

29 MOLE STREET

by

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EXT. CRUMBLEY'S DINER - DAY

A warm amber light glows from within the greasy spoon. Its windows all fogged up, promising sanctuary from the harsh winter wind whipping the dead leaves into a miniature cyclone out front on the sidewalk.

INT. CRUMBLEY'S DINER

A bell JINGLES every time the door swings open and shut.

A chalkboard advertises the Milkshake of the Month: Double Dutch Chocolate.

The WAITRESS sidles up to a customer in a tweed cap seated at the counter.

WAITRESS
What can I getcha?

MAN
Coffee, no cream, no sugar.

WAITRESS
Dollar-fifty.

She slaps a check down.

COOK
Order up!

She takes two hot plates from the window, crosses to the corner booth and sets them down in front of-

HANNAH and JOHN.

Hannah wears dark sunglasses and chokes back tears.

John broods over the meatloaf special. He attacks a mountain of peas and carrots with his fork. Stab, stab, stab.

His knuckles are red and cut.

She lets a quiet whimper escape.

JOHN
For Christ's sake, Hannah! I'm
trying to eat.

She's scared of him. He can smell it on her.

JOHN (CONT'D)

Who are you supposed to be with those sunglasses anyway? Huh? Madonna or somebody? Take 'em off.

He reaches across the table but she swats his hand away.

HANNAH

Madonna doesn't wear sunglasses.

JOHN

You're telling me Madonna never wears sunglasses? So what, she goes outside, it's a sunny day- what's she do? Squint?

HANNAH

She's not known for wearing sunglasses.

JOHN

Who the fuck is known for wearing sunglasses?

HANNAH

Jackie O.

JOHN

Okay then. Who are you supposed to be, sunglasses-fucking-icon, Jackie O?

He reaches again and this time he snatches the glasses off her face.

A fresh bruise swallows her left eye, dark purple and puffy as blood pools under the skin.

HANNAH

Give them back, Johnny.

JOHN

Or what?

She fumes.

JOHN (CONT'D)

Fine. You want 'em, take 'em.

He sets the glasses down on the table. An obvious trap.

She reaches for the glasses and he grabs her hand. He bends her middle finger back until all the color drains out of it.

HANNAH
You're hurting me.

The man at the next table glances over at them, but quickly buries his face in his menu. John bends her finger further—almost to the breaking point.

JOHN
Snap.

He chuckles, lets go of her hand.

HANNAH
I wanna go.

JOHN
I haven't finished my meatloaf.
But if you wanna go, well, I guess
it'll just go to waste.

He pushes his plate off the table. It hits the floor and shatters.

BUSBOY
I'll get that.

JOHN
No.
(to Hannah)
You. Pick it up.

She knows what's coming if she doesn't. She kneels down on the ground and picks up the shards.

John puts his boot on top of her hand. He steps down, pressing her hand into the broken pieces of ceramic.

HANNAH
Stop it, Johnny!

She looks up at him, a ring of bright red blood around her ice blue pupil. This is what true fear looks like.

John twists his boot, grinding her hand into the sharp edges. Blood mixing with spilled gravy.

JOHN
(re: his knuckles)
You made me cut my hand. Tit for
tat.

HANNAH
You mean, you split your fist open
smashing my face.

JOHN

Do you have any idea what I could do to you?

HANNAH

Sure, I do. I know a cat is stronger than a mouse. But a tiger would swallow a cat whole. The world's a tiger, Johnny. And you're nothing but a pathetic little pussycat, hissing and screeching and flashing his claws. So go ahead, eat the mouse. Fill your belly. Because the world's going to have you for lunch.

She meets his stare head on. She is strong, and she is not giving up - not without a fight.

INT. TOYSHOP - DUSK

An antique DOLL with rosy cheeks and a pink lace dress.

ANTHONY MINCHIN holds it in his hands. He studies it carefully.

MINCHIN

No, I'm afraid not.

He hands it back to the SHOP GIRL with an apologetic tight-lipped smile. The wall is lined with dolls, each one different from the next. He points to another.

MINCHIN (CONT'D)

Perhaps that one?

SHOP GIRL

You've seen that one already.

MINCHIN

Oh, the one below it then -if you'd be so kind?

He can tell her patience is wearing thin. She takes the doll down from the shelf and hands it to him. He frowns, this isn't the one. He wanders a bit further, then he sees it-

MINCHIN (CONT'D)

There.

He points to a moonfaced doll with ringlet curls that look as though they were spun of gold.

The shop girl hands it to him. He admires it. There's a silver crank on the doll's back; he winds it and it plays Tschaikowski's SWAN LAKE.

MINCHIN (CONT'D)
 (smiles)
 Hello there, little one.

EXT. TOYSHOP

Twinkle lights dance in the bare branches of the trees that dot the sidewalk.

Minchin exits carrying a gift box tied with string; precious cargo. Dusk falls and a cold wind blows. He turns up the collar of his overcoat and hurries on his way.

EXT. THE HOUSE AT 29 MOLE STREET

Minchin climbs the back steps of the dilapidated townhouse at 29 Mole Street, and fits his key in the lock.

INT. BACK ALCOVE, 29 MOLE STREET

The house is done up in streamers and papier-mache flowers. A quaint hand-drawn HAPPY BIRTHDAY banner.

Minchin rushes in, hangs his coat and scarf on a hook.

MINCHIN
 Where are my little angels?

INT. LIVING ROOM, 29 MOLE STREET

The children (CHRISTOPHER (4), TALLULAH (5), WILLIAM (5), IRENA (7), GIDEON (8), and JUNIPER (10)) sit side by side in a line on the sofa watching cartoons when Minchin walks in.

ALL
 Daddy!

He drops to his knee and gathers them up in a big hug.

MINCHIN
 Oh, my angels! I missed you.

INT. KITCHEN/DINING ROOM, 29 MOLE STREET - NIGHT

Darkness, except for 7 candles burning atop a homemade cake.

MINCHIN
 (singing)
 Haaaapy Birthday to you...

The children are seated around the dining room table. Minchin carries the cake in from the kitchen. He sets it down in front of Irena. She looks up at him blankly.

IRENA
 What do I do now?

MINCHIN
 Close your eyes and make a wish,
 silly.

She shuts her eyes tight and concentrates.

MINCHIN (CONT'D)
 Now, blow.

She blows out the candles. The other children clap and cheer.

Minchin slices through the cake with a large knife, carving out a great big wedge for each child. Irena's piece has a cherry on top. She looks at it in awe.

IRENA
 I've never had a birthday party
 before.

MINCHIN
 No?

IRENA
 Bad Daddy used to say parties were
 for princesses. And I was too poor
 to be a princess.

MINCHIN
 Well, he must not have seen...

He twirls his napkin in the air, rolls it into a circle, and places it on her head.

MINCHIN (CONT'D)
 Your crown.

She giggles.

MINCHIN (CONT'D)
 By order of royal decree, I hereby
 declare you will never not have
 another birthday ever again. Now,
 may I present-

He disappears into the hallway and returns with the box from the toyshop.

MINCHIN (CONT'D)
Your royal subject.

Irena opens the box and lifts out the moonfaced doll.

IRENA
She's beautiful.

MINCHIN
Listen-

He winds the crank at the doll's back and SWAN LAKE plays.

IRENA
May I take her to bed?

MINCHIN
Of course you may.
(to all)
Now off you go!

TALLULAH
Carry us, Daddy!

MINCHIN
Haven't you got legs of your own?

JUNIPER
We're too tired to climb stairs.

WILLIAM
And too full of cake!

MINCHIN
Alright, then. Pile on, my little
sweet-mongers.

He bends down and Juniper wraps her arms around his neck and climbs on his back.

MINCHIN (CONT'D)
(teasing)
Oof! How much cake did you have?

JUNIPER
I barely had any!

MINCHIN
I don't know, you feel at least 10
pounds heavier than usual. Maybe
15.

WILLIAM

How about me, Daddy? Am I fat with
cake too?

He scoops up William and Tallulah in his arms.

MINCHIN

Oh, yes. In fact, is this a little
boy or a tiny elephant? Let me
see, do you have tusks?

WILLIAM

No!

MINCHIN

Are you sure? Go like this-

Minchin ROARS like an elephant. The children laugh as he
carries them up the stairs.

INT. CHILDREN'S BEDROOM, 29 MOLE STREET

He pushes the door open and the room comes into view.

An enormous blanket fort, 5 feet tall, swallows up the entire
room.

Minchin flips the light switch and Christmas lights blink on.
At least a dozen strands crisscross the top of the fort,
twinkling like stars in the night sky. The structure itself
is composed of vibrant swaths of color befitting the
Maharaja. And inside are mountains of featherbeds and
pillows in every shape and size.

An old record player is rigged to a string of vintage wind-up
toys, tugging a never-ending parade of monkeys playing
cymbals, retro robots and the like around a homemade track.
The space is messy and cluttered and entirely secondhand, yet
it is utterly enchanting. A treasure trove. A wonderland.

The children snuggle under the heap of mismatched blankets.

TALLULAH

Mr. Waddlesworth isn't here!

MINCHIN

That's right! He went to the
hospital for a broken beak. I'll
go check on the patient.

Minchin slips out of the blanket fort.

INTERCUT

Minchin takes the stuffed penguin from atop a chest of drawers, a tuft of fluff poking out from where his beak has been freshly sewn together.

INT. BLANKET FORT (CHILDREN'S BEDROOM), 29 MOLE STREET

Irena lies on her back, gazing up at the lights overhead. Tallulah rolls over on her side next to her.

TALLULAH

What did you wish for? -When you
blew out your candles?

IRENA

I wished for a mother.

GIDEON

You're not supposed to tell anyone,
dummy! Now it won't come true.

Minchin just on the other side of the fort's wall, hears everything the children are saying - and it weighs heavy on his heart.

He parts the sheets, holds up the toy triumphantly.

MINCHIN

Mr. Waddlesworth has returned!

TALLULAH

You saved him, Daddy!

MINCHIN

Now it's time for bed, my angels.

Minchin tucks the blankets under their chins.

CHRISTOPHER

Tell us a story.

He takes a seat next to them on the featherbed.

MINCHIN

Very well. This is an ooold Irish
fairytale. Much older than you, or
I, or even time itself. It is the
story of the Unforgiven Dead.

CHRISTOPHER

(mesmerized)
The Sluagh...

MINCHIN

That's right, Christopher, the
Sluagh - more feared than death
itself. The souls of the darkest
sinners, so evil that not even hell
would burn them. They soar through
the sky like a flock of mangled
birds, looking for an open window
to swoop in and steal the souls of
the dying or the dead!

The children GASP. But they're only pretending to be scared,
like kids around a campfire. They've heard this story a
thousand times before. They know it word for word.

MINCHIN (CONT'D)

Of course, any soul is ripe for the
picking of the Sluagh.

GIDEON

Even the healthy ones.

MINCHIN

Even the healthy ones. No one is
safe. And the Sluagh know no mercy.
Once they snatch you up, there's no
escape. You'll be doomed to the
same dark fate, circling the night
sky stealing souls for all
eternity. That is why we must
always, always keep the Sluagh out.
But how...?

TALLULAH

Shut the windows.

JUNIPER

Lock the doors.

WILLIAM

Keep the curtains drawn tight.

MINCHIN

Ah, if only that were enough. The
Sluagh have spies lurking
everywhere.

IRENA

Outsiders.

MINCHIN

Peeking in every windows. Rattling
every doorknob.

JUNIPER

How will we know them?

MINCHIN

That's the tricky part. A spy can be anybody at all. All it takes is a glimpse. A whiff. Why, even a notion. And then we're done for.

CHRISTOPHER

What happens then?

MINCHIN

You'll hear their warble off in the distance. It'll be faint at first but once you hear it, it's already too late. A great fog will roll in and from it the Sluagh will appear. They'll storm the house, the whole lot of them. -They always attack in packs. The very sight of them will bring you to your knees. They'll bind your hands so you can't fight back. They'll tear the house apart until they find every last one of us. And they'll take the children, one by one. You'll beg them to stop but they won't. For they have no ears to hear you. No eyes to shed a tear.

The children are at rapt attention.

MINCHIN (CONT'D)

There's only one way to stop them from coming.

WILLIAM

How?

MINCHIN

What draws the Sluagh most of all?

IRENA

A broken heart.

MINCHIN

Indeed. They sense it like a shark smells blood in the water. That is why we must make our home an impenetrable fortress and fill it with happiness and laughter.

(MORE)

MINCHIN (CONT'D)

Every minute of every day from now
until forever. Love is our
mightiest defense.

The children drift off to sleep. He kisses each of them on the forehead.

Gideon lays flat on his back, wheezes; A very severe version of the familiar sound of an asthmatic struggling for air. Minchin gently rolls him on his side and he breathes freely.

He goes to turn off the night-light-

IRENA

(whispers)

I love you, Daddy.

He looks at her, sweet as an angel.

MINCHIN

How'd I get so lucky?

INT. KITCHEN, 29 MOLE STREET - NIGHT

The loud WOOSH of running water at the kitchen sink as Minchin does the dishes. There's mounds and mounds of leftover cake - the children barely touched it.

He picks up the first plate and finishes off the leftovers, shoveling massive forkfuls into his mouth one after another. Then he washes the dish.

He devours a second slice. Not a crumb goes to waste. Then a third slice, and a fourth; Gobs of white frosting clotting at the corners of his mouth. He's making himself sick. He forces the cake down his throat, choking on it. He must have eaten half a cake in under five minutes.

He shuts off the water, and turns off the lights.

INT. BATHROOM, 29 MOLE STREET

Dead of night. Minchin's bare feet on the tile floor as he RUNS into the bathroom and vomits into the toilet.

He turns on the faucet and splashes cold water on his face. There's dirt under his fingernails.

INT. BASEMENT, 29 MOLE STREET

He stands at the top of the tall staircase. He can't sleep.

He steps onto the first step and it lets out a loud CREAK.

He takes a seat at his workbench.

A lighted magnifying glass flickers on, casting a soft glow across the distorted reflection of his face -too large and twisted through the looking glass.

He slips on a pair of bifocals that rest half-way down his nose.

He dips a paintbrush in black paint and carefully draws a fine line, a graceful curve, in painstaking detail. It's a labor of love. Stroke after meticulous stroke of the brush.

He pushes the magnifier aside and regards his work. He's quite pleased.

Until he spots it: a smudge. He frowns as he examines the mark. A dirty fingerprint. He tsks as he wipes his hands clean on an old rag then tries to rub out the spot, but it won't budge. What a pity.

Then, the final touch: A delicate spritz of perfume from an atomizer.

INT. CHILDREN'S BEDROOM, 29 MOLE STREET - DAY

It's morning now. Sun burns through the curtains. The children are still asleep, the covers drawn up under their chins. Minchin peeks his head in, chipper.

MINCHIN

Wake up, my angels! There's
someone I want you to meet!

INT. LIVING ROOM, 29 MOLE STREET

Christopher, Tallulah, William, Irena, Gideon, and Juniper sit on the couch, immaculate, dressed in their Sunday best.

Across from them sits Hannah Pratt -her black eye barely visible under her makeup.

Minchin stands between his children and the visitor.

MINCHIN

This is Miss Pratt.

A heavy silence hangs in the room.

HANNAH

It's nice to meet all of you. You can call me Hannah, if you'd like. I'm a social worker with the Philadelphia Department of Human Services, and I'm here to conduct what's called a home visit. Some of you may have experienced this before at your previous foster homes?

Blank stares.

HANNAH (CONT'D)

But for those of you who haven't, think of it as a time for us to get to know each other. First, I'll have a look around the house, and then I'll spend some time talking to each one of you.

IRENA

You want to see whether you like it here.

HANNAH

It's not a question of liking it. You see, the state conducts these routine checks in order to determine whether your environment continues to meet your basic health, safety, and welfare needs. It's standard procedure.

