

# Like Dandelion Dust

Written by

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We hear knocking at a door. Insistent.

EXT. PORTER HOUSE. OHIO. DAY.

An aging frame house off Wayne Avenue, a struggling neighborhood in a struggling town. A police cruiser is parked outside. Two local cops are at the front door.

COP  
Is anybody there?

One of the cops begins pounding on the door.

COP (CONT'D)  
Police. Open up!

We hear a shuffling inside, then Rip Porter, early thirties, appears. Bengals tee-shirt, cargo pants, no shoes. Dishevelled, cigarette, half-drunk.

COP 2  
Did somebody call 911?

RIP  
It's the old lady. She gets upset, she calls the cops. It's nothin'--

They push past Rip into the house.

INT. PORTER HOUSE. OHIO. DAY.

The place is a mess. Curtains drawn, TV on 'Wheel of Fortune.' Rip follows the cops through.

RIP  
She went out the back to her Mom's, I expect.

COP 2  
What's your name.

RIP  
Porter. Rip Porter.

COP 2  
Mrs. Porter? It's the police.

A muffled voice from the basement. The cops glance at each other. One stays with Rip, the other goes to the basement door.

INT. PORTER HOUSE. BASEMENT. DAY.

Dark. The cop moves carefully down the stairs, flips on his light. In a corner, clutching a shovel, is Wendy Porter, thirty, terrified, face bloody, tear-streaked, arm broken.

EXT. PORTER HOUSE. DUSK.

An ambulance outside now. Paramedics attend to Wendy. The cops are taking Rip out in handcuffs.

RIP  
You oughta just dealt with it,  
Wendy. That's what family does.

We hold on Wendy, remorseful, as they load Rip into the back of the cruiser.

EXT. CAMPBELL BOAT. DAY.

Jack Campbell, late forties, steers. His son, Joey, five, sits on his lap, his hands on the tiller, between his Dad's.

JACK  
Watch the spinnaker, keep it in the breeze. If you steer too hard, she begins to luff.

JOEY  
What's luff, Dad?

JACK  
When the wind goes out of the sail. So hold her before the wind. You got it?

JOEY  
I think so.

JACK  
(letting go)  
Good, cause you're drivin', J-J.

Molly's head appears in the companionway. She is fortyish, tinged green.

JOEY  
Mom, look at me! I'm driving!

Molly attempts a smile.

MOLLY  
You're doing great, Joey. Jack, can we go in soon?

JACK  
We just got out here.

MOLLY  
You said it wouldn't be rough.

JACK  
We haven't passed the breakwater--

MOLLY  
Jack...I really need to go in.

JOEY  
But Mom, I want to go out on the  
ocean.

MOLLY  
I'm gonna be sick.

Molly disappears below.

JOEY  
Is Mom okay?

JACK  
She'll be fine, kiddo.

JOEY  
(disappointed)  
Do we have to go in now?

Jack glances in Molly's direction and shrugs.

JACK  
Don't ask me. You're the captain.

Joey grins and grips the wheel with glee.

INT. CAMPBELL CAR. DAY.

Jack drives the big SUV, Molly huddles in Jack's windbreaker.  
Joey is asleep in the booster in back.

JACK  
The ocean was half the reason we  
settled here.

MOLLY  
The beach. The beach doesn't move.

JACK  
Well, Joey loves sailing. He's a  
natural.

MOLLY  
 Clearly not my DNA.  
 (off his look)  
 Honestly, Jack, I thought the  
 Dramamine would work.

JACK  
 Maybe you should see Doctor Reilly.

MOLLY  
 Why don't you take Beth and her  
 kids next week?

JACK  
 There's a good idea.

MOLLY  
 That was the point of them moving  
 here - to spend more time together.  
 Anyway, it's something you and Bill  
 both enjoy.

JACK  
 You think listening to Bill talk  
 about air conditioning is  
 enjoyable?

MOLLY  
 Jack, please.

JACK  
 Fine, I'll invite them next Sunday.

MOLLY  
 You know they don't do Sundays.

JACK  
 They will if they want to sail.

Molly glances at him.

MOLLY  
 I'll talk to Reilly. Maybe there's  
 some miracle drug. It's a beautiful  
 boat. I'm proud of it too.

Jack smiles at her, pats her hand.

EXT. OHIO STATE PENITENTIARY. DAY

Windowless sandstone walls, brick facade, hunchbacked chain  
 link. Wendy Porter waits by a Chevy pickup at the end of the  
 cement pathway leading from the front gate.

The door opens, a guard and a priest step out, and then Rip  
 comes squinting into the sunlight.

Wendy watches as Rip shakes the guard's hand, then he turns to the priest, hugs him, and walks to the gate. It buzzes open, and Rip stands, staring at her. A moment between them - alien, uncertain. Then Rip breaks into a grin, hurries to her. She does not know what to expect, how to react. He throws his arms around her, hugs her tight. Then:

RIP  
You're the most beautiful thing  
I've ever seen.

EXT. CAMPBELL HOUSE. BACK YARD. DAY.

A handsome Mediterranean in Lakewood, near the water. The Campbells spend the afternoon by the pool with Molly's sister Beth, her husband Bill, and their three kids: Cammie, eight, and six-year-old twin boys Blain and Jonah.

A SERIES OF SHOTS:

The adults make small talk, lounging in patio chairs.

Joey splashes in the pool with his cousins.

Jack teaches Joey to throw a baseball in the yard. Gus, the golden retriever, keeps watch.

EXT. CAMPBELL HOUSE. BACK YARD. SUNSET.

Molly and Beth sit by the pool while Jack and Bill tend to the barbecue. Joey and kids play in the carefully-trimmed St. Augustine.

Jack turns a few burgers, then loads hot dogs onto a plate.

BILL  
I never got to do much sailing in  
Albany. You just kinda *walked* on  
the Hudson.

JACK  
That's all right, Joey'll teach  
you. Won't you, pal?

JOEY  
(running by)  
Sure, Dad. Teach what?

The housekeeper, Josefina, brings iced tea from the house. Beth and Molly watch their husbands across the yard, amused.

MOLLY  
Look at our husbands, making  
conversation.

BETH  
 Quite an effort.  
 (calling out)  
 Cammie, not by the pool!

MOLLY  
 I know what'll get their attention.  
 Remember this?  
 (reciting a cheer)  
 S.E.A.L.S. Kingston swim team is  
 the best...

Beth jumps right in.

BETH AND MOLLY  
 ...We work together day and night,  
 let's hear it for the green and  
 white!

They bust up laughing. Jack and Bill bring plates of burgers  
 and hotdogs.

JACK  
 Dinner for the cheerleader squad.

MOLLY  
 Bill, your wife was once a wild  
 young athlete.

BETH  
 Please.

MOLLY  
 Do I need to tell the marshmallow  
 story?

Beth laughs.

BILL  
 There's a marshmallow story?

INT. PORTER CHEVY PICKUP. DAY.

Wendy drives. Rip lays his head against the seat, breathes  
 in the air.

RIP  
 Five years. Freedom.

Wendy glances at him sidelong.

WENDY  
 I feel bad I didn't come see you  
 more often, Rip. But it was real  
 hard, y'know, on my own--

RIP  
 Hey, you did the best you could.  
 Besides, how could I blame you?  
 After what I done.

WENDY  
 (peers at him)  
 You mean that?

RIP  
 I do.  
 (off her surprised look)  
 They had a real good program in  
 there, anger awareness. Run by  
 Father Logan. A regular guy - he  
 did time himself once.

WENDY  
 No kidding?

RIP  
 He understands how a man can be,  
 y'know, angry and frustrated,  
 taking it out on those he loves. I  
 had no right.

Wendy smiles. Rip slaps the dash. Wendy jumps slightly.

RIP (CONT'D)  
 You kept the old Silverado!

WENDY  
 I bought new tires, just for you.

RIP  
 You could afford new tires?

WENDY  
 Well, I'm doing pretty good at the  
 Busy Bee. I'm head cashier now--

RIP  
 Seriously? Wendy Porter, I'm proud  
 of you.

WENDY  
 Really?

RIP  
 Head cashier? I am indeed. See,  
 that's a sign - that things are  
 gonna change. Father Logan said  
 there'd be signs, and I just have  
 to look for them.  
 (reaches into his pocket)  
 This is his number. Here, you keep  
 it for me, guard it.

(MORE)

RIP (CONT'D)

If I ever, ever get angry like that again, give it to me and I'll call him. 'Cause I don't ever want to hurt you again.

WENDY

Rip...

RIP

(turns to her)

Babe, I was so scared you wouldn't be there. That I'd come out of that place and be alone. But now... we can have a whole new life.

Wendy turns back to the road, tears in her eyes.

EXT. CAMPBELL HOUSE. BACK YARD. DUSK

Dinner done, the kids are playing. Jack opens a beer.

JACK

(to Bill)

How's business?

BILL

Hot weather's coming, it'll pick up.

JACK

My offer still stands.

BILL

Nah, thanks, we'll manage.

MOLLY

Why don't you let Jack help? It'd be an investment for us.

Bill glances at Beth and smiles.

BILL

I appreciate that. But we'll get there. Little elbow grease, little help from the man upstairs.

Beth sits in the lounge by Molly.

BETH

Speaking of which, have you thought about my offer?

JACK

What's this?

MOLLY  
 (distant)  
 Beth wants to start taking Joey to church with them.

JACK  
 (amused)  
 Really?

BETH  
 Don't you think it's important that Joey is raised with good values?

BILL  
 Beth...

BETH  
 That he have the same choices you had?

MOLLY  
 Joey is being raised with good values.

Joey runs up, winded.

BILL  
 There's the big man himself. You all ready for Tee-Ball?

JOEY  
 (lighting up)  
 Dad's coaching.

Bill looks at Jack, amused.

JACK  
 I used to play. It'll come back to me.

Jack flexes slightly. Molly and Bill laugh.

BETH  
 Just want you to know you're welcome at church any time.

MOLLY  
 We go sailing on Sundays.

Jack looks up, surprised.

JOEY  
 Can I go to church?

Before Molly can answer:

BETH  
 Would you like to, Joey? It's fine  
 with us.

MOLLY  
 We'll see, honey.

Molly gets up abruptly.

MOLLY (CONT'D)  
 I need some water.

She walks briskly inside. Bill glances at Beth, not pleased.

INT. PORTER HOUSE. EVENING.

Wendy sits up in bed, watching Rip splash water on his face  
 in the bathroom sink.

RIP  
 I have to go to work Tuesday.

WENDY  
 You got a job?

RIP  
 Parole set it up. Landscapin', sort  
 of. They're gonna place me over  
 with County Parks Department.

Rip sits on the bed.

WENDY  
 That's wonderful, Babe.  
 (she hugs him)  
 It's gonna be all right now, isn't  
 it?

RIP  
 Bettern all right. I don't drink  
 anymore, I don't even smoke. I'm  
 clean, Wen, all the way through.  
 And I'm stayin that way. For you.

WENDY  
 I always told my mother that - that  
 you were good inside.

RIP  
 Let's not talk about your mother  
 now, okay?  
 (kisses her)  
 Let's talk about us.

Rip goes to the dresser, changes into a clean T-shirt. We see that his body is chiselled from years of prison food and workouts. Wendy can't help but admire him.

RIP (CONT'D)

We're gonna have two salaries comin' in, so we can fix this place up, maybe get you a car - I'll need the truck - and we can finally do that other thing.

Wendy sobers suddenly, doesn't say anything.

RIP (CONT'D)

What do you say, Wen? After I get settled again, and we got money saved, let's do it. Let's start us a family.

WENDY

Really?

He sits beside her. She runs her hand over him.

RIP

A child will be the new life I talked about. It would cement us, you understand what I'm sayin'? He'd be the new me.

WENDY

You want a boy?

RIP

Course I want a boy. Every man wants a son. Like that musical you like--

WENDY

"Carousel."

RIP

(sings)  
"My boy Buck, he's as big and strong as a tree..."

WENDY

(laughing)  
Its Bill. My boy Bill.

He takes her face.

RIP

I'd like that more than anything.  
(jumps up)  
You know what? I'm gonna go to the kitchen and get a soda.

(MORE)

RIP (CONT'D)  
 And I don't have to ask no guard, I  
 just get up and go. Ain't that  
 somethin'?!

INT. CAMPBELL HOUSE. KITCHEN. EVENING.

Molly, still fuming, puts away food. Jack enters, watching her for a moment.

JACK  
 You do realize we have a  
 housekeeper.

MOLLY  
 I'm not going to stand for it,  
 Jack.

JACK  
 What's the big deal? Let him go.

MOLLY  
 Him going or not going is not the  
 point. He's our son. And he's  
 probably the only child we'll ever  
 have!

JACK  
 Okay, I'm on your side, remember?  
 (moving closer)  
 Look, she's just jealous. You got  
 the looks, the talent...you got me.  
 It's perfectly understandable.

MOLLY  
 You think this is amusing? I don't  
 think its amusing.

JACK  
 No, what's amusing is picturing you  
 in a cheerleader outfit.

Molly laughs in spite of herself.

BETH (O.C.)  
 Hey.

Beth stands in the doorway. Molly's face drops.

JACK  
 I've got a central air question for  
 Bill. He still out back?

BETH  
 (nodding)  
 With the kids.

Molly returns to tending the kitchen. Beth helps. Finally:

MOLLY  
Do you think I'm a bad mother?

BETH  
What?

MOLLY  
(facing her)  
Do you think I'm a bad mother?

BETH  
Molly--

MOLLY  
You know how glad I am that you're here. It's been hard for us... the whole thing with Joey. But now you and I both have families, and we're here together, like we always said we'd be.

BETH  
It's a miracle.

MOLLY  
You just can't help yourself, can you?

BETH  
It's important to me. It *used* to be important to you.

MOLLY  
Look, I'm glad you found God. And I'm glad you found Bill. But I don't tell you how to raise your kids. Don't tell me how to raise mine.

