

DOWN THE ROAD

Written by
Robert Young

Copyright © 2020

541-729-4693
areswhy@gmail.com

EXT. CLEAR CUT - EARLY MORNING

A broken-down double-wide trailer sits among an open area of tree stubs. Surrounding the trailer are several vehicles in various states of repair as well as machine parts and assorted trash.

WOMAN #1 (OS)
You could've called. We have a phone,
you know.

INT. TRAILER, KITCHEN, STOVE - DAY

A woman's hands frying eggs and cooking pancakes.

WOMAN #1 (OS)
It wouldn't have taken much to have
just given us a call.

INT. TRAILER, KITCHEN - DAY

A kid's feet with well-worn sneakers. Breakfast sounds. (OS)

WOMAN #1 (OS)
That's not asking too much. It's
just...

MAN #1 (OS)
Shut it!

WOMAN #2 (OS)
You stop that, Daddy! She don't
deserve that.

WOMAN #1 (OS)
I was just worried when you didn't
come home.

INT. TRAILER, KITCHEN - DAY

A man's feet wearing beat-up work boots.

WOMAN #1 (OS)
You should've...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MAN #1 (OS)
Godammit!

The man's feet move quickly to a pair of women's feet in worn sandals, and a scuffle ensues.

WOMAN #2 (OS)
Stop it!

MAN #2 (OS)
Leave her be!

As two more pairs of feet (man and woman) enter the fray, the kid's feet run from the kitchen.

EXT. TRAILER, ENTRANCE - DAY

The kid's feet burst from the front door and across the porch.

EXT. TRAILER - DAY

The kid's feet race past the "yard" and clear cut to some standing trees. There, behind a massive cedar tree, the feet come to rest.

EXT. COTTAGE IN THE WOODS - DAY

A modest cottage sits in a wooded area. Nearby are a barn, a small, fenced garden, fruit trees in a clearing, and groupings of brightly colored fall flowers punctuating the walkways.

INT. COTTAGE, BATHROOM - DAY

TIM HAWKINS (40s) stands at the sink, finishing up shaving and staring intently at himself in the mirror. He is shirtless, revealing a medium/athletic build.

EMILY (OS)
Timmy, you're going to be late!

Tim wipes his face and puts on a shirt.

TIM
Be right there, honey!

INT. COTTAGE, SUNROOM - DAY

Tim enters, wearing a mismatched tie, carrying a small backpack. EMILY HAWKINS (30s) is sitting behind an easel, painting. She looks over and stifles a laugh. Emily is petite, with long blond hair.

TIM

What. What?

EMILY

Your...tie?

Tim leans over and kisses her cheek.

TIM

It's impressionistic.

She laughs.

EMILY

Yes, that will certainly make an impression. (a beat) Ready for your first day of school, young man?

TIM

Yeah, but I'd rather be staying here with you.

EMILY

Awww. Time with me. That's sweet.

TIM

We've got so much to do. I really should be here.

EMILY

(laughs)

We've got months ahead of us.

TIM

It's gonna go fast.

He brightens and pats her stomach.

TIM (cont'd)

Remember now, you're painting for two.

She beams at him, takes his hand in both of hers, and looks into his eyes.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

EMILY

You have yourself an awesome day, Mr. Hawkins. (gives him a nudge) Now get going or you're going to be late.

EXT. COTTAGE - DAY

Tim exits the house and walks by OCHO, sleeping on the porch. Ocho is an old, mixed-breed, medium-sized mutt. He opens his eyes, lifts his head, and watches Tim walk toward the barn. Tim stops halfway and looks back at the dog.

TIM

Well, come on.

Ocho bounds after him.

INT. BARN - DAY

Tim loads the dog into his '55 Ford pickup. The truck, a classic, is in its original state, except for the tinted windows.

EXT. COTTAGE - DAY

Tim drives the truck past the cottage and down the lane lined by trees displaying early signs of fall.

EXT. HIGHWAY - DAY

Tim turns the truck onto the county highway, flips on the radio (classic rock), and drives.

EXT. TOWN OF CEDAR CREEK - DAY

Tim's pickup passes the sign that marks the town: "Cedar Creek, pop. 1,951. A Safe Haven."

INT. TIM'S PICKUP - DAY

Tim hears a short bleep and looks into his rearview mirror. He sees a police car with its lights flashing.

EXT. CEDAR CREEK, MAIN STREET - DAY

Tim's pickup is stopped on the side of the street. The police car sits behind it. A female police officer emerges and walks toward to Tim's truck.

EXT. TIM'S PICKUP - DAY

Officer AMBER MCKENZIE (40s) steps up to the truck. She's medium built and fit, with a pretty face.

AMBER
License and registration, sir.

TIM
C'mon Amber.

AMBER
License and registration, sir.

He reaches into the glove compartment and then his wallet.

TIM
Don't you have anything better to do today?

He passes over his documents and she examines them.

TIM (cont'd)
Gees, Amber, it's the first day. I've got lots to do. (pauses) What are you stopping me for anyway?

She gives him a hard stare, then breaks into a smile.

AMBER
I just wanted to see you.

He sighs.

She reaches over and touches his hand.

AMBER (cont'd)
I miss you.

He pulls away.

TIM
This is not fair.

AMBER
Don't you miss me, Tim?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

TIM
I gotta go, Amber. I really do.

Amber hands Tim his documents and steps back from the truck. Passersby on the sidewalk have slowed to watch and listen.

AMBER
(in a loud voice)
And I want you to keep that speed
down when you're driving in this
town.

EXT. CEDAR CREEK, MAIN STREET - DAY

Tim drives off in his pickup. He talks on his cell phone.

TIM (OS)
Yes, I'd like to speak with Chief
Bennett.

INT. CEDAR CREEK ELEMENTARY SCHOOL, CLASSROOM - DAY

Tim flies around the classroom, readying it for the day. MIGUEL PEREZ (50s) appears in the doorway. He's muscular-thick with a broad smile and long, black hair pulled into a ponytail.

MIGUEL
You sleep in or something?

TIM
Nah...I got pulled over.

MIGUEL
Amber?

TIM
Who else?

MIGUEL
(chuckles)
She still got the hots for you?

Tim stops what he's doing and stares at Miguel.

TIM
That's *not* funny.

MIGUEL
Well, does she?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

TIM
Stop, will ya? We only went out a couple times. Before Emily. She knows I'm happy now.

MIGUEL
Nah, I think you're still on her caseload. (laughs)

School bell rings.

MIGUEL (cont'd)
Have a good one!

He leaves, then pops his head back into the room.

MIGUEL (cont'd)
Hey, don't forget, amigo. We're stoppin' by Lucky's today and liftin' a glass to the new year.

INT. CEDAR CREEK ELEMENTARY SCHOOL, CLASSROOM - DAY

Twenty fourth graders sit on a colorful carpet at the front of the room. Tim faces them, sitting on a stool. Ocho lies at his feet.

TIM
(with enthusiasm)
...and so, my friends, prepare yourself for the Best. Year. Ever. You will be math masters, reading royalty, writing wonders, and experts on wherever your curiosity takes you.

The door to the classroom flies open and VIRGIL (STUB) STANTON (50s) appears. He is a short, fire hydrant of a man, with close-cropped gray hair, a leathery face, and wearing beat-up work boots.

Next to him is nine-year-old CODY STANTON. Cody is the opposite of his father: tall and rail-thin, with long unkempt hair. On his feet: well-worn sneakers.

Stub shoves Cody into the room and Cody stumbles, but regains his balance. His hair covers his face and he makes no attempt to push it away. His obscured gaze is aimed at the floor.

STUB
This here is Cody Stanton. He won't be late again. Ever.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Tim rises and walks to the boy.

TIM

We welcome you, Cody. Come join us.

Tim leads Cody to the carpet and guides him to spot near his stool and Ocho. Cody sits.

TIM (cont'd)

Now, where were we? Ahhh, that's right. I was telling you what a fantastic year this is going to be.

Stub glowers from the doorway.

TIM (cont'd)

And we're going to do it all with the help of Ocho, the Wonder Dog.

Hearing his name, Ocho thumps his tail. The kids buzz with excitement. Cody pushes back his hair, revealing his kind, angelic face. He reaches over and lightly touches the dog.

Stub frowns, shakes his head, and leaves, shutting the door loudly.

INT. CEDAR CREEK POLICE STATION, CHIEF BENNETT'S OFFICE - DAY

CHIEF BENNETT (50s) works at his desk. A knock comes from the door.

CHIEF BENNETT

Come!

Amber enters.

AMBER

You wanted to see me, sir.

CHIEF BENNETT

Yeah, McKenzie, I got a call this morning. Guy by the name of Hawkins said you were harassing him. Pulled him over for no reason.

She laughs.

AMBER

He's a friend, Chief. I was just joking with him.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CHIEF BENNETT

A joke, huh? Well it wasn't funny to him. And it's not funny to me!

AMBER

Yes, sir.

CHIEF BENNETT

This better be the last time I hear of something like this coming from you, McKenzie.

AMBER

It will be, sir.

INT. CEDAR CREEK ELEMENTARY SCHOOL, CLASSROOM - LATER

Fourth-grade students stand in two circles, one inside the other. Upbeat music plays in the background. When the music stops, the students stop.

TIM

Okay, folks, turn to the closest person in the other circle and introduce yourself. Tell the other person two things about yourself.

The room buzzes with conversation. Tim roams the room, listening and assisting students who need help. CHELSEA, working with Cody, motions for Tim. He walks to her.

CHELSEA

Mr. Hawkins, I can't hear what he's saying.

TIM

Well let's just lean in a bit.

The two of them step closer to Cody and lean their heads toward him.

TIM (cont'd)

Fire away Cody. We want to know about you.

Cody speaks and they listen.

Tim steps away and addresses the group.

TIM (cont'd)

Okay, now, who would like to introduce their partner to the class?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Several students' hands shoot up. Tim points to NATE.

NATE
This here's Brandon. He loves soccer
and is my best friend since
kindergarten.

Both boys grin. Tim points to SASHA.

SASHA
I'd like to introduce Gabby. She
talks a lot and wants to be a lawyer
when she gets older.

Tim chuckles.

TIM
Perfect match.

He points to Chelsea.

CHELSEA
This is Cody. He talks real quiet and
he's got cool hair.

Laughter from the class.

TIM
Is that what he told you?

CHELSEA
Well...not exactly. I couldn't really
hear him so I just added a few
things. It really is cool, though.

More class laughter.

NATE
Mr. Hawkins, isn't it recess time?

Tim looks over at the clock.

TIM
Well, so it is! Where is this day
going? Okay, you are hereby excused
to *WALK* to the door.

The students make for the side door that leads to the
playground. All except Cody, who sits down on the floor next
to a sleeping Ocho.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

TIM (cont'd)
Cody, I have to go down to the
office. Would you be willing to keep
an eye on Ocho while I'm gone?

Cody nods his head.

EXT. CEDAR CREEK ELEMENTARY - DAY

Teachers stand and watch as the buses pull away from the
school.

INT. CEDAR CREEK ELEMENTARY SCHOOL, CLASSROOM

Tim erases his white board with his shirt sleeve. Miguel
enters the room.

MIGUEL
Savin' the district money on
supplies, are you?

TIM
Don't know what happened to my
erasers. Had 'em this morning. Can't
find my markers either.

MIGUEL
The great Cedar Creek Elementary
first-day-of-school mystery. I'll be
happy to share what I have.

TIM
Thanks, man.

MIGUEL
Now let's get out of here.

INT. LUCKY'S BAR AND GRILL - DAY

The dank dive-bar is half-filled with locals, many of them
timber workers, noted by the suspenders they wear. Country
music plays. Tim and Miguel sit at a table away from the bar
and drink from bottles of beer.

MIGUEL
(raising his bottle)
To another year!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

TIM
(touching Miguel's
bottle with his)
Twenty years on the job.

MIGUEL
And twenty-seven for me.

TIM
Here, here!

They drink.

TIM (cont'd)
And here's to a great year!

MIGUEL
And no more talk about bagging it all
and moving to Alaska.

TIM
And no more trying to get me to go to
Mexico instead!

MIGUEL
I told you, I got family there. I
could set you up.

TIM
Yeah, I was just so damn frustrated.
I got into teaching to make a
difference with kids. A real
difference. It just never seems to
happen.