(softens)

But for what it's worth, I can already tell I like it here very much.

Irena is delighted.

MINCHIN

(big smile)

Welcome to our home.

INT. CHILDREN'S BEDROOM, 29 MOLE STREET

Hannah stands in the door frame reluctantly, clutching a clipboard to her chest.

The children's blanket fort looks a little worse for wear in the harsh light of day. The shoddy structure is swallowed by a sea of broken junk and bric-a-brac.

HANNAH
The children sleep in here?

MINCHIN
Here, let me show you.

He switches on the Christmas lights. Ta-da! Hannah still seems wary.

MINCHIN (CONT'D)
You haven't even seen the best part yet!

INT. BLANKET FORT (CHILDREN'S BEDROOM), 29 MOLE STREET

Minchin stoops to fit inside, Hannah follows. He turns on the record player and the parade of wind-up toys chug-a-lug along their track, restoring the magic to the mess. Hannah can't help but be swayed.

HANNAH
It's lovely.

She looks around, counting the beds.

HANNAH (CONT'D)
Do all the children sleep in this one area?

MINCHIN
They just all pile in together.

HANNAH
Are you aware the state requires separate bedrooms for girls and boys?

MINCHIN
No.

HANNAH
I'm surprised the previous social worker didn't mention that when they evaluated your home for placement.

MINCHIN
He didn't say much, to tell you the truth.

HANNAH
(consults her file)
What was his name?
(MORE)

HANNAH (CONT'D)
 -your caseworker? For some reason
 it's missing from my file.

MINCHIN
 I think it was Edward-something.

HANNAH
 And he placed all your children?

MINCHIN
 Mm-hm.

She makes a note of it.

MINCHIN (CONT'D)
 It won't be a problem, will it?

HANNAH
 Huh?

MINCHIN
 The separate bedrooms. -It won't be
 a problem?

HANNAH
 Mr. Minchin, there are 400,000
 foster kids in this country; nearly
 6,000 of whom are seeking placement
 in Philadelphia alone. It's in the
 best interest of the state -and
 your children- to give you the
 benefit of the doubt. Don't worry.
 You'll have an opportunity to fix
 any issues that come up during my
 inspection.

INT. CHILDREN'S BEDROOM, 29 MOLE STREET

As Hannah climbs out of the blanket fort she stumbles over a
 pile of stuffed toys.

MINCHIN
 If we had known you were coming we
 would have tidied up.

HANNAH
 That's alright. That's why we do
 these visits unannounced. -To see
 how you really live.

She goes to the window.

HANNAH (CONT'D)

Are there screens on these windows?

She searches for the part in the curtains then realizes they have been sewn together.

MINCHIN

The children insisted.

(off Hannah: confused)

The sun drowns out the twinkle lights.

He pulls the corner of the curtain back and lets her peek through.

MINCHIN (CONT'D)

There are the screens, there.

Hannah marks the form on her clipboard:

Windows have screens in good repair - check.

Windows have curtains/shades for privacy - exuberant check.

House appears reasonably neat and clutter free - skip...

Corrections Needed - she puts a check next to the box marked "children's bedroom(s)."

HANNAH

I just need you to print and sign at the bottom, acknowledging the change to the sleeping arrangement.

Minchin writes his name in cursive capital letters. He carefully draws the loop of the "I".

HANNAH (CONT'D)

That's a unique way to write your "I"s.

MINCHIN

It's proper cursive. It was originally invented to accommodate the use of the quill pen. Avoiding lifting pen from paper prevented the tip of the quill from breaking and the ink from spattering.

He hands the clipboard back to her.

MINCHIN (CONT'D)

Today, it's just a lost art.

She manages a smile.

HANNAH
Shall we continue?

INT. UPSTAIRS HALLWAY, 29 MOLE STREET

The 2 other doors off the hallway are closed.

HANNAH
What's behind these doors?

MINCHIN
This one here's a playroom.

He opens the door: An overcrowded yet idyllic toyland. A tall chest blocks the window.

MINCHIN (CONT'D)
And this one's just a spare room.
We use it for storage mostly.

He opens the last door: Clutter piled high to the ceiling. Curtains drawn.

HANNAH
Wouldn't the children rather have
separate bedrooms, if you have the
space?

MINCHIN
We're a very close family.

INT. LIVING ROOM, 29 MOLE STREET

A large living space, the main room of the house. It is a world built around children, overrun with toys; old yellowed plastic tea sets and hand-me-down dress-up costumes.

As Minchin and Hannah walk down the stairs she observes the children playing together sweetly.

MINCHIN
As you can see, there are smoke
alarms throughout the house. I
check the batteries every three
months like clockwork.

A handwritten sign hangs on a closed door off the living room: **OFF LIMITS: DADDY ONLY!**

HANNAH
What's that?

MINCHIN
That's the basement.

HANNAH
May I?

She reaches for the doorknob but he steps -subtly- in between her and the door.

MINCHIN
It's off-limits.
(points to the sign)
See?

HANNAH
(laughs)
I assumed that was just there for the kids.

MINCHIN
It's for everyone.

HANNAH
Well, I have to inspect the whole house, top to bottom.

MINCHIN
The children don't go down there.

HANNAH
Still, I need to make sure everything's in proper working order.
(he doesn't budge)
I'm afraid I have to insist.

Juniper runs up to Minchin and tugs on his arm.

JUNIPER
Daddy!

MINCHIN
What is it, my darling?

JUNIPER
We're hungry. It's nearly ten! We haven't had anything to eat all morning.

MINCHIN

Well, that simply won't do. I know just the thing.

(to Hannah)

Excuse me just a moment.

He disappears into the kitchen; CLINKING and CLANGING in the refrigerator.

Hannah reaches for the doorknob again. She opens the door. It's dark down there...

She places a foot on the first step - it lets out a loud CREAK.

WILLIAM

Aren't you hungry, Miss Pratt?

William appears by her side. She lets him lead her into the dining room, slightly relieved.

INT. DINING ROOM, 29 MOLE STREET

Minchin returns with the leftover birthday cake on a tray.

HANNAH

Cake for breakfast?

MINCHIN

It's a special occasion!

HANNAH

And what's that?

MINCHIN

You're here.

He sets a slice in front of each child, but Hannah waves hers off. He sets it down anyway, with an encouraging smile-

MINCHIN (CONT'D)

Live a little.

WILLIAM

On my birthday, Daddy's going to make me a chocolate cake with real fudge, and chocolate sprinkles, and chocolate syrup!

HANNAH

Let me guess, you like chocolate?

WILLIAM
It's my favorite.

HANNAH
And how old will you be on your
birthday?

WILLIAM
Five.

HANNAH
But aren't you five now?

WILLIAM
Yes.

HANNAH
(laughs)
That's not how it works!

CHRISTOPHER
I'm four. I'm the youngest.

HANNAH
I see! And whose birthday was it
yesterday?

IRENA
Mine.

HANNAH
Then you and I have something in
common. My birthday was just a few
days ago.

She gets up and sits next to Irena. She shows the little
girl her necklace: a red gem that catches the light.

HANNAH (CONT'D)
You see this? This is our
birthstone. It's a garnet. Have
you ever seen one before?

Irena shakes her head "no". She is captivated by the gem.

IRENA
It's very pretty.
(she looks up at Hannah)
You're very pretty too.

HANNAH
Thank you.

Irena searches here face in a way that only children do. Self-conscious about her black eye, she turns away.

HANNAH (CONT'D)

You all have barely touched your cake!

MINCHIN

Children are such fussy eaters.

HANNAH

Well, it's delicious. You'll have to give me the recipe.

MINCHIN

Oh, no. It's a family secret.

He wipes his mouth with his napkin and smiles.

HANNAH

(to the children)

Tell me about your studies.

GIDEON

We have lessons five days a week, in every subject: arithmetic, science, history, literature, and language arts. I'm learning Mandarin Chinese. Ni zenme fanyì zuò? That means, how do you do.

TALLULAH

Como você está? That's how you say it in Portuguese.

CHRISTOPHER

Quid agis? That's Latin. Ow-hay ooh-day ooh-yay ooh-day? That's Pig Latin.

HANNAH

I see! Very impressive!

Hannah laughs but then she sees something in Christopher's big brown eyes that sends a sudden chill down her spine.

HANNAH (CONT'D)

Christopher, was I your caseworker at a previous foster home?

CHRISTOPHER

No, ma'am.

HANNAH

Are you sure? I never placed you before?

CHRISTOPHER

No.

MINCHIN

Christopher lived with his biological mother before he came here.

HANNAH

Those eyes... I have the strangest feeling I've seen him before.

In fact, she's sure of it.

Suddenly, out of nowhere, an AIR RAID SIREN whirs to life.

WILLIAM

Oh no...

HANNAH

What's that sound?

TALLULAH

They're here.

HANNAH

Who?

The children bolt out of their chairs. They hold hands and form a chain. Irena is the last in line. She grabs hold of Hannah's hand and drags her behind like a rag doll.

INT. LIVING ROOM, 29 MOLE STREET

Minchin leads the children like ducks in a row. Hannah dawdles behind, happy to play along with the children's game.

He presses against the wall panel underneath the stairs and it pops opens, revealing a hidden spandrel closet. An awkward triangular space.

INT. SPANDREL CLOSET, 29 MOLE STREET

Minchin and the children scramble in, fast as they can. Hannah follows, and the door shuts behind her. Pitch black.

HANNAH
 (amused)
 Now what?

SHHHT. The sound of metal against metal: a deadbolt sliding into place.

Hannah quickly turns from playful to panic-stricken.

HANNAH (CONT'D)
 Okay, game's over. Let me out.

The children shut their eyes tight, gripping each other's hands with white knuckles. They whisper, over and over again:

ALL
 Be still,
 Be quiet,
 Stay together.
 If the Sluagh catch you,
 You'll be lost forever.

-their chant battling the high-pitched scream of the siren.

HANNAH
 Open the door.

ALL
 Be still,
 Be quiet,
 Stay together!
 If the Sluagh catch you,
 You'll be lost forever!

Frantic, she runs her hands along the door, feeling for the lock.

HANNAH
 Open the door!

It's cramped in here. And hot. Air is scarce. Hannah can't breathe.

HANNAH (CONT'D)
 OPEN THE DOOR RIGHT NOW!

She finds the lock and opens it. She stumbles out of the odd little space and bursts out into-

INT. LIVING ROOM, 29 MOLE STREET

The air raid siren stops.

She looks back at Minchin and the children, wedged in the tiny closet like sardines in a tin can -their mouths all agape with shock. Minchin steps out.

MINCHIN

Come out now, my angels.

He coaxes the children out. They're upset.

MINCHIN (CONT'D)

It's okay. Go upstairs and play.

As the children march upstairs they whisper to each other:

GIDEON

She gave away our secret hiding place! Now the Sluagh know exactly where it is.

IRENA

Why wouldn't she hide?

JUNIPER

Because...
(scowls at Hannah)
She's a spy.

The children are gone, leaving Hannah alone with Minchin.

HANNAH

That's a terrible game! Someone could get seriously hurt.

MINCHIN

I'm sorry if we frightened you.

She regains her composure, tucks in her shirt.

MINCHIN (CONT'D)

Would you like to continue your inspection? You haven't seen the kitchen yet.

HANNAH

I think I better start my interviews now. I'm not entirely sure the inspection's still necessary at this point.

INT. PLAYROOM, 29 MOLE STREET

Hannah sits across from William at a child's-size table and chairs.

HANNAH

This is a safe space. You can tell me anything you want and I won't tell your father, or even your brothers and sisters. It'll stay just between you and me.

WILLIAM

Like what?

HANNAH

It can be anything at all. It can be a thought, or a feeling... or a fear. You looked pretty scared in that closet.

WILLIAM

You shouldn't have opened the door.

HANNAH

I didn't mean to ruin your game.

WILLIAM

It's not a game. It's a drill. We practice hiding for when they come.

HANNAH

Who? Who are you so afraid of?

WILLIAM

The Sluagh. If they find us, they'll steal our souls.

HANNAH

That's make-believe. Just a scary story. You know they're not real, don't you, William?

WILLIAM

I assure you, Miss Pratt, they're every bit as real as you and I.

HANNAH

Here, I'll show you.

She digs in her bag and pulls out her cell phone (an ancient Motorola). She goes online and searches for "Sluagh".

HANNAH (CONT'D)

We can Google it. Look-

She pivots to show him her phone but he moves away.

WILLIAM
No, thank you.

HANNAH
You don't want to see?

WILLIAM
I'm not supposed to.

HANNAH
You have adult supervision so it's okay.

WILLIAM
No. No internet, phone, or live television. Those are the rules. The world can be a dangerous place. We don't invite it in. Not through an open window or an unlocked door. And not through Google or CNN.

HANNAH
But-

WILLIAM
Please, put it away. This isn't a game either.

INT. LIVING ROOM, 29 MOLE STREET

Minchin is gathering up the "breakfast" dishes.

Juniper comes up behind him.

JUNIPER
Daddy, how do we identify a spy?

MINCHIN
What's that, Juni?

JUNIPER
How can we tell if someone is a spy for the Sluagh?

MINCHIN
There's two main ways to tell a spy. They ask questions and tell lies.

JUNIPER
What kind of questions?

MINCHIN

Oh, you know, personal questions. Sticking their nose where it doesn't belong. They'll try to trick you too. Throw you off the trail. They'll say things like, I'm just trying to help, or you can trust me.

JUNIPER

What else?

MINCHIN

Really, Juni, I don't have time for these questions. It's a very important day with Miss Pratt here. I have too much to do!

He picks up the tray of dishes and starts for the kitchen.

JUNIPER

Just one more thing, Daddy.

MINCHIN

Yes, my angel?

JUNIPER

If we discover a spy, what do we do?

He stops in the doorway; matter-of-factly:

MINCHIN

Bury them.

INT. STAIRCASE, 29 MOLE STREET

Hannah walks down from the second floor.

INT. LIVING ROOM, 29 MOLE STREET

The living room is empty. Juni and Minchin have dispersed. She eyes the tiny door under the stairs.

INT. SPANDREL CLOSET, 29 MOLE STREET

Hannah opens the door and light floods in. Still scary.

The deadbolt is mounted abnormally high - too high for a child to reach. There are tiny scratch marks all around it. Someone trying to get out?

She crouches as she walks further in to the deep closet. It's dark and cavernous. She shivers.

She turns to leave and something catches her eye. A piece of metal wedged inside the door frame. She digs it out: A stretched-out wire hanger.

She swats it against the palm of her hand, testing its capacity for corporal punishment. It stings.

MINCHIN (O.S.)

Marco!

She quickly puts the hanger back in its hiding place.

INT. LIVING ROOM, 29 MOLE STREET

Hannah comes out of the closet to find Minchin waiting.

MINCHIN

You're supposed to say Polo.

HANNAH

I'm not here to play. I have a job to do.

He looks disappointed.

MINCHIN

Of course.

HANNAH

I'd like to interview you next.

He surveys the mountain of toys that have overtaken the room.

MINCHIN

Shall we sit in the dining room?

INT. DINING ROOM, 29 MOLE STREET

They sit caddy-corner at the end of the dining room table. Minchin watches Hannah as she sorts through her file.

HANNAH

There's a series of routine questions-

MINCHIN

Ask me anything you'd like.

HANNAH

Is there a religion practiced in the household?

MINCHIN

I've always been fascinated by Celtic mythology. So full of poetry and magic. But that's not a religion, of course.

HANNAH

So... None?

MINCHIN

None per se, but I believe in God; A benevolent creator who brings us to life and watches over us with kindness and compassion. I believe in a savior. Second chances.

HANNAH

Mr. Minchin, this process works best if you try to answer the questions as directly as possible.

MINCHIN

Ah. Of course. You can just check no on religion then.

