

THE LAST GOOD DAY

Written by

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EXT. AL'S TRAILER, DRIVEWAY - DAY

CASEY (3), a sticky ball of energy, careens toward a stagnant green pond as LAUREL (16), a sharp vibrant teen, dives at her, grabbing the toddler's OVERALLS just before she tumbles in.

Their mother, LAURALEE (30s), frazzled and tense, loads up on TOTE BAGS and SUPPLIES from her trunk.

LAURALEE

You guys want carrot sticks or fruit snacks? You know what, I'll pack both. Who knows what your dad eats. Probably fifty boxes of Lucky Charms crammed in a linen closet.

FRANKLIN (9), a miniature nerd, looks up from his book.

FRANKLIN

Oooh, Lucky Charms!

HENRY (13), sullen and silent, pipes up from under his HOODIE.

HENRY

He eats all the marshmallows out of it.

FRANKLIN

Ew.

Laurel hands Casey to her mother, who puts her down to keep packing. Casey wanders away toward an ABANDONED SANDBOX that is definitely a litter box for the local cats.

LAUREL

(sarcastic)

Why thank you for saving your little sister from certain death, Laurel. We would all be dead without your constant vigilance.

LAURALEE

Thank you, Laurel.

FRANKLIN

You know, between 1995 and 2005, 147 children under the age of 6 drowned in a residential pond.

LAUREL

I guess I just made it 146 then.

FRANKLIN

That's not how statistics work!

Lauralee holds up a box of MAC & CHEESE to Casey.

LAURALEE
Do you want mac & cheese?

CASEY
Mac and cheese!

LAUREL
Does Dad know how to boil water?

LAURALEE
He can cook. Kind of.

Lauralee tosses the box back into the trunk. Casey pulls a LARGE BONE out of the sand.

CASEY
Dinosaur!

FRANKLIN
What is that? Is it human?

Laurel extracts the bone from Casey's grip.

LAUREL
No, because this is not an episode of SVU, Franklin. It's a rib.

LAURALEE
See? Your dad can cook ribs.

FRANKLIN
I'm not eating that. Fifteen percent of greenhouse gas emissions come from livestock farming.

HENRY
You eat chicken nuggets.

FRANKLIN
Chickens have very small brains.

HENRY
You have a very small brain.

FRANKLIN
Hey!

LAUREL
(to Henry)
You should talk, Mr. "I Have a D in Social Studies."

Henry tries to SMACK Laurel's arm. She DODGES and tries to SLAP back at him. Henry picks up Franklin to use as a shield.

FRANKLIN

Child abuse!

LAURALEE

Enough. All of you. Your dad agreed to a visit today and that's the best we've done in three years so let's not screw it up until at least two hours in.

LAUREL

You mean that's the best *he's* done in three years.

LAURALEE

I'm serious, Laurel. Adjust your attitude before we get inside.
(to the other kids)
You guys hear me? Yeah, your dad is an asshole sometimes, and yeah he walked out on us, but he's the only dad you've got. So we're gonna meet him where he is, which is here, in this single-wide trailer with a boneyard out front and what looks to be a pet cemetery out back and you're gonna have a wonderful freaking time.

FRANKLIN

We're not sleeping over, are we? I didn't bring my neck pillow.

LAURALEE

God, no. I'll be back at five.

HENRY

What if there's an emergency? You'll have to come get us.

LAURALEE

Don't you go concocting an "emergency" just to get out of going to your dad's. If anything pops up, Laurel will handle it.

LAUREL

Great. Thanks.

LAURALEE

You're a better mom than I was at your age.

LAUREL

I'm not a mom!

LAURALEE

I know, and I'm hoping that watching your brothers and sister will keep it that way. All right, we're going in.

Lauralee takes a fortifying BREATH, then knocks on the battered ALUMINUM DOOR.

AL (late 30s), grizzled and cigarette dangling, comes to the screen door in a pair of graying BRIEFS, rubbing his beard. He does a double-take at Lauralee and the kids.

AL

Oh shit, is that today? Hang on.

The kids look at Lauralee.

LAURALEE

I know. Give him a chance.

INT. AL'S TRAILER, LIVING ROOM - DAY

Al opens the door and FLINGS his arms wide in welcome while kicking BEER CANS under a SHREDDED RECLINER.

AL

Come on in. The place is a little messy. Maid's day off.

The kids shuffle in reluctantly. Franklin whispers to Laurel.