MIGUEL
How can it? We only have them for a
snapshot of the day.

TIM
Yeah, then they're back home, where
the problems start.

MIGUEL
And where the problems continue.

TIM
I guess I'll be making my own
problems soon enough.

They laugh.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

MIGUEL

Ahhh. You two are going to be amazing parents!

Tim takes another drink and ponders it.

TIM

Yeah, but I'm still going to get kids that keep me awake at night. I got one today. Barely speaks. Doesn't interact. Asshole dad. I shudder to think what he goes home to.

MIGUEL

Well at least he has you for part of the day. The kid's lucky.

The two men finish their beers and walk past the bar and toward the door. Stub Stanton is sitting at the bar with friends and notices Tim.

STUB

Hey teach!

Tim and Miguel walk over to the bar.

TIM

Mr. Stanton.

STUB

You're pretty darn slick with your Wonder Mutt talk and all.

Stub laughs. Tim considers him.

STUB (cont'd)

You better keep an eye on that kid of mine.

TIM

Yeah, and why's that?

STUB

'Cause he'll lie to your face and steal you blind!

Stub digs in his jacket pocket and pulls out some markers and erasers.

TIM

Hey, where'd you get those?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

STUB

The kid had these with him when I
picked him up today.

TIM

And I know exactly where he got them.

Tim reaches and Stub pulls them back.

STUB

Now hold on just a minute there.

He looks to his friends sitting around him.

STUB (cont'd)

Don't they say that possession is
nine-tenths of the law?

The friends nod and smile.

STUB (cont'd)

So I guess that makes these mine.

Tim glares.

TIM

Yeah, I see where he gets it from.

Tim and Stub lock eyes, then Tim turns and heads for the door. Miguel follows. Stub throws the markers and erasers. They hit the door and drop to the ground in front of the men. Tim picks them up and opens the door to leave.

EXT. LUCKY'S BAR AND GRILL - DAY

Tim and Miguel step out of the bar and the door slams shut.

MIGUEL

Who the hell was that?

TIM

Two guesses.

MIGUEL

Asshole?

Tim nods as he pockets the markers.

INT. COTTAGE, LIVING ROOM - DAY

Emily is asleep on the couch. Tim walks to her and touches her hand. She opens her eyes, and is startled to see Tim.

EMILY

What? What are you doing home? What time is it?

TIM

It's a little after six.

Emily struggles to a sitting position.

EMILY

Jesus, what am I thinking! I didn't even start dinner yet.

TIM

(embraces her)

It's okay honey. You feeling all right?

EMILY

I was so tired I thought I'd lay down for just a little bit. That was three hours ago!

TIM

It's okay, Emmie. We'll make dinner together.

INT. COTTAGE, DINING ROOM - NIGHT

Tim and Emily eat by candlelight.

EMILY

Mom called today.

TIM

Oh...how's she doing?

EMILY

She's doing fine. Dad too. They send their love.

Silence.

EMILY (cont'd)

She wants to come out. Be here when I deliver.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Tim grimaces.

TIM

We'll see. It's a long way away.

EMILY

I'd like her to be here, Tim. She's always wanted to be a grandma. My brothers haven't been any help.

TIM

Yeah, one hates kids and the other can't keep a job.

EMILY

Mom's so excited.

TIM

I love your mom. Your dad, too. It's just that they...well, she, can be a pain in the ass.

EMILY

They've helped us a lot, Tim. We get to get to live in this beautiful place rent-free.

TIM

We don't need their help.

EMILY

They've given us money too.

TIM

A little bit.

EMILY

Think of all the money we've been able to save since we've lived here. We'll be able to use that down the road.

TIM

Yeah, maybe so.

EXT. CEDAR CREEK ELEMENTARY SCHOOL, PLAYGROUND - DAY

Kids are engaged in a variety of activities: 4-square, swinging, soccer, basketball, chasing, talking in small groups. The recess aide is talks and laughs with a small group of girls. Her back is to the playground.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Cody walks along the playground. When he passes the soccer field, a couple of the boys notice him.

ELI
(points to Cody)
Hey you guys, looks who's here!

BRANDON
Freak show!

NATE
Let's go hunting!

He picks up the soccer ball, runs at Cody and then throws the ball at him. BAM! The ball hits Cody square in the back and knocks him to the ground.

Disoriented, Cody jumps to his feet and takes off running, but cannot outrun the boys who follow and pummel him with the ball several more times.

INT. CEDAR CREEK ELEMENTARY SCHOOL, CLASSROOM - DAY

Tim's students file into his room from the playground.

TIM
Where's Cody? Did anyone see him at recess.

BRANDON
Yeah, we saw him out there. He didn't want to play.

Several boys snicker.

TIM
Where'd he go?

BRANDON
I don't know Mr. Hawkins. We all lined up when the whistle blew. I didn't see him in line.

Tim thinks a moment.

TIM
Alright everyone. Please take out your math books and do the problems at the bottom of page five. They're a review of what we worked on yesterday. I'll be right back.

EXT. CEDAR CREEK ELEMENTARY SCHOOL, PLAYGROUND - DAY

Tim walks along the playground to the surrounding woods. There he spots color behind one of the trees. He walks toward the tree.

EXT. CEDAR CREEK ELEMENTARY SCHOOL, WOODS - DAY

Tim kneels down beside Cody. Cody's face is red and tear-stained.

TIM
Hey, Cody. What's going on?

CODY
Nothing.

TIM
Why are you sitting by this tree?

CODY
I'm just a little tired.

TIM
Are you hurt? Did something happen at recess?

CODY
No, I'm just tired.

TIM
Well, let's have you stop by the nurse's office. It will be more comfortable for you to rest there.

Tim reaches over and helps Cody to his feet.

TIM (cont'd)
Hate to tell you, but you're going to miss a bit of math time. I know how much you love math.

Cody squints his eyes.

CODY
I really...don't like math.

TIM
(smiles)
Yeah, I know.

INT. COTTAGE, DINING ROOM - NIGHT

Tim and Emily sit at the table in candlelight. Emily watches Tim eat.

TIM

So I found out what really happened on the playground with this kid. Some of my boys chased him and nailed him with a soccer ball. Knocked him down.

Tim continues to eat as Emily pushes food around her plate. He goes on.

TIM (cont'd)

The nurse told me after school. Cody spilled it all to her.

He pauses.

TIM (cont'd)

Yeah, I'll talk to Brandon tomorrow. He's the one who the others follow. I'll read him the riot act. He'll get it.

Tim notices Emily is not eating.

TIM (cont'd)

Hey, honey, are you alright?

EMILY

I'm just having a little cramping. I'll be fine.

She winces.

TIM

Cramping? Did that just start? You haven't mentioned it before?

EMILY

It's been just a couple days. Nothing big. It'll get better.

When she winces again, Tim jumps to his feet and to her side.

TIM

I think we should call. They told us that's not a good sign.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

EMILY

(evenly)

No, we're not going to bother the doctor tonight. I'll rest and it will be better in the morning.

TIM

All right, honey. Well, let's get you over to the couch. I'll get a blanket and make you a fire.

He helps her up from her chair.

INT. CEDAR CREEK ELEMENTARY SCHOOL, HALLWAY - DAY

Tim and Brandon stand outside their classroom.

TIM

I know what happened on the playground yesterday.

Brandon looks perplexed.

TIM (cont'd)

You know, with Cody.

BRANDON

We were just having fun. He was running and we were chasing him.

TIM

And the soccer ball? Throwing it at him and knocking him down?

Brandon deflates.

BRANDON

Well that...

TIM

Yeah, that. Why'd you do that? What were you guys thinking?

BRANDON

I don't know. He's just so weird.

TIM

No weirder than you, Brandon. Or me. I don't want to be treated that way. Do you?

Brandon lowers his head and slowly shakes it.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

TIM (cont'd)
Give this some thought, Brandon. What
can you do to make this right?

Principal, PAMELA TURNER (40s), rushes up.

PAMELA
Mr. Hawkins, sorry to interrupt, but
you have a phone call down at the
office. We tried to take a message,
but I think you should take it. Right
now. I got your class.

EXT. COUNTRYSIDE - DAY

Tim's pickup hurtles through the countryside.

EXT. MEDIUM SIZE TOWN, OVERLOOKING THE PACIFIC OCEAN - DAY

Tim's pickup races through traffic, causing some close
calls.

EXT. HOSPITAL - DAY

Tim's pickup wheels pass the sign, COAST REGIONAL HOSPITAL,
and into the parking lot. He emerges from the truck and runs
toward the entrance.

INT. COAST REGIONAL HOSPITAL, ROOM - DAY

Tim enters and sees Emily lying in bed. When she sees him,
she begins to cry.

TIM
Oh, Em...

Emily cries harder. Tim moves to her and gathers her in his
arms.

TIM (cont'd)
It's all right, Em. The doctor said
you'll be fine.

EMILY
But I lost our baby.

When she begins to cry again, Tim holds her closer and
strokes her hair. Tears run down his face.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

TIM
It's okay, honey. It just wasn't
meant to be right now.

EXT. COUNTRYSIDE - DAY

Tim's pickup moves down the road.

EXT. CEDAR GROVE - DAY

Tim slowly drives the pickup through town. They pass by
Amber's squad car. Amber waves but neither Tim nor Emily
wave back.

INT. TIM'S PICKUP - DAY

Tim pulls Emily closer to him.

EMILY
I'm sorry, Timmy. I'm so sorry.

TIM
It's not your fault, honey.

EXT. CEDAR CREEK - DAY

The pickup truck continues through town.

TIM (OS)
Don't worry, Em. Next time will be
better. I promise.

INT. STANTON TRAILER, KITCHEN - DAY

The kitchen cluttered with knick-knacks and neglected
houseplants. EILEEN STANTON (50s), is setting the table. She
is unhealthy thin, with sharp features, disheveled hair, and
a sad face.

Stub enters.

STUB
Where the hell is my goddamn jack? I
had a flat and didn't have a fuckin'
jack! Somebody took it out of my
truck! Who the hell took it?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

EILEEN
(calmly)
I didn't take your jack, Stub.

INT. STANTON TRAILER, CODY'S BEDROOM - DAY

Cody's bedroom is small and spare, a single bed in the middle, a dresser and bookshelf along the walls. The bookshelf is nearly filled. There are no poster or pictures on the walls.

Cody lies on his bed, staring at the ceiling. Next to him lays an open book.

STUB (OS)
Well, who the hell did it then? Was
it Jackie or her soft-headed
boyfriend?

Eileen replies but it is difficult to make out the words.

STUB (OS) (cont'd)
I had to stand along that road like a
goddamn hippie and try to flag
somebody down. The cars...they just
kept going by me.

Eileen's response is muffled.

STUB (OS) (cont'd)
And one of 'em was the boy's goddamn
teacher. Do you believe that? Rolled
right on by!

Cody picks up the book next to him and tries to read.

STUB (OS) (cont'd)
Where the hell is the kid, anyway?
It's time for dinner.

Eileen's response is muffled.

STUB (OS) (cont'd)
(louder)
Cody, you get your ass in here. Now!

Cody puts down his book, rolls on his side, brings his knees to his chest, and closes his eyes.

Silence.

Footsteps pound along the hallway.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

STUB (OS) (cont'd)
You're gonna learn to listen to me
the first time, boy!

Stub bursts into Cody's bedroom.

EXT. CEDAR CREEK ELEMENTARY SCHOOL - DAY

Teachers, including Tim, lead their classes to awaiting buses. Kids' happy voices fill the air.

INT. CEDAR CREEK ELEMENTARY SCHOOL, CLASSROOM - DAY

Tim walks into his classroom. Cody is sitting on the floor at the front of the room and petting Ocho.

TIM
Hey Cody, what's goin' on?

He waits for a response.

TIM (cont'd)
You're supposed to be on your bus. We
gotta get you on the bus!

Tim gently takes Cody's arm and fastwalks him out of the classroom. Ocho follows.

EXT. CEDAR CREEK ELEMENTARY SCHOOL - DAY

Tim races past teachers, including Miguel, to buses slowly pulling away from the curb. Cody lags behind him, followed by Ocho.

Tim runs alongside one of the buses and waves his arms. The bus pulls over and stops. The door opens. Tim leans in and gestures to the driver.

Cody catches up and boards the bus. The door closes and the bus roars off.

Tim and Ocho walk back toward the school. Miguel is waiting for them.