He smiles.

HANNAH

Highest level of education completed?

MINCHIN

I have a graduate degree in historical studies from Carnegie Mellon, as well as a doctorate from Harvard in Celtology.

HANNAH

Work-

MINCHIN

I also hold an advanced degree in linguistics. I speak 13 different languages.

HANNAH

Impressive.

(re: her file)

It says here that you work for the Philadelphia Inquirer.

MINCHIN

That's right. I write the obits.

HANNAH

That's quite macabre, isn't it?

MINCHIN

I suppose that depends how you look at it.

HANNAH

Are you one of those people who can find beauty in tragedy?

MINCHIN

Not in it. In spite of it.

She puts down her pen, goes off-book.

HANNAH

Mr. Minchin, what motivates you to take in so many foster children?

MINCHIN

I suppose the same thing that motivates you to be a social worker. I never had any biological children of my own. A childless parent in search of a parent-less child.

HANNAH

How did you know I don't have children?

He ignores it, determined to make his point instead:

MINCHIN

Way up above us, there are these tiny pieces of meteors; flecks of rock plummeting through the night sky and hurtling toward the ground. And occasionally, someone will see one of those tiny flecks of rock and they'll make a wish on it. They hang all their hopes and dreams on it, and it becomes something more.

(MORE)

MINCHIN (CONT'D)

It's no longer just a falling bit of rock, careening through darkness, doomed to crash. Now, it's a shooting star.

HANNAH

You want to give them the chance to shine.

MINCHIN

I'd take in every last foster kid in this country, if I could. All 400,000 of them.

(he feels a connection)

Did you know I was turned down 9 times before I finally got my kids?

HANNAH

No...

That's not in the file.

MINCHIN

The Department of Human Services felt I wasn't fit to be a father because I was unmarried. I've never been very good with women -in case you couldn't tell.

She smiles sympathetically.

MINCHIN (CONT'D)

I'm a decent man. But I'm an exceptional father. I hope you'll see that for yourself.

Hannah glances over at her cell phone.

MINCHIN (CONT'D)

Are you expecting a call?

She checks: No missed calls.

HANNAH

I guess I should know better.

MINCHIN

How about a nice hot cup of tea? You look like you could use one.

INT. PLAYROOM, 29 MOLE STREET

The room is fractured by the gemstone-colored crystals of a kaleidoscope's lens.

Christopher giggles as he presses it against his eye.

He points the toy at William. William makes a funny face, which the kaleidoscope distorts and reflects a dozen times over -much to Christopher's delight.

His lens finds Tallulah next. She sticks out her tongue.

Then Irena, who smiles sweetly, creating a flurry of half moons.

Christopher loses himself in the ornate brightly colored patterns.

The children jostle to be seen as the kaleidoscope drifts from one face, to the next.

Juniper's bugged out eyes, Gideon's pushed up nose, then suddenly-

Something terrifying flits by in the blink of an eye. It flies right at the lens. A grotesque flash of beady eyes and snout. An ungodly mix of bat and man.

Christopher drops the kaleidoscope. The breath has been sucked right out of him. He looks like he's seen a ghost.

TALLULAH

What? What was it? What did you see...?

CHRISTOPHER

(whispers)
Sluagh.

The word sends a chill through the others.

GIDEON

What did it look like?

CHRISTOPHER

Its skin was like a snake. And its eyes... Its eyes were like death.

IRENA

The lens must have distorted something you saw. Something harmless. You're safe. There's no Sluagh here.

JUNIPER

She's right. There are no Sluagh here.

Juniper picks up the kaleidoscope and checks it out, looking around the room.

JUNIPER (CONT'D)

But they must be close. Christopher sensed it. Something - or someone, is drawing them here.

She scales the tall chest blocking the window and peeks over the top. She uses the kaleidoscope like a periscope to look out the window, surveying the horizon.

JUNIPER (CONT'D)

Very, very close...

INT. KITCHEN, 29 MOLE STREET

Minchin puts the teakettle on.

HANNAH

You're very provincial, aren't you?

MINCHIN

How do you mean?

HANNAH

You don't allow the children to go online. You use a teakettle instead of a microwave.

MINCHIN

Hot water is hot water. Doesn't much matter how it gets that way.

Hannah has a look around the kitchen. Hung on the refrigerator are some stick figure drawings of the family. There's one that reads: "**World's Best Dad**". Another says: "**Father of the Year!**"

And one that says: "**To the Most Terrific Daddy in the Whole Wide World**" - with the exact same distinctive loopy "I"s as Minchin's handwriting, in proper cursive.

HANNAH

(skeptical)

Did your children draw these?

MINCHIN

Oh, yes. My little Picassos. They spoil me.

HANNAH

I noticed there's no computer in the house either. No video games for the kids.

MINCHIN

No.

HANNAH

They must beg you for them constantly.

MINCHIN

It's not about what they want. It's about what's best for them.

HANNAH

Is that what's best for them?

MINCHIN

The world can be a bad place. Sometimes it's better just to shut it out. We've made our own little sanctuary here.

HANNAH

So I've been told.

He takes two teacups from the cupboard.

MINCHIN

When I was little I got by with a ball and a stick. And I didn't have any brothers or sisters to play with either.

Hannah wanders over to the window. Through the sheer curtains she can see the neighbor, MRS. GRADY, on her front porch fastening a leash to the collar of an energetic black and white TERRIER.

HANNAH

Is that your neighbor?

She pushes the curtain aside. She tries to open the window, but it won't open. She KNOCKS on the glass instead:

HANNAH (CONT'D)

(calls out)

Hello!

MINCHIN
Get away from there!

MRS. GRADY
Who's that?

HANNAH
My name's Hannah. I'm with-

He snatches the curtain closed.

MINCHIN
I said no.

HANNAH
I'm not one of your children, Mr. Minchin. I'm not bound by your rules. I'll talk to whoever I'd like and there's not a damn thing you can do to stop me.

MRS. GRADY
Hello?

Mrs. Grady tries to see past the curtains.

MRS. GRADY (CONT'D)
Do you have company, Anthony? Is that a woman in there with you?

MINCHIN
(to Hannah)
Just- sit down. Let me handle it.

Hannah stares him down, defiant.

MINCHIN (CONT'D)
Please.

She reluctantly takes a seat. Minchin does damage control at the window.

MRS. GRADY
Hello?

MINCHIN
Yes, hello, Mrs. Grady. It's just me.

MRS. GRADY
Thought you might have had a new lady friend.

MINCHIN

Nothing for you to concern yourself with. Have a good day now go away.

MRS. GRADY

You-

He whips the curtains shut before she can finish the thought.

MINCHIN

Old Lady Grady is a nuisance. Always poking around, sticking her nose into my business. She's not to be trusted.

HANNAH

Why did you lie to her about me?

The teakettle screams as Minchin reaches his boiling point.

MINCHIN

I don't think she'd like it if she knew you were here.

HANNAH

Why not?

He pours the tea -the cups rattle in their saucers as he carries them to the table. He notices Hannah taking notes.

MINCHIN

What are you writing?

HANNAH

Does she know your children?

MINCHIN

Please don't write that.

HANNAH

It would be useful to interview her-

MINCHIN

DON'T YOU WRITE THAT!

He fumbles the teacups (they hit the table and the scalding hot tea splashes Hannah but she doesn't react).

He snatches the paper from Hannah's note pad and tears it to pieces. Rip, rip, rip. Until it's confetti.

Hannah's expression is pure shock. It's sobering to Minchin. He drops to the floor and picks up the bits of paper, trying in vain to piece them back together.

MINCHIN (CONT'D)
You shouldn't have done that.

HANNAH
I-

MINCHIN
Now she's going to take the
children away.

Hannah suddenly realizes he's talking to himself.

MINCHIN (CONT'D)
You should've known this wasn't
going to work out. But you just
had to have your rubber stamp.
You're such a goddamned fool.

As she stands over him, watching him on his hands and knees,
he reminds her of herself cleaning up the plate with Johnny
standing over her, and she's overcome with empathy.

HANNAH
I- I didn't mean to upset you.
Here, let me help.

INT. ENTRYWAY, 29 MOLE STREET

The children all crowd just on the other side of the door,
eavesdropping. They whisper.

GIDEON
Now she's gone and done it.

CHRISTOPHER
Done what?

GIDEON
She opened the curtains.

JUNIPER
See! I told you she was a spy!
She did it on purpose. To let the
Sluagh see in.

CHRISTOPHER
No!

IRENA
Stop trying to scare him, Juni.

JUNIPER

They're probably circling overhead
right now.

GIDEON

With their leathery wings.

WILLIAM

And scaly skin, barely clinging to
their bones.

GIDEON

Their hands and feet like claws.

WILLIAM

Their teeth all pointed and jagged.

JUNIPER

They can hear a pin drop from ten
miles away. A child's whisper is
like a scream to them.

Christopher's mouth hangs open, petrified.

GIDEON

They can smell your breath too.

WILLIAM

They're drawn to the sweetness.

JUNIPER

You smell just like cake.

He clamps his hand over his mouth.

JUNIPER (CONT'D)

It's too late.

GIDEON

They've already had a whiff.

JUNIPER

They're coming for you. And she's
leading the way.

CHRISTOPHER

But I don't want Miss Pratt to be a
spy! I like her. She's nice and
she smells like perfume.

IRENA

Don't listen to them, Christopher.
Miss Pratt is nice. They just
don't like her because she's new.

TALLULAH
So then she's not a spy?

IRENA
No.

CHRISTOPHER
I'm confused.

JUNIPER
Wake up, dum-dum. There's a
traitor in our midst.
(she looks Irena over)
Possibly two.

GIDEON
It's up to us to stop her.

WILLIAM
Or else.

William jabs a finger into Christopher's rib and he jumps.

JUNIPER
You're not safe now. None of us
are.

INT. KITCHEN, 29 MOLE STREET

Hannah and Minchin sit across from each other, politely
sipping tea, trying to pretend like everything's fine.

A very, very long and awkward silence...

MINCHIN
I imagine you'll want to get going
now.

She literally jumps at the chance, popping up from her chair.

HANNAH
Yes, I think that's a good idea.

INT. ENTRYWAY, 29 MOLE STREET

She walks quickly to the door, Minchin in tow.

MINCHIN
I realize we didn't make as good an
impression as we could have.

HANNAH

It was a very productive day.

She opens the door and is about to leave when he stops her-

MINCHIN

Will you come back?

HANNAH

Of course.

MINCHIN

If not for me, then for them.

She lingers.

HANNAH

I'll be back first thing in the morning.

This time she means it.

Minchin closes the door behind her. His expression a pained mix of hope and worry.

INT. LIVING ROOM, 29 MOLE STREET - MORNING

It's early. Quiet.

Minchin turns on the television and tunes to local news. He sits at the ready with a pencil and paper.

NEWSCASTER

Good morning and welcome to CBS-3's Eyewitness News This Morning. If you're just joining us, here's a look at today's top stories. An investigation is underway into a fire that claimed the life of an elderly man and injured dozens more at a North Philadelphia supermarket.

Minchin writes on his note pad: 1 dead - North Philly - supermarket fire.

NEWSCASTER (CONT'D)

A 14 year-old has been arrested after bringing a loaded gun to Upper Darby High School.

(MORE)

NEWSCASTER (CONT'D)

Classmates alerted teachers of the potential threat after the boy spoke of plans to carry out a mass shooting. And finally, authorities have issued an Amber Alert for 6 year-old Casey Mathers. Casey was last seen at the Chuck E. Cheese's on Roosevelt Boulevard. She was abducted from the restaurant she was visiting with her parents.

He watches intently, his eyes welling with tears.

NEWSCASTER (CONT'D)

Anyone with information is asked to call-

TALLULAH (O.S.)

Daddy?

He leaps up and switches off the TV.

MINCHIN

Yes, my love?

He rubs his eyes but it's obvious he's been crying.

TALLULAH

What are you doing?

MINCHIN

Daddy's just working, that's all. It seems there's a constant supply of... of, work out there.

TALLULAH

Then why were you crying?

MINCHIN

Because the world's a very scary place.

TALLULAH

It scared you?

MINCHIN

It did.

She kisses him on the cheek.

TALLULAH

Don't worry, Daddy. You're safe here with us.

He smiles.

MINCHIN
Did you hear that?

TALLULAH
What?

MINCHIN
That knock! It must be Miss Pratt!

INT. ENTRYWAY, 29 MOLE STREET

He checks his reflection in the glass of the china cabinet, straightens his collar, wipes his eyes once more.

He opens the front door with a grand gesture.

MINCHIN
Good morning!

Hannah enters, with a determined smile.

HANNAH
Good morning, Mr. Minchin.

MINCHIN
I trust you had a pleasant evening?

HANNAH
I did, actually. I can't remember when I've ever slept so soundly.

INT. LIVING ROOM, 29 MOLE STREET

HANNAH
May I set up in here?

MINCHIN
Please, make yourself at home.

She pulls out her file, checks her phone.

HANNAH
Oh, shoot. I must have forgot to charge my phone last night. The battery's almost dead. You don't have a charger for one of these, do you?

MINCHIN

I'm afraid I don't. I don't own a cell phone.

Today's not off to a much better start... But she's determined to forge ahead.

HANNAH

Well, should we get started?

INT. PLAYROOM, 29 MOLE STREET

All the children are in the playroom. William scribbles on the wall with a red crayon.

Hannah KNOCKS, enters.

HANNAH

Good morning, everyone!

IRENA/TALLULAH/CHRISTOPHER

Good morning, Miss Pratt!

But Gideon, Juniper, and William give her the cold shoulder. There's tension in the room.

HANNAH

Did you all sleep well last night?

The same three answer, but the others continue to ignore her. She notices William marking up the walls.

HANNAH (CONT'D)

Does your father allow you to draw on the walls, William?

WILLIAM

No.

HANNAH

Then you better wipe it off.

WILLIAM

But I'm making something for you.

She holds out her hand and he surrenders his crayon.

HANNAH

You made it quite clear yesterday how seriously you take the rules. I expect to see that wall scrubbed clean when I get back here.

William trades an angry look with Juniper.

HANNAH (CONT'D)

Irena, I'd like to start with you today, if that's alright?

Irena takes Hannah's hand and follows her out of the room.

INT. LIVING ROOM, 29 MOLE STREET

Irena brushes her new moonfaced doll's hair. She HUMS along to the doll's music box, playing SWAN LAKE.

Hannah watches from the opposite end of the sofa.

HANNAH

That's a pretty song. Do you like music?

Irena keeps on humming.

HANNAH (CONT'D)

It's okay to talk to me, you know.

IRENA

I know. But they're listening. And they'll be mad if I do.

HANNAH

Who?

IRENA

Juniper and Gideon. And now William too.

HANNAH

Why don't they want you to talk to me?

IRENA

Because they think you're here to hurt us.

HANNAH

I'm not.

IRENA

Do you think there are more bad people in the world, or more good?

HANNAH

I'd like to think there are more good.

IRENA

But you don't know. Most people don't. That's because most people are somewhere in the middle. Not good or bad. Not black, or white. Just gray. People get so used to seeing gray, that the whole world looks gray to them. But when all you've ever known your whole life is black, and then one day everything is white, the contrast is so stark it blinds you. You can't help but see it.

HANNAH

And what color is your daddy?
White...or black?

IRENA

The question is, which one are you?

She looks at Hannah's bruised eye.

IRENA (CONT'D)

Besides, something tells me you can see it too.

Hannah tries to deflect the attention back to Irena:

HANNAH

That's a beautiful dress you're wearing.

IRENA

Daddy said you'd like it. He dressed us in all our nicest things. He wanted to make a good impression.

HANNAH

You don't dress yourself?

IRENA

It makes Daddy so happy to do it. He braids our hair, and mends our stockings, and shines our shoes.

