

"Gooma & the Misfits"

Joshua Fuentes-Smith

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jvfsmith@gmail.com

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"The wise man's eyes are in his head; but the fool walketh in darkness: and I myself perceived also that one event happeneth to them all."

Ecclesiastes 2:14

EXT. STATE CORRECTIONAL INSTITUTION, CLOVERLEAF - NIGHT

The prison is a beacon against the cold desert space.

INT. DEERLING'S CELL - NIGHT

DEERLING (late-thirties) retrieves a Philips head attached to a makeshift wooden handle from inside his mattress.

He tucks it into his sock, grabs a rolled blanket, and exits.

INT. CELLBLOCK - NIGHT

Deerling meets up with CURTIS JOHNSTON (thirties), both from "crashingMNT."

Curtis also has a blanket rolled under his arm.

They continue toward the rec quarters.

INT. CELLBLOCK HALL - NIGHT

Curtis and Deerling stop short of another hallway.

Two Guards stand, surveying.

Curtis goes first and walks down the hall and exits.

Deerling tentatively follows.

EXT. BOILER ROOM (ENTRANCE GATE) - NIGHT

A security cam overlooks the gate.

Curtis and Deerling approach.

Curtis presses the speaker.

CURTIS

Hey friend, it's Curtis! Let me in!

OPERATOR (O.S.)

Whadaya need?

CURTIS  
Just let me in.

OPERATOR (O.S.)  
It's fifteen 'til lights out.

CURTIS  
That's fifteen whole minutes.

The BUZZ of the front gate.

Curtis enters through.

Deerling waits behind.

A FEW MINUTES LATER

Deerling scans backward.

DEERLING  
(sotto)  
What's takin you?

Deerling finally climbs over the entrance gate.

He comes to the boiler room door.

It's slightly ajar.

He peers inside.

Curtis carries on SMALLTALK with the OPERATOR (forties).

INT. BOILER ROOM - NIGHT

Curtis and the Operator LAUGH as Deerling enters.

OPERATOR  
What are you doing in here?

Curtis picks up a rubber mallet off the workbench and clubs the Operator.

Curtis bludgeons the Operator over the head, repeatedly.

DEERLING  
(stops Curtis)  
That's it! He's out!

Curtis stops.

Deerling drags the body into the corner of the room.

DEERLING (CONT'D)  
Cut off the generators.

The men disable the generator and its backup.

The boiler room and the entire compound goes dark.

INT. BOILER ROOM - NIGHT

Deerling and Curtis move a workbench under the vent shaft.

Deerling goes up to the grille and starts unscrewing with the makeshift screwdriver.

Curtis looks on, anxious.

Long moment.

DEERLING  
One down. Nine more.

CURTIS  
Just hurry it up.

MINUTES LATER

Deerling removes the grille.

Curtis flings his blanket and into the shaft and jumps up and in.

Deerling follows.

INT. VENTILATION SHAFT - NIGHT

They belly-crawl forward, single file.

Curtis comes to a fork.

CURTIS  
Fork.

DEERLING  
Left or right?

CURTIS  
Right.

Curtis starts to wiggle left.

DEERLING  
(grabs Curtis' pant leg)  
What are you doing? You said right.

CURTIS  
How am I gonna kick out the grille?  
Use your head!

Curtis wiggles back and left.

He then moves backwards through the shaft.

MINUTES LATER

Curtis come to a grille.

He flips to his back and begins to kick the grille.

CURTIS  
I need some leverage. Press in!

Deerling moves closer and presses.

Curtis forces the grille partially out by its corner.

Curtis pries more of it loose with his feet.

He then begins to squeeze into a decent.

INT. INFIRMARY - NIGHT

The men work their way out of the shaft inside the darkened room.

Curtis heads to the door, crouched.

He opens it.

Darkened hallway.

A light flashes from down the hallway.

Curtis closes the door, but leaves a slight gap.

The men freeze.

FOOTSTEPS round the corner then passes the door.

Curtis waits a moment, then exits.

## HALLWAY

Curtis stalks the Guard down the hall and around another corner.

The Guard gets to a door, unlocks it and exits.

Curtis seizes his chance and blitzes toward the door.

Crouched low, he dives to save the door from being shut with his fingertips.

Deerling follows.

CURTIS  
Let's wait a bit.

## MOMENTS LATER

Curtis and Deerling exit.

## INT. TRANSPORTATION CAGE - NIGHT

A truck is lead out.

It exits and the gate begins to slide close.

Curtis and Deerling head down the stairs and race down the gangway, along the wall, and stop.

The gate is closing.

CURTIS  
We've gotta wait until the last second...

The truck rounds the corner to the right.

DEERLING  
Go now!

Curtis slips out.

Deerling barely slips out.

## EXT. COMPOUND - NIGHT

Curtis and Deerling hug a wall near a clearance.

CURTIS  
Ready?

Deerling nods.

Curtis pauses, then runs out through the clearance to the first fence.

FIRST FENCE

Curtis climbs halfway then tosses his blanket over the razor-wire and climbs up and over.

Deerling climbs.

KILL ZONE

CURTIS  
Toss the next one!

DEERLING  
No, wait for me.

Deerling touches kill zone ground.

Curtis grabs the blanket.

Curtis and Deerling move through the kill zone to the second fence.

SENCOD FENCE

Curtis climbs halfway then throws his blanket over the razor wire, then climbs over.

Deerling follows.

After hitting pay dirt, Curtis darts off.

Deerling climbs.

Deerling squirms atop the razor wire, snagged.

DEERLING  
Curtis, I'm stuck! Help me off!

Deerling stares into the darkness of the desert.

EXT. FIELD - NIGHT

Curtis sprints across a dusty field.



EXT. SECOND FENCE - NIGHT

Deerling squirms.

The fence JINGLES.

DEERLING

*Curtis!...*

A GUNSHOT RINGS out from the guard tower and strikes Deerling in back.

He continues to try to squirm over—

Another SHOT in the back of the head—

EXT. BARREN FIELD - NIGHT

Curtis sprints, kicking up dust and dirt.

He spots a pickup truck loaded with Armed Guards in the truck-bed.

Curtis drops low, stops.

After the pickup passes, Curtis continues to sprint.

Curtis runs seven miles toward a cell tower near Highway 58.

EXT. NEAR HIGHWAY 58 - NIGHT

Using some brush as cover, Curtis edges closer.

He notices patrol cars setting a perimeter a little ways down the road.

When the coast is clear, Curtis moves to cross, crouched.

EXT. OUTSKIRTS - DAWN

Curtis' jog turns into a brisk walk.

He spots a metal donation drop off box.

He rummages through the bags of clothes near the container.

INT. GOOMA'S BEDROOM - MORNING

Inside the Evans' house.

GOOMA (seventies) watches a TV program about cathedrals from her bed.

The realization of the Evan's grandmother matriarch's own mortality subconsciously underpins her curiosity for the things of life.

The flip clock reads 5:29am.

PASTOR REMINGTON (PRE-LAP)  
What if... What if...

The minute POPS.

ALARM.

INT. CHURCH SANCTUARY - MORNING

Pastor Remington addresses a row of teens with colored bracelets near the podium, MEGHAN EVANS (seventeen) among them.

PASTOR REMINGTON  
What if today was the last day you  
had on this earth?

Gooma is in the front pew, attentive.

PASTOR REMINGTON (CONT'D)  
Imagine, as a teenager, today  
someone handed you your death  
certificate. Certificate of death,  
your name. And a signature of the  
coroner. Just presumptuously. And  
yet... I repeat, and yet so many of  
us live our lives without fully  
knowing we are dead!  
(beat)  
We all MUST weigh the eternal  
ramifications of our lives! Christ  
said that those who hold onto their  
life will lose it. BUT THOSE, who  
lose their life for the sake of the  
gospel will gain their life!

INT. EVANS LIVING ROOM - MORNING

An upper middle-class suburban home.

Gooma's on the couch with her iPad.

Gooma flips the TV channel.

TV SCREEN

ANCHORWOMAN

A gruesome discovery in a Riverdale. An elderly couple was found brutally stabbed and murdered inside their home yesterday.

GOOMA

Well, ain't that the sickest.

ANCHORWOMAN

The prime suspect is fugitive Curtis Johnston.

Curtis' mugshot is on the screen.

CURTIS

Authorities have been on a manhunt for since last December, after escaping from—

Gooma switches channels.

Adorable puppies.

GOOMA

Well, ain't that the cutest.

EXT. CAROUSEL MALL FOOD COURT - MORNING

Curtis loiters.

Curtis notices JUNIOR (eighteen) eating a burger by himself at table.

Curtis approaches and sits.

Junior's hungry eyes outweigh his fragile frame.

CURTIS

Mind if I sit?

JUNIOR

You're already sitting.

Curtis and Junior lock eyes.

Junior eyes deject downward, to his second burger.

Junior motions to the second burger.

CURTIS

Sure.

He slides the burger to Curtis.

Curtis starts unwrapping.

CUT TO BLACK

THE SOUND OF RAIN BEATING DOWN ON A TRUCK'S ROOF.

MIKE (V.O.)

Mike n Gary—and it's time for the  
po-po blotter!

GARY (V.O.)

Signs... of the times!

MIKE (V.O.)

"In the Sporting Section." A man is  
arrested for beating a 75-year-old  
man to death with a baseball bat  
inside the sporting section of a  
Auburn Walmart.

GARY (V.O.)

What a shame.

MIKE (V.O.)

Police say the incident was  
unprovoked, with no apparent  
motive.

GARY (V.O.)

The guy went old-school, a wooden  
bat apparently.

MIKE (V.O.)

Imagine the surveillance on that  
one.

GARY (V.O.)

You know, this reminds me a lot of  
that lady who got stabbed in front  
of that Target the other day.

MIKE (V.O.)

How so?

GARY (V.O.)

Violence mainly. In or around a big  
store.

MEGHAN (O.S.)  
Can you turn it?

MIKE (V.O.)  
You think they're gonna ban the  
bats, like they did the guns?

The radio is SWITCHED OFF.

EXT. PARKING LOT (RAINING) - MORNING

Empty lot aside from a single red truck parked near a pet cemetery.

INT. JIMMER'S TRUCK (PARKED) - MORNING

Meghan traces rivulets of rainwater sliding down the glass.

Meghan revels in her aptitude for spontaneity.

The university jock JIMMER (twenty-one) sighs.

MEGHAN  
I love that the pet cemetery's on  
top of a hill. I love that it  
overlooks all of Pikesville. We  
could gaze down at all the  
streetlights and headlights, all  
those lights in the ground. And we  
could make fun of all the weird  
names people give their pets?

JIMMER  
You mean if we jump the fence?

MEGHAN  
Guess what my grandma named the  
kitten we got her for her birthday?  
She goes and names him Gremlin!  
(chuckles)

GOOMA (PRE-LAP)  
*Gremlin!*

MEGHAN  
It's quite the hideous little  
thing.

INT. EVANS LIVING ROOM - MORNING

BRUCEY (forties) paces.

GOOMA (O.S.)  
Gremlin!

Level-headed yet exhausted by people, Brucey likes to see himself as a man of action.

GOOMA (O.S.) (CONT'D)  
Where's my Gremlin!

Gooma enters.

BRUCEY  
Where's my Meghan? It's almost ten.

SUSAN (late thirties) breaks from her book.

SUSAN  
She knows what time it is.

Susan's face seems unfazed and all-together uninterested with the passing of time.

BRUCEY  
What's that you're reading?

SUSAN  
You never ask me what I'm reading.

BRUCEY  
So now I'm asking.

SUSAN  
Well, why're you walking away? You ask me, then you start walking off.

BRUCEY  
It's just, you know—punch-in, punch-in, gas—break, gas-break. I do. I hate all things medicine! Drives me absolutely sick having to work with the sick, Susan. Having to make that commute like I'm some random blood-cell in a bloodstream. Mindless amoebic movement and white-collar grind—just to survive!

GOOMA  
There you are!

Gooma picks up the kitten.

Brucey plops on the couch.

BRUCEY

And to keep what we've got. And now that we have these two weeks I can feel the approaching calm, you know? I like the calm.

INT. MALL FOOD COURT - MORNING

The burgers are finished.

Curtis scans.

CURTIS

Look at it, we look disgusting.

JUNIOR

I don't see nothin.

Curtis and his mannerisms carry with them a flighty impression of contained madness, which Junior is thoroughly dazzled by.

CURTIS

It's the smell that knocks me out.

(inhales)

The all failing, all permeating, commercial smut of commerce. A living modern monument. A high pole of capitalistic worship. So just breathe her in, Junior.

JUNIOR

(inhales)

I smell burgers.

CURTIS

Burgers and BO! And remember those are some very expensive armpits.

Kitchen line chefs.

CURTIS (V.O.)

They belong to the city's best performing artists, losing themselves in the grandiloquent role of a lifetime.

Shoppers, up and down the escalator.

CURTIS (V.O.)

The extras are the leads now. It's an excellent time to be truly alive, the complacent herd and its effect, their lucid system full of longing and prepackaged experiences.

Storefronts, merchandise.

CURTIS (V.O.)

But what's there to sell and sell so much of? Images, ideas, things, stuff? You see, in the future people'll shop for a life. They'll try on a life as easy as throwing on a sweater.

Glass elevator.

CURTIS (V.O.)

They'll be able to hover outside and above life itself.

Curtis scans the crowds.

CURTIS

If you've got the cash to buy that kind of freedom... It ain't even Christmastime!

INT. JIMMER'S TRUCK (PARKED) - MORNING

Meghan and Jimmer stop making out.

JIMMER

Are you thinking about it again?

MEGHAN

It's just... The cat reminded me, the rain reminds me... everything reminds me!

JIMMER

Everything's back to the way it was. You're not in pain, are you?

MEGHAN

No.

JIMMER

No bleeding?



MEGHAN  
No, I'm fine.

JIMMER  
Then stop beating yourself up. You  
can't go back in time.

MEGHAN  
I'm having dreams again.

JIMMER  
You don't think I feel terrible?

Meghan fidgets with her purity bracelet.

MEGHAN  
But you don't know. I feel...  
*missing.*

JIMMER  
It's been almost a year. This isn't  
healthy.

MEGHAN  
Don't talk to me right now.

JIMMER  
Everything's like it was before.

MEGHAN  
I mean it, please stop talking.

JIMMER  
Maybe the trip is the thing you  
need right now.

Meghan slips the bracelet off.

MEGHAN  
I feel like they know. I feel like  
my dad knows.

JIMMER  
No one knows. Just you, me, and the  
doctor. And when you get back,  
you'll be back to your normal self  
again.

MEGHAN  
(nods towards the side  
mirror)  
Who's that?

JIMMER  
It's just another car.

MEGHAN  
But why are they here?

JIMMER  
Maybe you should go see who it is.

Meghan exits, leaves the door open.

JIMMER (CONT'D)  
I was kidding!

EXT. PARKING LOT (RAINING) - MORNING

MEGHAN  
Come on, Jimmer! It's barely  
sprinkling!

Meghan spins with outstretched arms.

JIMMER (O.S.)  
You want me to leave you out here?