Beth tries to decide if she is offended or not.

MOLLY (CONT'D)  
I mean it. If you ever pull something like that again, you will not be welcome in this house.

BETH  
(nodding)  
All right. Relax, Mol. It won't happen again.

MOLLY  
Good. Then we're done fighting.  
(hugs her)  
Now want to help me make cookies?

BETH  
Depends. Can I be controlling and  
overbearing?

Molly smiles.

INT. CAMPBELL HOUSE. JOEY'S BEDROOM. NIGHT.

Molly quietly opens the door. A Thomas the Tank Engine night  
light grins on the bureau. At first glance, the room is  
empty.

MOLLY  
Joey?

The Garfield sheets on the bed giggle suspiciously.

MOLLY (CONT'D)  
Now, where could Joey have gone?  
(walks to bed)  
I'll just have to sit down here and  
think about it.

She sits on Joey, tickling him through the sheets.

JOEY  
(laughing)  
Mom, its me! Stop!

She relents. Joey pops his head out.

MOLLY  
(stroking his hair)  
There's my angel. Did you have a  
good day, baby?

JOEY  
I drove the sailboat.

MOLLY  
Yeah, you did.

Molly picks up a coloring book, half filled with drawings.

MOLLY (CONT'D)  
Is this your story?

JOEY  
(yawning)  
Yup. Will you help me with the  
words?

MOLLY  
Sure. What's it about?

JOEY

A boy who goes sailing on the ocean  
and makes friends with a whale. He  
likes it so much he stays out there  
to live.

MOLLY

I'll bet his mother misses him very  
much.

JOEY

She comes, too.

MOLLY

(pokes his nose)  
Well, this mommy gets seasick.

JOEY

(sleepy)  
He'd have to come back then. He'd  
miss you too much.

MOLLY

(grabbing a stuffed bear)  
Here's Mr. Growls. Goodnight,  
sweetheart.

JOEY

G'night, Mommy.

INT. PORTER HOUSE. PARLOR

Rip zips open a diet Dr. Pepper, searches for a glass.

WENDY

Top shelf, last cabinet.

Wendy is in the doorway. Rip smiles.

RIP

Gotta learn my way around again. I  
like the way you keep the place.

WENDY

Rip...

RIP

Yeah?

WENDY

Rip...there's something I need to  
talk to you about.

Rip tightens up.

RIP  
 You didn't cheat on me, did you,  
 Wen?

WENDY  
 No. No, nothin' like that. Can we  
 sit down?

They sit at the table. Wendy hesitates. Rip smiles, reaches for her hand.

RIP  
 Whatever it is, babe, it's just  
 fine.

WENDY  
 After you went away, Rip, it was so  
 hard for me. It was just so hard.

Wendy is terrified trying to get the words out. She begins to cry.

RIP  
 Come on now. It's all right.

WENDY  
 I couldn't even find a job right  
 away. And then... then I found out  
 I was pregnant.

RIP  
 (pulling away)  
 What?

WENDY  
 And I didn't want to have an  
 abortion. 'Cause it was like a  
 part of you, Rip.

RIP  
 My god...

WENDY  
 But I just couldn't do it by  
 myself, I couldn't. And my mother  
 said she wasn't going to help with  
 him...

Rip just stares silently at her, the heat rising to his face.

WENDY (CONT'D)  
 It was too much for me. I was  
 alone, I was afraid. So I...  
 (sobbing)  
 ...my mother, she signed for you...

Wendy tries to pull herself together. Rip stares at her for a long moment.

WENDY (CONT'D)  
Rip, please say something. Are you mad?

Rip takes a long breath. Finally:

RIP  
You said him. It's a boy?

WENDY  
(nodding)  
I gave him up. I gave up our boy.  
I'm so sorry...

Rip looks directly into Wendy's eyes. Steady. Calm.

RIP  
It's a sign. Don't you see, babe,  
it's a sign. You sending me away  
was the best thing you coulda done.  
I couldn't have been a father, not  
then. Not the man I was then.

WENDY  
Rip...

RIP  
We're gonna get him back.

WENDY  
(shaking her head)  
We can't...we gave him up for  
adoption.

RIP  
I didn't give up nothin'.  
(smiling)  
Don't worry. I'm gonna make this  
right. I'm gonna get our son back.

EXT./INT. CAMPBELL HOUSE. DAY.

Molly holds the door from the garage for Joey. He struggles with a plastic supermarket bag. She carries half a dozen.

MOLLY  
Careful, you have the eggs.

JOEY  
Why the eggs?

MOLLY  
It was the lightest one.

JOEY  
I'm not a baby, Mom, I can carry  
heavy stuff.

She maneuvers herself inside the kitchen.

MOLLY  
Just put it on the counter.

JOEY  
I gotta pee!

MOLLY  
Put the seat down! Put it up  
first, then put it down!

She arranges the bags, notices the light blinking on the  
phone machine. She presses it as she puts away the groceries.

WOMAN'S VOICE  
I'm calling for Mr. And Mrs.  
Campbell. This is Allyson Bower of  
the Ohio Department of Child  
Services. It's about your son,  
Joey...

Molly glances toward the bathroom, quickly picks up the  
receiver, listens. We watch her face closing down.

INT. PACE PHARMACEUTICALS. DAY. MOMENTS LATER.

Jack is in a meeting with his sales staff. He talks tightly  
into the phone.

JACK  
It's probably nothing serious--

MOLLY (V.O.)  
Why would they call if its nothing  
serious?

INT. CAMPBELL HOUSE. KITCHEN. DAY. CROSSCUT.

Molly talks in an undertone. Joey watches a "Scooby Doo" DVD  
in the living room.

JACK (V.O.)  
I'm in meetings all afternoon. Why  
don't you call her?

MOLLY  
No, I can't deal with this, Jack...

JOEY  
Mom, I've seen this one.

MOLLY

Then put on the other one. I'm talking to Daddy!

JACK

Look, just calm down. We'll talk about this tonight.

EXT./INT. COURTHOUSE. OHIO. DAY.

In chambers, more like an office than a courtroom. Judge Evans, about seventy, slouches behind his desk, a thick file open before him. Allyson Bower sits opposite, and to one side, Nathan Berman, a bus-poster attorney.

EVANS

You've had the signature examined?

ALLYSON

The analysis confirms that it is not Mr. Porter's handwriting. Nor the wife's.

BERMAN

The statute is clear, judge: The forgery renders the adoption invalid. It's as if it never happened.

ALLYSON

Not to the child, it isn't.

EVANS

(consults the file)

The adoptive father is CFO of a pharmaceutical company, the mother... is an actress, what?

ALLYSON

She went to Yale Drama School, but now she does charity shows for non-profits.

EVANS

And your client, counsel, is on parole. Two convictions, felonious assault.

BERMAN

He's had three years of anger management training, your honor. Here's an affidavit from Father Andrew Logan who ran the program, certifying he's reformed. And Mrs. Porter has reconciled with him.

Judge Evans puts down the file.

EVANS

All right, bring them in.

As Berman leaves, Allyson turns to the judge.

ALLYSON

I'd like to point out that the child is in private school and seems very well-adjusted, whereas these people have no parental experience. And Mr. Porter faces his third strike if he offends again.

EVANS

That doesn't change the forgery, Mrs. Bower.

Rip and Wendy come in with Berman. He wears a new blazer and slacks, and she, a floral WalMart dress. They smile, sit. The judge holds up the adoption papers.

EVANS (CONT'D)

Mrs. Porter, who signed these papers?

WENDY

(hesitates)

I don't know, your honor.

EVANS

How can you not know? You filed them.

RIP

I can explain--

EVANS

I wasn't speaking to you.

Rip forces another smile. Wendy shifts in her chair.

WENDY

After Rip was put away, I decided to adopt out the baby. I took the papers to the prison and, since Rip and I weren't... on speaking terms, I asked the guard to take them to him. Someone inside must have signed Rip's name.

EVANS

Didn't you realize it wasn't your husband's handwriting?

WENDY

I didn't actually look at the papers. I just wanted it over with.

EVANS

You're saying that someone on the prison staff forged your husband's signature?

RIP

If I may, your honor... It's not that uncommon. I was in solitary my first few months... I had an anger problem. So, rather than go through the hassle, one of the guards or even a trusty, will often sign legal papers for an inmate.

EVANS

Well, if I find out who did sign, he's going to the same prison you did.

(puts the papers aside)

So you never even knew about the pregnancy or the adoption?

RIP

Not till a coupla weeks ago, sir.

EVANS

And you think you're ready to have a son?

Allyson watches as Rip speaks. Wendy's gaze is on the floor.

RIP

Yes, your honor. I used to be real angry, but in prison I got a handle on that - insight, y'know? I'm not saying that I'm cured - healing is a lifelong process - but I can promise you, I will never raise my hand against that boy --

(stops)

Can I know what they named him?

A moment. Allyson makes up her mind.

ALLYSON

James Joseph. They call him Joey.

EVANS

James... Jimmy Porter.

Rip is suddenly overcome with emotion. Wendy reaches for him.

WENDY

Rip--?

RIP

That was my father's name.  
 (pulls himself together)  
 Judge, I promise I will never raise  
 a hand against little Jimmy.

EVANS

You do, and you're looking at  
 twenty-five to life.

RIP

I know it. But I swear to you, I  
 will die before I allow harm to  
 come to my wife and child.

EXT. COURTHOUSE. DAY.

Rip and Wendy are walking to the truck.

RIP

You were perfect.

WENDY

(conflicted)  
 Was I? I was scared, lying to a  
 judge--

RIP

I think we oughta go out and  
 celebrate, babe. Red Lobster,  
 whadaya say?

WENDY

Really?

RIP

It's a special occasion. C'mon,  
 you're gonna be a Mom!

INT. CAMPBELL HOUSE. BEDROOM. DUSK.

Molly paces by the bed. Jack is on the phone.

MOLLY

She's been in court all day? What's  
 going on?

JACK

(into phone)  
 Yes, Allyson Bower? This is Jack  
 Campbell returning your call.  
 (listening)  
 (MORE)

JACK (CONT'D)  
 What kind of situation?  
 (frowning)  
 I don't understand.

Molly is fixated on Jack's every word.

JACK (CONT'D)  
 Well, wait a minute, how is that  
 our problem? We took care of this  
 years ago, Mrs. Bower.

MOLLY  
 What is she saying, Jack?

JACK  
 That's impossible. There must be--  
 You can't do that, that's-- We have  
 paperwork!

Jack paces back and forth, growing more and more angry. Molly watches, terrified.

JACK (CONT'D)  
 How is that legal? We signed the  
 papers! Would you stop saying  
 that?! I have a file with their  
 signatures that you gave us!

MOLLY  
 Jack?

JACK  
 Molly, please!  
 (into phone)  
 Mrs. Bower, listen-- No, you listen  
 to me! We're done! Anything else  
 you have to say, you can say to my  
 lawyer.

He slams the phone down, furious. Molly sits on the bed in shock. When she finds her voice, it's a whisper.

MOLLY  
 What's happening?

As Jack looks at her, cut to:

INT. CAMPBELL KITCHEN. NIGHT. LATER.

Jack and Molly sit at the kitchen table, exhausted. Joey's adoption file is spread out, surrounded by coffee mugs and Kleenex. Molly clutches a fax.

MOLLY  
Three visits and then they get  
custody?! How can they do this?

JACK  
We'll talk to Tom Alonzo, file for  
a stay--

MOLLY  
(holding up the fax)  
We have no right of appeal. The  
adoption is invalidated. He was  
never ours!

JACK  
Of course he's ours.

MOLLY  
(in shock)  
This doesn't make any sense. I  
don't -- I can't handle this.

JACK  
So what are you gonna do, Molly?

She looks up at him.

MOLLY  
What does that mean?

JACK  
(cold)  
Doesn't matter. I'll handle it.

MOLLY  
They're taking our son, Jack! What  
do you want me to say?

The door opens: Joey. Molly hides her face.

JOEY  
Are you fighting?

JACK  
No, J-J. We're talking.

JOEY  
About me?

JACK  
Joey, it's not anything you did.  
C'mon, let's go back to bed.

Joey heads into the other room. As Jack starts out:

JACK (CONT'D)  
I'm going to the lawyer, first  
thing tomorrow. I'll deal with  
this.

EXT./INT. PORTER HOUSE. DAY.

Allyson follows Rip and Wendy through. The place is spotless.

RIP  
He's got his own room, all ready  
for him.

ALLYSON  
Have you thought about school?

WENDY  
The public school's right down the  
street. It got an API rating of  
720.

ALLYSON  
You're both working full-time?

RIP  
Yes, ma'am. I'm in a management  
position with the county--

WENDY  
And I shifted my hours at the store  
so I can pick Jimmy up after  
school.

ALLYSON  
What about his diet?

She follows them into the kitchen, looks in the fridge.

WENDY  
I have all his meals planned, and I  
even made a schedule. I know how  
important structure is to a young  
child.

Allyson tries the pantry door. It won't open.

RIP  
Child-proof locks. We *have* done  
our homework, Mrs. Bower.

She turns to them, solemn-faced.

ALLYSON  
There's more to raising a child  
than toys and locks.

(MORE)

ALLYSON (CONT'D)

This boy is being ripped away from the only home he has ever known. What do you think that's going to do to him? Have you thought about that?

Rip looks at her tight-lipped. Before he can say anything:

WENDY

We have thought about it, Mrs. Bower. Yes, I wanted to adopt him out, but that was a mistake. And DCS made a mistake in not checking the signatures. So Rip and I say: Let's try to make all these mistakes right for our boy. Because he is our boy.

As Rip looks at her, admiration in his eyes, cut to:

INT. ALONZO'S OFFICE. DAY.

A top-tier law firm in Miami Beach. High-rise, ocean view. Tom Alonzo sits at an antique Hacienda-style desk, papers spread before him. Jack sits opposite.