FRANKLIN

What is that smell?

LAUREL

Unwashed loser. And pot.

Lauralee gives Al a LOOK.

AL

What? I'm mostly ready.

LAURALEE

Fine. It's fine. The kids are pretty much self-sufficient.

(MORE)

LAURALEE (CONT'D)

Except Casey, but Laurel's great with her. They all are. I mean, they're great kids. You're all gonna have a great day together.

LAUREL

So great.

Lauralee swipes a bunch of STEMS AND SEEDS off the coffee table and puts down the kids' stuff.

LAURALEE

I packed snacks and games and coloring books and some extra Magic Treehouse books for Franklin since he goes through them so fast and a change of clothes for Casey in case she has an accident.

AL

What kind of accident are we talking here?

HENRY

Like if she shits her pants.

CASEY

Shits her pants!

LAURALEE

Henry!

(to Al)

She loves the word S-H-I-T.

AL

Yeah, me too kid.

CASEY

(giggling)

Shit.

Lauralee picks up Casey and shows her a SAD EMPTY BIRDCAGE hanging in the corner.

LAURALEE

Do you see a birdie?

CASEY

No birdie!

LAURALEE

What does a birdie say?

CASEY

Tweet tweet!

LAURALEE

You have to distract her when she gets fixated on that word.

Lauralee holds Casey out to Al. He stares at her uncomprehending. She sets Casey on the filthy carpet instead.

LAURALEE (CONT'D)

Okay. Looks like you're all set here. Right?

FRANKLIN

Are we up to date on tetanus shots?

Casey picks up an unwrapped CONDOM from under the couch and brings it to Laurel.

CASEY

Balloon please.

LAUREL

Oh my god!

Laurel grabs the condom from Casey and throws it in the SINK.

AL

Don't put it there, that's how the disposal got fucked up last time.

Laurel holds out her condom-touching hand to her mother.

LAUREL

Look at this! It's disgusting! You can't leave us here!

Lauralee hesitates.

LAURALEE

Oh wow. Jeez. You are not making this easy, Alan. Okay, maybe this was a good enough start. You can get your shit together and we'll try again in a couple of weeks.

AL

My shit is 100% together! They'll be fine. Nobody ever died from a little dirt.

Franklin examines the couch.

FRANKLIN

What about fleas? They carry typhus. You can die from typhus.

AL

I got rid of all the fleas. Those are probably just bedbugs.

Franklin jumps up from the couch in disgust. Lauralee opens her mouth, shakes her head, closes it again.

LAURALEE

It's fine. Totally fine. Think of it as an adventure. Like camping!

Henry knocks over a stack of empty CEREAL BOXES.

HENRY

Can I make a bonfire?

AL

Yeah!

LAURALEE

No! You guys need to be on your best behavior, no matter what happens. Got it?

The kids grumble in agreement. Lauralee pokes a finger at Al.

LAURALEE (CONT'D)

I'm entrusting you with the kids and they are everything to me. So you take care of every single one of them as if they were your own.

FRANKLIN

I might point out--

Laurel flicks Franklin in the ear. He yelps.

AL

I will. Jeez.

LAURALEE

Okay. Today is a new leaf for all of us. You guys are gonna have so much fun that pretty soon you'll be asking to hang out on weekends. Henry, don't forget to tell Dad about your soccer game. And Laurel, I bet he'd love to hear about the French club trip. And Franklin...

(MORE)

LAURALEE (CONT'D)

well, I'm sure Franklin will tell Dad everything he ever wanted to know about every subject in the universe.

FRANKLIN

I read a wikipedia article on the infrared paradox this morning.

LAURALEE

Be good to each other. I'll be back around five.

Lauralee kisses each of them, gives one last worried look, then leaves the trailer.

The kids and Al stare at each other in silence.

AL

I forgot something outside.

Al sprints after Lauralee.

EXT. AL'S TRAILER, DRIVEWAY - DAY

Al runs up to the driver's side window of Lauralee's car.

AL

Maybe this isn't such a good idea.

LAURALEE

Why not.

AL

They don't wanna be here.

LAURALEE

And who's fault is that? Look at the way you live! You couldn't even pick up the used condoms before your own children got here?

AL

It wasn't used! I didn't even get it up that night!

Lauralee takes a calming breath and grips the steering wheel.

LAURALEE

The other day, Franklin asked me if you left us because he talked too much. Do you understand?

