabs a LITTLE BOY's shoulder, whipping him around. Not Jamie. She continues her frantic search, leaving the frightened boy to cling to his mother's leg. Another nearby BOY, wearing a toddler leash attached to his wrist, watches in terror. The STORE MANAGER intercepts the officers.

STORE MANAGER

She was in our store screaming--

The woman runs up, grabbing Stevens' sleeve.

MOTHER

You have to find my son.

STEVENS

Tell me what happened.

MOTHER

(distracted; eyes darting)
I was browsing the sales rack for a few minutes...next thing I know, he's gone.

STEVENS

Description?

MOTHER

He's 10 years old, got brown hair...

She digs through her purse and pulls out her wallet, flipping to a SMALL PICTURE of a smiling boy.

MOTHER

There. That's Jamie.

Stevens takes the photo.

STEVENS

We'll take a look around.

He and Burns walk towards the center of the mall.

BURNS

(anxiously)

I've never been on one of these calls before.

STEVENS

Relax, rookie. This is crap work. Just walk around and look concerned ...chances are, the kid got tired of browsing fat-lady lingerie and holed up in a toy store somewhere.

BURNS

So what should I do?

STEVENS

I don't care. Look busy.

BURNS

Maybe tape off the area?

STEVENS

Sure.

Burns runs back to the car. The store manager runs up.

STORE MANAGER

You have to do something. She's killing business.

The mother is still violently pushing through the crowd, calling her son's name.

STEVENS

Ma'am, why don't you have a seat over there.

MOTHER

(hysterical)

You have to find my baby--

STEVENS

We will but you need to calm down.

MOTHER

My husband will kill me...

Stevens takes her arm, trying to lead her towards a bench.

STEVENS

Please ma'am...

The mother wrenches her arm out of his grasp.

MOTHER

Let go of me.

She continues searching. Stevens roughly grabs her arm again.

STEVENS

I need you to sit down.

She squirms, trying to rip her arm from his grip but he won't let go. They struggle until suddenly, she slams his head with her heavy purse. The crowd GASPS. She hits him repeatedly until he finally lets go.

Out of nowhere, Burns tackles her from the side, his roll of yellow tape flying out of his hand. The officers wrestle her to the ground with Burns sitting on her as she struggles on her stomach. Stevens stands up, his hair and uniform disheveled.

STEVENS

You crazy--

Stevens pulls out his baton, raising it over his head. Burns shoots his hands out protectively.

BURNS

SIR!

Stevens looks around, noting the dumbstruck crowd of spectators. He tentatively checks his head for blood, then pulls her to her feet and starts cuffing her.

STEVENS

We're taking her in.

BURNS

What? Why?

STEVENS

She just assaulted a police officer in front of all these people. We let her go, and it's gonna be open season on every cop in the city.

(to the mother)

You have the right to remain silent...

Burns looks around incredulously at the crowd which is made up of mostly overweight, middle-aged women and children.

BURNS

Are you kidding me?

Stevens leads the kicking and screaming mother to the squad car.

MOTHER

Where are you taking me?!? What about Jamie?!?

STEVENS

Save it, lady.

He put her in the back and close the door, going around to the driver's side. The mother pounds on the window with her fists. Burns hasn't moved from his place on the sidewalk.

STEVENS

(to Burns)

You coming?

Burns contemplates his options, then quietly gets into the car. The car pulls away, lights flashing. The people standing around can here the mother screaming from inside the car...

MOTHER

You can't take me away! Please.
What about my son?!? WHAT ABOUT MY
BABY?!?!?

FADE TO BLACK

A LITTLE GIRL SINGS, "HE'S GOT THE WHOLE WORLD IN HIS HANDS,"
A CAPELLA, CONTINUING OVER ESTABLISHING MONTAGE

FADE IN:

BEGIN CREDITS

EXT. A SUBURBAN TOWN - SUNSET

AERIAL of a suburban Californian town. Trim green lawns. Swimming pools. Minivans. Heavy residential areas mixed with strip malls. Everything has an ambiguous 1980s feel.

A circus

Being set up near the center.

Mothers are faintly heard calling their children in for dinner.

EXT. CHILDREN'S PLAYGROUND - SUNSET

The playground is emptying, the merry-go-round slowly turning.

EXT. A QUIET NEIGHBORHOOD - SUNSET

A quaint, tree-lined street where children run inside their houses. Dogs BARK.

We PULL IN, settling on a cozy house with warm, orange lights illuminating through the windows.

PAINTED MAILBOX

...says "The Fermans" surrounded by a heart.

END SONG AND CREDITS

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

A HAGGARD WOMAN'S VOICE (O.S.)
GET IN THE CAR!!

This is a war cry. The voice comes from MARGE FERMAN(43), the kind of heavysset, loudmouthed, bitchmaster mom whose kids aspire to be serial killers. Next to her, her grumpy husband HERB (45) puts on a coat as the two stand in a living room decorated in 80s- kitsch. They're wearing their Sunday best...the best K-Mart has to offer.

MARGE
(yelling into the other
room)
GET IN THE CAR!
(to Herb)
Go start the car.

EXT. DRIVEWAY - NIGHT

Two teenagers, WAYNE (16) and SISSY (15), climb into a wood-paneled station wagon (THE WOODY). Herb is behind the wheel, trying to start the wheezing engine.

HERB
Where's your mother?

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

Marge pulls at a leash in a tug-o-war, red-faced with muscles straining to the limit. The end of the leash is wrapped around the corner of the wall, but whatever is attached to the end is resisting hard, GROWLING.

MARGE
(hugely irritated)
C'mon, Tina...we've...gotta...go.

INT. WOODY - NIGHT

The ENGINE RATTLES. In the back, Wayne pulls Sissy's hair as she looks at herself in a compact.

 SISSY
 (annoyed)
 Don't.

Wayne pulls her hair.

 SISSY
 Don't!

He pulls hard one last time. Sissy whips around and punches him in the face. Wayne yelps and grabs his nose. Herb gets out, slamming the car door.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

Herb storms into the kitchen where his red-faced wife struggles.

 HERB
 What's the problem? You know how my
 mother gets!

 MARGE
 (out of breath)
 Oh shut up, Herb. She won't
 come...without...

Herb reaches for the leash and the two of them pull, dragging in TINA (8), their youngest child who's clinging to a coffee table and has the family bulldog (GUNTHER) in the other arm. The leash is attached to Gunther but Tina's the one growling.

 MARGE
 ...the dog.

EXT. DRIVEWAY - NIGHT

Herb carries a squirming and shrieking Tina to the car.

 TINA
 No no nooo! I don't wanna go
 without Gunther.

 MARGE
 (to Herb)
 Frankly, I don't want to go either.
 Your mother's insane.

Herb ignores her as he stuffs Tina into the backseat.

HERB
 (to Marge)
 Get in the car.

INT. UNDER A TABLE/COCO'S RESTAURANT - NIGHT

A TINY FINGERNAIL

Works to peel off a greyish-pink mound of gum glued to the underside of table.

PULL OUT to reveal Tina, just as she's able to wrestle a good chunk of the gum off, like rotten cheese stretching off a hot pizza. She pops it into her mouth, chewing it happily for a few seconds before putting it back. She begins working on a greyish-green mound.

Suddenly, she's yanked out from under the table by her shirt.

INT. COCO'S RESTAURANT - CONTINUOUS

Tina climbs back into her seat. The family sits around a corner table. The kids (with Tina in the middle) are on one side and Herb and Marge are on the other.

At one end of the table is GRANDMOTHER, a thin, constipated-looking woman in a black dress with her gray hair tied back in a tight bun. She'd be perfect for horror films.

At the other end is a large 12x16 framed portrait of a 60-ish angry-looking man in a crewcut (GRANDFATHER).

In the middle of the table, like a centerpiece, is an URN.

The WAITRESS leaves with their order as...

Grandmother taps her fork against a glass of orange juice and raises it in a toast to the picture. Everything she does has an over-the-top ceremonial feel.

GRANDMOTHER
 Quiet. Quiet please. We are ready
 to begin the annual memorial.

Long dramatic beat. Deep breath.

GRANDMOTHER
 On this day, six years ago, God
 spoke to George and asked him to
 join his heavenly ranks.

Wayne and Sissy roll their eyes and mouth the words along with her. They know this speech by heart. Tina listens attentively.

GRANDMOTHER

He was a great man, a noble man who served his country and his Lord with unselfishness and dignity until his final moments.

As Grandmother continues her speech in the background, Wayne makes a jacking-off motion then whispers something to Sissy, causing her to giggle. Herb and Marge shoot poisonous looks at them. Tina looks from Wayne to Sissy, amused. Wayne whispers something to Sissy, making her snicker again. Tina wants in on the fun and tugs on Wayne's sleeve.

TINA

(whispering)
Tell me too!

Wayne shakes her off but she keeps tugging. Finally, he whispers something in her ear, then nods toward Grandmother. Tina's eyes widen.

TINA

Really?

WAYNE

(shrugs)
You can ask her if you don't believe me...

Tina looks at Grandmother, then raises her hand.

GRANDMOTHER

Why God took him so early is a mystery, though his departure was part of the Lord's divine plan. So let's raise our glasses in honor of-

She sees Tina with her hand raised.

GRANDMOTHER

What is it, Tina?

TINA

(innocently)
Did um, God really make Grandpa die on the toilet?

Herb and Marge's faces turn an angry red. Wayne and Sissy repress giggles. Grandmother's eyes narrow into a death glare. Finally...

GRANDMOTHER

Can we act like adults and raise a glass to our patriarch's memory?

They all do, obediently.

EVERYONE

To George.

Everyone drinks.

TINA

So he didn't die because his poo got stuck?

MARGE/HERB

Tina!

Grandmother slams down her glass, a mask of pure murder flashing across her face.

GRANDMOTHER

Show some respect, child. In my day, we kept our belt buckles polished for devil children like you.

She glares at Herb who shrugs.

GRANDMOTHER

Let us pray for George's soul.

Everyone bows their heads.

GRANDMOTHER

Oh, Lord, since you took my dear George from this world of sin and vice, it has been so cold and lonely...

As she talks, Wayne, head bowed, scans the room in boredom. His eyes lock on a BIG BLACK SPIDER crawling up the tablecloth. Devilishly, he picks up the spider and puts it on Tina's plate.

GRANDMOTHER (CONT'D)

Amen.

Grandmother's eyes open, glassy and wistful.

Suddenly...

Tina lets out a blood-curdling SCREAM. She's up like a rocket, shrieking and hysterical. As the entire restaurant looks on in confusion, Tina stands up in her chair and shoves her plate away. The plate slams into the URN, tipping it over and spilling it. The urn rolls towards her and she grabs it, bashing at the spider who's quick and confused and scrambling all over the table. Over and over, she slams the table with the urn, trying to kill it as Grandpa dust flies out, creating a huge dust storm over the table. People in the restaurant scramble to get out of the way.

Dust flings into the face of the waitress who had approached from behind with a tray of food. Blinded, she crashes into the table, tossing the entire tray and its contents.

Tina stops her assault only long enough to see gooey globs of spider-remains on the bottom of the urn. She jolts with fear and disgust, reflexively flinging the urn...right into the PHOTO OF GRANDFATHER, shattering it and the urn.

A long quiet beat. The entire restaurant, completely covered in grandfather dust and food, looks at her in horror.

CUT TO:

The family quickly leaves the restaurant. On the floor, Grandmother, moaning, scoops dust into a styrofoam cup with a credit card, picking out the occasional dusty french fry.

INT. STATION WAGON - NIGHT

The family, faces and clothes filthy, have the silent treatment in play. Tina looks at her brother next her. She smiles and playfully pokes him in the arm. He shakes her off, pissed. She goes back to forlornly looking off into space.

INT./EXT. STRIP MALL - DAY

The family wanders the strip mall. Wayne and Sissy whine while Tina climbs all over the benches, jumping off of them and bothering other shoppers. They stop in front of a card store.

HERB

(irritated)

We're just picking out an apology card. In and out.

WAYNE

If I don't get the record now, I'll just come right back.

SISSY
I need a new pair of boots.

 HERB
No.

 WAYNE/SISSY
Please...

 HERB
We're staying together.

 WAYNE/SISSY
Please...

 HERB
No.

 WAYNE/SISSY
Mom!...

 MARGE
Herb...

 HERB
No!

 WAYNE/SISSY
Mom!

 MARGE
Fine.

 HERB
Marge!

 MARGE
Meet back at these benches in
fifteen.

 HERB
Goddamit. Fine.

The kids take off. Tina turns to go with them but she can't catch up. She turns back, but her parents are gone. She looks torn.

INT. STRIP MALL - LATER

The family groups back together minus Tina.

HERB
(to the kids)
I thought she was with you.

Wayne shrugs. The family scans the area until...

A PIERCING SCREAM

Makes them turn. Marge's face explodes with rage.

INT. PET STORE - DAY

CACAPHONY--DOGS BARKING, BIRDS SQUAWKING, BABIES CRYING,
MOTHERS SCREAMING, EMPLOYEES YELLING, DISPLAYS CRASHING, etc.

Little WHITE MICE streak everywhere, running for their lives.
Panicked customers hop around trying to avoid them. Someone
knocks over a CANARY CAGE. It breaks open, sending out a
hoard of fluttering birds that get tangled in people's hair.

In the middle is Tina, an open box in her hand.

Marge and Herb storm over.

TINA
(timidly)
But they were gonna feed them to
the snakes...

Marge grabs Tina's elbow and drags her toward the front door.

MARGE
(livid)
God help me, I'm giving you the
worst punishment I can think of!

As if by an act of God, a wall of hanging leashes collapses
at their feet, blocking their path, scattering leashes
everywhere.

