

CALL ME THOR

Written by

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FADE IN:

EXT. GAS STATION - DAY

A hatchback pulls up to a pump.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

In 1991, a gallon of gas cost a  
dollar and fourteen cents.

EXT. MOVIE THEATER - NIGHT

THEATER PATRONS stand in line, waiting to purchase tickets.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

People went to the movies to see  
*Silence of the Lambs*, *Terminator 2*  
and *Don't Tell Mom the Babysitter's*  
*Dead*.

INT. SHOPPING MALL - DAY

Elderly MALL WALKERS in aerobics gear haul ass past a food  
court.

GOOD LOOKING TEENAGERS, dressed in early-90's fashion, hang  
around in clumps.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

Teenagers wanted to look like the  
cast of 90210.

A CUTE GUY with sideburns smiles at a pair of TEEN GIRLS  
holding shopping bags.

INT. RECORD STORE - DAY

A DISAFFECTED TEEN with long hair and a flannel shirt tied  
around his waist rifles through CDs.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

George Bush - the first one - was  
president. Grunge music was about  
to take over the airwaves...

A GUY WITH HUGE 80'S HAIR, wearing a half-shirt, walks up  
next to the teen and browses alongside him.

NARRATOR (V.O.) (CONT'D)  
...and hair metal was hanging on  
for dear life.

INT. JULIAN'S BEDROOM - DAY

A pile of dirty clothes sits atop an unmade twin bed. The walls are covered with posters of heavy metal bands - Skid Row, Suicidal Tendencies, Anthrax, etc.

NARRATOR (V.O.)  
I was twelve years old that year...

JULIAN, 12 - chubby, daydreaming metalhead with a mullet - searches under his bed, tossing aside shirts, socks, and underwear, until he finds what he's looking for - a yellow SONY WALKMAN adorned with a large SKULL STICKER.

NARRATOR (V.O.)  
...and everything was about to  
change.

He puts on the headphones and presses "PLAY."

MUSIC CUE: Hard driving heavy metal - something like  
"Painkiller" by Judas Priest.

Julian comes to life, flamboyantly playing air guitar and lip-synching as he cleans his room.

DAYDREAM SEQUENCE - CONCERT VENUE - NIGHT

The song continues inside Julian's fantasy. He has huge hair, wears leather pants, and feverishly plays a FLYING V guitar to an audience of ENTHRALLED FANS.

END DAYDREAM.

INT. JULIAN'S BEDROOM - DAY

Julian continues playing air guitar. There is a knock on the door. He can't hear it.

LINDA, 29 - Walmart chic, youthful faced and weary-eyed - enters, carrying a styrofoam container, wearing a purple sweatshirt, stirrup pants, and a waitress apron.

She stands in the doorway, watching Julian. She doesn't want to interrupt him. This is the best part of her day.

Julian really gets into the guitar solo, oblivious to her presence.

He spins around, sees her, and is jolted out of his fantasy. He stops the music and removes his headphones, embarrassed.

JULIAN

God, Mom!

LINDA

Don't stop on my account. I was enjoyin' the show.

JULIAN

You're supposed to knock!

LINDA

I did! You had the headphones full blast.

JULIAN

Sorry.

LINDA

I brought you chicken fried steak.

JULIAN

Thanks.

Linda sets the container on the dresser.

LINDA

Bad news - Nancy called out of the dinner shift. I have to cover.

JULIAN

You said if I cleaned my room, we'd go to the movies.

LINDA

Sorry, Jules. We could really use the money.

Linda reaches into her apron, pulls out some crumpled bills and hands them to him.

LINDA (CONT'D)

Why don't you see if Ted can go?

JULIAN

Okay.

LINDA

You're not off the hook, you know.  
You still owe me a movie night.

Julian grins and nods.

LINDA (CONT'D)

Give your mother a kiss.

Julian pecks Linda on the cheek. She exits. Once the door is closed, he presses "PLAY" and resumes air guitar.

EXT. MOVIE THEATER - NIGHT

Julian and TED, 12 - skinny, smartass skater-boy - exit the theater and hit the sidewalk.

They drink sodas and pass a half-eaten popcorn tub back and forth. Julian walks. Ted skateboards slowly beside him.

TED

I can't believe Freddy Krueger had  
a daughter. Know what that means?

JULIAN

Father's Day's weird for her?

TED

Means Freddy had sex.

JULIAN

Glad you know where babies come  
from.

TED

You think his dick is all, like,  
burnt and weird and shit?

They pass an OLD LADY. Her eyebrows raise.

JULIAN

Can we talk about anything other  
than Freddy Krueger's dick?

Ted slurps the rest of his soda.

TED

I think my mom might buy me a  
guitar.

JULIAN

Really?!

TED

My neighbor's selling his Epiphone.  
Overheard her talkin' to him.

JULIAN

Our lives are about to change.

TED

Rampage is gonna be the heaviest  
band on the planet.

They pass a garbage can. Ted tosses his empty cup in.

JULIAN

I think I'm gonna use a stage name.

TED

That's stupid.

JULIAN

Every great rockstar name has two  
parts. One name - first or last,  
doesn't matter - is always  
something real tough.

TED

Like Sid Vicious.

JULIAN

Exactly! That's not a normal last  
name. But, Sid's sort-of normal.

TED

I got an uncle Sid.

JULIAN

Pair the badass name with something  
regular so people can relate.

Ted jumps his skateboard over a discarded can.

TED

Like Axl Rose

JULIAN

Joan Jett, Ace Frehley, you get it.

Ted flips his skateboard up and holds it as he walks.

TED

So, what's your name gonna be?

JULIAN  
(pausing for effect)  
Thor. Williams.

TED  
(laughing)  
Thor Williams? No way!

JULIAN  
(resolute)  
I'm gonna be Thor Williams.

TED  
It does sound better than your real  
name. Julian Bianco sounds like a  
mobster's kid.

JULIAN  
You're joking, but I might be.

TED  
Not!

Ted hops back on his skateboard. Julian walks faster.

JULIAN  
I don't think he's in the mafia or  
anything, but my dad's into some  
shady shit.

TED  
I thought your dad owned a bakery  
in Florida.

JULIAN  
He made me work there last summer.  
I saw things.

TED  
Like what?

JULIAN  
One time, I went back to my dad's  
office. There was this guy there.

Ted's slows down to listen.

JULIAN (CONT'D)  
He was real scared. Like shakin'  
and stuff.

TED  
Okay.

JULIAN  
My dad tells the guy he's got two  
days to pay what he owes.

TED  
That doesn't mean -

JULIAN  
- Two days later, same guy walks  
in, limpin', with a black eye.  
Hands my dad a stack of cash.

Julian pops a piece of popcorn into his mouth.

TED  
That really happened?

JULIAN  
Saw other stuff, too. If adults  
don't think you're paying  
attention, they do all sorts of  
shit.

They reach the door to Julian's apartment.

TED  
Want the rest of the popcorn?

JULIAN  
I'm good.

TED  
See you tomorrow.

JULIAN  
Cool.

Ted skates away. Julian pulls out his key.

INT. APARTMENT - NIGHT

Julian enters. The coffee table is littered with empty beer cans. Professional wrestling is on television. One of the wrestlers breaks an acoustic guitar over his opponent's back.

ALVIN, 35 - a broad-shouldered, beer-bellied volcano that could erupt any moment - stands at the sink, washing dishes.

Julian walks on eggshells, hoping to avoid battle. Alvin turns around, sporting a big grin.

ALVIN  
 There he is! Where you been all  
 night?

JULIAN  
 (avoiding eye contact)  
 Movies. Mom said I could.

Alvin's smile fades. He turns back to the sink, rinsing off a  
 plate. His shoulders tense.

ALVIN  
 Where'd you get the money?

JULIAN  
 Ted paid.

Alvin dries the plate. Julian takes a deep breath.

JULIAN (CONT'D)  
 I got a lot of homework, so...

Julian steps around Alvin, heading toward the hallway. Alvin  
 throws a plate. It shatters against the wall over Julian's  
 head.

ALVIN  
 Just gonna walk past me doin'  
 dishes? Like I didn't work all day!

Julian freezes.

ALVIN (CONT'D)  
 Ain't got shit to say?!

JULIAN  
 Sorry.

Alvin grabs Julian by the hair and drags him to the sink.

ALVIN  
 Teach you. Some goddamn.  
 Responsibility!

He turns on the water and holds Julian's head under the  
 faucet.

The front door opens. Linda enters. She drops a takeout  
 container and rushes towards them, jumping on Alvin's back.

LINDA  
 Leave him alone! STOP IT!

Alvin peels her off him. She stands between them.

JULIAN  
I didn't DO anything!

ALVIN  
That's the point. You NEVER DO!

LINDA  
He's just a kid!

Alvin's anger redirects at Linda. She stares at him defiantly. He takes the bait.

ALVIN  
You tellin' me what to do?!

LINDA  
Julian, go to your room.

JULIAN  
No, mom, I--

LINDA  
GO!

Julian walks slowly toward his room. He hears a SMACK and turns to see Alvin standing over his mother.

Julian takes a step forward. He and Linda make eye contact. He wants to help. Very subtly, she shakes her head "NO."

INT. JULIAN'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Julian sits on his bed, in the dark, listening to his Walkman as the apartment walls shake.

MUSIC CUE: Sad metal like "In My Darkest Hour" by Megadeth

DAYDREAM SEQUENCE - ALLEY - NIGHT

Inside Julian's fantasy, the song continues. He is dressed in black leather, standing on a fire escape, playing a Flying V guitar in the pouring rain.

END DAYDREAM.

EXT. MIDDLE SCHOOL TRACK - DAY

Julian and Ted stand on a track with other MIDDLE SCHOOLERS. Everyone wears gym uniforms.

Rain puddles surround the track. The gym teacher, MISS DUCHARME, 50 - large and imposing - blows her whistle.

MISS DUCHARME

Listen up, people! Today is simple.  
All we're gonna do is run a mile.

JULIAN

(to Ted)

I can't run a mile. I gotta get out  
of this.

TED

There's only one way.

JULIAN

What's that?

TED

You're gonna have to seduce her.

Julian and Ted giggle. Miss Ducharme gives them a glare.

MISS DUCHARME

Due to some parental complaints, I  
can no longer force you to run. You  
may walk IF YOU CHOOSE.

JULIAN

Thank God.

MISS DUCHARME

But, I encourage you to give a hoot  
about your health and at least TRY  
to run. ON YOUR MARK. GET SET!

She blows her whistle. Students start jogging while Julian slowly walks. Ted circles back to walk with him.

INT. MERCURY COUGAR - DAY

The car is beat-up and rusty. Linda drives. There is a bruise on her cheek. Alvin is in the passenger seat, wearing work clothes, eating a plain toaster waffle.

ALVIN

I'm sorry.

She stares straight ahead.

ALVIN (CONT'D)

I'm under a lot of stress. Tony got laid off. He's been there longer than me. I know that's no excuse.

He puts a hand on her knee. She tenses.

ALVIN (CONT'D)

I love you. You know that.

She parks the car in front of a building. The sign out front reads "Mid America Textiles."

Alvin goes to kiss her. She turns her head so the kiss lands on her cheek.

LINDA

(avoiding eye contact)

Loveyoutoo.

Alvin puts a hand out and tilts her chin toward him. He smiles. He's charming, but she knows that tune.

ALVIN

You know I can't start the day without a kiss from my girl.

She kisses him without emotion. It's the only way to get rid of him. He exits the car. Linda drives away. As soon as she rounds the corner, her shoulders relax.

EXT. MIDDLE SCHOOL TRACK - DAY

Julian and Ted continue walking.

JULIAN

Your mom say anything about that guitar?

TED

Not yet. You cool to sleep over on Halloween?

JULIAN

I'll ask tonight.

Students run past them. One of them goes through a puddle. It splashes up, soaking Julian's shirt. He grimaces.

Two MALE STUDENTS jog up next to them, laughing.

MALE STUDENT 1

Hey everybody, looks like we found  
the winner of today's wet t-shirt  
contest!

MALE STUDENT 2

Damn, Julian, you got the best tits  
in school!

They jog off, laughing. Ted yells after them.

TED

Shut up Harkins! That's only 'cause  
your mom dropped out!

Julian stares straight ahead. They keep walking.

JULIAN

You think I really got the best  
tits in school?

EXT. APARTMENT - DAY

Linda parks the car and gets out. There is a STRANGE MAN  
standing by the front door.

STRANGE MAN

Linda Bloom?

LINDA

Can I help you?

He hands her a manila envelope.

STRANGE MAN

You've been served.

INT. APARTMENT - AFTERNOON

Julian bursts through the front door. Linda stands at the  
counter, fully dressed.

JULIAN

Can I spend the night at Ted's on  
Halloween!?

Linda turns around. Her mascara runs. She's been crying.

JULIAN (CONT'D)

What happened!?

She picks up the court papers and hands them to Julian.

LINDA  
Your father's suing for custody.

This unexpected news sucks the excitement out of Julian.

JULIAN  
What? Why?!

LINDA  
Yvette. She can't have kids, so she  
wants you. That's my guess.

Linda sets the papers down. She looks hopeless. Julian is  
taken aback, desperate to fix this.

JULIAN  
No. I'm not living with them! I  
won't go.

LINDA  
That's not how it works. You don't  
just get to choose.

Julian sits in a kitchen chair, naively determined.

JULIAN  
I'll tell the judge I wanna stay  
with you...

Linda smiles. The kid's a fighter.

JULIAN (CONT'D)  
I'm serious.

LINDA  
I know, honey.  
(beat)  
I'm not giving you up without a  
fight. That's a promise.

Linda hugs him from the side and kisses the top of his head.  
A kitchen timer DINGS. She grabs an oven mitt.

JULIAN  
Would it be alright if I spent the  
night at Ted's Thursday?

LINDA  
On a school night?

JULIAN  
It's Halloween.

She pulls a casserole out of the oven and looks at her baby boy. How could she say no?

LINDA

Alright.

JULIAN

Yesss!

INT. JERRY'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

It's a very nice home - the polar opposite of Linda and Julian's apartment.

JERRY BIANCO, 32 - slick and dangerous - lies in a king sized bed, wearing silk pajamas, reading *The Art of War*.

YVETTE BIANCO, 25 - blonde, tan, knows how to get what she wants - enters from the bathroom, wearing a sexy nightgown.

YVETTE

Breanne's shower's Saturday. You told me to remind you.

Jerry closes his book.

JERRY

Saturday's no good.

YVETTE

You promised!

JERRY

I gotta work. Things are busy.

She climbs into bed. He sets the book down.

YVETTE

Things are always busy.

JERRY

I'm not gonna apologize for making money.

She turns the bedside lamp off. The room goes dark.

JERRY (CONT'D)

You'll be happy to know they served her papers today.

She turns the light back on. He smiles at her.

YVETTE  
It's really happening!

She straddles him.

YVETTE (CONT'D)  
I'm gonna be a mother.

JERRY  
You sure you wanna do this? There  
are easier ways. We could adopt a  
baby.

She kisses him. Slow and passionate.

YVETTE  
I don't want to adopt a baby.  
You're always working. I get  
lonely. I want someone I can talk  
to.

She kisses his chest.

YVETTE (CONT'D)  
Besides, I don't want to change  
diapers, get up in the middle of  
the night... I want to skip to the  
good parts of motherhood.

JERRY  
Just wanted to be sure.

YVETTE  
This is what I want.

She kisses down his stomach. His breathing becomes heavy.