MIGUEL
Got your aerobic exercise in for the
day, huh?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

TIM

He was just sitting in the room,
petting Ocho.

MIGUEL

I'd say he isn't in a big hurry to
get home.

TIM

Yeah. I'm thinking...maybe there's
stuff going on.

MIGUEL

You thinking abuse?

TIM

Or neglect.

MIGUEL

See any marks on him?

TIM

No.

MIGUEL

Has he told you anything?

TIM

No. But the way he acts is making me
suspicious.

MIGUEL

Well, if there's reasonable cause,
you gotta call.

TIM

Yeah, I know. I just don't know if
it's reasonable.

EXT. COTTAGE - DAY

Tim drives his pickup, music blaring, up the lane past the
cottage. A late-model sedan with Idaho plates sits alongside
the cottage.

INT. TIM'S PICKUP - DAY

Tim sighs and turns off the radio.

INT. COTTAGE, KITCHEN - DAY

Tim enters. MARJORIE BRANCH (late 60s) busies herself at the stove. She is a tall and angular and is dressed stylishly under her apron. Her hair is dyed and her face is made up. Classical music plays in the background.

Marjorie rushes to Tim and hugs him.

MARJORIE

Oh, Tim! We're so sorry. You must be devastated.

TIM

Where's Emily?

MARJORIE

We have her resting now. Don't worry, she's doing fine. Why don't you go in and sit down with Eric. He'll make you a drink.

TIM

I don't want a drink. I want to see Emily.

INT. COTTAGE, LIVING ROOM - DAY

Tim enters from the kitchen. ERIC BRANCH (70s) is seated, reading a book and holding a drink. He is pear-shaped and nearly bald. Eric rises and offers his hand. Tim shakes it.

ERIC

Awww, Tim! We had to come when we heard. How're you doing?

TIM

I'm doing okay, Eric. I need to go see Emily.

ERIC

Sure, sure, Tim, you go right ahead. She's in your room resting. I'll make you a drink.

INT. COTTAGE, BEDROOM - DAY

Emily is sleeping when Tim enters. He pulls up a chair next to the bed and watches her.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Emily opens her eyes, sees Tim, and smiles. He lies down beside her.

TIM
(whispers)
When did they get here?

EMILY
(whispers)
A little while ago. They brought in food for dinner. Isn't that nice?

TIM
Are they gonna be staying here? How long are they going to be around?

EMILY
They have a motel room in town. They'll only be here a few days. They just want to be helpful.

TIM
Short and sweet. That'll be helpful.

Emily smiles and kisses him.

EMILY
It'll be okay. Don't worry.

INT. COTTAGE, KITCHEN - NIGHT

Tim, Emily, Marjorie, and Eric sit at the table and finish their dinners. The stove, sink, and counter areas in the background are in disarray with pots, pans, and tools of the cooking trade strewn about.

EMILY
Thanks for making my favorite, Mom.

MARJORIE
Since you were little. What kid likes eggplant parmigiana?

EMILY
Me.

MARJORIE
Well, that's what moms are for: making favorite foods. You'll find that out someday.

Everyone stops eating. Silence.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ERIC

Margie...

MARJORIE

Well, it's true. Next time will be different. I know it.

ERIC

Sure, this is just a bump in the road. You'll have other chances. It'll be all right.

EMILY

I wish we'd all stop saying "It's gonna be alright!" We don't know! We just don't know.

ERIC

Are you going to see a doctor?

TIM

Yeah, we have a visit planned.

ERIC

There's treatments too, if there are problems.

MARJORIE

Don't even say that, Eric. There's no problem. It was just one of those things.

The air has gone out of the room.

MARJORIE (cont'd)

(sighs)

I think the go has left me. I better lie down.

Emily moves to her.

EMILY

Here, let me help you, Mom.

MARJORIE

No, no, I'm fine. It's just that long drive...

Marjorie leaves the room, followed by Emily.

Eric and Tim look over at the disarray.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

ERIC
Looks like we have our job cut out
for us.

INT. COTTAGE, KITCHEN, COOKING AREA - NIGHT

Tim and Eric work at cleaning up.

ERIC
Marge is great in the kitchen...up
until the meal. After that...this.

Tim chuckles.

TIM
But she sure can cook.

ERIC
She's always been a first-rate cook.
She could've had her own restaurant
if she wanted. Would've been awful
hours, though. Our kids were more
important.

The men work in silence.

ERIC (cont'd)
Thing is, we would've been more
prepared for retirement had she
worked. It's going to be tough.

Work continues.

ERIC (cont'd)
We're going to have to sell this
place, Tim. We'll need the money to
live.

An uneasy silence.

TIM
Of course. It's your place.

ERIC
Not right away, though. We can wait a
while. A year if we have to. We
didn't say anything to Emily. Now's
not a good time.

INT. STANTONS' TRAILER, KITCHEN - DAY

JESSE STANTON (late teens) stands at the stove cooking pancakes. She is short and round, with curly hair and a red face.

Cody enters.

CODY
Where's Mom?

JESSE
Well, good morning sleepyhead. I thought you were going to sleep right through your alarm.

CODY
Where is she?

JESSE
She had to go to town. Ellie next door took her. Dad's working.

CODY
How come she had to go to town?

JESSE
I dunno, some kind of business she said. She'll be back later, after you leave for school.

Jesse serves Cody a plate of pancakes.

JESSE (cont'd)
Now, eat up kiddo. The bus will be here soon.

Jesse watches as Cody adds butter and syrup then attacks the pancakes. He's in heaven.

JESSE (cont'd)
You know, I was thinking about all the times we used to read together. Remember that?

Cody mumbles a positive response as he eats.

JESSE (cont'd)
You loved Dr. Suess the best. Remember *The Sneeches*?

CODY
LORAX!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JESSE

Yes, that was a great one! I think you learned to read with *The Cat In The Hat*.

CODY

(enthused)

"And all we could do is sit, sit, sit, sit. And we did not like it, not one little bit."

JESSE

"And then something went bump! How that bump made us jump!

A horn outside sounds.

JESSE (cont'd)

Oh, nooo! The bus. You better get out there.

CODY

Ohhhhh, can't you take me to school?

JESSE

I'd love to honey, but Eddie's got the car. He's working today.

The horn sounds again. Insistent.

INT. SCHOOL BUS - DAY

Cody boards the bus, greeted by a frowning, overweight DRIVER.

DRIVER

Cody, you gotta get out here on time. I got more stops to make. We're already running late.

Cody moves past the driver and starts down the aisle. Most of the seats are filled. He comes to a few seats that are open on the aisle side, but the kids sitting by the windows slide over to block those seats.

Cody continues on.

DRIVER (cont'd)

C'mon, Cody. Find a seat!

As Cody continues down the aisle, some older boys trip him. Cody sprawls to the floor amid laughter.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The driver looks at his inside mirror and does not see Cody walking down the aisle.

The bus continues down the road.

INT. CEDAR CREEK ELEMENTARY SCHOOL, CLASSROOM - DAY

Silent reading time. Everyone, including Tim, sit at their seats reading quietly. Chelsea approaches Tim's desk at the back of the room. Ocho sleeps quietly at Tim's feet.

CHELSEA
(whispers)
Mr. Hawkins.

TIM
Chelsea, this is silent reading time.
All read, no talk.

CHELSEA
But Mr. Hawkins...

TIM
Is this really important?

Chelsea nods.

CHELSEA
Cody's got my lunch. I can see it in
his desk.

TIM
Would you please quietly ask him to
come up here.

Chelsea walks to Cody's desk, taps him, and points to Tim.
Cody slowly walks to the back of the room.

TIM (cont'd)
(whispers)
Cody, do you have something in your
desk that doesn't belong to you?

Cody shakes his head no.

TIM (cont'd)
Do we need to go look?

Cody slumps and slowly shakes his head.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

TIM (cont'd)
Please return it when we leave for
recess in a few minutes.

Cody kneels down and pets Ocho.

TIM (cont'd)
Did you hear me, Cody.

Cody nods.

INT. CEDAR CREEK ELEMENTARY SCHOOL, TEACHERS' ROOM - DAY

Several teachers are talking and eating lunch at tables spread around the room. Tim and Miguel sit at one of the tables.

MIGUEL
So, did he put the lunch back?

TIM
Yeah, he did.

MIGUEL
I would think he'd be one of the free
lunch kids.

TIM
He is.

Miguel looks puzzled.

INT. STANTONS' TRAILER, KITCHEN - DAY

Cody enters. Eileen works at the sink, peeling potatoes. Only the right side of her face is visible.

CODY
Can I play my game?

EILEEN
You got chores. You know that.

CODY
But Eddie's not here. He always takes
it over!

Eileen turns to face him, exposing a large, ugly bruise on the left side of her face.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

EILEEN
Did you hear me?

CODY
What happened to your face?

Eileen covers the side of her face and turns away.

EXT. COTTAGE - DAY

Eric stands outside the barn as Tim drives up. After parking, Tim and Ocho join him.

ERIC
You two have done a real nice job
taking care of the place. I
appreciate that.

TIM
Thanks for letting us live here.
We've been able save up some money.

A pause as both men look around.

ERIC
You know, I did most of the work here
myself.

TIM
Yeah.

ERIC
I think I'm really gonna miss the
place.

TIM
So's Emily. She loves it here.

INT. COTTAGE, KITCHEN - NIGHT

Marjorie has made another grand dinner, which the four of them are enjoying at the table. Emily's mood has lifted.

EMILY
I'm so grateful you came, Mom and
Dad. I feel so much better today.

ERIC
Just a bump in the road, honey.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

EMILY

I hope you'll be able to come more often now that Dad's not working.

Tim and Eric exchange glances.

MARJORIE

We'd love that, wouldn't we dear.

A pause.

ERIC

Of course. Absolutely!

EXT. COTTAGE - DAY

Tim exits the house and walks by Ocho, sleeping on the porch. Tim stops halfway to the barn and looks back at the dog.

TIM

Well, come on.

The dog doesn't move. Tim returns to the porch, leans over, and nudges the dog.

TIM (cont'd)

Hey, boy, it's time for school. Let's go!

Ocho opens his eyes. He looks old and tired. Tim studies him a moment.

TIM (cont'd)

Looks like you could use a day off. You just rest easy here and I'll be back before you know it.

INT. CEDAR CREEK ELEMENTARY SCHOOL, CLASSROOM - DAY

Tim greets his students as they enter the classroom. Cody slowly walks in. He is disheveled, his hair wild, his clothes looking like he slept in them.

TIM

Morning Cody.

CODY

Where's Ocho?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

TIM
He's at home. Needed a day off.

Tears spring to Cody's eyes and he gasps for breath.

TIM (cont'd)
Hey, what's goin' on, Cody?

CODY
I...I...he...

As the students hang coats and backpacks and prepare for the day, Tim gently takes Cody's arm and leads him out of the classroom.

INT. CEDAR CREEK ELEMENTARY SCHOOL, HALLWAY - DAY

Tim and Cody stand outside the classroom.

TIM
Can you tell me what's goin' on?

As tears stream down his face, Cody tries to speak but is unable.

TIM (cont'd)
It's okay, Cody, let's take a walk down to the nurse's office. She'll help us sort this out.

INT. CEDAR CREEK ELEMENTARY SCHOOL, CLASSROOM - DAY

All the desks are occupied, except Cody's. The students are working quietly. Tim surveys the class then stands at the front of the room.

TIM
Okay, folks, you've worked hard this morning and earned some sunshine. You are excused for recess. Please WALK to door.

Excited students move to the door and the beautiful day that awaits them.

INT. CEDAR CREEK ELEMENTARY SCHOOL, NURSE'S OFFICE - DAY

Tim enters. The room is small and simple neatly organized. A bench-couch lines one wall, opposite a sink with cupboards and shelves. Cody sleeps on the couch.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MELINDA, the nurse, sits behind a neatly organized desk at the far end of the room. She is middle-aged, short, and thin, with tightly curled hair and bright-colored glasses.

Melinda rises quickly and puts her finger to her lips.

MELINDA

Shhh...he's been sleeping all morning.

She leads Tim to the far end of the room. They talk in hushed voices.

MELINDA

I got him some clean clothes. Put his in the wash. Said he didn't feel good. Wanted to lie down.

TIM

Did he tell you anything? Why he was so upset?