ALONZO

We can definitely go after Ohio DCS for negligence, file a lawsuit--

JACK

I don't want money, I want my son. You've got to stop this, Tom. The woman is coming next week.

ALONZO

(hesitates, then)

We can't stop it, Jack. Ohio case law is pretty firm: eight forged adoptions, all invalidated. And in every case, the child was returned to the biological parents. The judge has no choice.

JACK

This makes no sense.

ALONZO

Now, you can start the whole process over, try to get him back--

JACK

And what happens while he's there? With a guy who's done time for beating up his wife. How do I protect him?

ALONZO  
Ohio DCS will supervise--

JACK  
You mean the same people who  
screwed this up in the first place?  
Now, look, Tom, you find some legal  
loophole in this or I'll find a  
lawyer who can.

ALONZO  
They'll just tell you the same  
thing...

JACK  
(firm)  
I want to talk to the judge.

ALONZO  
The order forbids you to do that.  
Jack, if you do anything to violate  
this order - approach the judge, or  
the bio-parents, or try to remove  
the child - any hope you have of  
keeping Joey is gone.

INT. NORTON HOUSE. KITCHEN. DUSK.

Molly cradles a mug of coffee, Beth opposite.

BETH  
Have you spoken to Joey?

MOLLY  
What would I tell him? That he's  
going to live in some strange place  
with people he never met? That  
we're not his 'real' parents?  
(a little laugh)  
You know what he said to me the  
other day? "I'm not a baby - I can  
carry heavy stuff."

BETH  
I can't imagine someone taking one  
of mine.

MOLLY  
What would you do?

Beth hesitates.

MOLLY (CONT'D)  
God.

BETH  
Of course.

MOLLY  
If I did that, Jack would say I'm just avoiding it, wanting someone else to deal with it.

BETH  
We'll get through this, Mol. We will. You may not want to hear it, but the Lord has a way of working these things out.

Molly shakes her head, bitter.

EXT. MUNICIPAL PARK. ZANESVILLE, OHIO. LATE AFTERNOON.

Rip rides on the back of a Parks Department sanitation truck, jumps off, empties trash cans.

INT. CHEVY PICKUP. DUSK.

He drives home through downtown. The neon of a liquor store beckons. He hesitates, but keeps driving.

EXT. NEW LIFE COMMUNITY CHURCH. EVENING.

A single car sits in the parking lot of the modern sanctuary.

INT. NEW LIFE COMMUNITY CHURCH. EVENING.

Beth kneels alone in an empty pew, eyes closed, head bowed.

INT. NORTON HOUSE. LIVING ROOM. NIGHT

Bill is sorting through mail on the couch. Beth enters through the kitchen, pouring herself a glass of water.

BETH  
Kids went down okay?

BILL  
They put up a good fight, but I think they're out. How's she holding up?

BETH  
She isn't. I'm really worried.

BILL  
I have to believe someone will come  
to their senses.

BETH  
I hate to say this, but... as much  
as I don't want to see Molly  
suffer, this may be just what she  
needs.

Bill stops.

BILL  
What?

BETH  
(defensive)  
Molly's like me. She's not going to  
re-examine her life until things  
get really bad for her. Maybe God  
is taking Joey to finally draw her  
to him.

BILL  
(serious)  
Beth, God isn't taking Joey.

BETH  
Don't talk down to me, you know I  
hate that. You're the one always  
talking about accepting God's will.

BILL  
That doesn't mean it's always got  
to be the difficult thing.

BETH  
I didn't say it was, but we need to  
be prepared for that.

BILL  
Let's also be prepared for the  
possibility that Joey isn't going  
anywhere.

BETH  
Of course! But... sometimes I think  
you want everything to be okay so  
much that you ignore the truth. If  
Molly is going to lose Joey, I want  
to help her to see God in that.

BILL  
How about just being her sister  
right now?

Beth puts her glass down.

BETH  
 (irritated)  
 Good night.

She walks out.

INT. PORTER HOUSE. NIGHT.

Rip sits in the parlor alone, staring at the TV. Wendy comes in, hair still wet from the shower.

WENDY  
 You coming to bed?

Rip does not answer. Wendy moves closer.

WENDY (CONT'D)  
 Rip...?

He looks up at her, eyes vacant.

RIP  
 I've been thinkin alot about my old man.

Wendy sits beside him, puts her arms around him.

RIP (CONT'D)  
 I don't want to be like that... I'm scared, babe. What if Jimmy don't like me? What if he hates me?

WENDY  
 He won't hate you. You're gonna be a great father, you'll see.

RIP  
 (looks closely at her)  
 You believe in me, don't you?

WENDY  
 If I don't believe in you, I don't know what I believe in.

Off his grateful smile...

INT. MAISON CARLOS. DAY.

The best restaurant in West Palm Beach, somewhere between the lunch and dinner crowds.

Not many people, but in a green blaize booth at the back, Jack and Curtis Golding, forties, slick, sartorial.

JACK

I'm running out of options here,  
Curt.

CURTIS

You're talking about reversing the  
ruling of an Ohio judge. I have no  
legal authority.

JACK

You're a congressman. Can't you  
call in some favors, twist some  
arms?

CURTIS

It's the state judiciary, Jack. I  
can't interfere with that.

JACK

What if it was your son - what if  
it was Max? You'd find a way.

CURTIS

That's not fair.

JACK

Not fair? In three days a woman is  
coming to take Joey away from us.  
Do you understand that?

People are starting to stare. Golding glances around.

CURTIS

Calm down, Jack...

JACK

I realize it's an election year,  
and I know these aren't popular  
cases to be associated with...

CURTIS

Wait, it has nothing to do with...

JACK

...but I'm asking you to put  
yourself on the line for once. To  
help me *save my son!*

CURTIS

Look, you're under a lot of  
pressure, but you're yelling at the  
wrong guy. I'd like to help you,  
Jack, but it's a state matter. My  
hands are tied here.

JACK  
 (bitter)  
 Of course they are.  
 (tosses cash on the table)  
 Thanks for your help, Congressman.

He stands abruptly, pushing the table back, then storms out.

INT. CAMPBELL HOUSE. PARLOR. NIGHT.

Molly on the sofa, paging through meticulously scrap-booked photos, a bottle of Merlot on the coffee table. The history of Joey's growing: crooked in Jack's arm asleep; in the highchair, face smeared with spaghetti. She sips the wine as she muses. First steps, first trike, first Halloween, first day of pre-school. On the beach, on the boat. And everywhere, Molly holding, hugging, hovering. Then:

MOLLY (V.O.)  
 Mrs. Bower, thank you for returning  
 my call.

INT. CAMPBELL HOUSE. STUDY. NIGHT.

Molly sits in the leather chair, talking quietly on the phone.

MOLLY  
 I'm sorry to bother you so late. I  
 know you must want to go home--

ALLYSON (V.O.)  
 That's all right, Mrs. Campbell, I  
 rarely get out of here before eight  
 or nine.

INT. DEPT. OF CHILDREN'S SERVICES. OHIO. NIGHT. CROSSCUT.

Allyson is at a desk overflowing with case folders.

ALLYSON  
 What can I do for you?

A moment, then:

MOLLY  
 Don't come.

ALLYSON  
 I beg your pardon?

MOLLY  
 Just don't come. Don't come here  
 next week.

ALLYSON  
Mrs. Campbell--

MOLLY  
Joey is my whole world. Everything I do, I do for him. But you can save his life just by not doing anything.

ALLYSON  
Mrs. Campbell, I am an officer of the court. I have no choice.

MOLLY  
You have no choice, the judge has no choice, we have no choice! Who does have a choice?

ALLYSON  
I think, maybe Joey does.

MOLLY  
What choice does he have?

ALLYSON  
Not to forget you.

Molly is stunned. She slowly puts the phone down.

INT. CAMPBELL HOUSE. BEDROOM. NIGHT.

Molly sits on the bed, Jack in the armchair across the room.

MOLLY  
Send him to your parents.

JACK  
That's the first place they'll look.

MOLLY  
If he's not here when she comes--

JACK  
They'll throw us in jail. And then what good can we do?  
(then)  
We have to let him go on the first visit.

MOLLY  
No--

JACK  
Until I work something out.

MOLLY  
What about Tom Alonzo?

JACK  
He filed for an emergency stay. It  
was denied.

MOLLY  
And Curtis?

Jack shakes his head. He gets up from his chair and sits  
beside Molly. She leans her head against him. A moment, then:

MOLLY (CONT'D)  
We have to talk to Joey. He's  
supposed to be leaving Friday. We  
have to tell him something.

INT. CAMPBELL HOUSE. PARLOR. DAY.

Joey sits at the coffee table, coloring pictures in his story  
book. Gus is curled at his feet. His parents stand nearby.  
The house is like a tomb.

JOEY  
Where's Ohio?

JACK  
It's pretty far. You'll have to  
ride on an airplane. You like  
planes, remember?

JOEY  
Why do I have to go?

Molly sits next to him, takes a deep breath.

MOLLY  
There's a woman, a nice woman - you  
don't remember her, but she knew  
you when you were a baby and she  
cares about you very much. She  
asked if she could see you, and  
your Daddy and I said yes.

JOEY  
Are you coming, too?

Molly hesitates.

JACK  
Your Mom and I are staying here,  
kiddo. You're a big boy now. You  
don't need us to go with you.

JOEY  
I want you to go.

JACK  
Joey, there's nothing to be afraid of. You're going to be fine.

MOLLY  
(fighting tears)  
You can bring Mr. Growls.

JOEY  
(looks between them)  
I don't want to go.

JACK  
It's just for a couple of days. And I'll make you a deal: when you get back, we'll take the boat out, and this time we'll go out on the ocean. Okay?

Joey looks at them, frightened, confused. Molly can't take any more. She quickly walks out of the room.

INT. JOEY'S BEDROOM. LATER.

Joey is sleeping. Molly stands in the doorway, silhouetted in the hallway light, watching him. We hold on her. Then:

EXT. CAMPBELL HOUSE. DAY.

A rental car pulls up to the Campbells' home.

INT. JOEY'S BEDROOM. DAY.

Joey is pouting, holding Mr. Growls tightly. He watches his mother pack his suitcase.

MOLLY  
I'm packing your Batsuit. If you feel scared, you can put it on.

Joey stares at the floor. Molly zips up the suitcase.

JOEY  
Mommy, did I do something wrong?

Molly holds him, stroking his hair. Tries to be strong.

MOLLY

No, sweetheart, no. You're a good boy, and Daddy and I love you very much. It's just... sometimes things happen that we can't control.

JOEY

Who controls them then?

Molly looks at him. She has no answer for this. Then:

JACK (O.S.)

Mol... she's here.

Molly stops. Then she kneels, takes Joey's arms.

MOLLY

Why don't you come down when you're ready. Okay?

INT. CAMPBELL HOUSE. PARLOR. DAY. MOMENTS LATER

Allyson Bower waits in the vestibule. Jack stands nearby, watching her. Molly comes down the stairs, stops.

ALLYSON

I'm sorry, Mrs. Campbell. I know this must be difficult for you.

JACK

(harshly)

Difficult? Do they teach you to say that?

ALLYSON

There are a few things I have to go over with you.

Allyson hands Jack a folder.

ALLYSON (CONT'D)

Here's the itinerary and all of my information. If there's an emergency, Joey can call you, but you're not to contact the Porters directly.

Molly and Jack just listen in stunned silence.

ALLYSON (CONT'D)

For this first visit, we'll just tell Joey the Porters are "friends." Next time, we'll refer to them as the "other Mommy and Daddy", and on the final visit, he'll be told the truth.

MOLLY

Do you have children, Mrs. Bower?

ALLYSON

I have three girls.

MOLLY

Then you understand how completely absurd that is.

ALLYSON

I do, and I'm sorry. I want you to know I did everything I could...

JACK

What if something happens?

ALLYSON

What do you mean?

JACK

I know why Rip Porter went to jail.

Allyson processes this.

ALLYSON

Mr. Porter has gone through three years of rehabilitation and anger management. The court has deemed him a fit parent. I've personally been to their home, and it is a suitable environment.

JACK

"A suitable environment?" That's not good enough.

(handing back her folder)

We're not doing this. You're not taking Joey anywhere.

ALLYSON

Mr. Campbell, I can appreciate your frustration. I truly can. But it's either me or two uniformed police officers. I've done it both ways, and believe me, this is the best way for Joey.

JACK

You're threatening me? Let me tell you something Mrs. Bower. If anything happens to my son while we're clearing this mess up, I'm holding you responsible.  
Personally.

MOLLY

Jack...

He looks up and sees Joey standing on the stairs.

ALLYSON

You must be Joey. My name is Allyson. Are you ready to go?

Joey wraps his arms around Molly. She does her best to give him a reassuring smile.

MOLLY

Joey, it's okay. This is the lady who's going to take you to Ohio--

JOEY

No...

Jack moves to him.

JACK

It's not long, J-J. Just a couple of days. Hey, you remember about the boat, the ocean?

JOEY

Come with me!

ALLYSON

I'm sorry, but it's time. Do you want to say your goodbyes?

Jack and Molly envelope him. Molly whispers:

MOLLY

You be a big boy now, be brave. Nothing bad will happen, darling, I promise.

JOEY

Will you come with me to the airplane?

She looks at Allyson, who shakes her head.

MOLLY

I'll walk you to the car.

She stands, takes his hand.

JOEY

No!

This is killing her, but she puts on a brave face for Joey. Molly takes the suitcase with one hand, Joey's hand with the other. Joey digs in his heels, screaming. Jack grabs Allyson's arm.

JACK  
Mrs. Bower, there must be something... You have kids, maybe you need college money. I'll pay you.

ALLYSON  
I'm so sorry.

JACK  
(disgusted)  
I don't know how you sleep at night.