MEGHAN  
(spins)  
C'mon! It feels so good!

INT. EVANS LIVING ROOM - MORNING

Meghan enters.

Brucey approaches.

BRUCEY  
We're leaving after breakfast. I  
hope you have time.

Meghan heads upstairs.

BRUCEY (CONT'D)  
Why are you all wet?

MEGHAN  
It's raining!

SUSAN  
You know what Meghan just reminded  
me of? A dream I had the other day.

BRUCEY

I'd rather hear about the book.

SUSAN

You stop. Now, it's been a recurring dream...

INT. CAROUSEL MALL - MORNING

Crowded.

Light from the overhead glass ceiling illuminates the almost clinical space.

SUSAN (V.O.)

...I'm standing in a room with these two twin angels, one standing, the other on a bed. They both had bleach blond hair. I think they were both females. They were somewhat faceless, their features sharp and fragile, emitting some-sort of invisible heat, a blaring consciousness.

As Curtis and Junior stroll, the collective WHITE NOISES mesh—indistinct cross-conversations, a baby crying, easy-listening music, teenagers horsing about, foot-traffic, etc.

SUSAN (V.O.)

I could hardly stand to look at them they were so glorious. And they didn't speak. It was more like a ball of thought. And by their presence I understood they were pressing some revelation on my heart...

INT. EVANS LIVING ROOM - MORNING

SUSAN

And that's it. Now is that a visitation or what? And it's been driving me crazy trying to figure out what it means.

BRUCEY

(offhand)

Yeah, that's strange.

SUSAN

What do you think it means?

BRUCEY

Kinda sounds like we're having twins! I'd rather have a couple of boys, but imagine two more rug-rats running around, writing on the wall with crayon. Chasing them up the stairs.

SUSAN

You have lost your mind.

BRUCEY

And it's true, more children means more heaven. And we'll dress them the same, none of this having them wearing different clothes. If they're gonna be twins I want them looking exactly the same, identical. But their names'll... What's wrong?

SUSAN

Nothing, just thinking.

BRUCEY

What?

SUSAN

Nothing I said.

BRUCEY

So you had a dream. Saw some twins, the light, the bed, then you woke up.

(beat)

And they didn't say anything, and you don't know what it means. What, what's wrong?

SUSAN

Nothing, that's it. Saw some twins—then I woke up.

INT. CAROUSEL MALL - MORNING

JUNIOR

I mean, is it like juvie?

CURTIS

Seent things. Did a bunch of grunt work for un-honorable men. Got backstabbed... literally. Dropped acid, ballooned my consciousness.

(MORE)

CURTIS (CONT'D)

And I read just about everything.  
Could namedrop an endless list of  
dead authors and minor poets.  
There's not much to do when you're  
locked up, except get smart and  
cultivate... a certain solitude.  
Learnt about the law and the  
government.

JUNIOR

I don't trust the government.

CURTIS

Yeah, well, they're eventually  
gonna release these engineered  
viruses, until the population is  
small enough for the elites to  
control us. I even wrote that down  
before COVID.

JUNIOR

What about aliens?

CURTIS

Yup, a mock alien invasion, too. So  
they can regulate communication.  
Only no one's gonna disclose it,  
'cause they control mainstream  
media, too.

(looks far-off)

But imagine all the conspiracies we  
don't know about. That they're  
hiding from us. The treat the  
masses as a mass of guppies. Food  
for whales. Any fool can tell  
something's outta joint—jumbled  
up. Just don't overshoot the bull's-  
eye with all the BS. Remember,  
conspiracies, even the benign ones,  
are all rooted in caricature.

JUNIOR

What's that mean?

CURTIS

It means, isn't it so comforting to  
have big brother breathing down  
your neck, even if he is evil and  
has hidden agendas?

INT. MEGHAN'S BEDROOM - MORNING

LAUGHTER and COMMOTION wafts through the window.

Meghan gets up and looks out.

LAUGHTER ERUPTS again from a distant neighboring house.

Meghan sighs.

BRUCEY (O.S.)  
HURRY PLEASE! Pack up!

EXT. GARAGE - MORNING

A welder blowtorches car's front bumper.

CUT TO BLACK

SUPER: 10:05am

INT. EVANS HOUSE - MORNING

KITCHEN

Brucey breaks yolk, eats, scrolls his iPhone.

Susan eats.

MEGHAN'S UPSTAIRS BEDROOM

Meghan primps in front of her dresser mirror and bobs her head to the HOUSE MUSIC playing from her laptop.

SUSAN (O.S.)  
Meghan! Come down and eat your  
breakfast!

Meghan answers her phone and turns down the volume of her MUSIC.

MEGHAN  
(into phone)  
What, can't get enough of me?

KITCHEN

Gooma enters from the living room.

GOOMA  
What are you all having?

BRUCEY  
Well, look at you.

GOOMA  
You like, Brucey? It's all new.

BRUCEY  
How come you bought all that? No one died, did they?

GOOMA  
No one died, child. Sunday's best's for church! And what family in Christ doesn't attend church? You all missed a very moving message this morning—the gospel was an urgent godsend. And there was this heartfelt ceremony, a purity pledge, with the whole youth group receiving these multi-colored promise bracelets—you know, to signify their pledge.

BRUCEY  
Get ya a plate, Ma.

GOOMA  
I've had communion, thank you. That'll last me 'til lunchtime. Now don't shrug me off. Meghan is sixteen.

SUSAN  
Seventeen.

GOOMA  
All the more urgent. Meghan is seventeen—what was I saying?

BRUCEY  
(yells toward the stairs)  
MEGHAN!

#### MEGHAN'S BEDROOM

MEGHAN  
(into phone)  
You can't come back, no!... I don't care, it's just a sock!... No, it's not like I don't have other pairs you know... 'Cause everyone's here, that's why!... Oh, that's real smart, and what if you get caught?

BRUCEY (O.S.)  
 MEGHAN!

MEGHAN  
 (into phone)  
 Where?...

Meghan heads to the window and opens it.

Jimmer is outside tossing a rolled up sock at the window.

MEGHAN (CONT'D)  
 Jimmer, I'd have to take the screen  
 off!

JIMMER (O.S.)  
 Then take it off!

MEGHAN  
 I'm not taking the screen off for a  
 lousy sock!

FOOTSTEPS.

MEGHAN (CONT'D)  
 Now, go!

Brucey quickly opens the door.

BRUCEY  
 Who you talking to?

MEGHAN  
 No one—and can you knock, please?

BRUCEY  
 Your mother made you breakfast.

MEGHAN  
 Ok.

BRUCEY  
 Right now.

MEGHAN  
 OK!

Brucey closes Meghan's bedroom door and heads downstairs.

MEGHAN (CONT'D)  
 (out the window,  
 vehemently)  
 Leave!



Window SLAMS.

INT. CAROUSEL MALL - DAY

Curtis and Junior stroll out of a store.

CURTIS

I'll put it in an image, so you can understand.

JUNIOR

Go 'head. I'm a visual learner.

CURTIS

So are horses. Now, imagine this—the government, it's like a huge, infectious party that none of us were invited to, a sloppy, good ol time. And we're all just outside in the rain watching the high-class sap from the pyramid's base. Bellies split open with bonuses and bribes and confidential in-jokes, as our ruin-prone national pride applauds on. So why are we still in the rain looking in?

JUNIOR

'Cause they control what's going on outside.

CURTIS

...Never-mind, just don't talk or think about big things if you can't keep up.

JUNIOR

No, keep going, explain it.

CURTIS

There's nothing to explain. You allow your own inferiority control you, Junior. Besides, you shouldn't be worrying about hidden things, ok? The only conspiracy is the one hidden inside the darkness your own psyche, not within some elaborate political world. 'Cause the horrid fact that's denied and denied daily, is that no one's in control, no one's got the wheel—not big business or big government or big science!

JUNIOR  
What about religion?

CURTIS  
Ah... Now we can talk.

INT. EVANS KITCHEN - MORNING

SUSAN  
She'll be off to college before we know it.

GOOMA  
Good gracious, time sure has a way of growing wings.

Brucey reenters the kitchen and sits.

GOOMA (CONT'D)  
Now Brucey, I was trying to make a point here—about the Sunday message.

BRUCEY  
And...

GOOMA  
And... Oh, yes—teenage *pre-miscuity*! And the responsibilities are not the church's, they're the parents'.

Gooma pulls out a thin paperback from her purse.

GOOMA (CONT'D)  
Now I can't repeat the whole sermon verbatim. I need at least a few days to digest the good Word.

Brucey gives Gooma a look.

Gooma (CONT'D)  
What, can't I share, without your laser stare, can I, huh, Brucey? It's not a matter of sainthood, just a few words...  
(reading)  
"We're are"—my tongue's knotting up on me.

(MORE)

Gooma (CONT'D)

Let's see, "We are at war for the souls of a budding and green generation"—I'm echoing Pastor Remington's new book here: "a spiritual battle against the whole western cannon of human fragility, a reptilian mindset, hellbent on convincing us decadence and demoralizing behavior is..." gosh, I can hardly see without my eyeglasses... "deadening, demoralizing"...

BRUCEY

Let me see.

GOOMA

I haven't even read it all myself!

BRUCEY

Ma, I'll read it for you.

GOOMA

I told you, you'll have to wait.  
Let's see...

BRUCEY

(yells toward the stairs)  
MEGHAN!

GOOMA

"This current culture is sun-drunk with sex! And though we'll all die because of the consequences of sin, the drones of stud, the saints by staying virgin, what our children see is vitally"—excuse me, I've got a little tickle in my throat.

(clears throat)

"What children see is vitally important. All mainstream media is a type of propaganda"—Oh, I don't have my glasses. You know I'm nearly blind without my eyeglasses. I need a new pair, too. Here, "It's our duty to inform our children the pleasures of being chaste—"

MEGHAN'S FOOTSTEPS down the stairs.

GOOMA (CONT'D)

We'll talk later.

Meghan enters.

MEGHAN

Hey!... Oh, I forgot my phone.

Meghan exits and heads back up the stairs.

Gooma starts again once Meghan is out of earshot.

GOOMA

"A direct openness is our first line of defense against these principalities of darkness"—that reptilian mindset. Can you please stop with your phone? Do you even know the difference between a vow of chastity versus a vow of celibacy?

BRUCEY

No, what's the difference?

GOOMA

Don't ask me, I'm not a Google! You should've been at church!

MUSIC from Meghan's room.

GOOMA (CONT'D)

Now, I don't know if Meghan is sexually attractive—I mean sexually active—

SUSAN

Evelyn, please.

BRUCEY

Ma, not now.

GOOMA

I'm just saying. Can't I say? Meghan's always on that tumor machine of a cellular phone, always on her laptop late at night, always having friends over unannounced. She's never alone! She's always plugged-in, and to be frank, I've always pegged her a bit simple-minded when it came to the influence of those heathen mouth-breathers she calls friends.

SUSAN

She's just social, Evelyn. You know, a queen bee.

GOOMA

I'm not sure if you're aware, but in nature the queen bee mates with all the drones, honey.

BRUCEY

Ma.

SUSAN

I've had talks with her, so please.

GOOMA

I dunno if you all know this, but yesterday, some neighbor-boy came to the house when you all were at work—

MEGHAN'S FOOTSTEPS down the stairs.

GOOMA (CONT'D)

We'll talk later.

Meghan enters.

MEGHAN

Why can't I stay home instead?

INT. CAROUSEL MALL - DAY

Curtis and Rocha peruse shoes in a store.

CURTIS

And I also don't believe in Darwin's evolution. I don't sip at the cup of another man's intellectual spit. I have my own brain, thank you very much. Right? Are you listening to what I'm saying, or are you listening to how I'm saying it? Forget established ideas! I say give me a theory and I'll disprove it. Give me a concept and I'll deconstruct it. Give me an ideal and I'll destroy it. 'Cause I rely on me and my thoughts and my experience, 'cause that I can test. Everything else sounds like, like crickets trying to talk to a fridge.

JUNIOR

I get it, you're like a scientist of things and thoughts...

CURTIS

Wait.

Two Cops, outside, scour the crowd.

CURTIS (CONT'D)

Let's head out. Slow.

Curtis and Junior make their way out of the store.

Curtis looks back.

They're in the clear.

INT. EVANS KITCHEN - MORNING

BRUCEY

What *boy*?

GOOMA

We'll talk later I said. Now, did you all hear about that criminal up north? One more reason we all shouldn't go. We spent last year in Canada! We ought to vacation somewhere else for a change, see different parts of the world, to be broad and cultivated, like the Newman's. We never visited the Grand Canyon.

MEGHAN

Why can't I stay home this time?

GOOMA

And have an open-house so you can invite God-knows-whoever over?

MEGHAN

I can take care of Gremlin for you.

GOOMA

Gremlin is coming with us.

MEGHAN

I just wanna stay home!

BRUCEY

Listen, everyone in this kitchen goes on this family trip, as a family unit—to *Canada, Ma.*

(MORE)

BRUCEY (CONT'D)

And we'll all go visit the fancy zoo, and watch the gorillas and the gators and the flamingos and the flowers, and do whatever else we want to do, and we'll all have a wonderful, peaceful, awfully lousy time doing it, ok?

GOOMA

I still believe a trip to the Grand Canyon could be very educational. Where's my Gremlin? Gremlin!

Gooma exits.

BRUCEY

I don't want to be sneezing and scratching my eyes out the entire trip.

MEGHAN

Papa, everyone's already at the pool party. A pool party I was invited to! I wanna know why I'm not trusted more?

BRUCEY

Who swims in the rain? Go bother your mother. Go ahead Susan, that's your big pumpkin brain she's got there.

Brucey returns to his phone.

MEGHAN

I just think I can be trusted to look after myself for two weeks. You know, the mild bigotry of low expectations isn't very conducive to the brain development of an only child.

BRUCEY

(sotto)

Fear and Greed's at a 85.

MEGHAN

Rakel's having her birthday party this week. Co-captain, cheerleader Rakel. Best-friend Rakel!

BRUCEY

Which one's that again?

MEGHAN

What's not to trust? You want your little princess to stay doll-sized forever, and I can, but this week—it's the peak fun of a well-earned summer. I can't go on hiding from my friends forever.

SUSAN

We let you go out all the time, Meghan. Time spent with your family shouldn't be a prison sentence.

INT. EVANS LIVING ROOM - MORNING

MEGHAN (O.S.)

Imagine if I go. I'll be in the corner of some ugly motel room, seething inside a hard cocoon of hatred and ear-plugged music.

Gooma hears a faint MEOW from the TV armoire.

MEGHAN (O.S.) (CONT'D)

So why not have me stay home and housesit—save you guys the emotional luxury of me souring the atmosphere?

Gooma approaches and opens the cabinet.

Gremlin.

Gremlin MEOWS.

MEGHAN (O.S.) (CONT'D)

If going on this trip means I can recover some lost time that somehow replaces—

INT. EVAN KITCHEN - MORNING

BRUCEY

Enough! You're going. And if you want to know why, ask your Gooma.

GOOMA (O.S.)

Who's using my name?