JERRY  
Okay.

She looks up at him, smiling.

YVETTE  
We're gonna be a family.

INT. LAWYER'S OFFICE - DAY

Linda sits across from a male ATTORNEY, 45 - bald with  
glasses, wearing a sweater vest.

ATTORNEY

Even if you could afford me, I don't think I'd take the case. Not with Kenny Adair representing him.

LINDA

He's that good?

ATTORNEY

Your best bet's to check out Social Services.

The attorney writes down a number on a Post-it.

ATTORNEY (CONT'D)

They're not great, but they're free.

The attorney hands the note to Linda, who suddenly clutches her stomach and grimaces.

LINDA

Bathroom?!

The attorney points to a door. Linda makes a mad dash. As soon as it opens, she can be heard vomiting.

INT. WALMART - DAY

Julian and Ted browse Halloween merchandise. Ted picks up a mask of a bloody face.

TED

Who am I?

Julian shrugs.

TED (CONT'D)

Natasha Rutherford!

JULIAN

'Cause she has acne?

TED

C'mon. That's funny. What's up with you?

JULIAN

I might have to go live with my dad.

TED

Seriously? That really sucks.

Ted takes off the mask.

TED (CONT'D)  
What about the band?

JULIAN  
I don't know. This could ruin  
everything.

Ted picks up a package of multi-colored makeup.

TED  
Here.

He hands the package to Julian and takes one for himself.

JULIAN  
I don't have any money.

TED  
I'm not gonna dress up by myself.  
I'll spot you.

They walk through the store, stopping in front of the music section.

JULIAN  
I'll pay you back.

They stare at a cardboard cutout of ALAN JACKSON that says "Don't Rock the Jukebox."

JULIAN (CONT'D)  
Gross.

TED  
Looks like he got his sister  
pregnant and he's proud of it.

EXT. APARTMENT - DAY

Linda parks the Mercury Cougar in front of the apartment and gets out, carrying a bag from a pharmacy.

There is a small mailbox next to the door. She pulls a few envelopes out. One of them has "PAST DUE" printed in large letters. Another says "FINAL NOTICE."

INT. APARTMENT - DAY

Linda stands at the kitchen counter with bills laid out in front of her. She picks up the phone and dials.

EXT. BIANCO'S BAKERY - DAY

Jerry sits at an outdoor table, sipping coffee, reading a newspaper. A cordless PHONE RINGS. He picks up.

PHONE OPERATOR (V.O.)  
I have a collect call from Linda  
Bloom. Will you accept?

Jerry shrugs.

JERRY  
Yeah, okay.

INTERCUT - PHONE CONVERSATION

LINDA  
Why you doin' this, Jerry?

JERRY  
He's my kid, too.

A CUSTOMER approaches from the sidewalk. Jerry waves politely. The man nods and enters the bakery.

LINDA  
No phone call. No discussion. You  
didn't even warn your own son.

JERRY  
My lawyer advised against it.

Linda grits her teeth and takes a deep breath.

LINDA  
I'm callin' about the child  
support.

Linda looks down at the bills scattered around the table. Among them, is a check from Jerry.

JERRY  
Mailed it last week.

LINDA  
You forgot to sign the check.

Jerry grins.

JERRY  
Oops. Just mail it back to me. I'll  
sign and re-send it.

LINDA

I need it now. Electric's past due.

JERRY

Doesn't sound like a very stable environment for a twelve year-old.

LINDA

You did this on purpose.

Jerry begins to fold up his newspaper.

JERRY

I gotta go. Mail me that check.

Jerry hangs up.

DREAM SEQUENCE - SCIENCE CLASSROOM - DAY

A SCIENCE TEACHER, 50 - wearing a lab coat and safety goggles, sporting a goofy grin and the wide eyes of a mad scientist - stands in front of a room full of STUDENTS.

SCIENCE TEACHER

Our experiment is complete.

On a lab table is the frozen corpse of Julian. He looks like a heavy metal edition of FRANKENSTEIN'S MONSTER. He clutches the same Flying V guitar.

The teacher flips a switch. Streams of electricity surge toward Julian. He sits bolt upright and begins playing.

SCIENCE TEACHER (CONT'D)

I've created A MONSTER!!!

Julian totally shreds, like a zombie Eddie Van Halen. He walks around the room, playing amidst the awestruck students.

A SCHOOL BELL RINGS.

END DREAM.

INT. APARTMENT - DAY

JULIAN'S BEDROOM

The ALARM CLOCK BLARES. Julian's is sprawled out in bed. His hand slams down to silence the clock. He opens his eyes, bummed to be taken out of his dream.

## KITCHEN

Linda stands at the counter, drawing on a scrap piece of paper. She's just doodling, but it's a good drawing of a cartoon bird trapped in a cage.

Julian walks in, wearing a KISS t-shirt, carrying a backpack.

LINDA  
Happy Halloween!

She smiles at him and grabs a plate.

LINDA (CONT'D)  
I made banana skull pancakes.

Julian sits at the table. Linda sets the plate down in front of him. There is a stack of pancakes in the shape of a skull. Below them, two strips of bacon are arranged like crossbones.

JULIAN  
Thanks, Mom!

Linda leans in and whispers.

LINDA  
Eat 'em fast. Alvin's in the  
shower. I only made enough for you.

Julian grabs a fork and digs in. Linda ruffles his hair.

## EXT. BUS STOP - DAY

Julian waits for the school bus. It pulls up, full of KIDS dressed in Halloween costumes.

## INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Alvin enters, dressed for work, holding car keys.

LINDA  
I need the car today.

ALVIN  
What for? Thought you were off..

LINDA  
Social Services might be able to  
get us a lawyer.

Alvin stares at her. He's not happy.

ALVIN  
Alright. Let's go.

He tosses her the keys, opens the cabinet, and grabs a pouch of Pop Tarts.

ALVIN (CONT'D)  
Is there bacon? I thought I smelled  
bacon.

LINDA  
Nope.

INT. MERCURY COUGAR - DAY

Linda drives Alvin to work.

ALVIN  
I don't see why you're fightin'  
this.

LINDA  
He's my SON!

ALVIN  
He's not mine.

Linda looks at him in disgust. They pull up to a stoplight. Alvin grabs her arm and squeezes hard.

ALVIN (CONT'D)  
Don't look at me like that.

LINDA  
You're hurting me.

He lets go.

ALVIN  
I just think things would be  
easier. For US. If you let him go.

The light has turned green. A car honks. Linda drives while fighting back tears.

ALVIN (CONT'D)  
Get ahead on some bills. Finally  
have some alone time. Maybe start  
our own little family.

She parks in front of Mid America Textiles.

LINDA  
You don't want to be late.

Alvin leans in for a kiss, then gets a whiff of something.

ALVIN  
You puke again?

LINDA  
Yep.

He exits the car.

INT. MIDDLE SCHOOL CAFETERIA - DAY

Julian and Ted eat lunch with FRIENDS who are dressed as a NURSE, NINJA TURTLE, AND GEORGE H.W. BUSH.

Ted dips a slice of pizza into a pile of ketchup.

NURSE  
That's disgusting.

NINJA TURTLE  
How come you guys didn't wear costumes?

TED  
Costumes in school are lame.  
Tonight, we're going out in full makeup.

Julian pulls a pudding cup out of a brown paper sack.

GEORGE BUSH  
As what?

JULIAN  
Ace Frehley and Peter Criss.

NURSE  
Who?

Julian opens his pudding.

TED  
The original drummer and guitar player from KISS.

NINJA TURTLE  
Who?

INT. BATHROOM - DAY

Linda sits on the toilet, staring at a home pregnancy test.

LINDA

No. No, no, no, no.

The phone rings. Linda waddles out of the bathroom, pulling up her pants.

INT. HANK'S TAVERN - DAY

Alvin stands at a payphone in a white trash dive bar. OUTLAW COUNTRY MUSIC plays on the JUKEBOX.

ALVIN

(into phone)

Got laid off. Rodney and Calvin, too. Hell, half the day shift.

INT. KITCHEN - SAME TIME

Linda stands at the counter, talking into the phone, still holding the pregnancy test.

LINDA

You lost your job?

INTERCUT - PHONE CONVERSATION

ALVIN

Told you it might happen.

Linda reaches into her purse for the car keys.

LINDA

I'll come get you.

ALVIN

Don't worry about it. Went to Hank's for a drink. Rodney'll take me home.

LINDA

When?

ALVIN

I'll get there when I get there.

Alvin hangs up.

EXT. APARTMENT - DAY

The school bus pulls up. Julian gets out. Ted, still on the bus, lowers his window.

TED  
(yelling)  
Seven o'clock!

Julian turns and salutes him with metal horns.

INT. APARTMENT - DAY

Julian enters and looks around.

JULIAN  
Hello?

Julian smiles. He has the place to himself.

EXT. PARKING LOT - SAME TIME

The Mercury Cougar is parked in front of a sign that says "SOCIAL SERVICES."

INT. BATHROOM - LATER

Julian stands in front of the mirror, applying makeup, singing along to the music.

MUSIC CUE: Fun, sexy hard rock like "Calling Dr. Love" by Kiss

He checks his makeup against a picture of ACE FREHLEY, torn from a magazine.

INT. SOCIAL SERVICES OFFICE - SAME TIME

Linda sits across from a concerned SOCIAL WORKER, crying.

SOCIAL WORKER  
You need more than a lawyer, Miss Bloom. You need to get someplace safe.

Linda looks down at the floor.

LINDA  
There isn't anywhere.

SOCIAL WORKER  
 Maybe with a friend? Family member?

Linda looks the counselor in the eye.

LINDA  
 My parents are dead. My son IS my  
 family. Go to a friend's?! He knows  
 my friends. He'll just show up,  
 drag me home, kill me.

The counselor slides a box of Kleenex across the desk.

SOCIAL WORKER  
 Men like this, they want you to  
 think there's no escape.

The counselor opens a different drawer, pulls out a pamphlet,  
 and hands it to Linda.

SOCIAL WORKER (CONT'D)  
 But, there are people who can help  
 you get away. From both these men.

INT. BATHROOM - ABOUT AN HOUR LATER

Julian admires himself in the mirror. His makeup isn't  
 perfect, but it's pretty good. He's satisfied.

The sun sets through the small window.

INT. APARTMENT - NIGHT

Linda enters and sets some mail on the kitchen table.

LINDA  
 Julian? Julian!

JULIAN (O.S.)  
 In the bathroom.

LINDA  
 Get in here! NOW!

JULIAN (O.S.)  
 Okay, okay! I'm comin'!

Julian enters.

JULIAN (CONT'D)  
 Check it out. I'm Ace Frehley.

LINDA  
Pack a bag. We're leaving.

JULIAN  
What are you talking about?

LINDA  
We're getting out of here. There's  
not a lot of time, honey!

JULIAN  
It's Halloween.

Linda walks past Julian and heads to her bedroom. Julian follows.

#### LINDA'S BEDROOM

Linda opens her closet and pulls out a suitcase.

LINDA  
I know Halloween's important to  
you, but this might be our only  
chance. We're getting away from  
Alvin. I'm leaving him.

JULIAN  
Serious?!

LINDA  
We gotta move fast. He lost his  
job. He's at the bar. Could be back  
any minute.

JULIAN  
We're leaving for real?!

LINDA  
Without work, he's gonna be home  
all the time. If we're doing this,  
it's gotta be now.

JULIAN  
Okay!

Julian rushes out of the room.

#### JULIAN'S BEDROOM

Julian dumps books out of his backpack and fills it with clothes and cassette tapes.

He slips his Walkman into the front pouch and zips it closed.

LIVING ROOM

Julian rushes out of his bedroom. He notices the remote control on the coffee table. He opens the battery compartment as Linda enters with her suitcase.

LINDA  
What are you doing?

JULIAN  
Batteries. For my Walkman.

He takes the batteries out and puts them in his pocket.

LINDA  
Let's go!

EXT. APARTMENT - NIGHT

They exit and go straight to the car, load their bags into the trunk, and hop in the vehicle.

LINDA  
Shit!

JULIAN  
What is it?

LINDA  
Forgot my paycheck on the kitchen table. Be right back. STAY HERE.

Linda gets out of the car and returns to the apartment. As the door closes, a pickup truck parks a few spaces down. Alvin hops out of the passenger side.

Julian ducks down to avoid being seen.

ALVIN  
Alright, then. I'll see you, man.

Julian hears the truck pull away. He peeks his head up to see Alvin entering the apartment.

INT. APARTMENT - NIGHT

Alvin enters. Linda's back is to him.

LINDA  
I thought I told you -  
(surprised to see Alvin)  
Oh! Hey, baby.

ALVIN  
(inebriated)  
Told me what?

LINDA  
Um, told you everything will be  
okay.

Alvin stands behind her and talks into her ear. She takes a deep breath.

ALVIN  
Said they might bring me back in a  
couple months. If production picks  
back up.

She turns to face him.

LINDA  
That's good.

He pulls her close and gives her a drunken kiss.

ALVIN  
Least I still got you.

He kisses her neck.

LINDA  
Always.

ALVIN  
I need... sleep.

LINDA  
That's a good idea, baby.

ALVIN  
(suggestively)  
Come tuck me in?

He takes her by the hand and leads her to the bedroom. Linda tries to play it cool.

LINDA'S BEDROOM

They enter in the dark. Alvin stumbles into the wall.

ALVIN  
Where's the damn switch?

LINDA  
Don't worry about it. Let's get you  
into bed.

ALVIN  
You know I like to do it with the  
lights on.  
(finding the switch)  
Here we go.

Alvin turns on the lights. The bedroom is in disarray. The closet door is open. Half of Linda's clothes are missing.

ALVIN (CONT'D)  
What the hell's going on?!

EXT. APARTMENT - SAME TIME

Julian sits in the car, staring at the apartment, unsure what to do. He hears Linda scream. He gets out of the car.

The door opens. Linda rushes out, holding her paycheck in one hand. In the other is a lamp with a large splotch of blood on it.

LINDA  
Go! Go! Go!

They sprint to the car. Linda tosses the lamp in the backseat and digs in her purse for the keys. Her hands shake as she struggles to get the key into the ignition.

The engine turns over. The car screeches and backs out.

LINDA (CONT'D)  
Seatbelt!

Julian buckles up. They speed off.

INT./EXT. MERCURY COUGAR - NIGHT

Linda and Julian drive through the neighborhood, stunned. The radio plays.

MUSIC CUE: Something in contrast to the mood in the car. A happy pop song like "Every Heartbeat" by Amy Grant.

They pass Ted's house. He stands out front, in full Peter Criss KISS makeup. He recognizes the car, waves to Julian, and is confused when they drive past.

Julian looks at the bloody lamp in the backseat and back to his badass mother.

Finally - Linda pulls the car over beneath an overpass. She pulls on the emergency brake, and tries to get her bearings.

LINDA  
I think I killed him.

JULIAN  
Holy hell.

Headlights shine across their faces as a car drives past.

LINDA  
Didn't mean to. Just happened.

JULIAN  
You never said where we're going.

Linda opens her purse and digs around until she finds a pamphlet.

LINDA  
This place.

She hands the pamphlet to Julian.

JULIAN  
(reading)  
"Shelter for Abused Women."

LINDA  
Social Services said they could help us get someplace safe. Have a fresh start.

Julian nods to the bloody lamp.

JULIAN  
Not like we can go back now.

LINDA  
Jesus Christ. I'm a murderer.