(MORE)

LAURALEE (CONT'D)

They think it's *their* fault that you abandoned your family. So I don't care what the fuck you do with them today, as long as you show them that you're still their dad, you still love them, and you want to be a part of their lives. Got it?

AL

Yeah.

LAURALEE

And vacuum your fucking house.

Lauralee pulls away, waving cheerfully out the window.

INT. ALAN'S TRAILER, LIVING ROOM - DAY

Al comes inside to find Laurel and Henry head-down on their PHONES. Franklin reads in the recliner. Casey watches a toddler video on a TABLET. Al pokes around in their stuff.

AL

Your mom didn't happen to pack a vacuum cleaner...

FRANKLIN

You don't have a vacuum? How do you clean?

LAUREL

He doesn't. That's why it smells so bad.

AL

Hey, you don't have to start busting my balls two seconds after I let you in. I clean all the time. It's just that you kids came on a day between cleanings.

Franklin pokes at the STUFFING creeping out of the recliner.

FRANKLIN

Your chair has a lot of holes in it.

AL

The dog did that.

HENRY

(not looking up)
I don't see a dog.

AL

That's cause I shot him and buried him in the woods for fucking up my favorite chair.

Franklin's eyes go wide.

AL (CONT'D)

I'm kidding. Jesus, kid. You're wound tighter than a two dollar watch.

FRANKLIN

(relieved)

So the dog's alive?

AL

No.

LAUREL

Oh my god, you can't just tease the little kids. Franklin's sensitive.

AL

(to Franklin)

You're the one we used to catch reading in the bathroom in the middle of the night, right?

FRANKLIN

I would never leave my bed after lights out!

HENRY

That was me.

AL

Oh. Well. Hi.

Al points excitedly at Casey.

AL (CONT'D)

Did you guys know that the little gal there was almost named Anaheim because that's where she was conceived?

HENRY

From what I heard she should have been called Space Mountain.

AL

(chuckles)

What can I say, it's a pretty dark ride.

FRANKLIN

Conceiving a child on a roller coaster is a flagrant safety hazard and a clear violation of the terms of service on your ticket!

AL

Yeah, well your name was almost Museum of Natural History's Neanderthal Exhibit.

FRANKLIN

(moaning)

Oh no. The artifacts...

LAUREL

(to Al)

Now you're being gross on purpose. Could you at least try to be normal?

AL

You sound just like your mother.

LAUREL

I am not like Mom!

HENRY

You're exactly like mom.

FRANKLIN

You're mini-mom.

Laurel SEETHES on the couch. An ancient CUCKOO CLOCK chimes off-key. Casey jumps for the small BROKEN BIRD that pops out.

CASEY

Birdie! Tweet tweet!

AL

Hey, I've got an errand I gotta do so how about you all stay here for a bit. There's plenty of cereal in the towel closet. No milk, but you can use water. It's good dry too. I'll be back in a bit.

FRANKLIN

An errand? I love errands! Is it the grocery store? Or the dry cleaners? Sometimes at our cleaners they let me go in back and watch the steam press guy iron the shirts in one big FOOMF!

LAUREL

Look around. What exactly do you think Dad is getting dry cleaned?

AL

Very funny. Anyways, this is an "adult" errand. No kids allowed.

HENRY

Is it porn?

AL

It's not porn!

HENRY

You said "adult."

AL

I just mean it's only for adults.

LAUREL

A gun club?

HENRY

A strip club.

FRANKLIN

Is it a prostate exam? Those are only for adults over forty.

AL

What the fuck? No. I'm just going to meet the guys at Buzz Eagle's.

LAUREL

That's a bar.

Henry holds up from his phone, already on the Buzz Eagle website.

HENRY

But they serve breakfast.

LAUREL

(getting up)

Well I'm starving.

FRANKLIN

Me too. Do they have cruelty-free eggs?

AL

Wait. Hold on. I told you there's cereal in the closet.

The kids stare at him. Laurel turns to Casey.

LAUREL
Casey, you want pancakes?

CASEY
(screaming)
Pancakes! Pancakes!

Laurel grins. Al grumbles under his breath.

AL
Fine. Get in the car.

The kids perk up. Laurel picks up all their BAGS.

AL (CONT'D)
We're just going to breakfast.

LAUREL
We need all this stuff. Just in case Casey needs a change or if they don't have a food Franklin likes or if somebody spills...

