

FAMILY VACATION

an original screenplay by

Eric Reese

THE ALLEGIANCE THEATER  
424.260.3340  
info@theallegiance.com



FORMAT MINI-DV  
NTSC  
60-FPS

5:22 AM

01/27/2002

INT. BEDROOM -- BEFORE DAWN

The held camera is pointed toward the master bedroom, where HELEN HURT (38) comes out in a shower robe, drying her face. Helen was once a stunner, but being a mother of three has since trumped trying to stay youthful.

She sees the camera.

HELEN

David...

DAVID (BEHIND CAMERA)

Just making sure it works.

HELEN

Is that recording?

He closes in on her as she turns a little. Though there's a curious smile somewhere.

HELEN (CONT'D)

What're you doing?

DAVID

Can't give Ash a camera that doesn't work, right?

HELEN

Well, go film something else.

DAVID

But there's so much to see right here.

HELEN

It's 5 AM.

DAVID

Just a smile.

HELEN

Off, please.

DAVID

What about a tooth.

HELEN

We have to get going.

He waits her out...

But her tone doesn't budge.

DAVID

Take off your robe?

HELEN

Don't be silly.

She *slings* her towel at the camera --

6:03 AM

01/27/2002

INT. HALLWAY, ASH'S BEDROOM -- BEFORE DAWN

Helen's holding a breakfast muffin with a lit candle. Quietly, she opens the door to their son's bedroom...

Still behind the camera, David follows in with youngest son JACOB (a blindly excited two-year-old) and daughter BREE (16 going on 20).

And on the mark, they flip on the light.

EVERYONE SINGING

*Happy birthday to you. Happy birthday to you...*

David *zooms* into the bed, where ASH (11) wakes in a groggy wince like an annoyed little vampire.

EVERYONE SINGING (CONT'D)

*Happy birthday little Ashton...*

ASH

Go away!

EVERYONE SINGING

*Happy birthday to youuu.*

Applause as Ash shields under the covers.

DAVID

Up and at 'em!

BREE

Get up, you brat -- If I'm up this early, you better be.

ASH (UNDER COVERS)  
No!

BREE  
Don't make me come in there.

ASH  
Get out of my room!

BREE  
Ugh, such a little turd.

David chuckles.

HELEN  
(disapproving)  
Bree.

DAVID  
Tahoe time, buddy!

HELEN  
Get up, sweetie. Blow out your  
candle.

ASH  
No! I don't wanna go to Tahoe...

Doesn't seem like Ash is getting up any time soon.

They watch the sheeted hump lie there stubbornly.

DAVID  
All right, guys. Well. Guess Ash  
just doesn't want his birthday  
present, huh?

HELEN  
Oh well. At least we tried...

BREE  
Yeah, guess there's no choice but  
to give it to me.

Ash rips himself from under the covers.

ASH  
No, she can't have my present!

6:17 AM

1/27/2002

Ash finally out of bed looking up at us, at David.

HELEN (O.S.)  
Ash, what do you wanna be when you  
grow up?

ASH  
...A director.

DAVID  
Okay, and what do directors shoot  
their movies with?

ASH  
Duh. Cameras.

They wait for it.

Ash pauses, looks at us, realizing what his present might be.  
His face lighting up.

DAVID  
I think he's found it!

BREE  
He's a genius.

ASH  
No freakin' way. The camera?!

DAVID  
This one right here.

HELEN  
Happy birthday, sweetheart.

ASH  
No way! No way!

He jumps around. Jake cackling with him.

When Ash finally settles, David *hands* the camera off to him.

Giving a little instruction on holding it properly, basic  
buttons and so on. But Ash seems already pretty adept.

DAVID  
Got you a bunch of extra batteries,  
the works.

ASH  
Cool!

At the helm now, Ash points his camera around the room with  
surprising savvy, electrified as he curiously *zooms* around.

We see DAVID (42) for the first time -- a handsome, often jovial man with a natural tan and smart looks, though he could use a shave.

ASH (CONT'D)  
This is so awesome!

BREE  
So annoying.

HELEN  
What do you say, Ash?

Ash aims around joyfully.

ASH  
Freaking cool!

BREE  
You say thank you, dummy...

6:28 AM

01/27/2002

INT. FOYER / GARAGE -- MORNING

Still dark before dawn. Ash looking through the doorway from the foyer.

In the garage, David rounds up the family's ski gear, when his cell *rings* from his pocket. He takes out the flip phone. Looks and rejects the call... Puts it back in his pocket.

Double-takes at the camera, looking past it.

Ash turns around to see Helen standing there.

DAVID (O.S.)  
Wrong number. Help me with these?

6:46 AM

01/27/2002

INT. HALLWAY, BREE'S BEDROOM -- MORNING

Ash moves down the hall toward his sister's room... entering the half-open door,

to see Bree halfheartedly packing a bag on her bed. She notices Ash with the camera, rolling her eyes.

BREE  
Can't believe they got you that  
thing. You better not break it.

ASH  
(making a case)  
I'm not.

BREE  
Wanna bet?

ASH  
Shut up.

BREE  
Five bucks you'll break it on this  
trip.

ASH  
Stop it!

She smirks, stuffing another sweater into her bag. Then  
sighs.

BREE  
This is gonna be a nightmare.

ASH  
Why.

BREE  
They're just gonna fight the whole  
time. That's all they do...

She sticks her waterproof Walkman into a side pocket.  
Dismissing it all.

BREE (CONT'D)  
Whatever.

Ash sneaks a peek in one of the bag's pockets, spotting a  
*pack of cigarettes* tucked in there.

BREE (CONT'D)  
Get away, you dork.

ASH  
I saw that.

BREE  
Say anything and you die.

Ash backs away as Bree advances.

BREE (CONT'D)  
Give me the camera.

ASH  
No.

She pounces, but Ash makes the getaway.

ASH (CONT'D)  
Dad!

BREE (O.S.)  
Don't make me kill you on your  
birthday...

6:52 AM

01/27/2002

INT. BATHROOM, HALLWAY, BREE'S ROOM -- MORNING

Ash points the camera *down at the toilet*. Flushes. *Zooming*  
into the spiral wash as it gets swallowed by the drain...

HELEN (O.S.)  
Ash, why aren't you getting ready?

...turns to see her in the doorway.

HELEN (CONT'D)  
Time to go soon.

ASH  
Okay.

Ash moves out of the bathroom,

HELEN  
And sweetie, save the batteries for  
the trip--

--when Bree's *screeching scream* shoots through the hall from  
her room, startling --

HELEN (CONT'D)  
Bree?!

Helen bolts toward her daughter's room, Ash following with  
the *camera frenetic* --

HELEN (CONT'D)  
*What's the matter!*

David behind, holding Jake.

DAVID (O.S.)  
*What's going on?*

Bree's standing in her room with hands over her mouth, red in the face.

HELEN  
 What just happened?

But she's... chuckling. A little embarrassed.

Helen looks out the window. Ash crossing beside her to take a peek out. *Zooms* down at the back yard...

HELEN (O.S.) (CONT'D)  
 Bree, you scared the living  
 daylights out of me.

Bree just chuckles. Sorry.

David comes over with Jake to get a look.

ASH  
 Cool!

...a *mule deer* nosing a bush in the dim, early morning light.

JACOB (O.S.)  
*Weindeer!*

BREE (O.S.)  
 Ash, don't tell me you were  
 recording...

8:15 AM

01/27/2002

INT. DEN -- MORNING

Peeking in from the foyer, Ash *zooms* into the living area.

Alone in the room, David sits on the recliner waiting to get going. Seems pensive.

After a moment, he comes out of it. His leg pulsating anxiously. Checks his watch.

BREE (O.S.)  
 Ash watch out!

Camera *jerks* around, Ash *shrieking* --

ASH  
-- *Stop!*

BREE  
Scared you.

ASH  
No you didn't!

BREE  
Now we got *you* screaming on tape.

DAVID (O.S.)  
Guys, what are you doing? Time to go.

BREE  
We're waiting for mom.

DAVID  
(calls out for)  
Helen, let's go!

HELEN (FROM UPSTAIRS)  
Down in a second.

David huffs, shaking his head. He steps out the front door -- and *slams* it shut, much harder than he had to.

Ash looks to Bree, who's even a little surprised.

BREE  
Okay...

8:47 AM

01/27/2002

EXT. DRIVEWAY -- MORNING

A beautiful day in Southern California. Ash has the camera *zoomed* toward the San Gabriel mountains against an azure morning sky...

DAVID (O.S.)  
Come on, bud, let's get some help.

...turns to see David and Bree hauling luggage and gear into the family's luxury SUV.

Helen's trying to nab Jacob to put him in his car seat as he scurries around excited.

DAVID (CONT'D)  
Hearing me, birthday boy?

ASH  
What?

DAVID  
See all this stuff here?

BREE  
The director's busy, dad.

HELEN  
(still chasing Jake)  
David, help me, would you?

DAVID  
Ash, help your sister.

David gets a hand on animated Jake, picks him up, and sits the young one in his car seat.

HELEN  
Does everyone have everything? Did you use bathrooms?

BREE/ASH  
Yes.

Helen does a quick check of the garage. Ready to go. *Whirs* the door shut.

David's cell *rings* from his pocket as he straps Jacob in.

HELEN  
David, did you lock the back?

DAVID  
Check.

HELEN  
And who keeps calling?

DAVID  
Just a wrong number, Helen.  
(then to kids)  
All right, guys, hit the road time, let's go.

BREE  
Are you sure you guys don't wanna get a fight in before we go?

HELEN  
 (condemning)  
 Bree.

David ignores.

Bree looks at the camera, can't hold back her smirk.

9:46 AM

01/27/2002

INT. SUV (DRIVING) -- DAY

A little classic rock from the radio. Heading north on CA HWY 14 just past Lancaster.

The occasional housing developments and mall plazas whirring by start to give way to hilly desert.

Ash *zooms* in and out of the passing scenery, cars...

9:53 AM

01/27/2002

INT. SUV (DRIVING) -- DAY

David driving, occasionally humming along to radio rock. Helen sits passenger. Bree and kids in the back.