MELINDA

Not a thing. I asked him if he thought he should go home today, and he said no. He was adamant. Looked like he was going to cry again.

TIM

Something's going on there.

MELINDA

We're going to have to call.

TIM

(startled)

Whatdaya mean?

MELINDA

I mean...if we have reasonable cause to think any student is being abused or neglected, we have to report it. We don't have a choice. It's the law.

TIM

But we don't know for sure.

MELINDA

Reasonable cause.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

TIM

His dad's crazy. If he wasn't hitting Cody before, he'll sure start if he gets turned in. And, if he was, it's gonna get worse.

MELINDA

We don't have a choice.

Tim looks over at Cody sleeping. He stirs and makes low whimpering sounds.

TIM

I'll call.

EXT. CEDAR CREEK ELEMENTARY SCHOOL - DAY

A Cedar Creek police car sits outside the building.

INT. CEDAR CREEK ELEMENTARY SCHOOL, OUTSIDE NURSE'S OFFICE - DAY

Amber and Cody emerge from the office.

AMBER

It was really good meeting you Cody.
Thanks for taking the time to talk to me.

Cody looks at the floor and walks toward his classroom.
Amber studies him as he leaves.

EXT. CEDAR CREEK POLICE STATION - DAY

Tim pulls up in his pickup, gets out, and enters the police station.

INT. CEDAR CREEK POLICE STATION, INTERVIEW ROOM - DAY

Tim and Amber enter. Amber closes the door behind her. They sit opposite at a table.

TIM

Couldn't you have just told me over the phone what's going on?

AMBER

These things are better done in person.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

TIM

So what did you find out? What'd he say?

AMBER

Not a whole lot. Nothing real solid, but there are some signs: he hadn't changed his clothes. They smelled like urine, according to Melinda. His reaction when she asked if he wanted to go home. There may have been some marks on his back, too. Just not real defined.

TIM

What are you going to do?

AMBER

I'm going to go out there. Check out the house, interview the parents.

TIM

By yourself?

AMBER

Of course!

TIM

Well, his dad can be...

AMBER

I know about his dad. I've been out there before.

She reaches over and puts her hand on his.

AMBER (cont'd)

But thanks for caring.

Tim slides his hand out from under hers, stands, and heads for the door.

AMBER (cont'd)

I'll be in touch.

EXT. COTTAGE - DAY

Pickup drives up, parks in the barn. Tim emerges and walks to the porch. Ocho is lying in his bed, same place he was when Tim left this morning.

Tim leans over and pets the dog.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

TIM
Hey boy, how're you doing?

Ocho thumps his tail. As he struggles to get up, Tim assists.

TIM (cont'd)
Come on inside, buddy. I'll make you
you a fire.

INT. COTTAGE, LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

A fire crackles in the fireplace. Ocho lies nearby. Tim and Emily sit on the couch, drinking tea.

EMILY
You really think we need to take him
in?

TIM
Yeah, I'd like to have the vet look
at him.

EMILY
You think something's wrong?

TIM
Nah, probably not. Maybe he just ate
something that didn't agree with him.
Maybe he's just getting old.

EMILY
He didn't eat a thing today. Barely
drank any water either. I had to coax
him off his bed.

TIM
I'll get him in tomorrow.

EMILY
And remember, we go to the doctor's
later this week.

TIM
Yeah, how're you feeling about that?

EMILY
I just want to find out what's going
on? I want to find out what ha...

She chokes on the word and tries to hold back tears. Tim embraces her.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

TIM
We'll find out, honey. And then we'll
move on from there. Just a bump in
the road, like your dad said.

EXT. STANTON'S TRAILER - NIGHT

Cedar Creek police car pulls up in front of the house. Amber
gets out of the car and walks to the front door.

INT. STANTON TRAILER, ENTRY - NIGHT

A knock at the door. Stub opens it and comes face-to-face
with Amber.

AMBER
Evening, Mr. Stanton.

STUB
What do you want?

AMBER
I need to ask you and your wife a few
questions. May I come in?

STUB
You sure as hell may not.

AMBER
Well then, I'd like to ask you to
come out here so we can talk.

She looks over his shoulder to see Eileen working in the
kitchen.

AMBER (cont'd)
I'd like your wife to join us.

STUB
She's busy.

AMBER
(calling past Stub)
Mrs. Stanton, this is Officer
McKenzie. I need to speak with you a
moment.

EXT. STANTON TRAILER, PORCH - NIGHT

Amber stands on the dimly lit porch with a nervous Eileen and agitated Stub. Eileen positions herself so that her bruised face is in the shadows.

AMBER

Mr. and Mrs. Stanton, someone has reported that Cody might not be getting the care he needs.

STUB

Who the hell?

EILEEN

What?!

STUB

It's that goddamned teacher!

AMBER

All reporting is confidential. I'm not able to share the name of the reporter.

STUB

You don't have to. I know who it was.

EILEEN

You're not going to take our Cody, are you?

AMBER

We just want to make sure Cody is getting the care he needs: enough food, clean clothes, medical care, a safe environment.

STUB

Of course he does! What the hell do you think we are?

AMBER

He came to school today in clothes that hadn't been washed in a long time. They smelled like urine.

STUB

(turning on Eileen)

Is he sleeping in his clothes again? And pissing in them? Jesus Christ!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

EILEEN

Our washer's been acting up.

AMBER

You'll need to find a way so that Cody is not coming to school in soiled clothes. And I'll need to take a walk through your house to make sure there's no health issues in there.

STUB

The hell you will!

AMBER

If you'd prefer, I can come out here with a search warrant and another officer.

Stony silence.

AMBER (cont'd)

Listen, we don't want to be in your business. We just have to make sure your son is safe.

More silence. Eileen looks to Stub. He snorts and opens the door. Eileen leads and Amber follows.

EXT. CEDAR CREEK, MAIN STREET - DAY

Tim drives his pickup through town.

INT. TIM'S PICKUP - DAY

Tim looks into the rear view mirror. Amber, in her police car, is following him.

EXT. CEDAR CREEK ELEMENTARY SCHOOL, PARKING LOT - DAY

Tim drives in and parks. Amber pulls up next to him, rolls down her window, and motions Tim to do the same. He does.

AMBER

Mornin' Tim!

TIM

What's going on?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

AMBER

You look a little tired. You get enough sleep?

TIM

What do you want, Amber?

AMBER

Visited the Stantons last night.

A pause.

TIM

And? What'd they say?

AMBER

Not much. Said their washing machine isn't working.

TIM

So that's it? They have an excuse so they're off the hook? What about the other stuff? The way he acts. Not wanting to go home. They're probably knocking him around.

AMBER

We don't have any evidence of that. I checked the house, too. It's not the tidiest, but there's no safety issues.

TIM

So there's nothing we can do?

AMBER

Just keep an eye on him. Get in touch if you notice anything.

TIM

(sarcastic)

Great...

AMBER

Oh, there's one other thing: Stub knows it's you that reported it.

TIM

What?! Did you tell him? You said...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

AMBER

I told you it was confidential, and it is. I didn't tell him, and I didn't confirm it.

TIM

This is just what I need now.

AMBER

Listen, if he gives you any trouble, call me. (a beat) You can even call me if he doesn't give you any trouble.

She smiles. He rolls up his window.

INT. CEDAR CREEK ELEMENTARY SCHOOL, CLASSROOM - DAY

The room is empty except for Ocho, curled up in his bed and Cody, sitting alongside of him, reading. Tim enters.

TIM

You sure you don't want to go to recess, Cody?

CODY

Nah.

Tim approaches him, holding a paper. He shows it to Cody.

TIM

This your paper, Cody?

Cody nods.

TIM (cont'd)

I'm a little confused. Why'd you write your name as Cameron?

Cody shrugs.

TIM (cont'd)

You like that name?

Cody nods.

TIM (cont'd)

Would you like to put it on your papers?

Another nod.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

TIM (cont'd)
I guess that would be okay. Just put
you last name there too so I'll
remember.

Cody nods and keeps petting Ocho.

TIM (cont'd)
You doin' okay today?

CODY
Ocho is acting funny.

TIM
Yeah, his balance is off. He's a
little out of sorts.

CODY
He's gonna be okay though, right?

TIM
Yeah, sure, he's gonna be fine.

INT. VET'S OFFICE, EXAMINING ROOM - DAY

Tim pets Ocho, who is lying on the exam table. The VET
enters.

VET
It's not good, Tim. The scan shows a
tumor near the brain. It's not big,
but it's in a bad place.

TIM
So, what can we do? Surgery?

VET
It's not just there, Tim. The chest
x-ray shows some masses in his lungs.

TIM
So what can we do?

The vet sighs and pats Ocho.

VET
Given his age, the placement of the
tumor, and metastases, I think the
best thing we can do is make him
comfortable.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

TIM

How long?

VET

Hard to say. Could be as short as a week or two. Might even be a year. Doubtful beyond that.

INT. COTTAGE, LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Emily and Tim sit on the couch. Ocho lies between them. Emily reaches over and pets the dog.

EMILY

Such a good boy.

TIM

Yeah.

EMILY

So what did the vet say?

TIM

He said Ocho is gettin' old.

EMILY

Awww...poor boy. Gettin' old isn't for the faint of heart.

TIM

Sure isn't.

Emily gets up and retrieves a piece of paper from the table. She carries it to the couch and hands it to Tim.

EMILY

I did this today. I was feeling nostalgic.

It is a watercolor painting of the cottage.

TIM

It's beautiful, Em. You really captured the place.

EMILY

Some of my earliest memories are about coming here. Playing in the woods. The smell after it rained.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

TIM

Yeah, you were really lucky to have this place.

EMILY

And we're lucky to have it now.

TIM

You ever think you might want to live somewhere else?

EMILY

Maybe, but I can't imagine where. I love this place.

INT. LUCKY'S BAR AND GRILL - DAY

Tim and Miguel sit at a table drinking bottles of beer.

MIGUEL

So her dad really has to sell?

TIM

So he says. (a beat) He does. Never put much away for retirement. Raised three kids. That was the priority.

MIGUEL

Shit, that's too bad. Well, use that as a lesson: save some money.

TIM

You got that right.

MIGUEL

How'd Cody do today?

TIM

Ehhh...not bad I guess. He's really distant from the other kids. Just wants to hang out with the dog.

MIGUEL

You tell him?

TIM

Nah...I didn't even tell Emily. Didn't want to upset her. We got that doctor's visit tomorrow. We'll be talkin' babies.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MIGUEL
Good luck with that.

Tim nods. They take their last swallows, flip some bills on the table, and make for the door.

EXT. LUCKY'S BAR AND GRILL - DAY

As Tim and Miguel exit, Stub and a few of his friends approach the door.

STUB
Well, lookee here...dumb and dumber.

Miguel glares at Stub and Tim attempts to pass by, but Stub grabs his arm.

STUB (cont'd)
Pretty quiet now, are we?

TIM
I don't have anything to say to you.

STUB
Course not. You already said it...to your girlfriend cop.

Tim pushes Stub's arm away.

TIM
You don't know that!

Stub grabs Tim's arm hard and shoves him.

STUB
You're not gonna fuck with my family,
I don't care who the hell you are!

Miguel pushes himself between the two, separating them. Stub's friends move toward Miguel.

MIGUEL
You want some?

The men freeze. Miguel takes Tim by the arm and walks him toward the parking lot.

STUB
I'm not done with you, boy. You leave my family alone!

EXT. COTTAGE - DAY

Tim's pickup is stopped near the front of the COTTAGE.

INT. TIM'S PICKUP -DAY

Tim sits in silence, staring at the COTTAGE in front of him. It looks like the painting Emily made.

INT. COTTAGE, KITCHEN - DAY

Tim enters and is greeted by Ocho. Emily is at the stove stirring a pot of soup.

EMILY

Hi honey! Look at Ocho. He's got his energy back.

TIM

That's great to hear! How'd your day go, my favorite artist?

EMILY

Still in my nostalgia phase. Doing scenes from around here: the barn, the swing. It's really been giving me some peace.

Tim wraps his arms around her.

TIM

You deserve it, honey. Every bit of it.

She kisses him.

EMILY

And so do you.

INT. TIM'S PICKUP - DAY

Emily sits close to Tim as he drives. Ocho lies next to the passenger door.

EMILY

I'm really nervous, Timmy. What if they say we won't be able to have any kids?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

TIM
They haven't said that yet. Or even
anything close.