Henry gives her a grin.

LAUREL (CONT'D)
Don't say I sound like Mom!

EXT. BUZZ EAGLE'S AMERICAN DINER, PARKING LOT - DAY

Al's rusty yellow IROC Z skids into a parking spot in a line of pickups. The kids climb over each other to get out.

FRANKLIN
I counted at least nine speed limit violations and one right-of-way infraction.

HENRY
Shut up, it was cool.

LAUREL
Don't tell him to shut up.

HENRY
Okay, Mom.

LAUREL
You little freak--

AL
 Hey, everybody chill out. Okay?
 This is my place so *be cool*.

INT. BUZZ EAGLE'S AMERICAN DINER, ENTRY - DAY

A WAITRESS (20s), but already ground down by life, greets the family at the door.

WAITRESS
 Whoa! You got a big crowd today,
 Al. These your grandkids?

AL
 They're my kids actually.

WAITRESS
 Whoa! Really? How cute! How many
 you need a table for?

AL
 Uh. One, two, three, four... five!

CASEY
 Five!

LAUREL
 Good job counting, buddy.

It's not clear if she's talking to Casey or to Al.

AL
 (to The Waitress)
 You can just slide an extra table
 over with Roy and the guys...

WAITRESS
 Sorry, Al. We can't have minors in
 the bar. You'll have to sit with
 them in the restaurant.

As they pass the bar, Al looks forlornly at his friends, gathered at a long table. ROY (60s), a shaggy mountain man, waves him over.

ROY
 Where you going, Al?

AL
 I gotta sit with my kids.

The boys at the table confer about this new development.

INT. BUZZ EAGLE'S AMERICAN DINER, TABLE - DAY

The bar guys BURST INTO LAUGHTER. Al looks over at his friends to see what's up. The kids read their menus.

FRANKLIN

I want the Belgian waffle. Did you know that it was originally called the Brussels waffle? I guess they had to change it because the sprouts already had that name.

HENRY

You can have two foods with the same first name. French fries. French toast. French dressing.

LAUREL

French press.

AL

French kiss.

The kids stare at him. Laurel shakes her head.

LAUREL

What is wrong with you?

CASEY

Pancakes!

AL

(to Laurel)

You got this under control, right? I'll be right back.

LAUREL

Please tell me you're not going to leave us here and skip out on the bill.

AL

What? No! I just gotta take a leak.

CASEY

Take a leak!

LAUREL

Casey, look at the fan spinning!

HENRY

Cool, it has spiderwebs hanging off it for Halloween.

LAUREL

Those aren't Halloween decorations, bud.

Franklin gulps and holds the menu over his head like an umbrella.

INT. BUZZ EAGLE'S AMERICAN DINER, BAR - DAY

Al slides into a seat next to Roy, STEVE (40s), a paint-spattered Latino, and ULI (40s), a stout Eastern European.

AL

So what'd I miss?

ROY

What's this about your kids?

AL

You know Lauralee, she's always trying to get me to hang out with the "family."

STEVE

I've never seen your kids once in all the time you've lived here.

AL

They don't come too much. I'm busy with work, you know.

ROY

You mean she dumped them on you.

AL

Yeah.

ULI

That bitch.

AL

Well, you know. She asked first.

ULI

Still. She wanted those kids, she should have to take care of them. They're not your responsibility.

ROY

You should ditch them on an exit ramp and leave her a voicemail with instructions where to pick them up.

ULI

Yeah! Or feed them a shit ton of soup and then shake 'em up real good so they puke all over her car when she comes to get 'em.

The guys stare at Uli.

ULI (CONT'D)

What? That's what my dad used to do with us.

AL

I'm not gonna shake my kids, dude. I'm gonna feed them pancakes, take them back to my place, and let them play on their phones until their mom gets back. It'll be so fucking boring that they'll never want to come over again. Problem solved.

The boys TOAST to that plan with their BREAKFAST BEERS. The Waitress comes over.

WAITRESS

Hey, Al. There's a situation over at your table.

AL

This is my table.

The boys TOAST again.

WAITRESS

Your *kids'* table.

AL

I'm sure Laurel's got it handled.

WAITRESS

Yeah, well. Your kids have opened about fifty pull tabs so far. You better be able to cover that, because they're fifty cents each.

Al leaps up from the table.

AL

Fuck!

INT. BUZZ EAGLE'S AMERICAN DINER, TABLE - DAY

The kids gleefully pull open paper PULL TAB games.