EXT. STRIP MALL PARKING LOT - DAY

The family walks out. Tina has a leash attached to her wrist
and Marge is holding the other end. With tear-stained cheeks,
Tina fights it like crazy, twisting and squirming and doing
windmills with her arm.

HERB
Two hundred bucks in damages! You'd
think those mice shit gold or
something.

TINA

I don't wanna wear this!

Marge yanks her to a stop. Looks her right in the eye.

MARGE

If this is what it takes to keep
you out of trouble, then deal with
it.

TINA

(screams)

I HATE YOU!

MARGE

(yells back)

I hate you too!

Wayne and Sissy snicker. Tina gives the leash a final defiant tug to no avail, and continues stomping in defiance.

INT. LIVING ROOM/FERMAN'S HOME - NIGHT

Marge sits on her couch giving a Tupperware demonstration to a group of MIDDLE-AGED MOMS, who are all wearing colorful leggings, sweaters, cheesy sweatshirts, etc. It's a scene out of *Midwestern Housewife*.

MARGE

So Linda, I'm putting you down for
the 12 piece set where I throw in a
free egg-slicer?

LINDA

Well, twelve's a bit much...

MARGE

But the egg-slicer's valued at
twenty-five dollars.

LINDA

(non-committal)

I suppose...

Tina runs in, very upset. The leash dangles from her wrist. Marge acts a lot nicer to Tina in the presence of company.

MARGE

What's the matter, honey?

TINA

All the other kids are making fun
of me!

Marge laughs nervously, conscious of her "customers."

MARGE
I'm sure they're just kidding!

TINA
I don't wanna go back up there...

Marge gets up and ushers Tina out. Tina refuses to go, holding the door frame.

MARGE
(through her teeth)
You're embarrassing me...

TINA
But...

They struggle. Marge finally overcomes the little girl and shoves her out of the room. She turns to the women with a big smile.

MARGE
Now where were we?

INT. DINING ROOM

Tina appears in the doorway. She hugs the frame shyly, watching Herb play poker with his court of whipped HUSBANDS through a haze of cheap cigar smoke.

SAM, bleary-eyed with alcohol, sees Tina.

SAM
Hey, it's the little one!

He holds out a half-full whiskey glass.

SAM
You want some of this?

Tina shakes her head.

BOB
It ain't booze she needs. That one there needs an anchor.

HERB
She needs somethin'. Her latest adventure cost me \$200.

SAM
You know why I think you had kids,
Herbie?

HERB
Why?

SAM
To keep that crazy wife of yours
busy so you wouldn't have to deal
with her.

All the fathers laugh. BOB speaks up.

BOB
(heartily)
It's true, Herb! Your wife's a real
bitch!

HERB
And yours is a stupid whore!

The room goes silent.

Long beat.

Everyone, including Herb, roars with laughter.

BOB
(good-naturedly)
It's true! She is!

Tina quietly leaves the doorway.

INT. HERB & MARGE'S BEDROOM

A bunch of kids, MAX (9, the cruel ringleader), FREDDIE, and some other BOYS and GIRLS including Sissy, have found Herb's stash of porn mags under the mattress. Tina opens the door and enters.

BOYS
Close the door!

MAX
Dammit rodent, we said you couldn't
come in here.

Tina looks to Sissy for help.

SISSY
Close the door!

Tina begins closing the door but Marge enters. The boys quickly hide the magazines.

MARGE
What's going on?

MAX
(big innocent smile)
Nothing, Mrs. Ferman. We're just talking.

MARGE
What's that behind your back?

MAX
Just some comics. Hey, did my mom put in the big order she said she would?

Marge hurries to her closet and gathers more Tupperware items.

MARGE
Not yet but I haven't pulled out the big guns yet. Why don't you all go play downstairs.

MAX
Yes, ma'am.

He stuffs a magazine under his shirt and herds the other kids towards the door where Tina still stands. As soon as Marge leaves, Max shoves Tina.

MAX
You almost got us in trouble.

TINA
That wasn't my fault.

FREDDIE
You suck, Tina.

TINA
YOU suck, Freddie.

FREDDIE
Well at least I don't have to wear a leash like a dog.

TINA
Well at least I'm not ugly.

MAX

Let's tie the dog up in the closet!

He lunges for Tina but she squirms out of his reach, shrieking down the hall as the mob chases.

INT. KITCHEN/FERMAN'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Tina runs into kitchen, darting under the poker table, knocking over Sam's drink.

SAM

Hey!

HERB

Tina!

The mob comes a'lookin'. Tina's leash peeks out from under the table, giving her away. She pulls it in but it's too late. The boys drag her out, knocking over piles of chips, drinks, etc., disrupting the game. All the dads yell in anger.

TINA

(genuine fear)

No no no! Daaaaaad!

HERB

Dammit, Tina! I had a good hand.

TINA

Dad! Help! They're going to--

HERB

Get out of here!

INT. LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

The boys, barking and hooting, drag Tina through the living room by her leash. The mothers watch them disappear around the corner. PEGGY, Max's mother, smiles, smugly amused.

PEGGY

Play nicely, Maxie!

MAX (O.S.)

We are, mom!

TINA (O.S.)

(screaming)

Mom!

The women chuckle.

PEGGY

I have to say, that's quite a creative thing you've done with Tina.

MARGE

You like it? We just got it today. It should make her a bit more manageable.

The other moms mumble in agreement.

PEGGY

I hope so! Remember when she took out the entire church bake sale when she toppled the organ? I thought Father Wick would never stop cussing!

LINDA

Or when she set Sister Catherine's habit on fire during the Easter sermon!

TERRY, another mother, pipes in.

TERRY

That was the fastest I've ever seen an 80 year old strip!

Round of agreement.

MARGE

(embarrassed)

We won't be having problems like that anymore.

SHEILA, another mom has been a bit more reserved.

SHEILA

(unsure)

Doesn't the leash seem a bit...undignified?

Marge looks unsure. Peggy puts her hand over Marge's in support.

PEGGY

Stop trying to use your big words to intimidate us, Sheila. When it comes to discipline, a good mother does whatever it takes.

Marge nods, glowing with acceptance.

INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT

It's a suburban Lord of the Flies scene. The boys drag Tina towards the closet. She's grabbing onto every object she can (wall, paintings, toys, etc) to stop them. They pass Wayne's room where Wayne is sitting on his bed, staring out the door, slack-jawed and stoned.

TINA
Wayne, help!

Wayne doesn't even blink as the caravan rumbles by.

INT. LIVING ROOM

HOWLING and pounding FOOTSTEPS can be heard from upstairs. Plaster falls from the ceiling. A faint, little girl's, "Nooooo!" None of the women notices the noise.

MARGE
Did a family finally move into that house down the street?

TERRY
No family, just one guy. A plumber or something, total blue collar.

PEGGY
Well, at least he's white.

MARGE
I'm surprised Wilma hasn't organized the Welcome Wagon yet.

TERRY
Marge! Didn't you hear? Wilma was at K-Mart with Jamie today and he disappeared!

INT. HALLWAY

Meanwhile, the boys are trying to stuff Tina into a hallway closet. Tina's fighting for her life. She kicks her legs out frantically. One of the kicks catches a boy in the crotch and he goes down.

INT. LIVING ROOM

LOUD BANGING and RUCKUS from upstairs. The mothers are too wrapped up in conversation.

SHEILA

Do they think he was kidnapped? I heard there's been a rash of them around the country.

TERRY

It's terrifying. I heard last week that some cult stole a bus full of retarded kids and brainwashed them.

LINDA

Are you sure? I heard it was just that singer from Bon Jovi hopped up on drugs.

TERRY

Horrible. I'm telling you...long hair on a man means he's oversexed.

PEGGY

Amen, sister.

MARGE

Well thank goodness Wilma still has Robbie. Jamie always seemed kind of slow, anyway.

INT. HALLWAY

Tina's still screaming and fighting. Using the door frame for leverage, she brings her legs to her stomach and thrusts both legs out--a desperate kangaroo kick that slams Max in the stomach. He's thrown backwards...right through the window.

INT. LIVING ROOM

THE SOUND OF A WINDOW SHATTERING

All the mothers look alarmed.

Max's WAIL morphs into the sound of a fire engine SIREN as we...

CUT TO:

EXT. FERMAN'S HOUSE - NIGHT

A fireman in a crane rescues Max, whose hooked by the pants to the rain gutter off the second story. On the front lawn, Peggy is hysterical as all the other mothers surround her. Her husband Sam has his arm around her. Marge stands to the side, an outcast. Tina watches the scene from her bedroom window.

PEGGY
 (to Marge)
 Your daughter...
 (struggles for words)
 Absolutely evil.

The fireman brings Max down. Peggy hurries a crying Max into her station wagon. Max gives Tina the finger the moment his mother turns her back.

MARGE
 How about if I take 25 percent off
 your order and we pretend this
 never happened?

Peggy shoots her a death glare before slamming the door and speeding away. Marge turns and glares up at Tina.

EXT. SUBURBAN NEIGHBORHOOD - MORNING

The sun breaks over the horizon of the quaint suburban neighborhood.

INT. HOUSE - MORNING

We see the back of a MYSTERIOUS MAN wearing a hooded sweatshirt, sitting at a kitchen table eating toast and reading a newspaper. He folds the newspaper and plops it down on the table.

ANGLE ON

The HEADLINE of the newspaper reads...

"LOCAL K-MART SCENE OF POSSIBLE KIDNAPPING"

We hear the man pick up car keys and leave the house. We never see his face.

INT. KITCHEN - MORNING

PULL OUT from the newspaper headline to find the Ferman family eating breakfast around their own kitchen table. Herb reads the same newspaper as Marge knits. The morning news plays on the TV on the counter. Tina pours milk from a gallon jug into her bowl of cereal. The heavy jug slips and hits the side of her bowl, sending a wave of milk and cereal all over the table. She uprights everything and eats what's left in her bowl. The milk drips off the edge of the table.

On TV, the news shows images of the circus.

TINA
Hey dad, can we go?

No answer. Tina concentrates on her cereal. The news changes to a story about Jamie.

MARGE
Herb...look.

Herb looks up at the TV.

ANGLE ON TV

A NEWS ANCHOR speaks. An icon with the picture of JAMIE is in the right corner of the screen.

NEWS ANCHOR
The boy, ten year-old Jamie Musgraves, disappeared last week from a local department store. We go live to the scene with Shayna Gayhart.

Through the TV we SMASH ZOOM INTO:

EXT. K-MART/STRIP MALL - MORNING

Live action from the scene of the crime.

A newsreporter, SHAYNA GAYHART reports in front of Ross where POLICE mill around.

SHAYNA GAYHART
--and still, no witnesses. Police are now treating the case as a possible kidnapping.

Behind Shayna and her camera crew are the investigating police officers led by JONES (33), a tomboy turned pretty but no-nonsense detective. She's clearly the sharpest one in the pack. Jones talks to Officer Burns.

JONES
I can't seem to find the witness list.

BURNS
There uh, isn't one.

JONES
What do you mean?

BURNS

We had to go down to the station
and...didn't come back.

JONES

(fuming)
Is this a joke?

BURNS

(uncomfortable)
Well, we had an incident and had to
make an arrest--

JONES

She was a distraught mother!

BURNS

Right, but she did hit Stevens and
we do have witnesses to that...

Stevens sees Jones talking to Burns and walks over, gruffly
pulling her away by the arm.

STEVENS

(accusingly)
What are you doing?

JONES

What do you mean?

STEVENS

What's with busting my partner's
balls?

JONES

I didn't realize your name was on
them.

STEVENS

Funny, Jones. Don't you and your
bulldyke buddies have a softball
game to be at?

JONES

Look I don't have time to play
games today. You had a possible
kidnapping here and not only did
you not interview any potential
witnesses, but you arrested the
mother. How am I supposed to run
this investigation when you guys
are doing a piss-poor job?

Beat.

 STEVENS
She hit me first.

 JONES
Did she steal your lunchbox too?

Jones walks away. Stevens is confused, not realizing he's just been insulted?

 STEVENS
 (mumbling)
I don't have a lunchbox...

EXT. K-MART/STRIP MALL - SAME

Stevens stands next to Shayna and speaks to the camera. In the background, Jones works diligently.

 STEVENS
Well, thus far, we've narrowed down the perpetrator's identity to the fact that he's probably...male. Because it seems more logical. And that he probably has access to a car which was how he got away so quickly. So we're looking for a white?
 (looks off-screen for help. OFFICERS shrug)
yes, white male of at least 16 years of age.

 SHAYNA GAYHART
 (into camera)
Children disappearing into thin air and a community distraught. Back to you, John.

SMASH ZOOM OUT OF SCENE THROUGH TV TO:

INT. KITCHEN/FERMAN'S HOUSE - BACK TO SCENE

Herb and Marge have been watching the newscast and now take a long look at each other, the wheels in their heads turning. Simultaneously, they turn to look at Tina, who is getting up to put her bowl in the sink. She suddenly slips on the milk and falls, slamming against the table which collapses.

Marge SCREAMS. A knitting needle protrudes from her thigh.

EXT. K-MART - DAY

The Woody pulls into the lot.

INT. /EXT. WOODY - CONTINUOUS

Tina, dressed in her best with a bow in her hair, sits in the back between Wayne and Sissy. She's listening to some bubble gum music on her Walkman, singing every fourth word and clapping unrhythmically to the beat. She's completely oblivious of Wayne and Sissy, who stare at her from each side, sadistic smirks frozen on their faces.

Marge scans the K-Mart intensely.

MARGE
(pointing)
There. Right on the curb.

She points to a bike rack in front of K-Mart.

HERB
(nervously)
Isn't that too obvious?

Marge pulls out Tina's backpack, stuffed full with things.

MARGE
Get her leash.