EMILY
But, what if they do?

TIM
Then we'll figure out something.
There's options.

EMILY
What are you thinking?

TIM
Let's wait to see what the doctor
says. Then we can consider options.

INT. DOCTOR'S OFFICE - DAY

Tim and Emily wait nervously. A female DOCTOR enters and
sits in front of them, on the edge of her large desk.

DOCTOR
Thanks for your patience, Emily and
Tim. After the exam I wanted to check
with a few colleagues.

EMILY
What for? What'd you have to check?

DOCTOR
I wanted to go over my findings.

TIM
So what are they?

DOCTOR
You have some scarring inside your
uterus, Emily. It prevented the
placenta from fully attaching.

EMILY
Scarring?

TIM
How much?

DOCTOR
Looks like around 70%.

Emily is in shock.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

TIM

What? How did...how did this happen?

DOCTOR

Most likely, from a procedure she had done years ago.

TIM

Procedure? What procedure?

The doctor and Emily exchange looks. Emily begins to cry.

EMILY

I had an abortion, Tim. When I was in college. Before I even knew you.

TIM

What? Why didn't you tell me about this?

EMILY

I...I...I was so ashamed.

TIM

(to the doctor)

So that's why we can't have a baby now?

DOCTOR

The condition - it's called Asherman syndrome - is going to make it a challenge.

Emily cries harder. Tim embraces her.

DOCTOR (cont'd)

It's not out of the question, though. We can do surgery and remove the adhesions. But you need to know, the adhesions can reoccur.

TIM

And if that happened, there'd be another miscarriage.

The doctor nods.

EXT. TIM'S PICKUP - DAY

The pickup winds its way along the highway.

INT. TIM'S PICKUP - DAY

Tim and Emily ride in silence. Ocho lies on the seat between them.

EMILY
I can't go through losing another
baby. I just can't.

Tim reaches over and touches her leg.

TIM
It's okay, honey. You don't have to.

INT. COTTAGE, BEDROOM - DAY

Emily packs her suitcase as Tim stands in the doorway.

TIM
You sure you want to do this?

EMILY
It'll only be a few days. I just want
to get my head clear.

TIM
Being around your mom now. You think
that's a good idea?

EMILY
You don't?

TIM
I'm not sure. You're the one who
would know the best.

EMILY
(curtly)
Thank you.

EXT. CEDAR CREEK, BUS STATION - DAY

Tim's pickup pulls up in front of the station and parks. Tim and Emily emerge from the truck. A block away sits a Cedar Creek police car.

INT. POLICE CAR - DAY

Amber watches as Tim lifts a suitcase from the back of the truck and then carries it as he accompanies Emily into the bus station.

INT. BUS STATION - DAY

While Emily buys her ticket at the counter, Tim waits with the suitcase and studies the people who will be traveling with his wife. Soon, Emily returns.

EMILY

The bus is on time.

TIM

That's good.

They wait in silence.

EMILY

You better get to school. You're gonna be late.

TIM

Yeah. Okay. You sure about this?

EMILY

(annoyed)

We've already gone through it, Tim. I'll be fine. Now, go on to school.

He hugs her.

TIM

I miss you already, Emily. Come back soon.

INT. POLICE CAR - DAY

Amber watches as Tim walks out of the bus station, gets in the pickup, and drives away.

INT. CEDAR CREEK ELEMENTARY SCHOOL, CLASSROOM - DAY

Tim and Cody sit on the floor, petting Ocho. The classroom is otherwise empty. Recess sounds can be heard.

CODY

Are you sick today, Mr. Hawkins?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

TIM
What made you ask that, Cody?

CODY
I don't know. It seems like you don't
feel good.

TIM
No, I'm fine. I just have lot of
stuff going on.

CODY
Yeah.

TIM
You too?

Cody nods.

TIM (cont'd)
Wanna talk about it?

Cody shakes his head and continues petting Ocho.

INT. COTTAGE, KITCHEN - NIGHT

Tim sits alone at the table, drinking a beer. Several
empties line the counter. Ocho lies on the floor nearby. A
quiet knock comes from the front door. Ocho utters a bark
but doesn't get up. Tim stands, steadies himself, and walks
toward the door.

INT. COTTAGE, ENTRY - NIGHT

Tim opens the door. Before him stands a smiling Amber, in
high heels and a short dress that clings to her curves. Her
hair rests on her shoulders and is curled. She wears make-up
on her face.

AMBER
Well, aren't you going to invite me
in?

TIM
I...I...I can't do that, Amber.

Amber pushes past him.

AMBER
Sure you can, Tim. I have some more
information about the case.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

TIM
Yeah, well I...

AMBER
It's important that we talk.

She pulls a bottle of Jack Daniels from behind her back.

AMBER (cont'd)
And here's a little something I know
you like. Well, at least, you used
to.

INT. COTTAGE, LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Tim and Amber sit on the couch, both with tumblers of Jack
Daniels on the rocks.

TIM
So, you've dealt with the family
before?

AMBER
Sure have. Child Services were out
there for their daughter. The
Stantons were this close to losing
her.

TIM
That's a long time ago. The girl's
grown. I've seen her. How is this
gonna help us now?

AMBER
They got a history. It's on the
record. It'll make it easier to get
the boy - Cody - the help he needs.

TIM
Yeah, we'll see about that.

Amber takes another drink, then scoots over to him.

AMBER
Hey you, that's enough with the
negativity.

She puts her hand on his. He leaves it there and looks into
her eyes.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

AMBER (cont'd)
What happened, Tim? Why didn't you
want me anymore?

TIM
It's not like that. I...

AMBER
I wanted you. I still do.

TIM
Amber...

She puts her finger to his lips, then replaces it with her
lips. A small kiss that lingers, then becomes a deep and
passionate kiss.

TIM (cont'd)
Amber...

She pulls him onto her, starts to unbutton his shirt, and
stares into his eyes. A man unrestrained, Tim pulls her to
the floor and unzips her dress as he kisses her.

The fire flickers in the fireplace as they grope each other.

The telephone RINGS but nobody answers it.

INT. COTTAGE, LIVING ROOM - DAY

The fire is out. A comforter is spread out on the floor in
front of the fireplace. Tim lies under one half, his head on
a pillow. The other half is empty.

Tim slowly gets up and wraps his naked body with the
comforter, groans, then lies back down. He tries again and
is able to stand. He picks up a note from the couch and
reads it.

The note reads: "Some of us have to work weekends. See you
later?" It's signed with a heart.

INT. COTTAGE, KITCHEN -DAY

Tim sits at the table eating cereal and drinking coffee. He
is in obvious pain, both physically and emotionally.

EXT. COTTAGE - DAY

Tim slowly leads Ocho across the yard. The dog walks unsteadily, with effort.

TIM
You're a good boy...and what am I?

The phone RINGS inside the house. Tim runs for the back door.

INT. COTTAGE, KITCHEN - DAY

Tim picks up the phone.

EMILY (OS)
Where were you?

TIM
Hi, honey. I was outside with Ocho.

EMILY (OS)
No, I mean last night. I called you.

TIM
Yeah, well Miguel and I were at
Lucky's. I guess it got pretty late.

Silence.

EMILY (OS)
Are you okay, Timmy?

TIM
I miss you.

EMILY (OS)
Awww. I miss you too, sweetheart. I'm
feeling better. Mom and I had a long
talk.

TIM
You decide anything?

EMILY (OS)
No, I'm going to give it some time.
And I want to talk with you.

TIM
Okay.(a beat) When you comin' home?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

EMILY (OS)
I'll be back in a few days.

TIM
I'll be glad to see you.

EXT. COTTAGE - DAY

Tim walks around the yard, looking for Ocho. When he doesn't quickly locate the dog, he become frantic and races down the driveway toward the highway.

TIM
Ocho! Where are you, boy? You didn't go down to the road, did you?

Tim reaches the highway, doesn't see the dog, then runs back up the driveway, calling.

TIM (cont'd)
Ocho! Ocho! Come here, boy? Where'd you go?

Tim runs around the woods near the house, then into the barn. Ocho is lying on the ground near Tim's pickup.

TIM (cont'd)
There you are. You had me worried.

Tim kneels and touches Ocho's head, but the dog doesn't respond. He lifts the dog's limp body into his arms.

TIM (cont'd)
(weeping)
Awww, Ocho. You're a good boy.

Tim stands, holding the dog, crying.

EXT. COTTAGE, BACKYARD - DAY

Ocho's body is stretched out on the ground. Next to it, Tim digs with a shovel.

EXT. COTTAGE, BACKYARD - DAY

Tim lowers Ocho's body into the hole he has dug.

EXT. COTTAGE, BACKYARD - DAY

Tim finishes covering the hole with dirt. He lies on the ground next to the covered hole.

EXT. CEDAR CREEK, MAIN STREET - DAY

Tim's pickup parks behind a Cedar Creek police car parked outside the police station. The car is empty. Tim waits in his pickup and watches the station.

When Amber comes out of the station she spots Tim and walks to the pickup.

AMBER

Well well, good morning!

TIM

Amber, I'm sorry. I'm so sorry.

AMBER

Sorry for what? You didn't do anything wrong.

TIM

I should have never...we shouldn't have...

AMBER

We shouldn't have what? Given in to our true feelings?

TIM

Amber, I was drunk. So were you!

AMBER

I wasn't drunk enough to not know what I was doing.

TIM

I'm married. I love my wife.

Amber studies him.

AMBER

That's why you were calling my name as you made love to me? That's why you were begging for more?

TIM

I was drunk! I didn't know what I was doing?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

AMBER
(chuckling)
I'd say you did pretty damn good for
not knowing what you were doing.

TIM
It can't happen again.

AMBER
(slyly smiling)
We'll just have to see about that,
won't we?

Tim starts up the truck and roars off.

EXT. CEDAR CREEK, MIGUEL'S HOUSE - DAY

Tim's pickup pulls up and parks in front of a modest-sized house. Miguel is mowing the grass. When he sees Tim getting out of the pickup, he turns off the mower.

MIGUEL
Greetings, amigo! Como estas?

TIM
Hey.

Tim joins Miguel in the yard.

MIGUEL
To what do we owe this honor?

TIM
I fucked up, Miguel. I fucked up bad!

MIGUEL
Talk to me, buddy.

TIM
Emily's gone for a few days. Amber
came over last night.

MIGUEL
Uh-oh.

TIM
Yeah. Uh-oh is right.

MIGUEL
She, uh, spend some time there?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

TIM

Yep.

MIGUEL

So now, you're in a bit of a bind.

TIM

I'd say so.

Miguel ponders.

MIGUEL

That Mexico offer is still open. You could leave this life behind. I could even get you a new name.

TIM

New name?

MIGUEL

Yeah, you could be anyone you want: Everett, Lamar, Rodrigo.

TIM

How do you do that?

MIGUEL

Oh, amigo, I got people. From my old life in SoCal. Pros. We're still in touch time to time.

Tim shakes his aching head and starts back to his truck.

TIM

Yeah, sure.

Tim calls over his shoulder.

TIM (cont'd)

Oh, and Ocho laid down and died this morning.

MIGUEL

Jesus! So sorry to hear that, man.

Tim keeps walking, lowers his head, and raises his right arm to the sky.

EXT. CEDAR CREEK ELEMENTARY SCHOOL - DAY

Buses arrive, doors open, students burst out, and walk in groups to the school's entry. Cody steps off the bus and walks alone.

INT. CEDAR CREEK ELEMENTARY SCHOOL, CLASSROOM - DAY

As classical music plays in the background, Tim writes on the white board at the front of the room and students file in. Cody enters the room, looks around, and walks up to Tim.

CODY
Where's Ocho.

TIM
Ocho's not coming in today.

CODY
Oh.

Cody walks to his desk, sits, and begins to read as the other students settle in.

EXT. CEDAR CREEK ELEMENTARY SCHOOL, PLAYGROUND - DAY

Kids are involved in a variety of activities: swinging, basketball, four-square, tag.

INT. CEDAR CREEK ELEMENTARY SCHOOL, CLASSROOM - DAY

Cody sits on Ocho's bed reading. Tim approaches him.

TIM
Cody.

CODY
Hmm?

TIM
Cody, Ocho won't be coming in anymore. He passed away yesterday.

Cody squeezes his face tight to stop his tears, but it doesn't work.

Tim rests his hand on Cody's shoulder.