HANNAH

How about the older children? Does he dress them too?

IRENA

All of us. Every morning.

HANNAH

And does he undress you at night?

Hannah reaches over and carefully lifts the moonfaced doll from Irena's lap.

HANNAH (CONT'D)

Show me on this doll where he touches you.

IRENA

I know what you're getting at. That's what Bad Daddy used to do. But Daddy's not like that. He loves us. His love is pure.

HANNAH

Sometimes, when we love someone a whole lot, we make allowances. It's perfectly normal.

IRENA

There's nothing normal about what you're suggesting. If there were, you wouldn't bother suggesting it in the first place.

HANNAH

That's my job. I have to ask questions, and sometimes they're uncomfortable. I've been doing this a very long time. I've I've been in hundreds of homes and I've talked to thousands of kids, and I've asked millions of questions. And usually I know what the answer's going to be before they tell me.

IRENA

But you didn't know my answer.

HANNAH

No, I didn't.

IRENA

I'm not lying.

HANNAH

I know. I just think there's something more you're not telling me.

And it'll stay that way.

IRENA
May I have my doll back now?

INT. UPSTAIRS HALLWAY, 29 MOLE STREET

Hannah climbs the stairs and heads toward the playroom.

JUNIPER
Miss Pratt?

Hannah turns to see Juniper standing at the opposite end of the hallway. Her hands are cupped together, holding something inside.

HANNAH
Yes?

JUNIPER
I found a mouse.

Juniper doesn't budge. So Hannah inches down the hallway toward her. As she comes closer she sees a small pink tail hangs from between her hands.

HANNAH
Oh no! The poor little guy must have lost his way.

Hannah eyes the mouse tail - curiously still.

HANNAH (CONT'D)
How about we give Mr. Mouse a piece of cheese and send him on his way. What do you say?

JUNIPER
No can do.

HANNAH
Why not?

JUNIPER
One, it tunneled its way in here, sticking its nose where it didn't belong. And two, we don't have any cheese.

HANNAH
Let it go, Juniper.

She'll do no such thing.

HANNAH (CONT'D)
 Juniper, let it go! You're being
 cruel.

Hannah pulls her hands apart. The mouse drops to the floor -
 and hits with the THUD of dead weight. Not moving. Mangled.
 Its head hangs limp at an unnatural angle from its body.

Hannah gasps, backs into the wall.

HANNAH (CONT'D)
 What did you do to it?!

JUNIPER
 It was a spy. So I snapped its
 neck.

A terrible SCREAM comes from the playroom.

INT. PLAYROOM, 29 MOLE STREET

Hannah comes running. Juniper is close behind.

Christopher wails as Minchin cradles him in his arms.

HANNAH
 What happened?

MINCHIN
 I think he dislocated his shoulder.

The bone juts out of the socket. Gruesome.

HANNAH
 How?

MINCHIN
 (to Christopher)
 I'm going to have to pop it back
 into place.

CHRISTOPHER
 No, Daddy, no!

MINCHIN
 It'll only hurt for a second.

CHRISTOPHER
 Please, Daddy! Don't do it!

MINCHIN
 Shh...

INT. CHILDREN'S BEDROOM, 29 MOLE STREET

Hannah peers in and sees Tallulah sitting on the floor, playing with an oversized doll house.

TALLULAH
Would you like to play with me?

Hannah kneels next to her. Tallulah hands her a doll.

TALLULAH (CONT'D)
You can be the brown-haired one.

HANNAH
What's her name?

TALLULAH
Her name is Mommy.

Hannah notices the doll house has been painstakingly restored as a miniature version of the actual house: Same wallpaper, same furniture, same little spandrel closet and off-limits basement. She places the doll inside.

HANNAH
Well, Mommy has had a stressful day so she is going to soak in a nice warm bubble bath.

TALLULAH
What's that?

HANNAH
What- a bubble bath?

Tallulah looks at her blankly.

HANNAH (CONT'D)
Don't tell me you've never had a bubble bath?

Tallulah shakes her head.

HANNAH (CONT'D)
Well, come with me, young lady!

She gets to her feet and holds out her hand, Tallulah takes it.

HANNAH (CONT'D)
(smiles)
This is gonna blow your mind.

INT. UPSTAIRS BATHROOM, 29 MOLE STREET

Hannah shoves the plug in the drain and turns on the faucets full blast. She squirts Dawn dish detergent into the water and the tub quickly fills with big soapy bubbles.

HANNAH

See?

She scoops some suds off the top and blows them at Tallulah.

HANNAH (CONT'D)

Bubble bath.

Tallulah is amazed.

HANNAH (CONT'D)

Put your hand in. Feel it.

Tallulah cuts through the bubbles with her hand. She's delighted. Then she starts to undo the buttons of her dress.

HANNAH (CONT'D)

No. You can't go in. You can't take your clothes off in front of people you don't know, Tallulah. That's a private thing.

TALLULAH

Please? I want to try it.

HANNAH

Some other time. A stranger is a stranger, even when they're in your own home.

TALLULAH

We've never had another grown-up in the house.

HANNAH

What about the social worker who was here before? The one who placed you?

TALLULAH

Oh, right. I forgot about her.

Her?

Hannah retrieves her case file from the bathroom sink. She flips through the pages and finds the note she took during her walk-through with Minchin: "**PREVIOUS SOCIAL WORKER - EDWARD ??**"

SPLASH!

Tallulah jumps into the bath tub, fully dressed, disappears under the bubbles.

HANNAH

Tallulah!

She's under for a long time...

HANNAH (CONT'D)

Tallulah?

Suddenly just her face surfaces and she GASPS for air. A look of pure terror on her face as she thrashes around.

TALLULAH

Help me!

She's drowning -in 12 inches of water.

Hannah tries to pull her out but she can't. She's too heavy.

Half the water in the tub is gone -as though it just evaporated.

HANNAH

We need help in here! Somebody help!

Minchin comes rushing in and together the two of them drag Tallulah out of the bath.

MINCHIN

(to Tallulah)

Are you alright, my angel?

(to Hannah)

What in God's name happened?

HANNAH

I- I don't know. She got so heavy, all of a sudden. I couldn't lift her.

MINCHIN

She could have drowned!

HANNAH

I don't understand-

Minchin pulls the plug, letting the water out of the tub.

MINCHIN

I'll get some dry clothes.

Minchin leaves. Hannah wraps Tallulah in a towel.

TALLULAH
I'm sorry I got you in trouble.

HANNAH
I'm just relieved you're not hurt.

Tallulah sees something on Hannah's cheek.

TALLULAH
You have an eyelash.

She plucks the fallen lash from her face and holds it up.

TALLULAH (CONT'D)
Make a wish!

Hannah looks at the eyelash resting on the tip of her finger - but then she notices something else... On the inside of Tallulah's wrist is a severe burn mark.

HANNAH
How did you get that burn?

MINCHIN (O.S.)
She had an accident.

Minchin stands in the doorway with the change of clothes.

MINCHIN (CONT'D)
Surely you can see how that's possible, considering you almost just drowned her.

He helps Tallulah strip off her wet dress.

MINCHIN (CONT'D)
I took her to the doctor. It will heal.

HANNAH
I'll need to confirm with the doctor, as a matter of practice.

MINCHIN
Fine.

INT. ENTRYWAY, 29 MOLE STREET

Hannah follows Minchin downstairs to the landline phone in the entryway. He places the call.

MINCHIN

(on the phone)

Yes, hello. This is Anthony Minchin... Fine, thank you... Is Dr. Merrick in? There's a caseworker from social services here who'd like to speak with him about Tallulah's accident... Oh, no, it's not urgent. She's feeling much better in fact... Alright, I'll let her know... You have the number?... Very well. Bye for now.

He hangs up.

MINCHIN (CONT'D)

Dr. Merrick is with a patient but he'll call back as soon as he can.

HANNAH

Will you come find me when he calls?

MINCHIN

The second it rings. Now, if you'll excuse me, I have a traumatized child to attend to.

Minchin tromps up the stairs, leaving Hannah alone...

INT. LIVING ROOM, 29 MOLE STREET

She wanders into the living room, free to explore on her own.

She rifles through the drawers of the credenza: mostly scraps of paper, old pens, broken toys. She finds what looks like a chicken bone. Peculiar. It's small, maybe too small. She roots around and finds another one. This one even smaller.

She places the two bones on top of the credenza, end to end, then spins one around. There: They could almost connect...

She slips the bones into her pocket and shuts the drawer.

Her eyes drift up to a framed picture on top of the credenza. It's a family photo: Minchin with all his children gathered around him.

There are more than a dozen family photos. All of them taken inside the home. All of them recent.

HANNAH

No baby photos.

Hannah picks up a photo of Christopher and examines it closely. Those familiar eyes...

HANNAH (CONT'D)

Where have I seen you before?

Her eyes drift to the **"OFF-LIMITS: DADDY ONLY!"** sign.

INT. BASEMENT, 29 MOLE STREET

Hannah stands at the top of the stairs, looking down at the forbidden basement. She steps onto the first stair and it CREAKS, loudly. She pauses, but no one heard it.

She continues downstairs.

It's dark down here. It's different than the rest of the house. No warmth.

There's a small sliver of a window up near the ceiling.

The basement is divided into three areas:

The first is a workbench piled a mile high with hobbyist's tools. She pulls the chain to turn on the lightbulb overhead, shining a spotlight on the mountain of paints and paintbrushes, primers, solvents, spools of thread, and broken toys awaiting repair.

The second area is a plain wood desk and chair. No computer. A flurry of papers - records and research, a mess of manila folders. Tacked up on the wall, are newspaper clippings. Dozens of them. Hannah leans in to read the headline-

When she hears an asthmatic wheezing sound behind her...

She slowly turns to see Gideon standing in the shadows under the stairs, gasping for air as his chest rises and falls with each shallow breath.

GIDEON

You're not supposed to be down here.

This is the third area: an austere bedroom and tiny bathroom. A twin bed in the corner, neatly made with a heavy wool blanket.

HANNAH

I'm sorry, I-

GIDEON
I'm not supposed to either. This
is Daddy's room.

HANNAH
What are you doing down here?

GIDEON
Playing ball.

He throws a ball and it bounces off the wall - BA-DUNK.

GIDEON (CONT'D)
I sneak down here sometimes.
Sometimes I just need to be alone.

HANNAH
It's okay. I won't tell.

GIDEON
Are you good at keeping secrets?

HANNAH
Yes. Are you?

GIDEON
Very good.

HANNAH
How about we each tell each other
one of our secrets then?

Gideon says nothing.

HANNAH (CONT'D)
I'll go first. I found something
strange in a drawer upstairs.

She reaches into her pocket for the two little bones, holds
them out to Gideon. He glances at them for just a second,
then returns to his game. Ba-dunk.

HANNAH (CONT'D)
They look like tiny chicken bones.
But, you know that little voice in
the back of your head? The one
that nags at you when something's
not quite right? That little voice
keeps asking, why would someone
keep old chicken bones in a drawer?

Ba-dunk.

HANNAH (CONT'D)

Your turn.

GIDEON

My secret is...you're not as good at keeping secrets as you think you are.

Ba-dunk.

HANNAH

Wouldn't you rather play with that ball outside? Maybe some of the neighborhood boys would like to play with you.

GIDEON

You should put them back. -The bones.

HANNAH

Why?

GIDEON

In case the chicken comes looking for them.

HANNAH

Are you afraid of what might happen if he did?

GIDEON

I'd be a fool not to be. We're all God's creatures. And we're not always what we seem.

Ba-dunk.

GIDEON (CONT'D)

What's that little voice telling you now?

HANNAH

Now, that would be two secrets.

Ba-dunk. Only this time, Gideon misses the catch and the ball rolls across the floor.

As it rolls, the sound changes: Badadada-**DADADA**-dadada. Like there's a hollow spot in the floor.

HANNAH (CONT'D)

You better go upstairs and play now, Gideon. I won't tell your father you were down here.

GIDEON

I won't tell him you were down here either. Now we'll really see who's good at keeping secrets.

As soon as Gideon leaves Hannah goes to work: She knocks along the floor to locate the hollow spot, then she pries up the loose floorboards. They reveal a small hiding space under the floor, where an old PC laptop is stowed.

She takes a seat on the bed and starts up the computer.

EXT. ALLEY, 29 MOLE STREET

Minchin exits from the back door and walks to the side alley that runs between his house and Mrs. Grady's house next door. He's taking out the trash.

He notices the bag is dripping onto his steps.

MINCHIN

Tsk. What a mess.

The adorable black and white terrier runs down the alley, BARKING, tail wagging.

Old Lady Grady follows a ways behind, carrying his leash.

The terrier sniffs the trash bag. Minchin tries to maneuver it out of his reach but he's relentless.

MINCHIN (CONT'D)

That dog should be on a leash.

He barks as though he's alerting to something. Grady waves her hand in front of her nose.

MRS. GRADY

Oh boy! That's a doozy! What have you got in there anyway?

MINCHIN

Just kitchen scraps.

He shoos the dog away with his foot.

MRS. GRADY

Well, I hope you didn't eat
whatever it was! It smells rancid.
It must have stunk up the whole
house.

The dog nips at the bag and the plastic tears a little.
Minchin jerks it away. It drips onto his pant leg.

MINCHIN

Now look what you've done.

INT. MINCHIN'S BEDROOM, 29 MOLE STREET

Hannah searches through Minchin's laptop.

She opens his PHOTO LIBRARY.

The recent ones are all of the children. Normal, happy
snapshots. She scrolls to the very beginning. Photos of
Minchin as a child, an adolescent, and a young man. He's
alone in every single one of them. He seems unhappy.

She looks on his HARD DRIVE.

She clicks on a folder labeled "MOUNT MORIAH", then a file
named "MAP". It's a cemetery.

She clicks a sub-folder labeled "SOULS". There are hundreds
of documents inside, each identified with a first name and a
range of dates.

She opens the first file: "AARON 1997-1999." An OBITUARY
pops up for Aaron Brown, 2 years old, who died in a drowning
accident, and was laid to rest at Mount Moriah Cemetery. She
skips down to "JASMINE 2000-2004." An obituary for Jasmine
Lazzaro who died of influenza, 4 years old. She clicks on
"SARAH JANE 1964-1972." Sarah Jane Butler, murdered, 8 years
old.

They're all children. All buried at Mount Moriah Cemetery.

EXT. ALLEY, 29 MOLE STREET

MINCHIN

Can't you get your animal under
control?

Minchin stuffs the bag in the trash can and puts the lid on
tight.

MRS. GRADY

Oh, he's harmless. His bark is worse than his bite.

MINCHIN

I'm afraid the same can't be said of me. You really ought to be careful. People throw away all sorts of dangerous things. Is it true what they say? -a single grape can kill a dog? I'd hate for anything to happen to little pecker.

MRS. GRADY

His name is Pepper.

INT. MINCHIN'S BEDROOM, 29 MOLE STREET

ON Minchin'S COMPUTER: Hannah opens the WEB BROWSER history.

Article after article on ABDUCTED or MISSING CHILDREN.

She opens his E-MAIL.

There's an online order confirmation from RIVERSIDE CHEMICAL SOLUTIONS for cedar, bleach, sodium chloride, and sodium sulfate.

EXT. ALLEY, 29 MOLE STREET

MRS. GRADY

I have half a mind to call the cops on you!

MINCHIN

Mrs. Grady, I try to be neighborly, I really do-

MRS. GRADY

Neighborly? Ha! Do you know the neighborhood kids won't even walk by here? They cross the street! They think you're a creep. I hope it's worth it -whatever you're hiding in there. Because one day that rotten old house is going to fall in on you and you'll die in there - all alone. And not a person alive will miss you.

This cuts him to the core.

MINCHIN

Thank you.

MRS. GRADY

For what?

MINCHIN

For proving me right. The world
can be cruel. But people... People
are monsters.