EXT. K-MART - DAY

The place is milling with SHOPPERS. Nobody seems to find it peculiar that the family has their daughter on a leash. They walk up to the bike rack and Herb ties the leash to a metal bar.

Marge inspects Tina.

MARGE
(to Sissy)
Make-up.

Sissy hands over her compact. Marge roughly puffs powder all over Tina's face as Tina squirms and coughs. She fixes the bow in Tina's hair and steps back, looking satisfied. Tina looks almost angelic.

TINA
Am I gonna get my Icee?

Herb gets down on one knee, and uses his most fatherly voice-- Mr. Brady's having a heart to heart.

HERB

Of course but you'll have to stay here and wait for us, okay?

MARGE

Now remember, if anyone talks to you, make sure you're on your best behavior. Don't be afraid of strangers.

HERB

Especially ones in cars.

Marge pats her on the head awkwardly, like a dog and the family walks towards K-Mart as Tina watches mournfully. The minute she turns around, they sprint towards the car. Moments later, the Woody SCREETCHES out of the lot.

INT. WOODY - CONTINUOUS

The family peels out of the lot, whooping and cheering.

EXT. K-MART - AFTERNOON

Tina watches people walk by, hoping someone will talk to her. An OLD COUPLE dressed like retired Floridians walks by.

TINA

Hi!

OLD WOMAN

Oh, look Stan, how cute! Are you with the circus?

TINA

No, but I like the circus.

OLD WOMAN

Oh, she must be homeless. Give her some money, Stan.

The old man takes a quarter from a pouch and hands it to Tina as the couple goes on its way. Tina looks at the quarter, then sniffs it. A BIKER ties his bike right next to Tina. She watches him hopefully, with a big smile, holding up the quarter.

TINA

Do you wanna buy a quarter?

BIKER

(as he walks away)
Eat me.

Tina continues to try to talk to shoppers but is mostly ignored. Her eyes follow the legs that cross back and forth in front of her. Nobody stops. Nobody gives her the time of day. Nobody seems to have any qualms about the fact that this little girl is tied to a bike rack.

EXT. K-MART - SUNSET

The sun sets in the distance and Tina's pooped. She sits with her bag in her lap, singing lethargically to herself, her eyelids heavy.

Two SECURITY GUARDS walk by and give her a friendly wave. She waves back wearily.

Tina looks up and sees RALPH walking by. He's a soft-looking, wide-eyed middle-aged man, wearing the same sweatshirt as the Mysterious Man eating breakfast. Something about his mannerisms makes him seem like a big awkward harmless kid--a naive and single-mindedness. He has a just-purchased toaster under his arm and is drinking an Icee.

TINA

Hi!

Ralph jumps, surprised.

RALPH

(timid)

Hi.

TINA

(desperate)

I'm sooo thirsty.

Ralph doesn't know what to do.

RALPH

Okay.

He turns to go.

TINA

Wait! Can I have some of yours?

Ralph looks like he doesn't want to give it up, but is too polite not to, so after some internal struggle, hands his Icee to her. She gulps it happily then hands it back. Ralph looks at it disgustedly, then waves it off.

TINA

What's your name?

RALPH

Ralph.

TINA

I'm Tina.

RALPH

What are you doing here?

TINA

I'm waiting for my family. What are you doing here?

RALPH

I just bought a toaster.

TINA

Why?

RALPH

For a ...project.

TINA

What kind of project?

RALPH

A, um, secret project.

TINA

Oooh, what's the secret?

Ralph looks around nervously.

RALPH

I should go now.

TINA

Wait! Cant you...stay and hang out for a while?

Ralph looks down at her. The lighting on the crown of her head makes her look almost angelic. He shuffles his feet, not really wanting to.

TINA

Please?

RALPH

I got so much work to do.

TINA

It'll only be for a few minutes.

Her eyes beg him. Overwhelmed, he puts his shopping bag down.

RALPH
Just for a few minutes.

He sits down next to Tina.

TINA
So what's the secret?

RALPH
I can't tell you.

TINA
Why not?

RALPH
I just can't.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. K-MART - SUNSET

Tina and Ralph are in the same position. Ralph has his head in his hand and he looks exhausted.

TINA
Well, maybe if you told me, I could tell you if it's a good secret or not.

RALPH
(exhausted)
I said no.

Suddenly, from across the parking lot, a haggard woman's voice yells:

HAGGARD WOMAN'S VOICE (O.S.)
Hey you! Don't move!

Ralph looks up, terrified. A HOMELESS WOMAN with an overflowing shopping cart runs up, her cart rattling horribly. She bends down so her face is right up to Tina's, her finger pointing at close range.

HOMELESS WOMAN
How old are you?

TINA
Eight.

HOMELESS WOMAN

You one of 'em...illegals? You speak English, right?

Tina nods.

HOMELESS WOMAN

Eight...I was eight once. Before the war.

TINA

What war?

HOMELESS WOMAN

'62, Wyoming.

(darkens)

They raided our factories to steal our babies, the little blue-eyed ones with curly red hair, but we had nothing to fight 'em off with but the sporks in our lunch. But we killed 'em bastards, every one, popping out those lecherous eyes pop pop pop! Just see if the French ever come near us again...

Tina stares blankly.

HOMELESS WOMAN

Didn't they teach you about the civil war?

TINA

I'm only in the third grade.

HOMELESS WOMAN

What's your name, child?

TINA

Tina.

HOMELESS WOMAN

(inspects Tina)

You know...

(leans in and sniffs

Tina's hair)

...you could make a lot of money selling on the street, cute girl like you. At least five bucks a bag of Tijuana oranges out by the freeway with that puppy-dog look 'a yours...

She catches Ralph looking at her like she's crazy.

HOMELESS WOMAN
WHAT ARE YOU LOOKING AT?

She tries to choke him. Just then, the two security guards round the corner and see the woman attacking Ralph.

GUARD #1
Hey you! Stop it!

The guards run towards them and pry her off of Ralph.

GUARD #2
I thought I told you to leave!

HOMELESS WOMAN
I have a human right to be here!

The guards try to tip her cart over and she flings herself on it, pushing them off. She hurriedly pushes the cart away.

HOMELESS WOMAN
Alright, alright you assholes!
You'll get yours when the aliens
are elected president. And I'm not
talking about Mexicans!
(to Tina)
Think about it, little girl!
Oranges. We'll go in together and
share the profit. Look for me at
the playground behind 7-11.

The guards chase her out into the parking lot.

GUARD #2
GET OUT OF HERE!

HOMELESS WOMAN
(angrily)
Eat my cheese!
(to Tina)
Remember, girl...7-11! Just ask for
me, Suzanne Sommers!

She tears off, mumbling angrily and throwing punches at invisible people.

Ralph gets up quickly and dusts himself off. He checks to make sure his toaster is okay.

TINA
(panicked)
Where are you going?

RALPH
I gotta go.

Tina grabs his leg and won't let him go.

TINA
No wait, five more minutes!

RALPH
I can't.

TINA
Then take me with you!

Ralph looks down at her. He clearly feels bad. He leans over to pry her hands off him.

RALPH
I'm sorry--

TINA
I can be your helper...I can help you with whatever you need.

Ralph stops, giving this some thought.

TINA
Really, I could. You said you had a lot of work. Maybe if I helped you, you could get things done faster.

Ralph seriously contemplates it, but then changes his mind.

RALPH
I'm sorry.

He extracts his leg and turns to walk away.

TINA
(yelling after him)
Is it because you're worried I'll tell your secret? Because if you are I--I can't.

Ralph turns to look at her.

TINA
I don't have any friends to tell. I promise.

Ralph looks at her and her sadness. Overwhelmed, he finally turns back. He squats down so they're eye to eye.

RALPH

If I let you help me, it's very important that you don't tell anyone okay? Not your mom or dad, or your classmates. NO ONE.

Tina nods, enthusiastically. Ralph looks like a part of him knows he's making a very bad decision.

RALPH

Alright, let's go.

ties her leash from the rack and follows Ralph into the parking lot.

Tina looks confused. Two SECURITY GUARDS round the corner and see the homeless woman.

GUARD #1

Hey, I told you to leave!

The homeless woman quickly jumps up and flings herself onto her cart, protecting it just as the guards run up, trying to tip it over.

HOMELESS WOMAN

Alright, alright you assholes!

(to Tina)

Think about it. Oranges. We'll go in together and share the profit. Look for me at the playground behind 7-11.

GUARD #2

Move!

HOMELESS WOMAN

(angrily)

Eat my cheese!

(to Tina)

Just ask for me, Suzanne Sommers!

She tears off, mumbling angrily and waving her middle finger in the air at invisible people.

EXT. PARKING LOT/K-MART - DAY

Ralph and Tina get into his beat up Dodge van with a magnetic sign on the side that says, "APPLIANCE REPAIR."

INT. RALPH'S VAN - DUSK

They're on the road. Tina looks around the car and sees that there are all kinds of random electronic components and equipment in the back. Tina turns on the radio loudly. Ralph turns it down. Tina channel-surfs madly. Ralph turns it off.

RALPH

Don't touch that.

Tina plays with a bobbing head puppy on Ralph's dashboard. Ralph grabs the toy.

RALPH

C'mon! Hands on your side. Alright?
Stay on your side.

Tina folds her hands in her lap.

TINA

Where are we going?

RALPH

To my house.

TINA

What are we going to do?

RALPH

I told you. You're going to help me
build something important.

TINA

I've never built anything before.
Once, I tried to build a volcano
for school. I used peanut butter
and Playdoh and glue but then my
dog Gunther ate it when I was
sleeping. I should have known not
to leave it out at night but my mom
put plastic wrap on it and said it
would be okay and I asked her if
she was sure and she said yes and I
asked her if she was sure she was
really sure and she said yes but
she should have said no because she
was wrong because it wasn't okay...

Tina continues to ramble on. Ralph starts looking like he's wondering if perhaps this was a bad idea.

FADE INTO:

EXT. RALPH'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Ralph's van is parked in his driveway, underneath a pole with a "NEIGHBORHOOD WATCH" sign. Inside the van, Tina is still talking.

TINA (V.O.)

--and the vet said we would just have to wait. So Gunther couldn't poo for like a week until one day, he made the biggest poo in our kitchen and it was red and purple and stuck to the floor so hard that my dad needed a shovel to scrape it off.

INT. RALPH'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Ralph lets Tina into the house and closes the door, locking it behind him as Tina wanders around the room, touching everything. There are half-unpacked cardboard boxes everywhere, like he'd just moved in. The place is filled with mechanical components, broken appliances and tools, and is sparsely decorated. The walls are excessively covered with large sheets of butcher paper that look like blueprints for some kind of machine.

He peeks through his blinds. Satisfied that no one's watching, he turns his attention to Tina, just in time to see her about to touch a large shape with a sheet draped over it.

RALPH

Don't touch that!

Tina jumps and pulls her hand away. Ralph gets down on his knees and holds Tina's shoulders, looking into her eyes earnestly.

RALPH

Do you promise me you can keep a secret?

TINA

Yes.

Ralph walks over and gently pulls off the sheet. Underneath, is a mechanical contraption haphazardly made up of metal, wires and gutted appliances.

It looks like a large refrigerator with all kinds of crazy components attached to it. Prominently featured is an alarm clock modified to tell the time/date. It looks unequivocally like the brainchild of a madman. Tina's eyes widen in surprise.

TINA

What is it?

RALPH

(proudly)

THAT...is my time machine. I came up with the design all by myself.

TINA

What's that?

RALPH

It's a machine that lets you travel back in time.

TINA

Are we going on a trip?

RALPH

It's not done yet.

TINA

When will it be done?

RALPH

As soon as I finish it.

TINA

When will you finish it?

RALPH

I don't know.

TINA

Why not.

RALPH

I just don't. Will you help me with it? I need you to hold the antennae while I calibrate the machine to specific antimatter pathways.

TINA

Sure!

Ralph takes out a roll of aluminum foil and wraps it around Tina's torso.

He gives her a pair of television rabbit ears and extends her arms so she's holding the antennae high over her head.

Tina stands quietly for a while. Ralph takes the new toaster out of the box, takes it apart and starts attaching it to the wiring behind the alarm clock.

TINA

Do you want to see me dance?

RALPH

No thanks.

Tina looks disappointed. She looks around the room at the clutter in the house. It's a graveyard for all that is mechanical.

TINA

Is your job to fix things?

RALPH

Not anymore.

TINA

Why?

RALPH

Got tired of other people always telling me what to do.

TINA

Do you live by yourself?

RALPH

Yes.

TINA

Where's your family?

RALPH

I don't have one.

TINA

Why not?

RALPH

Just because.

TINA

You don't even have a mom or dad?

Ralph is starting to get exasperated.

RALPH

No.

TINA

That's impossible.

RALPH

Okay, I used to have a mom. I'm trying to find her again.

TINA

Where is she?

RALPH

Here. But...a long time ago.

Tina looks around.

TINA

Where?

RALPH

Here.

TINA

Where?

RALPH

In this house. We used to live here...before...before she left.

TINA

Where did she go?

RALPH

Look. I can't work with you asking me so many questions.

TINA

(feels bad)

Sor-RY.

Ralph continues working and Tina does her best to stay quiet and stand still. She watches him for a bit and then gets bored. She notices some occasional tiny sparks igniting around some wires close to where Ralph is working. Curious, she uses one of the rabbit ears and pokes at the wires. The moment there's contact, there's an electrical explosion with SPARKS FLYING and SMOKE comes out of the machine. Ralph jumps back in surprise, tipping over the time machine. It crashes to the floor.

RALPH
What'd you do that for?!?

TINA
(horrified)
I'm sorry, I'm sorry!

Ralph examines the area that's smoking. He tinkers with a piece but it falls apart in his hands.

RALPH
It's BROKEN!

TINA
I'll help you fix it.