FRANKLIN

I got three cherries!

HENRY

I got three bells!

Al runs over and scoops up the stacks of unopened pull tabs.

AL

What the fuck are you doing? These cost money!

LAUREL

We know. Do you think we're stupid? We paid for them.

AL

You're kids, you can't gamble.

Franklin pushes up his glasses.

FRANKLIN

Technically, no. But the state Gambling Commission's Licensing, Regulation, and Enforcement Division tells private businesses to *discourage* minors from opening tabs but it doesn't provide an explicit consequence as long as the minor doesn't try to claim the prize.

AL

What does that mean?

HENRY

It means no one cares, as long as you turn in the winners.

AL

(to Franklin)

I didn't take you for a gambling man.

FRANKLIN

The odds are actually better at pull tabs than any other game of chance. With every card you open, your odds of winning increase, unlike slots which operate on a near-continuum probability in which no event has an effect on the likelihood of upcoming events.

AL

I'm not sure you're my kid, bud.

FRANKLIN

Mom let me do a 23 and Me test and you're definitely my dad. Sorry.

LAUREL

We bought out the rest of the container so we should win all the remaining prizes on the poster.

HENRY

I won twenty-five bucks.

FRANKLIN

There's a hundred and a ten in the pile somewhere too.

Al drops the unopened pull-tabs back on the table.

AL

I guess we better get opening then.

LAUREL

Look! Casey got three gold bars!

AL

Well shit!

CASEY

Well shit!

LAUREL

Dude.

Al pulls all the WINNING TICKETS out of the kids' hands as The Waitress returns with their food.

WAITRESS

Here you go, guys. Pancakes, omelette, chicken fried steak, and a *Brussels* waffle.

AL

Looks like we pulled a few winners today, Kath.

WAITRESS

Al, we aren't supposed to let kids open the pull-tabs.

AL

True. But state Gambling Committee's Liberty and Rehabilitation Division tells private businesses to disparage minors but doesn't provide explicit materials to compensate.

FRANKLIN

That's not right.

WAITRESS

Whatever. Give 'em here.

Al triumphantly hands over the tickets.

AL

(to the kids)

See? We're having a good day. You should tell your mom.

INT. BUZZ EAGLE'S AMERICAN DINER, TABLE - LATER

The kids eat happily. The Waitress comes back with the BILL and with the pull tab winnings in CASH.

Al studies the bill, puts half the CASH WINNINGS down on it, and pockets the rest.

HENRY

What are you doing?

AL

Paying for your big ass breakfast.

HENRY

That's our money. We won it.

AL

You can't legally win this money, pal. It's mine.

FRANKLIN

That's not fair. We bought the tickets and you agreed to cash them in for us.

Al's phone rings. He glances at the cloudy screen and frowns.

LAUREL

That hundred belongs to Casey.

Al puts his phone down and ignores the call.

AL

What?

LAUREL

Casey found the \$100 ticket. It's hers.

AL

What the fuck does a baby need with a hundred dollars?

LAUREL

It doesn't matter if she needs it. It belongs to her.

Al's phone pings with a voicemail. Franklin peers over at it.

FRANKLIN

Why did Uncle Dan leave you a voicemail?

AL

Probably to tell me that the baby also needs a Lamborghini. I gotta take a leak. For real this time.

CASEY

Take a leak!

INT. BUZZ EAGLE'S AMERICAN DINER, BATHROOM - DAY

Al balances the phone on top of the URINAL and plays the voicemail on speaker while peeing.

DAN (O.S.)

Al? Al? Are you there? Pick up dammit. It's Dan. I have to tell you. God, man. It's Lauralee. On the way home from your place she got into an accident.

(Dan's voice breaks)

We lost her. She's fucking gone. I can't believe it. I just talked to her this morning. How the fuck does this happen? Jesus.

(he clears his throat)

Listen. You have to tell the kids about their mom before they hear it someplace else. Tell them... shit, I don't know, just tell them gently. And bring them here. To my mom's house. Okay. Call me when you get this. Jesus Christ.

The message ends. Al's attention wanders. He pees on the wall. Franklin BURSTS into the bathroom.

FRANKLIN

You didn't even ask if I had to go too. Mom always asks if I have to pee when she does. And she waits outside the men's room door the whole time so I can tell her if there are any predators in the bathroom. But this one looks pretty empty. And also you're here. I guess when you have a dad he watches out for bad guys. I don't like peeing in the wall thingy so I'll be over here.