Minchin starts back up the steps to the house.

INT. MINCHIN'S BEDROOM, 29 MOLE STREET

ON Minchin'S COMPUTER: Hannah opens another E-MAIL.

From InstantCheckmate.com Subscription Services: **YOUR SEARCH RESULTS FOR JONATHAN PRATT.**

"A search of public records has revealed the following criminal record for Jonathan Pratt" followed by a long history of domestic violence charges.

Hannah is completely dumbstruck staring at her husband's complete criminal record, of which she has been the victim.

Just then, she hears the loud CREAK of the first stair.

Shit! She tries to shut down the computer:

3 PROGRAMS STILL NEED TO CLOSE. TO CLOSE THE PROGRAMS THAT ARE PREVENTING WINDOWS FROM SHUTTING DOWN, CLICK CANCEL, AND THEN CLOSE THE PROGRAMS.

She can hear the FOOTSTEPS descending the stairs, getting closer...and closer...

She frantically quits out of Photos, Adobe, Safari; Then tries to shut down again.

SHUTTING DOWN...

The spinning wheel goes around, and around, and around... There's no time. She slams the laptop shut, drops it into its hiding space and fits the floorboards into place.

She ducks into the dark corner under the stairs and hides.

Minchin reaches the bottom of the stairs and goes to his bedroom area.

He turns on the light, shrinking the shadow under the staircase even smaller. She presses herself into the wall.

He takes off his pants and lays them out on his bed, then disappears into the bathroom, runs the water.

Hannah sneaks out from her hiding spot and hurries up the stairs as quietly as she can... She reaches the top, opens the basement door-

And leaps over the top step, careful to avoid the CREAK.

INT. LIVING ROOM, 29 MOLE STREET

Hannah closes the door behind her, panicked and out of breath.

She pushes a side table in place to block the basement door.

She searches for her purse and digs through it for her phone. Low battery. One bar. She dials: "JOHNNY".

MAN'S VOICE (O.S.)

Hello?

HANNAH

Johnny, it's me-

MAN'S VOICE (O.S.)

Hello?

She frantically moves around the room trying to get better reception.

HANNAH

Can you hear me? I'm at a home visit- This guy has a file on you.

MAN'S VOICE (O.S.)

Who is this?

INT. BASEMENT, 29 MOLE STREET

Minchin returns from the bathroom with a damp washcloth. He dabs at the drips on his pant leg.

He opens his closet, selects a new pair of trousers, and puts them on.

He's buckling his belt when- He hears it: that familiar 4-note chime. The Windows shut down sound. -Coming from underneath the floor.

INT. KITCHEN, 29 MOLE STREET

Hannah hurries into the kitchen, searching for reception.

HANNAH
Something's wrong, Johnny. I'm
leaving but I have to get the kids
out-

Her battery goes dead.

HANNAH (CONT'D)
SHIT!

INT. LIVING ROOM, 29 MOLE STREET

Hannah tears through the house looking for the kids.

INT. DINING ROOM, 29 MOLE STREET

Christopher kneels on a dining room chair, coloring.

Hannah rushes in.

HANNAH
Christopher, what was the name of
the social worker who brought you
here?

CHRISTOPHER
I don't remember.

She takes a seat next to him. Calms herself, falls back on her training.

HANNAH
There was no other social worker,
was there?

Christopher shakes his head "no".

HANNAH (CONT'D)
Then how did you get here?

CHRISTOPHER
I don't remember.

HANNAH

Try.

She takes his crayon away, forcing him to focus.

HANNAH (CONT'D)

I need you to think really, really hard.

He concentrates, breathing heavy.

A little booger dangles out of his nostril. But it's no regular snot bubble. -It's moving. -It's...*wriggling*.

Hannah looks closer, tilts his head back to get a better look.

HANNAH (CONT'D)

What is that...?

She pinches the end of it between her fingers, and pulls. Slowly, inch by inch the slimy goo slides out of his nose.

She holds it up in the air. It twists and curls between her fingers. It's a live **worm**.

Startled, she drops it and it slithers away.

HANNAH (CONT'D)

Did you put that up your nose?

CHRISTOPHER

No!

HANNAH

Then how did it get there?

His face gets hot and his eyes fill with tears.

HANNAH (CONT'D)

I'm not trying to embarrass you.
I'm just trying to help. You can trust me.

His ears perk up. She cradles his head against her.

HANNAH (CONT'D)

It's going to be okay. Listen, I want you to go round up your brothers and sisters. We're going to go on a little adventure. Okay?

Christopher nods.

HANNAH (CONT'D)
Good. Gather everyone in the
playroom and I'll meet you up
there. Go quickly!

Christopher runs off.

INT. LIVING ROOM, 29 MOLE STREET

He scurries through the living room-

INT. STAIRCASE, 29 MOLE STREET

And up the stairs.

INT. UPSTAIRS HALLWAY, 29 MOLE STREET

Down the hallway-

INT. PLAYROOM, 29 MOLE STREET

And into the playroom, where the rest of the children are
playing.

CHRISTOPHER
You're right, Juniper. She's a
spy.

JUNIPER
I told you!

CHRISTOPHER
She said the exact words you warned
us a spy would say.

IRENA
That doesn't prove anything.

WILLIAM
We can't take any chances.

GIDEON
Why are you protecting her?

IRENA
Because-! She could grow to love
us. Just like Daddy. Maybe
someday, she could be our mommy.

GIDEON

Someday? There is no someday!
She'll have the Sluagh at our door
by midnight. Then it's all over.
Face the facts: Miss Pratt is a
spy. The only question now is,
what are we going to do about it?

JUNIPER

Daddy told us what we have to do.
Let's put it to a vote. All in
favor, raise your hand.

Juniper, Gideon, William, and Christopher put their hands up.
Then, reluctantly, Tallulah does too.

Irena is the last man standing.

JUNIPER (CONT'D)

So be it. If you're not with us,
you're against us.

INT. LIVING ROOM, 29 MOLE STREET

Hannah walks back into the living room and immediately sees
the side table has been put back in its place. The basement
door is no longer barricaded.

MINCHIN (O.S.)

Tea?

Hannah whips around to see Minchin walking in from the
kitchen, smiling, carrying a tea tray.

HANNAH

Mr. Minchin, I have some very
serious concerns about what I've
seen here today.

Minchin sets the tray down on the coffee table. His back is
to her as he prepares the tea.

MINCHIN

One lump or two?

HANNAH

I have no choice but to mention
these concerns in my report.

MINCHIN

I'll put two. If you can't tell,
I've got a bit of a sweet tooth.

HANNAH

And I'm going to suggest removing the children from the home temporarily. Sometimes it's a week, sometimes it's as little as a day.

MINCHIN

Do you have any idea what I could do to you?

Only it's not Minchin's voice she hears- It's Johnny's.

HANNAH

What did you say...?

Minchin turns around to face her. His expression is cheerful, his voice his own-

MINCHIN

I said, I hope you like the tea that I brewed for you?

He hands her a cup.

HANNAH

(flustered)

Regarding your children-

MINCHIN

No.

HANNAH

I'm not asking for your permission-

MINCHIN

You will not take my children away from me. Not for a week, or a day. Not for one minute.

HANNAH

What makes you so sure?

MINCHIN

You know why. I won't let you.

HANNAH

Well, you can take it up in court.

She goes to-

INT. ENTRYWAY, 29 MOLE STREET

Picks up the landline phone and dials.

OPERATOR (O.S.)
Department of Human Services.

HANNAH
This is Hannah Pratt. I'm working
a case at 29 Mole Street. I need
you to send help right away.

OPERATOR (O.S.)
Hello?

HANNAH
Yes, hello! Can you hear me?

OPERATOR (O.S.)
Hello? Is anybody there? Hello...?

Hannah slowly lowers the receiver as it sinks in. The phone
doesn't work. Minchin couldn't have called the pediatrician.
It was all a ruse...

Tucked above the telephone is a business card:

DR. ARMEN MERRICK, CLINICAL PSYCHOLOGIST

Holy fucking shit.

MINCHIN (O.S.)
Something the matter?

Minchin has followed her into the entryway.

HANNAH
Don't come any closer.

MINCHIN
What's wrong?

He inches toward her as she retreats.

HANNAH
Stay away from me!

She trips on a toy car. Her ankle makes a bone-crunching
CRACK sound and her tibia juts out, stretching against her
skin almost at a right angle. (Her reaction to the pain is
not what we'd expect.) She limps along, backing away.

MINCHIN

That looks like a bad break.

He reaches into his pocket-

MINCHIN (CONT'D)

Here, let me fix it.

-and pulls out the roll of white gauze.

HANNAH

You carry that around with you?
Just waiting for one of the
children to have an accident?

MINCHIN

You know how clumsy kids can be.
If I didn't carry it with me, I'd
be running to the cupboard every
ten minutes.

A light bulb turns on in her head:

HANNAH

That's it! That's where I know him
from!

MINCHIN

Who?

HANNAH

Christopher. He's the Keeley
Cupboard Boy.

MINCHIN

That's absurd.

HANNAH

His picture was all over the news.
-That terrible story about the
mother who kept her son locked in
the cupboard until one day he got
out and he ran away.

MINCHIN

That's not him.

HANNAH

I remember his face perfectly. He
just disappeared. They searched
and searched but they couldn't find
him. They couldn't find him
because he was here -with you. You
abducted him.

(MORE)

HANNAH (CONT'D)

You abducted all your kids. And you're abusing them. You're sick!

MINCHIN

Christopher can't be the Keeley Cupboard Boy.

HANNAH

Why not?

MINCHIN

Because the Keeley Cupboard Boy is dead.

HANNAH

No...

MINCHIN

Four years after he disappeared, a body washed up in the Schuylkill River. They matched it to his dental records. Here- I can prove it.

He goes down to the basement, leaving Hannah alone. She stands at the foot of the staircase and calls up-

HANNAH

(whisper-shout)

Christopher...? Christopher, is everybody ready? It's almost time to go now.

Minchin returns from the basement with a worn newspaper clipping. He hands it to Hannah.

MINCHIN

My newspaper covered the story.

The headline reads:

"KEELEY CUPBOARD BOY FINALLY LAID TO REST AT MOUNT MORIAH"

MINCHIN (CONT'D)

Besides, the Keeley boy was four years old when he died - in 2001. He'd be older now.

HANNAH

No...

MINCHIN

When he disappeared it was front page news.

(MORE)

MINCHIN (CONT'D)

The whole city was out looking for him. But by the time they discovered his remains he was long forgotten. A cold case. They buried that article back on B8.

Hannah studies it, its grainy black and white photo.

HANNAH

Why did you keep the clipping?

MINCHIN

I researched the story for the paper. I help out with the homicide reporting sometimes. It goes hand in hand with the obits. I keep every single article I've ever worked on.

She hands it back to him. He looks at the photo himself.

MINCHIN (CONT'D)

I'll admit, the resemblance is uncanny.

HANNAH

None of this changes the fact that you are an unfit father.

MINCHIN

Unfit? I dote on those children. I spend every minute and every dime I have on them. I would never do anything to endanger them and anyone who says otherwise would have to be...

HANNAH

What?

MINCHIN

They'd have to be crazy.

RIIIIIING! RING! RING! Minchin picks up the receiver.

MINCHIN (CONT'D)

Hello?

MERRICK (O.S.)

Anthony? It's Dr. Merrick. I just got your message.

MINCHIN

Thanks for calling back.

Hannah is perplexed; How could this be?

HANNAH

But the phone doesn't work...

MERRICK (O.S.)

Anthony, listen to me. You said there was a caseworker there? -from Social Services?

MINCHIN

Yes.

MERRICK (O.S.)

Is she there with you now?

MINCHIN

Yes.

MERRICK (O.S.)

Can you go into another room so we can talk privately?

Minchin tucks the phone into his shoulder.

MINCHIN

(to Hannah)

Excuse me a moment.

He takes the phone around the corner into the living room, as far as the chord will reach. He talks in hushed tones.

He returns and hangs up the phone.

MINCHIN (CONT'D)

Now that I've answered all your questions, I wonder if you wouldn't mind answering one for me. What's my case number?

HANNAH

(confused)

What?

MINCHIN

Dr. Merrick said if you really are who you say you are, you'd know it.

HANNAH

Of course! Of course I know it. I just- I can't remember. With everything that's been going on, I- I forgot it.

She spots her notes across the room.

HANNAH (CONT'D)
It'll be in your case file!

She desperately flips through the file.

HANNAH (CONT'D)
(to herself)
How could it not be in here? It
has to be here!

She pours over every page.

HANNAH (CONT'D)
WHERE IS IT?

She sees fear in Minchin's eyes. He's afraid of her.

MINCHIN
Perhaps it's best if you-

HANNAH
I'm not crazy.

MINCHIN
Please, just let us be. We don't
want any trouble.

Hannah sinks into an armchair. Her head is spinning.

HANNAH
May I have an aspirin? I think my
ankle's starting to swell.

MINCHIN
Let me see what I have in my
medicine cabinet.

Minchin starts down the stairs for the basement. As soon as
he's out of sight, Hannah makes a break for it-

INT. STAIRCASE, 29 MOLE STREET

She limps up the stairs, fast as she can-

INT. PLAYROOM, 29 MOLE STREET

HANNAH
Quick now, children! Come with me.

IRENA
Where are we going?

HANNAH
Didn't Christopher tell you? We're going on an adventure. But we need to leave right now. Fast as we can.

JUNIPER
We're not going anywhere.

Juniper picks up a piggy bank.

JUNIPER (CONT'D)
Gideon, are you going to leave with Miss Pratt?

GIDEON
No.

She turns the piggy bank upside down and pops its cork. She reaches in and pulls out a sugar cube, hands it to him. Gideon attacks it like a ravenous animal.

JUNIPER
How about you, William? Are you going to leave?

WILLIAM
No!

She hands him a sugar cube. He sucks on it. Closes his eyes and melts. He's in heaven. She makes her way down the line.

JUNIPER
Tallulah?

TALLULAH
No!

JUNIPER
Christopher?

CHRISTOPHER
No!

JUNIPER
Irena...?

Irena eyes that piggy bank. She wants what's inside.

JUNIPER (CONT'D)

Irena, are you going to leave with
Miss Pratt?

Her siblings devour their sugar cubes like it's water in the Mojave.

IRENA

(looks up at Hannah)
Would we be gone very long?

Juniper crumbles Irena's sugar cube into tiny crystals and lets them spill onto the floor.

HANNAH

Are you all so easily swayed? Come
with me and I'll get you more
sweets than you've ever dreamed of.
If all it takes to win you over is
a little-

She dabs her finger in the crystals, touches it to her tongue-

HANNAH (CONT'D)

Salt?

Irena hungrily licks her lips at the word.

HANNAH (CONT'D)

Those are salt cubes?

Hannah observes the tiny gluttons. Their grotesque sucking sounds. Their sickly indulgence.

HANNAH (CONT'D)

We have to get out of here.

A trail of salty saliva runs down Juniper's arm and she licks it up. As she does, it draws Hannah's attention to a mark on her wrist.

HANNAH (CONT'D)

Let me see that.

Juniper, consumed with the salt, ignores her. Hannah pushes up her sleeves, revealing dark rings of scar tissue around both wrists: Rope burns.

HANNAH (CONT'D)

How did you get these? Who did
this to you?

She searches Christopher next. His legs are covered in dark bruises.

HANNAH (CONT'D)

Answer me!

But they don't answer. They just suck. She pulls up Gideon's shirt to find his back crisscrossed with whip marks.

HANNAH (CONT'D)

Was it your daddy? Did your daddy hurt you?

This gets their attention.

GIDEON

Our daddy would never hurt us! Not in a million years! I'm going to tell him what you said and then you'll be sorry. He'd do anything to protect us. Anything!