JULIAN  
It was self-defense.

LINDA

Oh, God! This is Alvin's car. It's registered in his name. I killed a man and I have his car. This is bad.

Julian rolls down his window and looks around.

JULIAN

We're like two blocks from the river. We could push it in.

LINDA

What? No.

JULIAN

(getting excited)

We'll get a can of gas. Set it on fire!

LINDA

Or we could just leave it here and walk the rest of the way. Seriously, Julian, you watch too many movies.

Linda gets out of the car and opens the trunk. Julian follows.

JULIAN

I guess. Fire'd be cooler, though.

LINDA

I bashed a man's skull tonight. Isn't that cool enough for you!?

She hands Julian his backpack and takes the suitcase out of the trunk.

JULIAN

That WAS pretty cool.

She closes the trunk.

LINDA

Yeah, well, Happy Halloween.

They walk away from the car, into the night.

EXT. SIDEWALK - NIGHT

Linda and Julian walk down a residential street, passing TRICK OR TREATERS. They approach an intersection.

LINDA

This is Walnut. Turn left. Should be about a block away.

They turn left and continue down the street.

JULIAN

We should probably use fake names, right?

LINDA

What should we call ourselves?

Linda opens her purse and takes out a pack of chewing gum.

JULIAN

Something common - like Williams.

LINDA

Williams, huh?

She offers gum to Julian.

JULIAN

There are people named Williams all over the place. We'll blend in.

He takes a piece of gum.

LINDA

I never would've thought of that.

JULIAN

Maybe you could be, I don't know. Tammie?

Linda thinks about it, then nods.

LINDA

Nice to meet you, I'm Tammie Williams.

JULIAN

And I'll be Thor.

LINDA

(laughing)

Thor? I don't think so. No. Pick something else.

A LITTLE KID dressed up as JASON VOORHEES sneaks up behind them.

LITTLE KID  
AAAAHHHH!

Linda drops her bag. Julian turns around.

LINDA  
Oh my God!

The kid laughs and runs off. The KID'S MOTHER follows him.

KID'S MOTHER  
Sorry about that. He loves  
Halloween.

LINDA  
Clearly.

Linda picks her bag up. They continue walking.

LINDA (CONT'D)  
Nearly gave me a stroke.

Julian points to a house on the corner.

JULIAN  
I think that's it. Thirty-one-oh-  
eight, right?

LINDA  
Blue light? That's the place.

EXT. OKLAHOMA CITY SHELTER - NIGHT

The shelter is a two-story residential house. The bulb in the porch fixture is blue. Linda and Julian walk up the steps and ring the doorbell.

LINDA  
(whispering)  
Don't mention what happened with  
Alvin.

The door opens. BERNICE, 45 - protective mother bear with a big presence - pops her head out.

BERNICE  
We're all out of candy.

LINDA  
Oh, we're not, um - we need help.

Bernice opens the door a little more and stares.

LINDA (CONT'D)  
 Maureen Gray at social services  
 gave me the address.

BERNICE  
 Maureen happen to mention my  
 favorite fruit?

JULIAN  
 (to Linda)  
 You sure this is the place?

Linda's realizes what Bernice is asking.

LINDA  
 Right! Rutabaga. No - rhubarb. The  
 password is rhubarb!

Bernice nods her head and lets them inside.

INT. OKLAHOMA CITY SHELTER - NIGHT

Linda and Julian enter behind Bernice, who closes the door  
 and locks three separate deadbolts. She looks them up and  
 down. Her stern demeanor melts into a smile.

BERNICE  
 I'm Bernice. I manage the shelter.

Linda extends her hand.

LINDA  
 I'm Tammie Williams.

LINDA (CONT'D)  
 And this is--

JULIAN  
 Thor! My name is Thor.

Linda gives Julian the side-eye.

BERNICE  
 Nice makeup, Thor. I love Ace  
 Frehley.

JULIAN  
 You know KISS?!

BERNICE  
 Saw 'em live on the '77 Love Gun  
 tour.

She reaches for a bowl of candy and offers it to him.

BERNICE (CONT'D)

Candy?

JULIAN

Thought you were out.

BERNICE

This ain't for trick or treaters.  
It's my personal stash.

SHELTER BEDROOM

Bernice leads them in, holding a stack of towels and washcloths. The room is sparse, with two twin beds. A smudged mirror hangs on the wall in the corner.

BERNICE

It ain't The Ritz, but it's safe.

LINDA

It's great. Thank you.

Bernice drops the towels onto one of the beds.

BERNICE

Thor, why don't you stay here while  
your mom comes down to the office  
for a little chat?

Bernice steps out into the hall. Linda sets her bag down.

LINDA

It's gonna be okay. I'll be right  
back.

JULIAN

It's fine.

Linda reaches out and gives Julian's shoulder a squeeze.

LINDA

I love you... Thor.

Julian grins. She exits.

Julian walks to the window and pulls the curtain closed. He looks in the mirror, picks up one of the towels, and begins to wipe off his makeup.

INT. APARTMENT - NIGHT

Alvin lies on the floor. He rolls over slowly, holding his aching head. He is ALIVE, and he is PISSED.

INT. SHELTER BEDROOM - NIGHT

Julian stares out the window, listening to his Walkman. He has removed all his makeup.

Linda enters and hugs him from behind. He takes off his headphones.

JULIAN  
Everything okay?

LINDA  
We're gonna figure out next steps tomorrow.

JULIAN  
This whole day's been like a weird dream.

Linda sees the towel, covered in makeup.

LINDA  
Honey, you ruined their towel.

JULIAN  
Sorry.

LINDA  
Let's get some sleep.

She turns off the light switch.

INT. SHELTER DINING ROOM - DAY

They eat breakfast at a wobbly table with other SHELTER RESIDENTS. Julian shovels food into his mouth.

LINDA  
You're eating like a maniac.

JULIAN  
I'm hungry.

DONNA - a gravelly-voiced smoker who looks like she could be 30 or 50 - walks up to the table, holding a clipboard.

DONNA  
Tammie?

LINDA  
That's me.

Donna checks the clipboard.

DONNA  
You and, uh, Thor - you guys got  
bathroom duty.

LINDA  
I'm sorry? What's bathroom duty?

DONNA  
Everybody has an assignment. You  
wanna stay, you gotta work. New  
folks get the worst jobs. I think  
the toilet's clogged, too. Sorry.

Julian finally looks up from his food.

JULIAN  
Gross.

INT. APARTMENT BATHROOM - DAY

Alvin looks in the mirror, examining his wound. He notices something in the garbage and finds the pregnancy test box.

He sifts through the trash until he finds the used pregnancy test. He holds it up and sees a big PLUS SIGN.

INT. SHELTER BATHROOM - DAY

The bathroom is musty with peeling paint and rusty pipes. Linda examines a toilet. Julian wipes a mirror.

JULIAN  
The smell!

LINDA  
Help me find a plunger.

The door swings open. KENDRA - late 20's, skinny with the baggy eyes of an addict - enters. She stops when she sees Julian.

KENDRA  
(yelling into the hall)  
There is a MAN IN THE BATHROOM!

LINDA  
Oh, relax. That's not a man. It's  
my son.

JULIAN  
Hey!

LINDA  
You're gonna want to use the one  
upstairs, anyway. Toilet's clogged.

KENDRA  
Put up a sign or something.

She turns on her heels to exit. Julian locates a plunger in  
the corner.

JULIAN  
Found it!

He hands it to Linda. She looks at the toilet.

LINDA  
Pray for me.

The door swings open. Bernice enters.

BERNICE  
Hi, Tammie! Sorry to interrupt.

LINDA  
That's okay. Believe me.

BERNICE  
Got a minute? I made some calls. We  
should talk.

Linda hands the plunger to Julian.

LINDA  
You're up, slugger.

Linda and Bernice exit. Julian glares at the toilet.

He goes to battle, plunging aggressively. He stands in  
triumph and confidently flushes. The water starts to rise and  
spills out onto the floor. He drops the plunger and darts  
toward the exit.

The door opens. Another RESIDENT enters.

JULIAN  
Out of order.

Julian hastily exits.

INT. POLICE STATION - DAY

Alvin enters. He is clean shaven and his shirt is tucked in. Other than the bandage on his head, he looks like a model citizen.

He approaches a counter where an OFFICER stands.

ALVIN  
I'd like to report a stolen car.  
(smiling)  
And a missing person.

INT. SHELTER COMMON ROOM - DAY

Julian sits on a couch, bored, watching a soap opera with SHELTER RESIDENTS. Linda walks in and sits next to him.

LINDA  
(whispering)  
Heard there's a DQ down the street.  
Wanna go for ice cream?

JULIAN  
Okay.

EXT. SIDEWALK - DAY

Linda and Julian hold half-eaten ice cream cones and continue enjoying them as they walk.

LINDA  
Good news - we're not gonna be  
plunging anymore toilets.

JULIAN  
You got us switched?

They veer off the sidewalk, into a grocery store parking lot.

LINDA  
Bernice got us into a long-term  
shelter - in New Mexico.

Julian has finished his ice cream. Linda sees a trash can and discards the remainder of her cone.

JULIAN  
That's... far.

LINDA  
I know it is, honey.

Linda stops walking. She looks Julian in the eye.

LINDA (CONT'D)  
I been thinking. You dont have to  
come with me... if you don't want.  
I'd understand. I can call your  
father and--

JULIAN  
No! I told you before. I'm not  
leaving you. End of discussion.

LINDA  
You're sure?

Julian answers by pulling Linda to him hugging her tight.

JULIAN  
Where in New Mexico?

LINDA  
Albuquerque. Nobody knows us there.  
We can really start over!

Linda reaches into her purse and pulls out her paycheck.

LINDA (CONT'D)  
I'm gonna cash this. We need  
supplies for the road. We're  
leavin' tonight!

INT. APARTMENT - DAY

Alvin sits at the dining table, brooding, drinking a beer.

The PHONE RINGS. He answers.

POLICE OFFICER (V.O.)  
Alvin Cloverdale?

ALVIN  
Who's askin'?

POLICE OFFICER (V.O.)  
Oklahoma City Police. You reported  
a stolen Mercury? Plates DJT 691?

ALVIN  
Sure did.

POLICE OFFICER (V.O.)  
We found it.

INT. SHELTER BEDROOM - DAY

Julian lays their purchases out on the bed - snacks, a gallon jug of water, etc.

Linda has a towel draped over her shoulders and dye in her hair. She checks her watch.

LINDA  
Time to rinse! New life - new look!

She exits the room. Julian picks up a pair of scissors from the bed and walks to the mirror.

INT. SHELTER BATHROOM - DAY

Linda towels off and checks her reflection. Her hair is shorter and has been dyed red.

LINDA  
Oof. Bangs were a mistake.

INT. SHELTER BEDROOM - DAY

Julian examines himself in the mirror. He has cut off the long hair in the back.

Linda enters.

LINDA  
So, what's the verdict?!

Julian turns around, holding up the hair he lopped off.

JULIAN  
New life - new look!

Linda examines his hair.

LINDA  
My god, Julian!

JULIAN  
Thor.

He turns away and opens his backpack.

JULIAN (CONT'D)

Took out my contacts. Found these.

He turns around and is wearing glasses.

JULIAN (CONT'D)

Guess I left 'em in my bag.

LINDA

You look like a totally different kid.

EXT. APARTMENT - NIGHT

Alvin pulls his car up as the sun sets.

He turns off the ignition and gets out, grabbing the bloody lamp from the back. He notices a paper stuck between the seats - Linda's pamphlet for the women's shelter.

EXT. OKLAHOMA CITY SHELTER - NIGHT

Linda and Julian load their bags into a Ford Bronco. Donna sits in the driver's seat with the engine running. They hop in. Bernice approaches the window.

BERNICE

These are your tickets. Don't lose 'em, now.

She hands the bus tickets to Linda.

BERNICE (CONT'D)

You transfer in Amarillo.

LINDA

Thank you, Bernice. For everything.

Bernice checks her watch.

BERNICE

Your Albuquerque contact will be wearing a sweatshirt says "SLIPPERY ROCK UNIVERSITY."

LINDA

Okay.

BERNICE

This is important. Ask if she's still selling makeup.

(MORE)

BERNICE (CONT'D)  
If she says yes, but she's all out  
of eyeliner, she's the one.

Bernice hands Linda a slip of paper.

BERNICE (CONT'D)  
I wrote it down. Take care, now.

Bernice walks away. Linda rolls up the window.

INT. FORD BRONCO - NIGHT

As the car pulls away from the shelter, Alvin's Mercury Cougar turns the corner, heading straight towards them. Julian notices it. He nudges Linda.

JULIAN  
Mom!

He points to the car. Linda makes eye contact with Alvin. She ducks down, but it's too late.

LINDA  
(whispering)  
Oh my God.

JULIAN  
(whispering)  
Guess you didn't kill him.

DONNA  
What's that?

Tires screech as Alvin turns the car around.

LINDA  
He found us! We gotta go - fast!

Donna hits the gas and the car jerks forward. Behind them, Alvin speeds up to keep pace.

LINDA (CONT'D)  
You gotta lose him!

DONNA  
Hold on to your tits.

Donna takes a sharp left turn. TIRES SQUEAL. Alvin follows.

In the backseat, Julian falls to the floorboard, then pulls himself up and looks out the rear window.

JULIAN  
He's right behind us!

DONNA  
Not for long!

Donna speeds towards a busy intersection. The light turns yellow. There's no way they'll make it. She hits the gas.

Julian looks behind them. Alvin is still there.

The traffic light turns red as they dart across the intersection.

INT. MERCURY COUGAR - SAME TIME

Alvin has to swerve to avoid a city bus that drives by, blocking his way.

INT. FORD BRONCO - SAME TIME

Linda clutches her chest. Julian looks back.

JULIAN  
We lost him!

Linda looks down, shaking, terrified. Donna laughs and coughs.

DONNA  
That was some *Dukes of Hazzard* shit.

INT. MERCURY COUGAR - SAME TIME

Alvin sits in the car, furiously pounding on the dashboard.

INT. OKLAHOMA CITY GREYHOUND STATION - NIGHT

Linda and Julian enter with their bags. Linda is still dazed from their close call. The place is filthy and crowded with DESPERATE PEOPLE. They look around.

JULIAN  
(pointing to a sign)  
Amarillo!

Julian grabs Linda by the arm and leads her to the back of a long line. They stand behind a bearded, toothless PASSENGER who smiles at them.

PASSENGER  
(to Julian)  
Got a cigarette?

INT. GREYHOUND BUS - NIGHT

Julian helps Linda onto the bus. It is jam-packed with PASSENGERS. They search for a seat.

JULIAN  
I don't think we're gonna be able  
to sit together, mom.

Julian scans the bus. He spies an empty seat next to a heavily made-up OLD LADY.

JULIAN (CONT'D)  
She seems nice. Sit there. I'll  
find a spot near the back.

Julian guides Linda to the seat, and puts her bag in the overhead space. He squeezes her shoulder, then moves toward the back of the bus.

Linda stares straight ahead. The old lady turns to her and smiles.

OLD LADY  
My house burned down, so I'm going  
to stay with my grandson.

The old lady takes out a bottle of pills and pops one into her mouth.

BACK OF BUS

Julian spies an empty seat next to PUSS, mid-20's - long hair/goatee, heavy metal vibes. He wears headphones.

Julian sits next to him and puts his headphones on. They both stare straight ahead, listening to their respective Walkmans as the bus pulls out.