For a moment, Allyson's defenses drop.

ALLYSON  
Some nights I don't.

Allyson follows Molly and Joey outside.

EXT. CAMPBELL HOUSE. DAY.

Molly is buckling Joey into the booster seat. He's crying uncontrollably now.

JOEY  
Don't make me go!

MOLLY  
I'm sorry, honey. I love you.

Molly shuts the door, and turns away, tears streaming. Joey presses his face against the glass, terrified.

Molly collapses in Jack's arms, sobbing, as Allyson gets in the driver's seat. They watch, helpless, as Joey disappears down the street.

EXT. PORTER HOUSE. DAY.

Allyson leads Joey to the front door. He clutches Mr. Growls. Rip and Wendy watch them approach, nervous, smiling.

WENDY  
He's got my eyes.

RIP  
It's somethin', ain't it?

ALLYSON

Mr. And Mrs. Porter, this is James Joseph.

Wendy looks at him a long moment, then puts out her arms.

WENDY

What a handsome boy! Welcome to our home.

He tolerates her hug. Rip bends down, puts out his hand.

RIP

I'm Richard; you can call me Rip. And this is Wendy. I think you're gonna be happy here, Jimmy.

JOEY

My name is Joey. Or sometimes my Dad calls me J-J.

He shuffles nervously.

ALLYSON

Wendy and Rip are your new friends, Joey. Now, you should listen to them and obey them as you would your parents. Do you understand?

Joey nods uncertainly. Rip takes his suitcase, smiling.

RIP

You got a lot of stuff, little man. I'll put it in your room. You wanna see your room?

JOEY

Okay.

He leads Joey inside.

ALLYSON

(to Wendy)

There's some paperwork you have to sign and I'll be going.

Wendy signs, then hands the forms back.

WENDY

Mrs. Bower... Thank you. For everything.

ALLYSON

Remember: he's five and he's in a new world. Take it slowly. I'll check in tomorrow.

She leaves.

INT. PORTER HOUSE. JOEY'S BEDROOM. DAY.

Wendy hurries into Joey's room. Joey stands by the bed scanning the room full of toys and games. Rip is unpacking his things.

RIP  
Soap. You didn't need to bring  
soap. We got plenty.

JOEY  
That's my special Scooby soap. You  
can write on the bathtub with it.

Wendy is in the doorway.

RIP  
We don't have a bathtub. We take  
showers here.

JOEY  
I don't like showers.

Rip throws a glance at Wendy.

WENDY  
I understand, sweetie, but things  
are a little different at our  
house. You can deal with a little  
different, can't you?

JOEY  
I want to go home, please.

RIP  
Tell you what, little guy. Look at  
all these toys we got for you. And  
games. Do you like to play games?

JOEY  
Yeah.

RIP  
Then that's what we'll do. We'll  
sit right down here on the floor  
and you pick a game and we'll play  
it. How 'bout that?

Joey regards him for a moment, then goes to the shelf and takes down a dinosaur game.

JOEY  
Play this.

Rip grins at him, then at Wendy. She smiles, relieved.

RIP  
You got it, kiddo!

INT. CAMPBELL HOUSE. STUDY. DAY.

Jack is on the phone, angry. Molly stands in the doorway.

JACK  
I want their address, I want to know where he works. License plate number, parole officer, rap sheet, anything else I can get.

ALONZO (V.O.)  
Jack, the court order prohibits--

JACK  
You haven't done anything for me, Tom, and Joey's gone! I know you have investigators you work with. Have them set it up with somebody in Ohio. Please.

A moment, then:

ALONZO  
Okay. I'll take care of it.

He hangs up, then returns to the computer screen on his desk: financial records.

MOLLY  
What are you doing?

JACK  
I'm going to Ohio to see this guy. I know what he wants.

Molly moves into the room, seems lethargic, half out of it.

MOLLY  
How much are you going to offer him?

JACK  
I can liquidate our portfolio and raise a couple million. He won't turn that down. Not just for a signature.

Molly looks out the window. Warm early summer sun, but she seems cold.

MOLLY  
I don't know how to start over.

JACK  
We won't starve.

MOLLY  
That's not what I'm talking about.

Jack turns to her.

MOLLY (CONT'D)  
What will we do without him, Jack?

JACK  
We won't be without him.

MOLLY  
But what if we can't...

JACK  
Molly...

Jack gets up, moves to her.

MOLLY  
What will we have without him?

JACK  
Don't do this. We're going to get  
him back. For good. *I'll* get him  
back.  
(he holds her)  
We'll get through this. Just let me  
take care of it.

Molly pulls away and shuffles from the room. Jack goes back  
to his computer.

INT. PORTER HOUSE. KITCHEN. NIGHT.

Wendy is taking frozen-dough choco-chips out of the oven.  
Joey sits at the tiny table, a glass of milk in front of him.  
Rip is in the doorway.

RIP  
He's smart, that's for sure. He got  
all the dinosaur bones.

JOEY  
Except you got the tail.

RIP  
That's only 'cause I seen 'Jurassic  
Park' so many times. Hey Jimmy, you  
ever see that movie?

JOEY

No. My dad says its too violent.

RIP

I got it on DVD. You and me can watch it tomorrow night.

Wendy lays out a plate of cookies. Rip grabs for one. She smacks his hand with a spatula.

WENDY

Joey first!

Rip feigns injury, Joey laughs.

WENDY (CONT'D)

You take as many as you want, then we'll get ready for bed, okay?

JOEY

My mom only lets me have one. I get hyper if I eat too much sugar.

RIP

Hey, in this house, we got different rules. My dad, he always used to take away my sweets, and I told myself, if I ever have a boy of my own, he can have as much as he wants.

WENDY

(sits)

What do you like to do, Joey?

JOEY

I mostly like to sail. I know how to steer a boat by myself.

WENDY

Your parents have a boat?

JOEY

Yeah, a big sailboat, but it also has a motor.

RIP

Then, y'know what? Tomorrow we'll drive up to Dillon Lake and rent one of those little boats, and you can steer it. How 'bout that?

WENDY

That'll be fun. Won't that be fun?

Joey pushes away the plate.

JOEY  
I'm done with my cookies now.

WENDY  
All right, time for bed. But first,  
we have to take our shower.

JOEY  
I don't like showers. I like to  
play with my Scooby soap.

RIP  
Look, Jimmy--

JOEY  
Joey.

Joey's getting upset. Wendy throws a helpless glance at Rip.

RIP  
Okay, for now it's Joey, okay?  
(calmly)  
Now listen, I told you we have  
different rules in this house. And  
one of 'em is that you got to take  
a shower before you go to bed--

JOEY  
(melting down)  
I want to see my Mommy and Daddy. I  
don't want a shower and I don't  
want to sleep here. I wanna sleep  
in my own bed!

RIP  
(moves to the table)  
Well, ya can't go home. You're here  
all weekend. That's just the way it  
is...

Wendy puts a hand on his arm, stops him.

WENDY  
Joey...tell you what. For now, why  
don't we just go and wash your  
hands and face in the sink and then  
we can get ready for bed. Okay?

A delicate moment as Joey looks at her, then at Rip.

JOEY  
Okay.

Wendy smiles, takes Joey's hand and leads him out.

INT. PORTER HOUSE. BATHROOM. NIGHT. LATER.

Joey stands on the stool in front of the sink, wearing his pajamas. Wendy is behind him, looking at him in the mirror, speaking softly. She studies him, seeing all she's missed.

WENDY  
Look in the mirror, Joey. What color are your eyes?

JOEY  
Brown.

WENDY  
Dark brown. Almost black, like mine. Like yours. Just like yours.

She reaches out and very lightly touches his bangs. He moves away, uncomfortable.

WENDY (CONT'D)  
Want me to read to you before you go to sleep?

JOEY  
My Mom always does.

WENDY  
Then I'll do it, too.

INT. PORTER HOUSE. JOEY'S BEDROOM. NIGHT. LATER.

Joey is asleep, cuddled with Mr. Growls. Wendy sits on the edge of the bed and gently rubs his back.

WENDY  
(softly)  
Mama loves you, Joey.

Rip steps into the doorway. Wendy quietly joins him. In whispers:

WENDY (CONT'D)  
He's a good boy. They did a good job.

RIP  
You did good, too, Wen. Real good.

WENDY  
I don't want to lose him again.

RIP  
You won't. He's ours. Nothin' nobody can do about it now.

INT. NORTON HOUSE. DINING ROOM. DUSK.

Jack and Molly have finished dinner, though most of it is left. Beth is cleaning up. Bill sits at the head of the small table. We can see the kids playing outside. Molly still seems to be drifting, nursing a glass of red wine.

JACK  
Thanks for making dinner. We didn't really feel like it.

BETH  
Of course...

BILL  
Did Beth mention we're going away in a couple of weeks? To Haiti.

JACK  
What's in Haiti?

BILL  
We're taking the kids on a mission trip.

BETH  
(calls)  
Come on in, kids, get cleaned up.

BILL  
The church sponsors an orphanage in Port-au-Prince, with a school and a hospital.

BETH  
We're building a day-care center. There's so much need there.

Camie and the twins rush past, run upstairs.

BETH (CONT'D)  
I think it's good for them to see what other parts of the world can be like.

MOLLY  
Then why don't you take them to Ohio? I understand they have convicted felons running things up there.

Silence. Then, quietly:

BILL  
When does he come back?

JACK  
Tomorrow night.

MOLLY  
Then in two weeks he'll go again.  
And the next time, he won't come  
back.

BETH  
Come on, Mol, let's try not to  
focus on that--

MOLLY  
Why? What is this - the 'let's-have-  
Molly-and-Jack-over-and-not-talk-  
about-it' dinner? I am losing my  
*child* and we're all just sitting  
here and trying not to notice!

JACK  
Well, I for one am doing something.

MOLLY  
He's up there with them right now!

JACK  
And crying and taking tranquilizers  
isn't going to help!

Molly looks at him like he's slapped her.

BILL  
Why not contact the governor of  
Ohio? Or go to the newspapers, the  
television--

JACK  
None of that's ever worked. And we  
don't want Joey going through a  
media frenzy.

BETH  
There must be something we're not  
thinking of.

MOLLY  
(bitter)  
Tell you what - why don't we pray  
about it? That should do the trick.

BETH  
(stops; then)  
Why not? You've tried everything  
else.

Molly gets up and hurries out to the patio. Beth gives Bill a  
look and follows. Jack and Bill sit awkwardly.

JACK  
I'm going to Ohio.

BILL  
Is that a good idea?

JACK  
At this point I don't care.  
(then)  
I don't think Molly should be alone  
while I'm gone.

BILL  
We'll look after her.

Jack gives him a grateful nod.

INT. CAMPBELL HOUSE. JOEY'S BEDROOM. NIGHT.

Molly stands in Joey's empty room. It's dark, except for faint moonlight. She spots his storybook on the floor and picks it up. Sits on his bed.

She flips through the pages, looking at his crayon drawings of a sailboat in the ocean. Colorful images of a mom and dad and a young boy riding the waves. A few pages in she finds a half-finished drawing. The remaining pages are blank.

She sits holding the unfinished book, staring vacantly into the dark.

INT. CAMPBELL HOUSE. BEDROOM. NIGHT.

Jack lies alone in bed, unable to sleep. He gets up, walks barefoot down the hall to Joey's room, nudges open the door.

What he sees: Molly is fast asleep on Joey's bed.

EXT. CAMPBELL HOUSE. DAY.

Jack and Molly are waiting anxiously. Allyson's car pulls up, Joey waving from the back window. Molly dashes to the car.

MOLLY  
Sweetheart! We missed you so much!

She hugs him. Allyson gets the suitcase out.

JOEY  
(holds up a toy jet)  
Look what Wendy gave me!

ALLYSON

He says it went all right. How are you two holding up?

Jack grabs the suitcase as Molly hustles Joey inside.

JACK

Go away. Just go away.

INT. CAMPBELL HOUSE. DINING ROOM. LATER.

The family eats dinner. Joey is bubbling over with news.

JOEY

They let me have as many chocolate chip cookies as I want. And we went to a lake and I steered a paddle boat all by myself. And I didn't want to take a shower, but Rip said if I took one next time, he'd get me my own DVD for my room.

Jack and Molly exchange a look.

MOLLY

Was Wendy nice to you?

JOEY

Yeah. Wendy was really nice. She cooks good and she read me a funny book.

JACK

And how was Rip?

JACK (CONT'D)

He was okay. When I go back next time, we're gonna ride horses. I never rode a horse before.

MOLLY

Joey, you don't mind going? You were so scared before.

JOEY

It's all right, Mom. I can deal with it.

As Jack and Molly look at each other:

JACK (V.O.)

They're bribing him!

INT. CAMPBELL HOUSE. NIGHT.

Jack and Molly are in the parlor, shell-shocked.

MOLLY

I never thought he'd actually want to go back. With all this, it's the one thing that never crossed my mind: What if he *wants* to be with them?

JACK

He's five years old! They're trying to buy him off!

MOLLY

Suppose he feels some connection to these people. Some deep connection--

JACK

He doesn't even know them.

MOLLY

He came from them!

Joey calls from upstairs:

JOEY

Mom, I'm done with my bath!

MOLLY

(gets up)

I'll put him to bed. I'm going to sleep in his room from now on.

INT. CAMPBELL HOUSE. JOEY'S ROOM. NIGHT. LATER.

Molly cuddles with Joey in his bed. The Thomas night light grins at them. Joey has drifted to sleep, and Molly clings to her son, tears streaking her face.

MOLLY (V.O.)

Go now.

INT. CAMPBELL HOUSE. BEDROOM. NIGHT. LATER.

Jack turns, half-asleep. Molly stands next to the bed.

JACK

What--?

MOLLY

Don't wait for Wednesday. This is killing us. Go tomorrow.

EXT. COUNTY PARKS DEPARTMENT PARKING LOT. OHIO. DUSK.