TIM (cont'd)
We're going to miss him very much.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Cody sobs and hugs Tim.

TIM (cont'd)
It's okay, Cody. Go ahead.

EXT. CEDAR CREEK ELEMENTARY SCHOOL - DAY

Students rush to the waiting buses as teachers watch. Bus doors slam shut and buses depart, leaving silence.

INT. CEDAR CREEK ELEMENTARY SCHOOL, CLASSROOM - DAY

Tim works at his desk until he hears sounds from his closet. He walks toward the sounds, opens the closet door, and discovers Cody sitting in the darkness.

TIM
What's goin' on, Cody?

CODY
I don't wanna go home.

TIM
Your mom and dad will be worried when you don't get off the bus.

CODY
No they won't.

TIM
Yeah, well we gotta get you home, man.

INT. TIM'S PICKUP -DAY

Tim and Cody ride in silence.

EXT. STANTON TRAILER, PORCH - DAY

Cody opens the door to go in. Tim stands nearby.

CODY
Thanks for the ride, Mr. Hawkins.

TIM
We need to make sure someone is here:
one of your parents, your sister,
someone.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CODY
I'm here a lot by myself.

TIM
Yeah, I'm not comfortable with that
Cody. Could you see if someone's
here?

Cody enters the house and shouts.

CODY (OS)
Mom? Jesse?

There is no answer. Cody returns to the porch.

CODY
It's okay, Mr. Hawkins.

TIM
I just can't leave you here by
yourself. Why don't you hang out with
me for awhile and then I'll bring you
back.

EXT. COTTAGE - DAY

As Tim and Cody approach the back entry, Tim notices the
door is ajar.

TIM
Just a second. Wait here.

INT. COTTAGE, KITCHEN - DAY

When Tim enters the cottage, Emily rushes into his arms.

TIM
You're back!

EMILY
I couldn't stay away. I need to be
here...with you.

TIM
Yeah. Yeah. (a pause). Hey, I've got
someone I want you to meet.

EXT. COTTAGE, BACK ENTRY - DAY

Tim leads Emily to Cody.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

TIM
Emily, I'd like you to meet Cody, one
of my students. And Cody, this is
Emily.

Emily extends her hand. Cody shakes it.

EMILY
Welcome to our home, Cody.

CODY
Hey.

TIM
Yeah, Cody missed the bus but
nobody's home so we were going to
hang out for a bit.

EMILY
Did you guys have Ocho with you? He's
not here.

Tim's face falls. Cody begins to cry.

EMILY (cont'd)
What. What?

TIM
He's gone, Em.

EMILY
He died?

TIM
Yeah. The other day. I didn't want to
tell you over the phone.

Emily begins to cry.

EMILY
Oh no...poor boy.

Emily drops to a knee, and Tim hugs her. Both are crying.

INT. TIM'S PICKUP -NIGHT

Tim, Emily, and Cody ride in silence.

EXT. STANTON TRAILER - NIGHT

Tim's pickup slowly drives up and its headlights illuminate Stub, sitting on the porch. He rises and walks toward the truck.

Tim and Cody get out of the truck and walk toward Stub. Tension is in the air.

STUB
(to Cody)
Where the hell have you been?

CODY
I...I...I wrote you a note.

TIM
He missed the bus. I brought him-

STUB
Stay out of this!

TIM
There wasn't anybody home. I didn't want to leave him here without-

STUB
Shut up!!

CODY
He helped me.

STUB
Get in the house, boy.

CODY
But he didn't-

STUB
I said, get the fuck in the house.
Now! Unless you want me to kick your scrawny ass right here.

Cody runs for the house. Tim steps forward.

TIM
You keep your hands off that boy!

STUB
And you get the fuck off my property!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

TIM
I'm tellin' you, if you lay a hand on
him, you're gonna regret it.

Stub steps forward and the two are chest-to-chest, fists at the ready.

A horn sounds from the pickup.

EMILY (OS)
Tim! Timmy!

STUB
You better listen to her.

TIM
You don't scare me.

Tim turns to leave.

TIM (cont'd)
You don't scare me one bit.

INT. STANTON TRAILER, CODY'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Stub backhands Cody.

STUB
You wanna talk back, this is what you
get!

CODY
(crying)
But I-

Stub grabs him by the throat and pushes him against the wall.

STUB
I said SHUT UP! I don't want to hear
your voice.

Cody struggles but Stub's grip is vise-like. Cody makes choking sounds and then goes limp. When Stub removes his hand, Cody falls to the floor.

INT. COTTAGE, LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Tim and Emily sit on the rug - Ocho's place - in front of a crackling fire.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

EMILY
I miss him so much.

TIM
Yeah. He was a good dog.

Silence.

EMILY
I'm not going to have any more tests.
No more doctors.

He embraces her.

EMILY (cont'd)
Maybe we can adopt. There's lots of
kids that need good homes.

TIM
Whatever you want, Em.

INT. CEDAR CREEK ELEMENTARY SCHOOL, CLASSROOM - DAY

Classical music plays as students file into Tim's classroom. Tim greets them. Cody enters, his hoodie tied tightly so only a small part of his face is revealed. He walks to his desk, sits, and rests his head on the desk. Tim walks over to him.

TIM
Cody, are you okay?

Cody moves his head.

TIM (cont'd)
Is that a yes?

Cody moves his head again.

TIM (cont'd)
It's gonna get pretty hot in there.
You might want to put your hood down.

Cody stifles a cry. Tim gently takes his arm.

TIM (cont'd)
C'mon, buddy, let's take a walk.

Cody gets up and Tim leads him to the door as the kids in the class watch.

INT. CEDAR CREEK ELEMENTARY SCHOOL, NURSE'S OFFICE - DAY

Cody's sweatshirt is off. Tim and Melinda stand in front of him. Cody's face is bruised and swollen, his neck red. Melinda is professional. Tim is seething.

TIM

Did he do this to you?

MELINDA

Cody, can you tell us what happened?

CODY

I...I fell.

TIM

He did this...your dad did this to you!

MELINDA

Mr. Hawkins, we need you to go to the office and make a call.

INT. CEDAR CREEK ELEMENTARY SCHOOL, CLASSROOM - DAY

Tim sits with his class - minus Cody - on the carpet at the front of the room.

TIM

Now, remember how we've talked about the breath, and how important breathing is, especially when you're feeling stressed.

CHELSEA

Are you stressed about Cody, Mr. Hawkins?

TIM

No...I'm concerned about Cody. Well, yeah, I guess I am a little stressed.

GABBY

Where'd he go?

TIM

He's visiting with the nurse right now. He'll be back.

NATE

(mumbles)

He's weird.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Tim glares at Nate.

TIM

Cody has some issues right now. He
needs our support, not our judgment.

A stony silence.

TIM (cont'd)

Okay, let's practice our breathing.
Big breath in through your nose...
deep into your abdomen...3, 4, 5. Now
let it out through your mouth. Don't
force it, let it go 6,7,8. And again.

INT. COTTAGE, KITCHEN - NIGHT

Tim and Emily are finishing up their dinner.

EMILY

So, are they going to take him out of
the home?

TIM

I don't know. The police didn't get
back to me.

EMILY

Why didn't you call them again?

TIM

They'll let us know when they have
something.

EMILY

Well I don't want to wait. I want to
know. I'll call.

The sound of car can be heard outside. Tim gets up and looks
out the window.

TIM

No need to call.

INT. COTTAGE, ENTRY - NIGHT

Tim opens the door to a smiling Amber. Her smile disappears
when Emily walks up behind Tim. Amber only looks at Tim.

AMBER

Good evening.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

TIM

What'd you find out?

AMBER

I interviewed the boy and then the parents. Their stories agree: he fell out of bed.

TIM

That's bullshit! Those marks on his throat weren't from a fall.

AMBER

We don't have witnesses and the boy won't talk.

TIM

He's afraid! Of course he won't talk.

AMBER

We've contacted Child Services and they'll be involved, but unless the boy talks or we get some evidence-

Emily pushes past Tim and gets in Amber's face.

EMILY

How about a doctor? Ever heard of them? A doctor could look at the marks and determine what happened.

AMBER

If the marks are still there when we get him to one.

EMILY

Well, what are you waiting for?

AMBER

Listen, Mrs. Hawkins, I'm on your side. I'll do everything-

EMILY

Well, get going and do it!

Amber turns and walks toward her car.

AMBER

Goodnight, Tim.

INT. COTTAGE, KITCHEN - NIGHT

Emily washes the dishes and Tim dries.

EMILY
Is there something I don't know?

TIM
Huh? What are you talking about?

EMILY
With Amber. That's her name, isn't it? The cop.

TIM
Yeah, that's her name. What about her.

EMILY
She only acknowledged me when she had to.

TIM
Huh.

EMILY
Everything was toward you - her smile, her words, her eye contact - until I forced it.

TIM
Yeah. I don't know.

EMILY
Well, I felt uncomfortable. Didn't you date her?

TIM
A lifetime ago. Before I even knew you.

EMILY
Why'd you stop?

TIM
I met you.

EMILY
Think she still has something for you?

TIM
Huh? What do you mean?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

EMILY
Feelings? Do you think she has
feelings for you?

TIM
No. Of course not!

EMILY
I'm not so sure about that.

INT. CEDAR CREEK ELEMENTARY SCHOOL, CLASSROOM - DAY

Students file in as background music plays. Cody enters and, again, has the hood on his sweatshirt up and tied tightly with only a small opening showing. Tim walks to him.

TIM
Mornin' Cody.

Cody grunts.

TIM (cont'd)
You doin' okay?

Cody nods.

TIM (cont'd)
What do say we loosen that hood a bit
so you'll be able to see and hear
what great things are goin' on today?

Cod shakes his head. Tim reaches over and starts to untie the hood.

TIM (cont'd)
Here, I can help you.

Cody starts to resist.

TIM (cont'd)
It's okay, man, we got your back.
You're among friends.

Cody stops resisting. Tim unties the hood and pushes it back to reveal Cody's shaved head. Cody struggles to fight back tears. Titters can be heard from the other students. Tim's fierce look ends all sounds except the background music.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

TIM (cont'd)
You know, Cody, with your new cut,
which by the way looks great, it may
be a little chilly for you so you may
want to keep your hood up to stay
warm.

Tim pulls up the hood.

TIM (cont'd)
But let's keep it loose so you can
see and hear everything, okay?

Cody nods.

INT. CEDAR CREEK ELEMENTARY SCHOOL, PLAYGROUND - DAY

Several boys chase after Cody and pull his hood down when
they catch him. Cody puts it back up and races away,
followed by the boys.

INT. COTTAGE, KITCHEN - NIGHT

Tim and Emily are eating dinner.

EMILY
How's Cody doing?

TIM
Cody got a haircut.

EMILY
Hope it's not too short. I like his
hair.

TIM
His head is shaved.

EMILY
What? Why would he want to do that?

TIM
I don't think he had any choice in
the matter?

EMILY
You think his dad did that?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

TIM
That's what Cody told me. I wish he'd
tell us the other things his dad
does.

EMILY
Oh, the poor boy. Does he hate it?

TIM
Yeah.

EMILY
Awww...I just feel so bad for him. He
doesn't deserve this.

EXT. CEDAR CREEK ELEMENTARY SCHOOL - DAY

Buses arrive and students emerge from their opened doors and
head into the school.

INT. CEDAR CREEK ELEMENTARY SCHOOL, CLASSROOM - DAY

Tim teaches a lesson to the class. One desk is empty:
Cody's.

INT. NURSE'S OFFICE - DAY

Tim pops his head in the door. Melinda is taking a student's
temperature.

TIM
Cody's a no-show today. Would you
mind calling home?

MELINDA
Sure thing, Tim. I'll get right to
it, when I'm done with this young
man.

INT. CEDAR CREEK ELEMENTARY SCHOOL - DAY

Melinda appears in Tim's doorway. She makes eye contact with
him and shakes her head. He looks quizzical and walks to the
door.

TIM
What happened?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MELINDA

No answer.

TIM

That's strange. You'd think somebody'd be there and answer.

MELINDA

You'd think.

TIM

I'll take a drive out there after school.

EXT. STANTON'S TRAILER - DAY

Tim's pickup pulls up in the driveway and stops. Tim gets out and walks to the front. He knocks then bangs on the door. No answer.

TIM

Hello! Anybody home. Mrs. Stanton!
Cody! Anybody in there?