INT. GREYHOUND BUS - MIDDLE OF NIGHT

Most of the passengers sleep. Linda's eyes are closed as the Old Lady rattles on.

OLD LADY

He told me he didn't want a divorce, but he didn't want to keep lying about his affair. I said, "I'm no doormat, Mitchell!"

She takes another pill. Linda raises her head and looks at her.

LINDA

Do you mind? I'm trying to sleep.

OLD LADY

Sleep? Oh, I never do.

LINDA

Great.

OLD LADY

Two days later, he had a heart attack. Martha and I showed up at the hospital at the same time. Talk about awkward.

Linda sighs and puts her head in her hands.

BACK OF BUS

Julian goes to change the batteries in his Walkman. He hears the music coming from Puss's headphones. He recognizes it and stares. Puss stops his Walkman.

PUSS

What are you lookin' at, kid?

JULIAN

Nothing. You listening to Icepik?

PUSS

YOU know Icepik?

JULIAN

They're faster than Anthrax, and the singer's like some wild combination of Bruce Dickinson and Mike Muir.

Julian digs into his backpack for a bag of Skittles.

PUSS

Holy shit. That's a perfect description.

JULIAN

Sorry for eavesdropping. I've just never met anybody else who's heard of them. Want some Skittles?

Puss opens his hand. Julian pours candy into it.

PUSS

Wanna know a secret? I'm Icepik's new rhythm guitar player.

JULIAN

I'm not an idiot. Brick Sarzo's their rhythm player.

PUSS

He's back in rehab. They kicked him out in the middle of the tour. I'm meeting them in Phoenix to take his spot.

JULIAN

No way!

PUSS

Cheap bastards wouldn't spring for a plane ticket.

Puss pulls a flask out of his bag and takes a swig. He offers it to Julian.

PUSS (CONT'D)

Whiskey?

JULIAN

I'm twelve.

PUSS

Right.

JULIAN

I can't believe I'm sitting next to Icepik's new guitar player. You're opening for Brutal Bones, right?

Puss nods and extends his hand.

PUSS

The name's Puss.

Julian shakes his hand.

JULIAN

I'm Thor.

PUSS  
Nice to meet you, Thor.

FRONT OF BUS

Linda has given up on sleep. The old lady pops another pill. She offers one to Linda.

OLD LADY  
Want one?

LINDA  
What are they, even?

OLD LADY  
Not sure. They were my husband's.

LINDA  
No, thanks.

OLD LADY  
So, what's YOUR story?

BACK OF BUS

Puss and Julian sit, talking. Their headphones are off and sitting in their laps.

PUSS  
So, what's YOUR story?

Julian pauses, not sure what to say.

JULIAN  
It's sort-of a secret.

PUSS  
You don't have to tell me if you don't want.

Julian leans toward Puss and whispers.

JULIAN  
I'm on the run.

FRONT OF BUS

OLD LADY  
I've never met a government agent before. This is so exciting!

LINDA  
Not so loud. There are spies  
everywhere.

OLD LADY  
(whispering)  
I won't tell anyone.

LINDA  
Your country thanks you.

OLD LADY  
My house burned down, so I'm going  
to stay with my grandson!

Linda sinks into her seat.

INT. GREYHOUND BUS - MORNING

Puss and Julian pack their Walkmans into their bags.

PUSS  
That's some kind-of tough  
situation. Keep your head up, kid

JULIAN  
Thanks. I will.

PUSS  
If the tour hits your town, look me  
up. I'll get you tickets.

JULIAN  
Awesome.

The bus pulls into a station and the DRIVER talks into the  
intercom.

DRIVER (O.S.)  
Welcome to Amarillo. Thanks for  
riding Greyhound.

FRONT OF BUS

Linda stands to exit and looks over at the Old Lady. She is  
fast asleep, snoring with the pill bottle in her hands.

LINDA  
You gotta be kidding me.

EXT. AMARILLO GREYHOUND STATION - DAY

Julian exits the bus. Linda stands outside, waiting for him, holding her suitcase.

LINDA  
Sorry for going all catatonic back  
there.

JULIAN  
I gotta find a bathroom.

Linda checks her watch.

LINDA  
Boarding starts in five minutes.  
We're two buses over.

JULIAN  
I'll be quick.

Julian heads toward the station entrance.

LINDA  
(calling out)  
I'm gonna get in line. Hurry!

INT. BUS STATION BATHROOM - DAY

Julian enters a poorly maintained bathroom with faded yellow tile that was once white. The lights flicker.

A TALL MAN, washes his bare feet in the sink.

Julian goes to a stall door and realizes he has to pay to use it. A sign that says "10 cents" hangs on the door next to a coin slot.

He digs in his pockets for change. A STRANGER exits the stall next to him. The door bumps Julian, knocking the coins into the air and down a drain in the floor.

Julian sighs, gets down on his stomach, and crawls under the stall door.

As he urinates, Julian sees a pair of shoes enter the stall next to him. Another pair of shoes appears behind them and pants drop to the ground. He flushes quickly and exits.

INT. GREYHOUND BUS - DAY

Julian walks onto the bus. Linda waves to him. He takes a seat next to her.

LINDA  
Everything alright?

JULIAN  
I don't wanna talk about it.

LINDA  
At least we get to sit together.  
Almost had to fight a blind guy to  
save your seat.

The bus pulls out. Julian stares out the window. Linda leans on his shoulder and falls asleep.

INT. GREYHOUND BUS - AFTERNOON

Julian switches the tape in his Walkman while Linda pulls two packages of Lunchables out of her purse.

LINDA  
Shouldn't be much longer. Hungry?

JULIAN  
Thanks.

She hands a Lunchable to him. He opens the package and pops a piece of cheese into his mouth.

LINDA  
Can I ask you something?

JULIAN  
Okay.

LINDA  
How come you like music so much?

JULIAN  
Everybody likes music. You like  
music.

LINDA  
I don't think I like it like you.

Julian constructs a tower of turkey, cheese, and crackers.

JULIAN  
I guess it takes me away.

LINDA

Where to?

JULIAN

Depends on the song. It's not really about where it takes me to. It's where it takes me from.

He bites into his tower while Linda eats her Lunchable one piece at a time.

LINDA

I think I get it.

JULIAN

When things are bad - at home, school, wherever - music lets me go somewhere else. I can be somebody else.

Linda reaches into her purse and pulls out a little pad of paper and a pen. She begins to draw.

JULIAN (CONT'D)

What's that?

She hands the pad to Julian.

LINDA

That's Cassie.

Linda has drawn a small cartoon girl. She has pigtails, glasses, and wears a cowboy hat.

JULIAN

It's really good.

LINDA

Started drawing her when I was your age. When things were bad for me, drawing was MY escape. Wanted to be a cartoonist. That was MY dream.

Julian looks up at Linda, a little puzzled. What else doesn't he know about his Mom?

JULIAN

Why'd you quit?

LINDA

Life just sort-of got in the way.

Linda takes a napkin from her purse and wipes crumbs from Julian's mouth.

JULIAN  
Can I keep this?

LINDA  
Sure.

Julian reaches into his pocket and pulls out a velcro wallet. He opens it and slips the drawing inside.

LINDA (CONT'D)  
Promise me somethin'.

JULIAN  
Okay.

She hands him a jug of water. He opens it and drinks.

LINDA  
No matter what happens, you won't  
let life get in the way for you.

He hands the jug back to her.

JULIAN  
I promise.

Julian slips his headphones on.

EXT. ALBUQUERQUE GREYHOUND STATION - NIGHT

The bus is parked. PASSENGERS exit. Linda and Julian stand outside by stacks of luggage. Linda grabs her suitcase.

LINDA  
Bernice said someone would be here  
to pick us up.

PATIENCE, 23, tattooed, street smart hippie, stands on the sidewalk, wearing a sweatshirt that says SLIPPERY ROCK UNIVERSITY.

LINDA (CONT'D)  
I think that's her.

Linda and Julian approach Patience.

LINDA (CONT'D)  
(apprehensive)  
Hi.

PATIENCE  
You need somethin'?

Linda reaches in her purse and reads from a slip of paper.

LINDA

Are you... still selling makeup?

PATIENCE

Yeah, but I hope you don't need eyeliner. I'm all outta that.

Patience nods toward the parking lot and starts to walk.

LINDA

Okay. Oh.

(to Julian)

I guess we're going.

They follow after her.

INT. CAR - NIGHT

Julian is in the passenger seat of an old, but clean sedan. Linda rides in back. Patience turns the key, and the radio plays loudly.

MUSIC CUE: Something folksy, like "Fast Car" by Tracy Chapman.

Patience turns down the volume, backs out of the space, and begins to drive.

PATIENCE

I'm Patience, by the way.

LINDA

I'm Tammie.

Linda extends her hand over Patience's shoulder. She shakes it.

JULIAN

And I'm Thor.

Patience smiles and looks over at Julian.

PATIENCE

That's a pretty cool name. Your parents into comic books or somethin'?

LINDA

It's a family name.

JULIAN

I like your name, too. There's a  
Guns N' Roses song called Patience.

PATIENCE

I love that song. You like it?

Julian shrugs.

JULIAN

It's okay. For a ballad.

Patience laughs.

PATIENCE

(to Linda)

First time at the shelter?

LINDA

First time in New Mexico.

PATIENCE

When you meet Miss Gonzales - she's  
the lady in charge - be real with  
her.

LINDA

Okay.

PATIENCE

She's got a bullshit detector. Can  
smell a lie a mile away.

They pull up to the shelter entrance. It is blocked by a  
large chain link gate. Patience honks.

PATIENCE (CONT'D)

Home sweet home.

The gate opens.

EXT. ALBUQUERQUE SHELTER - NIGHT

They walk from the car towards a three-story brick building.  
There are several smaller buildings on the property, all  
surrounded by a tall chain link fence, topped with barbed  
wire.

LINDA

It's like a refugee camp.

PATIENCE

It's not so bad. We got cable. HBO.

They pass a small playground with a swingset and blacktop with a basketball hoop.

PATIENCE (CONT'D)  
Over there's the playground.

Patience points to the main building.

PATIENCE (CONT'D)  
There's a little garden on the other side of the building.

INT. ALBUQUERQUE SHELTER - NIGHT

They walk down the hall. Patience points out various rooms as they pass.

PATIENCE  
That's the rec room. Movie night's Saturday. Popcorn and everything.

They peer inside. SHELTER RESIDENTS watch TV and play cards. Patience points to another door.

PATIENCE (CONT'D)  
That's Miss Gonzales' office.

LINDA  
Here we go.

PATIENCE  
You won't be seeing her tonight. She don't come in on weekends unless there's an emergency. You see her on the weekend, somebody's getting kicked out.

LINDA  
Good to know.

They continue walking.

PATIENCE  
You'll talk to her in the morning. Big room on the right's the dining hall.

They look inside and see a cafeteria. Some WOMEN wait in line for food. Others sit and eat.

PATIENCE (CONT'D)  
Dinner just started. I'll take you to your room.

They enter an elevator.

ELEVATOR

They ride in an old elevator that jerks when it stops. Patience digs a key out of her pocket.

PATIENCE

Quiet time starts at nine. Don't be loud. Have to write up a complaint and that'll piss off Miss Gonzales.

The elevator door opens and they exit.

INT. SHELTER ROOM - NIGHT

Linda and Julian stand in a dormitory-style room with a couple of beds and a small fan. Patience hands over the key.

PATIENCE

If you want dinner, better get down there.

She exits, closing the door behind her.

LINDA

So, what do you think?

JULIAN

Kind-of feels like jail.

LINDA

It kind-of does.

JULIAN

Except for, instead of keeping the bad guys in, they're keeping 'em out.

INT. SHELTER DINING HALL - NIGHT

Linda and Julian exit the chow line, looking for a place to sit. They get a combination of angry looks, blank stares, and welcoming smiles from RESIDENTS. They find an empty table and eat alone.

JULIAN

What is this, exactly?

LINDA

I think it's beef stew.

Julian takes a bite.

JULIAN  
Needs salt.

Linda's face gets serious. She leans in and places a hand on Julian's.

LINDA  
We're not gonna be able to do this  
on our own.

JULIAN  
(confused)  
So...

LINDA  
So, this is the last meal we eat by  
ourselves. We're gonna need  
friends. Tomorrow, we start making  
them.

INT. MISS GONZALES OFFICE - DAY

MISS GONZALES, 45 - a short woman with a powerhouse personality, whose kindness should never be mistaken for weakness - wears a pantsuit and stands in front of a desk. Linda sits on a couch across from her.

MISS GONZALES  
There's lots of ways to get kicked  
out of my shelter. You steal -  
you're out. Lie to me - you're out.  
Alcohol or drugs - you're out. You  
fight, damage the property, cause  
drama, or any other reason I  
haven't listed, you and your son  
will be asked to leave.

LINDA  
I understand.

Miss Gonzales looks at a schedule of work assignments on her desk.

MISS GONZALES  
I just want to be clear from the  
beginning. Know how to cook?

LINDA  
Sure.

MISS GONZALES  
Michelle in the kitchen will handle  
the details. You'll be assigned  
meal prep. Skip your work  
assignment - you're out.

LINDA  
Got it.

Miss Gonzales opens a can of Coke. She takes a sip.

MISS GONZALES  
I talked to Bernice in Oklahoma.  
Gave me the details of your  
situation.

LINDA  
So you know--

MISS GONZALES  
About the ex-husband? Yes. And the  
boyfriend. As far as I'm concerned,  
you can stay here as long as you  
need.

LINDA  
Thank you.

Miss Gonzales sits next to Linda on the couch and looks her  
in the eye.

MISS GONZALES  
How long you been pregnant, Tammie?

LINDA  
(surprised)  
Ummm... I'm not sure.

Linda looks down at her stomach.

MISS GONZALES  
That baggy sweatshirt don't fool  
me. I'd guess you're farther along  
than you think.

EXT. SHELTER PLAYGROUND - DAY

Linda shoots hoops by herself, making shot after shot. She's  
in a zone, almost meditating as she plays.

Julian exits the dining facility, holding a Twinkie. He sees  
Linda shooting the ball, stops and watches in awe.

JULIAN  
Since when can you play  
basketball?!

Linda sinks another basket.

LINDA  
Since high school. I was second  
team all-conference.

JULIAN  
Who ARE you?

Linda rebounds the ball and smiles.

JULIAN (CONT'D)  
They got Twinkies.

LINDA  
I need to talk to you about  
something. It's kind of important.

She shoots the ball. This time it's an airball that lands in  
the grass. She's nervous - no longer in the zone.

JULIAN  
That's closer to how I play.

LINDA  
I'm pregnant.

Julian drops his Twinkie. The cream filling spills onto the  
blacktop.

Julian stares at her, dumbfounded.

LINDA (CONT'D)  
Say something, please.

JULIAN  
Alvin's?

LINDA  
Of course it's Alvin's.

Julian turns around slowly, and walks off the basketball  
court. He looks around. There's nowhere to go. Everything is  
fenced in. He sits on the swing set.

Linda walks up behind him. Julian stares into the distance,  
not making eye contact.

LINDA (CONT'D)  
I'm not TRYING to screw things up.

She sits on the swing next to him.

JULIAN  
But, you do.

Julian begins to go from stunned to angry.

LINDA  
That's not fair.

JULIAN  
When you left Dad, everything was good. Just us. Then you let Alvin move in. Didn't even ask me.

LINDA  
That's because I'm the adult.