BREE  
 Can we change the station? Not everyone in the car's like from B.C.

DAVID  
 The day you drive us to Tahoe's the day you can control the radio.

BREE  
 Whatever.

HELEN  
 Where's your Walkman, Bree.

BREE  
 It's in the back.

DAVID  
 That wasn't very good planning, was it.

BREE  
Noted, dad.

HELEN  
We're stopping for gas soon.

BREE  
I hope before my ears fall off.

DAVID  
Hey, a little REO's good for the  
soul.

BREE  
I think we should take a vote.

DAVID  
That's a great idea, Bree. Everyone  
in the car old enough to vote,  
raise your hand.

She groans.

BREE  
Torture.

DAVID  
(re: out the window)  
Look at this.

A rundown pickup truck hauls a huge load of bric-a-brac  
precariously stacked and tied together.

DAVID (CONT'D)  
Not a care in the world.

He passes, leering at the driver, who's singing to himself.

BREE  
Bet he's listening to better music.

10:20 AM

01/27/2002

INT. SUV (PARKED) -- DAY

At a gas station pump. Everyone's in the store. Alone in the  
car with the camera, Ash fiddles around inside, opening  
compartments, flipping knobs...

He climbs up to the passenger seat. *Zooms* all the way into an  
air vent, pushing the lens' limit.

Fascinated by the bits of dust, smudges and textures around the car as the camera tries hard to *focus*.

He arrives at the glove box. And opens it:

Some gloves. Owner's manual. A Best Western hotel key...

Ash then catches something of more interest out the windshield, *zooming* over at the next pump:

A buxom teen fills up with some friends -- their giggles alone enough for a kid's wet dream. She bends in a way any imagination would run with it...

when -- *knock knock* --

Ash whips around --

David with a gotcha smirk at the window. Though somewhat proud. His son's crime could be worse.

As David rounds the hood, Ash *shuts* the glove box --

12:45 PM

01/27/2002

EXT. LAKE ISABELLA -- DAY

Junior mountains surround the quintessential SoCal lake. A little stop-off with families and happy campers peppered about a rocky shore, taking advantage of a perfect day.

Ash *zooms* into the distance, where David and Helen stand by the water, enjoying the view.

What seems like a nice chat, though, turns into something a little heated. Domestic quibbling rearing its ugly head as usual.

Helen ponders something a beat. Shakes her head again, moving off bitterly toward us.

David watches her go shaking his head.

BREE (O.S.)  
What're you shooting?

Camera *startles*, *pointing* away --

4:12 PM

01/27/2002

INT. SUV -- DAY

Stuck in gridlock on the main road going through Lone Pine, California.

Helen reading a magazine. David tapping the wheel, clearly antsy with the stopped traffic.

ASH

Do we get to go skiing today?

BREE

Not looking good, dorkus.

DAVID

Of course we can, buddy.

HELEN

It's gonna get dark soon.

DAVID

There's always night-skiing.

HELEN

We're not driving through the hills at night. Not on those icy roads.

ASH

Aw, man...

DAVID

(looks over)

Trying to stay positive here, Helen.

HELEN

I prefer realistic.

BREE

So, that's a no to getting there today.

DAVID

That's a maybe.

BREE

Where are we staying?

DAVID

This is gonna clear up soon, guys.

HELEN  
At a motel, where else?

David scoffs, shakes his head.

HELEN (CONT'D)  
Do you want disappointment or do  
you want to manage expectations?

DAVID  
How about just an ounce of hope for  
your kids.

She chuckles to herself.

HELEN  
Suddenly the savior.

Off that, David holds back.

DAVID  
You know what, guys? I'm gonna see  
what's jamming us up. Okay?

David opens the door and steps out quicker than he has to.  
Shuts the door. Needing the air, he walks up along the road.

BREE  
Um. What was that about?

Helen shakes her head.

BREE (CONT'D)  
Can you guys go one day without  
fighting?

HELEN  
Not now, Bree, okay?

Helen looks back. Smiling at Jacob to reset her mood.

HELEN (CONT'D)  
How's my little guy? Hm?

Mom's smiling face is all he needs.

HELEN (CONT'D)  
Doing okay back here?

BREE  
Hunky freaking dory.

HELEN  
(to Ash)  
Honey, how's your movie coming  
along?

ASH  
Good.

HELEN  
I say it's gonna be a big hit.

Ash snickers.

BREE  
(nudge)  
You know directors get all the  
ladies, right?

ASH  
Of course.

Helen chuckles, and faces the gridlock again, sitting back with a breath. Only thing to do is wait this out. She punches up the radio.

BREE  
What's dad doing?

HELEN  
Who knows.

Ash *zooms* out the windshield to get a better look ahead.

ASH  
Where did he go?

BREE  
That's it, Ash. You're the man of  
the house.

Ash opens the door, stepping out...

BREE (CONT'D)  
Where are you going?

HELEN  
Ash, stay in the car --

EXT. SUV, ROAD -- CONT'D

...moving along the gridlock to follow David's trail. Curious faces eye from their vehicles.

BREE (O.S.)  
What are you doing?

She catches up.

BREE (CONT'D)  
Back in the car, come on.

ASH  
I wanna see.

BREE  
Uh, negative.

ASH  
You can't tell me what to do.

BREE  
Well mom can and she wants you in  
the car.

But Ash presses forward, Bree having to follow.

Up ahead, some commotion, a growing group of onlookers out of their cars. Among the rubberneckerers is David.

BREE (O.S.) (CONT'D)  
Ash, don't be a brat.

Some sort of accident in the distance. Road flares and sheriff's deputies surrounding the scene.

BREE (CONT'D)  
Geez, what's going on.

They move toward David and the crowd.

Ash *zooms* through the gathering of people's legs and barely catches what looks like a *stream of blood* on the road...

coming from a *severely mangled car* upended at the side of the road.

ASH  
Dad?

David hears, turns around.

BREE (O.S.)  
What happened?

DAVID  
Dammit, guys, get back to the car  
right now --

BREE  
Did someone die--?

DAVID  
*What did I just say? Now.*

BREE  
*Fine, Jesus.*

They're forced to turn around and walk back toward the SUV.  
The sun's starting to set.

BREE (CONT'D)  
You see what happens when you're a  
brat?

5:25 PM

01/27/2002

INT. SUV (DRIVING) -- NIGHT

The sun has just set. Bree's listening to her Walkman.  
Goofball face for the camera. Jacob sleeping.

HELEN  
God, that poor couple.

DAVID  
It's sad.

HELEN  
All the more reason we shouldn't be  
driving at night.

DAVID  
We're not in the hills yet.

HELEN  
I'm just saying, David.

BREE  
(taking headphones off)  
When are we stopping to eat?

ASH  
Yeah.

HELEN  
Ask your dad.

DAVID  
Soon.

BREE

Starving.

David's phone *vibrates* in the console. He looks, and rejects the call.

HELEN

All day, David. Why don't you just answer and see who it--

--when he *jerks* the wheel and brakes -- everyone in the car swinging --

DAVID

Dammit!

HELEN

*Jesus--*

A beat-up *station wagon* carelessly rockets past, weaving through the cars at nearly a hundred.

BREE

What was that?

DAVID

Idiot cut me off.

David *accelerates...*

HELEN

David, don't.

DAVID

Just gonna see...

...weaving past cars to try and catch up.

JACOB

Mommy...?

BREE

(nervously)

Dad.

HELEN

David. *Slow down.*

But the station wagon is too quick and reckless up there, its tail lights trailing away fast into the night.

David lets off the gas... and comes down to reasonable speed, back to his senses. Not worth it anyway.

HELEN (CONT'D)

Thank you...

She shakes her head.

DAVID

(sotto)

Bastard.

BREE

Nice driving, dad.

DAVID

Quiet back there.

BREE

I will be soon.

Beat.

BREE (CONT'D)

You know, from starving to death?...

5:48 PM

01/27/2002

INT. ROADSIDE RESTAURANT -- NIGHT

Helen cuts up Jacob's meal, the family sitting at a booth table. She looks a little spent. So does Bree.

BREE

How much longer are we gonna go tonight?

DAVID

Plenty of time still.

HELEN

I don't think so.

DAVID

(pushing it)

Up for some night-skiing, Ash?

ASH

Not really.

DAVID

Aw, come on.

HELEN  
That's not funny.

She's trying to feed Jake, but he's being a cranky little squirmer at the moment.

BREE  
I need a shower, like seriously.

ASH  
Can I go to the bathroom?

HELEN  
Be quick.

DAVID  
Leave the camera here.

ASH  
I wanna take it.

DAVID  
To the bathroom?

HELEN  
Just -- go. Be careful.

BREE  
Yeah, don't drop it in the toilet.

ASH  
Yuck.

With that, Ash leaves the table, moving through the restaurant as he points the camera here and there, rousing patrons' curiosities.

Crossing his way over into the men's bathroom...

INT. BATHROOM -- CONT'D

Not the cleanest, though not the dirtiest. Ash goes to the sink, just tall enough to see himself in the mirror.

Playing around with his reflection a bit, *zooming* into himself, messing with focus.

When someone *whistles* a tune from one of the stalls behind him...

A pale, gruff-looking GUY (late 20s) comes out from the stall over to the sink. His face has been heavily blurred.

An amused smile down at the little guy with the camera as he washes his hands. There's a tired, strangely gentle way about him.

(Voice digitally altered.)

GUY  
What's up, doc?

ASH  
Nothing.

GUY  
(nods)  
Nothing, huh...

The guy wipes his face, and runs some wet fingers through his mopy hair.

GUY (CONT'D)  
Well... all right.

He rips off some paper towels and dries. Points a finger gun at the camera and goes to leave.

But then,

GUY (CONT'D)  
Hey, little guy.

gets down and puts his hands on the floor by the wall. Shoots his legs up, doing a handstand against it.

GUY (CONT'D)  
Ever see someone do this? What do you think?

Ash chuckles a little, *zooming* into the guy's *blurry*, upside-down face.

GUY (CONT'D)  
Pretty cool, right?

The guy brings his feet down, and stands up again. Shaking off his head rush.

GUY (CONT'D)  
Woo!