Rip turns in his gear, says goodnight to his buddies on the sanitation truck. As he does, a POV: Someone is watching as he walks toward his Silverado.

EXT. CHEVY PICKUP. DUSK. MOMENTS LATER.

As Rip is about to get into the pickup:

JACK (V.O.)  
Rip Porter?

RIP  
Yeah?

JACK  
I'm Jack Campbell. Joey's Dad.

A moment as they size each other up. Then:

JACK (CONT'D)  
How much do you want?

RIP  
Come again?

JACK  
(holds up a legal form)  
This is an amendment to the original adoption. I'll give you half a million dollars to sign it. In cash.

RIP  
You serious?  
(whistles)  
That's a lot of money.

JACK  
You sign this, I pay you, we walk away.

Rip takes the form, glances at it. Considers. Then:

RIP  
If you can raise half a million in cash, to me that means you could raise a million.

JACK  
(glares, then)  
Okay. A million dollars.

Rip regards him. Grins.

RIP  
So, with a little work, you could probably raise two million.

Jack glowers at him, then:

JACK  
Fine. Just sign it.

Rip circles Jack, considering.

RIP  
Two million bucks. I guess then I'd be just like you, Jack.

JACK  
You could be whatever you want.

RIP  
Big house, big boat. Big-shot.

JACK  
That's right.

Rip shakes his head.

RIP  
Ya know, all my life people like you been takin' things away from me.

JACK  
What is it you want?

RIP  
Simple, I want my son. And you can't have him. Not for two million. Not for ten million. He ain't for sale.

Rip shoves the form at him. Other workers are watching.

JACK  
With the money, you can start over. You can have as many kids as you want.

RIP  
Yes, I can.  
(smiles)  
But you can't. Who is it - you or her? I bet it's you.  
(laughs at him)  
What'sa matter - you got no bullets in your gun, big-shot--?

Jack lunges at Rip, pushing him. He swings, but Rip easily sidesteps, then punches Jack fast and hard. First in the stomach, then in the face, laying him out. Jack falls to the ground, gasping. His face is bloody, already swelling. Rip's co-workers head toward them.

RIP (CONT'D)  
 (laughs)  
 Look at the big man now. Hell, I'm doin' Jimmy a favor.

JACK  
 It's Joey.

Jack pushes to his feet and punches Rip in the nose. Rip doesn't even try to move away. He laughs and knocks Jack down again.

JACK (CONT'D)  
 I'll send you back to prison!

RIP  
 Really? Cause it looks to me like you're the one violatin' a court order. You go to the cops, they throw you in jail. Either way, you don't get my kid back.

He kicks Jack, hard. Jack grips his ribs in pain.

RIP (CONT'D)  
 Oh, and 'til you send him up again, call him Jimmy. That's his name. Jimmy Porter.

Rip waves his co-workers off, gets in his truck and drives away. Jack cowers in the dirt, humiliated.

EXT. LIQUOR STORE. NIGHT.

Rip sits in the front seat of his truck with a bottle of Jack Daniels. He looks at it for a long moment, then cranks the cap off and takes a swig.

INT. PORTER HOUSE. KITCHEN. NIGHT. LATER.

Rip stands by the half-empty bottle of whiskey on the counter. Wendy is in her bathrobe.

RIP  
 Yeah, I told him. I told him exactly what he could do with his money!

WENDY

Two million dollars--

RIP

You shoulda seen him lyin' there in  
the dirt.

WENDY

(reaching for the bottle)

Rip, you don't need this.

Rip grabs her wrist, hard.

RIP

Don't touch it.

WENDY

You said you weren't gonna drink--

RIP

You hear me?

WENDY

Rip, things are going so good for  
us, please don't--

RIP

I'm in charge of my life, in charge  
of Jimmy, in charge of you. So  
don't you be touchin' this.

She grabs the bottle, dumps it into the sink. Rip shoves her  
away; she topples onto the stove. He retrieves the bottle,  
almost empty now, turns on her.

RIP (CONT'D)

(growls)

Go get me another.

WENDY

Don't start this--

RIP

Get me another! Or *I'll* go get it  
and I might not come back!

Wendy pulls herself up, in tears.

WENDY

You said you changed.

RIP

Yeah, I changed - I turned down *two  
million bucks cash!* Would old Rip  
have done that?

WENDY  
You're drunk.

Rip raises his hand. Wendy cowers. He stops himself, eyes wild. Then:

RIP  
The liquor store's open til  
midnight. Get the money from my  
coat.  
(she glares at him)  
Do as I tell you!

As Wendy skulks out, cut to:

INT. CAMPBELL HOUSE. PARLOR. NIGHT.

Jack comes in the door, drops his bags. Molly rushes down the stairs, tying on a bathrobe.

MOLLY  
Jack? Why didn't you answer your  
cell? You were supposed to call...

She gets a look at his bruised face.

MOLLY (CONT'D)  
My god, what happened to you?

Jack drops onto the leather sofa. He stares into the gas fire.

JACK  
He didn't want money. He just  
wants Joey.

MOLLY  
I'll get some ice.

JACK  
No, don't go. Just... stay with  
me.

MOLLY  
Jack, he can't do this. He  
assaulted you... he's on parole.

JACK  
It won't work.

MOLLY  
Why not?

JACK  
Because it won't, Molly.

MOLLY

Just--

JACK

Because if we report him, I go to jail too!

Molly looks towards Joey's room, worried he'll hear.

MOLLY

(softly)

So what do we do?

JACK

There's nothing left to do. It's over.

MOLLY

Don't say that.

JACK

Maybe we can get visitation. I don't know...

(drops his head)

I'm sorry, Mol. We can start again. We'll - we can adopt again.

He moves to embrace her. Molly pushes him away.

MOLLY

What?

She stares at him in disbelief. A flush of anger rises to her face.

JACK

Molly, we lost.

MOLLY

That's it? You tried buying him off, it didn't work, and now you're done?

JACK

What else do you want me to do?

MOLLY

I don't know. Something. Anything! But don't just give up. You're his father!

JACK

I've done everything!

MOLLY

It's not enough!

She turns on him, livid.

MOLLY (CONT'D)  
Face it, Jack. Joey's only ever  
been the "next best thing" to you.  
So you might as well just trade him  
for a new one.

Jack shakes his head.

MOLLY (CONT'D)  
I don't care what it takes. I'm not  
going to give up our son, *my* son.

JACK  
(bitterly)  
You're really something.

MOLLY  
(yelling)  
*I'm not giving up my son!*

JACK  
Yeah, you've made that clear. Look  
at me, the terrible father, just  
throwing in the towel.  
(harshly)  
*Look at me!*

She looks at his beaten face.

JACK (CONT'D)  
You want to step up and do  
something? Go ahead. It's about  
time.

MOLLY  
When would you *ever* have let me do  
anything?

JACK  
Oh, so I've been holding you back?  
Well, it's all yours, Molly. Show  
us how its done.  
(grabbing his bags)  
I'm going to bed.

He storms up the stairs. Molly collapses to the couch, head  
in her hands, unable to contain her emotion. She sobs, hardly  
able to breathe through the tears.

MOLLY  
Please don't take my baby! Oh, God,  
please.

She curls on the couch, her voice lost in grief.

MOLLY (CONT'D)  
Please, please don't take him.  
Don't let them take my baby...

INT. PORTER HOUSE. JOEY'S BEDROOM. NIGHT.

Wendy lays in her bed, staring at the wall. Rip comes in and quietly climbs beside her. A long moment, then:

RIP  
I don't deserve you.

She doesn't say anything. After a moment, Rip turns away. Finally, Wendy rolls over toward him.

WENDY  
That's not true, Rip. I know how hard you're trying.

RIP  
I'd die without you, Babe. You're the only one who really knows me. Do you love me?

WENDY  
You know I do.

RIP  
Say it. I need to hear you say it.

WENDY  
I love you, Rip.

He pulls her closer to him and closes his eyes.

EXT. CAMPBELL HOUSE. DAY.

Allyson pulls up in her rental car. Joey and Molly stand outside, waiting. Jack stands back in the shaded doorway, silent, angry.

MOLLY  
You going to be okay, baby?

JOEY  
Yeah. I'm gonna ride a horse.

Molly is crushed, but hides it. Allyson gets out of her car.

MOLLY  
Well, we'll miss you.

JOEY  
I'll miss you too, Mom.

ALLYSON  
You ready to go, Joey?

JOEY  
Yeah.  
(hugs Molly)  
Bye, Dad!

JACK  
Bye kiddo.

Joey begins loading his stuff in the car.

ALLYSON  
He seems all right.

MOLLY  
(cold)  
Suppose so.

ALLYSON  
Call me if you need anything.

Molly nods. Allyson glances at Jack, who doesn't move.

As they pull away, Jack turns and walks silently inside, leaving Molly alone in the driveway.

INT. PORTER HOUSE. PARLOR. THE NEXT NIGHT.

Wendy sits with Joey watching a cartoon. His head rests against her arm. Rip ambles into the room, beer in his fist. He stares at Joey and Wendy, sullen. From the TV: "Scooby-dooby-Doo!"

RIP  
Bed time. Go take a shower.

JOEY  
I don't want to take a--

RIP  
Then no DVD.

JOEY  
It's okay, I'll watch in here.

WENDY  
Rip, I'll take care of it--

RIP  
You won't. You'll just spoil him.  
(turns to Joey)  
Get in the bathroom and take a shower. Do as I say.

Joey stares at him, starts to cry.

RIP (CONT'D)  
 You don't get nothin' that way  
 here. This ain't Florida! Now get  
 in that bathroom and get your  
 clothes off.

WENDY  
 Rip, stop it! You're upsetting him.

RIP  
 And what about me, what if I'm  
 upset? This kid can't get away with  
 everything--

WENDY  
 I'll take him in the bathroom.

RIP  
*In the shower!*

Wendy gets up, takes Joey's hand.

WENDY  
 Come on, Joey.

RIP  
 (as they leave)  
 It's Jimmy! Call him Jimmy!

INT. PORTER HOUSE. BATHROOM. NIGHT. LATER.

The shower is running; Joey stands in the middle of the room,  
 still dressed, sobbing quietly.

WENDY  
 Please, Joey, please, just *please*  
 get in the shower.  
 (kneels)  
 I'll get you the DVD, I'll take you  
 riding, I promise.

Then Rip is banging at the door.

RIP  
 You locked it?

WENDY  
 (panicking)  
 He's getting undressed! He's taking  
 a shower--

Rip forces open the door.

RIP  
I knew it! Get in that shower,  
Jimmy.

JOEY  
I wanna go home!

RIP  
You *are* home! My home!

He moves on Joey, grabs his arm in a powerful grip. Joey yelps in pain, eyes wide with terror. Wendy is yelling at him to stop. Rip pulls open the plastic shower door, shoves Joey under the water, still dressed.

WENDY  
Stop it! You're terrifying him--

Joey is wailing.

JOEY  
Please! I want my Dad!

RIP  
I am your Dad!

WENDY  
Rip, don't. Let him go!

She reaches for Joey but Rip puts up an arm to block her. She beats on it with her fists. Rip turns on her, savage.

RIP  
Don't you *ever* hit me, woman! I  
could break your neck!

WENDY  
Then do it, do it - but leave my  
baby alone!

Rip stares at her.

RIP  
Your baby? You threw him away. I  
was the one got him back, so how's  
he *your* baby?

Silence. Rip reaches in, shuts off the shower.

RIP (CONT'D)  
Get out.

Joey slinks out of the shower, dripping wet. Rip regards him oddly, as if for the first time.

RIP (CONT'D)  
 Go in your room and change your  
 clothes.

Joey hurries out, whimpering, holding his arm.

INT. PORTER HOUSE. JOEY'S BEDROOM. NIGHT.

Wendy is putting Joey to bed, trying to collect herself.

WENDY  
 You want a story?

Joey just sobs in reply. Rip comes to the door.

RIP  
 I'll tell him a story.

WENDY  
 Rip, no--

RIP  
 Get out of the way.  
 (moves to the bed)  
 Once upon a time there was a lady  
 who had a baby. But this lady did a  
 very bad thing.

WENDY  
 Rip, please--

RIP  
 She gave the baby away to some  
 strangers. But when the baby's  
 father found out, he went and got  
 that baby back, 'cause it was  
 really his--

WENDY  
 That's enough, Rip--

RIP  
 And now that baby is a boy and he  
 lives with his real Mom and Dad.  
 You know who the boy is?

Joey shakes his head.

RIP (CONT'D)  
 He's you, Jimmy. We are your real  
 Mom and Dad.

JOEY  
 No. No, you're not.

RIP  
 Wendy is your real Mom, and I am  
 your real Dad. And that's why  
 you're here, and that's why you are  
 gonna do exactly as I say--

JOEY  
 (cowering)  
 No, no - please... Take me home.  
 Please take me home.

RIP  
 'Cause I am the *only* Daddy you ever  
 had, and you are gonna live here  
 forever.

Joey bursts into hysterics, throws his face against the wall,  
 clinging to his bear.

RIP (CONT'D)  
 (leans over him)  
 And if you don't obey me, Jimmy,  
 you'll never see those people in  
 Florida again. You hear me? Never.  
 You hear me?!

Joey turns, face streaked.

JOEY  
 Y-y-yes.

RIP  
 Good. Now, say good night to your  
 Mom.

WENDY  
 Leave him alone, Rip--

RIP  
 Shut up! Say it.

JOEY  
 (heaving)  
 G'night, Mom.

RIP  
 And say good night to your Dad.

Joey glares at him, defiant.

RIP (CONT'D)  
 You want to go back to Florida  
 again, don't you? Say 'good night,  
 Dad.'

JOEY  
 Good night, Dad.

RIP  
 (pats his head)  
 That's a good boy. Good night,  
 Jimmy.

JOEY  
 My name's--

RIP  
 (snaps)  
 What is your name?