Julian stands and faces his mother. How can she not understand this?

LINDA (CONT'D)  
He was different, then.

JULIAN  
No. He wasn't. I tried to tell you, but you wouldn't listen. How can you LOVE someone that HURTS ME!?

LINDA  
I didn't mean--

JULIAN  
How can you make a BABY with someone like that?! Fuck you, Mom. What are we gonna do?!

This was HARD for Julian to say. He turns away, not wanting Linda to see his tears. Linda is stung. She begins to sob. Julian turns toward her.

JULIAN (CONT'D)  
Don't cry. I can't take it if you cry.

LINDA  
I'm sorry. I'm so sorry.

She wraps her arms around him. He gives in and hugs her back.

LINDA (CONT'D)  
You're all I have. All WE have. I'm trying to make things better. I can't do it without you.

INT. COURTROOM - DAY

JUDGE MALONE, 55 - southern and amiable, part of the "good old boys club" - sits at the bench. Jerry stands next to his lawyer, KENNY ADAIR, 40 - successful, confident.

JUDGE MALONE  
We've waited long enough.  
Counselor, you okay to proceed?

Kenny stands.

KENNY  
Fine by me, Your Honor.

JUDGE MALONE  
We're the only ones here, I'm not  
gonna yell.

The judge waves them over. Kenny and Jerry approach the bench.

JUDGE MALONE (CONT'D)  
How you doin' Jerry?

JERRY  
Good, Your Honor, all things  
considered.

Jerry and the judge shake hands.

JUDGE MALONE  
Haven't seen you since your  
father's funeral. You're in Florida  
now?

JERRY  
Yes, sir.

JUDGE MALONE  
The mother not showing - I don't  
like it.

KENNY  
She was served papers.

Kenny hands over a document. The judge examines it.

JERRY  
Frankly, this is typical for her.  
Her behavior's erratic - one of the  
reasons I'm seeking custody. I want  
to give my son stability.

JUDGE MALONE

It's never easy for a single mother. But, this isn't about her. It's about the boy.

KENNY

My thoughts exactly.

JUDGE MALONE

Everything seems in order.

The judge scans some papers.

JUDGE MALONE (CONT'D)

Certainly appears you have the financial means to care for him.

KENNY

And he'd be in an excellent school district, Your Honor. His life would benefit, all around.

JUDGE MALONE

Her failure to appear leaves me no choice. If she can't even bother to show up and fight, my hands are tied. I'm awarding you full custody, Mr. Bianco.

JERRY

Thank you, Your Honor.

Judge Malone takes off his glasses and cleans them on his robe.

JUDGE MALONE

She's got thirty days to hand the child over. In case she's had some sort of emergency, she'll have the opportunity to appeal.

JERRY

Believe me, there's no emergency. She's just stalling.

JUDGE MALONE

After thirty days, I'll issue a warrant.

KENNY

Thank you, Your Honor.

JUDGE MALONE

It's settled, then.

The judge taps his gavel to the bench and rises to exit.  
Kenny pats Jerry on the back.

JERRY

That was easy. Too easy.

Kenny begins to pack his papers into his briefcase.

KENNY

If she was here, she'd walk away  
with at-least visitation.

JERRY

Yvette's gonna be pissed. She had  
her heart set on me bringin' him  
home today.

INT. COURTHOUSE HALLWAY - DAY

Jerry and Kenny nod to each other. Kenny walks off.

Yvette rises from a bench, expectantly.

YVETTE

So... did we get him?

Jerry gives her a big smile and a nod. She squeals with  
delight and runs to hug him!

YVETTE (CONT'D)

Where is he?!

She looks around for Julian.

JERRY

I'll explain in the car.

They stroll past Alvin, who has been leaning against the  
wall, waiting for Jerry to emerge from the courtroom.

ALVIN

Hey, Jerry.

Jerry turns around. Alvin smiles.

ALVIN (CONT'D)

We need to talk.

INT. SHELTER KITCHEN - DAY

Linda's belly is starting to show. She is with TRACY, 33 -  
bubbly, fun in even the worst circumstances.

They stand in an out-of-date, institutional kitchen, stuffing Thanksgiving turkeys.

LINDA

The first person to stuff a turkey must've been a real creep.

TRACY

I love stuffing!

LINDA

Yeah, but the first guy to do it didn't know it was gonna taste good. Just decided to shove a bunch of bread up a bird. Total weirdo.

Tracy laughs.

LINDA (CONT'D)

Think it was a pilgrim or an Indian?

TRACY

Pilgrim, for sure. It's always white guys into shit like that.

Tracy opens a window and lights a cigarette.

LINDA

One of these days, Miss Gonzales is gonna catch you.

Tracy takes a drag and shrugs.

LINDA (CONT'D)

(imitating Miss Gonzales)

I find you smoking in the kitchen - you're OUT!

TRACY

Oh, my God, you sound just like her! What's she gonna do? I'm out anyway.

The door opens. MICHELLE, 30 - transgender, friendly, one of those people who hugs everyone - enters with a big box of yams.

LINDA

(to Tracy)

I can't believe you're leaving. You're like, my best friend in here.

MICHELLE

I thought I was your best friend in here.

LINDA

You're both my best friends in here.

Linda helps Michelle unload yams from the box.

MICHELLE

You leavin', Tracy?

TRACY

Restraining order on Harold went through. Got a new apartment. Move in December 1st.

LINDA

I'm so happy for you.

TRACY

I didn't even tell you the best part. I'm gettin' my daughter back!

MICHELLE

Happy Thanksgiving, indeed.

TRACY

Damn right!

EXT. SHELTER PLAYGROUND - DAY

Julian stands alone on the basketball court, dribbling the ball. WOMEN push their KIDS on the nearby swingset.

Julian shoots the basketball in a high arc. The ball gets stuck, wedged in the corner where the hoop meets the backboard.

JULIAN

You gotta be kidding me.

INT. SHELTER REC ROOM - DAY

Julian looks around for a broom or mop handle - something to get the basketball down.

He finds a rake in the corner of the room. He grabs it and heads toward the door.

Julian stops suddenly. He sees an acoustic guitar case lying on the couch. The lid is propped open. Light spills from the window onto the instrument, giving it a magical quality.

Julian looks around for the guitar's owner. No one is there. He props the rake against the wall and walks over to it.

He takes the guitar out and puts the strap over his shoulder.

DAYDREAM SEQUENCE - CONCERT VENUE - NIGHT

Julian is in full spandex attire. Instead of an acoustic, he holds the FLYING V of his dreams. A MASSIVE CROWD goes wild as he raises the pick into the air.

CROWD

Thor! Thor! Thor!

END DAYDREAM.

INT. SHELTER REC ROOM - SAME TIME

Julian brings a pick down on the strings making a terrible, out-of-tune clanging. Patience enters, holding a cup of tea.

PATIENCE

Hey, Thor.

Julian is embarrassed. He quickly places the guitar back in the case.

JULIAN

I'm sorry. I shouldn't have -

PATIENCE

Wanna learn to play?

JULIAN

Really? Yeah!

Patience smiles, sits her cup of tea down, and picks up the guitar, placing the strap over Julian's shoulder.

Patience shows Julian how to hold his hand on the fret.

PATIENCE

Look at my hand. Holds yours like that. There you go!

INT. PRIVATE INVESTIGATOR'S OFFICE - DAY

NORMAN HIGGS, 42 - private investigator, could afford a secretary, but is too cheap to hire one - sits behind a desk in a sparse storefront office.

He lights a new cigarette with a cigarette he has almost finished smoking.

Jerry and Alvin sit across from him.

NORMAN

You did the right thing, coming to a professional.

Norman opens a mini fridge below his desk and pulls out a can of Fresca.

NORMAN (CONT'D)

I'll need a five thousand dollar retainer. After that, it's four-hundred a day plus expenses.

ALVIN

Seems a little steep.

Jerry removes an envelope from his jacket pocket.

JERRY

My treat.

Jerry hands the envelope to Norman. He puts out his cigarette and looks inside. It is full of cash, clearly more than he asked for.

ALVIN

Jesus.

NORMAN

Looks like we got a deal.

He shakes Jerry's hand.

ALVIN

Hold on. I want to help.

JERRY

Relax. I said it's on me.

ALVIN

Not what I mean. She's carrying my baby. She stole my kid, too.

Jerry leans in, surprised.

JERRY

Wait - Linda's pregnant?

Alvin nods.

ALVIN

You're not the only victim here.  
I don't got money. But, I got time.  
You need someone else to help, I'm  
here. Boots on the ground.

NORMAN

That's not how I usually operate.

JERRY

I like that. Alvin knows Linda.  
Might see somethin' you don't. You  
find something you need another man  
for, I want you to bring him along.

Norman sighs and thumbs through the money in the envelope.

NORMAN

The customer's always right.

EXT. ALBUQUERQUE SHELTER - DAY

Tracy stands by the gate with a suitcase. Linda, Michelle,  
and OTHER RESIDENTS gather to wish her well.

TRACY

I guess this is it.

Michelle gives her a big hug and wraps a scarf around her.

MICHELLE

Crocheted it for you. Brings out  
your eyes.

TRACY

You're sweet.

Michelle starts to cry.

MICHELLE

There goes my mascara.

Michelle walks away, misty-eyed. Linda approaches.

LINDA

I'm gonna miss you, lady. Won't be  
the same here without you.

Tracy reaches into her purse and pulls out a scrap of paper with her phone number written on it.

TRACY

Not goin' far. My phone's already set-up.

She hands Linda the scrap of paper.

TRACY (CONT'D)

You call me if you need ANYTHING, okay?

LINDA

I'll do that.

A HORN HONKS. Patience sits in a car outside the gate, waiting to drive Tracy to her new apartment.

TRACY

There goes Patience, living up to her name.

Linda laughs. Tracy gives her a hug.

EXT. OKLAHOMA CITY SHELTER - DAY

Norman's car, a faded blue Oldsmobile 88, is parked out front. He leans on the hood, smoking a cigarette. The weather is wet and gloomy.

The front door opens. A RESIDENT exits and walks down the stairs.

NORMAN

How ya doin'?

She ignores Norman, turns and heads down the sidewalk. He stomps out his cigarette and follows.

NORMAN (CONT'D)

I'd like to ask you a question.

She picks up the pace. He calls after her.

NORMAN (CONT'D)

C'mon!

She turns around, annoyed and concerned. He catches up.

NORMAN (CONT'D)

Just want to know if you seen this woman. Was with a kid.

He pulls a picture out of his coat pocket and thrusts it forward.

RESIDENT  
(uncomfortable)  
I don't know her.

NORMAN  
You sure? Twenty bucks if you can help. I know she was here.

She looks at him, disgusted, shakes her head and walks away.

NORMAN (CONT'D)  
Fifty bucks! I just want to know she's safe.

The woman keeps walking, turning the corner. Norman takes out his pack of cigarettes. It's empty. He crumples it and tosses it on the ground.

NORMAN (CONT'D)  
Goddammit.

The shelter door opens. Bernice steps onto the porch.

BERNICE  
You get the hell off my property.

Norman smiles and heads up the steps, toward Bernice. She stands her ground.

NORMAN  
Relax. We're on the same side. I just want to make sure this lady and her kid are safe.

He gets close enough to make her skin crawl.

BERNICE  
Nobody here tryin' to talk to you. Just called the police. Better be gone when they get here.

She steps back into the house and tries to slam the door, but Norman holds a hand out to block it.

INT. SHELTER ENTRYWAY - DAY

Norman steps inside. Bernice backs away, but he grabs her.

BERNICE  
 (shouting to the house)  
 Help! HELP! Somebo--

Norman reaches a hand out and clamps it over her mouth. She freezes in terror.

NORMAN  
 (shouting to the house)  
 That's right! HELP! I NEED HELP!  
 Looking for a woman. Had a kid with  
 her. A twelve-year-old. I know they  
 were here. Maybe STILL ARE. HUNDRED  
 BUCKS for anybody can help--

Bernice musters up her courage and knees Norman in the crotch. He grunts and lets go of her as a couple SHELTER RESIDENTS enter the room. He holds his hands up in surrender.

NORMAN (CONT'D)  
 (smiling)  
 Spread the word, ladies. I'll be  
 around.

He exits. Bernice slams the door behind him and locks the deadbolts.

EXT. SHELTER PLAYGROUND - NIGHT

Julian wears a jacket and wool cap. His breath fogs up in the chilly air. He sits on a swing, holding Patience's guitar, attempting to play a Christmas tune.

INT. SHELTER REC ROOM - SAME TIME

VARIOUS RESIDENTS, including Linda, Michelle, and Patience, are seated in a circle, wrapping up a group therapy session.

Julian can be seen through the window, practicing guitar. Snow begins to fall.

SHANNON, 38 - middle class, suburban vibes - is in the middle of speaking.

SHANNON  
 I'm not saying I want to go back.  
 I'll never do that. I just don't  
 know HOW to be me without him.

PATIENCE

That's how they control you. Force you to make your entire life about them.

SHANNON

Exactly. I'm not Shannon. I'm "Pete's wife."

LINDA

Maybe finding out who you are is, like, your Christmas gift to yourself.

SHANNON

I like that.  
(noticing the window)  
Hey, is it snowing?

Linda goes to the window.

LINDA

It IS!

Michelle goes to the door and opens it.

MICHELLE

C'mon, everybody.

They all go outside.

EXT. SHELTER PLAYGROUND - SAME TIME

Snow falls all around. Patience opens her arms and looks up. Linda catches a snowflake on her tongue.

LINDA

There's somethin' about the first snowfall of the year. It's like, magic.

Julian walks over to join them.

MICHELLE

You know what it is? It's change.

SHANNON

It's nice.

MICHELLE

Everything that happened last year is dying. It's almost over.

(MORE)

MICHELLE (CONT'D)

Winter comes and we know a new chapter's starting. Anything is possible.

SHANNON

I like that.

LINDA

Me, too.

EXT. OKLAHOMA CITY SHELTER - LATE NIGHT

The front door opens. Kendra - the same woman who was upset there was a "man in the bathroom" - steps outside.

She shuts the door quietly, sneaks down the steps, and looks around in the darkness.

NORMAN (O.S.)

Hey, there.

Kendra jumps, startled. She looks down at the sidewalk, a little ashamed of herself.

KENDRA

Heard you were lookin' for somebody.

Norman steps out of the shadows.

NORMAN

You heard right.

KENDRA

Also heard you're paying.

She scratches her arm with the nervous tick of a junkie.

NORMAN

Hundred bucks.

He pulls his wallet out and removes a hundred dollar bill. She reaches for it. He pulls away.

NORMAN (CONT'D)

Hold on.

Norman takes out the picture with his other hand. She looks it over.

KENDRA

Yeah. I seen 'em. They were here awhile back. Gone now, though.

She hands the photo back to Norman, snatches the money, and starts to walk away. Norman puts a hand on her shoulder. He isn't finished with her.

NORMAN

Know where they went?

Kendra swallows and looks at the ground.

KENDRA

Cost you another hundred.

INT. SHELTER DINING HALL - DAY

RESIDENTS and some of their CHILDREN are gathered in the hall, enjoying treats, decorating for Christmas.

The walls are covered in decorations that have been used every year for a decade. A few people hang ornaments on a big, artificial tree.

Patience and Julian sit at a table. She sings a Christmas song. Julian accompanies her on guitar, smiling, truly happy.

Linda holds a ladder while a RESIDENT places a star atop the tree.