Gideon's chest heaves as he wheezes, breathless and irate.

She eyes the door, nervous Minchin will hear him.

HANNAH

Shh! Listen to me, I have to get help and I can't leave you here alone. It isn't safe. Okay? We have to go. We have to go right now.

She grabs Tallulah's arm and tries to lead her toward the door but Tallulah wiggles out of her grasp.

TALLULAH

Let go of me!

She runs away, leaving a trail of wet footprints.

HANNAH

You're still soaking wet. How can that be?

(Tallulah's hair is still wet too, and will remain so.)

JUNIPER

(icy)

Now you listen to me, you stupid old cow. If you think we'd ever leave our father, you've gone mad. No one's going anywhere. Not us, and not you either.

MINCHIN (O.S.)

Juniper!

Just as she feared, Minchin appears in the doorway, holding the aspirin and a glass of water.

MINCHIN (CONT'D)
Apologize to Ms. Pratt.

JUNIPER
But Daddy, she-

MINCHIN
That sort of language is uncalled for under any circumstances. Now, apologize.

JUNIPER
No.

MINCHIN
(to Hannah)
Miss Pratt, here are those pills you wanted. Would you give us a moment alone please?

Hannah can't leave fast enough. Minchin closes the door.

INT. UPSTAIRS HALLWAY, 29 MOLE STREET

Voices can be heard through the door-

MINCHIN (O.S.)
That's it. You're in time out.
All of you.

JUNIPER (O.S.)
But Daddy, she's ruining everything!

Juniper sounds strange: As though her voice is blended with Minchin's; As though he were talking for her.

But Hannah doesn't waste time listening. She runs.

INT. STAIRCASE, 29 MOLE STREET

She races down the stairs, heart pounding.

INT. ENTRYWAY, 29 MOLE STREET

She flies to the front door -she's gonna make it!

She turns the knob and throws open the door-

She stops dead in her tracks.

In fact, time itself seems to stop.

On the other side of the door is a coat closet.

The same door she's come and gone from this whole time. Only now, it opens to a closet.

HANNAH
That's not possible...

She pushes aside the coats, feeling the wall behind them: Solid. She roots around in the galoshes and umbrellas.

HANNAH (CONT'D)
It's not possible!

She backs out of the closet. Desperate for another way out.

She tries to open the window but it's locked. -Not just locked, sealed. Permanently. They all are, and there's no one in sight outside.

She picks up the landline, dials.

OPERATOR (O.S.)
9-1-1 What's your emergency?

HANNAH
I need help.

OPERATOR (O.S.)
Are you having an emergency?

HANNAH
Yes, I'm locked inside a house.
I'm being held against my will.
The address is 29 Mole Street-

OPERATOR (O.S.)
Is there someone in the room with
you, is that why you can't answer?

They can't hear her.

HANNAH
No!

She slams the phone down. She looks around anxiously: Nowhere to turn. Then it dawns on her-

HANNAH (CONT'D)
The laptop!

INT. BASEMENT, 29 MOLE STREET

She flies down the stairs.

She goes to Minchin's bedroom and drops to her knees. She knocks on the floorboards until she finds the hollow spot, then digs out the laptop.

She starts it up, opens MAIL.

New message. Her fingers tremble as she types.

**TO: johnnypratt64@aol.com, sarah.wheeler@phila.gov,
dawn.degrecco@phila.gov, brian.shultz@phila.gov,
contactus@philaDHS.gov**

SUBJECT: HELP

She types: **IN DANGER. 29 MOLE STREET. CALL THE POLICE.**

She hits SEND...

ERROR: CANNOT CONNECT TO SERVER

She tries again. Error.

She checks the wireless signal: No Network Found.

Go to the source. She finds the internet cable where it comes in at the corner of the ceiling. She follows it along the ceiling, down the wall, and across the molding at the floor. It dead-ends in Minchin's bedroom closet.

She opens the closet and there is the modem: smashed to pieces. -Like someone took a hammer to it.

Suddenly, she hears the haunting tinny notes of a music box, coming from upstairs: Swan Lake...

INT. LIVING ROOM, 29 MOLE STREET

Hannah emerges from the basement to find Irena clutching her doll, waiting for her in the living room -like the piece of cheese in a mousetrap.

Irena's eyes are red and watery. She's been crying.

HANNAH

What's the matter?

She sniffles.

HANNAH (CONT'D)
Irena, what's wrong?

She notices she's hiding her left hand behind her back.

HANNAH (CONT'D)
Show me your hand.

She won't.

HANNAH (CONT'D)
Show me your hand right now!

She yanks her hand free. She GASPS in horror.

At the end of her pudgy little index finger, her fingernail is **missing**. Gone, as though it's been pulled clean out.

She takes her by the hand and drags her upstairs to the playroom. She turns the doorknob and lets herself in-

INT. PLAYROOM, 29 MOLE STREET

Red crayon is scrawled across all four walls and the ceiling too. Every square inch is covered...

DIE SPY! DIE SPY! DIE SPY! DIE SPY! DIE SPY! DIE SPY!

...written in proper cursive - with the same distinctive loopy "I"s.

Hannah clasps her hand over her mouth to keep from screaming.

William puts the finishing touches on his masterpiece.

WILLIAM
Do you like it? I made it just for you.

Her eyes ping-pong from one wall to the next, drinking in the psychotic display of aggression.

She holds up Irena's hand in hers.

HANNAH
Who did this? Huh? Which one of you did this to her?
(to William)
Was it you?
(to Tallulah)
Or you? Or maybe you're all in on it together?

The children look at her blankly.

HANNAH (CONT'D)
TELL ME THIS INSTANT! Who did it?

WILLIAM
You did.

HANNAH
That's absurd! I barely touched
her.

Just then, Irena's tiny hand slips out of hers and she feels something...

She opens her hand and lying right there in her palm are Irena's other three fingernails. They just peeled right off, like skin off a boiled tomato.

She turns and flees in a panic.

INT. STAIRCASE, 29 MOLE STREET

She limps down the stairs, stumbling over the last one and spilling into-

INT. ENTRYWAY, 29 MOLE STREET

She gets to her feet. Dead ahead, where the front door used to be, is the coat closet. She's disoriented. Then, she remembers:

HANNAH
The back door...

She makes a run for it.

INT. LIVING ROOM, 29 MOLE STREET

Through the living room, to-

INT. BACK ALCOVE, 29 MOLE STREET

She tries the handle of the back door. It's locked and it needs a key to open. She bangs on it.

HANNAH
Let me out of here! Help!
Somebody help me!

(We get our first good look at the door itself and this time we see it has a mail slot and a peephole.)

Hannah looks over her shoulder and sees Gideon plodding across the living room behind her. She's terrified of him. She runs.

GIDEON
Run, spy, run.

INT. BATHROOM, 29 MOLE STREET

Hannah locks herself in the bathroom.

She looks at her reflection in the mirror-

HANNAH
Get a grip, Hannah.

She takes a couple deep breaths. She turns on the faucet and splashes cold water on her face, then wipes it dry with a towel.

She notices the water washed away some of her makeup and her black eye is starting to show through. She dabs at her concealer, trying to even it out.

As she smudges the makeup, three eyelashes fall onto her cheek. She wipes them away and a couple more come out. That's odd...

There's a KNOCK at the door.

HANNAH (CONT'D)
Go away!

She brushes the eyelashes away and this time even more come out. Too many. She starts to panic.

Another KNOCK at the door.

HANNAH (CONT'D)
I said, go away!

They start to come out in clumps now. She frantically paws at her eyes.

The door handle slowly turns from the outside. The door opens. Hannah turns to face Tallulah standing in the doorway...

She has no eyelashes left! Not a single hair.

Her cheeks are covered with the fallen lashes. Tallulah looks up at her with a devilish grin-

TALLULAH
Make a wish.

Hannah instinctively slams the door, but Tallulah is caught in the doorway - is she stuck, or is she's trying to push her way in?? Hannah slams the door on her again and again until finally, on the third try, she's able to get the door closed.

What's happening to her...?

INT. HALLWAY, 29 MOLE STREET

Hannah slowly opens the door and peers outside. The coast is clear.

She sneaks down the hall, peers into the living room. The basement door is open.

She turns the opposite way into-

INT. KITCHEN, 29 MOLE STREET

She goes back to the kitchen window. It's sealed just like all the others.

She grabs a dish towel and wraps it around her elbow. She braces for the pain, then smashes her elbow into the window. Only it doesn't break. It doesn't even crack.

She tries again. Still nothing.

Why won't it break??

Then the lights snap on in the upstairs room across the way: She can see Old Lady Grady up in her bedroom, changing into her house coat.

Hannah comes alive with hope. Help is just across the alley!

She THUMPS on the window to get Mrs. Grady's attention, but Grady doesn't notice. She's too far away.

INT. STAIRCASE, 29 MOLE STREET

Hannah climbs the stairs. When she reaches the top she can hear the children's voices in their playroom.

INT. UPSTAIRS HALLWAY, 29 MOLE STREET

She quietly tiptoes past the open door and slips inside the spare room.

INT. SPARE ROOM, 29 MOLE STREET

She closes the door behind her. It's dark. The clutter is so ubiquitous the room is like an obstacle course. A towering stack of worn books, a mountain of dolls stripped of their clothes and missing limbs and eyes. An old dress form and a sewing machine. This is where things go to die.

She climbs over to the window directly across from Grady's bedroom. She's at point blank range.

She POUNDS on the window. But Grady doesn't notice. She just goes about her business, putting away the laundry.

Hannah BANGS on the window as hard as she can. Someone in the house is sure to hear her but it's a risk she has to take. Grady is her only hope at this point... BANG! BANG! BANG! BANG!

Nothing.

Until... Hannah hears a door slam inside the house. -The basement door. He's coming.

She looks around her and finds an old jigsaw puzzle box. She takes the lid and breaks it down, flattening out the cardboard. Then she grabs a marker.

She can hear footsteps out in the hallway.

She scrawls a message on the cardboard.

The footsteps are getting closer.

She shoves the cardboard up against the window.

She slides underneath an old cot pushed up against the wall, and hides.

Then the door opens. He's here.

She holds her breath. The slightest sound could betray her hiding spot. It's a demented game of hide-and-seek where the stakes are as high as life and death.

His footsteps get closer and closer...

He topples a pile of stuffed animals, overturns an old rocking chair. No Hannah.

He sits on the cot and it sinks down, trapping her against the floor. Her eyes are wide as saucers.

He's right on top of her.

MINCHIN

Marco.

She doesn't dare even blink.

Then the coils squeak as he bends down to peer underneath the cot- And they come face to face.

MINCHIN (CONT'D)

You're supposed to say Polo.

He grabs her wrist and in one swift powerful motion, violently drags her out from under the cot.

INT. BASEMENT, 29 MOLE STREET

Minchin ties her to a chair.

HANNAH

Please- Please, don't hurt me.

MINCHIN

(sincere)

I would never.

He forces a gag into her mouth and secures it in place with the roll of gauze from his pocket. Then he picks up a dirty shovel, throws it over his shoulder, and heads up the stairs.

We stay with Hannah.

Just us and her. Gagged and bound. Waiting for the inevitable, in whatever twisted form it will come. Waiting, and listening...

She can hear their voices upstairs.

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

I'm going out now, my angels. I'll be back in a little while. Mind Miss Pratt while I'm gone.

JUNIPER (O.S.)

Oh, we will, Daddy.

The front door opens, shuts, locks. Then there's nothing.

The silence is painful. Her mind fills the void, imagining the terror that will descend those stairs at any moment.

Her eyes flood with tears. Her tears roll down her cheeks and are absorbed into the gauze of her gag.

The basement door opens slooowly behind her. The familiar CREAK of the first stair. A jumble of FOOTSTEPS. The children are coming...

CHILDREN

For she's a jolly good fellow,
For she's a jolly good fellow,
For she's a jolly good fellowwww-

The children gather in front of her, with a plastic tea set, stuffed toys, and party hats.

JUNIPER

(sings)

But it's time for the spy to die.

The veins in Hannah's neck bulge as she screams silently into her gag.

They lay out a blanket on the floor and set-up the pretend tea party in front of her.

JUNIPER (CONT'D)

It's your going away party!

Hannah cries, shakes her head "no".

She tries to say something but her words are muffled.

TALLULAH

I think she wants to make a speech.

WILLIAM

If you scream, we'll put it back.
Okay?

Hannah nods and William removes her gag.

CHILDREN

Speech! Speech! Speech!

HANNAH

I know why you are the way you are.
It's not your fault.

(MORE)

HANNAH (CONT'D)

You've suffered a serious trauma
and it- It warps the mind. But I
can get you help...

GIDEON

You still don't get it.

HANNAH

I've seen the scars. I know what
abuse looks like.

GIDEON

Because you've seen it before.

HANNAH

Thousands of times.

GIDEON

And do you suppose Daddy abused all
of them, too? Each of us had
another life before we came here.
And we came here with scars.

HANNAH

Did he tell you to lie? -To protect
him?

GIDEON

Think about it: There's no pattern.
Each of us have different scars.
Have you ever seen multiple
children in the same household
abused in entirely different ways?
Consider the psychology. It
doesn't fit.

WILLIAM

Besides, you know what it's like to
be hurt. You can block out the
memories, but the scars are
forever.

They drag her chair in front of a cracked and cloudy full-
length mirror propped up against the wall.

Hannah looks at her reflection. She notices something new...
She uses her chin to push her shirt collar aside. There -
clear as day- right above her collarbone, is a scar.

When did that get there...?

She spots another scar peeking out from under her shirt a few
inches below it.

HANNAH

Show me...

TALLULAH

Sometimes it's better not to look.

HANNAH

SHOW ME!

Tallulah lifts up the bottom of Hannah's shirt, exposing her stomach: Every inch of it covered in scars. Dozens of them. Jagged little lines, like scratches -or claw marks.

Hannah is in shock.

IRENA

(sweet)

See? You're not so different from us after all.

EXT. MOUNT MORIAH CEMETERY - NIGHT

A shovel slices into the dirt.

It's dark. The mourners are gone.

Minchin digs a grave.

He mops his brow. Exhausted.

He walks a little ways toward the edge of the property. He passes a silver locket laid on top of a tombstone and snatches it up.

Then he tosses his shovel over the chain link fence, and scales it with great effort.

INT. CRUMBLEY'S DINER - NIGHT

A bell JINGLES as the door opens.

The chalkboard advertises the Milkshake of the Month: Pumpkin Caramel Swirl.

It's mostly empty inside. A couple teenagers plugged into their smartphones in the corner booth. A man buried in his newspaper.

Minchin takes a seat at the counter. The red leather stool is worn and cracked. He rests his shovel next to him.

WAITRESS
What can I getcha?

MINCHIN
Coffee, no cream, no sugar.

WAITRESS
Two dollars.

The waitress slaps the check down on the counter. She's the same waitress from the first scene, only she looks a little plumper, has a few more lines in her face.

INT. OLD LADY GRADY'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Mrs. Grady is seated at her make-up table, her back to the window, putting curlers in her hair. She looks in the mirror to set the curler with a pin when she notices something in the reflection. She squints, then rushes to the window for a better look.

EXT. ALLEY, 29 MOLE STREET

Mrs. Grady, in her bathrobe with a half head of curlers, cups her hands against Minchin's kitchen window, trying to see in. It's no use: It's dark inside and the curtains are drawn.

She sneaks around the perimeter of the house, checking every room.

INT. BASEMENT, 29 MOLE STREET - NIGHT

HANNAH
Irena, I need you to untie me.
They're going to hurt me, do you
understand? You have to do it now,
before it's too late.

IRENA
(reluctant)
Promise you won't tell anybody
about us?

HANNAH
I promise.

JUNIPER
Don't listen to her, Irena. She's
lying. If we don't bury her, we're
done for.