Ruffles his flop of hair and slicks it back again. Smiling into the camera.

GUY (CONT'D)  
How do I look?

Through the blur, he makes a goofy face with his tongue out.

ASH  
What are you doing?

GUY  
What am I doing?

The guy thinks a beat. Then crouches down, and looks squarely into the camera.

GUY (CONT'D)  
I'm mugging.

ASH  
What's mugging...?

GUY  
(tilts his head)  
This.

ASH  
You're weird.

The man chuckles, and gets even closer to the lens with his *pixelated face*.

GUY  
Kiddo?  
(beat)  
You have no... *fucking*... idea.

Creeped, Ash starts toward the door,

GUY (CONT'D)  
Where you going, little man?

but gets turned around by the guy's hand on his shoulder.

ASH  
Stop -- let go --

When David comes into the bathroom, seeing this --

DAVID  
Hey -- hey. Get your hands off my son.

The guy steps away. Annoyed.

DAVID (CONT'D)  
What the hell do you think you're doing?

GUY  
 (casually)  
 Just talking to my new friend here.

DAVID  
 (to Ash)  
 Back to the table.

Ash opens the door.

DAVID (O.S.) (CONT'D)  
 I asked you why you put your hands  
 on my son.

GUY (O.S.)  
 We were just talking, man. All  
 right?

An argument between David and the man escalates behind Ash as he quickly moves out of the bathroom...

INT. RESTAURANT FLOOR -- CONT'D

...making his way back through the tables as *loud yelling* and bumps and thumps emanate from the bathroom.

ASH  
 Mom?

As Ash approaches the family table, Helen scoots out concerned.

Patrons and staff curiously gawking.

HELEN  
 (to Bree)  
 Watch Jake.  
 (then to)  
 Ash -- what's going on in there?

BREE  
 Is that dad?

Wait staff move toward the bathroom to stop what's become a fight...

EXT. ROADSIDE RESTAURANT -- NIGHT

Bree's capturing the action. Helen nearby holding a sleeping Jacob, troubled by everything.

HELEN  
God, we shouldn't have done this.

BREE  
It's fine, mom.

Across the way, David talks to a man (30s, though grizzled -- his face also blurred) with a nervous-looking Ashton at his side.

BREE (CONT'D)  
Happy birthday, Ash...

The man seems fairly apologetic, but David's still pretty heated.

Particularly with our Guy from the bathroom -- who stands over by a jalopy *station wagon*, the one that cut them off earlier -- making faces.

Accompanying him are two young women (both early 20s at the oldest) flanking a downtrodden, pale young boy (9).

All the faces of this other family have been blurred. We will never know what they actually look like.

David dismisses whatever apologies are thrown his way on behalf of the Guy, and walks off with Ash.

HELEN (O.S.)  
Turn it off, okay?

As David and Ash come over.

BREE  
Awesome vacation, dad.

HELEN  
And I'm pretty sure it's canceled at this point.

DAVID  
We're leaving, guys, c'mon.

ASH  
Give me my camera.

BREE  
Shut up --

10:17 PM

01/27/2002

INT. MOTEL ROOM -- NIGHT

Checked into a triple room. Ash filming from his bed. Bree in another with Jake, annoyed trying to sleep,

as David argues in the bathroom doorway with Helen, who's washing her face in there.

HELEN (O.S.)

You got in a fight, David.

DAVID

He put his hands on Ash -- and he attacked *me*.

HELEN (O.S.)

Maybe just cut our losses at this point.

DAVID

What in the world are you talking about?

BREE (O.S.)

Ash, why are you recording this...

HELEN (O.S.)

I just don't like the idea of being on the road with maniacs running around.

DAVID

(chuckles)

Oh, stop it.

HELEN (O.S.)

Is that so wrong?

DAVID

They're long gone. What are you worried about?

She flicks off the light, and crosses to bed, as Jake whines a little, tired.

HELEN

(quietly)

Let's talk about this in the morning, okay?

BREE  
Yes, *thank you*.

DAVID  
There's nothing to talk about.

BREE  
Doesn't sound like it.

DAVID  
Hey, go to bed.

BREE  
You're kidding, right?

HELEN  
Bree, don't get smart right now.

Bree huffs and turns in her bed, pillow over her head.

DAVID  
We're not cutting our vacation  
short because of some peabrained  
loser.

HELEN  
Ash, camera off, time for bed...

DAVID  
All right?

5:37 AM

01/28/2002

INT. MOTEL ROOM -- BEFORE DAWN

Nobody up yet. Ash sneaks around the room... catching Bree mouth-breathing in her bed. An image of her she'd never allow, but Ash is getting all he wants. He snickers quietly.

Onward to Helen, sleeping alone in her bed. David's not beside her.

The sound of a car door *shutting* outside...

draws Ash's attention. He gently crosses over to the window. Edging a peek out the curtain:

Behind the wheel in their SUV out front, David talks on his cell phone. Inaudible from here.

Ash *zooms* as far as he can into dad's happy face as he chats away, clearly enjoying the conversation. Though at one point his expression turns glum as he mulls something.

Ash *zooms* back out, and scans the few cars in the parking lot. A truck or two, a sedan.

At the end of the lot, a familiar old *station wagon*. Parked not in a spot but against a far curb. Like it's been surveilling...

Ash *zooms* toward it... to catch that *young, pale boy's face (blurred)* staring in this direction from the back window.

BREE (O.S.)  
(groggy)  
What are you doing...?

Ash turns around. Bree half asleep, annoyed that he's up.

ASH  
I think those people are over there.

Falling back into her dream, Bree mutters something incomprehensible.

He turns back to the window, looking out again -- to see David coming back to the room --

Ash quickly moving toward his bed --

8:16 AM

01/28/2002

INT. SUV (DRIVING) -- DAY

On the 395 sidling up to the snowy east Sierras. Overcast, but still some of the most beautiful terrain on the west coast.

Helen sits a little ornery.

DAVID  
We're gonna be there soon and forget it ever happened.

HELEN  
That's not the point, David. The point is it *did* happen.

DAVID

What are you worried about, for  
godsakes?

BREE

Can't believe I'm saying this, but  
can we turn on the radio?

David drives with pointed silence. Helen perturbed -- more  
with him.

BREE (CONT'D)

Or we can just sit quietly.

ASH

Where's your Walkman?

BREE

Stupid batteries.

DAVID

(trying something)  
Who wants to play fortunately-  
unfortunately?

ASH

Me!

BREE

Ugh.

DAVID

Helen, why don't you start.

Despite her mood, mom lightens it up for the kids.

HELEN

Let's see... Unfortunately. I smell  
something funny.

DAVID

Fortunately. I brought potpourri.

BREE

But unfortunately, Ash's fart is  
too strong for potpourri.

ASH

I didn't fart!

Light chuckles around.

DAVID

Did you have to go there, Bree?

BREE  
Mom started it.

David shakes his head.

HELEN  
Fortunately, guys, I brought a fan.

DAVID  
But unfortunately, we can't plug it  
in.

BREE  
Well, fortunately... I opened the  
window so it doesn't smell anymore.

ASH  
And Bree fell out!

DAVID  
Ash, you have to do an  
unfortunately.

BREE  
Unfortunately, a bird flew into the  
car.

DAVID  
It's Ash's turn.

ASH  
It's my turn!

BREE  
Then go, Jesus.

HELEN  
Bree.

DAVID  
Focus, please?

ASH  
Unfortunately... the bird farted  
and it smelled real bad.  
(chuckling)

Jacob squeals laughing.

BREE  
You're such a dork.

DAVID  
Okay, enough with the fart stuff,  
all right?

HELEN  
Oh leave them alone.

Ash and Bree giggle.

JACOB  
*Fart!*

Kids all chuckling.

DAVID  
Way to muck up the game, guys.

HELEN  
Would you stop it?

Then,

BREE  
Oh! I love the hot springs. Can we  
pull over? Please?

ASH  
Aw, cool!

Ash points the camera out the window at a long, steamy stream  
along the icy road bank -- the Fales Hot Springs.

JACOB  
*Hot spwings!*

ASH  
Please dad?

David looks put out...

8:28 AM

01/28/2002

EXT. HWY 395, FALES HOT SPRINGS -- DAY

Ash behind the camera again. Cars whip by the SUV parked on  
the thin shoulder.

Bree holds Jacob's hand at the edge of the ice as they marvel  
at the steam rising from the various patches of hot water  
along the highway.

Helen steps out of the car and shuts the door, leaning against it. Smiling at Jacob and Bree.

David steps out from behind the wheel and rounds the hood. Comes next to her. Some distance between them.

when *splat!* --

-- several *tomatoes* smack the SUV as a car full of yee-hawing college kids whips by...

DAVID

Jesus!

David and Helen see the car disappear down the highway, furious. Startled. Though it was relatively harmless.

DAVID (CONT'D)

*Fuck!*

HELEN

*Jesus, watch your mouth.*

Bree sort of chuckles from the distance. Jacob smiling with her.

10:11 AM

01/28/2002

INT. SUV (DRIVING) -- DAY

Snowing heavily as the family moves along a two-lane highway up through Inyo National Forest, California.

Ash is *zooming* out the back into the snowy trees and road behind them.

ASH

Where...?

BREE

Nevermind, I thought I saw it.

DAVID

Really coming down. Gonna be great skiing, guys.

HELEN

David, slow down.

DAVID

I'm doing 35.

HELEN  
Then do 30.

DAVID  
It's fine, Helen.

David turns a corner, immediately braking into a little skid when a row of headlights appears ahead. Forced to a crawl.

DAVID (CONT'D)  
Dammit...

Helen shaking her head.

BREE  
Are we ever gonna get there?

DAVID  
There's plenty of time.

HELEN  
(noticing)  
It's really coming down.

David gauges.

DAVID  
I should put the chains on.

He pulls over...

BREE  
Now?

DAVID  
Would you like me to put them on after we skid off the road?

HELEN  
(disapproving)  
David...

Parks.

DAVID  
What, Helen.

HELEN  
(calmly)  
Don't use that tone with me.

BREE  
Ugh, please don't start again.