Gooma reenters carrying Gremlin.



BRUCEY

She saw you with a boy in the house  
while I was at work.

MEGHAN

You guys know Jimmer! And he never  
came in, his feet didn't touch the  
tile! And what are you doing spying  
on me?

GOOMA

I was just voicing a concern.

MEGHAN

But you guys know Jimmer!

BRUCEY

But you know how I feel about boys  
inside this house.

MEGHAN

But he wasn't inside the house I  
said. We were just talking for a  
bit—outside. I can't control who  
visits me.

GOOMA

I did see him hand you something.

MEGHAN

Gooma!

BRUCEY

What did he give you, *drugs*?

MEGHAN

He handed me a letter.

BRUCEY

Let me see.

MEGHAN

No, it wasn't written for you.

BRUCEY

How about you bring the letter here  
and you won't have to go with us.  
Does that sound like a deal or  
what?

Meghan exits excitedly.

Susan rises.

BRUCEY (CONT'D)  
Where are you going?

SUSAN  
Sometimes, I swear, you're  
possessed by the cruel.

BRUCEY  
I haven't done anything!

Susan exits.

CURTIS (PRE-LAP)  
Gotta secure a chair before the  
music stops. And the music will  
stop.

EXT. SITES OF MOUNTAINS AND TREES - MORNING

Endless trees.

CURTIS (O.S.)  
The keys to the kingdom are lost  
'cause the gap widens, while the  
Moloch fattens.

JUNIOR (O.S.)  
That's a funny word, *Mo-loch*.

CURTIS (O.S.)  
Damn right, Moloch! Moloch!—the  
shattered blocks of broken cities,  
a gymnasium of genitals and  
unnamable obscenities, and all of  
it burnt.

Houses.

Communities.

CURTIS (O.S.) (CONT'D)  
That's how it'll end, gathered up  
in a black wind, radiated men  
eating the bitter hearts of  
radiated men, the summer  
blockbuster blobbed to  
life—flaming skyscrapers spit out  
into the sea's froth. Oh, the  
world'll get their nuke in  
unimaginable ways, believe me.  
They'll get it as sure as we're  
walking this road, Junior.

Cities.

Downtown.

CURTIS (O.S.) (CONT'D)  
Entire cars swallowed up by the  
earth's iron mouth, the crusting  
scab of war and fire, creatures  
bloated in the dead and festered  
waters, severed heads and drought  
and all of it burning!

INT. EVANS KITCHEN - MORNING

Meghan returns with a folded up piece of paper.

MEGHAN  
Here! This is what you saw Jimmer  
hand me, isn't it, Gooma?

GOOMA  
It was a piece of folded up paper,  
yes, but I dunno know if that's the  
exact same piece of paper.

MEGHAN  
You see it, so now I don't have to  
go.

BRUCEY  
No, no, no. I've gotta read it.

MEGHAN  
You're not reading a single word  
off this paper!

BRUCEY  
Alright then, you read it, out  
loud.

MEGHAN  
But that wasn't the deal!

BRUCEY  
Did you pack?

MEGHAN  
Not yet.

BRUCEY  
I told you to be packed! I told you  
we were gonna leave as soon as your  
grandmother came home from church!

MEGHAN

But you guys are still eating!

BRUCEY

Never-mind what everyone else is doing!

(rapid-fire)

So are you gonna read your boyfriend's little love-letter so you can stay home and keep the cat company, or am I gonna have to throw a bunch of your clothes you've got laying around in that hurricane den of yours inside one of those black trash bags—so you can live out of a trash bag like some white-trash hillbilly for not having been packed when I told you to be ready, or are you gonna read what's written on that DAMN PAPER!

GOOMA

Settle down Brucey. I'll read it for you, baby.

MEGHAN

No, I'll read it. I don't want you touching my things. It's a poem. It's called "Wednesdays."

BRUCEY

Wait, a poem?

Meghan stands still, jaw clenched.

BRUCEY (CONT'D)

(laughs hard and loud,  
almost to tears)

A po-em! I'm sorry, but that's too funny!

GOOMA

Alright, hush up now and let her read it.

BRUCEY

What's that mean, "Wednesdays?"

MEGHAN

I'm not telling you. And I'm not reading it.

BRUCEY

Alright, give it here.

MEGHAN

No—

BRUCEY

Just let me see...

MEGHAN

No! Stop it!

There's a small wrestle for the paper.

Meghan wins.

Brucey goes and grabs a black trash bag from under the kitchen sink, and opens it up in the air, with a LOUD PLASTIC POP.

Brucey exits.

MEGHAN (CONT'D)

Why are you always trying to embarrass me! Is there any privacy in Pikesville?...

Meghan plops onto a kitchen chair.

MEGHAN (CONT'D)

And whatever Indian chief named this stupid town is a long-winded stoner! But at least they got the name right, Spikes-ville—'cause there's nothing but spikes here. No-color, close-minded, metal spikes, spikes surrounding Spikes-ville, and spikes surrounding this house like a cage—and this is a house, Gooma, 'cause the word home denotes warmness. I live in a male-constructed constrictive house, and I can't wait to leave for college!

Meghan plunges her face into her arms and weeps.

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - MORNING

Curtis and Junior walk.

JUNIOR

Wait a second—

CURTIS

You asked, so now I'm tellin you!

JUNIOR

I just wanted to know if it's gonna be in our lifetime.

CURTIS

You're not gettin it. It's the broad face of our cowboy landscape, our human desert of hills, of sand and ash of nothing. Man facing his eternal will. A common will to desert, to destruction, a will to nothing—when's not important. The space of winter is held inside this very hour. When? It's now—right now the world's on fire!

JUNIOR

What do you mean?

CURTIS

Exactly what I meant. The world and everything in it is on fire. Right now these trees are on fire.

JUNIOR

But they're not, I can see them.

CURTIS

I'm talkin about an event horizon. Exponential novel-ty. It's what I've studied on. The savage servility of the humanoid slave, like a dog from hell lapping the streets for a warm caress, teethless, hairless, skinless—this is the fate and triumph of mankind, his under-skin and the batwing of his insanity exposed. Bashing his skull against the wall to drum his heart alive for the former touch of something lived and lived is burning!

Junior stops, hands to knees.

JUNIOR

Can we take a break soon?

CURTIS

Look—

(picks up a leaf)

(MORE)

## CURTIS (CONT'D)

The shadow of this leaf will enter  
 a human hand, and that won't even  
 be close to the strangest things  
 happening as we get closer to the  
 singularity. The dead'll be driven  
 into the dirt like nails, the black  
 pearls of their flesh softening,  
 rotting. These trees buried, buried  
 under sand and ash, and burning,  
 until all is fire, 'til  
 everything's fire, burnt and  
 burning!

## JUNIOR

I see it!

## CURTIS

I've already seenct it. You think  
 I'm lying?

## JUNIOR

What happens after that, after  
 everything's burnt and burning?

## CURTIS

Look. What do you see?

## JUNIOR

What, it's your fist.

## CURTIS

Right. So if I tell you that the  
 cat is black, it's because I hold  
 the hair inside my hand...

## JUNIOR

What happens then, after  
 everything's burnt up?

INT. EVANS KITCHEN - MORNING

Meghan cries.

## GOOMA

Look child, you're getting  
 teardrops on your toast. Now,  
 you've got it better than most.  
 Most girls aren't even attractive  
 enough to get a boy to notice them,  
 let alone write them a poem. And  
 you are very, very pretty.

MEGHAN

I know I am.

(sniffles)

But why did you have to go and tell him about Jimmer?

GOOMA

You relax, I could've said more. You thought I'd fallen asleep, but I was just resting my eyes. And I saw you two leave and you didn't return 'til my program was ending. That's a half-hour of being somewhere you ought not be.

MEGHAN

Don't you dare tell him anything else. And can we not talk about you spying on me?

Meghan stands.

GOOMA

Meghan, you sit back down and finish those eggs. Go on, you hardly touched them.

Meghan sits.

GOOMA (CONT'D)

(clears the table)

I've been meaning to talk to you, and I guess this is as good a time as any.

(goes to sink)

Now Meghan there are certain sensitive *realities*, for lack of a better word, that make me nervous—hey now, are you listening?

Gooma turns around.

MEGHAN

I'm listening.

Gooma goes back to dishwashing.

GOOMA

There're things I hate to bring up. It's about that Jimmer.

MEGHAN

And what about him?



GOOMA

Your mother says he plays a wide-receiver for the J.C. football game or whatever...

Gooma turns her head and shoulders.

MEGHAN

And?...

Gooma goes back to dishwashing.

GOOMA

And anyways, I bring it up only because I don't want this to be some puppy-love fad your unprepared for. Like in those star magazines you're always looking at.

Meghan rises and exits silently.

GOOMA (CONT'D)

And those realities, for lack of a word, do exist, rich celebrities you idolize thinking it's what's "in"—to grab them some rich, athlete husband, just like all of them stuffing puppies inside handbags. Please don't tell me he's your boyfriend for that reason. Please don't tell me you're influenced by people who objectify other people. Who see truelove as a checklist, who treat marriage like an elaborate wardrobe choice, interchangeable, in fashion, of the season, what's in—Meghan?

Gooma turns her head, then turns completely around.

She stands alone in the kitchen.

EXT. WOODED AREA - DAY

Clouds sliding across a electric-blue sky.

On grass, Gooma gazes skyward.

CURTIS (PRE-LAP)

And one day out of the faded and fallen earth-star...

BIG BREATH and awe.

CURTIS (CONT'D)

Out of the choked sputter of gutted machine parts...

A cathedral.

CURTIS (CONT'D)

Out of the ironwork and its need to stand the swell of ocean and confusion, someone will come along and see it even better than me...

EXT. DIRT ROAD - DAY

Curtis and Junior walk.

CURTIS

Then we'll all be in for it. And he won't be wearing the suit and tie of the political elite, no. The devil's too cute with his arrogance. He'll come belly-crawling out of the indistinguishable and immutable social laws of the poorest of the poor, produced from the mud up like me. And he'll see it better than anyone's ever seen it, and he'll give back to man his will, this miniature godhead, this antichrist and anti-nihilist, he'll come. Someday. And his arrival will shed his light, an angel of death.

JUNIOR

Are you talking about you?

CURTIS

You mean, am I the spring bee and the flower?

JUNIOR

I dunno, but I know you've done awful things.

CURTIS

The redeemer comes a dark way, Junior.

INT. EVANS CAR (MOVING) - DAY

The family drives.

Brucey is at the wheel, Susan is in the passenger seat and Gooma and Meghan are in the backseats, Meghan behind her mother.

Gremlin travels in a cage between Megan and Gooma.

Brucey SNEEZES.

Gooma jars awake.

BRUCEY

(to Susan)

Shouldn't've brought the dander-bag.

MEGHAN

What were you dreaming about?

GOOMA

I already forgot... But last night I saw this program on gothic cathedrals and this Italian one looked like it came from a dream. The roof stuck out like a giant sewing needle right smack in the middle of the city. You know, we all should fly to Europe, Brucey. You need to safe up so we can go see a real-life cathedral!

MEGHAN

That sounds kinda interesting.

GOOMA

What do you think, Brucey?

BRUCEY

We're on vacation right now, Ma. Let's finish this trip before we start planning another one to another country, ok?

GOOMA

All I'm saying is that it'd be very educational to see some real culture up close. There're these mosaics I hafta see before I die. Just plain exquisite—beautiful stain glass mosaics of shepherds and saints. If someone says, cathedral, do you know what that even is? Do you know the difference between that, and say, a basilica?

BRUCEY  
What's a basilica?

GOOMA  
That's not what I asked. I asked if  
you knew *the difference*?

BRUCEY  
Ma, if I dunno know what it is, how  
the heck am I gonna know the  
difference?

GOOMA  
Just answer the question. Do you  
know the difference between a  
cathedral and a basilica?

BRUCEY  
No, Ma, what's the difference?

GOOMA  
When you take me there, I'll tell  
you. Oh, and inside the cathedral,  
Meghan, they've got these giant  
frescos covering the wall, flying  
buttresses, and massive stone made  
of marble, marble with engraved  
scriptures—in Latin!

MEGHAN  
It sounds a lot less interesting  
now.

INT. CATHEDRAL - DAY

A crown of thorns.

Christ's passion statue.

CUT TO BLACK

SUPER: 12:30pm

EXT. GROCERY STORE PARKING LOT - DAY

CURTIS  
Just make it hard.

JUNIOR  
Yup.

A black car starts to back up.

CURTIS

Now.

Roach sprints a short distance and SLAMS into the car rear and drops to the ground.

INT. EVANS CAR (MOVING) - DAY

GOOMA

What I wanna know is, where are all the new cathedrals of the world? In the olden days it was the center of everyone's lives. To see a cathedral—in this depraved age! Oh, that would mean the world to me, Brucey. I'd cut off my pinkie toe just to read one of those Latin inscriptions.

MEGHAN

When did you learn Latin?

GOOMA

Just seeing the words would be enough. I don't have to understand any of it. Just touching the engraving would give the marble its meaning.

EXT. GROCERY STORE PARKING LOT - DAY

The black car parks and EDWARD (late sixties) gets out.

Curtis tends to the WAILING Junior.

CURTIS

You alright there, kiddo?

EDWARD

(approaches)

Ya saw me backin out! Why in the heck would you run into it?

CURTIS

He's a bit simple, sir.

EDWARD

Aaaah.

CURTIS  
 He's also gifted in his own way.  
 Can noodle a catfish like ain't  
 nobody's business. But when he gets  
 ta runnin.

EDWARD  
 Oughta be more careful.

Curtis helps Junior up.

CURTIS  
 You look awfully familiar...

INT. EVANS CAR (MOVING) - DAY

GOOMA  
 Brucey, have a look at the  
 speedometer.

Meghan's cell phone RINGS.

Brucey SNEEZES.

MEGHAN  
 (into phone)  
 Hey... Somewhere where it's about  
 to storm, with plenty of poor  
 people in trailer parks.

GOOMA  
 Brucey, tell me the mile number on  
 the speedometer. I want to see how  
 far we've traveled.

MEGHAN  
 (into phone)  
 Oh, hi... Yeah, she's right here.  
 (to Susan)  
 Mom, Rachael's mom says Hi, and  
 says she'd have to be mental to  
 take her kids anywhere but the  
 mall.

SUSAN  
 Tell her it's no picnic here.

MEGHAN  
 (into phone)  
 She says it's no picnic here...  
 (to Susan)  
 (MORE)

MEGHAN (CONT'D)

She says when you get back the adults should go on a trip without the kids.

SUSAN

Tell her I was thinking the same thing. We could go to a couple's resort in Arizona. I'll show her the brochure when we get back.

MEGHAN

(into phone)

She said she was thinking the same thing. There's a couple's resort in Arizona. She'll show you the brochure when we get back...

(to Susan)

She says not to Arizona, 'cause the desert heat's brutal she says.

SUSAN

Tell her I did the research and the price is good.

MEGHAN

(into phone)

She said she did the research and the price is good—

BRUCEY

Enough with that! You have a phone, how about you call her!