Joey stares at him, then glances at Wendy. She nods.

JOEY  
 My name is Jimmy.

RIP  
 (to Wendy, as he leaves)  
 There. You see how easy that is,  
 Mom? That's parenting skills.

INT. PORTER HOUSE. KITCHEN. MORNING.

Wendy does dishes, despondent. She glances at Rip, drinking a beer, watching a baseball game. Outside the window, Joey sits alone in the yard, staring at nothing.

EXT. PORTER HOUSE. CONTINUOUS.

Wendy comes outside, sits across from Joey. He doesn't meet her gaze. She glances down at a dandelion in full bloom growing out of the lawn.

WENDY  
 Do you know about dandelions?

Joey doesn't answer.

WENDY (CONT'D)  
 About how you can make wishes on  
 them?

Joey shakes his head, a little intrigued. Wendy pulls the flower and holds it in front of Joey. He takes it.

WENDY (CONT'D)  
 You just close your eyes, make a  
 wish, and then blow on it.

JOEY  
 Why blow on it?

WENDY

Well... because there is a wish in there, and when you blow on it, it's like you're setting the wish free. Try it.

Joey looks away, uncertain.

WENDY (CONT'D)

Wishes are important, Joey. You always have to believe that things can get better than they are.

After a long moment, she stands and heads back toward the house. Before going in, she glances back to see Joey closing his eyes and blowing the dandelion dust into the wind.

INT. CAMPBELL HOUSE. PARLOR. DAY.

Allyson leads Joey in. He is sullen, subdued.

MOLLY

Joey, sweetheart, what's the matter?

He doesn't answer.

ALLYSON

I think this time was a little more difficult.

JACK

Difficult? How?

ALLYSON

He wouldn't tell me. Maybe he'll tell you.

Joey stands in silence, staring at the floor. Then:

ALLYSON (CONT'D)

(quietly)

Mrs. Porter has offered to give you an extra week to say good-bye. I asked the judge. He agreed.

A moment.

MOLLY

Thank you.

ALLYSON

See you later, Joey.

He stares at her, says nothing. She leaves.

MOLLY  
Sweetie, are you all right? Did  
something happen--?

He runs upstairs to his room. As Molly looks at Jack, cut to:

INT. CAMPBELL HOUSE. JOEY'S ROOM. DUSK. MOMENTS LATER.

Joey lies on the bed, face to the wall. Molly comes quietly  
in. Jack waits in the doorway.

MOLLY  
Joey? I made dinner--

JOEY  
I don't want dinner.

MOLLY  
Aren't you hungry?

JOEY  
No.

Molly glances at Jack, sits on the bed. Mr. Growls lies on  
the floor, she picks it up.

MOLLY  
Mr. Growls is hungry--

Joey takes the bear, flings it away. Jack moves to the bed.

JACK  
Joey, did something happen to you?

JOEY  
(through the pillow)  
He made me take a shower in my  
clothes.

Molly looks at Jack, then reaches down, hugs Joey.

MOLLY  
Joey... come on, let's get you into  
your jammies--

JOEY  
He said you're not my real Mommy  
and Daddy! He said I have to stay  
there forever - tell him I'm never  
going back there! Tell him!

He reaches for her with both arms. That is when Jack notices  
the bruise under his shirt sleeve.

JACK  
Molly...

She glances down, sees it. Her whole face contracts.

MOLLY  
 Joey, let's get this shirt off you  
 and put on your jams, okay,  
 sweetie? Will you let me?

He relaxes a little and she slips his shirt over his head. Shocking. They both stare: Joey's upper arm is purple and blue. Jack looks closely at him.

JACK  
 Joey, did Rip do this to you?

JOEY  
 I told you: he made me take a  
 shower. He said if I didn't obey  
 him I'd never see you again. Is  
 that true?

MOLLY  
 (quietly)  
 No, sweetheart. That's not true.

INT. CAMPBELL HOUSE. STUDY. NIGHT. MOMENTS LATER.

Jack is dialing the telephone. Molly comes in, beside herself with anguish and anger.

JACK  
 Get the digital camera, I want  
 pictures of that bruise.

MOLLY  
 Who are you calling?

JACK  
 Allyson Bower, who do you think?  
 And call Doctor Reilly. We're  
 taking him over there right now.

MOLLY  
 And all this is going to accomplish  
 what? Filing a lawsuit, putting  
 Porter in jail?

JACK  
 Sure. Yes. Let's put him in jail.

MOLLY  
 Jack, you already said it, that  
 doesn't do us any good! He could go  
 away for the rest of his life and  
 it wouldn't make Joey ours.

JACK  
What, then? What?

MOLLY  
(after a moment)  
We have to leave.

Jack stops.

MOLLY (CONT'D)  
We have to take Joey and leave.  
It's the only way.

JACK  
Please. Do you even know what  
you're saying?

MOLLY  
Yes. I do. Think about it. At least  
he'd be safe.

JACK  
How is that safe? We'd be  
fugitives. We give up every legal  
option we have. All our resources,  
all our contacts--

MOLLY  
None of that has helped us! There's  
no one left to bribe, no one left  
to threaten. No one is coming to  
save us! We just have to go.

JACK  
So what, pack up everything, find a  
new home... in two weeks?

MOLLY  
No, we just go.

JACK  
(frustrated)  
Go where? You don't think they'll  
find us?

MOLLY  
Not if we do it right.

Jack looks at Molly, surprised at her resolve. She's serious.  
He takes a long moment. Thinks.

JACK  
We'd be leaving our whole world  
behind... school, my job, our  
friends, the house. We'd have  
nothing.

MOLLY  
We'd have Joey.

EXT. NEW LIFE COMMUNITY CHURCH. DAY.

Beth and Bill stand in the church lobby, mingling with friends before service. Beth looks up to see Jack, Molly and Joey walking toward her. Surprised:

BETH  
Molly!

Molly smiles.

MOLLY  
We've tried everything else.

Beth hugs her. Jack looks to Bill and shrugs.

JACK  
We're desperate.

INT. NEW LIFE COMMUNITY CHURCH. DAY.

Jack, Molly, Joey, Beth, Bill and the kids sit in a pew together, listening to the choir sing a haunting six-part arrangement of "It is Well with My Soul". Molly stares up at the altar, lost in the music.

A SERIES OF SHOTS:

INT. PHOTO BOOTH. DAY.

Flash photos of Jack, Molly and Joey.

INT. BANK. DAY

Jack withdrawing thousands from his bank account.

EXT. MIAMI STREET. EARLY EVENING.

Jack in a seedy section of Miami handing over cash to a man who gives him a thick Manila envelope.

BACK TO CHURCH: The voices swell as the female soloist sings of finding peace in the midst of suffering. Molly is overcome. Beth looks at her sister, then reaches over and gently squeezes her hand.

INT. PORTER HOUSE. PARLOR. EVENING.

Wendy sits on the couch. Rip confronts her, furious.

RIP  
An extra week?! Why did you agree  
to this?! Huh?

WENDY  
I didn't agree to it, Rip--

RIP  
Don't lie!

WENDY  
It was *my idea*.

He looks at her, incredulous.

RIP  
*Your idea...?*

WENDY  
You're not ready, Rip. You need  
more time.

RIP  
You're doing it to me again - going  
behind my back, keeping me from my  
son.

WENDY  
You hurt that child, Rip. I'm just  
trying to protect him. And you. I  
love you - both of you.

RIP  
You wouldn't know love if it fell  
off a fence on top of you. All you  
do is lie - hide and lie!

She glares at him a moment, then starts out.

RIP (CONT'D)  
Where you goin'?

WENDY  
I'm gonna wash my hair and go to  
bed. You better sleep down here.

INT. PORTER HOUSE. BATHROOM. NIGHT. LATER.

Wendy walks to the sink. She looks at herself a moment in the mirror. Then she bends over, throws her hair over her face. When she straightens again, Rip is standing behind her, demonic. He grabs her hair viciously.

RIP

You call Bower and you tell her you changed your mind.

WENDY

No. It's too late--

Suddenly, Rip smashes her face against the mirror. She shatters it with a grunt. It happens so fast, it hardly seems real. When he straightens her again, her nose is broken, streaming blood.

RIP

Call her.

She cannot answer; she is half-unconscious, blood gurgles into her mouth.

RIP (CONT'D)

I'll call her.

He stalks out. Wendy slumps to the floor.

INT. CAMPBELL HOUSE. KITCHEN. EVENING.

Beth rushes in as Molly holds the door.

BETH

What is it? Why couldn't you tell me on the phone?

MOLLY

I had to tell you in person. Beth, Curt Golding talked to the congressman from Ohio, and he's asked DCS for an investigation by a state commission.

BETH

That sounds like good news. What does it mean?

MOLLY

It means the transfer is suspended!

BETH

That's amazing, Molly! For how long?

MOLLY

Weeks, maybe months. And the commission can reverse the judge's decision!

BETH  
 (hugging her)  
 See that? It's a miracle.

MOLLY  
 It *is* like a miracle, isn't it?

Molly hugs her back. After a moment, her smile fades, eyes welling up. She does her best to hide it.

BETH  
 What's wrong? You should be happy.

MOLLY  
 (covering)  
 I am. I think I'm just overwhelmed.

Beth watches her, a little concerned. She smiles and this time Molly smiles back.

BETH  
 We have to tell everyone at church.

MOLLY  
 Beth, I don't want to tell them - I want to *do* something for them.

BETH  
 What?

MOLLY  
 I want to go to Haiti with you and help out.

BETH  
 Really?

MOLLY  
 Jack and I both want to go. And I think you're right: It's important for Joey to see how the rest of the world lives.

BETH  
 Are you allowed to take him out of the country--?

MOLLY  
 Jack already cleared it with the judge. Since the order's suspended, we're free to do as we like. So, can you arrange it with the church?

BETH  
 (excited)  
 It's short notice, but, sure, I can arrange it.

INT. CAMPBELL HOUSE. BEDROOM. EVENING.

Jack and Molly sit on the bed; six passports on Molly's lap.

MOLLY  
"Walt and Tracy Sanders." This is  
so strange.

JACK  
I kept Joey as "Joseph" so there's  
no slip-ups.

She compares two of them.

MOLLY  
It looks exactly like mine.

JACK  
For what I paid, it ought to.

Molly looks up. Jack is distant.

MOLLY  
What?

JACK  
I still don't see how Haiti is the  
best way.

MOLLY  
(irritated)  
Because that's what I decided,  
Jack.

JACK  
Why not just wait until Beth and  
Bill are gone, then fly straight to  
Europe? We'll have a bigger head  
start.

MOLLY  
No, it's too late. Anyway, Haiti  
looks more innocent. If we get  
stopped, we're just part of a  
church trip. We didn't even realize  
we were breaking the law.

JACK  
But Mol...

MOLLY  
Look, nothing's going to be  
perfect... Can we please just be  
together on this?

JACK

Fine. Okay. But we've got to settle in Grand Cayman.

MOLLY

Why?

JACK

No banking transparency, no extradition treaty. We can take ten thousand in cash with us, but I'm going to transfer the two million into an account Friday before we leave.

MOLLY

Don't do that. Jack, what if they trace it? It's not worth it.

JACK

How do you think we're going to live, Honey? "Walt Sanders" doesn't have a job. We'll be starting all over.

MOLLY

We'll figure it out, like we did in the beginning. We don't need a big house, we don't need all this.

JACK

I've worked very hard for a very long time to get where we are. It doesn't make sense to give it all up if we don't have to.

MOLLY

Whatever, do what you need to do.

JACK

(frustrated)

We can't just run off without thinking about how we'll survive on the other side.

(she doesn't reply)

What, you disagree?

MOLLY

(softening)

No. I'm just nervous. I don't like all the lying. And I hate doing this to Beth. All these years we waited to live together and now... I don't even get to say goodbye.

Jack takes her face in his hands.

JACK

We're going to be okay. In a month we'll be setting up a new home in the Cayman islands. Doesn't sound so bad, does it?

MOLLY

(managing a smile)  
I guess not.

INT. PORTER HOUSE. PARLOR. DAY.

Rip is on the phone, pacing. Nervous. Wendy is nowhere to be seen.

RIP

So we been talking it over, Miss Bower, and we think it's best for Jimmy if we stick to the original schedule.

INT. DEPT. OF CHILDREN'S SERVICES. OHIO. DAY. CROSSCUT.

Allyson is at her desk.

ALLYSON

Mr. Porter...

RIP

Fact is, the last visit I slipped and told Jimmy the truth. I know I wasn't supposed to, but he was gettin' confused. So, I think it's best that we do the transfer now. We just need to get started bein' a family, you know?

ALLYSON

I'm sorry, but the judge has ruled, and the Campell's have been notified. You'll just have to wait another week.

Rip is frustrated, but does his best to keep his voice level.

RIP

I see. Okay, well, thanks anyways.

ALLYSON

(concerned)  
Is everything okay over there, Mr. Porter?

RIP

Just fine. Sorry to bother you.

He throws the phone down.

INT. NORTON BEDROOM. EVENING.

Bill sits up in bed, reading. Beth lay beside him, staring at the wall, concerned.

BETH  
Something's going on. With Molly  
and Jack.

BILL  
What do you mean?

BETH  
She says the congressman is helping  
with this investigation, but... I  
know her. The way she's acting,  
something's not right.

BILL  
How should she be acting?

BETH  
Think about it: Suddenly they're  
going to church with us, and now  
they want to leave the country and  
go to Haiti? Don't you think it's  
weird?

BILL  
Joey was supposed to be gone by  
now. They've still got him. I don't  
think there's anything you need to  
worry about. Just be happy for her,  
Beth.

BETH  
This isn't me meddling, Bill. I'm  
really concerned.

Bill shoots her an exasperated look.

BETH (CONT'D)  
She's my sister!

BILL  
And if you want to keep her as your  
sister, you need to stop. I mean  
it, Beth. It's enough.