DAVID

*Quiet.*

HELEN

Stop talking to her like that.

DAVID

Like what, her dad?

BREE

(huff)

God, all you do is fight.

DAVID

I'm on your side.

HELEN

Can we just get the chains on,  
please?

10:18 AM

01/28/2002

INT. SUV -- DAY

Through a thick flurry, cars pass slowly on the passenger side.

Ash *turns* to look out the driver side, where Helen's having trouble unzipping the new bag of chains.

David tries to help loosen the zipper, but she insists she can handle the task.

BREE (O.S.)

God, they are so annoying.

Bree shifts onto her knees to grab something out of the back.

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

Want anything?

Ash shakes his head.

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

(searching)

Please tell me we brought pretzels.

Then...

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

Who is that over there?

ASH

Huh?

BREE (O.S.)

Behind us.

Ash gets onto his knees, to take a look out the back window...

seeing a set of *headlights* pulled over on the road about 30 yards away. Unclear in the snowy haze, but it looks like a smaller, newer car.

Its headlights turn *off*.

DAVID (O.S. OUTSIDE)

Helen. *This* way.

HELEN (O.S. OUTSIDE)

It *is* that way --

Ash turns to mom and dad again. They're crouched below the door trying to hook a chain on the wheel -- needless to say bickering.

DAVID (MUFFLED OUTSIDE)

Jostle it a little.

She huffs and tries a hand at his damn instructions.

BREE (O.S.)

They're coming over here.

Ash looks out the back again -- to see *two figures* from the car walking this way.

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

Is that...?

(calls out to)

*Dad.*

David stands up, and off her point,

sees the casually approaching strangers. Helen straightens beside him.

It's the *Guy* from last night, accompanied by one of the women, an emaciated *Brunette*. Both *faces blurred*, but we can tell they're smiling.

David bristling, a tire tool at his hip.

GUY (MUFFLED OUTSIDE)  
(voice altered)  
What's up doc? You guys need--

He pauses... realizing he recognizes David, and Helen.

GUY (CONT'D)  
Oh... wow.

Guy chuckles. Brunette, too.

GUY (CONT'D)  
Just thought you guys could use  
some fingers. It's pretty thick.

HELEN  
Oh. That's nice of you.

DAVID  
No. Don't need your help.

Helen encourages David not to be pigheaded.

BRUNETTE  
So, you all going to Tahoe, too?

DAVID  
Look, we're fine here. You can feel  
free to go.

Guy looks squarely at David. His friendly smile gone.

GUY  
Hey.

The man steps a few forward... offering a hand.

GUY (CONT'D)  
You're sure?

David doesn't budge. He's not going to accept the olive branch.

HELEN  
He's just trying to help.

DAVID  
We're fine.

Guy seems rather disappointed.

GUY  
All right... Loud and clear.

He looks at the camera, seeing Ash in the car.

GUY (CONT'D)  
What's up, little man?

DAVID  
Don't talk to my son. All right?

Helen sighs apologetically.

Guy salutes with a rakish grin. And with that, he and Brunette turn around, moving back toward the car...

HELEN  
Jesus. You couldn't just take the damn apology?

DAVID  
That's the last thing he wanted to do, all right? He was laughing in our face.

HELEN  
You know what? Since you don't need the help, you can do this yourself.

Helen trudges around the hood shaking her head.

DAVID  
Just wonderful, Helen...

HELEN  
Yeah, wonderful.

She opens the door, and sits down in her passenger seat. Slaps the door shut. Taking off her gloves.

HELEN (CONT'D)  
Your dad's just gonna be the end of me.

David continues with the chains outside.

Helen rubs her face and leans back, fatigued from bickering and the cold.

BREE  
Mom?

Off her silence.

BREE (CONT'D)  
We didn't bring pretzels.

An engine *revs harshly* outside -- Ash turning to see the other family's car passing them,

Guy behind the wheel making a *devilish, tonguing face (though blurred)* directly at Helen as he moves off.

Helen practically startles -- creeped.

BREE (CONT'D)

Ew -- Um, what the hell was that?

HELEN

Just ignore, Bree.

Helen sighs, shaking her head.

10:51 AM

01/28/2002

INT. SUV (DRIVING) -- DAY

Chains *grind* underneath us on the snowy, narrow road cutting through the hills.

It's hard to even see the tail lights of the car ahead of us through what's starting to become a whiteout.

HELEN

He was just trying to help.

DAVID

Do I need to remind you that the guy attacked me? Let it go.

HELEN

Right, I should let it go.

DAVID

It's just one thing after the other with you.

Helen can't help but derisively chuckle.

HELEN

Really something, David. Just really something.

DAVID

I'm trying to watch the road, okay?

-- when the car up ahead *rams* the vehicle in front of it, both cars swinging to the side of the road in a slushy mess...

HELEN  
Geez!

BREE  
Whoa --

11:17 AM

01/28/2002

INT. SUV (PARKED) -- DAY

They've pulled over. Too dangerous to drive in this surging whiteout -- hard even to see just past the hood. Though it's toasty comfortable in here.

BREE  
Ugh, are we ever gonna get there?

ASH  
Dad, can we ski today?

DAVID  
Soon as this lets up, buddy. Be there in no time.

HELEN  
We'll see, Ash.

ASH  
How long are we gonna stay here?

HELEN  
As long as we have to.

BREE  
Starving.

Bree brings a neoprene cooler to her lap and digs through it. Unwrapping a granola bar for herself.

BREE (CONT'D)  
(offering)  
Anyone?

Helen reaches back and grabs a couple waters. Gives one to David.

BREE (CONT'D)  
This is like when we got stuck in Big Bear. Remember?

ASH  
No.

BREE

I think you were like 4.

Helen finds herself chuckling.

HELEN

Now that was a nightmare.

BREE

We waited it out in that parking lot for like four hours.

DAVID

(defending)

Still had fun, didn't we?

Helen titters nostalgic.

HELEN

You built that snowman with two heads for some reason.

DAVID

Those were ears. For a bear.

HELEN

What?

Chuckles.

HELEN (CONT'D)

That was not a bear.

BREE

I thought it was a rabbit.

DAVID

It was a bear!

They all giggle.

When David's phone *vibrates* in his pocket...

...and the jovial mood fades into strained silence when he doesn't answer it.

Helen's smile gone, soon replaced by a glare.

David turns on the radio, tuning it to whatever he can find up here.

DAVID (CONT'D)

We'll be there soon, guys.

And the distance between mom and dad seems larger than ever.

1:16 PM

01/28/2002

INT. SUV (DRIVING) -- DAY

Quiet in the car...

The snowfall has let up a bit.

David drives slowly but steadily, absorbed in the journey. Much fewer cars on the road.

Jacob sleeping. Helen resting her eyes. Bree, too.

Ash points the camera to the rear-view mirror, catching David's eyes looking back...

2:58 PM

01/28/2002

INT. SUV (DRIVING) -- LATER

It's coming down thick again. We seem to be on more of a back road. Heavily wooded.

David and Helen have been going at it, Helen with the map out.

HELEN

...Just turn around.

DAVID

Helen, we're not backtracking an hour.

HELEN

We haven't seen another car for miles.

DAVID

(re: road)  
It goes through.

HELEN

This isn't the same road. And look we're past a quarter tank.

He shakes his head.

HELEN (CONT'D)

David.

DAVID

Do me a favor and let me drive.  
Okay?

BREE

Ugh, it's really hot back here.

HELEN

There is nobody around.

DAVID

You haven't let up one minute since  
we left. Stop the dramatics for one  
minute. *Please.*

BREE

Mom?

HELEN

(re: map)

You could've easily turned off  
here, which means we're going the  
wrong way.

DAVID

I didn't turn. All right? There was  
no turn.

HELEN

At least stop and look.

DAVID

It's *fine*, Helen.

HELEN

You are so unbelievably stubborn I  
can't stand it.

BREE

*Mom --*

HELEN

(curt)

Then take off your coat, Bree.

BREE

Well, if you'd like listen to me.  
There's actually someone behind us.

Helen looks back.

Ash, too --

Way behind in the haze are a faint pair of *headlights*.

DAVID

See, we're not alone. All right?

Slight bit of relief, but Helen's still on edge.

DAVID (CONT'D)

A little faith is all I ask.

BREE

Totally burning up back here.

Helen looks around. Her irritation trumped by actual worry as the conditions start to justify it.

HELEN

(calmly)

David, I honestly think we should head back.

BREE

Can I open a window?

ASH

No, it's cold!

DAVID

Helen, please trust me. For once. All right?

HELEN

Trust you. Right.

BREE

At least turn the heater down?

DAVID

Well what does that mean?

HELEN

I don't know, David, what does it mean?

Bree lowers her window.

ASH

Stop, it's freezing!

BREE

Just for a few seconds, *God* --

ASH  
Close it!

BREE  
Would you shut up?

ASH  
Dad!

HELEN  
Bree, close the window.

BREE  
Fine, Jesus!  
(window back up)

DAVID  
And both of you, *can it*.

BREE  
Really awesome trip, guys. Best  
family vacation ever...

DAVID  
What the hell did I just say, Bree?

HELEN  
Will you keep your eyes on the  
road?

DAVID  
(back to)  
Helen? I'm serious.

HELEN  
Oh, do not even take a tone with me  
right now.

DAVID  
(losing it)  
Helen --

HELEN  
This is not the time.

BREE  
God, stop fighting!

David *slams* a hand on the steering wheel --

DAVID  
*Dammit!*

Helen startling.

DAVID (CONT'D)  
Everyone in this car, lips closed.  
I am not kidding around.

The kids go quiet.

Helen stares at David, silently furious.

DAVID (CONT'D)  
Peace and quiet -- I'm trying to  
drive. All right? Ashton?

Ash nods contrite.

DAVID (CONT'D)  
Bree?

BREE  
(grudgingly)  
Yeah, dad.

DAVID  
And Helen, please. Just quiet.

With that... David drives a moment, more carefully now, as  
the snow really starts to come down.

Bree takes off her coat, annoyed by all this.

Helen glances around, audibly sighing as they move along.

Then --

David *smacks* the brakes, and the SUV skids toward something  
on the road that appeared out of nowhere. Everyone jerks  
forward coming to a stop...