RALPH
It's no use. Those gears are broken
and I just spent the last of my
cash on that toaster.

TINA
Maybe I could ask my parents for
money.

Ralph thinks it over.

RALPH
Are they rich?

TINA
Yeah, we have a Cussing Jar in our
kitchen and it's almost filled to
the top.

Ralph contemplates. Finally...

RALPH
Okay. What's your phone number?

INT. KITCHEN/RALPH'S HOUSE

Ralph is on the phone. He deepens his voice and gives himself a terrible, inconsistent accent (something Russian- Scottish- Italian- ish with a hint of Chinese), trying to sound menacing and disguise his voice. Tina stands behind him.

INT. FERMAN'S HOUSE - NIGHT

It's a festive mood. Marge is preparing a large turkey for dinner. The phone RINGS. Herb answers it.

HERB

Hello?

CROSSCUT BETWEEN RALPH AND HERB

RALPH

Herb Ferman?

HERB

Yes?

RALPH

I have your daughter.

TINA (O.S.)

Hi dad!

HERB

What's that?

RALPH

I said I have your daughter.

TINA (O.S.)

Hi dad!

RALPH

It's gonna cost you--

Tina tries to crowd the phone.

TINA

Dad--can I have some money for my
friend's time machine????

Ralph wrestles the phone away from her.

RALPH

Go in the other room!

Tina skulks away into the living room.

RALPH

Listen up, Herb. I'm a dangerous
man. You want your daughter back?
It's gonna cost you.

HERB

(nonchalant)

Oh yeah? How much?

RALPH

50...dollars.

Herb laughs and hangs up.

INT. KITCHEN/RALPH'S HOUSE

Ralph stares at his phone, which buzzes with the dialtone. He dials again.

INT. FERMAN HOUSE

The phone RINGS. Herb gets up to answer it.

HERB
Hello?

RALPH
You need to understand me here. I will hurt your daughter if you don't pay me.

HERB
(exasperated)
We don't have that kind of money.

RALPH
You don't have 50 bucks?

HERB
Sorry.

Herb hangs up again.

INT. KITCHEN/RALPH'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Ralph stares at the phone with the DIALTONE. He can't believe what's happening. He redials the number. Herb picks up.

RALPH
How about 40?

HERB
Nope.

RALPH
30?

HERB
No.

RALPH
10?

HERB
You're wasting your time.

RALPH

How about some spare gears? Do you
have any, like from an old bike?

CLICK Ralph looks at the phone as a dialtone emanates. From
the living room of Ralph's house, there's a loud crash.

TINA (O.S.)

Don't worry! I think I can fix it!

Ralph sighs. He hits redial.

RALPH

(desperate)

Look--just take your daughter back.
She'll be waiting for you at the
top of Caliga Park in an hour.

HERB

(lackadaisically)

Sure. I'm getting into my car right
now.

RALPH

Great.

(menacing)

And no cops.

HERB

No cops. Gotcha.

He hangs up.

INT. LIVING ROOM/RALPH'S HOUSE

Ralph picks up Tina's backpack.

RALPH

C'mon. It's time to go home.

Tina's face falls as disappointment washes over her.

INT./EXT. RALPH'S VAN - NIGHT

The van is on the freeway. Ralph is lost in his own unhappy
thoughts.

TINA

I'm sorry I broke your time
machine.

Ralph doesn't answer. They sit in silence.

TINA
Are you mad at me?

Ralph sighs.

RALPH
No, but you have to go home.

TINA
(pointing behind them)
But my house was that way.

Ralph ignores her.

TINA
I had a lot of fun tonight.

Ralph is silent.

TINA
(timidly)
Can we play tomorrow?

RALPH
(stone-faced)
Sure...why not...

Tina smiles. Relieved.

TINA
I was hoping you would say that.

They pass the circus, the Ferris Wheel lit and turning.

TINA
Hey Ralph, do you wanna go to the
circus?

RALPH
No thanks.

Tina turns to watch the Ferris Wheel go by, her disappointed face reflected in the window.

EXT. CALIGA PARK

The van pulls into the parking lot at the foot of a hill. The park is a suburban hiking center, complete with concrete-paved trails.

EXT. TOP OF THE HILL/CALIGA PARK

Tina and Ralph walk up the trail.

TINA
Do you have any kids?

RALPH
No.

TINA
Why not?

RALPH
Why would I bring more miserable
people into this world?

TINA
I'm people and I'm not miserable.

RALPH
You're just not old enough to
realize it yet.

TINA
I'm 8.

RALPH
That's nice.

TINA
How old are you? Like 15?

Ralph can't help but laugh.

RALPH
No...I'm a lot older.

TINA
Is it fun being grown up?

RALPH
Not really. I wish I were a kid
again.

TINA
My mom tells me she can't wait til
I grow up. Because that's when I
get to move out.

RALPH
(bitterly)
If she doesn't move out on you
first.

TINA
What do you mean?

RALPH

Just make sure you're a good kid while she's still around. Because if you're not, you may just wake up one morning and find out your mom's up and left because she got tired of you causing trouble all the time.

Tina looks scared.

RALPH

(gently)

Don't look so scared, kid. It's just...that's what happened to me and it royally sucked. But now I've figured out a way to go back to the last time I saw her, and I'm gonna let her know that I'll be good now so she doesn't have to leave.

They've reached the top of the hill. All that's there is a cement bench. Ralph hands her a bag of cookies.

RALPH

Stay here and wait, okay?

TINA

Where are you going?

RALPH

I'll be right back.

Ralph hurries back down the trail.

EXT. PARKING LOT/CALIGA PARK - NIGHT

Ralph gets into his van and peels off.

EXT. TOP OF THE HILL/CALIGA PARK

The bag of cookies is empty. Bored, Tina stands up and walks down the hill.

TINA

Ralph?

(looks around)

Ralph?

INT. /EXT. RALPH'S VAN - NIGHT

Ralph is driving home. As he exits the freeway, he sees a little boy walking his bike along the exit. He slows the van.

The boy turns. It's Max. He knows he shouldn't, but he just can't stop himself. He's looking at the bike's gears and is damn near licking his chops.

Ralph rolls down his window and drives alongside Max.

RALPH
Hey kid, I'll give you a hundred
bucks for your bike...

EXT. HIGHWAY - NIGHT

Tina is walking on the side of the freeway, when she notices lights in the distance--it's the Ferris Wheel. Her face lights up and she walks a little bit faster.

INT. FERMAN'S HOUSE - SAME

The family is sitting around a dinner table eating a holiday spread. Marge taps her fork against her glass.

MARGE
I just want to make a toast. To the
best family a mother could ask for.

HERB/WAYNE/SISSY
Hear Hear!

The doorbell RINGS. Marge opens the door to find Officer Burns holding Tina by her leash.

BURNS
Hello, ma'am. Is this your
daughter?

Marge is shocked. She turns and looks at Herb, scared.

BURNS
I found her walking down the side
of the highway. Said she was going
to the circus.

MARGE
I'm sorry. She must have wandered
off.

BURNS
(genuinely impressed)
Wow, that's some determination.
That's twelve miles from here!

Herb clears his throat, distracting the cop. He holds two beers in his hands.

HERB

Hey buddy, you look like you've had a long day. How bout a cold one?

BURNS

I shouldn't. I'm still on duty.

HERB

You sure? They're imports...

Burns thinks. This is the hardest decision he's made all day. Finally, he breaks into a smile.

BURNS

I'm sure one won't hurt.

Herb and Burns clink bottles and drink. Burns finishes his bottle in one swig, handing the empty bottle back to Herb.

BURNS

Thanks, man.

(catches his breath)

Well, back to work. You folks have a good night!

The minute the door is closed, all eyes are on Tina. From outside, TIRES SCREECHING followed by the sound of TRASH CANS being wiped out. Everyone stares at Tina.

HERB

Weren't you...?

The family stares at her, astounded. Tina yawns.

TINA

Can I go to bed now?

They continue to stare at her.

EXT. FERMAN'S HOUSE - DAY

Tina sits on her porch, staring OFF SCREEN, to her right. Herb waters the lawn next to her, but she's staring past him. Two kids, a SIX YEAR-OLD BOY and GIRL on Big Wheels ride by, barking at her and laughing as they ride off. Gunther barks from inside the house. Tina misses the whole thing as she's lost in her own world. She continues to stare off at a point offscreen. Finally, she gets up and walks towards it, softly humming, "He's Got the Whole World In His Hands."

TRACK with her as she takes the sidewalk past Herb and the Ferman lawn, past a house with a VOLKSWAGON in the driveway, and stops in front of...Ralph's house, with his van parked in the driveway next to a "Neighborhood Watch" sign.

ON TINA

Ms. Child of the Corn--leash dangling, a tiny figure standing on the sidewalk under the "Neighborhood Watch" sign, staring at the house. Her humming fades away. Judging by her eyes, it's obvious there's quite a bit going on in her head. But for once, she stands as quiet and still as a statue.

EXT. RALPH'S HOUSE - DAY

Tina approaches the door and rings the doorbell. She waits, then rings it again. A muffled, "Help!" comes through the door. She goes around to the window, trampling a bed of gorgeous flowers. She looks in the window and sees Max, wrapped in foil and chained to the wall by a makeshift ankle shackle. He's got the rabbit ears in his hands. His bike lays on the floor, dissembled, the gears missing. Tina's eyes burn with flames of jealousy.

TINA

That's my job!

Tina pries the window open with superhuman strength and climbs through.

INT. RALPH'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Max sees Tina and becomes frantic.

MAX

(whispering anxiously)
Hurry! He went out back.

Tina pulls at the chain, a girl possessed, trying to pry it from the wall.

MAX

(frantically pointing)
The key's is on that table.

Tina gets the key and struggles to unlock the shackle.

MAX

He's crazy! He brought me here to get money to buy my bike, but then he didn't have any.

(MORE)

MAX (CONT'D)

When I tried to leave and told him
I'd call the cops if he didn't let
me, he chained me up!

But Tina doesn't care. She's finally unlocked the shackle.

TINA

GET OUT!

She grabs Max by his shirt and drags him towards the door.
She flings open the door and pushes him out.

INT. RALPH'S LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Ralph walks into the room carrying an armful of cables. He
kneels down and starts working on the time machine, not
noticing Tina who has shackled herself in place of Max and is
wearing the foil around her body and holding up the rabbit
ears. She has the most angelic smile on her face. Ralph
glances up, looks back down, then does a double take.

The bulky metal bar in his hands drops to the floor with a
clunk.

TINA

Hi Ralph!

RALPH

How'd you??---...

TINA

I came back to help you.

RALPH

No, stop. How did you get here?

TINA

We're neighbors. I live right
there.

(pointing out the window)

See? There's my dad.

Ralph looks out the window. Two doors down, Herb fiddles with
the lawn mower. Ralph ducks. From below the window, he pulls
the curtains shut. Panic.

TINA

What's wrong, Ralph?

Ralph's brain is melting down from panic.

RALPH

Where's Max???

TINA
I made him leave--

RALPH
(panic)
You let him go?!?

Tina doesn't say anything. Ralph MOANS.

TINA
(fear that he'd forgotten)
You promised we could play today.

RALPH
I didn't think you'd be able to
find me again!

Ralph peeks around the curtain out the window. Herb is looking around for Tina. He crawls over to Tina with fear in his eyes.

RALPH
Did you tell your dad about me? Did
you tell anyone?

Tina looks scared, worried that maybe she's messed something else up again.

TINA
No. I went straight to bed last
night.

RALPH
Are you sure? Does anyone know?

Tina shakes her head. Ralph furrows his brow in deep thought.

EXT. RALPH'S HOUSE - SAME

Herb is looking for Tina. He walks by the house between his and Ralph's where JACQUES, a skinny old man wearing a maroon beret, stands on the porch.

JACQUES
Are you looking for the little one?

HERB
Yeah, have you seen her?

Jacques gestures towards Ralph's house.

JACQUES

She's inside, bugging the new
guy.

Herb does a double take, then chalks it up to Jacques' bad English. Looking pissed, he walks up to Ralph's door, ringing the bell.

INT/EXT. RALPH'S HOUSE - SAME

The doorbell RINGS. Ralph looks out the peephole and sees Herb.

TINA

Who is it?

Ralph quickly clamps his hand over Tina's mouth.

RALPH

Listen, you have to keep our
friendship a secret. You can't tell
anyone about my time machine or
about anything that happened
yesterday, okay? Otherwise I'll
never find my mom.

TINA

Okay I promise.

RALPH

Please, you'll do this? Pretend we
just met today, okay?

TINA

Is this a game?

RALPH

Yes! It's a game. We'll be secret
friends. And it'll be fun because
no one else will know.

TINA

Cool! No one ever tells me any
secrets.

The doorbell RINGS again.

RALPH

Well, this one will be ours. I can
trust you, right? To be my friend?

Tina is blown away by the word "friend." She smiles.

TINA
I'm going to be the best friend
you've ever had.

RALPH
Good.
(takes a deep breath)
Good. Thank you.

The doorbell RINGS again. Ralph whips it open, looking stiff and nervous, his eyes way too wide.

INT./EXT - RALPH'S HOUSE - DAY

Herb stands on the other side of the door, looking irritated.

RALPH
(too loudly)
HI!

HERB
Hi I'm Herb from two doors down.
(shakes Ralph's hand)
Listen, did my daughter come around
bugging you? She's a bit of a pest.

TINA
Hi Daddy! Ralph and I just met.

HERB
Tina! Get out here and go help your
mother with dinner.
(to Ralph)
I'm so sorry. We try to keep her on
a short leash.

RALPH
(glances at Tina's leash)
Yes, I've noticed.

Tina squirms past Ralph and heads out the door.

TINA
Can Ralph come to dinner?