He clicks off his light. Off Beth, cut to:

EXT. CAMPBELL HOUSE. BACK YARD. DAY.

Molly and Beth sit at the patio table, engrossed in a scrabble game. Joey and his cousins play in the yard.

BETH  
Cammie, be careful!

Beth lays down a word.

BETH (CONT'D)  
Re-swung. 43 points.

MOLLY  
Wait, how is that a word?

BETH  
Yesterday I swung a bat. Today, I re-swung the same bat.

They both crack up.

MOLLY  
I don't think so! I'm definitely challenging you.

She glances over at Joey, who is kicking his feet in the pool, distant.

BETH  
Any news on the DCS investigation?

MOLLY  
(casually)  
Yeah, it's coming along. Curt Golding has been great. He said he should know more by the time we get back from the trip.

The phone rings. Molly answers.

MOLLY (CONT'D)  
Hello? Oh, Hi. She certainly is here, she's cheating at scrabble as we speak.  
(off Beth's look)  
Your hubby.

Beth takes the phone, grabs her empty glass and heads inside.

BETH  
Hi, hon...

INT. CAMPBELL HOUSE. KITCHEN. CONTINUING.

BETH  
(into phone)  
You were picking up the passport. I  
still have to stop at the post  
office.  
(listens)  
Alright, okay. But I need the  
address. Hold on...

Beth opens a drawer, searching for a pen. She lifts a stack  
of mail, and notices a bank letter.

CLOSE on the letter, *confirming a wire transfer for  
\$1,953,000.*

Beth freezes, shocked. Suddenly Molly enters and Beth quickly  
drops the letter. But she's caught.

BETH (CONT'D)  
(into phone)  
Let me call you from the car, Bill.

She hangs up, trying to recover.

BETH (CONT'D)  
I was looking for a pen.

MOLLY  
By the fridge.

An awkward beat.

BETH  
What's going on?

MOLLY  
What do you mean?

BETH  
What do you need two million  
dollars for?

MOLLY  
Excuse me for asking, but is that  
any of your business?

BETH  
Molly, I know something is going  
on, just tell me.

MOLLY  
Why, Beth? Why does everyone have  
to tell you everything?

BETH

Don't be so dramatic. I'm only trying to keep you from doing something you'll regret.

MOLLY

Of course you are.

BETH

I want to know what you're doing with that money. I want to know why you're going to Haiti.

A beat.

MOLLY

Jack offered the money to Rip Porter. We were trying to buy our son back. That's why we needed two million dollars.

Beth looks at her, taken aback.

MOLLY (CONT'D)

He turned it down.

BETH

Oh. I didn't even think--

MOLLY

But it doesn't matter now, because the congressman is working it out. So just relax, crazy sister.

BETH

It's just that... if it were me, I'd consider running. And you haven't even mentioned it.

MOLLY

Of course I thought about it. Believe me, I've thought about a lot worse than that. But don't worry. Nobody's running anywhere.

BETH

You swear?

MOLLY

Yes, I swear. Don't you think I'd tell you if I was going to leave forever?

BETH

I'd hope so.

MOLLY  
Okay, then. Anything else?

Beth studies Molly's face, then smiles with relief.

BETH  
No.

EXT. PORTER HOUSE. DAY.

A POV as Rip comes out of the house in his work uniform, gets into the Silverado, drives off. The reveal: Allyson sits in her car at the end of the street, watching.

A TIME CUT: Allyson walks up to the front door, knocks. A moment, then, Wendy's voice from inside.

WENDY (O.C.)  
Who is it?

ALLYSON  
It's Allyson Bower, Mrs. Porter.

WENDY (O.C.)  
I'm sorry... I can't see you right now--

ALLYSON  
Mrs. Porter, please open the door.

A moment, then, the door is pulled back. Allyson stops.

What she sees: Wendy's face is a horrid patchwork of cuts and bruises, stitches, surmounted by a blood-stained bandage on her nose.

Allyson stares at Wendy, shocked.

ALLYSON (CONT'D)  
(firmly)  
There is a way out of this for you, Wendy. Rip will go away, you'll keep your son. He'll be safe.

Wendy stands motionless. Finally:

WENDY  
No. I'm not giving up on my husband.

She slowly turns and closes the door behind her.

INT. NORTON HOUSE. KITCHEN. MORNING.

Beth sits alone with a cup of coffee, staring out the kitchen window, lost in troubled thought.

INT. CAMPBELL HOUSE. PARLOR. DAY.

Packed suitcases stand ready to go. Molly reviews the artifacts of her life. Her eyes fall on the family photos on the end table.

JACK  
(entering)  
Money's transferred. Our photos are backed up on the jump drive, and all the important stuff is scanned into the laptop.

Molly takes a deep breath.

JACK (CONT'D)  
Beth ask any more questions?

MOLLY  
No, I think she believed me.

JACK  
(realizing)  
Gus. What do we do about Gus?

MOLLY  
Josephina's taking care of him for four days. After that...

JACK  
After that we're supposed to be back.

MOLLY  
She'll find him a good home.

Jack scans the living room one last time.

JACK  
I wish we had more time. A couple more weeks and I could have figured out a way to sell the house.

MOLLY  
It doesn't matter, Jack.

He looks away, conflicted.

MOLLY (CONT'D)  
Why don't you go check on Joey?

Jack nods, heads upstairs.

INT. CAMPBELL HOUSE. JOEY'S BEDROOM. LATER.

Joey sits on his bed, doleful. Jack watches him from the doorway for a moment.

JACK  
What's wrong, kiddo?

JOEY  
Are you my real Dad?

Jack looks scared for a moment, glances downstairs, then looks back at Joey.

JACK  
What do you think?

JOEY  
I think you are.

JACK  
Why?

JOEY  
Ummm, you take care of me, and you taught me to tie my shoes, and to play baseball...

JACK  
And I changed your diapers, too.  
That was gross.  
(Joey giggles)  
And what else? What else do I do?

Joey thinks.

JACK (CONT'D)  
"High and low, near and far?..."

JOEY  
You love me.

JACK  
That's right, pal. That's the most important thing a mom and dad can do.

JOEY  
So why did Rip say he was my dad?

JACK  
Listen, this might be a little confusing, but... Wendy is the person who gave birth to you.  
(MORE)

JACK (CONT'D)

But right after you were born, your mother and I met you. And we loved you so much, that we became your mommy and daddy.

JOEY

Like Robbie Elwood? He has two Mom and Dads.

JACK

That's right. We adopted you. And that means we're your real parents. Forever.

JOEY

So I'm gonna stay here with you and Mommy?

JACK

Do you want to?

Joey nods his head.

JACK (CONT'D)

Then yes. We'll stay together. No matter what. How's that sound?

Jack takes his son into his arms.

INT. NORTON LIVING ROOM. DAY.

The kids are playing a video game.

BILL

Kids, let's go. Everyone in the car.

Bill goes to the foot of the stairs.

BILL (CONT'D)

Beth, come on! We're gonna miss the plane.

INT. NORTON BEDROOM. DAY.

Beth is huddled with the phone.

BETH

I'll be right down!  
(into the phone)

CURTIS (V.O.)

I'd like to speak with the congressman, please. Curtis Golding.

INT. JACK'S MERCEDES. MOVING. DAY.

Jack grips the steering wheel, eyes fixed on the road ahead. Molly watches in the rearview mirror as their home disappears behind them.

INT. MIAMI AIRPORT. DAY.

The Campbells and Nortons wait in the security line. Jack's eyes dart to closed-circuit cameras, to policemen chatting nearby. One of them answers a call on his radio. Jack watches him carefully. The policemen head off. Jack relaxes. Molly notices Beth staring at her. She smiles. Beth looks away. As they make their way through metal detectors:

INT. AIRPLANE. DAY

The Campbells and Nortons are seated in coach. Jack and Molly eyeball the crew. Bill notices that Beth is anxious.

BILL  
Don't worry, its a short flight.

Beth smiles stiffly at him as the Airbus rumbles down the runway, engines whining.

Jack and Molly are pressed into their seats as the plane takes off, Joey nestled between them. They each hold Joey's hand, their faces flooded with relief. Then:

Thumping Haitian hip-hop takes us to:

EXT. DOWNTOWN PORT-AU-PRINCE. DAY.

Two million people, teeming with life, fetid with flamingo colors and feckless energy.

The Campbells, Nortons and other missionaries make their way through the throng of beggars, taxi men, soldiers and police toward a waiting bus.

Jack and Molly shepherd Joey as ragged hucksters press on them with plump plastic bags of drinking water, baskets, handfuls of pastel fruit.

EXT. PORT-AU-PRINCE OUTSKIRTS. DAY

A tap-tap bus painted in rainbow colors climbs a steep mountain road. The slopes are crowded with shantytowns.

INT. TAP-TAP. DAY.

The Campbells and Nortons look out through the filthy windows. Steering the bus through traffic is Jesper; young, Haitian, always smiling.

JESPER  
(heavy accent)  
God give you a good trip, yes?

BILL  
Yes, a great trip. Thank you.

JESPER  
God is everything to people in my country.

Beth watches Molly and Jack. Molly looks over and catches her gaze. Beth glances away. After a moment, Molly gets up and joins her sister.

MOLLY  
(sits)  
Are you okay?

BETH  
I'm fine.

Molly takes Beth's hand, trying to connect.

MOLLY  
I love you, sis.

Beth turns away and looks out the window.

EXT. ORPHANAGE. DAY.

The bus rolls up to a gated compound: a church, brick buildings encircled by concrete walls topped with razor wire. Guarding the wrought-iron gate are armed Haitians, AK-47's slung over their shoulders.

INT. TAP-TAP. DAY.

Jack and Molly look anxiously at the guards. One barks at Jesper in Creole, signals the others to open the gate.

Jesper turns with a big smile.

JESPER  
We're here, friends.

INT. ORPHANAGE. DUSK.

Jesper leads the group through the orphanage, where dozens of children play with a few ragged toys.

BILL

I thought the church sent toys and clothes to the kids.

JESPER

Kids here get lots of toys and clothes. Much more than the children on the streets. The orphans share their blessings.

(smiles)

Come. I show you to your quarters.

INT. PORTER HOUSE. PARLOR. NIGHT.

Wendy is straightening up the living room. The screen door opens and Rip comes in. He stands in the doorway for a long moment, his head held low.

WENDY

Not workin today?

Rip moves carefully toward her.

RIP

I guess you'll be callin the cops?

Wendy shakes her head.

WENDY

No, Rip. No more cops.

Rip takes this in.

RIP

You leavin' then?

WENDY

No.

She walks to him, looks him directly in the eye.

WENDY (CONT'D)

I love you, Rip Porter. I believe in you. And I'm never giving up on you. Never.

Rip's eyes well up, full of shame.

RIP

I didn't mean for this to happen again.

(MORE)

RIP (CONT'D)

I'm feelin all turned around, baby.  
There's supposed to be signs,  
things are supposed to be better,  
but...

(breaking)

I just want to be a family. That's  
all.

WENDY

Me, too. But if we're gonna be a  
family, there's something you gotta  
do.

Wendy reaches into her purse and hands Rip a piece of paper.

RIP

What's this?

WENDY

Father Logan's number.

Rip buries his face in her shoulder and cries.

INT. ORPHANAGE. GUEST ROOM. NIGHT.

Molly and Jack lie awake in bed, sweltering under a ceiling  
fan. Joey sleeps between them.

JACK

(whispers)

Hey.

MOLLY

(sad smile)

Hey.

JACK

You okay?

MOLLY

Maybe I was wrong. Is this crazy?

JACK

No, you were right. If it had been  
up to me, we'd be packing Joey up  
for Ohio right now. This is going  
to work.

MOLLY

You promise? We're gonna be okay?

JACK

Yeah, honey. We'll be okay.

Molly smiles, then closes her eyes.

EXT. LIVING HOPE MISSION. DAY-CARE BUILDING. DAY.

A cinderblock-and-timber shell on the far edge of the compound. Molly and Beth are helping to whitewash the half-finished walls. Joey and the Norton kids play with the threadbare mission orphans in the courtyard nearby. Molly smiles at her sister from under the brim of a straw hat.

MOLLY  
I'm really glad we came.

Beth looks like she wants to say something more, but instead:

BETH  
Good.

MOLLY  
The people here are lovely. They have nothing, but they're so joyful. It feels good to be helping.

Beth keeps her eyes on her work, doesn't say anything. Molly watches her, gauging.

MOLLY (CONT'D)  
Anyway, you should be proud of the work you're doing.

BETH  
Tell you what, when we get back, why don't you join us? We meet once a month.

Molly nods, giving her best smile.

MOLLY  
I would love that. Count me in.

Beth looks up, searching Molly's eyes for sincerity.

From across the compound, a brightly-colored taxi pulls up. Jack, Bill and some other missionaries get out, carrying bags filled with pickings from the marketplace. The Haitian children are immediately upon them, carry off the bags, shouting, to the refectory. Bill laughs at the women's paint-splattered overalls.

BILL  
You get any of that on the building?

BETH  
Hey, we've been doing hard labor while you've been out shopping.

BILL

Believe me, you don't want to go downtown on your own. We were stopped three times by militia and about a hundred by peddlers.

JACK

Is Joey all right?

MOLLY

Yes, the kids have been running around non-stop.

Jack spots him chasing a dog and a clutch of Haitian children around the courtyard, waves.

JACK

Well, don't let him get too far off.

He takes her aside as Bill joins Beth on the building site.

MOLLY

How was it in town?

JACK

Crazy, in a chaotic and distinctly dangerous way.

MOLLY

What about the taxi?

JACK

I arranged for one to pick us up at the gate at five AM. The flight's at six-thirty.

Molly looks up to see Beth watching them. She drops her voice.

MOLLY

Are you sure he'll be here?