Just ahead, he almost rammed into the *locked road gate*.

The route they're on is dead closed.

HELEN  
You've got to be kidding me, David.

BREE  
(sigh)  
Oh. *Great...*

Helen shakes her head quietly. Livid with the recalcitrant  
skipper that's steered them miles off-course.

BREE (CONT'D)  
It's closed?

David stares ahead at the damn gate -- right now his mortal enemy.

BREE (CONT'D)

We have to go all the way back now?

ASH

Aw, man...

BREE

Fantastic.

Helen manages not to say anything, no matter how much she wants to.

ASH

Can we go outside?

BREE

Ugh, it's too hot in here.

Bree opens her door, and slaps it shut stepping out.

DAVID

Bree --

HELEN

(needled)

Oh let her get some damn air.

ASH

How come she gets to go?

HELEN

Just... stay close, both of you.  
And leave the camera here.

ASH

Aw, man, why?

HELEN

I don't want you breaking it out  
there.

DAVID

Leave it, Ash.

Ash grudgingly *sets down* the camera (*unframed* but still recording) on the seat and steps out, shuts the door.

David shuts off the engine. He and Helen sit quietly a moment.

Outside, Bree starts a little snow fight with her brother.

Helen talks low so as not to wake Jacob in the back.

HELEN  
Dammit, David.

DAVID  
Helen, not now --

HELEN  
God dammit!

Her tone quiets him a moment.

DAVID  
Okay... You want me to admit I took  
a wrong turn? Would that make you  
happy?

HELEN  
Does *one ounce* of me look happy  
right now?

DAVID  
Can we please not do this.

HELEN  
God, I could just strangle you, you  
know that?

DAVID  
Get it all out, Helen.

HELEN  
What the hell is going on with you?  
You've been nothing but a colossal  
asshole.

DAVID  
And now we're namecalling.

Helen smashes up the map and whips it in David's face, fed up  
with him...

David sits there calmly. Put out by the arguments they've had  
many times before this.

DAVID (CONT'D)  
...I don't know what you want  
anymore. Okay?

She scoffs, almost a chuckle.

HELEN

You say that like you have something left to give.

DAVID

And you expect me to understand your riddles.

HELEN

I'm the one giving *you* the riddles?

DAVID

Let's please just try and have this vacation. Okay?

Helen doesn't break her stare. Incensed at his deflections.

HELEN

You're right. We're on a fucking vacation. Which apparently means any real discussion is off limits.

DAVID

Do you hear yourself right now?

HELEN

But at the very least, David? At the very least, you could not insult my god damn intelligence.

DAVID

What are you talking about?

HELEN

Or maybe I'm just crazy. Maybe it *is* just a wrong number.

Something in David's cold silence betrays surprise...

DAVID

I can't talk to you when you're like this.

HELEN

I'm done, David. All right? Done. Can you figure that riddle out?

DAVID

Oh. Think you can follow through on that threat?

HELEN

After Tahoe, things are changing, believe me.

He lowers the window, calling out.

                  DAVID  
Bree, Ash, back in the car.

                  ASH (OUTSIDE)  
Aw, man...

                  DAVID  
Now!

Jake wakes, moaning a little.

                  BREE (OUTSIDE)  
Fine. Geez.

David starts the engine as Ash and Bree cross over and come back into the car...

...Ash *picking up* his camera again.

                  BREE (CONT'D)  
It's beautiful outside, mom, you should check it out.

                  DAVID  
Time to go.

She shuts the door. David *revs* hard, and turns the car sharply around, chains *grinding* underneath.

                  BREE  
Um. What's the hurry?

                  HELEN  
Slow down.

David certainly isn't listening to her right now.

                  HELEN (CONT'D)  
You're acting like a child.

                  BREE  
What is going on?

                  HELEN  
You realize you're just wasting gas.

                  BREE  
Anybody?

David just accelerates.

HELEN  
 (gloves off)  
 Okay, you know what -- Let me  
 drive, David, I'm sick of this.

But David revs even more as the tires slip a bit.

HELEN (CONT'D)  
 David, *stop it*.

BREE  
 Dad, slow down.

HELEN  
 You're scaring everyone.

BREE  
 Seriously. Dad!

Then...

going around a bend, the SUV fishtails, all holding tight,  
 collectively *gasping*.

HELEN  
*Jesus Christ, David!--*

David inadvertently spins the back around... and the SUV  
 comes to a stall at the side of the road.

BREE  
 Oh my God.

Everyone frightened. Jacob starts to cry.

Even David didn't expect the spinout. He breathes a few,  
 coming back to Earth.

DAVID  
 I'm sorry... Jesus. I'm sorry.

Helen turns off the ignition and rips out the keys. Taking a  
 breath to calm herself. But utterly furious.

HELEN  
*Enough*. I am driving the rest of  
 the way and that is final.

BREE  
 You guys are being ridiculous.

HELEN  
 And I think it's time we head back  
 home.

BREE  
What?

ASH  
Mom...!

BREE  
Why?

DAVID  
Helen, we're not gonna go home--

HELEN  
*Quiet!...*

Everyone sits silently a moment. Lest they receive Helen's maternal wrath.

HELEN (CONT'D)  
We should've gone back this morning. Okay? I'm sorry, I know everyone wants to go skiing but this just isn't--

*smash!* --

*The camera jerks about, skips, delays as it hits the floor, audio cutting out --*

BLACK...

3:26 PM

01/28/2002

INT. THE FAMILY'S SUV -- DAY

Ash's camera *turns on* staring into the seat. Several minutes have past. Jacob *crying* in Helen's arms, everyone breathing heavy. Bree's nerves going haywire.

BREE  
I can't believe they hit us! God, you stupid drivers!

DAVID  
*Hey -- One more time.* Is everyone okay?

HELEN  
--I'm fine. He's okay.

DAVID  
Bree?

BREE  
 (terrified)  
 No, dad, I'm not fine.

DAVID  
 Ash?

Ash doesn't answer right away, confused and frantic.

ASH  
 Are we gonna be okay, dad?

DAVID  
 We're gonna be fine, buddy.

BREE  
 God, this is unbelievable!

ASH  
 But how are we gonna get the car  
 out?

DAVID  
 Ash, where's your camera...

Ash *picks it up*, and looks at David. The fact that his son has something to do gives David some comfort.

BREE  
 I can't believe this is happening.

Ash ganders out the windows. The SUV seems to have pin-balled more than a hundred feet down a tree-lined slope into a small ravine.

From the looks of it, at one point this section of the hills was used for a logging operation. Large bundles of lumber and fallen trees still lie around the area.

DAVID  
 I'll be right back. All right?  
 Everyone sit tight, stay in the  
 car, it's gonna be fine.

Up the hill, we can barely see the front end of a set of *headlights and the hood of a car* wedging out up by the road.

BREE  
 How are we gonna be fine? Your  
 phones won't even work up here!

HELEN  
 Bree, honey, please.

DAVID

It might be just down here we're not getting reception. Okay?

BREE

God, this is so fucked up.

HELEN

*Stop it. Right now.* We all need to stay calm.

DAVID

Look, nobody's hurt, just a little accident.

BREE

(no solace)

Great, dad. Just a little accident. Are you kidding me?

HELEN

*Enough,* Bree. I am not kidding.

DAVID

Stay here, I'll be right back.

He opens the door, his feet *crunching* into the deep snow. Shuts it. And plods up the hill they're on.

BREE

Mom, what are we gonna do?

HELEN

I don't know right now, please.

BREE

Are we gonna call for help?

HELEN

Yes.

BREE

How?

HELEN

Honey, I need you to take a breath. Okay?

Ash aims, *zooms*, as David trudges up the hill toward the road...

Jake whimpers against Helen's neck. Mom trying to calm him with her warmth.

BREE (O.S.)  
 This wouldn't have happened if you  
 guys weren't fighting all the god  
 damn time!

HELEN (O.S.)  
 Bree? Shut your lips this instant.

BREE (O.S.)  
 Well it's true!

Ash opens the door and steps out into the snow...

HELEN (O.S.)  
 Hey --

BREE (O.S.)  
 Where are you going!

EXT. SUV, WOODED HILL -- CONT'D

...following David's trail up as Bree and Helen call out from  
 the car.

David turning back to see him.

DAVID (UP THE HILL)  
 Ash! Stay in the car.

ASH  
 I wanna come with you.

DAVID (UP THE HILL)  
 Get back in the car, *now* Ash.

ASH  
 I wanna help!

DAVID (UP THE HILL)  
 You can help by being in the car.

ASH  
 No, I wanna see.

HELEN (O.S. FROM THE CAR)  
 Ash!

But Ash is already half way up to David.

Frustrated, but giving in, David trudges back down a bit.  
 Decides to bring Ash with him. Helping him move up the snowy  
 hill...

DAVID

When are you gonna learn to stop  
being a pain in the neck, huh?

ASH

I just wanna see.

Ash and David slog their way up toward the crest, but there's a section of the hill that's too steep to climb, particularly for Ash, and the trees make it tricky to get around it.

From here, though, we can see the *smashed front bumper of the car* up there. Hood smoking. The driver door looks open.

DAVID

*Hello!*

No response.

David surveys... looks at their SUV down the slope with a daunted sigh.

DAVID (CONT'D)

*Hello! Down here.*

Nothing.

DAVID (CONT'D)

*Can anyone hear me? Is anyone hurt?*

Then a *sound*.

ASH

Dad?

DAVID

Shh...

They listen a moment. The sound was maybe just the trees.

Silence returns.

ASH

Where are they?

David looks around. Wondering himself. A white stillness around them...

DAVID

All right. Let's get back to the car.

Ash lingers a moment with the camera, looking at the car up there.

DAVID (CONT'D)

Now, Ash.

Then turns back down the hill.

3:42 PM

01/28/2002

INT. THE FAMILY'S SUV -- DAY

David *shuts* the door, back behind the wheel. Helen worried and confused.

HELEN

Well... Where are they? Where did they go?

DAVID

I don't know. Maybe they ran off. Or someone's hurt in there.