SUSAN

What's your problem?

BRUCEY

We're driving to Canada right now! Arizona, Europe! We're on vacation right now! Can everyone stop planning new crap every single minute?

GOOMA

Brucey, calm down.

BRUCEY

In fact give me your phone!

Brucey reaches to the backseat and grabs Meghan's pink phone along with some of her hair.

MEGHAN

Ah, you pulled out my hair!

GOOMA  
Brucey, careful with the wheel!

EXT. CATHEDRAL - DAY

A mighty, opposing monolith.

CUT TO BLACK

SUPER: 1:45pm

EXT. GROCERY STORE PARKING LOT - DAY

CURTIS  
I know you, I do. You're Aunt  
Daltrey's brother.

EDWARD  
Who?

CURTIS  
I said Aunt Beasley.

EDWARD  
Never heard of her.  
(heads back to his car)  
You've got the wrong person.

CURTIS  
(searches, reads...)  
...That's 'cause her maiden name is  
Walton!

Edward stops.

EDWARD  
I know of a Walton but I'm not her  
brother.

CURTIS  
Did I say brother? I meant an *old*  
*friend*. I think it must have been a  
wedding. Yessir, I was no taller  
than a baseball bat back then.  
About yay high.

EDWARD  
Don't recall. What's your relation?

CURTIS  
Oh, we're her sons! Yessir, me and  
my brother here.  
(MORE)



CURTIS (CONT'D)

She ain't doin' too well. See, she's about to pass, but she's got this fortune that not a soul knew about. War bonds and stocks. She left them to us. So as morbid as it sounds, we're waiting...

EDWARD

I feel sorry for her. She was a good woman.

CURTIS

That's the thing! There's a stipulation in her will. She was a godly, generous woman, and she's made it mandatory that me and my brother give a percentage of the inheritance away to a charity of our choosing, according to the lawyer-man.

Edward closes the car door and moves closer.

EDWARD

What's the percentage?

CURTIS

First fruits. A tithe, yes.

Pause.

CURTIS (CONT'D)

Ten percent of a big number is still a big number.

EDWARD

Yes, indeed.

CURTIS

You know what just struck my iron? It turns out we could bypass the legalese of that stipulation and keep all the money for ourselves. Only, we'd need the compliance of outside players to set the deal in motion...

EDWARD

What were you thinking?

CURTIS

The lawyer-man got it all set up. Maybe you and your wife would like to be those player-partners?

EDWARD

How much are we talking about exactly?

CURTIS

What's ten percent of a hundred million?

JUNIOR

...ten million!

CURTIS

(gives Junior a scolding glare)

You must've smacked the stupid out of him, 'cause that's right!

EDWARD

Ten million, huh?

CURTIS

Now we would have to take a cut of that. The lawyer-man also.

EDWARD

About how much?

CURTIS

Ten percent of ten percent seems fair. We ain't greedy. What's that buddy, ten of ten of ten million?

JUNIOR

Uh...

CURTIS

And taxes. You're probably lookin upward to seven million. Maybe a little less.

EDWARD

I'd have to speak with my wife...

CURTIS

Naturally.

EDWARD

What are you two doing for lunch?

CURTIS

The Lord sure has ways of openin doors!

EDWARD

He sure does!

The two LAUGH.

Junior looks puzzled, then joins in on the LAUGHTER.

INT. EVANS CAR (MOVING) - DAY

MEGHAN

Can I have my phone back?

BRUCEY

I need it quiet in here for a while.

MEGHAN

So it's ok for Gooma to babble on and on about every half-formed thought and every falling leaf outside her window, but I can't talk on my phone?... Is anyone gonna answer? Hello?

GOOMA

Your grandmother is right next to you, Missy. Brucey, I hope I raised you better than to raise my granddaughter to act this inconsiderate and spoiled. You know you don't have to listen, Meghan. You could just ignore me. Everyone else does—Oh, Jesus, help meh!

MEGHAN

I'm not gonna use it to talk. I just wanna play a game.

GOOMA

I have a game we can play. It's called "Cloud Shapes." So what you do is you choose a cloud and decide in your mind what you think the cloud could resemble, a pear, a chair, an elephant. Things plain and simple—could be plant, object or animal. Then you have someone else guess what the cloud is!

MEGHAN

Can I have my phone back, please?

BRUCEY

How about you talk to the clouds.

MEGHAN

Maybe I will!

BRUCEY

Go ahead then.

GOOMA

You know, your phone is a distraction, Meghan, a distraction from noticing the beautiful nature around us. And Meghan if you're annoyed that reminisce from time to time, it's because I do it for a reason. Back then life was something toy-ish and simple and wooden.

Meghan takes a banana from her backpack and puts it to the side of her head as a mock phone.

MEGHAN

(spryly, into banana)

Hello, Rakel? Hey, did you end up inviting Jimmer to your party next week? You did, *what fun!* I bet the neighbors'll call the cops on a noise complaint, 'cause I know there's no such thing as Sticks-ville privacy, even when you're not in Sticks-ville! Even when you're speeding away from it in a car full of family you can't stand, 'cause they can't understand or remember what it's like to be young in the summer!

BRUCEY

I haven't forgotten! And you know what, you're clever, Meghan, but clever's not cutting it. You heard your Gooma, you're just spoiled.

GOOMA

Like green cheese.

MEGHAN

(into banana)

Oh, what was that, Jimmer took you on a date? When was this? I never heard of *this*. Where did Jimmer take you? To the *bowling alley*?

(MORE)

MEGHAN (CONT'D)

And after you both bowled a bunch of gutters and ate some fries and shared a shake, what did you do?—No! I thought your dad has you on a nine o'clock curfew?

BRUCEY

She's gonna have me pull this car over, Susan.

GOOMA

Look, it's starting to sprinkle—please concentrate on the road, Brucey!

MEGHAN

(into banana)

So you guys decided to take a ride after?

BRUCEY

You think you're cute?

MEGHAN

(into banana)

Where to, Rakel? Lemme guess, next to the pet cemetery? How did I know!

GOOMA

Oh, Meghan, no one wants to be hearing any of this.

MEGHAN

(into banana)

So you both just sat there with the radio on? Rakel Bragster, tell me the truth, what happened next?

GOOMA

Brucey, slow down! Let's not have an accident!

MEGHAN

(into banana)

So you two just sat there the rest of the night, only listening to music? I just don't believe it. I'm sure he must have gazed into your eyes and whispered something sweet like, "Rakel, you sure have some sweet-looking brown eyes?" Oh, that's right, I forgot, your eyes are blue!

GOOMA

Bruce, slow down! Please knock off  
the pretending, Meghan!

MEGHAN

(into banana)

So what happened next? No. Oh—

Meghan starts to GIGGLE, then LAUGH uncontrollably.

MEGHAN (CONT'D)

(into banana)

Oh, my—yes, yes, you did, didn't  
you!

Brucey reacts and reaches toward the backseat, attempting to  
slap Meghan's face several times.

Meghan gives a slight scream and dodges most of Brucey's  
lunges.

The wheel and the car swerve.

Brucey returns to the wheel.

SUSAN

(beat)

Brucey...

GOOMA

Meghan... Honey, are you ok?

Meghan composes herself.

EXT. DIRT ROAD - DAY

CURTIS

It shouldn't be too far down.

JUNIOR

I guess I'm a real con-artist, huh?

CURTIS

There's not much con in running  
into cars. Or art.

JUNIOR

I'm a good actor then.

CURTIS

Doesn't take much actin neither.

JUNIOR  
I wonder what they're having?

CURTIS  
We're gonna eventually need a gun.

JUNIOR  
I might know of someone back home.

CURTIS  
We can swing back once we get the  
old man's car.

JUNIOR  
I said I might know someone!

INT. SAL'S BBQ - DAY

There are a few dining truckers, a small dance floor and a jukebox in the corner.

The family sits in a booth and SAL, the old head proprietor, is collecting the menus.

SAL  
It's nothing like our generation.

GOOMA  
Everything's getting so bleak and terrible. I remember the days when people would actually talk to one another.

SAL  
Not no more!

GOOMA  
Yes, not no more!

A CRASH OF DISHES from the back kitchen.

SAL  
I better get those drinks.

GOOMA  
Oh, does that jukebox in the corner work at all?

SAL  
It sure does. Just press a number.

GOOMA  
Well, isn't that lovely!

SAL  
I'll go get those drinks.

Sal exits.

MEGHAN  
Watching you flirt is embarrassing.

EXT. HARDING HOME - DAY

A mobile trailer inside a residential park for the elderly.

Edward sits in a leather recliner.

A toilet FLUSHES and NESSA (late-sixties) enters.

NESSA  
Edward, why are these groceries  
still not put away?

EDWARD  
(rises)  
I almost killed one of Ms. Walton's  
kids!

NESSA  
You're kidding!

EDWARD  
I'm backing out and all of a sudden  
I hear a loud thud, right on the  
bumper.

Nessa searches the bags.

EDWARD (CONT'D)  
So I get out and there's this kid  
face up on the blacktop, wailing—

NESSA  
Edward, where's the orange juice?

EDWARD  
I haven't got to the best part—

NESSA  
You got the wrong dog-gone orange  
juice again!

EDWARD  
Whatcha mean I got the wrong orange  
juice?



NESSA

Tell me what it says on this here label.

EDWARD

What's it say?

NESSA

It reads LOW PULP! I specifically told you before you left that I wanted "no pulp," not "low pulp." Edward, you deaf fossil, I'm gonna have bits of orange stuck in my teeth now! You know, this really grinds my gears!

EDWARD

No pulp?

NESSA

No! No pulp, Edward! What's wrong with you? Can't hear, can't see, runnin over kids!

EDWARD

Oh, shut it with your pulp!

NESSA

Edward, don't you talk to me like I'm some child!

EDWARD

You're not listening, they've got money!

NESSA

What?

EDWARD

The kid I ran over and his brother.

NESSA

Where's the phone?... I'm reporting it in.

Nessa goes for the phone.

EDWARD

I'm telling you, they've got money that's tied up to Ms. Walton's fortune!

NESSA

Did you say Ms. Walton's sons? The old fossil with that aluminum shack off Saint Helena?

EDWARD

I guess, that old fossil.

NESSA

Nope, not possible, Edward. Ms. Walton never had any sons. Miss Walton. Miss.

EDWARD

Well, they said Ms. Walton.

NESSA

Did't you just hear what I said?

EDWARD

Maybe they meant another Ms. Walton?

NESSA

Another crop of Walton in this town? That's not a last name you see doubles of.

EDWARD

They wouldn't have a reason to lie.

NESSA

You ran over a couple of liars, Edward.

EDWARD

We'll see.

NESSA

Whatcha mean, "We'll see?"

EDWARD

We're havin 'em over for lunch.

NESSA

What did you say?

EDWARD

What, are you goin deaf now too? I said I invited them over for lunch.

NESSA

Goodness Edward!

EDWARD

It's a humane gesture. What's the matter with your eyebrow?

NESSA

Are you drunk?

EDWARD

You're being paranoid.

NESSA

Edward, these people could rob us, did you think about that?

EDWARD

We'll see.

NESSA

No, we won't! Ms. Walton is a sonless old fossil 'til the night she passes, God bless her soul, and no twin redneck impostors are gonna, gonna drag bits of road-dust all about my carpet. We're not having any of that, not in this house, Edward!

A THUNDEROUS KNOCK at the door.

Edward and Nessa stare at the door.

Pause.

Another FORCEFUL KNOCK.

INT. SAL'S BBQ - DAY

GOOMA

You better watch that saucy mouth of yours.

MEGHAN

Saucy mouth?

Meghan takes a hot sauce bottle and starts pantomiming pouring the hot sauce in her mouth and on Gooma's imaginary plate.

MEGHAN (CONT'D)

You mean, hot-sauce mouth! Hot-sauce mouth!

GOOMA

You need to learn some respect.

Meghan embraces Gooma.

GOOMA (CONT'D)

Get off—I'm still mad at you. That whole car charade was just shameful.

MEGHAN

(lifts high her nose and chin)

What car charade?

GOOMA

Why's your head tilted up and your chin out like that?

MEGHAN

I look more dignified at this angle, like an angel.

GOOMA

Well, you look in the mirror enough.

MEGHAN

You should try it sometime—it might help.

GOOMA

You know, beauty fades, Meghan. Like grass in the sun.

MEGHAN

Yeah, you should know.

GOOMA

Brucey, are you gonna sit there and let her talk to me without any respect? There used to be a time when a child's father would correct his child!

BRUCEY

I quit, Ma. I can't control what she says.

MEGHAN

Can't control my hot-sauce mouth!

EXT. SHACK - DAY

A screen door flaps open.

RATTLES.

CUT TO BLACK

TITLE: 3:30pm

EXT. SAL'S BBQ - DAY

Gooma turns toward the window.

GOOMA

I'm not talking to you right now.  
I'm upset with you.

MEGHAN

(draws close to Gooma)  
(baby-talk)

Oh, poor Gooma's gonna pout? What,  
you're gonna ignore me by looking  
out the window, looking at all the  
cars? Oh, there's a blue one—oh,  
there goes a green one!

GOOMA

(shrugs Meghan off)  
I'm not playing with you, Meghan.  
I'm really upset.

MEGHAN

What do you want me to say?

GOOMA

You know what you can do? You can  
go to that dance floor and do a  
little tap for me. Remember when  
we'd dress her up like a tomboy,  
all cute in her blue corduroy—with  
that tattered straw-hat? And you'd  
tap your little number, and those  
little, electric feet of yours  
would start to move in circles, and  
I swear those circles would move!  
Oh, our miniature, mad talent at  
seven! Remember? Do some tap for me  
and I'll be happy.

MEGHAN

I don't remember any of the steps.

Sal returns with their sodas.

BRUCEY

I remember how much those lessons were.

GOOMA

(to Sal)

Wait, you'll have to watch my granddaughter do her tap dance, in just a minute.

MEGHAN

No really, I can't.

GOOMA

Brucey, let me see that phone of hers.

Brucey hands Gooma the pink phone.

GOOMA (CONT'D)

Let's make a trade—a bit of tap for your phone back.

MEGHAN

Really?

Brucey nods.

Meghan gives a puckering smile then gets out from the booth and walks to the jukebox.

Meghan takes a brief moment to decide on a song.

The SONG begins.

Meghan waddles to the dance floor.

She begins dances an energetic tap number that progressively gets more chaotic and complicated as the SONG CRESCENDOS.

Everyone, including Sal and the dining truckers, CLAP.

Meghan bows and approaches the booth.

GOOMA

Like a professional!

MEGHAN

Did ya like it?

GOOMA

Loved it!

SUSAN  
We loved it, baby.

GOOMA  
Those tap lessons sure weren't  
wasted Brucey! And you sure love  
the attention!

MEGHAN  
I guess I do.

GOOMA  
Look at that smile—never seen such  
a smile!

Meghan sits.

Everyone's smiling.

INT. HARDING HOME - DAY

Another FORCEFUL KNOCK.

Pause.

Nessa goes to the door and looks through the peephole.

Another DRAWN-OUT KNOCK.