HERB
(hesitant)
Uh...

Ralph's eyes widen in fear.

RALPH
Oh no, it's okay. I--

TINA
Pleeeeeeease?

HERB
Well, I guess it would be only
right to welcome you to the
neighborhood.

RALPH
Oh, I'm...things to do...

TINA
Yeah Ralph! Come see my house!

Tina grabs his hand and drags him out the door. Ralph's
struggles are useless against this little girl's will.

INT. LIVING ROOM/FERMAN'S HOME

Ralph enters with Herb and Tina. Gunther begins growling.
Marge peeks out from the kitchen.

MARGE
Oh! I didn't know we were having
company.

She approaches Ralph with her hand extended.

MARGE
I'm Marge Ferman.

She holds out her hand. Ralph takes it suspiciously.

RALPH
Ralph.

An awkward pause. That just...doesn't...end. Finally:

RALPH
You guys have nice stuff.

Marge and Herb both look at Ralph strangely.

INT. DINING ROOM/FERMAN'S HOUSE - EARLY EVENING

The Fermans are sitting around the dinner table. Ralph looks
out of place with his timidity and nervousness. Tina sits
next to Ralph, beaming at him.

HERB
So Ralph, what do you do?

RALPH
I'm a repairman.

HERB
Like what kinds of things?

RALPH
Toasters, fridges, you know...the usual.

HERB
Oh great, I've got some things maybe you could take a look at.

RALPH
No thanks.

Herb doesn't know how to take this response. Wayne mouths the word "Weirdo" to Sissy.

The doorbell RINGS.

WAYNE
I'll get it.

MARGE
So Ralph...where did you learn how to fix things?

RALPH
At uh...this place I stayed for a while. They teach you job skills.

MARGE
A school?

RALPH
Not exactly.

MARGE
(confused)
Hmmm.

Wayne enters with Jones.

WAYNE
This cop wants to talk to Tina.

Marge and Ralph, who were taking a drink of water at the same time, both choke. They look up, scared. Jones peers at them, puzzled.

JONES

I'm sorry to bother you folks at dinnertime but I was wondering if I could have a word with Tina.

HERB/MARGE/RALPH

About what?

They all look at each other, puzzled.

JONES

A neighborhood boy, Max Coldwell, was hit by a car today and I was hoping Tina can answer some questions.

Marge and Herb look relieved. Jones registers this. Ralph still looks nervous.

MARGE

That's Tina.

The everyone in the room stares at Tina.

JONES

Is there someplace more private we can go?

HERB

Oh sure.

Herb leads the way and Jones is about to follow, but she hesitates, looking at Ralph.

JONES

(to Ralph)

I'm sorry, but do I know you from somewhere?

Ralph looks like a deer caught in headlights.

HERB

Doubt it. He just moved in a few weeks ago.

JONES

(still searching her memory)

Hmm. Welcome to the neighborhood.

She follows Herb into the next room.

INT. LIVING ROOM

Tina sits on the couch between her parents while Jones asks questions.

JONES
Do you know Max well?

TINA
Yeah, but I hate him. He always tells lies and makes fun of me.

MARGE
(laughs nervously)
Kids, you know...

Jones gives Marge an annoyed glance.

JONES
Max was hit by a car while crossing his street this afternoon. He's in a coma right now.

TINA
Oh.

JONES
The reason why I'm here is because he said your name in the ambulance before he slipped under. Do you have any idea why he would say your name?

Tina sneaks a nervous look into the dining room. Jones follows her gaze but Tina snaps her eyes back to Jones.

TINA
(eyes widen)
Uh uh.

She looks from her mother to her father.

TINA
Max doesn't like me.

JONES
Have you seen him in the last two days?

Tina shrugs.

JONES

Did you know that he never came home last night? Do you have any idea where he might have been? Any idea?

INT. DINING ROOM

The VOICES from the living room can be faintly heard.

Ralph is straining to listen to their conversation. Wayne and Sissy sit across the table, staring at him.

WAYNE

So you like musicals, Ralph?

Beat. Ralph suddenly realizes he's being spoken to.

RALPH

Huh? Oh yeah. Sure.

Wayne smirks.

WAYNE

Yeah? You also think Richard Simmons is sexy in those tight shorts?

RALPH

I don't know who that is.

Sissy snickers while Ralph narrows his eyes at both of them.

INT. LIVING ROOM

Jones continues her interrogation.

JONES

What about the day the police brought you home.

MARGE

(nervously)

Oh that night she wandered off?
What a scare for us that was,
(to Tina)
Right, honey?

Jones ignores her.

JONES

Did you see anyone suspicious?

TINA
What do you mean?

JONES
Anyone seem odd? Try to talk to
you?

Finally, something she can answer honestly.

TINA
Oh! Well there was this one
homeless lady with a shopping cart
who kept talking to me. About
making money together.

Jones is interested. She takes out a notepad.

JONES
This could be something. What did
she say.

Tina thinks hard.

TINA
Uh...that we could sell oranges by
the freeway. And to look for her at
the playground behind the 7-11.

JONES
Did she tell you her name?

TINA
It was...Suzanne. Suzanne Sommers.

Marge gasps.

MARGE
Oh my God! Suzanne Sommers tried to
kidnap our daughter!

Jones writes this piece of information into her notepad.

JONES
This is great, Tina. I'm gonna see
if I can track down Ms. Sommers for
a chat. And...just one last
thing...why are you wearing a
leash?

MARGE
Oh she--

Jones holds up a hand, silencing Marge. Tina looks at her parents cautiously.

TINA

It's, um...it's punishment because I always get into trouble.

MARGE

(quickly)

She's a real handful, if you know what I mean. It keeps her in line.

JONES

Seems like good parenting would do just as well.

MARGE

Perhaps. But you need special tactics for special cases.

(quickly)

So will any of this help catch the kidnapper?

Jones stands up. Marge and Herb corral her towards the door. They stop in the foyer, which is in sight and within earshot of the dining room. Ralph can hear everything.

JONES

Well, right now we're not even sure if Max was kidnapped unless he wakes up and told us. But if he was, I promise you, I will exhaust every police resource available to catch the person responsible.

Ralph noticeably pales.

MARGE

Definitely let us know if you need anything else. We're always at your service.

Jones steps through the door.

JONES

I appreciate that.

She takes out her card. Marge reaches for it, but Jones keeps it away from her, getting on her haunches so she's at eye level with Tina. She hands Tina the card.

JONES

My number's there in the corner.
Give me a call if you remember
anything else. Or if you need
anything...

Jones looks up at Marge and Herb, then winks at Tina. Jones stands up and leaves as Tina runs back into the dining room.

The moment the door closes, Marge and Herb start arguing.

HERB

I told you it was risky! We could
go to jail for abandoning her.

MARGE

Stop being such a woman, Herb. They
won't find out.

They stop when they hear an ARGUMENT from the dining room...

TINA (O.S.)

(angrily)

Why don't you shut up with the
stupid questions?

INT. DINING ROOM

Marge and Herb enter the dining room to find Tina struggling to hit Wayne. Wayne is holding her off. Ralph has stood up and is putting on his coat. Marge pulls Tina off of Wayne.

Wayne feigns innocence.

WAYNE

I was only asking if he likes his
buns toasted or split with fruit
jelly in the morning.

MARGE

Wayne!

RALPH

It's okay. I should probably get
going anyway.

TINA

No! Stay, please.

HERB

I'm sorry. Kids these days are out
of control. Wish there was some way
we could ship off the bad ones.

Ralph's face tightens. This line has hit a nerve. He glares at Herb.

RALPH
(to Marge)
Thanks for dinner.

Ralph heads for the door. Tina's fuming. She picks up a bowl of pudding and throws at Wayne, giving him a faceful of ooze.

TINA
Thanks for making him leave!

Wayne lunges for Tina. Herb jumps in the middle of it, separating the two. Marge grabs Tina.

MARGE
In your room! Now!

TINA
(screaming)
He started it!

Marge struggles with Tina, trying to drag her out of the room.

RALPH
Hey, look. It's alright.

MARGE
No, this one's always starting trouble. It's about time we clamped down on some discipline.

She starts to drag Tina again. Tina wails.

RALPH
No, no! Stop! There's nothing wrong with her.

Marge ignores him, fighting with Tina.

TINA
Owww!

RALPH
Please don't do that!

He tries to break them apart. Marge trips and falls, but it looks like Ralph pushed her. The room goes silent.

RALPH
I didn't mean to--...

Herb hurries over to help Marge up.

HERB
(to Ralph)
Get out.

RALPH
It was an accident.

HERB
GET OUT!

Ralph hurries out the door. Tina chases.

TINA
Ralph, wait!

EXT. TINA'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Tina catches up to Ralph and tags along.

TINA
I'm sorry my family sucks.

RALPH
It's okay. You should go home
though.

TINA
Can we still hang out?

Ralph hesitates.

RALPH
Not for a while. I'm going on a
trip.

TINA
When will you be back?

RALPH
I don't know.

Tina keeps looking at him, waiting for an answer.

RALPH
How about if I call you when I do?

TINA
Okay.

Tina stops as Ralph makes his way up his porch. Across the street from Ralph's house, Jones is in her car flipping through some files. She sees the two and watches, curiously.

TINA
(cautiously)
Hey Ralph? Thanks for sticking up
for me.

Ralph stands on his porch awkwardly, searching for words.

RALPH
What are friends for, right?

Tina's eyes widen.

TINA
(cautiously, yet hopeful)
Yeah...that's what friends are for!

Tina hugs Ralph, who takes it awkwardly. She runs home happily. Ralph enters his house and closes the door.

Jones, having watch and heard the exchange, contemplates.

INT. RALPH'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Ralph quickly closes the door behind him then obsessive-compulsively sliding the locks in place, checking the door, unlocking it, then slamming the door to make sure it's closed all the way, re-locking it, etc.

RALPH
(mumbling)
I'm not going back to that place. I
am NOT GOING BACK TO THAT PLACE.

He runs through the room frantically throw things into boxes.

EXT. RALPH'S HOUSE - NIGHT

The neighborhood is asleep. Ralph has put the time machine into the back of his van and is covering it up with the sheet. Satisfied, he closes the door and gets into his car.

INT./EXT. RALPH'S VAN - NIGHT

The car is filled with hastily-packed boxes. Ralph drives down a street while listening to news radio.

RADIO (V.O.)

The boy is still in a coma as community members hold a vigil outside the hospital. The driver of the car was Elliot Winslow of Campbell, a middle school teacher last seen at a local bar shortly after summer sessions let out. He's currently being held on charges of driving under the influence and reckless driving.

Traffic comes to a standstill near a 7-11, where four police cars with their sirens flashing block the street. All the drivers are watching, some of them having gotten out of their cars.

Suddenly, Suzanne Sommers comes bolting out from behind the convenience store, pushing her shopping cart at full speed, with SIX POLICE OFFICERS chasing her.

SUZANNE

(shrieking)

Tell Napoleon he ain't never gonna get me!

They take her down and attempt to cuff her. From the sidelines, Jones watches. Ralph rolls down his window and motions to a nearby TRUCKER.

RALPH

What's going on?

TRUCKER

Picked it up on the scanner. The cops think they've got the K-Mart Kidnapper.

He watches the action with newfound interest. Jones catches sight of him. They make eye contact. Recognition flickers across her face. Ralph quickly rolls up his window.

INT. RALPH'S VAN - CONTINUOUS

Ralph checks his mirror and tries to make a u-turn. KNOCKING on his side window. It's Jones. Ralph rolls down his window. In the distance, Suzanne's struggling with the cops who search her cart.

JONES

(big smile)

Hi. Friend of the Ferman's, right?
You out for a midnight drive?

RALPH

Yep. Insomnia. It's a pain.

Jones reaches in, extending her hand. Ralph instinctively flinches, then shakes her hand.

JONES

Detective Samantha Jones.

RALPH

Ralph.

Her eyes roam the inside of the car. She points to the boxes in the back.

JONES

What's with those? Thought you moved in a few days ago.

RALPH

Oh, those. Junk.

(nervous laugh)

I'm hoping to sell what I can at the flea market this weekend.

JONES

Sounds fun. I should do that too, clear out all of my ex-husband's junk. So how much are booth spaces going for these days?

RALPH

(sweating)

You know, I haven't reserved mine yet...guess I need to get on the ball.

JONES

Yeah, probably. Those spaces fill up quick.

SUZANNE (O.S.)

That's mine, you stinkin' pig!
Finders keepers. It's the rule.

Suzanne lunges at an OFFICER who's holding up a kid's sweatshirt with the end of his baton. Another OFFICER runs up to Jones.

OFFICER

(to Jones)

Detective, there's something you should see.

(MORE)

OFFICER (CONT'D)

Baker did a search of the cart and says he found a kiddie sweatshirt.

JONES

I'll be right there.

(to Ralph)

There's a full moon out tonight so things are bound to be strange. You'd better head on home and try counting some sheep.

Ralph looks confused.

JONES

For that insomnia.

RALPH

Oh! Right, right.

Jones walks away. In his mirror, Ralph watches her take down his license number. He quickly pulls a U-turn and goes back in the direction he came, driving with a distant look in his eyes. He begins to laugh, an involuntary, bitter laugh. Suddenly, he slams the steering wheel with his hands and screams in frustration.

EXT. SURBURBAN TOWN - DAWN

Dawn over the city that's just waking up. It looks like rain.

INT. POLICE STATION - DAY

Tina, her parents and Jones sit in a booth with a few other DETECTIVES. In front of them through a one-way glass, people file in for the line-up. There is a BLACK MAN with a beard, a little ASIAN LADY, Suzanne Sommers, a 17 year-old TEENAGE GUY, and a POLICEWOMAN in uniform. Jones takes one look and gets angry.

JONES

Who put this line-up together?