Miss Gonzales enters with SEVERAL WOMEN. None of them are residents of the shelter.

MISS GONZALES

Happy Holidays, everybody!

Miss Gonzales steps to the center of the room and claps her hands.

MISS GONZALES (CONT'D)

If I can have EVERYONE'S ATTENTION -  
I have some very special people to  
introduce.

The room goes quiet.

MISS GONZALES (CONT'D)

These ladies are your Christmas  
Angels. They've volunteered their  
time and money to take you  
shopping.

LINDA

That's so nice.

MISS GONZALES

Tonight, you'll meet your angel and  
make arrangements. Tomorrow,  
they'll take you to get your gifts.

The shelter residents smile and clap.

MISS GONZALES (CONT'D)

Play nice. I catch you  
disrespecting one of my angels,  
well, you know...

EVERYONE

You're out!

Miss Gonzales laughs.

INT. SHELTER DINING HALL - LATER

Linda and Julian sit, sipping hot chocolate out of styrofoam  
cups. At the other end of the table, Michelle sits with a  
kind and bubbly VOLUNTEER.

MICHELLE

I don't really have anyone to shop  
for.

VOLUNTEER

What if we just went shopping for  
YOU?

MICHELLE

We can do that?

VOLUNTEER

I won't tell if you don't.

Miss Gonzales approaches with DALE, 40, southern, rugged,  
looks like she owns a gun and a big dog.

MISS GONZALES

Tammie, Thor - I'd like you to meet  
Dale - your angel.

Linda stands up and shakes Dale's hand.

LINDA

So nice to meet you.

MISS GONZALES

I'll just let you get acquainted.

Miss Gonzales walks off. Dale looks down at Julian.

DALE  
Who's this handsome little devil?

LINDA  
My son, Thor.

DALE  
Like the god of thunder?

LINDA  
It's short for Thornton.

DALE  
I was thinking I'd come by around  
ten tomorrow morning. There's a big  
mall across town. Whaddya think?

Julian smiles big. He's dying to get out.

JULIAN  
(to Linda)  
Can we?!

LINDA  
(to Dale)  
That sounds nice. We haven't been  
outside the fence since we got  
here.

INT. BIANCO'S BAKERY OFFICE - DAY

Jerry sits, on the phone in his office, his feet up on a  
vintage desk, with a half-eaten sandwich in front of him.

JERRY  
Just heard from our guy. We got a  
lead on her location.

INT. APARTMENT - SAME TIME

Alvin stands at the kitchen counter, on the phone. The lamp  
Linda hit him with is plugged in, the splotch of blood still  
on it.

ALVIN  
(smiling)  
That's the kind of news I like to  
hear.

## INTERCUT - PHONE CONVERSATION

JERRY

I'm sending him to check it out. I want you to go along.

ALVIN

Wouldn't miss it for the world.

JERRY

Looks like she's in Albuquerque. How soon can you leave?

ALVIN

I'm ready now.

JERRY

Good. Yvette's all up my ass. Really wants the kid home for Christmas.

END INTERCUT

## INT. SHOPPING MALL - DAY

Dale, Linda and Julian walk through a shopping mall, bustling with HOLIDAY SHOPPERS. Julian sips from an Orange Julius cup.

DALE

I mean, I got out. I was lucky. Wanted to pay it forward, so I help out on the holidays.

LINDA

It means a lot. I want to give him a good Christmas. Thanks to you, I'll be able to.

Julian spots a music store and goes to look at the window display. He stares at a big Metallica poster.

LINDA (CONT'D)

(calling out to Julian)

Remember, you're not shopping for yourself!

JULIAN

I'm just looking.

LINDA

(to Dale)

We've been cooped up so long. Feels weird to be out.

DALE

How about I take Thor shopping and let you go off on your own? That way he won't snoop on what he's getting.

LINDA

And you can make sure I don't end up with a stocking full of Megadeth tapes.

Dale reaches into her purse and pulls out some cash. She hands it to Linda. It's more money than she expected.

LINDA (CONT'D)

This is too much. I couldn't.

DALE

You can, and you will. Have fun.

Linda sighs and looks over at Julian. She's uncomfortable leaving him with a stranger, but decides she trusts Dale.

LINDA

Okay. Thank you!

Linda walks off. Dale approaches Thor.

DALE

You're with me, partner. Let's find something nice for your mom.

INT. DEPARTMENT STORE - DAY

Julian stands in the women's section, looking at scarves and sweaters. Dale stands back, letting him browse on his own. He spots a green dress he really likes.

DALE

That's pretty. You've got a good eye.

JULIAN

Green's my mom's favorite color.

Dale goes to look at the dress. She feels the fabric.

DALE

It's really soft. If I'm judging right, looks just her size. I mean, when she's not pregnant.

Julian looks at the price tag. It says "\$150." He sets the dress down, embarrassed. It's too expensive.

JULIAN  
On second thought, I don't really  
like it. I'll find something else.

Dale frowns. Julian walks over to a table with scarves, labeled "2 FOR \$15" and looks through them. Dale grabs the dress and walks toward Julian. He holds up a scarf.

JULIAN (CONT'D)  
This is good. Let's get this.

DALE  
Hey, Thor.

JULIAN  
Yeah?

DALE  
(smiling)  
Let's get her the dress.

Julian grins.

INT. CHEVY SUBURBAN - DAY

Dale drives. Linda sits up front. Julian rides in the back, next to several shopping bags. The radio plays.

MUSIC CUE: 80'S Country like "Queen of Hearts" by Juice Newton.

Julian peeks into a bag and sees a Nintendo Game Boy. Linda catches him.

LINDA  
Don't you dare snoop! I saw that.

JULIAN  
I wasn't doing anything.

LINDA  
Yeah, right.

They pull up to the shelter entrance. Linda is immediately alarmed.

LINDA (CONT'D)  
Dale, stop the car.

DALE  
We're almost--

LINDA  
STOP THE CAR!

Dale slams on the brakes, just before they approach the gate.

DALE  
Sugar, what's wrong?

She points to a scarf that hangs over the gate, tied to the chain links. Dale sees it and tenses up.

LINDA  
Purple scarf.

DALE  
Hope everything's okay.

She backs up the car and pulls away.

JULIAN  
What's going on?

LINDA  
There's a purple scarf hanging on  
the gate, honey.

Dale drives down the street. Julian looks back at the shelter, concerned.

DALE  
A purple scarf means it's not safe.  
Sort-of a secret code.

JULIAN  
Yeah, I know what it means.

INT. DINER - DAY

Linda and Julian sit at a table, sipping soft drinks in a working class, greasy spoon restaurant. Linda fidgets nervously.

A TRUCKER eats at a booth. A WAITRESS refills his coffee.

Dale hangs up a pay phone in the corner, approaches the table, and takes a seat.

DALE  
Got ahold of Miss Gonzales.  
Wouldn't tell me much.  
(MORE)

DALE (CONT'D)

Just asked where we were and told me to stay put. She's on her way.

LINDA

I'm gonna be sick.

Dale puts a comforting hand on Linda's.

DALE

(to Julian)

I don't know about you, but I could use some pie.

EXT. ALBUQUERQUE SHELTER - DAY

Norman and Alvin wait in the parking lot. Norman's car is parked next to a police cruiser. The front door opens. A POLICE OFFICER walks out, shaking his head "NO."

POLICE OFFICER

She's not here.

NORMAN

You showed 'em the picture?

The officer nods.

POLICE OFFICER

Manager hadn't seen her or the kid. Pretty sure she was lying, but we searched the premises.

ALVIN

What do you mean she was lying?!

The officer looks at Alvin uneasily.

POLICE OFFICER

Don't get excited. It's just a hunch. I appreciate the tip, but the shelter's private property. You guys shouldn't be inside the gate.

Alvin heads for the front door. The Police Officer follows him.

POLICE OFFICER (CONT'D)

You hear what I said?!

ALVIN

I got rights!

POLICE OFFICER  
Don't make me take you in for  
trespassing.

Norman goes to Alvin to calm him down.

NORMAN  
Don't piss off the cops. Can't do  
shit if you're locked up.

ALVIN  
I'll burn this place to the ground.

POLICE OFFICER  
What was that?!

NORMAN  
He's just upset. We'll get going.

Norman looks at Alvin and nods to the car. Alvin begrudgingly  
gets in.

POLICE OFFICER  
Get your friend under control.

INT. DINER - NIGHT

Linda, Julian, and Dale sit at the table with empty pie  
plates in front of them. The trucker from before is gone. A  
FAMILY sits at a nearby table, laughing and eating.

Miss Gonzales enters. Linda sees her and stands.

MISS GONZALES  
Sorry it took me so long. Didn't  
want to seem like I was rushing to  
meet you and get followed.

DALE  
What's the situation?

Miss Gonzales takes a seat at the table.

MISS GONZALES  
(to Linda)  
Police came looking for you. Well,  
they weren't looking for someone  
named Tammie. But, they had a  
picture.

Linda puts her head in her hands.

MISS GONZALES  
There's a warrant for your arrest.  
Kidnapping.

Julian nervously slurps his soda.

LINDA  
The custody hearing. I didn't go.

MISS GONZALES  
They gave custody to the father.  
You took him across state lines.

The waitress comes to the table.

WAITRESS  
Get you something to drink?

MISS GONZALES  
Coke. No ice.

WAITRESS  
(to Julian)  
Refill number three?

LINDA  
I think he's had enough sugar.

The waitress walks off.

MISS GONZALES  
Now that I know you're wanted by  
the police, my hands are tied.  
Technically, I'm obligated to  
report you.

LINDA  
I didn't go to court because it was  
impossible. I couldn't even afford  
a lawyer. I'm not a bad mother.

Linda begins to shake. Miss Gonzales places her hands on  
Linda's shoulders and looks her in the eye.

MISS GONZALES  
I know. And I'm not gonna report  
you. But, if I let you come back,  
I'd lose my job. The shelter could  
lose funding. I'm sorry to say...

LINDA  
We're out.

DALE

This breaks my heart.

LINDA

How'd they find us?

MISS GONZALES

No idea, but whoever tipped off the police is watching the place. They're camped out across the street.

DALE

You have somewhere you could stay?

Linda gets an idea. She opens her purse, searches frantically through the contents and pulls out the scrap of paper with Tracy's phone number.

LINDA

Anybody got a quarter?

INT. TRACY'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Tracy opens the door. Linda and Julian enter a clean, cramped apartment with cheap, mismatched furniture. There is a tiny Christmas tree in the corner. Julian holds the shopping bags.

TRACY

There's not a lot of room, but you can stay as long as you need to.

Linda hugs Tracy.

LINDA

You're saving our lives. Today's been a nightmare.

Julian sets the bags down. Tracy notices them.

TRACY

You go shopping?

LINDA

Thank God we did. Otherwise, I wouldn't be here.

TRACY

We need wine.

LINDA

You know I'm pregnant, right?

The bathroom door opens. VICTORIA, 14 - hip and adorable - enters, wearing a towel. Julian's jaw drops.

VICTORIA

Umm... hi.

She exits to her bedroom, embarrassed.

TRACY

That's--

LINDA

Your daughter! Looks just like you!

Julian stares down the hall, lovestruck.

INT. MOTEL - NIGHT

Norman sits on the side of the bed in a room with wallpaper that's been up since the 70's. He holds the phone to his ear.

NORMAN

She wasn't there, but she's nearby.

INT. JERRY'S CAR - SAME TIME

Jerry Bianco drives a luxury automobile and talks on a car phone.

JERRY

Find them. I don't care what it costs. As of right now, I'm your only client.

INTERCUT - PHONE CONVERSATION

NORMAN

(lighting a cigarette)  
You're the boss.

JERRY

How's Alvin working out?

NORMAN

Got some real rage issues. He's staking out the shelter right now. I should get back in case he decides to storm the place.

Jerry drives past a homeless man and swerves to hit a puddle. It splashes him. Jerry grins.

JERRY

Thought you said she wasn't there.

NORMAN

It's our only lead. My gut tells me  
to stay put.

END INTERCUT

INT. TRACY'S APARTMENT - DAY

Linda and Tracy sit on the couch, sipping cocoa, relaxing amid a pile of torn wrapping paper. Linda's green dress sits on the arm of the couch.

Julian is at the kitchen counter, playing his Game Boy. Veronica watches over his shoulder, sucking on a candy cane. She's new to flirting and Julian is great practice.

TRACY

I talked to Dave at the restaurant.  
Said he could get you some shifts

LINDA

Under the table? I can't have a  
paper trail.

TRACY

Half the staff's under the table.  
Pregnant girls make good tips, too.

Linda leans toward Tracy, excited.

LINDA

Enough to rent the one bedroom down  
the hall?

Tracy nods.

Julian's character dies in the video game.

JULIAN

Damn!

VICTORIA

Only way to kill him's to knock him  
in the water.

Victoria reaches her arms around Julian and takes control of the Game Boy.

VICTORIA (CONT'D)

Here. I'll show you.

Julian tries to keep his cool. This is the most erotic moment of his young life.

VICTORIA (CONT'D)

See?

JULIAN

Uh huh.

INT. NORMAN'S CAR - NIGHT

Alvin sits, watching the shelter, listening to the radio.

MUSIC CUE: Southern rock like "Hold On Loosely" by 38 Special

Alvin's wallet sits open in his lap, displaying an old Glamour Shot of Linda. Norman approaches the car, carrying a McDonald's bag and a couple of sodas. He gets in.

NORMAN

Anything?

ALVIN

Bunch of sad sacks walkin' around.  
No sign of our leading lady.

NORMAN

You got any bright ideas, I'm all ears.

Norman hands him a sandwich.

ALVIN

The McRib's back? Hell yeah.

INT. TRACY'S APARTMENT - DAY

The Christmas tree is gone. Linda looks through the fridge. Julian enters, wearing an old shirt that's too tight. Across the front, in cursive letters, it says "LINDA RONSTADT."

LINDA

What are you wearing?

JULIAN

Tracy let me borrow it.

LINDA

We gotta get you some clothes.

Julian reaches into the fridge and pulls out a carton of orange juice. Linda gets a whiff of him. He smells bad.

LINDA (CONT'D)  
The shower's free.

Julian smells his armpit. She's right.

JULIAN  
Good idea.

He heads to the bathroom. Linda picks up the phone and dials.

INT. MISS GONZALES' OFFICE - SAME TIME

Miss Gonzales eats a bowl of soup, going through paperwork.

The phone rings. She answers.

MISS GONZALES  
Albuquerque shelter for--

INTERCUT - PHONE CONVERSATION

LINDA  
Miss Gonzales! This is Tammie - er,  
Linda--

MISS GONZALES  
You okay?

LINDA  
I was wondering if there was any  
chance our things were still there.

Miss Gonzales peers into the hallway to make sure no one is listening and closes the door.

MISS GONZALES  
Michelle wouldn't let us get rid of  
it. Had a feeling you'd want it  
back.

Linda takes off her shoes and sighs in relief. She tries to rub her feet, but her belly is too big and she can't reach.

LINDA  
That's great. Julian's been goin'  
crazy without his music.

MISS GONZALES  
You can't come back here. Those men  
are still watching.

LINDA

If I send Tracy, can you just give it to her? She's been helping me.

MISS GONZALES

That would be fine.

EXT. ALBUQUERQUE SHELTER - DAY

The gate opens. Tracy drives through in a beat-up magenta two-door. She parks and gets out.

Michelle comes through the front door with a backpack and box. On top, clearly recognizable, sits Julian's yellow Walkman with the skull sticker.