NESSA  
Who's there?

CURTIS (O.S.)  
Knock, knock!

NESSA  
Now I want the both of you to head  
on down the road from where you  
came.

CURTIS (O.S.)  
Wait a minute—Edward, are you  
there?

EDWARD  
I'm right here! Come on in boys!

Nessa gives resistance as Edward fights to the door open.

EDWARD (CONT'D)  
The old lady gets jumpy with  
strangers. Sometimes mistakes  
feathers for fox hairs.

Curtis and Junior enter.

NESSA

Edward, what's wrong with you?

EDWARD

Did I call you an old hen? Go set the table!

CURTIS

I shouldn't cuss in front of a lady, but holy Moses, Junior, look at your shoes! Is that horse-pie, 'cause I don't remember any mud on that road? You know, you should always do a wipe on the welcome mat before you step foot inside a good Christian home like this. You don't want this poor lady kneeling down, having to scrub away all the crud you caked on top of her carpet, huh, do ya? Where's your etiquette? He never acts smart, but I think he's had a concussion.

Junior goes outside to wipe his feet.

EDWARD

But he's ok now? He toughed it out?

NESSA

Edward, I don't feel comfortable.

CURTIS

What seems to be the problem, Ma'am?

EDWARD

Old hen thinks—

NESSA

Old hen thinks that you all are some hillbilly impostors. I'm sorry, but that's my suspicion. Ms. Walton never even had one son, let alone two. Now I'd like to know who you claim to be.

CURTIS

Well, we're just—

NESSA

That's not the earthly truth and you know it!



EDWARD

Will you leave it alone, Nessa?

NESSA

I want you two to leave this house!  
I know to a certainty you're not  
telling the truth—out, out,  
goodbye!

Nessa tries to corral Curtis and Junior out the door.

CURTIS

You don't know who I am?

NESSA

I know who you are, you're some  
cartoon character, now out!

Curtis gives a light CHUCKLE at Nessa's attempt to push him out.

CURTIS

Lady... I'll tell you the truth.

Nessa stops.

CURTIS (CONT'D)

I'm a dragon—a big-old, green-old  
dragon.

NESSA

Edward, you picked up a couple of  
crazies. Now if you all don't leave  
right now, I'm calling the  
authorities—

CURTIS

You don't see it? Junior, do you  
see it?

JUNIOR

Yup, I see it.

CURTIS

(putting pointy fingers on  
his head)  
My horns... You see 'em?

JUNIOR

Yup, I see 'em.

NESSA

You two are sick in the head, now  
get out!

Nessa lunges forward.

Curtis pulls out a large hunting knife.

CURTIS

Are you able to see it? You see it,  
Junior?

JUNIOR

Yup, I see it.

Nessa stands back.

Edward moves to leave.

CURTIS

Stay here, Edward.

Edward stops.

SILENCE

JUNIOR

Silence is golden, huh?

CURTIS

It's also very heavy, Junior. Here.  
(hands Junior the knife)  
I'm sorry, what was your name?

NESSA

Nessa Chelsea Stewton, that's my  
maiden name. My married name is  
Harding, Nessa Chelsea Harding.

CURTIS

Junior, have Nessa, wonderful name,  
have Nessa show you around Mr.  
Edward's wardrobe and pick out any  
vintage shirts that are in my  
spectrum of style. Edward and I'll  
be in the kitchen having ourselves  
a little discussion.

JUNIOR

(makes a poking gesture  
with the knife)  
Go on Nussy.

Junior and Nessa exit to the bedroom.

Curtis and Edward head to the kitchen.

INT. HOTEL MOTEL - DAY

Brucey opens the door and Meghan rushes toward the bed farthest from the door.

Susan enters, followed by Gooma.

Everyone's exhausted, except for Gooma.

MEGHAN

Finally!

Meghan throws her backpack on the bed and falls backward with a huge sigh.

GOOMA

Oh, it's nice and cool in here!  
Don't you just love that feeling?

Meghan does a snow-angel, letting out a slight LAUGH of relief.

Susan lays on the bed closest to the door.

Brucey sets his bags down near Susan.

The motel room door is open.

BRUCEY

Don't get too comfortable now.  
We're leaving as soon as we get  
everything in.

MEGHAN

We just got here!

GOOMA

We're gonna go see that mission we  
all want to see, remember?

MEGHAN

I don't wanna see a house that's  
falling apart. It has nothing to do  
with me.

GOOMA

It has everything to do with  
everyone. It's a mission contains a  
plethora of historical  
significance.

MEGHAN

What significance? We're in the middle of Hicks-ville and mountain-goat country!

BRUCEY

Come on, Meghan, help me with the rest of these bags.

Meghan starts up with a large groan.

Brucey and Meghan exit.

Gooma sits on the bed...

She notices Meghan's backpack on the floor.

Gooma's back is facing the door.

She looks over her shoulder at the door and at Susan.

Gooma stares at the zipper partially opened, then lifts up the flap: something papery and white.

Gooma grabs the object, a pack of cigarettes, and pulls it out.

Brucey has already reentered the room.

Brucey places two of Gooma's bags next the second bed.

BRUCEY (CONT'D)

Ma, how much stuff did you bring?—What's that?

GOOMA

What, I don't know.

Brucey takes the cigarettes from Gooma's hand and turns to face the door.

Meghan finally reenters, slow and with an exaggerated limp from the weight of her clothes in a large black trash bag, Susan's bag and purse and the last of Gooma's bags, around her neck.

Meghan gets to the center of the room and notices Brucey holding out the cigarettes.

MEGHAN

Crap.

Meghan DROPS all the bags at once.

INT. HARDING KITCHEN - DAY

Curtis and Edward sit at the wooden table, with a bag of bread as its centerpiece.

EDWARD

I'm a bit confused.

CURTIS

I'm confused too. All we wanted was a meal, which shouldn't've been too difficult in a nice Christian home like this. What're you all having?

EDWARD

Okra gumbo.

CURTIS

Where is it?

EDWARD

In the freezer. From last winter.

CURTIS

You-dunno-nothin'-about-no-GUM-BO!  
Sir, frozen gumbo is a sin.

EDWARD

It just might be.

CURTIS

(beat)

What kind of foods do you like? You know what, never-mind, I can see by your gut you don't discriminate much. Me, I'm not a big lover of the ubiquitous Mexicano cuisine. It's the monotonous remedios. Lettuce, rice, corn, bean. All smacks of vegetable banality. Tough luck for me though, since we are headed for Mexico. I prefer seafood. I'm originally from Louisiana, so it's in my blood.

NESSA (O.S.)

EDWARD!

CURTIS

You know, my daddy, he made a mean oyster po' boy. I mean it, it'd spit at you, that's how mean it was. Do you like oysters?

(MORE)

## CURTIS (CONT'D)

I can smell the ocean just thinkin  
of 'em.

(inhales)

The walnuts of the sea! The taste  
and texture kind of reminds me of a  
wet, slimy mushroom. The word  
sounds erotic too, doesn't  
it?—Oyster! You know, if two dozen  
were carried out right now on a  
tray by some naked nymph—well  
let's just say, the tray wouldn't  
hit the floor.

## EDWARD

Sir, I'd—I'd like to know exactly  
what's going on here. Now, if it's  
my wife, I can understand. I've  
been married for forty-six years,  
so I—

## CURTIS

Marriage! That social dress, how  
does it go, made with a naked  
artifice?

Curtis takes the bread from out of the bag.

He breaks it, then starts to eat.

## CURTIS (CONT'D)

(chews)

You wanna know the strange thing  
about oysters? There're the  
ultimate aphrodisiac of course.  
Now, while the sexual component in  
one is, chemical, the actual act of  
slurping down one of those  
spineless critters is still  
suggestive, that is to say, like  
eating—well, ya know. And don't  
forget, an oyster's level of zinc  
is exceptionally high, and zinc is  
the lifeblood of a man's seed. Now  
could that link be a biological  
coincidence, lips and genital,  
action and animal, chemically  
fused? What a dark design if it is.  
That's the stuff that interests me,  
a jigsaws of misunderstandings,  
twisted thoughts, a string of  
contingencies. Consider the  
lightbulb and how it sings.

(points to the lightbulb)

Hear the hum?

(MORE)

CURTIS (CONT'D)

And the wine stain ingrained in the wood here.

(runs a finger across the table)

Immaculate disorder. That, my dear friend, is the nutshell of existence.

INT. MOTEL ROOM - DAY

BRUCEY

(holds up the pack of cigarettes)

"You can trust me. Oh, Papa, what's not to trust!" Well, hell Meghan, what're you doing with these?

Megahn shrugs.

BRUCEY (CONT'D)

You talk about trust and responsibility and how much more freedom and independence you crave, and you turn around and start burning down these little life-suckers?

MEGHAN

There's still like sixteen, seventeen left in there—hey, wait a minute, who was going through my stuff?

GOOMA

I found it, baby.

MEGHAN

Why are you always snooping through my stuff?

BRUCEY

Meghan, I'm not done with you.

GOOMA

I thought it was that poem of yours.

MEGHAN

How does that make any difference? How could you think it's ok to break into my stuff without my permission? How can you justify that?

GOOMA

I thought it was that poem—

MEGHAN

I told you, you're not reading it,  
no one is. You wouldn't read  
someone else's diary, would you?

BRUCEY

Meghan, we're talking here.

MEGHAN

No. I'm not.  
(grabs her backpack)  
This is a type of  
harassment—nosing into other  
people's things.

GOOMA

You know what I think?

MEGHAN

No one cares what you think! Just  
keep your mouth closed and keep  
your advice on how I should live my  
life and conduct myself—to  
yourself! And the only reason  
anyone's ever tolerates your  
degrading, babbling nonsense is  
'cause you're old. And the only  
reason you're living with us now is  
'cause you're old and you can't  
stand the idea of rocking back and  
forth in some old-folk's home,  
alone with your own sick, self-  
righteous opinions of others!

Meghan turns to leave the room.

Brucey blocks Meghan's way.

GOOMA

Honey, in couple of years, you'll  
wind up pregnant with that Jimmer  
then you'll be asking your Gooma to  
raise the little monster.

MEGHAN

Move! I wanna get a soda from the  
vending machine.

BRUCEY

You're not going anywhere.



MEGHAN

I can go wherever I wanna go.

Meghan turns around and heads for the bathroom and enters it.

It LOCKS.

GOOMA

Honey, you're not ready for anything!

Brucey goes to the bathroom door.

INT. HARDING KITCHEN - DAY

EDWARD

Look, my wife and I are simple people, and it just seems odd, odd that you're going about like this. How about she gets in here and heats up that gumbo you wanted, with a smile? How—How does that sound?

Junior reenters.

CURTIS

Shirt news, Junior?

JUNIOR

Whatcha chewin on?

CURTIS

Bread.

Junior sets down a small pile of shirts and the bloody knife on the wooden table.

Curtis rifles through the shirts.

CURTIS (CONT'D)

They're making me dizzy. And remind me later to jerk a knot in your head. You gaumed up my knife. Go on, tie him up!

JUNIOR

With what?

CURTIS

Look in the cabinets, the drawers!

Junior searches.

EDWARD

What's going on? I wanna know your name!

CURTIS

I already told you who I am. I'm the dragon, remember? Or am I not being clear?

(leans into Edward's face)

I'm the dragon by the side of the road, watching those who pass. Now, it's given, we all return to the Father of Souls, but it is necessary you pass the dragon.

EDWARD

What are you gonna do to me?

CURTIS

You're not making any sense now, Edward! You've had your entire, absurd little life to figure that out. And I've seen your double somewhere—am I right? You're very, very tired, five years retired, couch-napping, groveling for new episodes, for some flash-in-the-pan transient instant, and here it is, and you're scared. It's like a butterfly has landed on your hand and instead of childlike excitement, you're scared!

EDWARD

Yes, I'm scared.

CURTIS

Don't be. Flirt with the flame—this is why I hate kids, they test my patience. C'mon Junior, just use some cable cord from the TV!

Junior exits.

Curtis waits for Junior.

CURTIS (CONT'D)

We've got a pressing need to be places.

Junior reenters and starts to tie Edward to the chair with some cords.

EDWARD

Hold on one minute! I—I have an enlarged heart.

Junior takes Edward's keys.

EDWARD (CONT'D)

Now, you just wait one second!

Curtis gets up and walks to Edward's chair.

Curtis drags the chair to the open space between the living room and kitchen.

The chair SCRAPs against the floor when dragged.

Edward sobs.

EDWARD (CONT'D)

Nessa!... Nessa!

CURTIS

Wanna see your wife?

Curtis goes to the living room and grabs a framed picture of a young Nessa, and returns.

CURTIS (CONT'D)

What, not how you remembered her?  
How long've you been married again?

Edward is sobbing and unresponsive.

CURTIS (CONT'D)

Ancient history, huh?—Or is that nuptial kiss still burning out your eyes?

(takes knife)

You know, shucking an oyster is not a delicate art, but not as delicate as their delicate, grayish entrails. You ever shuck an oyster?

(demonstrates with the knife on and inside

Edward's lips and mouth)

First, you search along the shell's lip for any kind of opening, it's always the backend.

(moves the knife to the back teeth)

And when you've found it, you wedge the blade, just the tip, just enough to get the edge in...

(MORE)

CURTIS (CONT'D)

You wedge it in there real tight  
and twist the wrist, and with good  
bang on the lever, like this—pop,  
a glop of heaven!

Edward starts convulsing.

JUNIOR

What's he doin'?

CURTIS

I think he's havin a heart attack.

JUNIOR

Maybe he needs an aspirin.

CURTIS

Go find some.

Junior exits.

CURTIS (CONT'D)

Edward, are you alright?... Huh?...  
You need an aspirin?

Edward is unresponsive.

Curtis kicks over Edward and the chair.

CURTIS (CONT'D)

Alright, let's hurry out! Keys,  
Junior!

Junior enters and tosses Curtis the keys.

JUNIOR

I think he's gurgling somethin.

Curtis walks to the door and stops.

CURTIS

Come on, we're leavin.

Junior hunches over Edward.

JUNIOR

He's still breathin.

CURTIS

Let him breathe.

JUNIOR  
 He's trying to say somethin. I  
 can't hear you, you need to  
 pronounciate!

CURTIS  
 Come on, Junior.

JUNIOR  
*Pronoun-c-iate!*

CURTIS  
 JUNIOR!

Junior jumps up and jogs out.

Curtis and Junior exit.

INT. HOTEL ROOM - DAY

BRUCEY  
 Open the door, Meghan.

MEGHAN (O.S.)  
 Can I please have some space!

BRUCEY  
 Just open the door.

GOOMA  
 Stop giving her attention. Oh, I've  
 never heard anything so incredibly  
 rude in my life. And if you were  
 trying to hurt me you did a good  
 job, Meghan! You must think it  
 takes a lot of courage to say the  
 most insensitive things and go  
 running behind a closed door, huh?  
 (beat)  
 Well, are you gonna answer for  
 yourself?

MEGHAN (O.S.)  
 I'm insensitive? You just—

GOOMA  
 LORD help me, nothing zaps my  
 energy quicker than all this  
 arguing—and I'm sick of it!