The detective shrugs.

DETECTIVE

Vice was out picking up Lieutenant's birthday cake and these were the only people I could find outside.

JONES

This looks like an idiot's Village People.

DETECTIVE

Hey, if you want a line-up at all,
then deal with it.

Jones glares at him then turns to Tina.

JONES

Tina, do you recognize any of these
people as the person who talked to
you the other day?

Tina immediately points to Suzanne.

TINA

The woman in the middle. That's
Suzanne.

JONES

(into microphone)
Number Three, step forward please.

Suzanne doesn't move.

JONES

Number Three, step forward.

Suzanne doesn't move. The policewoman in the line-up grabs
her and pushes her out. Suzanne tries to punch her, narrowly
missing.

JONES

Face left, please.

Suzanne raises her fist defiantly and rattles off some
expletives which can't be heard from the booth.

JONES

Number Three, face left.

Suzanne grabs her crotch and flips the bird.

JONES

Number Three, face left now.

Suzanne turns around, bends over and pulls up layer after
layer of skirts, trying to moon the booth.

JONES

Screw it. You're sure that's the
woman, Tina?

TINA

Yes.

JONES

Alright. We've got a positive ID.

INT. POLICE STATION - DAY

Herb, Marge and Tina follow Jones through the station.

MARGE

What's gonna happen now?

JONES

Well, we've got Tina's ID and a sweatshirt we found in her cart that has Max's name on the label, but it's all pretty circumstantial at this point. But if Max wakes up and can finger her, we've got her.

PEGGY (O.S.)

Marge!

Peggy Coldwell comes running up with her husband, Sam, in tow. She looks like she hasn't slept in months. Peggy grabs Marge in a bear hug.

PEGGY

Thank you so much for catching her. If anything, at least we'll get justice.

She hugs Tina passionately.

MARGE

How's Max?

PEGGY

The doctors say he has a good chance of pulling through but for now, between this monster and that drunk driver, I hope to personally send them both to hell.

Peggy looks at Marge with newfound admiration.

PEGGY

You're good people. All of you. You're heroes in this town.

She beams down at Tina. Tina cowers behind Herb.

MARGE

(flattered)

Yeah...I guess you could say we are. Good thing Tina had the good sense of remembering that crazy lady.

She smiles at the thought of how much she could bleed this for.

PEGGY

Justice, Margie. That's what we're going to get. Justice. Our God is a vengeful one.

Bob puts a hand on Peggy's arm.

SAM

We should probably head back to the hospital now.

Peggy gives Marge another hug and pinches Tina's cheek before leaving. Marge beams.

INT. FERMAN'S HOUSE - DAY

The PHONE is ringing as they walk into the house. Marge goes to answer it. Tina peeks in.

MARGE

Oh, thanks, Wanda! Yes, we did catch the kidnapper...Oh no, I wouldn't say we're heroes...

INT. LIVING ROOM/FERMAN'S HOUSE

The DOORBELL chimes. Herb answers it to find a GROUP OF MOTHERS (TERRY, FRAN, LYDIA, BETTY) wielding gift baskets and baked goods.

TERRY

Peggy called and told us the good news!

FRAN

We can't believe you caught her. And a woman! What has this world come to? What was she like?

HERB

Well, I--

BETTY

The whole neighborhood's talking about it. You guys are saviors!

LYDIA

(hands over a basket)

This is for you. It's got all kinds of baked goodies.

TERRY

Here's a Texas Sheetcake.

BETTY

And my famous cherry pie.

FRAN

Coffee cake. You'll love it.

Herb's staggers, trying to balance everything.

HERB

(helpless; yelling)

Marge?

Tina walks into the room. The women squeal, bum-rushing the door to get to her. They faun over her, making Tina squirm with discomfort.

BETTY

Tina, sweetheart! Congratulations on catching that monster. Tell me, were you scared?

TINA

No not really--

LYDIA

You always were a good girl. I always tell my Bobby, now why don't you play with Tina?

TINA

Bobby throws rocks at me--

TERRY

Tell me what happened. When you met her, did that woman try to touch you in any of your secret places?

Marge walks into the room, chest puffed out. A peacock strut.

MARGE

Girls! I guess you've heard the
good news?

The women jump on Marge, fauning over her. Marge leads the
gushing women away from Tina and into the kitchen.

MARGE (O.S.)

(overly-dramatic)

Let me tell you all about it. It
was horrifying.

The DOORBELL rings. Herb squeezes by the women and runs for
the door. He opens it to find FATHER WICK in his full get-up
with a Bible tucked under his arm.

FATHER WICK

(pumps Herb's hand)

Herb! Heard the good news! God
bless you all.

HERB

(surprised)

Father Wick--

FATHER WICK

Now we just have to pray that the
devious woman gets the chair.

(sing-song; holding the
Bible to the sky)

Praaaaaaaaise the death penalty!

HERB

Goddam right!

Herb lets the Reverend in.

HERB

Have a seat. Can I offer you
anything? Coffee? Tea?

FATHER WICK

How 'bout some of that scotch?
(dismissively pats Tina's
head)

Hello.

(to Herb)

On the rocks if you don't mind.

Marge runs through the living room toward the bedrooms.

MARGE

(elated)

Tupperware! Everyone wants
Tupperware.

Tina is lost in all this confusion. Herb re-enters with two tall glasses of scotch.

TINA

Dad, can I take Gunther out to
play?

HERB

(waving her off)

Make sure he does his business.

EXT. FERMAN'S HOUSE - DAY

Storm clouds hover menacingly overhead. She looks over at Ralph's house and is surprised to see his van in the drive. She breaks into a huge smile.

INT. RALPH'S LIVING ROOM - DAY

The living room is dark, lit by one small lamp in the corner. Ralph is tinkering with the time machine with his TV on in the background. He turns a key and the machine revs up, then sputters. There's KNOCKING at the door. Ralph jumps.

EXT. RALPH'S HOUSE

Fat raindrops begin to fall. Tina knocks. Ralph opens the door just as it begins pouring.

TINA

You're home!

Ralp defeatedly steps aside to let her in.

INT. RALPH'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Outside, THUNDER rumbles and rain batters the windows. Gunther sticks low to the ground, growling at Ralph. Ralph grabs Gunther's leash and ties it to the door handle of the closet. Gunther growls and strains against it.

RALPH

We really have to do something
about these constant visits of
yours.

TINA
 (excited)
 How come you didn't go on your
 trip?

The TV catches Tina's interest.

ANGLE ON TV

An icon of a wild-eyed Suzanne appears in the corner above
 the NEWS ANCHOR's head.

NEWS ANCHOR (V.O.)
 --charges have been pressed as the
 community lets out a collective
 sigh of relief.

BACK TO SCENE

TINA
 Hey, I pointed her out at the
 police station today! Boy was she
 rude.

On TV, the News switches to a story about the circus.
 Meanwhile, Gunther tears at his leash, barking and growling
 while tugging against it.

RALPH
 (very interested)
 You did? What did the police say?

TINA
 (distracted)
 I dunno. They're just waiting for
 Max to wake up.

RALPH
 (pensive)
 Max...

TINA
 I hope he wakes up with a brand new
 personality because his old one was
 mean.

Ralph's face is dark, his mind churning. He stares at her
 intensely.

RALPH
 You still haven't told anyone about
 me?

Tina's eyes are still glued to the TV.

TINA

Nope, like I promised. Hey Ralph!
Do you like the circus? Let's go
some time.

Suddenly, all the electricity goes out. The room is thrown into pitch dark. Gunther alternates between fierce BARKING and WHINING.

TINA

(scared)
What happened?

RALPH

Electricity's out.

INT. RALPH'S KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

The room is illuminated by the barest of moonlight. Rain slashes at the windows. Ralph grabs a lantern from a peg in the kitchen, frantically searching the drawers for a match. He opens one that's filled with kitchen knives. He stares at the knives, his eyes gleaming.

INT. RALPH'S LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Ralph enters with the lantern in his hand, the light from the flickering candle causing shadows to distort his face. His feverish eyes are fixed on Tina.

RALPH

Tina...it's been so much fun but
I'm sorry, your friend Ralph is
tired...

He approaches Tina, the shadows making his face look malicious. His other hand is dangerously hidden in the shadows. Gunther barks up a storm.

RALPH

I think it's time for you to go...

Ralph approaches Tina, hovering over her, his eyes burning as Gunther charges against his leash, each time stopped by the leash. Tina looks up at Ralph, eyes wide.

TINA

What do you mean?

Ralph brings the hand that was previously hidden up, revealing a lighter which he lights the lantern with.

RALPH

I mean you should go home now. I'm really tired.

At this moment, Gunther strains and charges again, the leash finally snapping. The small bulldog hurls into Ralph, his teeth sinking into Ralph's ankle.

Ralph screams and goes down. The lantern hits the ground, the fluid spilling and igniting the area around the time machine. the Ralph screams and grabs a fire extinguisher. He tries to get it to work but it wheezes and fizzles. He throws it at the fire and it EXPLODES. Ralph ducks and covers his head. When he looks up again, he can see the fire spreading closer and closer to the time machine.

He runs out of the room. Meanwhile, Tina runs into the kitchen and comes back with a glass of water, tossing water into the fire. It does nothing. She runs back into the kitchen.

EXT. RALPH'S HOUSE

Ralph grabs a large aluminum bucket that has filled with rainwater.

INT. RALPH'S LIVING ROOM

Ralph runs in and dumps all the water onto the fire. The flames subside a bit, then take on a new life. Tina runs in and pours the contents of her little glass of water, which does nothing. Ralph runs out again.

EXT. RALPH'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Ralph fills the bucket with a hose and runs back in just as Tina comes in, tossing another glass filled with water onto the flame. Ralph dumps the water from the bucket and finally, fire going out. At the center of the disaster area, the wiring of the time machine sparks and fizzles. It doesn't look good.

Tina looks scared to death.

TINA

I'm-I'm sorry. Gunther didn't mean to...

Ralph raises his head and screams to no one in particular.

RALPH

I can't take this anymore!

Ralph weeps, oblivious to everything in the world except his broken time machine. Tina inches towards the door, then slips out, leaving Ralph to continue sobbing, heartbroken.

EXT. TINA'S STREET - CONTINUOUS

Tina walks down the street, dejected, as Gunther follows at her feet. She kicks him away.

TINA
Look what you did!
(sighs)
He was my only friend.

INT. RALPH'S HOUSE

Ralph is wearing his hooded sweatshirt. He's looking crazy and a little bit out of control.

RALPH
(ranting)
I'm not going back. No way I'm
going back. Two little squealers
are gonna go all the way to hell
before I go back to the nuthouse.

INT./EXT. RALPH'S VAN - NIGHT

Ralph drives, a man on a mission. The van creeps by Tina's house but the driveway and street alongside are filled with cars and there are tons of people inside.

RALPH
Damn.

He takes off down the street.

INT. HOSPITAL - NIGHT

Ralph steals an orderly's outfit and ducks into a room.

EXT/INT. MAX'S ROOM/HOSPITAL - NIGHT

Ralph, dressed as an orderly, enters Max's room, which is empty except for Max, who is hooked up to all kinds of machines. A tape recorder plays New-Age music accompanied by the sound of waves and a soothing MAN'S VOICE giving positive affirmations.

MAN'S VOICE (V.O.)

You have so much to live for. You will reawaken and join the beautiful world that God has created just for you. Hello birds. Hello trees. Hello family. It is so nice to be back. And when you wake, you will feel refreshed...

Ralph looks around nervously, closing the door behind him. He looks at all the mess of machines, cables and wires. He hits a button and the TV turns on. He jumps. He turns off the TV and hits another button on a control. The upper part of the bed rises. He hits another one and the lower part (where Max's legs are) rises, knocking over a stand with vases of flowers.

Ralph goes for the plugs. He pulls at one and the tape recorder shuts off.

Frustrated, he grabs a group of plugs. He takes a deep breath, mentally commits to his action, then yanks them out. The machines quickly shutting down. Ralph holds his breath, standing in the deathly quiet room. Max GASPS, whimpers softly, then silence. The realization of murder dawns on him.

RALPH

(under his breath)

Oh no...

In fear, he scrambles to plug everything back in. Not only does this not resuscitate the boy, but the monitor comes on...a FLATLINE. Suddenly, all the machines BLARE! Code Red! Alarms everywhere go off.

Ralph shakes Max and roughly pats his cheek.

RALPH

I'm sorry I'm sorry! Wake up!

HOSPITAL PA SYSTEM

All Emergency Staff to Room 12! All
Emergency Staff to Room 12!

Ralph looks up at the speaker in horror. He backs away from the dying boy, fear and remorse in his eyes. He takes a final look and then turns, running out the door...only to be slammed back inside by the Emergency Team and their cart. The team rushes to Max with Ralph the pretend-orderly stuck in the middle of it.

DOCTOR
Give me a thousand CC's of
adrenalin!

The nurse hands Ralph a huge syringe. He doesn't know what to do with it.

DOCTOR
I need it now!

Ralph thrusts the syringe at the doctor, accidentally spearing it into the doctor's hand. The doctor gasps, grabbing his chest and crumpling forward, slamming his head on an overhanging piece of equipment and falling to the ground, unconscious. A perfect KO.

NURSE
(frantic)
What'd you do?!?

RALPH
(confused)
He wanted it--

ORDERLY
No time! Take the paddles!

The paddles are thrust into Ralph's hands.

ORDERLY
Clear!

Ralph, closes his eyes and presses the paddles to Max's chest. ZAP! The boy jumps but still no pulse. Ralph stands frozen. The nurse grabs his hand and makes him rub the paddles together.

ORDERLY
Clear!

RALPH
C'mon, kid...