HANNAH
 (to Irena)
 I never tricked you. I never lied.
 Everything you felt for me was
 real.

Irena starts to loosen the knot.

ALL
 Don't do it!/Stop!/No!

Irena gets the first knot undone. One of many.

TAP! TAP! TAP! There's a knock at the tiny window way high up on the wall.

The children freeze.

MRS. GRADY (O.S.)
 Hello? Is someone in there?

Hannah opens her mouth to call for help but Juniper shoves the gag in place. Hannah screams, but no sound comes out.

EXT. BACKYARD, 29 MOLE STREET

Mrs. Grady is bent over the tiny basement window by the ground: The only source of light in the house. Though she can't see past the window covering.

She TAPS on the window again.

MRS. GRADY
 Do you need help?

INT. BASEMENT, 29 MOLE STREET

MRS. GRADY (O.S.)
 I saw your note in the window.

Irena's heart breaks. The ultimate betrayal.

MRS. GRADY (O.S.) (CONT'D)
 Hello? Hello?

Hannah, still silently screaming. Finally, Grady gives up and her shadow moves on.

Irena, with tears in her eyes, wraps her little arms around Hannah's neck and hugs her.

IRENA

I wanted so very much to love you.
But Juniper and the others were
right. You're nothing but a spy.

She squeezes her tighter, and tighter -until Hannah's face
turns beet red and she can barely breathe.

MINCHIN (O.S.)

Where are my little angels?

ALL

Daddy's home!

The children rumble up the stairs, leaving Hannah alone once
more. She coughs and sputters into her gag as she gasps for
air. A momentary reprieve.

INT. KITCHEN, 29 MOLE STREET - NIGHT

Fresh hot popcorn shoots out of a popcorn maker. Minchin
collects the kernels in a bowl.

MINCHIN

Popcorn's ready!

INT. LIVING ROOM, 29 MOLE STREET

Minchin carries the popcorn into the living room where the
children are gathered on the sofa. They're all smiles,
except Irena.

WILLIAM

Oh, boy! Movie time!

Minchin puts a DVD into the player. An animated movie
begins. The upbeat MUSIC and bright colors of classic kids'
fare.

He covers them with a blanket, then takes a seat at the end,
next to Irena. She tugs on his sleeve to get his attention.

IRENA

Daddy, get her out of here.

MINCHIN

All in good time, my angel. All in
good time.

He digs into the popcorn bowl.

MINCHIN (CONT'D)

Oh! Juni, I almost forgot. I got you something.

He dangles the silver locket in front of her. She opens it.

JUNIPER

There's a picture of me inside!
Oh, Daddy! I love it! Thank you.

She leans over Irena and kisses him sweetly on the cheek.

INT. LIVING ROOM, 29 MOLE STREET - LATER

TV SCREEN: *A classic boy meets girl story. A shy 12 year-old BOY watches a pretty 13 year-old GIRL chat with her group of friends in front of the school lockers. He holds a single rose. The boy steels his nerves. He walks across the hall to the girl, hands her the flower, and steals a kiss on the cheek. The girl smiles.*

Minchin looks around at the children: They've all nodded off.

TV SCREEN: *The boy and girl are walking home from school. They're nervous. Too nervous to talk or touch. The girl carries the rose, admiring it - when she cuts herself on its thorn and a spot of bright red blood seeps from her finger. Seeing this, the boy intentionally pricks his finger on the rose's thorn, drawing his own blood. They press their fingers together, creating a blood bond, and continue on their way, holding hands.*

NARRATOR (V.O.)

But their love was too good to last. Before long, disease would claim his precious Eleanor, and the boy would be forever changed.

Minchin's eyes well with tears.

TV SCREEN: *The world inside the movie has turned gray. The boy weeps as a funeral precession slowly makes its way through the cemetery. A closed casket is set beside an empty grave. The priest opens the casket to reveal the girl. Her parents sob and kiss her forehead. Then the girl's mother beckons the boy. He approaches the girl. Then he leans in, to give her one last kiss. Their lips meet...*

NARRATOR (V.O.)

Would love's true kiss rouse his beloved? I'm afraid only in fairy tales... For Eleanor was dead, and Anthony would never love again.

TV SCREEN: *Suddenly the boy's lip begins to bleed... Just a trickle at first, but then it gushes blood. He pulls away. The dead girl smiles - but where her teeth should be there are tiny brown razor-sharp points - thorns of the rose jutting out from her gums. Her eyelids flutter opens to reveal rose petals that cover her eyeballs.*

The casket is closed and lowered into the grave. A shovelful of dirt is thrown in. Then the mother takes something from her purse: She tosses a handful of candies into the grave.

GIRL'S MOTHER

(to the Boy)

They're yours for the taking. Go get them.

The girl's father pushes the boy into the grave on top of the casket.

Minchin is bathed in the blue glow of the television. His eyes are filled with a spectacular sorrow.

He lifts Irena's head off his shoulder, careful not to wake her.

INT. BASEMENT, 29 MOLE STREET

Minchin is heavy-footed as he descends down the stairs to the basement.

Hannah is still bound to the chair, where the children left her. A mess of sweat and tears. Choking on the gauze in her mouth.

Minchin pulls up a chair opposite her, sits, face to face.

MINCHIN

You're angry with me, aren't you?

He uncoils the layers of gauze of her gag. She's about to SCREAM but he clamps his hand over her mouth.

MINCHIN (CONT'D)

You must understand: I'd do anything to protect my children. Please, don't make me.

HANNAH

You're a fucking psychopath.

He searches his hobby bench for a needle and a spool of heavy thread.

He pats his pockets until he finds his bifocals and puts them on. He passes the thread through the eye of the needle.

MINCHIN

I didn't want it to be this way.
But you were destroying everything
we built.

He unfurls a large white sheet and goes to work sewing the edges together.

MINCHIN (CONT'D)

I should never have opened my door
to you. I brought this on myself,
I know that. But I wanted to prove
that I'm a good father. I wanted
it to be a matter of record. I
needed to know they weren't right
to turn me down all those times.

He's a cinch with a needle and thread.

MINCHIN (CONT'D)

You were correct about Tallulah, by
the way. That scar on her wrist
was no accident. Before she came
to live with me she stayed with her
foster mother and her boyfriend
over in Stanton. They beat her
savagely. Almost every day. Until
one day, she passed out from the
punishment. To make sure she
wasn't faking they held a lighter
to her skin. That's how she got
that burn. But they didn't call an
ambulance for another four hours.
First they cleaned up the house of
any incriminating evidence,
including a half a gram of meth and
a pair of stretched out pantyhose
they'd used to tie her to the
banister. Then they ordered a
pizza and fornicated.

HANNAH

That poor girl...

MINCHIN

They all have stories. Each worse
than the last. Did you know rats
eat their young? A mother rat will
devour its baby as soon as it's out
of the womb, for no reason at all.

(MORE)

MINCHIN (CONT'D)

Some people are no better than a rat. The children are better off with me.

HANNAH

You don't get to decide.

MINCHIN

Then who does? Social services? God? You? Because you are all failing those kids.

HANNAH

You're not giving any one else a chance! You have to trust the system. We could have filed a claim, opened an investigation. We could have gotten them counseling.

MINCHIN

They didn't need someone to psychoanalyze them! They needed someone to love them! They needed me. And I needed them too. I had so much love to give, and no one to give it to. Why didn't I deserve a family? Why wasn't I good enough? Life has been unkind to me, that's just the way it's always been and I've accepted it. But it is not going to stop me from giving a good life- a better life to as many kids as I can.

HANNAH

I was so sure you were abusing them... But in your own bizarre way, you were just trying to save them.

He smiles. She gets him.

HANNAH (CONT'D)

When we first met, you told me you were a decent man, but an exceptional father. I think that might actually be true.

MINCHIN

(vulnerable)

You think I'm fit to be a father?

HANNAH

I do.

MINCHIN

You have no idea how much that means to me.

HANNAH

Now prove you're a decent man. Let me walk out of here.

MINCHIN

(shakes his head)
You have to go back.

HANNAH

I'll go! I'll go back to the office and I won't breathe a word of this.

MINCHIN

We both know that's not true. If it were, you would've left when you first had suspicions. But you didn't. You don't have it in you to turn your back on children who need help. You and I are the same that way. Children are our weakness. No, I'm sorry, I can't just send you back to your life.

HANNAH

They'll wonder where I am. The office will send someone to look for me.

MINCHIN

I know. They're coming...

Something flits by the tiny sliver of the basement window - too fast and too dark to see.

MINCHIN (CONT'D)

The Sluagh are coming.

HANNAH

Please- I'll do whatever you want me to do. Just let me go.

MINCHIN

If only I could, my dear. But it's far too late for that. In fact-
(checks the clock)
It should be late enough now. Time to go.

He takes the sheet - sewn into a crude sack - and puts Hannah's bound feet inside. Then he shimmies it up past her knees and over her thighs. As it climbs higher and higher it becomes clear: It's a body bag.

HANNAH
NO! STOP! HELP!

Minchin puts his finger to his lips: Shh...

Hannah is silenced. Still panicked, yet inexplicably unable to scream. As though she's controlled by his command -by this subtle gesture.

He puts the gag back in her mouth, then sews the last few stitches into the body bag, sealing her inside.

He drags her up the stairs. THUMP, THUMP, THUMP.

INT. LIVING ROOM, 29 MOLE STREET

Minchin emerges from the basement with Hannah in the body bag. He hoists her up over his shoulder and starts for the back door.

He tiptoes past the children asleep on the sofa, then suddenly he hears something... He freezes.

There it is again: That sound! Faint, but impossible to ignore. A muted high-pitched WARBLE. It puts the fear of death in Minchin.

He drops Hannah where he stands.

MINCHIN
Wake-up! Wake-up, my angels!

It sounds like a bird call.

MINCHIN (CONT'D)
They're here...

The children stretch and rub the sleep out of their eyes.

CHRISTOPHER
Who's here, Daddy?

MINCHIN
The Sluagh.

The next noise comes from the opposite side of the house: They're surrounded.

The AIR RAID SIREN grinds to life.

Minchin opens the hidden spandrel closet and drags Hannah inside- thrashing and squirming.

MINCHIN (CONT'D)
Hurry, children! Hurry!

The children, still groggy, hold hands and form a single file line.

CHRISTOPHER
I have to wee!

MINCHIN
There's no time.

CHRISTOPHER
But I'll wet myself.

MINCHIN
This isn't a drill, Christopher!
You have to hide!

He shoos him into the closet, followed by Tallulah, then William...

IRENA
My doll!

Irena remembers and runs off to get her.

CRASH! The window shatters.

Gideon, and Juniper hurry into the closet. That's five...

MINCHIN
Where's Irena?

JUNIPER
I don't know.

A dense fog rolls in through the window. The air becomes cloudy and thick.

BOOM. Something pounds against the back door. They're out of time.

MINCHIN
They're here now. You must be
very, very brave.

He coughs, choking on the smoke.

MINCHIN (CONT'D)

No matter what happens, remember
Daddy loves you. Don't ever forget
that.

JUNIPER

No...

He takes the stretched-out wire hanger from its place inside the door frame. The children realize he's not coming with them.

WILLIAM

Don't leave us, Daddy!

MINCHIN

They won't stop until they find me.

WILLIAM

NO!

Minchin shuts the door.

INT. SPANDREL CLOSET, 29 MOLE STREET

William cries hysterically. He pounds on the door.

WILLIAM

Daddy! Don't leave us!

INT. LIVING ROOM, 29 MOLE STREET

Minchin cries too.

MINCHIN

Daddy loves you.

But he does what he has to: He slips the wire hanger through the crack of the door and uses its hook to catch the deadbolt and slide it across - locking the door from the inside.

Then he pushes the end of the hanger through the crack, dropping it inside the closet. No going back.

He slides the side table in front of the hidden door to disguise it.

INT. SPANDREL CLOSET, 29 MOLE STREET

The children shut their eyes, hold hands, and chant.

ALL

Be still,
Be quiet,
Stay together.
If the Sluagh catch you,
You'll be lost forever.
Be still,
Be quiet-

INT. UNDER THE TABLE, DINING ROOM, 29 MOLE STREET

IRENA

-Stay together.
If the Sluagh catch you,
You'll be lost forever.

Irena whispers to herself, all alone, as she hides under the dining room table, clutching her precious moonfaced doll. The bright yellow tablecloth drapes all the way down to the ground all around her.

INT. LIVING ROOM, 29 MOLE STREET

The moment is upon them.

Minchin stands alone. The sacrificial lamb.

There's one final CRASH as the last window breaks.

INT. SPANDREL CLOSET, 29 MOLE STREET

JUNIPER

It's started.

INT. BACK ALCOVE, 29 MOLE STREET

JUNIPER (O.S.)

A great fog will roll in-

A dense wave of fog swallows the room, making it hard to see.

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

And from it, the Sluagh will
appear.

BOOM! The back door vibrates on its hinges. BOOM! It splinters and breaks open.

JUNIPER (O.S.) (CONT'D)
 They'll storm the house. They
 always attack in packs.

A flock of dark figures swoop in, cloaked by the churning cloud of smoke. They swarm the house in V-formation.

As the smoke subsides, the figures come into clear view: They are a SWAT TEAM (Special Weapons and Tactics).

SWAT
 PHILADELPHIA POLICE!

As soon as SWAT enters, the robust blaring sound of the air raid siren blends (in a mind-warping sound mix) into the tinny annoying clatter of an EGG TIMER.

SWAT floods the living room. They train their weapons on Minchin, lighting him up with their onboard lights.

SWAT (CONT'D)
 PHILADELPHIA POLICE! DON'T MOVE!
 KEEP YOUR HANDS WHERE I CAN SEEM
 THEM!

They surround him.

SWAT (CONT'D)
 DOWN ON THE GROUND! NOW!

JUNIPER (O.S.)
 The very sight of them will bring
 you to your knees.

Minchin drops to his knees. SWAT takes him down to the ground with a THUD. They cuff his hands behind his back.

JUNIPER (O.S.) (CONT'D)
 They'll bind your hands so you
 can't fight back.

INT. SPANDREL CLOSET, 29 MOLE STREET

Hannah screams, trying to alert the police to her position, but not a sound escapes the thick gag.

INT. LIVING ROOM, 29 MOLE STREET

They read Minchin his Miranda rights.

SWAT CAPTAIN
 Toss it.

The officers go to work turning the house upside down, tearing through every pile of junk.

INT. SPANDREL CLOSET, 29 MOLE STREET

JUNIPER

They'll tear the house apart until
they find every last one of us.

Juniper reaches for Gideon's hand. They interlock fingers and share a fearful look as the children continue to chant.

INT. LIVING ROOM, 29 MOLE STREET

SWAT #1

What's that?

SWAT OFFICER #1 spots a strip of familiar white gauze poking out from underneath the door of the spandrel closet.

He tugs at it with his boot but it doesn't give.

SWAT CAPTAIN

Let's open it up.

MINCHIN

NO!

Officer #1 pushes the side table out of the way. The door looks like a wall. He searches for a way to open it. Can't.

SWAT #1

It's locked.

SWAT CAPTAIN

(into his radio)
Get the hammer in here.

MINCHIN

Please...

Officer #1 knocks on the door and a hollow metal sound echoes back.

SWAT #1

It's reinforced.

SWAT CAPTAIN

(into his radio)
Better make it the saw.

MINCHIN

Take me instead.

SWAT uses a circular saw on the door. Sparks fly.

INT. SPANDREL CLOSET, 29 MOLE STREET

The BUZZ of the saw is deafening inside the closet. The children are panicked. The littlest ones begin to cry.

ALL

Be still,
Be quiet,
Stay together.
If the Sluagh catch you,
You'll be lost forever.

JUNIPER

They'll take the children, one by
one...

CHRISTOPHER

Juni, I'm scared!