MEGHAN (O.S.)

Why do you always do that? You ask me a question then you cut me off, like you never cared to ask the question in the first place!

BRUCEY

Alright, are you gonna open up or what?

GOOMA

What you need to do is start showing your grandmother some respect and appreciation!

MEGHAN (O.S.)

Oh, stop hiding behind those words, those hollowed-out, meaningless, fluff-words—*respect, appreciation!* And anyone who's demanding respect probably isn't worth respecting—did you ever think of that one? Huh? All those twisted truisms and tired clichés that you picked up from your Christian brunch circles, that you regurgitate—"Pop music is meaningless, Meghan. Rich celebrities aren't your friend. Your cellphone causes cancer." Do you have any idea how incredibly bluenosed and completely negative you sound?

GOOMA

I say those things because it's what I believe, and they also happen to be the truth.

Brucey turns to Gooma.

MEGHAN (O.S.)

Yeah, your truth! Please, you're afraid of everything, let's be honest! You're afraid of changes, of life and of anyone who thinks differently than you! And that's the truth! And you treat that pathetic cat better than you do people!

Gooma approaches the door but Brucey stops Gooma from advancing.

BRUCEY

Ma, hold on, go sit down.

GOOMA

No Brucey, she's had her turn... Meghan, there's nothing you can tell me that I don't already know about myself. And for heaven's sake, take the beam out of your own eye. But if that's how you truly feel, may the LORD have mercy on your generation and the trashy dreams it promises you. I've lived my sweet bird of youth—I've had my time in the sun, so if I, if I... Oh, never-mind! You young people, you just love to attack your own kind! You all fly out into the world, innocent and ignorant and arrogant and wordy, thinking you have some entitled, perceptual privilege to judge your own blood, when you can't even manage outside the nest yourself yet! And I've been around a longtime, Meghan, so I can tell you this, I am not afraid. Not afraid of you or your cold, so-called truth—and may the May snow nourish the headstone on my grave if that's not the God honest truth!

MEGHAN (O.S.)

If you're not afraid, then why are you yelling?

GOOMA

Because I'm hurt!

MEGHAN (O.S.)

Good!

GOOMA

Honey, I'm afraid of nothing!

MEGHAN (O.S.)

Good for you! Now leave me alone!

BRUCEY

Go outside Ma, and don't say another word!

Susan leads Gooma out of the motel room.

Brucey stands dejected then exits.

EXT. PLAYGROUND - DAY

Kids play tag.

CUT TO BLACK

SUPER: 5:30pm

EXT. SERGIO'S MOBILE HOME - DAY

In the wooded hills.

Curtis and Junior pull in the Harding's black car.

The home's front door is a sliding glass.

Along the outside wall there are bags of empty beer bottles and soda cans, a large broken TV, and an unplugged refrigerator-sized freezer covered with fisherman stickers.

There's also a large tannish-yellow painting of a cowboy on horseback propped against the wall by some free-weights.

Curtis and Junior exit the car and approach the sliding glass door.

Electrical wires protrude from the wall where two outside porch lights should be.

Curtis BANGS on the screen, then steps down from the three steps that lead into the house.

SERGIO answers, with the screen door between himself and Curtis and Junior.

CURTIS

Howdy there, are your parents home?

SERGIO

I live with my granddad.

CURTIS

You must be Sergio.

SERGIO

So.

CURTIS

Junior here—he gave me your name.  
You remember, Junior, right?



SERGIO

I've seen him around. What do you want?

CURTIS

We're looking for some pistols your grandad might want to sell.

SERGIO

He's gotta bunch. But I dunno, he's not here.

CURTIS

You know when he'll be back?

SERGIO

I dunno.  
(picks at his nose)  
Where're you from?

CURTIS

I'm from a lot of places, but you know Junior, he used to live around here.

SERGIO

I've seen him once or twice.

CURTIS

How about you show us a few pistols?

SERGIO

Alright, I'll go get 'em.

CURTIS

We'll just come in.

Curtis puts his foot on the first step.

SERGIO

—No. I'll bring 'em out.

Sergio closes the sliding glass door.

Junior starts horsing around with the rusty gym equipment.

The CLANKING of metal on metal.

EXT. OUTSIDE MOTEL ROOM - DAY

Gooma and Susan stand, Brucey is off in the b.g..

GOOMA

All I know is that, just as plants need to be pruned, children beg for discipline. It's a time-proven convention of nature and it promotes proper growth—the proper, slow growth of the meek, to be fixed on goals and respectable toward traditions.

(matter-a-factly)

Correction to a child is like fertilizer for their corrupted little souls—and their bottoms are slapped into this world corrupted, don't you forget that Susan. I'm saying Meghan needs to hear the snap of a belt from time to time, teenager or no teenager. Empty threats and heart-to-hearts and shouting back to back-talk only goes so far. And it kills me that Brucey is such a "yes dad." He is. Now his father was also a "yes dad," God rest his gentle soul. But I, I didn't raise him like that—No. 'Cause I wore the pants in that home. I was a librarian by day and disciplinarian by night. And if there's one thing I've learned it's that a child's butt was made by God not to bruise! And if Brucey truly loved her he'd be harder on her. Or else she'd be lost in this unrelenting and carnivorous world-system—Oh, I've gotta stop talking! I start to talking when I get all upset like this!

BRUCEY

(approaches)

Just breathe.

GOOMA

I'm breathing! It's just getting so crazy out here. Every doctor wants every kid bi-polar or hyper-active, so they can prop them up on pills at five. Well, I got some news for them, they can't all be stupid.

(MORE)

GOOMA (CONT'D)

Most kids are, in simple and sane reality, just plain, bad kids, led wild by bad parenting and a more than comfortable upbringing. Oh, I'm sweating now!

BRUCEY

Let's go get you some water, Ma.

SUSAN

Come on, Evelyn.

GOOMA

Yes, yes—I'm about to faint! You lead the way dear.

Susan takes Gooma by the arm.

GOOMA (CONT'D)

Oh and Brucey, we've still got that mission to visit! It'll help me recover my nerves.

EXT. SERGIO'S HOME - DAY

The sliding glass door opens.

Curtis goes back to the door.

SERGIO

This is a 32 Smith and Wesson. And this one's a Colt Python 357.

Sergio hands Curtis the 32 S&W.

CURTIS

Nickel-plating, nice bearing. Cheap antique. So how much for this one?

SERGIO

Around 700. But I'll have to ask my granddad.

CURTIS

(beat)

So what's there to do in these sleepy hills?

SERGIO

Sometimes I shoot squirrels.

CURTIS

Shouldn't you be in school?

SERGIO

It's the summer.

CURTIS

(examines the pistol)

Some handle. Feels like instant manhood. Everything seems cleaner, brighter. You wanna take a feel?

(hands the revolver to

Junior and receives the

Colt Python from Sergio)

This dump don't seem half-cluttered no more. There's something missing though. I'm not quite feeling the threat of power. Let's see how it'll feel with a few bullets in the chamber...

Curtis starts to pat down his pockets.

SERGIO

Yeah, I can't give you any.

CURTIS

It's ok, we happen to have some right here. You see, we can afford the bullets, but we can't afford the gun... Let's see here.

Perfect... Load her up, Junior.

Curtis hands Junior six bullets and two of them fall to the ground, and Junior goes after them.

Sergio starts to move.

CURTIS (CONT'D)

Where're you goin?... Let me tell you something about how the world works, son. It's called "Mean World Syndrome." See that TV?

(points with pistol)

From off that black, warped screen, the local news station bombards this hick-town with every big-city, random act of violence—suicide, homicide, double homicide, theft, arson, a kaleidoscope of abuse and a unicorn of evils. Packaged violence attained by smiles. So your granddad, he locks himself inside this secluded trailer, stacked with microwavable delectables, alienated, zombie-gray, hurt.

(MORE)

## CURTIS (CONT'D)

His hermit social life revolving around a collection of old revolvers, 'til every outside eye is a mean eye, every outside face, a mean face. Except you know better, 'cause you're smarter. You know that with such slanted view of reality you're likely to become a victim yourself. You know you should be careful, but you also know there are a myriad of outcomes to consider... If you don't create your reality someone's bound to create it for you. Whatcha think about your mean world now?

## SERGIO

I dunno, but I ain't scared.

## CURTIS

Good.

## SERGIO

(beat)

Are you gonna shoot me?

## CURTIS

(beat)

Are you coming with us?

## INT. MOTEL BATHROOM - DAY

## BRUCEY (O.S.)

Open up Meghan.

## MEGHAN

Is it just you?

## BRUCEY (V.O.)

Yes.

Meghan unlocks the door, then goes back to sitting inside the empty tub.

Brucey enters the bathroom and pulls back the shower curtain.

He sits down on top of the closed toilet.

## MEGHAN

We're not having a talk, are we?

BRUCEY

Aren't there things we need to talk about?

MEGHAN

Yeah...

BRUCEY

Your grandmother didn't deserve all of that. And you can't expect her to be perfect—you know your Gooma... And I'm pretty surprised by these smokes.

(examines the pack of cigarettes)

Don't you know I've gotta deal with the consequences of these death-sticks on a daily basis? Is there something you need to tell me?

MEGHAN

I dunno.

BRUCEY

What's going on?

INT. HARDING'S STOLEN CAR (MOVING) - DAY

Curtis drives down a rural highway.

Sergio and Junior are in the backseats.

Curtis addresses Sergio through the rearview.

CURTIS

He didn't hit you, did he?

SERGIO

No.

CURTIS

Then what're you complaining about?

SERGIO

You dunno what it's like to hafta live like that.

CURTIS

Whaddya mean I don't know?

SERGIO

I mean it's not just that my grandpa's always pissed. I can't stand... the conditions.

CURTIS

Conditions? What, you don't think I know *conditions*? Oh, I'm aware! The humility of church handouts. The depths. The purity of pure despair—the stink and morning musk of a dilapidated shack, a mother forever facing the same flaking wall. A drunk father in tears screaming from the kitchen. And absorbing it all in, and in, and in, until you become the chair, the table, the lampshade. Until you become an object. Until you associate numbness with conflict. Believe me I know! I know the cruelty of poverty, the embittering ways love is denied—and food. The brutal near-insanity of being and being deprived. The trivial onslaught of each unbearable day! Oh, I know! So don't tell me I don't, 'cause I know!

SERGIO

Alright, you know.

Curtis pulls to the side and stops.

He turns to the backseat, gun drawn.

CURTIS

I've seen you in my dream.

SERGIO

I'm not afraid of you.

Curtis stares Sergio down.

CURTIS

You were waiting for your mother to return by the riverbank. Among the weeds. And when you found her, it was not lust... But a child's lust of the eye...

SERGIO

How do you know that?

Curtis turns back.

CURTIS  
Tell him, Jr.

JUNIOR  
He's a magic man!  
(LAUGHS)

INT. MOTEL BATHROOM - DAY

MEGHAN  
I'm stuck in this role I hafta  
play. I need less rules, or I'm  
gonna explode, you know? And I am  
not your daughter first, I'm my own  
person first.

BRUCEY  
We're all still in the process of  
finding yourselves.

MEGHAN  
I don't wanna find myself as much  
as I wanna lose myself. And after  
high school I'm gonna travel. And I  
won't be home for a while.

BRUCEY  
You say that now, but that's a long  
ways ahead.

MEGHAN  
I've already made up my mind.

BRUCEY  
Is there something else going on  
that I don't know about.

MEGHAN  
Like what?

BRUCEY  
I dunno, something that's been on  
your mind.

MEGHAN  
No, I'm good—besides I know what  
you're trying to do.



BRUCEY

I'm not trying to trick you. If you need to tell me something... How are you with that boy?

MEGHAN

Good.

BRUCEY

You haven't—or you don't know him, do you?

MEGHAN

What?

BRUCEY

I said you haven't had sex with him?

MEGHAN

No, Papa.

BRUCEY

So that's it.

MEGHAN

Yup.

BRUCEY

Meghan, you can go on playing games, but if you're doing something, it's better you just tell me now. You can't keep holding on to whatever it is you're holding on to... Meghan.

MEGHAN

What do you want me to say?

BRUCEY

Whatever it is you're hiding.

MEGHAN

I'm not hiding anything.

BRUCEY

Then you have nothing to be upset about.

(beat)

Except for these smokes.

MEGHAN

...There is this one thing I've been thinking about. A friend...

(MORE)

MEGHAN (CONT'D)

she had an abortion not too long ago. And I, I've been thinking about it lately.

BRUCEY

Why're you worried about that?

MEGHAN

I dunno, had to search for something to tell.

BRUCEY

You're not pregnant are you?

MEGHAN

No, Papa.

BRUCEY

I'm not ready for any surprises... So that's it.

MEGHAN

That's everything.

BRUCEY

Why're you letting that bring you down? It's not Rakel, is it?

MEGHAN

Maybe. I'm not allowed to say. She's just really torn up about it.

BRUCEY

That's not your problem. Let her live with her own decisions. You don't have to carry around other people's problems.

MEGHAN

Yeah, but that's the thing. What if. What if I told her she should go through with it. I mean, what if she asked me what she should do, you know, as a close friend and I told her she should definitely go through with it and now she regrets it and I regret telling her. And now I feel. I feel the guilt and a real heaviness.

BRUCEY

But it wasn't your decision. So you don't have to carry that.

Meghan sobs into her lap.

Brucey rubs Meghan's back.

INT. MAINTENANCE CLOSET - DAY

A single lightbulb sways, hums.

CUT TO BLACK

SUPER: 6:30pm

EXT. CAMPSITE - DAY

Around a campfire, at the edge of a wooded plateau.

Curtis, Junior and Sergio lay on the ground with piles of blankets.

                  SERGIO  
                  (to Junior)  
Is he asleep?

                  CURTIS  
Just resting my eyes.

                  SERGIO  
                  (to Curtis)  
What do you think about hell?

                  CURTIS  
There's nothing new. What's new  
only seems new, 'cause it's all  
intermingled with what seems old.

                  SERGIO  
I've got this feeling I met you  
before. Haven't I?

                  CURTIS  
...You know, long ago, Indians  
lived on this very land. They'd  
smoke a cud of peyote, watch the  
reindeer fly, see birds as bodies  
of light. They'd dance along the  
mudflat around the same flame you  
see now. Shadows caught inside the  
eggshell of night. And what did  
they figure out?—Staring at the  
same forgotten fire you're staring  
at, asking the same silent  
questions.

(MORE)

CURTIS (CONT'D)

It's in the fire, Sergio. I said  
it's in the fire, Junior. Rome and  
the Babylon tower fall every  
unforgiving hour. The apocalypse is  
a daily renewal. That's all I know  
of God and all I know of hell.

INT. MOTEL BATHROOM - DAY

Brucey finishes consoling Meghan.

BRUCEY

We're gonna head out and go visit  
that mission your Gooma wanted to  
see. And when we come back I expect  
you to apologize. Vacation is a  
time to escape from life, not to  
stare it in the face. Oh, and give  
me your phone.

Meghan hands over her phone.