Ralph presses the paddles to Max's chest. The boy jumps. Ralph holds his breath. Suddenly, Max pops up into a sitting position, his shocked expressionless face less than an inch from Ralph's face.

MAX
Wha...

His eyes are blank. Long beat with victim and criminal face to face.

Max falls back to bed, semi-conscious, but with a beating heart. Everyone, including Ralph, breathes a sigh of relief. The nurse checks Max's eyes and pulse.

NURSE

He's gonna make it.

The confused doctor pulls himself up from the floor.

DOCTOR

What happened?

The orderly helps him up. With everyone distracted, Ralph jams out of the room.

INT. MARGE AND HERB'S BEDROOM/FERMAN HOUSE - MORNING

The household is in a bustle. Sissy, wearing a sundress, applies gawdy make-up onto Marge who is once again dressed in her Sunday best. Herb is trying get his suit pants on but he's gotten too fat for them. Wayne struggles to button them while Herb sucks in his stomach.

WAYNE

You're a freakin' tub, Herb. These pants aren't happening.

HERB

(barely able to talk)

Shut up and keep pulling. You're not trying hard enough.

Marge races by, digging in a jewelry box for her earrings.

MARGE

Hurry up! News people are gonna be here any minute now.

EXT. RALPH'S HOUSE - DAY

The heavy rain continues.

Tina walks down the street with fresh-picked flowers (some of them with clumps of dirt still hanging from their roots) and a homemade card with "I'm Sorry" on the front. She stops at Ralph's house and rings the doorbell. She waits, then rings it again and again.

INT. RALPH'S HOUSE

The room is dark, as the windows have been sloppily boarded up. The TV is on, gurgling STATIC.

Ralph is curled up in a fetal position on his couch, hugging the melted alarm clock/time meter. He has a heavy five-o'clock shadow and is wearing his bathrobe.

Ralph rocks himself, muttering under his breath with a glazed and crazed look in his eyes.

RALPH

Leave me alone...please...just
leave me alone...

EXT. RALPH'S HOUSE - DAY

Tina tramples his garden and tries to peek through the window, but it's boarded up. Shrugging, she leaves the flowers and the card on his welcome mat and walks home, dejected.

INT. FERMAN'S KITCHEN - AFTERNOON

A FILM CREW is filming the Ferman family, who all sit at the kitchen table being interviewed by Shayna Gayhart. Tina, not wearing her LEASH, sits stiffly between Marge and Herb, who each have an arm around her. Wayne and Sissy sit on the outskirts looking uncomfortable. Gunther is tied to the table and sits obediently.

MARGE

--then I said to her, it must be a
blessing from God that you should
wander from home and meet this
monster, yet be safely delivered
from her evil grasp.

She affectionately tussles Tina's hair.

SHAYNA GAYHART

Amazing. Thoroughly amazing.
(turns towards camera; a
big fake smile)
And there you have it. Good
parenting and a little help from
God has allowed this family to help
put a dangerous kidnapper safely
behind bars.

She holds the smile for a few seconds, and then it falls, replaced by a look of bored disdain.

SHAYNA GAYHART

We get it? I'm freakin' starved. Am
I the only one who's hot in here?

CAMERAMAN

We don't have any comments from the little girl. Shouldn't we...?

SHAYNA GAYHART

Edit from the angle of the parents.
C'mon, lunch.

She turns to the family with her big, fake smile and shakes their hands.

SHAYNA GAYHART

Thanks so much. You were all wonderful.

She hands Herb a stack of tickets.

SHAYNA GAYHART

Here are some complimentary tickets to the circus. Make sure you tell your friends to watch Channel 8!
(to crew)
C'mon! Let's go!

The crew leaves. Nobody notices Gunther slipping out the door behind them, wearing his leash.

INT. FERMAN'S HOUSE - NIGHT

The family is ready to go to the circus. Herb is wearing a suit and Marge is wearing a mumu. Wayne looks like he's going to a metal concert and Sissy looks like a hair-band groupie. Tina hangs at the edge of the group.

HERB

Got your purse?

MARGE

Check.

HERB

Alright, what are we missing?

MARGE

Nothing. Let's go.
(yelling)
GET IN THE CAR!

Marge goes to grab Tina's leash but it's not there. She gropes down Tina's arm and realizes what's wrong. A naked wrist.

MARGE
Where's your leash?

Tina shrugs.

MARGE
(to Wayne)
Go get her leash. Everyone else in
the car!

INT. KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

WAYNE walks in and stares at the pegs. Where there should be two leashes, they're both empty.

WAYNE
Oh crap!

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Everyone is putting on their coats and shoes when Wayne enters.

WAYNE
I forgot. I put her leash on
Gunther because I couldn't find
his.

MARGE
Then where's Gunther?

WAYNE
I can't find him.

EXT. FERMAN'S HOUSE - NIGHT

The family screams Gunther's name.

INT. FERMAN'S HOUSE - NIGHT

They are looking everywhere for the dog.

MARGE
(to Wayne and Sissy)
How could you let this happen?!?
Who told you you could use Tina's
leash to walk Gunther? Who told
you?

Herb enters, looking at his watch.

HERB
We have to go.

MARGE

I'm not going without her leash.
Who knows what kind of trouble she
could start up, after all the
respect we're finally getting. I'm
not going back to being the
neighborhood joke again!

HERB

(waving tickets)
Well figure something out now or
we're not going at all.

Everyone looks at Marge for a decision. Marge approaches
Tina. She gets onto her knees so they're at eye level, and
she looks at Tina tenderly.

MARGE

Tina, dear, I'm sorry but you're
gonna have to stay home tonight.

Tina's jaw drops and she stomps her foot. This will be the
grande mal of tantrums.

TINA

WHY?!?

MARGE

It's not every day we win a free
trip and you don't want to spoil it
for us, do you? Besides, who wants
to go the circus anyway--

Tina has a look of absolute panic.

TINA

I do!

MARGE

Tina, listen to me--

Tina's lower lip is trembling. Her eyes fill with tears. But
there's something more violent welling up in her.

MARGE (CONT'D)

You see, life's full of lemons--

HERB

That's right, dear. Lemons. Listen
to your mother.

CUT TO:

EXT. TINA'S NEIGHBORHOOD - NIGHT

A little girl's SERIOUSLY PISSED-OFF ROAR reverberates throughout the neighborhood for a good five seconds, followed by utter silence.

INT. LIVING ROOM/FERMAN HOUSE - NIGHT

The family heads out the door.

MARGE

Bye honey! Don't burn the house down.

(stops; thinks; threatens)

Seriously. Don't burn down the house.

Marge closes the door. Tina is left sullenly sitting in front of the TV with a TV dinner, her face flushed and her eyes red. The living room looks like it's been through a war, with some furniture overturned, one lamp cracked, a picture hanging crookedly and all kinds of knick knacks scattered on the floor.

She spears the meat and picks up the entire mostly-frozen meat-block on her fork. She puts it down and stares blankly at the TV. The A-TEAM is on.

There's WHINING and SCRATCHING at the back door. She opens it to find Gunther, wearing her dirty leash.

TINA

You jerk.

Gunther jumps on the couch as Tina sits down and stares apathetically at the TV.

ANGLE ON TV

A high speed chase scene. A car screeches and flies off a ramp, flipping several times before crashing down and bursting into flames.

SIMULTANEOUS SOUND OF TIRES SCREECHING AND THE SOUND OF IMPACT

CUT TO:

INT. POLICE PRECINCT - MORNING

Jones collapses into her chair, looking like she hasn't slept in weeks. A detective, KOHLER, tosses a newspaper onto her desk.

KOHLER
Morning, gorgeous. You just come
from the hospital?

JONES
(sighs)
The kid can't remember a thing.
We're gonna have to release
Suzanne.

KOHLER
Bad break. Hey, you see today's
headlines?

JONES
Tell me it's something good.

He laughs as he walks away.

KOHLER
Never. It's what keeps us in
business.

But Jones isn't listening as she stares at the paper, looking
very disturbed.

ANGLE ON HEADLINE OF NEWSPAPER ON HER DESK

The headline is out of focus. It slowly comes into focus as
we...

MATCH CUT TO:

INT./EXT. RALPH'S LIVING ROOM - MORNING

HEADLINE

"FAMILY OF FOUR DIES IN FIERY CRASH."

...over a picture of the Woody, burned out.

BACK TO SCENE

Ralph, sitting in the kitchen with his untouched breakfast on
the table, reading the paper. He starts chuckling,
astonished, the laughter of a madman. He turns the page then
suddenly, flips back and stares at the headline.

RALPH
(confused)
Four?

Faint BARKING is heard from outside.

He looks out the window, just in time to see a POLICE CAR pull up.

In a panic, he runs into the living room and throws the sheet back over the time machine and throws newspapers over the shackles.

He looks out the window again to see Officer Stevens exit the car. Stevens opens the back door and out comes Tina, holding Gunther (who's wearing her leash). A KNOCK on the door. Ralph composes himself and opens the door.

RALPH

Yes?

STEVENS

(looking in notepad)

Are you...Ralph Langley?

Ralph's eyes dart nervously from Tina to Stevens.

RALPH

Yeah, why?

STEVENS

Do you know this child?

He points to Tina, who waves shyly. Gunther growls at him, eyes filled with primitive hate.

TINA

Hi Ralph!

RALPH

Nope.

STEVENS

I don't know if you've heard, but her entire family died in a tragic car wreck last night. She has no other living relations--

RALPH

No, I hadn't heard.

TINA

Except my grandma.

STEVENS

Well, we tracked down a woman she says is her grandmother, but the woman claims to have never seen the girl before in her life--

TINA

I don't want to live with her
anyway, Ralph. She's mean as spit.
Hey, did you get my I'm-sorry card?

STEVENS

So with no relatives, the state
allows Tina to choose her guardian.

RALPH

Come again?

STEVENS

Well, by state law, under these
circumstances, she can choose her
own guardian.

It dawns on him.

RALPH

You're not saying that...

STEVENS

She chose you.

Beat. Tina looks at Ralph, eyes filled with hope. Ralph
laughs, relieved.

RALPH

That's it?

STEVENS

Yeah, pretty much. I have the
documents here, to sign her over to
you--

RALPH

(relieved)

I don't think so.

Ralph starts to close the door, but Stevens puts his hand out
to stop it.

STEVENS

(more intimately; a plea)
C'mon man, let's work something
out. Child Services is all the way
on the other side of town and it'll
be six times the paperwork.

RALPH

Are you kidding me?

TINA

Pleeease let me live with you,
Ralph. I promise you I'll be good
and I'll help you with
your...*secret thing*...all the time!

Ralph's eyes widen. The cop looks at Tina, then at Ralph,
questioningly. Ralph does a 180.

RALPH

You know, you're right. This little
girl deserves a good home and
someone to look out for her.

Stevens struggles to put something together but there's a bit
of a power shortage in that head of his.

STEVENS

(slowly)
Wait...

TINA

Yay!

Tina rushes inside past Ralph who blocks the doorway.

RALPH

Thanks, officer.

He begins to close the door but Stevens stops it. He waves
some papers.

STEVENS

You have to sign these.

Stevens continues to stare at Ralph, confused but suspicious.
Ralph quickly signs the papers and hands them back. Stevens
takes them but doesn't move, staring. It's a silent stand-off
between he and Ralph.

We hear the tinny notes of "He's Got the Whole World" playing
from an ice cream truck that's approaching. Ralph quickly
pulls out a five-dollar bill from his wallet.

RALPH

Say, why don't you go get some ice
cream. On me.

Beat as Stevens continues to stare, the money waving in the
breeze between them. Finally, Stevens takes the money and
breaks into a smile.

STEVENS

Thanks, man. It's been a pleasure.

INT. RALPH'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Ralph closes the door and watches the cop walk away. He turns to Tina (who is trying to wrap herself with foil) with the look of a desperate man facing a firing squad.

TINA

(oblivious)

We're gonna have so much fun,
Ralph! We're gonna spend every day
together. Everyday everyday
everyday!

Ralph steps towards her, a crazy look in his eyes. Without looking down, he picks up the butter knife from the table when the PHONE RINGS. He picks it up.

RALPH

Hello?

FEMALE VOICE (V.O.)

(sounding scripted like a
telemarketer)

Hi Ralph. This is Nadine over at
Social Services. You are now the
guardian of one Miss Tina Ferman,
is that correct?

RALPH

Uh, yeah.

NADINE (V.O.)

Fantastic. Thank you for your
kindness in these trying times. To
ease both yours and Tina's
transition in the face of this
tragedy, we'll be meeting with you
this afternoon to discuss the
living arrangement and adjustments
that will be needed.

RALPH

(confused)

This afternoon?

He slowly unconsciously lowers his butter knife. In the background, Tina is still happily chattering away.

NADINE (V.O.)

Yes, sir. And we'll also be meeting once every two weeks for the first 6 months to check on her progress, then once a month thereafter until she turns 18. I'd like to come over at say, 2- ish, to discuss the details?

RALPH

(on the verge of tears)
That's nine years! That's longer than a prison sentence!

Pause.

NADINE (V.O.)

Fantastic. I'll see you then.

Ralph slowly hangs up the phone. Long beat as he stares at it. His dysfunctional world is crumbling.

TINA

Ralph? Ralph, is everything okay?

Ralph looks at her, he's just trying to hold it together, but he can't stop the tears from flowing, his face from collapsing. He advances at her, the knife clenched in his hand, a man wrecked and crying.

RALPH

All I wanted was to finish my machine so I could see my mom again. Now my machine is ruined, my life is ruined, and all I've got is an annoying little girl who can't take a hint.

Tina isn't sure of what she's hearing.

TINA

Ralph, what's wrong?

RALPH

You're what's wrong!

TINA

(uncertain)
But I thought I was your best friend.