INT. COTTAGE, KITCHEN - DAY

Tim enters from the back door.

TIM

Emily? Emily, you here?

EMILY (OS)

We're in here!

INT. COTTAGE, SUNROOM - DAY

Tim enters. Emily and Cody are sitting side-by-side painting.

EMILY

Well hello there Mr. Hawkins. How was your day?

TIM

What's he doing here? He can't be here!

EMILY

Cody stopped by this morning. He wasn't up for school today.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

TIM

You can't do this, Emily! He wasn't in school. They called home and left a message!

EMILY

We had a perfect day here, working in the garden, reading, painting. Wouldn't you say, Cody?

Cody nods.

TIM

This is trouble, Emily! I'm tellin' you.

EMILY

We'll call over there and let them know where he is. Then we'll have a quiet dinner here, and after that we'll take him home.

TIM

I'm tellin' you.

Emily smiles, shakes her head and looks over at Cody's painting.

EMILY

This boy has talent.

Cody smiles.

INT. COTTAGE, KITCHEN - NIGHT

Emily, Tim, and Cody eat dinner.

EXT. STANTON'S TRAILER - NIGHT

Tim's pickup pulls up and stops among cars and pickup trucks. The trailer is well-lit and there is loud country music blaring.

INT. TIM'S PICKUP -NIGHT

TIM

Okay, Cody you better hustle in there.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

EMILY

Your mom knows where you've been so
there shouldn't be any trouble.

Cody slowly opens the door, then stops and looks intently at
Emily and Tim.

CODY

Thank you.

He gets out, closes the door, and walks toward the house.

EXT. COTTAGE - NIGHT

Tim's pickup pulls into the barn. Another pickup, with loud
country music playing, drives up along the cottage and
stops. The high beams on the pickup illuminate Tim and Emily
as they walk to the house. Several figures exit the truck
and stand in front of the lights.

TIM

(to Emily)

Let's get in the house.

They pick up their pace and head to the house. The five
figures move quickly toward them.

STUB

Wait just a second, Teach!

Tim stops. Stub comes face-to-face with Tim. The other men
surround him.

STUB (cont'd)

What did I tell you? I told you to
stay away from my family!

He pushes Tim.

STUB (cont'd)

And did you listen to me? NO! So now
you're going to have to pay!

Tim takes his best shot at Stub, landing his punch on Stub's
jaw. Stub reels and the other men move in.

TIM

Get in the house, Emily!

STUB

Get her!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

One of the men grabs Emily while Stub and the others knock Tim to the ground and pummel him.

Emily screams, wrestles away from the man holding her, and rushes to the other men. She continues screaming and pounds on the men's backs until they stop beating on Tim.

The men leave Tim motionless on the ground. They silently walk to their truck, where Stub turns around.

TIM

You leave my family alone.

EMILY

And you go directly to hell!

Emily kneels over Tim as the truck slowly backs down the driveway, music cranked.

EMILY (cont'd)

Tim! Tim!!

Barely conscious, he opens his eyes and stirs.

EMILY (cont'd)

Tim, oh Timmy!

He moans.

EMILY (cont'd)

They really hurt you, Tim! We gotta get you to the hospital. I'm gonna call the police.

TIM

(suddenly alert)

No! No police! Call Miguel. Call him now!

EXT. COTTAGE - NIGHT

An SUV races up the driveway and skids to a stop. Miguel jumps from the vehicle and runs to the front door.

INT. COTTAGE, LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Tim lies on the couch. He is covered with a blanket, except for his bruised and swollen face. Emily and Miguel stand over him.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MIGUEL

So it was a bunch of them? Not just Stub?

EMILY

There were five. They just kept hitting and kicking him. I thought... I thought they were going to kill him.

MIGUEL

Jesus! Did you call the police?

TIM

No police!

MIGUEL

What do you mean? They assaulted you. That's jail time.

TIM

I said no police.

MIGUEL

Okay, okay, no police. But I *know* people, and we'll take care of it.

EMILY

No. No more of this!

MIGUEL

We can't let him get away with this.

EMILY

No! This has to stop here.

Silence. Emily and Miguel look to Tim.

TIM

We're gonna make this right. But I'm gonna need your help, Miguel.

MIGUEL

You name it, amigo.

Emily's face falls.

EXT. COTTAGE - EARLY MORNING

The early morning sunlight illuminates the scene.

INT. COTTAGE, LIVING ROOM - MORNING

Tim slowly awakens on the couch. It's been a long, painful night. He groans. Emily hurries to him.

EMILY
How are you doing?

TIM
Mmmmmh...Oh, I've been better.

EMILY
Where do you hurt, honey?

TIM
Uhh...let's see: my legs, my head, my face. Pretty much everywhere.

EMILY
You poor thing. We need to get you to the hospital.

TIM
Nah, there's nothing broken. It's just gonna take some time.

EMILY
You may have a concussion. I'm really worried.

TIM
It's okay, honey. I'll be fine. I just need a little time.

EMILY
I already called the school. Said you had the flu and would be out for the week. I got the sub's number. You can call her and fill her in a little later. Right now, I want you to rest.

Tim nods and closes his eyes.

EXT. COTTAGE - DAY

Cody walks up the driveway, steps up on the porch, and knocks on the front door.

INT. COTTAGE, LIVING ROOM - DAY

Emily answers the door.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

EMILY

Cody, what are you doing here?

CODY

Is he okay? I heard my dad talking. I was worried-

EMILY

You're so sweet. Come on in.

She leads Cody to the couch where Tim is sitting up and eating oatmeal.

TIM

Hey, why aren't you in school?

CODY

Are you okay?

TIM

I'll be fine.

CODY

But my dad said-

TIM

I'm gonna be fine. And you should be gettin' to school.

EMILY

I can give you a ride.

CODY

I'm not going to school.

TIM

Well, what's your plan?

CODY

I don't know, hang out in the woods?

EMILY

You can't do that. It's gonna rain. You'll get soaked.

Silence.

EMILY

You'll stay here. I'll help you with your schoolwork. We'll work in the garden. We'll paint.

Cody smiles.

INT. COTTAGE, KITCHEN - NIGHT

Tim and Emily eat dinner. It is obvious Tim is still in pain. Emily watches him.

EMILY

I'm sorry you're in pain, honey.

TIM

I'm actually feelin' a little bit better. I know it doesn't look it (laughs). How'd it go with Cody?

EMILY

He's such a joy! We get along so well.

TIM

He is a good kid. It's too bad-

EMILY

I told him he could come back tomorrow. I said I'd pick him up, too. I don't want him walking. It's too far.

TIM

What about his parents?

EMILY

They don't care about him. They don't need to know.

Tim grimaces.

INT. AND EXT. COTTAGE - DAY

Various views of Emily and Cody engaging in activities during the day, including studying, painting, gardening, and reading.

INT. COTTAGE, LIVING ROOM - DAY

Tim rests on the couch. He hears the back door open and footsteps.

TIM

Who's there?

Emily enters.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

EMILY

What a great day!

TIM

Any problems dropping him off?

EMILY

Nope, I just let him off at his bus stop and he walked up the driveway. (a pause). I just love that kid! I wish he was mine. I mean ours.

TIM

Yeah, I been thinkin' about that. He deserves a better home.

EMILY

He deserves us.

TIM

Yeah.

EMILY

You're not suggesting...

TIM

I don't know. Maybe I am.

EMILY

That we invite him to be in our family? That we adopt him?

Tim laughs.

TIM

Oh, sure. His parents are gonna go for that. No, I'm suggesting we make him part of our family.

Emily is perplexed.

EMILY

That we...take him?

TIM

Can you think of another way? But we'd have to leave. Start over.

EMILY

Leave here? I couldn't do that. I love this place!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

TIM

Your parents are going to sell it.
They need the money to live on. Your
dad told me when they were here.

EMILY

What? I can't believe this! Why
didn't they tell me?

TIM

They were going to. It just wasn't
the right time.

EMILY

So what are we going to do? Where
will we go?

TIM

You know, Miguel said he'd help. It
just won't be the way he thought.

INT. COTTAGE, KITCHEN - DAY

Emily and Cody sit at the table working on schoolwork. They
hear the sound of a car pulling up the driveway. Emily gets
up and looks out the window.

EMILY

Oh my God, it's the police! Tim, the
police are here.

TIM (OS)

Get Cody in the back. Hurry!

Emily and Cody run out of the room.

INT. COTTAGE, LIVING ROOM - DAY

Tim lies on the couch, reading. A knock comes from the front
door.

TIM

Come on in!

Amber enters and walks to the couch.

AMBER

Oh, gees, are you okay?

TIM

I'll be fine.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

AMBER

I heard you got in a little tussle
with Stub and his guys.

TIM

Yeah, some tussle. I was on the
receiving end.

AMBER

Don't make light of this, Tim. This
is serious. You want to press
charges? They could do jail time.

TIM

Nah. We'll take care of it.

AMBER

That's not your job. That's my job.

TIM

I'll be sure to let you know if
there's any more problems.

AMBER

I just want to make sure you're okay.
Do you need anything? I mean
anything?

Amber moves closer. Emily enters the room.

EMILY

He doesn't need anything. And you can
leave now.

Amber backs away and circles the room, looking around. She
does a double-take at the kitchen table.

AMBER

Looks like you're doing some lesson
planning, Tim. You going back to
school soon?

EMILY

He'll get there when he's well
enough. Goodbye.

Amber slowly moves to the front door.

AMBER

See you soon, Tim.

She leaves.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

TIM
We gotta talk to Cody.

INT. COTTAGE, KITCHEN - DAY

Tim, Emily, and Cody sit at the table.

CODY
So I can stay here all the time?

TIM
We won't be able to stay in this house.

EMILY
But you'll be with us. You're going to be a part of our family.

TIM
You don't have to decide now. It's a big decision. But you can't tell anyone. Emily and I would get in a lot of trouble.

EMILY
We really want to help you, Cody. We want you to be safe. And happy.

INT. TIM'S PICKUP -DAY

Emily drives as she and Cody ride in silence. She pulls up to Cody's bus stop steers the truck to the side of the road.

Cody stares straight ahead and doesn't make a move to get out. Then he turns to Emily.

CODY
Yes. My answer is yes.

Emily reaches over and hugs him long and hard.

EMILY
Everything's going to be okay.

EXT. COTTAGE - DAY

Tim walks with a limp as he surveys the yard and garden area. Emily drives up in the pickup, rolls to a stop, and runs to him.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

EMILY

He said yes!

TIM

I knew he would. I told Miguel when
he stopped by. He's on it!

EXT. CEDAR CREEK, MAIN STREET - DAY

A Cedar Creek police car moves along the street and slows
when Tim emerges from the bank. The police car parks.

INT. CEDAR CREEK POLICE CAR - DAY

Amber watches as Tim walks along the sidewalk and then into
the travel agency.

INT. CEDAR CREEK ELEMENTARY SCHOOL, CLASSROOM - DAY

Tim enters Miguel's empty classroom and carries a large
envelope.

TIM

I got the pictures.

He hands the envelope to Miguel.

MIGUEL

You sure you want to do this?

TIM

We're sure. All three of us. Are **you**
sure you want to help?

Miguel hugs him.

MIGUEL

I'm with you, brother.

INT. COTTAGE, BEDROOM - NIGHT

Tim and Emily lie in bed reading.

EMILY

So, Miguel's going to contact you?
Did he say when?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

TIM

Soon. A day or two. So, we have to be ready. We have to make sure Cody's ready.

EMILY

We'll do that tomorrow when he's here.

INT. COTTAGE, LIVING ROOM - DAY

Tim, Emily, and Cody sit on the couch.

TIM

Cody, this is going to be a huge change, for all of us. We won't be able to come back here.

EMILY

Are you sure you want to go with us? You won't see your friends again.

CODY

I don't have any friends.

TIM

You won't see your family either.

CODY

They don't care about me. They don't even want me.

EMILY

Well, we want you. We'll take good care of you. I promise you that.

EXT. COUNTRYSIDE - DAY

Tim's pickup winds along the highway. It comes to a stop at Cody's bus stop.

INT. TIM'S PICKUP - DAY

Emily and Cody sit in silence.

CODY

I don't want to go in there. I never want to go in there.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

EMILY

It won't be long, Cody. Maybe even tomorrow. Just pretend it's just another day and you're going to school. You don't have to bring anything. We'll get you everything you'll need.