BRUCEY (CONT'D)

Alright, we'll be back.

INT. PLAIN KITCHEN - DAY

A dial clock on the wall.

CUT TO BLACK

SUPER: 6:45pm

EXT. CAMPSITE - DAY

Clear sky.

Junior and Sergio throw rocks at the edge of the plateau.

Curtis eats canned tuna with a fork.

JUNIOR

Are we gonna leave soon?

CURTIS

When it's time, it's time.

JUNIOR

Are we a gang now, now that we've  
got Sergio? Like a western movie?  
What should our name be?

CURTIS

A gang, no. Before we picked up Sergio, I would've said, Sure. But now that there's three of us, I'd say we're more of a family.

(beat)

Funny what a difference a day makes in the definition of a word.

SERGIO

What if they catch us?

CURTIS

(rises)

I don't see any flashing blue and red, do you? I'm not worried about any manhunt. I got a stranglehold on my reality, thank you very much. And besides, the FBI doesn't wanna arrest me—so many killers are cleared of killing. A man, murdered fifty-odd women—and he's still loose! They don't want to catch anyone, not unless they build me up as some high profile case for selling books and movies.

Curtis steps to the edge.

CURTIS (CONT'D)

Police are of sawdust under my boot. Money I steal, leaves rolling the treetops. All's the death-roll, dragon and bull dance of nirvana's plethora... How little life survives in the face of true life.

INT. MOTEL BATHROOM - DAY

Gremlin CRIES right outside the bathroom.

Meghan gets up and opens the bathroom door.

MEGHAN

Come here.

Meghan picks up Gremlin and sits down on the bed with the kitten cradled in her arms.

The cat CRIES.

MEGHAN (CONT'D)  
 Why're you crying, Gremlin? You  
 have no reason to be complaining.

The cat CRIES.

MEGHAN (CONT'D)  
 What, can't you see I'm holding  
 you? You know if you weren't  
 Gooma's, I'd adopt you.

The cat CRIES.

MEGHAN (CONT'D)  
 I know, I know... You know, he'd be  
 just shy of his terrible twos...  
 Oh, I don't know if I'll ever be  
 happy again...

The cat CRIES.

MEGHAN (CONT'D)  
 Here!  
 (beat)  
 You like that? You like how my  
 finger tastes? Salty, huh?

Meghan cradles the cat like a baby.

MEGHAN (CONT'D)  
 I wonder what your daddy's doin...

INT. STOLEN CAR (MOVING) - DAY

JUNIOR  
 Why are you stopping?

Curtis pulls to the side of the narrow switchback road then  
 parks.

JUNIOR (CONT'D)  
 I thought we were headin outta  
 here?

CURTIS  
 You think the rooster makes the sun  
 move along any faster, huh?

Curtis exits the car.

CURTIS (CONT'D)  
 We'll leave on my own sweet time.

Junior and Sergio follow.

INT. EVANS CAR (MOVING) - DAY

Brucey drives.

Susan sits in the passenger seat and Gooma behind her.

GOOMA

You're both not gonna wanna hear this, but I know to a certainty, that that girl has lost her virginity. And Susan, I know you've had your suspicions, but where a mother suspects, a grandmother simply knows. She's got this soft glow about her, an orangish, fleshy appeal. And that's my evidence, not gossip or intuition but real science. That glow of hers is only gotten by, well, by the ones who've unlocked certain pheromones in their blood by, you know, being involved in intercourse!

BRUCEY

She said she didn't know him like that.

GOOMA

Oh, and you believe her?

BRUCEY

Yes, I do.

INT. MOTEL ROOM - DAY

Meghan is on the bed, gazing up at the popcorn ceiling.

INT. EVANS CAR (MOVING) - DAY

BRUCEY

You sure this is the right road?

GOOMA

Yes, I'm sure. I'm not senile.

SUSAN

I don't think this road has been traveled on in months.

GOOMA

I remember when when children had more love and reverence for their parents and their parents' parents.

BRUCEY

Will you let it go?

GOOMA

Maybe I should move out. Of course I'll have to work again if I'm gonna get a little place of my own. I'll hafta search the PennySaver when we get back.

BRUCEY

Ma, you're not going anywhere. Now, is this the road we're supposed to be on?

GOOMA

Oh, Bruceyy, I'm so excited. We finally get to go somewhere I'd like to go.

BRUCEY

Riiight.

EXT. SWITCHBACK ROAD - DAY

Curtis, Junior and Sergio stand and wait.

JUNIOR

Why're we just sittin here?

CURTIS

I had a premonition today.

JUNIOR

Is that like a dream?

CURTIS

I had this vision and this is where we're suppose to be... I need you guys to get back in the car and wait.

Junior and Sergio glance at each other.

CURTIS (CONT'D)

Go on, I know what I'm doin. We're at the right lake and we've got the right bait.



INT. MOTEL BATHROOM - DAY

Meghan preps the shower.

MEGHAN

(sings)

Down by the bay, where the  
watermelons grow, back to my home,  
I dare not go,  
(temp checks the water)  
for if I do, my mother would say...

EXT. SWITCHBACK ROAD - DAY

JUNIOR

(from in the car)

Nobody is comin up this way!

SERGIO

(to Curtis, from in the  
car)

No one's driving on this path.

Curtis lifts the hood.

CURTIS

Stay here. I'ma head down to the  
main road.

Curtis walks off.

CURTIS (CONT'D)

Stay inside the car!

INT. EVANS CAR (MOVING) - DAY

BRUCEY

GPS is out. No signal.

GOOMA

Oh, it's such a gorgeous place from  
what I can remember.

BRUCEY

We're not going inside, are we?

GOOMA

Depends if they give tours.

SUSAN

I'll stay in the car.

BRUCEY  
I'll stay in the car, too.

GOOMA  
Brucey, you hafta come in with me!

BRUCEY  
This place better turn up in a  
minute or we're turning around.

GOOMA  
It's not much farther—I think.

BRUCEY  
Is this the right way or not?

GOOMA  
Maybe...

BRUCEY  
*Maybe...* We're turning back!

Curtis walks up the road in the distance.

GOOMA  
I said maybe, Brucey! I said maybe!  
There! Pull over and ask for that  
man there for directions. He'll  
know.

INT. MOTEL ROOM - DAY

Meghan towels her head.

MEGHAN  
(sings)  
Down by the bay, where the  
watermelons grow, back to my home I  
dare not go, for if I do, my mother  
will say...

EXT. CHILDREN'S AMUSEMENT PARK - DAY

Merry-go-round.

CUT TO BLACK

SUPER: 7:15pm

EXT. BACKROAD - DAY

The Evans' car pulls up to Curtis.

INT. EVANS CAR (IDLE) - DAY

CURTIS

Now ain't that somethin? I was gonna ask you people for help and now your askin me for help! Sure I know where the mission is. In fact, it's right up these switchbacks right here.

BRUCEY

Ok, thank you.

CURTIS

And if you can spare some coolant fluid, it'd be much appreciated.

BRUCEY

Sure, we'll help you out.

CURTIS

Good, good. Well, I'm not even gonna ask to ride up there with you all 'cause I know that's a weird thing to ask for, being a stranger n all.

GOOMA

(from the backseat)

Don't I know you from somewhere?

BRUCEY

What's your car model?

CURTIS

Oh, you can't miss it. I got my boys up there right now.

INT. MOTEL ROOM - DAY

Meghan brushes her hair in the mirror.

MEGHAN

(sings)

Have you ever seen a snake baking a cake down by the bay? Down by the bay, where the watermelons grow...

EXT. SWITCHBACK ROAD - DAY

The Evans' car climbs up the road.

Curtis walks up in the distance.

INT. EVANS CAR (MOVING) - DAY

The Evans' car approaches the parked stolen car.

BRUCEY

I don't like the feeling of this.

SUSAN

Let's just go on and pass them up.

GOOMA

No, you won't! You gave that man  
your word you'd help him.

BRUCEY

...Yeah, it'll be quick.

GOOMA

Then off to the mission we go!

Brucey parks.

EXT. SWITCHBACK ROAD - DAY

Brucey approaches the stolen car with a container of coolant.

Junior and Sergio perk up inside.

BRUCEY

Your father is on his way.

JUNIOR

He ain't our dad.

BRUCEY

Well, the radiator is overheated,  
right? I'll give it a check.

JUNIOR

Go ahead.

SERGIO

No! No, you should wait 'til our  
dad comes up.

BRUCEY  
I thought you said he's not?

SERGIO  
Sir, it's complicated. I say you  
wait for him.

BRUCEY  
You sure? I can give a quick look.

SERGIO  
It's gotta cool down anyways.

BRUCEY  
Very well.

A FEW MINUTES LATER

Curtis approaches.

CURTIS  
Bit of a climb!

Gooma gets out of the car.

BRUCEY  
Ma, get back in.

GOOMA  
I've gotta stretch!

CURTIS  
(to Gooma)  
Good afternoon, Ma'am!

GOOMA  
Yes, it is, isn't it? A very good  
afternoon to you, too. You know you  
look very familiar.

CURTIS  
Get that a lot.

Gooma follows Curtis to Brucey near the stolen car.

Brucey leans over the engine and checks.

GOOMA  
Where do I know you from?

CURTIS  
We all are lucky to have met, huh?

GOOMA

Thank you for pointing us to the mission. It's very kind of you. Are those your sons?

CURTIS

I dunno what else I'd call them.

GOOMA

Where do I know you from?

Brucey untwists the radiator cap.

INT. MOTEL ROOM - DAY

Meghan brushes her teeth, HUMMING Down By the Bay.

There's a HONK from outside.

Meghan finishes up then goes to the window and peers through the curtains, and observes.

EXT. SWITCHBACK ROAD - DAY

CURTIS

Beautiful day out...

Brucey looks at a nearly full radiator, puzzled.

GOOMA

Why, I recognized you the moment I saw you! You're that criminal!

Curtis smiles and lowers his head, nodding.

CURTIS

Yes ma'am, I am. And it's shame you had to let everyone know.

Brucey approaches.

BRUCEY

Let's go, in the car!

CURTIS

I wouldn't!

(pulls out his revolver)

(beat)

Can I have you two sit down together, right there, to the side, where you're at?... Go on, sit.

Curtis pulls out the other pistol and hands it to Junior.

CURTIS (CONT'D)

(to the Junior)

Go get the other woman, and bring her here.

BRUCEY

Damnit, Evelyn.

GOOMA

You wouldn't shoot a lady, would you?

CURTIS

I would hate to have to.

GOOMA

Listen, I know you're a gentleman!

BRUCEY

Let me handle this, Ma.

CURTIS

Yes ma'am, I am a gentleman. Was raised by the most fitting mother in the world. Never met a woman more refined, finest of all angelic creatures, all vibrating air and grace.

GOOMA

Yes, I can see it and tell.

CURTIS

And my daddy's heart was solid gold—an Army man.

(motions with the gun)

Go ahead and you all have a seat there.

Susan enters.

They comply.

CURTIS (CONT'D)

During summers like these, he'd watch me go over the grass with the mower. And if I missed a blade—well, I never missed a blade.

(looks up to the sky)

No clouds.

GOOMA

Yes, yes, it's a beautiful day,  
isn't it?

CURTIS

The sky's like a woman who loves  
you—open... Honest.

GOOMA

Yes, it's a beautiful sky. Listen,  
I know you have a good heart. I can  
just look at your face and tell.

BRUCEY

Quit it, Evelyn. Sir...

CURTIS

I appreciate the compliment, but I  
don't give much to appearances.

BRUCEY

Alright, listen now, we don't know  
what this is...

Brucey starts to rise.

CURTIS

Stay down, please.

Brucey squats back down.

CURTIS (CONT'D)

Alright Sergio, I want you and  
Junior to help this man walk on up  
the road, then cut over into those  
woods. Easy now. The boys just  
wanna ask you somethin.

Brucey moves slightly, then stops.

BRUCEY

Listen, we don't want to be a  
problem! You could just let us go.

Sergio helps Brucey up.

BRUCEY (CONT'D)

Wait on me Mama, I'll be back in a  
minute!

Junior, Brucey, and Sergio walk up the switchback at gunpoint  
and exit.



GOOMA

Come back here this instant!  
Brucey! Please!

CURTIS

Don't worry, he'll be back.

GOOMA

Don't you lie!

CURTIS

A saint I ain't, ma'am... My dad  
always said I was gonna have my  
hands all in the pudding.

GOOMA

Where are they taking my son?

CURTIS

Yup, couldn't fool him with  
anything.

GOOMA

You could be good, too, if you'd  
only try. If you turned good, you  
wouldn't have the cops chasing you  
all the time.

CURTIS

Yup, somebody's always chasin ya.

GOOMA

Have you ever prayed?

CURTIS

For a while, I was a gospel singer.  
I've been almost everything. Been  
in the armed service, at home and  
abroad. Married twice. Raised  
orchids for a nursery. Made heroin-  
runs with a motor-gang. Been an  
undertaker. Been in a hurricane. I  
even saw a woman die in my arms  
once.

A GUNSHOT ECHOS from the woods.

GOOMA

Brucey!

Gooma grabs Susan.

GOOMA (CONT'D)

Pray, pray, oh, Susan pray.

SUSAN

Evelyn, I'm scared.

CURTIS

I wasn't a bad kid, if I remember correctly. But somewhere along the line I got sent to prison, where I was consumed, buried. In there, time hangs by a hair.

GOOMA

That's when you should've started praying!

CURTIS

Turn to the right and there was a wall. Turn to the left, another wall. Look up, a ceiling. Look down, a floor. Man bound to a concrete box, with no color to survive his own rehabilitation. Oh, and I was magnificent, a young bull in a bullpen, ill-maned and ill-made. And it's still here, the indelible smell of tiger-balm and clammy towel. I'd pace my cell with stinging step and testicle, watch the wall breathe like a plant breathes. The law is a sledgehammer, not a scalpel, ladies. They're not in the business of fixing anyone.

GOOMA

Maybe if you ask God, He'd help you with your mistakes?

CURTIS

(a far-off look)

I never cared for fancy, functional stuff—small, earthbound things.

GOOMA

If only you would pray, Jesus would help you!

CURTIS

I don't want any help. I'm doin alright by myself.

Junior and Sergio return down the switchback.

Junior pretends to smoke.

Sergio has a cigarette behind his ear.

CURTIS (CONT'D)

No, I found out that the crime doesn't matter. You can do one thing or you can do another, kill a man or take his tire. Slap a woman or pinch her butt. Doesn't matter. 'Cause sooner or later you're gonna forget what it was you did and just be punished for it.

(to Susan)

Lady, would you like to step over there with the boys and join your husband?

SUSAN

...Yes, thank you.

Junior and Sergio escort Susan up the road.

GOOMA

Jesus, Jesus!

CURTIS

Is that a prayer or a swear?

Gooma has her head down crying, reciting almost inaudibly The Lord's Prayer.

GOOMA

Jesus, Jesus, Jesus, Jesus... Our Father...

CURTIS

You make a valid point though. Jesus threw the whole cycle of nature out of order. Same case with me, except He hadn't committed any crimes.