Ralph laughs, putting down the knife. He collects himself for a speech that will cut into a crueler place than a literal knife ever could.

RALPH

You know what, Tina. Here's a dose of reality. I'm not your friend. I never was your friend and I would rather kill myself than have to spend the next nine years with you. You are the worst thing that has ever happened to me.

TINA

(very quietly)
You don't mean that.

RALPH

Don't I? Let me put it very simply. I. Don't. Like. You. You're a disease and I wish I'd never met you.

Ralph waits for a response, but he doesn't get it. Tina is no longer looking at him. Slowly, without saying a word, she undoes the shackle and picks up her bag. She walks past him without looking at him and opens the door. Gunther is on the other side, jumping on her happily. She picks up his leash and walks away.

EXT. RALPH'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Tina walks down the street without looking back. Ralph watches her go, disconcerted at her reaction. He looks mildly remorseful, but not enough to chase her down. He turns to go back into his house.

ANGLE ON TINA

Her eyes are welled up with tears, but her face displays nothing but anger and betrayal. She fishes into her pocket and comes up with a business card.

EXT. POLICE STATION - DAY

Jones is reading through a file. Kohler walks up to her desk.

KOHLER

I got something that might tickle you.

JONES

Look, I was drunk and that was a one time thing...

KOHLER

(re: the file)

This is the report on that guy you wanted me to run a check on. Ralph Langley, real name Lutz...the people over at Santa Rosa Mental have been looking for him for weeks. He had off-grounds privileges and just didn't show up to work one day. Interesting guy though. Abandoned by his single mother when he was 8, had a tough time adapting in the foster care system and landed himself in Ol' Rosa by the time he was 17.

JONES

Dangerous?

KOHLER

Nah, didn't sound like it. The director was telling me that he was a nurse's pet...like a big, sweet kid...ultra polite. Just completely obsessed with going back into time to change things. Check this out...

Kohler pulls out a photograph. It shows a hospital room its walls completely covered with diagrams for a time machine drawn in blue marker from ground to ceiling. Somewhere in there, next to the biggest diagram of a machine, is written "= HAPPINESS AGAIN." Jones is blown away.

KOHLER

We're talking serious abandonment issues. Funny thing is, that house he's living in right now...it's the same house he and his mother were living in when she left.

JONES

You're kidding me.

KOHLER

Nope. He's back in town, looking for her. The whole thing...it's really sad if you really think about it.

(MORE)

KOHLER (CONT'D)

Hell, I'd probably be really messed up too if I woke up one morning and found myself completely alone in the world.

Jones's PHONE rings.

JONES

Jones.

(listens)

Who is this? Hello? HELLO?

Jones hangs up then bolts out of her chair, grabbing her gun and coat.

JONES

(to Kohler)

You're driving.

EXT. POLICE PRECINCT - DAY

Jones and Kohler run past Stevens towards the parking lot. Jones trips on a step and her file goes flying.

STEVENS

Hey, chickie chick, where's the fire?

Jones scrambles to pick everything up.

JONES

Westside. Got an anonymous tip about a suspect in the Coldwell case.

STEVENS

I just came from the westside. What's the address?

JONES

1011 Foothill.

STEVENS

1011...Holy shit, I just dropped off that Ferman girl there.

Jones stops abruptly.

JONES

What?

STEVENS

Assigned guardianship...

Jones realizes.

JONES

She's the anonymous caller!

She runs for the car, leaving a puzzled Stevens behind.

EXT. RALPH'S HOUSE - DAY

Kohler's car screeches around the corner, skidding to a stop in front of Ralph's house. Jones jumps out, running up Ralph's driveway with Kohler right behind her.

INT. RALPH'S HOUSE - SAME

Ralph is working on the time machine when he hears CAR DOORS SLAM. He looks out in time to see the police cars pulling up behind Kohler's. He panics. It's now or never.

He runs to the time machine and flips some switches, then turns the key. The generator sputters then hums...powering up. He sets the alarm clock for 02/21/54, gets into the mansized fridge compartment and closes the door. The machine hums and suddenly, there's a FLASH of light--an EXPLOSION from inside the fridge. The machine wheezes to a stop as smoke wafts out of the machine. The house falls into a dead silence.

EXT. RALPH'S HOUSE - DAY

Jones pounds on Ralph's front door.

JONES

Open up! Police!

She waits a few seconds. No response. She motions for Kohler, who kicks down the door.

INT. /EXT. RALPH'S HOUSE

Jones and Kohler burst through the doors. Stevens looks around at all the mechanical parts and the diagrams on the wall and can't believe what he's seeing.

KOHLER

Jesus Christ...

JONES

Search the place!

They go room to room but find no sign of Ralph. Jones returns to the living room and holsters her gun. She looks around and sees the time machine. She looks at it and it hits her.

JONES

Kohler!

He comes into the room and she motions towards the time machine. The fridge compartment could hold anything...even the body of a child.

She approaches it and puts her hand on the handle as behind her, Kohler looks a little bit sick, anticipating something gruesome. Taking a deep breath, Jones braces herself and opens the door. She stares into the cavernous enclosure. A puzzled look washes over her face.

The fridge is empty.

JONES

Dammit!

KOHLER

There's no one here.

JONES

Where are the kids? Where's Tina?

She looks around. On the table, she sees Tina's homemade "I'm Sorry" card. She goes to it and opens it.

ANGLE ON CARD

Inside is a crudely drawn picture of a man and a little girl holding hands and smiling under a bright sun. They are standing next to a Ferris Wheel. The card reads:

"PLEASE DON'T BE MAD AT ME ANYMORE. YOU ARE MY ONLY FRIEND."

Jones looks at the card. She's getting an idea.

EXT. CIRCUS - NIGHT

The circus is in full swing, loud noises, bright lights and bright colors. As much as this has been her desired destination all along, it's not everything she'd hoped for as the sights and sounds and people all seem intimidating. Tina, with Gunther, wanders around the circus area, dazed.

She arrives at the Funhouse. A group of CLOWNS are trying to get people to go inside. One of them grabs her.

CLOWN

(friendly)

Hey you, looks like you could use some fun. That pretty smile's gone south.

Tina backs away with him, frightened. She knocks into a LITTLE BOY wearing a pink clown wig and large painted smile who's selling plastic flowers. She falls down. The boy leans over to help her.

BOY

Tina?

Tina's surprised to hear her name. She takes a closer look at the boy.

TINA

Jamie?

Tina stares at him. He breaks into a big smile.

JAMIE

Howdy!

TINA

(confused)

I thought you were kidnapped.

JAMIE

Yeah, I wish. I ran away to be a clown. It's a heck of a lot of fun and

(holds up flowers)

I'm making my own money, too.

TINA

But why?

Jamie shrugs.

JAMIE

I dunno. Got tired of watching my parents fight when they get drunk. Thought I'd give this place a try.

TINA

They've been looking for you. They talk about you on TV.

Jamie grabs her and pulls her into a corner.

JAMIE

You can't tell anyone that you saw me here, okay? You promise? I'm never going back.

Tina nods. Jamie smiles.

JAMIE

Are you here with your family?

Tina looks sad. It's really hitting her for the first time.

TINA

I don't have a family anymore.

Jamie looks sympathetic but doesn't ask questions. He hands her a flower. A clown yells at Jamie.

CLOWN

Tiny, it's showtime!

JAMIE

I've gotta go.

(smiles proudly)

They let me climb out of the clown car in the show's big finale.

Tina looks at him, her eyes not wanting him to go.

JAMIE

Hey, you should join up, too. You get to leave this stupid town and see the whole world.

TINA

I don't know...

JAMIE

Really. I can talk to someone. They'll set you up. You can sell funnel cake or something. Honestly, Tina. They're okay here. Like one big family.

Tina is hesitant.

JAMIE

I've gotta go. You see that trailer over there? The one with the pig? Meet me there tonight if you wanna join up. We're blowing out of here at midnight.

Tina stares at him, indecisively. He pats her shoulder and smiles.

JAMIE

Don't worry so much. Maybe I'll see you later.

Jamie runs off. Tina looks around her at all the bright lights and people. It's overwhelming. She sits down on a bench, lost in the environment.

JONES (O.S.)
Something told me I might be able
to find you here.

Tina looks up. Jones sits down next to her.

JONES
You okay?

TINA
Yeah...

JONES
You did a good thing today, making
that phone call.

TINA
(bitterly)
He wasn't really my friend.

JONES
(gently)
I know. I'm so sorry for what you
went through.

Jones looks at Tina maternally, her heart going out to this little girl. She gets up and extends her hand.

JONES
C'mon. Let's get you someplace safe
and warm.

TINA
(suspicious)
Where?

JONES
(cautiously)
Well, down to the station first.
Then someone will pick you up and
take you to a place where there'll
be other kids like you who--

TINA
No way.

Tina gets up and walks away.

JONES

Tina, wait.

Jones follows her.

JONES

I know things have been really
rough for you lately...

Jones touches Tina's shoulder. Tina spins around.

TINA

(hostile)

Leave me alone!

She's surprised by her own anger.

TINA

I don't wanna go anywhere with you.

JONES

Tina...come here.

Jones tries to pull Tina into her arms but Tina shoves her away. Caught by surprise, Jones nearly falls, stumbling to regain her balance. The flashing lights from a nearby attraction reveal a hell of a lot of anger in Tina's eyes, her hands balled into fists.

TINA

I'm not falling for this.

JONES

Fall for what?

TINA

What you're doing. Pretending like
you want to be my friend.

JONES

Tina, hey...

Jones gently touches Tina's arm.

TINA

(recoils)

Don't touch me!

Jones wraps her in a big hug.

JONES

(gently)

Hey. Hey, listen. I'm sorry. I'm sorry about everything that's happened. Your family, that psycho...it's been tough, you know?

Tina won't look at her but she's listening.

JONES

My folks always had a saying when I was growing up. Life sucks and then you die. No wait. I mean, life isn't always fair. You can't judge the world based on a few bad apples.

No response from Tina.

JONES

I'm so bad with sayings. What I mean is that life isn't always great and neither are the people. Everyone's got their own problems and sometimes they take it out on the wrong people.

Tina looks sad again.

TINA

What's gonna happen to me?

JONES

I promise you, and I know that a lot people have said that to you but when Sam Jones makes a promise, she'll give up an eye before she breaks it...I promise you that I will personally make sure that you're taken care of.

Part of Tina is suspicious and a part of her wants to believe her. The struggle is in her eyes.

JONES

C'mon, Tina, I want to be your friend.

Hearing that word, Tina hesitates.

TINA

(flatly)

Friend.

Tina looks into Jones's eyes, sizing her up.

JONES

(gently)

Why don't you think about it. In the meantime, I could really go for a corndog. You want one? On me.

Tina continues to stare at Jones, then finally.

TINA

Okay.

JONES

(smiles broadly)

Great! C'mon...

TINA

Can I go to the bathroom first?

Nearby is a bunker-style building holding the restrooms.

JONES

Sure. Do you need me to go with you?

Tina shakes her head. Tina walks towards the bathroom. At the doorway, she turns and looks at Jones. Jones waves. Tina stares at her, then enters the restroom.

INT. RESTROOM

Tina locks herself into the last stall and sits on the toilet. Gunther lays at her feet. She sits in quiet, reflecting on everything that has happened. Through the open window against the wall, she can hear the show going on.

RINGMASTER (O.S.)

And now, ladies and gentlemen...the greatest show on earth!

The sound of LOUD APPLAUSE. Tina stares at the window, the light back in her eyes.

EXT. RESTROOM/CIRCUS

Jones stands outside, a corndog in each hand. She watches people walking in and out of the bathroom. No Tina. She asks a woman who exits.

JONES

Hey, did you see a little girl in there?

The woman shakes her head. Jones enters the restroom.

INT. RESTROOM

Jones opens every stall door. No Tina. She reaches the one at the end. It's locked. She looks underneath but there aren't any feet. She kicks the door open. It's empty, except for a leash on the floor and an open window.

EXT. CIRCUS/FAIRGROUNDS

The circus is being packed up. Various WORKERS and PERFORMERS laugh and chat festively the way people do at the end of a long day's work. Jamie, having taken off his clown wig, returns to his trailer. Just as he's about to open his door...

TINA (O.S.)
(whispers)
Jamie.

Jamie looks around. Tina crawls out from underneath the trailer. She smiles shyly, Gunther in her arms. Jamie smiles. The two kids look at each other, beaming, sharing a quiet moment of understanding.

EXT. FAIRGROUNDS - DAWN

Daylight is just breaking. A line of trailers and trucks leave the fairgrounds. Nothing is left of the circus except for debris.

INT. TRAILER - DAWN

The trailer is on the road. Various bottom-of-the-evolution-barrel-looking MALE and FEMALE circus workers (aka circus freaks) lounge around, laughing loudly and talking. Jamie and Tina sit together, huddled in the backseat. Tina stares out the window sadly, watching the passing roads fly by.

JAMIE
What's the matter, Tina?

Tina pauses before answering.

TINA
I had a pretty lousy week.

Jamie looks at her kindly. He takes her hand, holding it.

JAMIE
It couldn't have been that bad,
could it?

Beat. Tina looks down at their hands, then up at Jamie, seeing hope in the boy's eyes. Hope for a new beginning in spite of the insanity and indifference of the world. Tina can't help but smile gently.

TINA

No...I guess not.

EXT. PLAYGROUND - DAWN

The caravan of circus trucks and trailers drives by the playground. The place fills with HOMELESS at night. By a bonfire built in a garbage can, Suzanne Sommers gets a joyous welcome home celebration. This is her family.

In the middle of it, a BUM urinates on the merry-go-round as it slowly turns.

We PULL OUT to see the entire town, the lights of the city twinkling beautifully for just a few more moments before the breaking day wipes out the darkness of night.

FADE OUT

THE END