JACK

I gave him a hundred bucks in Haitian currency and told him I'd exchange it for dollars when he gets us to the airport. Believe me, he'll be here. With a little luck, tomorrow night, we'll be at the Sofitel in Geneva.

INT. ORPHANAGE DINING HALL. EARLY EVENING.

Molly and Jack play cards with Beth and Bill. The children, both orphans and missionary kids, chase Jesper around the room, laughing.

MOLLY  
Sorry, Beth, I should have saved you a spade.

BETH  
It's okay, I'm getting tired anyway. Why don't we call it a night? See you at seven for breakfast?

JACK  
Actually, Joey's a bit worn out today. I think the heat is getting to him. We were thinking we'd sleep in and meet up with you guys when you get back from town.

Beth knows he's lying, and the anger flashes behind her eyes.

BETH  
Oh.  
(looking to Molly)  
Are you sure?

MOLLY  
Is that okay?

BETH  
Of course. Whatever you want.

MOLLY  
We'll see you at lunch then.

Betrayed, Beth offers her best smile and quickly gets up from the table. Molly stands to hug her.

MOLLY (CONT'D)  
Love you, sis.

She closes her eyes, hugging her sister for the last time.

INT. ORPHANAGE. CHAPEL. LATER.

Beth sits in a pew in the little whitewashed sanctuary. She prays, desperately.

BETH  
Dear God, be with me now. Help me... help me to do what's right.  
(MORE)

BETH (CONT'D)  
Use me Lord; give me the light and  
strength to do your will.

She breaks into tears.

BETH (CONT'D)  
Give me light and strength to do  
your will...

Her cell phone rests on the bench next to her.

INT. DEPT. OF CHILDREN'S SERVICES. OHIO. EVENING.

Allyson is packing up for the night. She sees the light  
blinking on her answering machine. She hits the button.

BETH (V.O.)  
Mrs. Bower, this is Beth Norton,  
Molly Campbell's sister. Joey's  
aunt.  
(pause)  
This is a hard phone call to make.

Allyson listens, suddenly very concerned.

EXT. ORPHANAGE. SUNSET.

The sun is setting. Jack, Molly and Joey walk around the  
orphanage yard. Jack and Molly hold hands, close.

MOLLY  
So... Mr. Sanders?

JACK  
Yes, Tracy?

MOLLY  
(trying it out)  
Walt. Walter. This is going to take  
some getting used to.

Bill sees them, heads over. He seems a little distracted.

BILL  
Have you guys seen Beth?

JACK  
No, I thought she went to bed.  
Everything okay?

BILL  
Oh, I'm sure. I'll find her.

INT. ORPHANAGE. CHAPEL. LATER.

Bill enters, finds Beth sitting alone. She hears the sound, looks up at him, tears in her eyes.

BILL  
 Would you like to tell me what's  
 going on?

BETH  
 Molly lied. Curt Golding isn't  
 helping them.  
 (looking up)  
 They used us, Bill. They used the  
 church. This trip. They're running  
 away with Joey.

BILL  
 Good.

BETH  
*What?*

BILL  
 Good. I'm glad they are.

BETH  
 You *knew*?

BILL  
 It's what I'd have done.

BETH  
 Bill, this is crazy. It's wrong,  
 you know it's wrong. If God wanted  
 them to have Joey, he would have...

BILL  
 Beth, stop it!

Beth recoils, shocked at his tone.

BILL (CONT'D)  
 You don't get to decide what God's  
 will is. You want Joey to be  
 beaten, maybe killed by this man?  
 The courts are wrong! What other  
 option do they have?

Beth is speechless, her face falling.

BILL (CONT'D)  
 What else is this trip for, if not  
 to save children?  
 (softer)  
 (MORE)

BILL (CONT'D)  
 I know you'll miss your sister, but  
 this isn't your choice. We have to  
 let them go.

She looks up at him, guilty.

BILL (CONT'D)  
 What? What did you do?

BETH  
 I called Allyson Bower.

Bill stares at her, incredulous. Then he stands quickly and  
 runs out of the room.

EXT. ORPHANAGE. NIGHT.

Jack and Molly watch Jesper showing soccer tricks to Joey.  
 Bill rushes up.

BILL  
 Jack, you need to get your family  
 out of here. Right now.

Jack bolts across the yard for Joey.

MOLLY  
 What? Why?

Behind Bill, Beth slowly walks from the chapel, keeping her  
 distance. Molly sees her face, eyes blurred with tears.  
 Ashamed.

MOLLY (CONT'D)  
 (realizing)  
 Beth...

BILL  
 I'm sorry.

Jack picks up Joey, heads back for Molly.

MOLLY  
 (yelling at Beth)  
 How could you? How could you do  
 this?

Beth is sobbing now. Bill is talking quickly and quietly to  
 Jesper, who nods.

JOEY  
 (scared)  
 What's happening?

JACK  
It's okay, kiddo.  
(taking Molly's arm)  
Molly, come on. Quietly. Back to  
the room.

Molly sees lights at the compound entrance. A truck and a jeep drive in.

MOLLY  
Jack, it's too late.

Jack looks, desperate. Bill takes something from Jesper and heads for Jack.

BILL  
(handing him keys)  
Jesper's jeep. Right over there.

JACK  
(grateful, already moving)  
Thank you.

MOLLY  
Our passports...the money.

JACK  
We don't have time. Come on.

Jack puts Joey down, they head toward the jeep.

JOEY  
I'm scared.

Jack stops, kneels in front of Joey.

JACK  
Joey, you know I'd never let  
anything happen to you, right?

Joey nods.

JACK (CONT'D)  
I need you to trust me, kiddo.

MOLLY  
Just breathe, baby.

JACK  
(walking again)  
We're just going out to dinner.

Molly throws a parting glare at Beth, who buries herself in Bill's shoulder.

EXT. ORPHANAGE. GATE. CONTINUOUS.

Jack, Molly and Joey head toward Jesper's jeep, as calmly as they can. Across the way, a Haitian soldier steps out of the truck. He says a few words and all of his men follow toward the center of the compound.

JACK  
It's okay. We're okay. Nice and easy.

They climb into Jesper's Jeep.

INT. JESPER'S JEEP. CONTINUOUS.

Jack starts the engine and drives slowly to the gate.

EXT. ORPHANAGE. GATE. CONTINUOUS.

A Haitian guard separates from his colleagues and stops Jack.

JACK  
(rolling down his window)  
Hi, we're heading out for a couple of hours.

GUARD  
Just a moment, please.

The guard looks up toward the truck, sees no one.

JACK  
(looking at his watch)  
We're having a late dinner.

The guard looks down at Jack, then glances at Molly and Joey. Then back into the compound. Jack pulls out his wallet and \$50.

JACK (CONT'D)  
Please. We're running late.

The guard considers, then shakes Jack's hand, taking the money.

GUARD  
Have a good evening, sir.

JACK  
Thanks.

Relieved, Jack rolls up the window and starts to pull forward. Then someone in the compound yells toward the gate in French. The guard quickly pulls his gun, points it at Jack.

JOEY

Dad!

Jack looks at the guard, considers his options. He turns back to the road, takes a deep breath. But before he can act, Molly puts a hand on his arm.

MOLLY

Jack, no.

Jack meets Molly's gaze. She shakes her head. A moment.

Finally Jack relents.

MOLLY (CONT'D)

(turning to the back)

Joey, come here.

Joey crawls up to the front. Molly holds him. Guards quickly surround the jeep.

EXT. AIRPORT RUNWAY. HAITI.

Molly, Jack and Joey are led like criminals across the tarmac to a waiting plane.

INT. AIRPLANE. NIGHT.

Joey sits in the seat between Jack and Molly. Molly keeps her arm tightly around her son. She looks to Jack, fear in her eyes.

Jack reaches over and takes her hand. He looks to her with admiration.

They ride together in silence.

INT. MIAMI AIRPORT. NIGHT.

Deep in the bowels of the airport, the police lead the Campbells down a long, echoing service corridor. Molly, Jack, and Joey cling to each other.

INT. MIAMI INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT. CUSTOMS SECTION. DAY.

Jack and Molly sit in an empty, featureless holding room. A worn wooden bench, an iron door. They have been there all night.

A moment, then a key rattles in the lock. The door opens and a Customs officer enters.

He steps aside - then Allyson Bower comes into the room. The officer leaves. Jack and Molly look up at her, surprised.

ALLYSON  
Leaving the country isn't the way to handle this. You could both go to jail.

JACK  
I want my phone. I'm calling our lawyer.

ALLYSON  
You don't need to do that.

She takes a legal form from her briefcase, holds it out.

ALLYSON (CONT'D)  
This is an amendment to the adoption.

They glance at it. Then:

ALLYSON (CONT'D)  
Mr. Porter signed it. This time, I witnessed the signature.

They stare at her, then at each other.

JACK  
I don't... Why?

ALLYSON  
He assaulted his wife. She agreed not to press charges if he signed the adoption papers. This would be his third strike. He gave up Joey to save himself.

Jack and Molly gape at her, unbelieving.

MOLLY  
Does this mean--?

ALLYSON  
The adoption is now final.

She hands a copy to Molly.

ALLYSON (CONT'D)  
(sincerely)  
I'm so sorry for what your family has been through. And for my part in it. But no one can ever take your son from you again.

As they look at the paper, the signature, cut to:

Joey racing headlong down the hall of the detention center.

INT. MIAMI INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT. CUSTOMS SECTION. DAY.

Jack and Molly are hurrying toward him.

JOEY  
Mommy! Daddy!

He runs straight into his parents' arms. They hold each other, hug for a long time. Then: Molly looks up as a figure approaches: Wendy Porter. Her face is still bandaged. Molly stands.

MOLLY  
You're Mrs. Porter?

WENDY  
Yes.

Molly glances at Jack.

JACK  
We'll be right over here.

Jack takes Joey down the hall. Molly and Wendy look at each other a moment. Then:

WENDY  
You're just like I imagined you.

MOLLY  
Mrs. Porter... I want to thank you for what you did. I know the kind of sacrifice you're making.

WENDY  
I...don't think you do.

This stops Molly.

WENDY (CONT'D)  
I've lived with losing Joey for five years. When I saw him again, I knew in my heart I was his mother. And I gave him up anyway. Twice. The first time was for me. This time, it was for him.

MOLLY  
Thank you.

WENDY  
You've done a good job raising him, and I'm grateful to you.

(MORE)

WENDY (CONT'D)

But I'd like him to know that he has two mothers. One who loves him enough not to give him up. And one who loves him enough that she had to.

MOLLY

I'll make sure he knows that.

A moment between them.

MOLLY (CONT'D)

If there's anything I can do.  
(eyeing her stitches)  
Maybe we could help you...

Wendy shakes her head.

WENDY

Rip's just not ready to have a son.  
(she forces a smile)  
May I say good-bye to him now?

Off Molly, cut to:

Down the hall, Wendy approaches Joey. He looks up at Jack, who urges him to go to her. She kneels, touches his face, his hair.

WENDY (CONT'D)

Joey... it was real nice having you come stay with us. I enjoyed our visits so much, getting to know you, seeing what a big, handsome boy you are...

JOEY

What happened to your face?

WENDY

I got hurt. But I'm gonna be okay.

JOEY

Am I gonna come see you again?

WENDY

No, no, sweetheart. We had our last visit. You're not gonna come back anymore.

JOEY

How come?

WENDY

(tears now)  
Remember the dandelion? How we had to set the wish free?

He nods.

WENDY (CONT'D)  
 (softly)  
 Sometimes people are like that,  
 too, baby.

Wendy kisses Joey, her lips lingering a long moment on his forehead.

WENDY (CONT'D)  
 You remember me, now, okay? Try to  
 remember the good times we had.  
 Okay, little boy?

Joey nods. Then Wendy stands.

WENDY (CONT'D)  
 (to Jack and Molly)  
 Thank you. Thank you both.

They watch as Wendy walks down the corridor and out of their lives.

EXT. HOWARD PARK PLAYGROUND. DUSK.

Sunset through the palm trees. Joey plays alone on the jungle-gym. Molly sits on the bench, letting the last rays warm her face. The shouts and laughter of children: Cammie and the twins, as they race onto the playground. Then Beth is walking toward her sister, solemn, cowed.

BETH  
 Thanks for calling me.

MOLLY  
 Sit down.

She does, in silence. A moment, then:

BETH  
 Molly, I've been thinking for weeks  
 about how to apologize to you. What  
 I did... it was unforgiveable. I  
 betrayed you. I'm so sorry.

MOLLY  
 What if you hadn't made the call?  
 We might've gotten away with it;  
 disappeared, and lived in shadows  
 the rest of our lives.  
 (she turns to Beth)  
 We betrayed each other.

Beth stares at her, unsure.

MOLLY (CONT'D)

But here we are. Me and you, sis.  
Despite everything, we love each  
other anyway. That's what makes us  
family.

We hold on them, sitting side by side, as they watch their  
children play. Then, we cut to:

An azure sky, perfect puffball clouds.

EXT. PALM BEACH MARINA. DAY.

Jack, Molly and Joey load onto the deck of their sailboat.  
Joey looks back at his mom.

JOEY

Are you sure, Mommy?

MOLLY

You're driving, aren't you? I  
wouldn't miss it for the world.

She climbs aboard.

TIME CUT TO:

The Crocker sloop skims the silk-smooth surface of the inner  
harbor.

EXT. CAMPBELL BOAT. DAY.

In the cockpit, Jack holds the tiller, Joey's hands between  
his. Opposite, Molly looks on in head scarf and sunglasses.

JACK

Okay, captain, come about.

Joey glances over at his mother. She smiles.

Jack takes his hands off the tiller; Joey pulls it around.  
The big sail luffs a moment as the sloop heels over - Joey  
keeps it steady - and then the spinnaker catches the wind. We  
hold on them as the boat slides out past the breakwater  
toward the ocean, endless and inviting beyond.