Helen surveys. Hard to tell if she's worried or contemplating.

BREE

How the hell are we gonna get out of here?

David ponders, as it starts to snow again.

DAVID

I'm gonna see if I can get up there.

BREE

Up there? Hello, what about helping down here?

DAVID

Bree, someone could be hurt.

BREE

You said no one's up there.

DAVID

(impatiently)

I don't know that for sure. All right?

Bree huffs, worked up by everything.

He looks up the hill, and around. And to Helen. Puzzling over this godforsaken situation...

3:48 PM

01/28/2002

INT. SUV -- DAY

David *starts* the engine. At least the car still runs. He *revs* a few, puts it in gear, and tries to get something moving. But the wheels only slip in the snow.

Helen lifts and hands Jake over to Bree in the back.

BREE

Dig, that's our plan?

David opens the door and steps out again. Goes around to the back. Opens the bent cargo door and rifles around in the gear.

BREE (CONT'D)

Shouldn't we be trying to go get help? Get the police?

DAVID

We can't all go with this weather right now and I'm not leaving you guys here.

Helen puts on her gloves.

ASH

I wanna help.

DAVID

Stay in the car, Ash. I mean it.

HELEN

(motherly)

Just sit tight, honey. Okay?

Helen opens her door, and steps out.

DAVID

None of you even think about going anywhere, understand?

David passes Helen a little hand shovel from the emergency kit. Hands Bree a trash bag and roll of duct tape.

BREE

What am I supposed to...?

DAVID  
Cover the window.

The back *passenger window* got shattered.

DAVID (CONT'D)  
Ash, help your sister.

BREE  
Dad?

DAVID  
What, Bree.

BREE  
Are we gonna be okay?

DAVID  
We're gonna be fine.

HELEN  
We'll be out of this soon, honey.

DAVID  
I'm just gonna make sure everyone's  
okay up there and I'll be back to  
help.

David and Helen trudge around the hood to the driver side.

DAVID (CONT'D)  
Get around the wheel here, and as  
much as you can under the middle.  
Okay?

She nods and crouches down to start her dig.

DAVID (CONT'D)  
I'll be right back.

David gauges the hill, the trees, as the snow comes down  
heavily again. He tramps up toward the road.

Bree sits back in a frazzled huff with Jacob sniffing  
against her. She sets the bag and tape aside, trying not to  
let the tears stream.

Ash sets the *camera down*. Grabs the tape and trash bag.

BREE  
What are you doing?

ASH  
Dad said.

BREE  
There's no point in doing that if  
we're leaving.

ASH  
It's cold.

Jacob whines.

BREE  
Well get used to it 'cause we're  
gonna have to leave at some point.

ASH  
What if we have to stay?

BREE  
We're not staying here, Ash.

ASH  
What if--

BREE  
Just shut up right now.

ASH  
You shut up.

BREE  
Ash? I swear to God I'm gonna--

The camera's battery *dies* --

BLACK.

3:57 PM

01/28/2002

INT. SUV -- DAY

*Sounds* of Helen digging diligently below the door. Late day's light starts its slow creep away. Maybe an hour left until dark.

Ash pans and *zooms* around the trees -- spectres in the heavy yet feathery haze. David climbing a steep, awkward part of the slope up there.

BREE (O.S.)  
Help me with this.

Ash turns to her. She's covering her window with the black trash bag. Jacob strapped in his car seat.

ASH  
You said you didn't want to.

BREE  
Just give me a piece of tape. The  
snow's coming in.

Ash *sets the camera down*. Tears her off a piece.

She tapes up a side of the bag and takes it from there,  
sealing up the rest of window frame with the dark plastic.  
Sealing the cold breeze and snow out.

Bree sits there a moment. Impatient. Only slightly less  
tensed as Helen continues to dig outside.

Ash *picks up* the camera again.

BREE (CONT'D)  
(sigh)  
God. I can't take this.

She opens the door.

ASH  
Where are you going?

BREE  
Nowhere.

ASH  
Dad said stay in--

BREE  
Do you want me to pee in the car,  
Ash?

Ash muses on that.

Didn't think so. Bree steps out carefully onto the snow,  
making sure mom and dad aren't looking.

BREE (CONT'D)  
Don't say anything. Okay?

ASH  
Why?

BREE  
Because, genius, I don't want them  
to see me pee.

ASH  
Where are you gonna go?

BREE

Right over here. Just quiet. And  
don't look.

She shuts the door.

With the black plastic partially blocking our view, we can hear Bree's *footsteps* trudging the snow outside.

Ash scoots and takes a look out at mom on the driver side digging the snow out vigorously from underneath the chassis.

Looks up the hill, *zooming* at a barely visible David reaching the crest where the car is. Dad curiously surveys up there a moment. His movements suggesting unease...

He takes a final look around, then glances down the hill toward his family,

promptly turning back and slogging hurriedly this way,

-- when *clunk* -- a sound on the hood.

Ash *zooms* back out, looks out the windshield...

Another *clunk*, this time at the passenger side.

ASH

What are you doing?

No answer.

Louder, *clunk*.

ASH (CONT'D)

Bree?

Ash scoots over to the bag-covered side.

*Clunk* again. Sounds like pebbles hitting the door.

ASH (CONT'D)

(warning)

I'm gonna look.

With no response, Ash opens the door. Looking out at the thick, white wilderness surrounding him.

ASH (CONT'D)

(she's not there)

Bree?

He looks around. No Bree.

But the lens catches someone else in the distance -- through the heavily falling snow,

the *still figure of a child*. Staring this way.

ASH (CONT'D)  
(turns to)  
Mom!

Helen stands alert. Opening the door.

ASH (CONT'D)  
There's someone over there.

HELEN  
What?

Ash turns back to the trees. No one there now.

HELEN (O.S.) (CONT'D)  
Ash, where's Bree?

ASH  
(turns to her again)  
...I don't know.

HELEN  
What do you mean you don't know?

Helen trudges around to the passenger side, as David comes tromping down the hill --

DAVID (O.S.)  
*Helen.*  
(she looks)  
What's going on?

HELEN  
Ash, where is she?

DAVID  
(keyed)  
Where is who?

ASH  
She said she was peeing.

Helen calls out --

HELEN  
Bree!

DAVID  
*What?*

HELEN  
Get back here.

DAVID  
Bree!  
(then to --)  
Ash, where did she go?

ASH  
I don't know!

DAVID  
-- Bree! Get your butt back to the  
car now!

Nothing.

HELEN  
Which way did she go?

Ash points. Helen starts off in that direction yelling out  
for her. David trailing, tensed.

ASH  
Dad?

He turns.

ASH (CONT'D)  
I saw someone over there.

DAVID  
Saw who?

ASH  
Standing over there.

When --

a *loud thump* on the driver side --

Ash turns to look, and *zooms* out the window...

-- when a *bloody hand smacks the glass then disappears* --

Ash *screaming* as the *camera startles*,

ASH (CONT'D)  
Dad! --

Jake *shrieking* from his car seat --

DAVID  
What -- what happened?

Ash points to the *bloody handprint* on the opposite window.

DAVID (CONT'D)  
 (panicked)  
 What is...?

HELEN (O.S. NEAR DISTANCE)  
 What's going on?

Helen trudges back over to David.

DAVID  
 Stay here. Stay here.

David carefully, woefully rounds the hood... getting a peek at the driver side...

Pausing when he sees who's there. Glancing around.

HELEN (O.S.)  
 David?

She comes back and trudges over to him, as Jake cries out for mom from inside... pausing when she sees what's there.

ASH  
 (scared)  
 What is it?

HELEN  
 Where did she...?

DAVID  
 We have to... help her.

They both seem flabbergasted.

As David and Helen get down to tend, Ash makes his way around the back end, to see...

a *woman*, sitting against the driver side, bloodied and half-conscious.

A peppered trail of bloody snow goes up the hill. She must have just rolled down it.

DAVID (CONT'D)  
 Can you hear me? Hey... Do you know where you are?

She moans painfully.

DAVID (CONT'D)  
 Where are you hurt?

Unclear.

DAVID (CONT'D)  
Get me the first-aid box.

Helen stands and comes to the back. Digging around the trunk. Finding the kit, she steps over and hands it to David.

HELEN  
I have to find Bree. Are you okay here--?

DAVID  
Go, find her.

With that, trying to keep it together, Helen moves off.

DAVID (CONT'D)  
Hey. Do you know where you are?

The woman somewhat shakes her head, no.

DAVID (CONT'D)  
Do you remember hitting us?

She just coughs.

DAVID (CONT'D)  
Let's get you inside. Let's stand you up. Can you do that?

David helps her try. Then noticing Ash...

DAVID (CONT'D)  
Turn that off and help me get her in the car --

4:14 PM

01/28/2002

INT. SUV -- DAY

Jake's car seat moved to the front, the 2-year-old crying in it helplessly. On his knees from the driver seat, Ash looks back at the woman who's huddling herself against the window.

David tries to unzip her coat, but she keeps brushing him off in her dazed state.

DAVID  
I'm just trying to help you. All right? I just wanna see where you're hurt.

REDHEAD

I think... I don't... Did we...  
crash?

DAVID

Yes, we had an accident. That's why  
we're here.

REDHEAD

...accident.

DAVID

Was there anyone with you?

REDHEAD

I'm... I'm sorry...

DAVID

Don't be sorry. Just let me see  
where you're hurt. All right?

The woman sort of relaxes, trailing off.

Then, faintly from the distance --

HELEN (DISTANT)

David!

Hearing her voice, David's attention whips toward it. He  
steps out, trying to gauge which direction she called from.

Helen *screams* again, almost *shrieking* --

HELEN (DISTANT) (CONT'D)

*David! I found her!...*

He looks back at the car, rushed, torn.

DAVID

Ash, watch her --

ASH

Dad...

DAVID

*Stay here* -- I'll be right back.

He shuts the door and moves away toward Helen's voice in the  
trees. His *form* swallowed by the whiteout fog, *footsteps*  
*crunching off...*

Jake still sniffing and whining in his car seat...

The woman in the back, barely there, sits holding her stomach in pain...

All quiet.

When...