TRACY

Hey, girl!

MICHELLE

(smiling)

How the hell you been?!

INT. NORMAN'S CAR - SAME TIME

Norman looks through binoculars. Alvin drums on his knees, bored.

ALVIN

Anything exciting?

NORMAN

Couple of broads hugging each other. Kind of sexy.

Alvin grabs the binoculars from Norman. He looks through them and sees Michelle handing the box over to Tracy.

ALVIN

They could take this bull for a ride.

EXT. ALBUQUERQUE SHELTER - SAME TIME

Michelle jogs to the front door.

MICHELLE

Almost forgot.

She reaches inside and comes out with a guitar case.

TRACY  
That's Patience's guitar.

MICHELLE  
She wanted the kid to have it.

INT. NORMAN'S CAR - SAME TIME

Alvin watches through the binoculars as Tracy loads the things into the trunk. He recognizes Julian's Walkman.

ALVIN  
(smiling with menace)  
Follow that car.

EXT. TRACY'S APARTMENT - DAY

Tracy parks on the street and gets out. She pops the trunk. Norman pulls in a few spaces behind her. Alvin opens his door. Norman stops him.

NORMAN  
What are you doin'?

ALVIN  
Followin' her.

NORMAN  
Hold your horses, hotshot.

Tracy takes the box up the steps.

ALVIN  
That's the kid's tape player. We found 'em. No doubt.

NORMAN  
We need to call Jerry, see what he wants to do.

ALVIN  
I don't gotta do shit. I ain't Jerry's bitch.

Alvin gets out of the car and walks up the apartment steps.

Norman patiently watches as Alvin tries to open the door. It's locked. He pounds on it.

ALVIN (CONT'D)  
Goddammit!

INT. TRACY'S APARTMENT - DAY

In the kitchen, Julian holds a piece of ice to his ear while Linda stands by with a sewing needle.

LINDA  
Is it numb, yet?

JULIAN  
I think so.

LINDA  
I can't believe I let you talk me  
into this.

JULIAN  
Just do it.

Julian lays his head down on the counter. Linda pierces his left ear with the needle.

JULIAN (CONT'D)  
Ow!

LINDA  
Hold still!

She pokes the needle all the way through.

LINDA (CONT'D)  
Got it!

JULIAN  
(wincing)  
Thanks, Mom.

Julian runs to the bathroom. The front door opens. Tracy enters, carrying the box and the backpack.

TRACY  
Happy New Year!

Linda takes the box from her. She sets it on the couch and starts going through things.

LINDA  
This is great! Thor! Get out here!

Julian walks out of the bathroom. The needle has been replaced with a dangling gold cross earring.

TRACY  
Look at you! You look just like  
Rick Springfield.

JULIAN  
I know you think that's a  
compliment.

Julian almost hugs his Walkman as he takes it from the box.

TRACY  
There's something else.

Tracy reaches into the hallway, grabs the guitar case, and hands it to Julian. He takes it, dumbfounded.

EXT. TRACY'S APARTMENT - DAY

Norman and Alvin sit in the car. Norman is relaxed. Alvin rocks back and forth with nervous intensity.

NORMAN  
They're not going anywhere. Let's  
head back to the motel, figure out  
next steps, get some sleep.

ALVIN  
I'm stayin' right here.

Norman looks at Alvin with concern.

NORMAN  
How exactly do you see this thing  
playing out?

ALVIN  
What do you mean?

NORMAN  
This woman ran across the country  
to get away from you. You think  
you're just gonna smooth talk her?

ALVIN  
She's havin' my baby.

NORMAN  
You don't really strike me as  
Father of the Year.

ALVIN  
You don't know shit about me.

Alvin opens the car and gets out. Norman rolls the window down.

NORMAN  
C'mon. Get in the car.

Alvin turns around and slams his fist down on the car's hood, making a large dent.

NORMAN (CONT'D)  
Was that really necessary?

Alvin crosses his arms and stares back at Norman, fuming. Norman shrugs.

NORMAN (CONT'D)  
Suit yourself.

Norman drives away.

INT. TRACY'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Tracy is dressed up. Linda sits on the couch in pajamas, watching television, eating peanut butter out of a jar.

Julian stands at the kitchen counter, examining his guitar.

TRACY  
How do I look?

LINDA  
Like a hooker, but like, early in her career, when the job's still fun.

TRACY  
Thanks.

Victoria walks into the kitchen holding an overnight bag, and grabs an apple. She notices Julian.

VICTORIA  
You play guitar?

JULIAN  
Yeah.

He gives her a wry smile. With the guitar in his hand, he's confident. She eyes his earring and smiles back, blushing.

JULIAN (CONT'D)  
Going somewhere?

VICTORIA  
Spending the night at a friend's.  
Gonna watch the ball drop on tv.

Julian sets the guitar down and leans on the counter, in an attempt to "put out the vibe."

JULIAN  
That's cool.

Outside a HORN HONKS. Victoria looks out the window.

VICTORIA  
That's Sofie and her mom.

She grabs her bag and heads toward the door.

VICTORIA (CONT'D)  
See ya!

TRACY  
Have fun!

Victoria leaves.

TRACY (CONT'D)  
(to Linda)  
Sure you don't wanna come?  
I know you can't drink, but maybe  
you'll meet somebody.

LINDA  
I'm as big as a house.

TRACY  
Some guys are into that.

LINDA  
I don't wanna leave Thor alone on  
New Year's Eve.

TRACY  
The bar's just down the block... in  
case you change your mind.

Tracy exits. Julian sits on the couch

LINDA  
(to Julian)  
Looks like it's just you and me.

EXT. TRACY'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Tracy walks down the sidewalk, checking her appearance in a compact mirror.

Alvin leans against a building across the street, watching from the shadows.

INT. HOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

Norman sits on the edge of the bed, holding the phone. On the muted television, he watches *Dick Clark's Rockin' New Year's Eve*.

NORMAN

I think we found 'em. Alvin's becoming a problem, though.

INT. JERRY'S KITCHEN - NIGHT

Jerry is on the phone. Yvette stands behind him, pouring a glass of champagne.

JERRY

Cut him loose. He does some dumb cowboy shit, our hands are clean. If it happens to draw 'em out, even better.

INT. TRACY'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Julian sits on the couch. Linda walks in from the kitchen with a big bowl of popcorn and a VHS cassette.

LINDA

*Friday the 13th Part 8.*

JULIAN

*Jason Takes Manhattan!*

LINDA

Try not to get too scared.

INT. BAR - NIGHT

The bar is a seedy neighborhood joint, packed with CUSTOMERS. Popular music plays in the background.

Tracy walks in and is greeted by a GROUP OF FRIENDS. Someone immediately hands her a shot. A song comes on. They squeal in excitement and head to the dance floor.

MUSIC CUE: Something sexy and danceable, like "Cream" by Prince.

INT. TRACY'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Julian lays on the couch, asleep. The popcorn bowl is nearly empty. Linda eats pickles straight from the jar. The door opens. Tracy enters, drunk and smiling.

LINDA  
(whispering)  
How was it?

TRACY  
I met someone!

LINDA  
Good for you!

Tracy stumbles toward the couch and kicks off her high heels.

TRACY  
He's in the hallway.

LINDA  
He's here?!

TRACY  
His place is being exterminated.  
Hope that's okay.

LINDA  
It's YOUR apartment.

TRACY  
I really need to get laid.

Linda brings the pickle jar to the fridge.

LINDA  
It's fine. Jules and I can just  
stay in Victoria's room.

TRACY  
You're the best.

Linda wakes Julian up. Tracy goes to open the door.

LINDA  
C'mon, honey. We're gonna sleep in  
Vickie's room.

She leads a very sleepy Julian into the hall. He walks the rest of the way to Victoria's room.

TRACY  
 (to the hallway)  
 Come on in. Meet my roommates.

Linda turns around. Her jaw drops as Alvin enters.

ALVIN  
 Honey, I'm home!

LINDA  
 Alvin!

TRACY  
 You two know each other?

Alvin steps towards Linda. She backs away.

ALVIN  
 You changed your hair. Looks good.

LINDA  
 STAY AWAY FROM ME!

She grabs the bowl of popcorn and hurls it at Alvin. He bats it away easily.

ALVIN  
 I'm not gonna hurt you. I FOUND  
 you. It's, what do you call it? A  
 GRAND ROMANTIC GESTURE!

HALLWAY

Julian stands in the doorway of Victoria's room, suddenly wide awake. He sees his guitar sitting against the wall. He grabs it, careful not to make noise with the strings.

LINDA (O.S.)  
 Just leave. Please!

Julian creeps down the hall with his back to the wall.

TRACY (O.S.)  
 Somebody want to explain to me  
 what's going on?!

LIVING ROOM

ALVIN  
 Goddammit! I'm trying to man up. I  
 know about the baby.

LINDA  
Tracy, call the police.

Alvin rips the phone cord out of the wall.

ALVIN  
See what you made me do!

Alvin pushes Linda into the wall and pins her against it.

Julian comes around the corner, holding the guitar over his head.

DAYDREAM SEQUENCE - CONCERT VENUE - NIGHT

Julian stands in front of a RABID AUDIENCE, holding the FLYING V above his head.

His eyes are smeared with mascara stains. Sweat covers his brow. He could be in ALICE COOPER'S band.

He brings the guitar down, smashing it on the stage.

END DAYDREAM.

INT. TRACY'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Julian brings the acoustic guitar down onto Alvin's back.

INTERCUT - DAYDREAM AND TRACY'S APARTMENT

The heavy metal fantasy version of Julian smashes the FLYING V to bits as the real-life Julian smashes the acoustic over Alvin's back. The guitar comes down again and again.

END INTERCUT

INT. TRACY'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Julian stands over Alvin, stunned. The neck of the guitar is all that remains of the instrument. He drops it.

Linda takes Julian by the hand and pulls him towards the back door, shoving furniture out of the way.

LINDA  
Fire escape! Quick!

Linda pushes Julian out the back door and follows him onto the landing.

Alvin stands up and stumbles a bit before getting his footing and following after them. Tracy gets in his way, grabbing his shirt.

TRACY

You need to go.

Alvin shoves her away. She lands on the couch.

EXT. ALLEY - NIGHT

Linda and Julian climb down the fire escape. Linda is barefoot and moves slowly. There is a drop of several feet between the stairs and the ground.

JULIAN

Just let go!

Linda lets go and manages to land safely.

The door opens. Alvin looks down and sees Linda and Julian running away from the building.

INT. TRACY'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Alvin re-enters and rushes out the front door, leaving Tracy sitting on the couch, drunk and confused.

EXT. TRACY'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Alvin exits the building and heads toward the alley.

EXT. ALLEY - NIGHT - MOMENTS LATER

Linda and Julian run.

JULIAN

This way!

They head down a side alley and hide behind a dumpster. They bend over, trying to catch their breath.

LINDA

This is bad. This is bad.

A shadow approaches. Julian and Linda make eye contact and duck down.

Alvin walks by, with Terminator-like focus. He scans the alley, decides they aren't there, and walks away.

LINDA (CONT'D)  
We're in serious shit, Jules.

Julian stares at the brick wall across from them. It's covered with flyers and concert posters.

INSERT - CONCERT POSTERS

A row of concert posters are plastered to the wall. One of them stands out. It reads "Brutal Bones - Live on New Year's Eve - with special guests Icepik."

BACK TO SCENE

Julian rips the poster from the wall.

JULIAN  
(wide-eyed)  
I know where we can go.

EXT. SCORPION BALLROOM - NIGHT

Loud music blares from a sleazy rock venue. Outside the backstage door sits LOBO, 25 - enormous, tattooed, shaved head - wearing a shirt that says SECURITY.

Linda and Julian approach the building.

LOBO  
Can't go in there.

The door opens and RICKY, 22, a long haired, unkempt roadie, exits. He rushes past Julian and throws up.

JULIAN  
(to Lobo)  
I need to talk to one of the guys in the band.

LOBO  
Band's onstage.

JULIAN  
The opening band. Icepik. I know their guitar player. His name is Puss. I NEED to talk to him.

Ricky wipes his face off with his shirt and overhears Julian.

LOBO  
Sorry, man. Can't help you.

Ricky walks past Julian. Lobo opens the door and lets him back in.

JULIAN  
You don't understand. This is an emergency.

LINDA  
Let's just go. He's not gonna -

The backstage door opens. Puss pops his head out.

PUSS  
Thor! Holy shit, man! What's up?!

JULIAN  
We need a place to hide out.

PUSS  
Say no more.  
(to Lobo)  
It's cool. They're with me.

They go through the door as Alvin rounds the corner. He sees them and follows. Lobo holds a hand out to stop him.

LOBO  
Can't go in there.

Alvin surprises Lobo by pushing him hard. He falls backward, off his chair and onto the ground. Alvin goes to open the door, but Lobo is on his feet fast, and puts him in a full nelson.

ALVIN  
Jesus! Alright. Get off me!

LOBO  
Get out of here!

Alvin glares at Lobo and spits on the ground. He looks him up and down before deciding this isn't a fight he can win. He crosses the street.

INT. GREEN ROOM - NIGHT

Julian and Linda sit on a ratty old couch backstage. Puss sits next to them, drinking a beer. Ricky holds a bottle of whiskey, alongside other BAND MEMBERS and ROADIES.

PUSS  
You missed a killer show.

LINDA  
(to Julian)  
You KNOW this guy?!

PUSS  
Sat next to each other on the bus.  
You raised a cool kid.

Puss notices Julian's earring. He points to it.

PUSS (CONT'D)  
That new?

Julian nods.

PUSS (CONT'D)  
Kind of makes you look like George  
Michael.

Julian frowns.

LINDA  
I like it, too.

Puss takes his own skull-shaped earring out of his ear and  
hands it to Julian.

PUSS  
Here.

JULIAN  
Really?! Thanks!

Julian replaces the cross earring with the skull.

LINDA  
Uh oh.

Linda looks down. Everyone follows her gaze. There is a  
puddle on the floor at her feet.

PUSS  
That what I think it is?

LINDA  
My water just broke.

RICKY  
Fuckin' A!

EXT. SCORPION BALLROOM - NIGHT

The back door opens. Julian and Ricky help Linda outside. Puss follows behind them. Lobo sits by the door.

RICKY  
(pointing)  
Van's over there.

Julian, Linda, and Ricky head to the van. Puss hangs back and approaches Lobo.

PUSS  
Lobo, we need your help, man. You gotta drive this lady to the hospital.

LOBO  
What about the door?

PUSS  
Everybody else is too drunk to drive. She's about to bust. We gotta help her.

LOBO  
(sighing)  
Give me the keys.

Lobo and Puss get in the van. As it drives away, Alvin watches from across the street.

INT. TOUR VAN - NIGHT

Lobo drives. Ricky sits in the passenger seat, still holding his bottle of whiskey.

In the back, Linda lies on the floor. Julian kneels next to her, holding her hand. Puss digs through a box and pulls out a small Icepik t-shirt and hands it to Julian.

PUSS  
For the baby.

Linda breathes hard and tries to relax. Lobo honks and swerves through traffic.

LINDA  
We almost there!?

PUSS  
I'm not from around here. I have no idea.

Ricky takes a swig of whisky.

                  LOBO  
                  (yelling to the back)  
Almost!

                  RICKY  
                  (to Lobo)  
Wild night, huh?

Lobo, irritated, reaches over, takes the whiskey bottle, and throws it out the window.