GOOMA

Please, I know your heart is good at its core.

CURTIS

I just can't understand how it all fits together. Things done wrong versus the punishment of those things.

Curtis squats down near Gooma.

CURTIS (CONT'D)

Does it seem fair to you? That I could be punished forever, and not know the reason why?

GOOMA

You wouldn't shoot a lady! Oh, pray! I'll give you all the money I've got!

CURTIS

Ma'am, no one's ever tipped a undertaker.

A PIERCING SCREAM from the woods, followed by a GUNSHOT.

GOOMA

Brucey!

CURTIS

Jesus was the only one that ever raised the dead and He shouldn't have done what He did. The cycle's was thrown off balance ever since. Imagine if He did what He said He did. Then there's nothing for us to do but trash all your plans and passions and possessions and follow Him. Unquestionably.

GOOMA

Then maybe you ought to follow Him?

CURTIS

I wish I had of been there and seenct Him in the flesh myself, with my own two eyes... If I had been there I would of known. And I wouldn't...

(sighs, reluctantly)

(beat)

I wouldn't be what I am...

GOOMA

Oh my, I see it now.

CURTIS

See what?

GOOMA

You're like my Meghan.

CURTIS

Who's that?

GOOMA  
She's my granddaughter.

CURTIS  
I remind you of a girl?

Gooma looks up at the sky.

GOOMA  
I see it. I see it clear as day.

CURTIS  
See what?

Gooma looks back to Curtis.

GOOMA  
Why, you're one of my babies...  
You're one of my own children!

Gooma reaches out and touches Curtis' hand.

Curtis hesitates, then his hand pulls back.

Curtis composes himself.

Junior and Sergio return from the woods.

JUNIOR  
She a talker, huh?

Curtis is still shaken.

JUNIOR (CONT'D)  
Sergio wouldn't stop touchin da  
lady's boobies.

SERGIO  
That's a lie. It was Junior doin  
that.

Sergio and Junior CHUCKLE.

Gooma stares on earnestly, lovingly.

CURTIS  
(rises)  
C'mon. We gotta be places.

JUNIOR  
What about grandma?

CURTIS  
I said we're leaving.

The three head to the stolen car.

INT. STOLEN CAR - DAY

Curtis starts the car.

Junior hands Curtis the pink phone and motel key.

JUNIOR

I found this in the man's pocket.  
And here's their motel key. Number  
11.

Curtis examines the phone.

CURTIS

Her name's Meghan.

JUNIOR

How'd you unlock it?

CURTIS

Diamond shaped... She's definitely  
done enough texting. Jimbo, Rakel  
the Best, Anna Banana...

JUNIOR

So are we gonna go try to find the  
room or what?

CURTIS

Wait, I'm reading.

EXT. SWITCHBACK ROAD - DAY

Gooma sits, woefully.

CLOSE UP - Gooma's Crow's-foot Eyes

The stolen car idles nearby.

INT. STOLEN CAR (MOVING) - DAY

Curtis drives as Junior and Sergio goof in the back.

LATER

Curtis spots a bluejay as he pulls into the motel lot.

It flutters away.

The black car parks in front of the Evans' motel room.

Curtis gives a HONK.

He gets out of the car and approaches a beam.

INT. MOTEL ROOM - DAY

Meghan observes through the peephole.

She then primps herself in the mirror, before opening the door.

Meghan talks through the opening of the door.

CURTIS (O.S.)  
I'm not late, am I?

MEGHAN  
I don't even know who you are.

EXT. OUTSIDE MOTEL ROOM - DAY

CURTIS  
Sure you do. I'm an old friend. You  
wanna go for a ride?

MEGHAN  
What?

CURTIS  
You're beautiful. You believe me,  
don't you?

MEGHAN  
Look, I don't know who you are.

CURTIS  
I'm the blessed break you've been  
moving toward your whole life.  
C'mon, let's take a ride.

MEGHAN  
I can't.

CURTIS  
Why not?

MEGHAN  
'Cause I *shouldn't*.

CURTIS

Meghan, today's set aside for you and me and you know it.

MEGHAN

How do you know my name?

CURTIS

It's Meghan. Meghan Evans.

MEGHAN

Maybe... Maybe it's not.

CURTIS

I know my Meghan. Me and the boys came out here especially for you. They can sit in the back. So now, how 'bout it?

MEGHAN

Where... would we...

CURTIS

Just a light drive, Meghan.

MEGHAN

I never said my name was Meghan.

CURTIS

I know all about you. Lots of things. I know you hate pickles and that annoying girl Brittany. I know your parents and your grandmother are gone somewhere and I know where and how long before they'll be back. And your best friend's name is Rakel, right?... I don't have to call you Meghan. How about Birdie? I saw a blue-jay right before I pulled up here, so I'm gonna call you Birdie. Meghan my Birdie.

MEGHAN

How'd you find all that out?

CURTIS

Listen, I know the whole circle, Jimmer and Rakel and Anna and—

MEGHAN

How do you know all of them? Are you from Pikesville or something?



CURTIS

I'm from a lot of places. You've  
seenct me before.

MEGHAN

I haven't seen you in my life.

CURTIS

Have you made a decision?

MEGHAN

My answer's No. Maybe you guys  
better go.

CURTIS

Maybe you better step outside.

MEGHAN

No, you guys should leave now.

CURTIS

I'm not leaving until you come with  
me.

MEGHAN

Like hell I am.

CURTIS

Meghan, I mean it, don't mess with  
something you don't understand.

MEGHAN

If my dad comes and sees you—

CURTIS

You're dad is gone! Now what you're  
gonna do is this, you're gonna walk  
out that door and you're gonna to  
sit up front with me, like a big  
girl, and Junior and Sergio they'll  
sit in the back, ok? This isn't  
their date. You're my date.

MEGHAN

You're crazy—

CURTIS

Yes, and I'm your lover. So come  
on—

MEGHAN

No!

CURTIS

The ride to the countryside is green and easy and carefree. And free. Free from all of this confining stucco. And I'll lay you down on bristled grass, under a rolling sky and we'll witness two solitudes collide into a ball of love and light. And as we touch we'll touch entirely the way two dragonflies cling to one another—red-tailed, untethered and clean. And we'll breathe in the yellow and yellow-green leaves—the whole wheeling kaleidoscope of nature jealous of us. And I'll lead you into what love is, inside the all-hidden void, again and again and again. And I'll hold you so tight you won't ever think about flying away, Birdie.

MEGHAN

People aren't suppose to talk like that!

CURTIS

Talk like what? Like this? Be careful, it's not the talk you need to notice.

MEGHAN

You're crazy. I'm calling the cops—

CURTIS

Wait-wait-wait-wait.  
(holds up the motel key)  
I'll be in before you can touch the plastic on the phone. See, it's got the number on it.

MEGHAN

How did you get that?  
(beat)  
What do you want?

CURTIS

I want you.

MEGHAN

My dad's coming back. He's coming to get me—

JUNIOR  
(from the car)  
You need any help?

CURTIS  
Who told you to talk?

MEGHAN  
If I call the cops, they'll get  
you, they'll arrest you—

CURTIS  
Don't force me to do something you  
wouldn't want me to do. Just come  
out to me, the way you should.

MEGHAN  
(catches her breath)  
What do you... what...

CURTIS  
(slowly approaches)  
What're you saying? You can't stick  
two clean words... You're gonna  
step out and we'll fly away, right  
down that road. But if you don't  
come out, we're gonna wait until  
your parents come back, and then  
they're all gonna get it.

MEGHAN  
If you come in here. I'll scream.

CURTIS  
I don't wanna have to hurt your  
daddy or your mommy or your grand-  
mommy.

MEGHAN  
What are you gonna do if I go?

CURTIS  
You don't want your people in any  
trouble, do you?

Curtis takes a step towards the door.

CURTIS (CONT'D)  
Nobody knows what *home* is better  
than me.

Meghan's breaths deepen.

MEGHAN  
I've, I've gotta think...

CURTIS  
You're thinking too hard. I'm  
talkin life.

MEGHAN  
Are you gonna hurt me?

CURTIS  
Put your hand on your heart.

Meghan listens.

CURTIS (CONT'D)  
Feel that? So be nice and sweet  
like you are, 'cause what else is  
there for a girl to do, but be  
supple and sweet and give in. You  
don't want them to get hurt now, do  
you? Come on, step toward the  
door... One... Two... Three.

Meghan opens the door wider.

MEGHAN  
I want to...

CURTIS  
Don't you try to stall, Birdie,  
there's only you and me, and the  
inevitable.

Curtis backs up.

Meghan tentatively approaches Curtis.

CURTIS (CONT'D)  
That's it.

Meghan, has a soft, awestruck expression on her face.

MEGHAN  
It's so bright...

CURTIS  
Come on, little steps now.

Meghan takes a few more steps forward, breathing hard.

MEGHAN  
Everything's so strange...

CURTIS

That's right. Come on over to me.

Meghan squints as sunlight hits her face.

CURTIS (CONT'D)

You're a brave, gentle girl...

FLASHBACK

The entire Evans family dining earlier at Sal's BBQ—except for Meghan who's in the restroom.

CURTIS (V.O.)

And right now your family, they're all at some greasy spoon eating cream corn from a can... And your daddy, he's cutting up a weak, charred-up piece of steak, and they're all making a big mess for that poor waitress... And they didn't know not one thing about you, 'cause they never cared to know. And Birdie, you're a world better than them, 'cause not one of them would've sacrificed themselves for you.

END FLASHBACK

CURTIS

That's it, come on home.

Curtis and Meghan touch hands.

They walk toward the car together.

Curtis opens the passenger door for Meghan and she gets in.

Curtis walks to the driver's-side and enters the car.

The car starts, then backs up and drives off.

EXT. A ROOFTOP - EARLY EVENING

A gray satellite dish against an orange sky.

CUT TO BLACK

SUPER: 8:30pm

EXT. GAS STATION - SUNSET

The gang has stopped for gas.

Curtis pumps.

Meghan is in the passenger seat.

Junior and Sergio are off in the distance near the entrance of the convenient store.

A COMMOTION OF TALKING comes from Junior and Sergio.

Curtis makes his way to the hood.

His eyes connects with Meghan's.

Curtis gives a faint smile.

LAUGHTER near the store.

Curtis goes to investigate.

Curtis steps between Rocha and Sergio and looks down.

RONNIE (mid-twenties) from "humaN<sup>2</sup>" is inside a makeshift wooden cart contraption, like if on a skateboard.

It's wheeled.

He's handicapped.

RONNIE

Ya gotta dolla you could spare,  
sir?

JUNIOR

(to Curtis)

I told him we barely got any money  
for ourselves.

Curtis stares.

SILENCE.

AT THE PUMP

Meghan seizes her opportunity.

She opens the car door, crouches low and slips out of the car.

Meghan uses the gas pump as cover.

Meghan creeps low, eyes on the men.

She considers her options, the desolate road, the spare desert area.

NEAR STORE ENTRANCE

RONNIE  
Wanted ta get some ramen before it  
gets dark.

Pause.

Curtis moves closer.

CURTIS  
You don't need what you don't need.

RONNIE  
I needa eat.

Curtis pulls Ronnie by his shoulders.

CURTIS  
GET UP!

RONNIE  
AAAAH!

CURTIS  
Stand up!

NEAR THE PUMP

With eyes on the men, Meghan sneaks toward the gas station store.

Meghan uses parked cars as cover.

NEAR STORE ENTRANCE

RONNIE  
(resists)  
Hey, man! What are you doing!

CURTIS  
(pulls)  
Come on! Stand up!

Ronnie is pulled out of his cart and on to the ground.

Ronnie pushes Curtis away.

Curtis finally relents.

NEAR PARKED CARS

Meghan looks towards the gas station bathroom.

RONNIE (O.S.)  
What the hell is wrong with you?

Meghan goes for it, stays low and rounds the corner.

RONNIE (O.S.) (CONT'D)  
You already see me! I don't have  
any muscle in my legs! You think I  
ride around in this thing for fun?

NEAR STORE ENTRANCE

Junior sets the cart back.

Sergio goes to help him in.

RONNIE  
No, no, no, no, I can get in  
myself! I don't want you touchin  
me!

Ronnie toils with the cart, positioning his body.

Ronnie stops.

He stares at his legs.

OUTSIDE GAS STATION BATHROOM

Meghan tries to open the door.

LOCKED.

Panic.

Meghan looks back to the corner of the building and backs up.

NEAR STORE ENTRANCE

RONNIE  
...Help me up... Help me up!



Junior and Sergio help.

RONNIE (CONT'D)  
All the way!

They stand him on his feet.

Wobbly, then...

Stable.

He takes a step.

RONNIE (CONT'D)  
Good God...

He examines his legs and begins another cautious step.

RONNIE (CONT'D)  
Sweet Jesus... You did it! Haaaaaa,  
you did it, you crazy son of a  
bitch, you did it!

OUTSIDE GAS STATION BATHROOM

A Man exits the bathroom, carrying the bathroom key-stick.  
Meghan snatches the door before it closes and enters.

INT. GAS STATION BATHROOM - SUNSET

Pitch-black.

Meghan trips the light.

Meghan LOCKS the door and backpedals.

EXT. NEAR STORE ENTRANCE - SUNSET

Ronnie trods around, testing his new legs.

RONNIE  
Thank you! Thank you! Yes!

He comes back to Curtis and bearhugs him.

RONNIE (CONT'D)  
Thank you! You're a man of God, you  
are!

CURTIS

...Come on, we gotta get goin.

RONNIE

Thank you. Thank you, is all I can say.

CURTIS

Thank God.

RONNIE

Yessir, thank God!

Curtis, Junior, and Sergio head back toward the car.

Ronnie heads to his wooden cart and fiddles with some of his belongings.

Curtis stops and turns.

CURTIS

What are you doing? I said we gotta go! You ain't got no use for that junk no more!

Ronnie drops his water-bottle and blanket, then springs toward the car.

INT. GAS STATION BATHROOM - SUNSET

Meghan stares at the door, breathing heavy.

EXT. AT THE PUMP - SUNSET

Curtis stands with the driver's side door open.

The rest of the gang is in the car.

Curtis scans the desert barrenness, considers.

Curtis turns his head and refocuses on the gas station's convenient store.

INT. GAS STATION BATHROOM - SUNSET

Meghan stares on.

MIKE (V.O.)

Mike n Gary—and it's time for another po-po blotter!

GARY (V.O.)  
Signs... of the times!

The bathroom lights trip off.

Pitch-black.

MIKE (V.O.)  
This one reads: "Teenager eludes  
kidnapper by locking herself in  
bathroom gas station."

There's a faint outside light coming from the crack of the  
bottom of the door.

GARY (V.O.)  
I mean, honestly, I can't think of  
a better place to hide, you know.  
Who wants to go in there?  
(CHUCKLES)

MIKE (V.O.)  
Yeah, I hope she didn't have to  
wait too long. Phew-wee!  
(CHUCKLES)

A shadow passes through the the bottom of the door.

The door RATTLES.

SILENCE...

CUT TO BLACK.

THE END