The *noise of something exploding* resounds from up the hill --

Ash *turning* to look out the windshield --

as a *violently flaming station wagon* rolls down through the trees and into the ravine,

*smashing* like a fiery ramrod into a bundle of lumber maybe 20 yards away and setting it ablaze.

Jake's *terrified cries* pierce through the car.

Ash's unnerved breaths joining. He *turns* back to the woman...

who's now staring straight at Ash for the first time with her *blurry face*.

REDHEAD

Hi.

She wipes the blood off her brow with a coat sleeve. Sits up, and ties back her hair.

The injured woman isn't injured at all. She leans toward crying Jake in the front.

REDHEAD (CONT'D)

Shhh.... It's okay. Hm? It's okay.

Ash's nervous breaths flow from behind the camera. Like he's frozen. Looking *back and forth* from the woman to the big flames outside.

ASH

What happened...?

The woman casually eyes the interior. Must be nice getting to ride around in this. She smiles wide.

REDHEAD

It's gonna be okay.

Then unzips her coat. Showing a *pistol* tucked into her waistband... takes it out, displaying it for the camera.

REDHEAD (CONT'D)

Hm?

Then puts the barrel into her mouth.

ASH  
(scared)  
What are you doing?

No answer.

ASH (CONT'D)  
Don't.

REDHEAD  
One...

ASH  
Don't!

REDHEAD  
Two.  
(braces)  
Three --

But she doesn't. Just kidding.

REDHEAD (CONT'D)  
Hey.

She gets right up to the lens, finger to his mouth.

REDHEAD (CONT'D)  
Shh...

Then nods to the window,

Ash turning to see another woman's blurred face (the  
brunette) peering in, startling --

4:19 PM

01/28/2002

INT. SUV -- DAY

Dusk encroaching as the bonfire of flames outside *crackles*  
and grows brighter.

Ash *zooms* to the distance up the hill, where two *figures*  
quickly move away and disappear...

It's quiet in the SUV now, save Ash's terror-stricken  
whimpering. He turns the camera to Jake's car seat.

The two-year-old gone...

4:22 PM

01/28/2002

INT. SUV -- DAY

-- *Bree lies shivering half-naked* in the back seat, a bawling Helen quickly wrapping her with an emergency blanket. Bree doesn't seem hurt, just freezing. Stripped of her clothes.

HELEN

...Omigod, what the hell is going on!

Ash sobs.

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

Oh, God -- Jake...! What do they want!

DAVID (O.S.)

*Those f-- Bastards!*

HELEN (O.S.)

How could this happen?...

Helen wails as David tries to hold it together. Panicked and furious.

The fire outside seems to be growing, spreading across a long-fallen tree.

DAVID

We -- we have to get out of here.

HELEN (O.S.)

What about Jake?!

DAVID

We can't just stay here!

HELEN

(yelling out)

Jake!!

David chokes up, really not knowing what to do. Eyeing those sprawling flames outside.

BREE

(quivering)

I'm sorry... I'm sorry... I just, wanted a smoke...

She submits herself to tears.

Helen regards their precious daughter. Their typical teenager who should never have to go through something like this.

David eyes the fire that's *rumbling* and spreading unusually fast out there.

                          DAVID  
Guys, we have to go. We can't just stay here.

                          HELEN  
                          (sobbing)  
Oh God...!

                          DAVID  
Come on!

                          BREE  
I can't -- Dad, please it's cold.

                          DAVID  
Honey, we can't stay in the car.  
Okay?

And then...

Another sound carries softly through the trees, pausing everyone.

*Whistling.*

And it's not the wind. A familiar, happy little tune.

David steps out, and furiously surveys.

Pausing when he sees a *two figures* in the distance standing there.

                          DAVID (CONT'D)  
Hey!...

Then *another*, up by the road staring down at them.

                          DAVID (CONT'D)  
Help! Hey!...

Yet another *figure* across the way, perched utterly still.

David realizes quickly that they're not here to help.

The *whistling* continues. And he yells out --

                          DAVID (CONT'D)  
What do you want?!...

Helen steps out of the car and dreadfully takes stock of the *figures* in the haze surrounding them.

DAVID (CONT'D)  
Please, don't do this!

HELEN  
You can take everything we have,  
just please, give him back and let  
us leave!

But their calls are swallowed by the ether that's starting to turn gray, as the *whistling* just continues...

HELEN (CONT'D)  
Please, he's our baby!

DAVID  
Come on -- what do you want!

HELEN  
What do you want from us!

The whistling finally *stops*... And from their posts, the *figures* calmly disappear...

as the fire starts to wall off a whole side of the ravine...

DAVID  
*Dammit! You cowards! You god damn  
cowards!*

HELEN  
David! --

DAVID  
Show yourselves *right now!*

Helen realizes that the flames are spreading fast. Frantic and trembling.

HELEN  
What are we gonna do?

DAVID  
We have to go, Helen.

HELEN  
We don't know how many of them are!

David scans. The only real way out is to go up toward the road...

HELEN (CONT'D)

We can't leave Jake. We can't leave  
our baby.

David tears up. He's never felt this helpless in protecting his family. And the thought of Jake being kidnapped brings a swell of rage and regret.

But then --

DAVID

Hey! -- Hey! --

He just saw one of them behind a tree over there --

Ash turns and *zooms* out the windshield to see a *figure carrying what looks like a gas can* dashing off in the trees,

as David hotfoots it in that direction --

HELEN

David, wait!...

But he's already off on the chase.

HELEN (CONT'D)

David!

DAVID

(yelling back)  
Helen, stay there!

HELEN

Come back here!

Helen can only watch him go, tragically unnerved. She surveys the flaming valley restlessly, losing a battle to calm herself,

as the nearing fire finds itself catching and climbing up the trunk of a large pine.

Helen, struggling to take full breaths, comes back to the car and tries to ready her children to get the hell out of here.

ASH

Mom...?

HELEN

We're gonna go. We're gonna go.

ASH  
 (whimpering)  
 Mom, why did they take Jake? What  
 are they gonna do?

HELEN  
 Daddy's gonna get Jake and we're  
 gonna get out of here.

Bree bawls against the seat.

BREE  
 Why are they doing this to us?...!

HELEN  
 They're not gonna get away. Bree,  
 they're not gonna get away with  
 this.

Then, desperately needing him to come back, she calls out --

HELEN (CONT'D)  
 David!...!

...when *clunk*.

Ash looking to the passenger side. Something hit the door...

BREE  
 What was that...?

He looks out the windshield again, as black smoke begins to  
 choke up the view.

*Clunk* -- again.

Everyone scans out the windows. The flames *crackling* away.  
 Smoking wafting through the air.

HELEN  
 David!...?

Nothing.

*Clunk!* above -- camera *startling*. A pebble or something  
 bounced off the car.

Helen calls out louder.

HELEN (CONT'D)  
 Dav--?!

-- when a large stone *smashes* into the windshield -- camera *jerking around* as Ash startles and leaps into the back with mom and a *shrieking* Bree --

HELEN (O.S.) (CONT'D)  
Stay down, stay down!

She hunches up her kids.

BREE (O.S.)  
Omigod!

ASH  
(terrified)  
Mom, what's going on?

HELEN (O.S.)  
*Shh* --

*Frenzied breaths* as they huddle in the back seat, bracing for something next. It's getting very smoky outside.

Helen then calls out for him desperately.

HELEN (O.S.) (CONT'D)  
David!...

BREE (O.S.)  
Dad!...

ASH  
Mom, where'd did he go?

HELEN (O.S.)  
He's coming right back, honey. He's coming right back. And we're gonna get out of here.

*Whistling* outside...

That tune again. Carrying through the feathery, smoky silence. Just outside.

HELEN (O.S.) (CONT'D)  
*Shh*...

Ash peeks around frantically.

The whistling's somewhere nearby, but we can't see in the leaden air.

It finally *stops*.

*Footsteps crunching* out there.

BREE

Dad!?--

-- Helen quickly muffles her mouth -- *don't say a word* --

The *swish* of clothing somewhere. Snow *crunching* awfully close...

Followed by utter silence.

HELEN

(whispering panicked)

Deliver us, God... please...

Then a *thump* on the driver side.

Ash ever-so-slowly tries a peek out that window, but Helen keeps him down --

-- when a *face smacks the glass* --

David's.

*Shrieking, screaming* --

HELEN (CONT'D)

*Omigod!! David!!*

BREE

*Dad!!*

His face then *whipped away* out of view --

HELEN

*No!!*

Helen *rips open* her door and jets out screaming for her husband --

BREE

*Mom! Come back!*

ASH

*Mom!*

Bree and Ash embrace each other below the seat, fraught, terrified.

Helen's screams out there *stop abruptly*.

The near snow *crunching*.

Then, *dragging* sounds...

...and the *crackle* of burning trees starting to surround them as the flames spread even thicker.

BREE  
 (out of her mind)  
 Stop it!! Go away!!

Ash cries out.

ASH  
 Mom!... Dad!

BREE  
 Mom!!...!

But their bellows are unmet.

Bree hunches there quaking in shock. It's safe to say she's never experienced this kind of horror.

But through the dread, through the increasingly blinding air... a kind of hypnotic clarity comes to her. She whispers trembling.

BREE (CONT'D)  
 Ash, we have to run.

ASH  
 (barely)  
 What?

BREE  
 We have to.

ASH  
 No...

Bree desperately peeks out the windows for a direction to go. The fire outside encroaching them just a few yards away.

BREE  
 Put your hood on, keep your head down. We'll find our way out of here. Just run.

ASH  
 No, I don't want to...!

BREE  
 We're just gonna run, okay?

Distinct *crunching* just outside pauses her.

ASH  
Don't go --

BREE  
*Shh!* --

More *dragging* noises...

BREE (CONT'D)  
(still whispering)  
We have to go, Ash. Okay? We have  
to go.

ASH  
What about --

BREE  
We can't stay here!

ASH  
No!

His refusal puts her almost deeper in her trance.

BREE  
Then you're gonna be here by  
yourself. You wanna be here by  
yourself? You wanna be burned  
alive?

Ash is too scared to respond to that.