                  LINDA  
                  (to Puss)  
You know, for someone named Puss,  
you're a real good guy. I wish I  
knew how to thank you.

                  PUSS  
That's easy. Just name the baby  
after me.

                  LINDA  
                  (laughing)  
Absolutely not.

The van pulls up to the hospital entrance. Lobo parks and gets out.

                  JULIAN  
                  (to Puss)  
Thanks, man. You really saved us.

Puss salutes Julian with heavy metal horns. The back doors open. Lobo reaches in and picks up Linda. He carries her into the hospital. Julian walks beside them.

INT. HOSPITAL WAITING ROOM - MORNING

Julian sits by himself, fidgeting nervously. A NURSE comes out and scans the room.

                  NURSE  
Julian?

Julian stands.

                  JULIAN  
What did you call me?

                  NURSE  
Are you Julian?

JULIAN

Um... yeah.

NURSE

Your mother's okay. You can come back now, if you'd like. Meet your new sister.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

Julian enters Linda's room. She is in bed, holding MARIA - his newborn baby sister - and is fuzzy from the painkillers.

LINDA

Hey there, big brother.

Julian rushes to the bed and beams at the baby.

LINDA (CONT'D)

I named her Maria.

JULIAN

After grandma.

LINDA

Yeah.

JULIAN

Wow... she's... everything.

LINDA

Isn't she precious?

Julian's gaze turns from the baby to his mother. His smile disappears.

JULIAN

What name did you give them when you were admitted to the hospital?

Linda begins to panic.

LINDA

I completely forgot. I was in so much pain. This is bad, Jules.

JULIAN

Your Social Security number? You give them that?

LINDA

I wasn't thinking.

JULIAN

I figured.

LINDA

I'm on a lot of drugs right now,  
honey. You mind taking her from me?

Julian sets Maria down in a bassinet next to Linda's bed.

JULIAN

Your information's in their system.  
It's on the computer. The cops are  
gonna find out.

LINDA

I really messed up.

JULIAN

Doesn't matter.

Linda sits up, nervous and alert.

LINDA

Of course it matters! We gotta go!

She starts to yank out her IV tube. Julian stops her. She struggles, but is too weak to put up much of a fight. She lays back, out of breath.

JULIAN

Stop it. It's over!

LINDA

NOTHING'S OVER!

JULIAN

(resolute)

IT'S OVER.

(looking at Maria)

We can't run anymore. Not with her.  
It's not fair.

LINDA

What are you saying?!

JULIAN

We tried, okay, but what were we  
gonna do? I haven't been to school  
in months 'cause if I use my real  
name, they'll find us. You can't  
get a job or open a bank account or  
even apply for food stamps. We did  
everything we could, and they still  
found us.

(MORE)

JULIAN (CONT'D)

Everywhere we went - every single time. What, are we gonna do this forever? I love you, Mom. All I wanted was for you to be safe and to be with you. But, this baby - my sister - she didn't ask for any of this. She deserves better.

LINDA

So, what, we just give up?

Julian walks to his mother's side. He strokes her face and looks her in the eye.

JULIAN

I have a plan. I have to get out of here before the cops show up. You're gonna be okay. Both of you. I promise.

LINDA

Julian?

JULIAN

I love you, Mom. I always will.

He kisses her on the forehead and a tear runs down his cheek. He turns and leaves the hospital room. Linda stares, stunned, and heartbroken.

INT. BIANCO'S BAKERY OFFICE - DAY

Jerry sits behind his desk, cutting a slice out of a freshly baked loaf of bread. SAL, 30 - a large, ugly enforcer - sits across from him.

Jerry takes a bite of the bread and moans in appreciation.

JERRY

Fresh basil. So good. Try some.

Jerry cuts a slice of the bread and hands it to Sal.

SAL

I'm on a diet.

JERRY

Suit yourself. Where we at on Richie?

SAL

Heading over there now.

Sal gets up from his chair.

JERRY

I like the guy, but he owes what he owes.

SAL

What can you do? A man in your position?

JERRY

Don't hurt him too bad. Just, you know...

SAL

Send a message.

JERRY

Exactly.

Sal exits. Jerry takes another bite of bread.

The phone rings. Jerry picks up the receiver.

AUTOMATED OPERATOR (V.O.)

You have a collect call from...

JULIAN (V.O.)

"Julian."

AUTOMATED OPERATOR (V.O.)

To accept the charges, please stay on the line.

JERRY

Jules! Jesus Christ, kid. You okay?

EXT. PAYPHONE - SAME TIME

Julian stands at a payphone outside a shady gas station.

JULIAN

I'm fine.

JERRY (O.S.)

Where you at?

JULIAN

Albuquerque, but you already know that.

## INTERCUT - PHONE CONVERSATION

JERRY

Yeah, but, WHERE in Albuquerque?  
I'll send someone.

JULIAN

I don't think so. I want a sit  
down. You and me. Face to face.

JERRY

(taken aback)

I'll get on a plane tonight.

JULIAN

Come alone. No cops or anybody  
else. Just you.

Jerry opens a desk drawer and takes out a notepad.

JERRY

Where we meetin'?

END INTERCUT

## INT. HOSPITAL HALLWAY - DAY

Alvin stands outside Linda's room. A nurse wheels baby Maria out and down the hall. He follows.

## EXT. SCORPION BALLROOM - LATE AFTERNOON

A tour van is parked outside. ROADIES load gear through the back door. Lobo stands, supervising. Julian approaches the building.

JULIAN

Hey, Lobo.

LOBO

(surprised)

Kid! How you doin? How's your mom?

JULIAN

Still at the hospital. Had the  
baby.

LOBO

(smiling)

Boy or girl?

JULIAN  
 Girl. Her name's Maria.

LOBO  
 That's great!

JULIAN  
 Hey, I need a favor.

INT. HOSPITAL LOBBY - NIGHT

Two POLICE OFFICERS enter, accompanied by a SOCIAL WORKER who carries a file folder. They approach a RECEPTIONIST.

SOCIAL WORKER  
 I'm looking for Linda Bloom. Can you tell me what room she's in?

Behind them, Alvin walks out of the hospital, holding Maria.

INT. AIRPLANE - NIGHT

The plane has just landed. FLIGHT ATTENDANTS greet PASSENGERS as they exit. Jerry is seated next to the window, but can't get out because the LARGE MAN seated next to him is sleeping. Jerry shakes him.

LARGE MAN  
 (groggy)  
 We there already?

Jerry reaches down and unbuckles the man's seatbelt.

JERRY  
 Move!

The man falls into the aisle. Jerry steps over him and heads toward the exit.

FLIGHT ATTENDANT  
 (overly cheery)  
 Bye-bye now!

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - NIGHT

Linda awakens and looks up to see the Police Officers and Social Worker at the foot of the bed.

POLICE OFFICER 1  
 Linda Bloom, you're under arrest.

Linda looks around the room for Maria. She begins to hyperventilate.

LINDA  
My baby. I gotta say bye to my  
baby. NURSE!

EXT. SCORPION BALLROOM - DAY

Lobo stands outside the backstage entrance, wearing street clothes. A taxi cab pulls up. Jerry gets out, looks the building over, and approaches the door.

LOBO  
You must be Jerry.

Jerry looks up at him, unphased.

JERRY  
And you must have escaped the zoo.

Lobo flexes threateningly, then opens the door. Jerry walks in.

INT. GREEN ROOM - DAY

Julian sits in a chair backstage, next to the same couch as before. The room is mostly dark, illuminated by a few lamps. Jerry enters, followed by Lobo.

JERRY  
There he is! You're a sight for  
sore eyes. I been worried sick.

Jerry opens his arms for a hug, but Julian remains seated. Lobo points to the couch.

JERRY (CONT'D)  
That's how it's gonna be?

Jerry sits. They stare at each other. Lobo stands in the corner with his arms folded.

JULIAN  
Hi, Dad.

JERRY  
What's with the earring? What are  
you, Elton John?

Jerry laughs. Julian does not.

JERRY (CONT'D)

You have any idea what I've been through, tryin' to find you?

JULIAN

You have any idea what I've been through, tryin' not to be found?

JERRY

I've got to hand it to you. You and your mother play a mean game of hide and seek. It's over now.

Julian stands and turns away from his father. Jerry starts to get up, too, but Lobo cracks his knuckles and he thinks better of it.

JULIAN

You're right. It's over. You win. I'll go with you.

Julian turns around and faces his father.

JULIAN (CONT'D)

But, I have conditions.

JERRY

(amused)

He has conditions? Okay, let's hear it.

JULIAN

Mom goes free. You drop all charges against her.

JERRY

Anything else?

JULIAN

Take care of Alvin. I want to make sure he never gets near her or my sister again. I need to know they're safe.

JERRY

That's his child. You're askin' a lot.

Julian kicks the chair over. Lobo uncrosses his arms.

JULIAN

(fuming)

YOU'RE askin' a lot! And you're gonna GET what you want.

(MORE)

JULIAN (CONT'D)

But, you gotta do right by her.  
She's my MOTHER!

Julian's emotions have gotten the best of him. He takes a moment to gather himself.

JULIAN (CONT'D)

(calm)

Do that for me, and I'll go. I'll play nice. Give Yvette the perfect little family she's always wanted.

JERRY

You realize I don't have to do any of this. Cops have your mother. I've got custody. What, are you gonna live on the streets? C'mon.

Julian picks up the chair he knocked over and sits down.

JULIAN

I know who you are, Dad. Who you REALLY are. If you don't do this, the police are gonna find out.

JERRY

You don't know shit.

JULIAN

I know your bakery's a front. That you're a criminal. Where you keep the real money. I know more than you think.

JERRY

Jesus Christ, kid.

JULIAN

I overheard a lot last summer. You gotta be more careful - young minds are impressionable.

JERRY

You'll never prove--

JULIAN

I'm not an idiot. I know you could cover your tracks, but that's a lot more work than what I'm asking you to do.

JERRY

Let me think about it.

Julian stands. He is done negotiating.

JULIAN

There's nothin' to think about. I'm gonna give you everything you want. All you have to do is the right thing. She deserves at least that.

Jerry thinks for a moment, then stands. Lobo steps forward, but Julian waves him off.

JERRY

You got yourself a deal.

EXT. BERNALILLO COUNTY JAIL - DAY

Michelle and Patience wait outside. Linda exits through the front doors and they immediately greet her with hugs.

INT. APARTMENT - DAY

Alvin sits, drinking a beer. Baby Maria is on the couch next to him.

The door opens. Sal bursts in, followed by Norman. Sal picks up Alvin and throws him against the wall. Norman picks up the baby and dotes over her.

EXT. BIANCO HOUSE - DAY

Jerry's car pulls into the driveway of his very nice Florida home. He and Julian get out. Yvette runs to greet them, hugging Julian and fawning over him.

EXT. ALBUQUERQUE APARTMENT - DAY

Linda opens the front door of a new apartment. Outside, Norman stands with baby Maria. She smiles as he hands the baby over.

EXT. MEXICAN BORDER - DAY

Sal drives a car across the border into Mexico.

EXT. FIELD IN MEXICO - DAY

Sal opens the trunk of his car and pulls a badly beaten Alvin onto the ground. Sal pulls out a gun and points it at him.

SAL

We ever find you in the States  
again, I'll bring you back here to  
bury, understand?

ALVIN

Yeah, yeah, I get it.

Sal gets back in his car and drives away.

INT. JERRY'S DINING ROOM - NIGHT

Jerry and Julian sit at the table. Yvette enters, carrying a birthday cake. Julian smiles complacently and blows the candles out.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

That time, on the run with my  
mother, was the greatest adventure  
of my life.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

Julian sits at the table, talking on a cordless phone. Yvette watches from the doorway with concern.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

I didn't get to see her during my  
teenage years but sometimes, I'd  
get to talk to her on the phone.

INT. JERRY'S HOUSE - DAY

Julian answers the front door. A UPS DRIVER delivers a package.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

She'd send presents on my birthday  
and Christmas...

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Julian sleeps. The cartoon picture of "Cassie" that his mother drew on the bus is tacked to the wall. On the nightstand is a framed picture of Maria, now three years old.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

...along with pictures of my little  
sister.

EXT. JERRY'S HOUSE - NIGHT

POLICE OFFICERS escort Jerry out of the house in handcuffs. Yvette and Julian watch from the porch as he is loaded into the backseat of a police car.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

Eventually, my father did go to jail. I never ratted him out, but he wasn't the smartest criminal. It finally caught up to him.

INT. JERRY'S DINING ROOM - NIGHT

Julian, now SIXTEEN years-old, sits across the dinner table from Yvette.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

With him in prison, it was just me and Yvette.

EXT. FOOTBALL FIELD - DAY

A high school commencement ceremony takes place. Julian, now EIGHTEEN, walks across the stage and accepts his diploma. He sees Yvette in the crowd, clapping for him.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

To her credit, she was a pretty decent stepmom.

EXT. HOUSE - DAY

Julian loads bags and a guitar case into the back of a pickup truck. Yvette stands next to him, and gives him a big hug.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

I did okay in school. Wasn't valedictorian or anything, but my grades were good enough to get me into college.

EXT. TRUCK - DAY

The sun is rising as Julian drives down the highway.

MUSIC CUE: Bittersweet 90's metal, like "Mama I'm Coming Home" by Ozzy Osbourne

NARRATOR (V.O.)  
I decided on a small school in  
Oklahoma.

INSERT - BILLBOARD

It reads "Northern Oklahoma University - Home of the  
Dustbowls."

BACK TO SCENE

Julian stares out the window as he drives.

NARRATOR (V.O.)  
They offered me a scholarship,  
which was good, 'cause after legal  
fees and the loss of the bakery, my  
dad and Yvette couldn't afford  
tuition. The only thing the  
scholarship didn't cover was  
housing.

Julian passes a movie theater.

INSERT - THEATER MARQUEE

The sign lists the current films - *TITANIC*, *LETHAL WEAPON 4*,  
and *ARMAGEDDON*.

EXT. SMALL HOUSE - DAY

Julian pulls into the driveway of a cozy little house, parks,  
and gets out of the truck.

NARRATOR (V.O.)  
Luckily, I found a place to stay.

The front door opens. Linda comes out. She gives Julian a hug  
and is unable to hold back tears of joy.

Maria, now six-years-old, appears in the doorway. Julian gets  
down on his knees to look at her.

INT. LECTURE HALL - DAY

Julian sits in class among other COLLEGE STUDENTS.

NARRATOR (V.O.)  
And I never forgot that promise I  
made my mom...

The professor finishes speaking. Students stand up and begin to exit the classroom.

INT. COLLEGE HALLWAY - DAY

Julian exits the lecture hall and stops in front of a bulletin board.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

To not let life get in the way of  
me making music.

INSERT - BULLETIN BOARD

Among a cluttered series of notices is a flyer. It says "Metal Band needs guitarist." At the bottom, a phone number is written multiple times, on tabs meant to be torn off.

BACK TO SCENE

Julian tears off one of the tabs with the phone number.

INT. GARAGE - DAY

A group of long-haired MUSICIANS sit around. A dejected GUITAR PLAYER exits.

Sitting at a drum kit is TED, all grown-up, still skinny, with the same skater boy haircut.

Julian walks in, holding his guitar.

JULIAN

Ted?!

Ted stares at Julian like he's seeing a ghost.

TED

Julian?!

Julian grins big.

JULIAN

Call me Thor.

FADE OUT.

THE END