Cody reaches for the door handle.

EMILY (cont'd)

And don't worry. It's all going to work out fine. You'll see.

INT. COTTAGE, KITCHEN - NIGHT

Tim and Emily do the dinner dishes: Emily washes and Tim dries.

EMILY

I'm really worried, Timmy. There's so many things that can go wrong.

TIM

Nothing's gonna go wrong. I have it all worked out with Miguel.

EMILY

But what if-

TIM

Listen, Emily. What we're doing, it's right. This kid needs help. The police won't help. The state won't help. It's up to us.

EMILY

I know that. And I know that more than anything, I want this boy. I just can't help but think-

They hear a car pull up in the driveway. The car horn beeps twice. Tim gets up, walks to the window, looks out, and waves.

TIM

That's Miguel. We're goin' tomorrow.

EMILY

Why didn't he just call?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

TIM
Phone records.

EMILY
I've gotta call my parents.

TIM
No! The more people know what we're
doing, the more likely we get caught.

EMILY
I've got to tell them! They'll be
heartbroken if they don't know.

Tim considers this.

TIM
Okay, alright, you can call them. But
wait until the morning.

INT. COTTAGE, BEDROOM - EARLY MORNING

Tim and Emily lie in bed. Tim is wide-eyed, staring at the ceiling. Emily sleeps peacefully. He reaches for her, and she awakens.

TIM
Good morning, sunshine.

She smiles.

TIM (cont'd)
Are you ready for this adventure?

She hugs him.

TIM (cont'd)
Better give your folks a call if
you're going to.

EXT. COTTAGE - DAY

Emily walks around the property as she talks on her phone.

EMILY
No, I can't tell you where we're
going, Mom. Just that we'll be in a
safe place and you don't need to
worry.

She listens.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

EMILY (cont'd)

Yes, uh huh. That's right. We're saving a young boy. There's no other choice.

She listens.

EMILY (cont'd)

Oh, please don't cry Mom. We're doing the best thing for this boy. We just won't be able to be in touch for awhile.

She listens.

EMILY (cont'd)

Please, please don't ask. I really can't tell you. I just can't. There will be people coming to you and asking where we are. It's better if you don't know.

She listens.

EMILY (cont'd)

I don't want either of you to worry. Promise you won't worry.

EXT. COTTAGE - DAY

Tim walks out the back door carrying suitcases and takes them to the pickup in the barn. Emily, done with her call, joins him. She is crying.

EMILY

They're really upset, Tim. I feel so bad.

Tim hugs her.

TIM

We're saving a kid's life, Emily.

INT. STANTONS' TRAILER, KITCHEN - DAY

Eileen sits at the table smoking a cigarette and drinking coffee. Cody enters the room, gets his breakfast of cereal and milk, and sits down.

EILEEN

What are you doing up so early?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Cody mumbles a response.

EILEEN (cont'd)
Got a big day, do ya?

Cody ignores the question. Eileen watches him eat.

EILEEN (cont'd)
Well, I got a big day planned. Just
like every other day: pick up after
the messes you, Jesse and Eddie make.
And that ain't even countin' your
dad.

Cody doesn't respond and keeps eating.

EILEEN (cont'd)
And then, I get the pleasure of
making a meal that all of you will
like. Ha, fat chance of that! That's
my big day.

When Cody gets up from the table a toothbrush drops from his
pocket. He freezes.

EILEEN (cont'd)
Carrying around a toothbrush now? You
put it back where it belongs.

Cody mumbles a response.

EILEEN (cont'd)
What's that? Speak up, will ya?

CODY
I'm supposed to bring it to school.
They want me to.

EILEEN
They want you to have a toothbrush in
school, they can go ahead and buy you
one. That one's gonna stay right
here. Now go put it back!

EXT. COUNTRYSIDE - DAY

Tim's pickup winds along the highway.

EXT. STANTON'S DRIVEWAY - DAY

Cody runs along the driveway, toward his bus stop. The toothbrush falls from his pocket, but he doesn't notice.

EXT. CODY'S BUS STOP - DAY

Tim's pickup rolls to a stop. Cody gets in, and the pickup pulls away.

INT. TIM'S PICKUP - DAY

Tim drives, accompanied by Emily and Cody.

TIM
Just one stop before we get goin'.

EXT. CEDAR CREEK, MAIN STREET - DAY

Amber sits in her police car and watches as Tim's pickup (with tinted windows) passes. She follows it.

EXT. CEDAR CREEK ELEMENTARY SCHOOL - DAY

Tim's pickup passes the school. The police car stops, then follows the pickup at a distance.

EXT. HIGHWAY IN COUNTRYSIDE - DAY

The pickup winds through the countryside, with the police following at a distance. The vehicles pass a sign: Portland 65 miles. The police car makes a u-turn and races back toward town.

EXT. CEDAR CREEK, MAIN STREET - DAY

The police car stops in front of the travel agency. Amber gets out of the car and hustles to the front door.

INT. TRAVEL AGENCY - DAY

Amber enters. LISA (50s) sits behind her desk. She looks up from the computer she is working on.

LISA
Morning Amber. Ready for a vacation?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

AMBER

I wish. No, this is police business.
Did you do any business with Tim
Hawkins recently.

LISA

Yes, he was in here the other day.

AMBER

Is he going someplace?

LISA

Uhhhh...I'm not really comfortable-

AMBER

This is really important, Lisa. I'm
investigating a crime.

LISA

A crime? What do you mean?

AMBER

Well, it may be a crime. But it's
important I find out.

LISA

Yes, he was in here. He bought three
airline tickets to Fairbanks.

AMBER

Alaska?

LISA

Yes.

AMBER

For when?

LISA

I think it was for today. Or, maybe
tomorrow.

Lisa checks her computer.

LISA (cont'd)

It's today, early this afternoon. He
bought three tickets: two adults, one
child.

AMBER

My god!

She heads for the door.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

LISA

There's another thing that may be helpful. Tim didn't buy the tickets for himself. Or Emily either. He bought them for other people. I didn't recognize the names.

Amber runs out the door.

EXT. CEDAR CREEK, MAIN STREET - DAY

Amber runs across the street and enters the bank.

INT. CEDAR CREEK POLICE STATION - DAY

Amber hurries in and heads toward Chief Bennett's office.

INT. CEDAR CREEK POLICE STATION, CHIEF BENNETT'S OFFICE - DAY

The chief sits behind his desk. Amber stands.

CHIEF BENNETT

This the same "friend" who complained you were harassing him?

AMBER

This has nothing to do with that!

CHIEF BENNETT

And now you're accusing him of kidnapping? Some friend he is. Kidnapping is serious jail time, McKenzie.

AMBER

I know that! But that's what the evidence points to: the airline tickets, draining his bank account, him not being at school, and I can't locate the boy.

CHIEF BENNETT

Have you checked Hawkin's house?

AMBER

I don't have to! I saw him drive through town this morning.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

AMBER (cont'd)
I followed him. He's on his way to
Portland and the airport.

EXT. CITY - DAY

Tim's pickup moves among the heavy traffic.

INT. CHIEF BENNETT'S OFFICE - DAY

CHIEF BENNETT
All right, go ahead and call Portland
P.D.

Amber rushes from the room.

EXT. CITY - DAY

Tim's pickup passes signs for the airport.

EXT. CITY - DAY

Portland police cars race to the airport.

EXT. PORTLAND AIRPORT - DAY

Portland police cars, lights flashing, converge on Tim's
pickup. The pickup slows to a stop.

Police officers surround the pickup, guns drawn. From one of
the police car's loudspeakers, a voice sounds.

POLICE VOICE (OS)
Put both your hands out the window
and raise them.

Two hands emerge from the pickup.

POLICE VOICE (OS) (cont'd)
Now open the door from the outside
and slowly come out. Hands high, face
front!

A figure steps out of the pickup.

POLICE VOICE (OS) (cont'd)
Get on the ground! Face down! Move!!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The figure lays on the ground, face down. The police run to him, subdue him, and cuff him behind his back.

They roll him over. It's Miguel.

MIGUEL

What the hell you doin? I didn't do anything!

EXT. COASTAL TOWN, MARINA - DAY

Miguel's SUV wheels into the marina parking lot and screeches to a stop. Tim, Emily, and Cody get out of the vehicle. Tim grabs suitcases and the three of them run to a nearby dock.

MARK (50s), tall and weathered, waits along the dock.

MARK

You Hawkins?

TIM

Yeah, that's us.

MARK

Let's go, we're ready to shove off.

He leads them to a 40-foot sailboat.

EXT. PORTLAND AIRPORT - DAY

Several cops surround Miguel.

COP #1

So what is it you're doing with Timothy Hawkins' vehicle?

MIGUEL

I told you, I borrowed it so I could pick up some freight I'm having flown in. I wanted to save some money on delivery.

EXT. MARINA - DAY

Mark and a DECK HAND help Tim, Emily, and Cody onto the boat.

CODY

Wow, this is cool!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

TIM
The adventure begins!

MARK
Here, I'll show you to your quarters.

EXT. PORTLAND AIRPORT - DAY

COP #1
Okay sir, sorry for the bother. Let's
get you on your way.

INT. SAILBOAT, COTTAGE - DAY

Tim, Emily, Cody, and Mark are squeezed into a small cabin.

MARK
Cozy, huh?

EMILY
Uh, yeah.

MARK
This is for you and Tim. The kid will
have his own space.

Mark hands an envelope to Tim.

MARK
Here's your paperwork: passports,
birth certificates, licenses. All
you'll need.

TIM
Thanks.

EMILY
We are so grateful for what you're
doing. Your generosity is-

MARK
Yeah, yeah, I'm a good guy. But I can
also use the cash. It's been tight
since they legalized pot up here.

TIM
Yeah, I'm sure.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MARK

So, we'll get you in the country down in Baja. After that you're on your own.

TIM

We'll get a plane out of there. Miguel's got us set up with one of his relatives.

Mark covers his ears.

MARK

La, la, la, la. I've heard nothing. I know nothing.

INT. CEDAR CREEK POLICE STATION, CHIEF BENNETT'S OFFICE - DAY

AMBER

I just know they have the boy.

CHIEF BENNETT

Have you contacted the parents? We need to verify he's gone. Then we can get the word out.

AMBER

What if they leave the country? What do we do then?

CHIEF BENNETT

We find them and bring 'em back. We put kidnappers in jail.

EXT. COTTAGE - DAY

Amber's police car pulls up the driveway and stops. She gets out, walks to the back door, and knocks.

AMBER

Hellooo! Anybody home? Tim?

When nobody answers, she tries the handle. It's locked so she uses a tool to gain entry.

INT. COTTAGE - DAY

Amber walks around the kitchen and living room, looking for clues.

INT. COTTAGE, BEDROOM - DAY

Amber stands in the doorway, studying the room. She walks to the bedside table, opens the drawer, and rummages through the contents of books and papers. She pulls out a battered guide to Mexico.

She sits on the bed and leafs through the book, stopping at a dog-eared page. On the page is a description of Oaxaca, a Mexican city. A map shows its location on the mainland of Mexico. Amber studies the pages.

INT. COTTAGE, LIVING ROOM - DAY

Amber sits on the couch, with the guide in her lap. She surveys the room, and her eyes fixate on the floor in front of the fireplace, a place she remembers painfully well.

EXT. SAILBOAT - DAY

Three pairs of feet stand together facing the passing ocean and the diminishing land. The left pair of feet, an adult's, wear hiking shoes; the middle pair, a child's, wear well-worn sneakers; the right pair, a woman's, wear sandals.

CODY (OS)

I've always wanted to be Cameron.

TIM (OS)

Hmmm. How'd I know that?

EMILY (OS)

Cameron. I love that name.

As for Elise and Thomas, I guess I can get used to them.

EXT. COTTAGE - DAY

Amber uses a shovel to dig a hole among the trees in the backyard. She pulls the guide from her pocket, rips it into pieces, places them in the hole, then lights them with a match. She watches as the paper turns black and the smoke drifts into the sky. She pauses, looks back at the cottage, then fills the hole with dirt.

EXT. SAILBOAT - DAY

Tim, Emily, and Cody stand together at the rail and look out at the ocean. Cody is in between them. He lifts his arms and puts them around their waists.

EXT. OCEAN - DAY

The boat sails toward the horizon.