INT. LIVING ROOM, 29 MOLE STREET

The deadbolt has been sawed clean through.

Officer #1 pries opens the door with a crowbar.

He looks inside the closet with his flashlight. (We can't see what he sees.) The color drains from his face.

SWAT #1

Holy shit...

FLASHBACK

Minchin and Hannah at a standoff in the entryway.

RIIIIIING! RING! RING! Minchin picks up the phone.

MINCHIN

Hello?

MERRICK (O.S.)

Anthony? It's Dr. Merrick. I just
got your message... You said there
was a caseworker there? -from
Social Services?

MINCHIN

Yes.

MERRICK (O.S.)

Is she there with you now?

MINCHIN

Yes.

MERRICK (O.S.)

Can you go into another room so we can talk privately?

MINCHIN

(to Hannah)

Excuse me a moment.

He takes the phone around the corner into the living room, as far as the chord will reach.

Only this time, we follow him:

MERRICK (O.S.)

Anthony, we've been through this before. I need you to accept the possibility that things are not as you think they are.

MINCHIN

I'm afraid I don't follow.

MERRICK (O.S.)

You're sick.

Minchin laughs defensively.

INT. LIVING ROOM, 29 MOLE STREET

Minchin, restrained, watches powerlessly as SWAT stands in the open doorway of his secret hiding place.

MINCHIN

Please don't...

INT. SPANDREL CLOSET, 29 MOLE STREET

JUNIPER

You'll beg them to stop but they won't.

The children cower in the corner. They know the end is near.

JUNIPER (CONT'D)

They have no ears to hear you. No eyes to shed a tear.

SWAT breaches the darkness. The smooth round dome of his helmet covering his ears, his goggles hiding his eyes.

TALLULAH

Don't let them take me!

Frantic, she reaches for Gideon's arm. She holds on for dear life as SWAT tugs at her small frame.

TALLULAH (CONT'D)

HELP ME! DON'T LET ME GO!

But she's ripped away. She lets loose an ear-piercing shriek-

Which suddenly falls SILENT the second she's carried out of the closet.

MINCHIN (O.S.)

NO!!!

What happened to her on the other side of that door???

The SWAT officer returns. He ignores the children's screams as he plucks the next one from the huddle: William. He pries him, kicking and screaming, from his brothers' and sister's little hands.

WILLIAM

NO! PLEASE! NOOOOOO-

Again, his cry ends abruptly just outside the door. Snuffed out in an instant.

They come for Gideon next. He's the strongest. He manages to latch onto the door frame, but SWAT gives him one hard pull and his fingers break, bending back with a crunch.

He disappears.

INT. LIVING ROOM, 29 MOLE STREET

MINCHIN

Stop! You're hurting them!

Minchin is beside himself.

INT. SPANDREL CLOSET, 29 MOLE STREET

Juniper and Christopher are the last two children left. They listen to the gut-wrenching sounds of their father's hysterics on the other side of the door.

JUNIPER

I'm sorry I couldn't protect you.
They're going to take us now. I
want you to let them take you next.

CHRISTOPHER

No!

JUNIPER

Listen to me. Whoever doesn't go
next, will go last. And I don't
want you to be left alone. That's
a fate worse than death. They're
going to take you now. They're
going to take you and then it'll
all be over.

He hugs her tight.

CHRISTOPHER

I'm afraid.

JUNIPER

Just remember, however briefly; You
were loved so very much.

SWAT enters and takes hold of Christopher. He clings to her as he begs for his life.

With tears in her eyes, she pries his arms from around her waist and surrenders him to SWAT.

Alone, she shivers.

INT. KITCHEN, 29 MOLE STREET

SWAT OFFICER #2 opens every cupboard and closet.

SWAT #2

(into his radio)

Clear.

His voice crackles over the radio, echoing the warble sound from earlier.

Then he spots something in the next room-

INT. DINING ROOM, 29 MOLE STREET

Two tiny little feet poke out from under the yellow tablecloth.

He walks toward them, weapon drawn.

INT. UNDER THE TABLE, DINING ROOM, 29 MOLE STREET

Irena's eyes are shut. Her little hands cover her ears.

IRENA

Be still,
Be quiet,
Stay together.
If the Sluagh catch you,
You'll be lost forever.

INT. DINING ROOM, 29 MOLE STREET

Officer #2 approaches slowly. One...step...at...a...time...

SWAT #2

Come on out, sweetheart. I'm with
the Philadelphia P.D. We're your
friends.

INT. SPANDREL CLOSET, 29 MOLE STREET

Juniper's eyes overflow with tears, her bottom lip quivers.
But she stands tall - brave until the very end.

JUNIPER

(under her breath)
Daddy, I know you can hear me... I
want you to know, it's okay. You
did everything you could. It was
too good to last.

SWAT comes for her. She free falls into his arms, accepting
the inevitable. She's carried away.

FLASHBACK

MERRICK (O.S.)

I'd like you to come into the
office. -As soon as possible.

MINCHIN

Now, calm down, doc. I'm fine.
I'm not sick. I can't be!

(MORE)

MINCHIN (CONT'D)
I've got too many people depending
on me. My children-

MERRICK (O.S.)
You have no children.

INT. DINING ROOM, 29 MOLE STREET

SWAT #2
Nothing to be scared of. Just come
out from under the table and we can
have a nice little talk.

Officer #2 grabs hold of Irena's ankles.

As soon as he touches her, the eerie high-pitched notes of
SWAN LAKE begin to play.

He pulls Irena out from the table into plain view. She's
bandaged head to toe in white gauze, her face painted on.
Lifeless. An aberration. A gruesome cartoon.

The Swan Lake tune is coming from inside of her. Big
Frankenstein-esque stitches crisscross her breastbone. The
music box has been implanted inside her chest cavity.

Lying on the floor next to her is the moonfaced doll Minchin
gave her for her birthday - crudely gutted.

The haunting MUSIC carries throughout the house...

INT. LIVING ROOM, 29 MOLE STREET

Minchin is in the throws of a full mental breakdown. He
rocks back and forth.

MINCHIN
(hears the music)
No...

FLASHBACK

Minchin cradles the telephone receiver as he rocks back and
forth the same way.

MINCHIN (CONT'D)
No. No. No. NO! NO!!!

He bashes the phone against his head.

MERRICK (O.S.)
 You know I'm right! Don't shut me
 out! You've created an alternate
 reality-

FLASHBACK

Minchin turns on the magical twinkle lights and the record
 player pulling the parade of toys in the children's blanket
 fort.

MERRICK (V.O.)
 Your perfect world where you are
 the perfect father.

He tucks them into bed and tells them a story. Only now we
 see, they're not real children at all...

He's telling a bedtime story to six bandaged figures, wrapped
 head to toe in white gauze. Unnaturally stiff bodies.
 Strange frozen little faces.

FLASHBACK

Having just dug a fresh grave, Minchin carries his shovel.

MERRICK (V.O.)
 You shut out the real world,
 ignored or discounted every piece
 of the puzzle that didn't fit.

He snatches the silver locket off a gravestone, but this time
 we see the name on the stone: Juniper Barnes, 1944-1954.

FLASHBACK

Minchin scribbles with a red crayon, frenetically writing
 "DIE SPY" on the walls of the playroom.

MERRICK (V.O.)
 But you lost control. And now
 you're self-destructing.

FLASHBACK

He holds the phone to his ear, listening but saying nothing.

911 OPERATOR (O.S.)
 9-1-1 What's your emergency?... Are
 you having an emergency?... Is
 there someone in the room with you,
 is that why you can't answer?

FLASHBACK

The day of Hannah's arrival-

MERRICK (V.O.)

Think about it. Why did you choose to bring in a social worker? You're seeking validation. Someone to tell you social services was wrong all those times they rejected you- all those times they told you, you weren't good enough.

The "children" are seated neatly on the sofa, their heads cocked to one side with such precision to indicate inquisitiveness. Minchin struggles to hold up an adult-sized figure as he introduces it to the others.

MERRICK (V.O.)

Eventually, you started to doubt yourself. You started to wonder if maybe they're right- maybe you aren't good enough.

FLASHBACK

Minchin places "Hannah" into the coat closet -next to the galoshes and umbrellas. She leans unnaturally in the corner, her wig askew. He shuts the door.

MERRICK (V.O.)

There's a war going on inside of you. -The doubt eating away at the fantasy. You tried to lock it away, but you couldn't.

FLASHBACK

Minchin clutches the telephone receiver.

MERRICK (O.S.)

Are you processing what I'm saying? None of this is real. There's no one in the house with you. You're alone.

This flips a switch in his head. Minchin steels himself, wipes his nose and regains his composure. Just like that.

MINCHIN

Well, now I know there must be some kind of mistake. You see, Hannah's right in the other room. I was just talking to her.

MERRICK (O.S.)

Ask her to tell you your case number. If she really is who you say she is, if she's really from social services, she'll know it.

INT. SPANDREL CLOSET, 29 MOLE STREET

Hannah in her bodybag, panic-stricken, not knowing what's on the other side of the closet door: salvation or sudden death.

Finally, the SWAT officer slips inside the closet once more. This time he's come for her.

He grabs hold of her ankles and begins to drag her out.

They reach the doorway- her eyes go wide and the color drains from her face. It starts in her toes... Before she knows it, she can't feel her feet at all. He drags her another couple inches and the numbness spreads up her legs. As she leaves the closet she's dying a slow death - one inch at a time.

INT. LIVING ROOM, 29 MOLE STREET

SWAT #1 lays Hannah down on the ground, draws his knife, and splays open the bodybag.

The sunken hollows of her cheeks, the stretched leather of her skin. Her mouth pried open with the gag inside it, futilely silencing she who cannot scream. Hannah is dead.

And on the cuff of her shirt is a smudged fingerprint in stark contrast to the crisp white fabric. -The very same fingerprint Minchin left when he was working on that curious craft project the first night.

SWAT CAPTAIN

Let's get the neighbor to ID her.
Make sure that's who- or what the old lady saw.

They lay Hannah down next to the others: Tallulah, William, Irena, Gideon, Christopher, and Juniper. All in a neat line.

Minchin is a broken man.

MINCHIN

My angels... My sweet angels...
What have they done to you?

SWAT CAPTAIN

Get him out of here!

Minchin is escorted out of the house.

EXT. 29 MOLE STREET

Minchin is ushered into a squad car waiting out front.

Mrs. Grady stands at the police line; The vigilant good samaritan.

INT. LIVING ROOM, 29 MOLE STREET

CRIME SCENE INVESTIGATORS go to work, dropping markers all around the living room.

The Captain wanders over to the credenza. Hannah's case file is still there. He opens it up and leafs through it. Her notes are just pages cut out of the phone book.

Behind it are the framed family photos Hannah examined -in actuality, photographs of Minchin and his creatures.

And tucked way in the back, behind the other frames, is an old black and white class photo. Among the smiling sixth graders is a young Minchin, holding hands with a classmate. Their names are printed underneath: **ANTHONY MINCHIN, ELEANOR LYNCH.**

CSI #1 comes up the stairs from the basement.

CSI #1

Hey Cap- You're gonna want to see this.

INT. BASEMENT, 29 MOLE STREET

CSI #1 leads the Captain downstairs.

CSI #1

He's got some kind of a workshop down here.

They stand in front of Minchin's workbench: His mummy-making tools in plain view. Rolls of gauze, paints and brushes, salt cubes, cedar, bleach, sodium chloride, sodium sulfate.

CSI #1 (CONT'D)

This must be where he made them.

They move on to the corner reserved for Minchin's office, his desk piled high with records and research.

On top is a letter from the Philadelphia Department of Human Services, still with its envelope bearing a fresh postmark:

Dear Mr. Minchin, I regret to inform you that your application to become a foster parent has been denied... We recognize you have submitted multiple applications to this office over the years... We can no longer accept your applications... This decision is final.

The Captain shifts his attention to the newspaper clippings hung on the wall.

Pinned up among the sea of headlines are seven OBITUARIES: Christopher Keeley, Tallulah Belle Mee, William Flores, Irena Johansen, Gideon Palmero, Juniper Barnes, and Hannah Pratt.

The byline on each one of them reads: **BY ANTHONY MINCHIN.**

They don't paint a pretty picture of the lives cut short. "Neglect", "abuse", "beaten", "burned", "starvation", "rape". And in the case of poor wheezing Gideon: "suffocated."

And a carefully clipped article with big bold print: **HUBBY STABS SOCIAL WORKER 127 TIMES.** A pretty candid photo of Hannah next to a black and white mugshot of Jonathan Pratt. Dated **January 12, 2004.**

SWAT CAPTAIN
(to himself)
He dug them up. He dug them all up.

EXT. 29 MOLE STREET

Outside is a growing number of squad cars, flashing lights, and looky-loos corralled by a strip of yellow police tape fluttering in the cool breeze of an autumn night.

The usual calm of 29 Mole Street lost to procedural organized chaos and a flurry of whispers and conjecture.

And among it all -wholly unnoticed, we catch our first glimpse of that cardboard sign in the upstairs window. Hannah's sign. The one that Mrs. Grady saw. The beginning of the end.

Scrawled in large black letters, are the words:

I AM NOT ALONE

-written in Minchin's handwriting, elegant sloping "I"s and all.

EXT. STATE CORRECTIONAL INSTITUTION AT WAYMART - DAY

A stately red brick building built in 1817. A light snowfall kisses the ground.

EXT. YARD, STATE CORRECTIONAL INSTITUTION AT WAYMART

A space reserved for the criminally insane population. A few inmates mill about; lifting weights, talking to each other - and themselves.

Minchin sits alone. A pair of jumpsuits walk past and he flinches. There's violence in this place.

A CORRECTIONS OFFICER escorts DR. MERRICK across the yard. He wears a visitor's badge with his name on his lapel.

CORRECTIONS OFFICER

Minchin! Visitor.

Merrick takes a seat on the bench next to Minchin.

MERRICK

How have you been?

MINCHIN

I wrote you a letter. Did you get it?

MERRICK

I did-

MINCHIN

I hoped you might bring one of the children to visit. Of course, Christopher will want to go first. You know how it is with the youngest. But I think Irena might be most in need of a visit.

MERRICK

We've been over this.

MINCHIN

I was thinking maybe they could even stay with me in my room. I have lots of books. I could read to them!

MERRICK

They're dead and buried, Anthony!
They were dead the whole time.

(adjusts his tone)

(MORE)

MERRICK (CONT'D)

I blame myself. I never should have let it get to this point. All these years, I assumed your children were imagined. I never suspected-

MINCHIN

That I'd rescued them.

Merrick isn't getting through to him.

MERRICK

Here, I want to show you something.

He pulls a copy of the PHILADELPHIA INQUIRER from his bag and hands it to him. The headline reads: **MUMMY-MAKING BODYSNATCHER BEHIND BARS - ALL 7 VICTIMS REBURIED.**

MERRICK (CONT'D)

I'd hoped seeing this might provide you with closure. I thought it might bring you some peace.

MINCHIN

Was anyone there with them when they were buried? Loved ones, family members?

MERRICK

No. As you know, they came from troubled homes.

MINCHIN

Will you do me a favor? Will you visit their graves?

MERRICK

I don't-

MINCHIN

I don't want them to be alone. Promise me.

MERRICK

I promise.

He steals another glance at the headline.

MINCHIN

Why do they call them victims? I never hurt them. I never hurt anybody in my whole life.

(MORE)

MINCHIN (CONT'D)

Why am I locked up with dangerous
criminals? I don't belong in here.

MERRICK

You might not belong in here... But
you don't belong out there either.
You're not like other people.

MINCHIN

Oh, I don't know, Dr. Merrick...

A sheepish little grin-

MINCHIN (CONT'D)

We all let our imagination run away
with us sometimes.

CUT TO BLACK.

END CARD:

Based on actual events.