BREE (CONT'D)  
Then I'm getting out of here, I  
love you, okay?

ASH  
(crying)  
No... don't...

BREE  
I have to--

when something *tears through the trash-bagged window* -- Bree  
and Ash *jumping and bawling* in sheer terror --

An *unconscious Helen* just got tossed into the car.

It's enough to send Bree in utter dismay out the opposite  
door --

when a gunshot -- *pop!* --

tweaks her head and *shatters* the window --

as Ash *screams*... the camera *landing* on the back seat facing the door...

...to see *Bree crumbled against the door*, blood pouring from the hole in her neck.

ASH  
(barely)  
Bree...?...?!

Then it hits him that she's just been shot, and the tears pour.

ASH (CONT'D)  
Bree!...

In a state of witless alarm, Ash *picks up* the camera again, quickly climbing over to the front, and opens the passenger door...

EXT. SUV

...stepping out -- crying out for sis once more in some miserable hope she'll answer as the *sound of roaring flames* pierce the air out here.

ASH (CONT'D)  
Bree?...  
(maybe just once more)  
Bree....

But Bree's a long way from responding.

He looks to *mom's legs hanging* out the back passenger window. Heart in his mouth.

ASH (CONT'D)  
...Mom?

Then surveys the disturbingly silent grey surrounding him.

It's almost dark. But strangely light at the same time as a *choking blaze* has enveloped the immediate area.

With the smoke and embers joining forces with falling snow, even the foreground now is barely visible...

Ash trudges around the hood and checks the driver side. David is nowhere.

ASH (CONT'D)  
Dad!...

Looks up the hill toward the road.

ASH (CONT'D)  
Daaad...?!

Ash just starts walking, scanning the hellishly charcoaled woods before him. There's one section of path in his view that isn't engulfed in flames.

ASH (CONT'D)  
(screaming)  
Dad where are you!...

Then -- a *voice* in the distance, coming from up the hill. A man's. David's?

Hard to tell if it's crying out for help or calling him over.

ASH (CONT'D)  
...Dad!...

Either way, Ash plods toward the voice, coughing a little from the smoke...

...moving away from the car for the first time... as we hear Ash's heavy *breaths* and awkward, *crunching* steps, mingling with the *roar and crackle* of burning timber.

ASH (CONT'D)  
Dad!?

Not a sound otherwise.

But then --

DISTANT VOICE (O.S.)  
Ash...!

ASH  
Dad! I'm over here!

Ash makes his way up the hill through a feathery, cindery torrent, whimpering.

A *murky figure* moves behind a far tree.

ASH (CONT'D)  
Dad?!

Ash uses the camera to *zoom* over in that direction. Searching there...

But nothing. Just the very still and barely visible specters of trees in the *cherry* chalk.

But snow *crunches* somewhere.

ASH (CONT'D)  
Dad?!... I'm here!

The burning wilderness provides no response.

Ash's breaths get erratic. Terrified of being alone out here in the encroaching fiery night -- of the murky nightmare that's been forced upon him.

ASH (CONT'D)  
Dad! Where are you!...

Ash spots something at his feet.

A *trail* from someone being dragged, specked with blood every part of the way, into the far obscuring greyness that is the forest.

The track is fresh, though it's all quickly being covered with fresh powder.

Ash looks back toward the car, not visible right now.

Snow *crunching* again somewhere --

Ash whips around trying to follow the sound...

But it's just charcoal. Frustrating silence everywhere.

ASH (CONT'D)  
(at the top of his lungs)  
Daaadd!...

The calls echo into the asphyxiating distances but just get swallowed.

Ash looks at the trail again that goes yonder. Then trudges following it...

Just the sounds of his tense and tiring *breaths* behind the camera, his shoes *crunching* in the thick snow...

and the *swish* of his clothes as he makes way following the bloody trail...

He stops a moment and looks back again.

Snow *crunching* behind him somewhere -- he turns.

Nothing.

ASH (CONT'D)  
I wanna go home!...

*Crunches* again -- this time closer than before.

Ash surveys standing there.

ASH (CONT'D)  
(tears)  
Help! Please? I wanna go home!...

*Shifting* behind him -- he whips around.

*Footsteps*. Somewhere. But it's impossible to see any sort of distance.

Ash is on the verge of insanity himself now. Just needing to see something or someone familiar.

He continues along the trail deeper into the woods as snow and ashes pelt the lens.

He looks back again. The car's really out of sight now. He's surrounded in a grey-out, the orange glow of flames abound.

Looking ahead again, he spots something, uses the camera again to *zoom* into the distance.

There's something in the snow up there. A *hump* that isn't a rock or a tree.

Ash trudges a little faster, approaching it. Stopping when what it is becomes clear...

*David*.

ASH (CONT'D)  
...Dad...?

Lying there, face dusted and wet from snow and blood. Unable to speak, but reaching out for his son.

Ash doesn't go any farther, keeping his distance from the frightening sight. *Bawling* himself dry.

The image doesn't really compute, even though it's clear that's David. It's just impossible for the eleven-year-old Ash to comprehend what's going on.

...when a *woman's cries* echo through the fiery woods from back by the car. It sounded like Helen.

Ash searches the burning trees behind him, really breathing heavy.

ASH (CONT'D)  
Mommmmm!...

Looks at helpless dad one more time.

Then turns around, leaving him there, and hurriedly follows his own tracks back toward the voice...

...hustling in horrible fright through the deepening snow and ashy air.

Night quickly falling now.

ASH (CONT'D)

Mommm!...

Utter torment.

Surrounded in flaming pines, the *shape* of the SUV begins to fade into view, *flickering flames* dancing off the metal...

A smoky inferno surrounding the site.

*Dragging* noises behind Ash. He turns around...

to see *five spectres* standing there, the flames almost silhouetting them.

The other family.

Their strange child in the distance curiously staring...

One man standing in the open, holding Helen's body with a gas can at his feet. The other man, our Guy, nearest to us dragging a barely conscious David...

Over by a tree not yet on fire, one of the women has Bree stood up like a scarecrow...

Her counterpart emerging from afar, cradling and shaking a rather calm *Jacob* as if the two-year-old were her own.

The man holding David dumps his body there... and crosses over to a frozen Ash holding his camera...

Looks down at us with creepily *blurred face*, squarely into the lens.

GUY

What's up, doc?

Ash can't even sob, a quiet terror overtaking all his senses.

The man casually *palms the camera*, taking it from Ash...

and *turns* back to see their nine-year-old boy approaching sort of sheepishly.

GUY (BEHIND CAMERA) (CONT'D)  
First time's hardest.

The boy stares at Ash nervously.

GUY (CONT'D)  
But it's gravy from there, buddy.  
Right? All gravy. This is it.

He somewhat nods.

Guy takes a *carbon tactical knife* out from his pocket. Opens it. And offers the handle to the boy,

who palms it... regarding Ash now with hauntingly confident curiosity.

The camera *zooms* into the boy's almost ghostly, *blurry* face. Then *turns* again to Ashton.

Trembling. Paralyzed. Submitted against his will to this veritable evil.

Yesterday was Ash's birthday. Today his worst day.

And with that...

the camera *stops recording*.

BLACK.

*This video file was discovered playing on a communal computer at the Roseville California Public Library on July 12, 2011.*

*The original editor, who has concealed the killers' identities, remains unknown.*

*On November 7, 2011, a second video was discovered on a general-use computer at the Mishawaka Indiana Penn Harris County Library.*

*The original editor of this footage remains unknown.*

INT. LAKE CABIN - FAMILY ROOM -- NIGHT

Two young boys, around five years old, look up at us -- at chuckling Dad behind the lens.

DAD (BEHIND CAMERA)  
One more time, guys.

But the kids are being coy.

MOM (O.S.)  
One more for the camera.

DAD  
Pretty please?

The boys don't really wanna.

DAD (CONT'D)  
C'mon.

MOM (O.S.)  
Anything you want from Eaton's when we get home.

DAD  
Well, let's not go nuts--

A distinct *rustling* noise from outside.

Dad turns to look at the back porch... scanning the inky back lawn and shore far beyond it.

Now that the camera's looking away, our boys giggle and dance offscreen, toying with mom and dad.

MOM (O.S.)  
You're missing it!

DAD  
Hold on...

Dad *zooms* toward the near-black distance into the back yard, and spots the *hammock* out there between two trees *shifting* to and fro.

With the closer look, we can see a *young boy* lying on it, comfortably curled up away from us.

DAD (CONT'D)  
(annoyed)  
What is this...

MOM (O.S.)  
What?

Beat.

MOM (O.S.) (CONT'D)  
Alan.

As the boys continue to horse around, Dad sets the camera *aside facing the back yard*,

unlocks and slides open the glass door, flips on the deck lights.

MOM (O.S.) (CONT'D)  
Where are you going?

DAD  
Just a second.

Moving off. He crosses the grass toward the darkness out there... over to the *hammock* about twenty yards out, carefully approaching it...

SON (O.S.)  
Where did daddy go?

MOM (O.S.)  
He's coming right back.

Dad pointedly scans the night outside, like he heard something, and moves into the farther distance, disappearing in the black.

Beat.

The camera gets *picked up* off the counter...

*zoomed* into the back yard toward David. But it's just shadows and crickets out there.

We turn into the den, where Mom sits with her back to us on the sofa, watching her two playful sons.

Then out the window again... When the camera gets turned back to the family room...

we can see in the opposite doorway, our *blurry-faced* Guy standing there, just out of view from mom.

The boys look past their mother, up at us, very curiously.

SON

Mom...?

She turns around to see -- double-take -- that it's not her husband, smile wiped from her face, bursting toward her sons to protect them.

MOM

Omigod -- Alan!

Guy comes into the room, a son looking back at him frightened --

GUY

(*cheerfully, voice*  
*altered*)

Hey.

--startling Mom, her nerves frayed --

GUY (CONT'D)

What's up, doc?

MOM

*What do you want! -- Alan!!*

DAD (DISTANCE OUTSIDE)

*Sandra?! Sa--*

But Dad's voice gets forcefully *muffled* out there --

And Mom, holding her two frightened boys, is left surrounded and *screaming* for her life.

BLACK.