Franklin goes into a STALL and shuts the door.

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

Anyways, I agree with you about the money. If you give it to Casey she'll probably just stick it in her mouth. Time Magazine says that paper money can transmit the flu virus for up to seventeen days. So you're actually doing the right thing not giving money to Casey, but you should probably give it to us though since we bought the tickets and we had a tacit agreement. That's an agreement that's not a legal contract but where both parties know what's expected of them. And you knew what to expect. And so did we. Only it didn't happen, I guess.

Franklin comes out and washes his hands. He sees Al's stricken face.

FRANKLIN (CONT'D)

What? Am I talking too much?

AL

Nothing, buddy. You're great. It's all great. Go back to the table, I'll meet you there in a few minutes.

FRANKLIN

Do you suddenly have to poop? That happens to me sometimes.

(MORE)

FRANKLIN (CONT'D)

I feel like I only have to pee and then I finish and then I suddenly have to poop too. Like a surprise poop. Do you have to surprise poop?

AL

Yeah, bud.

Franklin tries to find some paper towels, but the dispenser is empty. He holds up his hands like a surgeon and heads out.

Al calls Dan.

AL (CONT'D)

Hey. It's me.

(beat)

Yeah, what the fuck? This is some fucked up shit. I literally just talked to her. So, uh. Are you gonna come pick up the kids or...

(beat)

Oh yeah. Sure. I get it. But uh. I was thinking it would be better if they heard it from you or your mom. Me and them don't really--

(beat)

Yeah, I'm their father, but they don't know me from Adam. You're the one who's with them all the time.

(beat)

I *am* a man. But I think it'll be easier for them if they hear it from someone they know.

(beat)

You're damn right, it's easier for me. Lauralee just BOOM dropped these kids on me and now what, I have to ruin their fucking lives? Then I gotta drive ninety goddamn minutes with a bunch of hysterical kids in the car? That's a great fucking dad moment. I'll forever be the asshole who told them their mom is dead. No way. I'm not gonna be that guy.

(beat)

Fuck you, Dan. I'm dropping them off at your mother's and you two can wreck their fucking lives.

Al hangs up, breathing heavily.

INT. BUZZ EAGLE'S AMERICAN DINER, TABLE - DAY

Al comes back to the table.

AL
Let's get out of here.

EXT. BUZZ EAGLE'S AMERICAN DINER, PARKING LOT - DAY

FRANKLIN
(to Al)
I told them about the surprise
poop. Henry said you were probably
doing coke in the bathroom though.
Were you? Doing coke?

AL
Nice.

HENRY
Dude!

FRANKLIN
I was just asking.

AL
No. No coke.

FRANKLIN
(to Henry)
See? Surprise poop.

Al unlocks the ancient car with several alarm beeps. He bends the front seat for Henry, Franklin, and Casey to get in back.

Laurel buckles Casey into a CAR SEAT and gets into the front.

AL
No, not a surprise poop either
actually. But there was a kind of
surprise, I guess.

He pulls out of the lot, heading back toward his place.

FRANKLIN
You have a surprise for us? Are we
getting ice cream?

CASEY
Ice cream!

LAUREL

She already ate three pancakes. If you give her ice cream, she'll projectile vomit all over the car.

FRANKLIN

And I won't be able to handle that kind of stress.

AL

It's not ice cream. Listen, I just heard from Uncle Dan and Gramma Sandy and they really want to see you guys 'cause it's been so long.

HENRY

We saw them on Wednesday. They came to my soccer game.

AL

But Gramma Sandy really misses you. So I told them I'd bring you guys right over to her house.

FRANKLIN

I don't like Gramma Sandy's house. It smells like pee and old cigarettes and her cat is mean and she only bakes cookies with raisins in them.

LAUREL

(to Al)

You called her, didn't you?

AL

No, I didn't.

LAUREL

You did. In the bathroom. It was clear from the minute we got here that you wanted to get rid of us. So you called Gramma and convinced her to take us for the day.

FRANKLIN

You don't like us?

HENRY

If he liked us, don't you think we would have seen him at least once in the last three years?

AL

Listen, I--

LAUREL

Whatever. It's fine. You tried. We tried. It didn't work out. It's not your fault. You're not the parenting type. We all knew that. I mean, deep down, mom knows it too, but she just got this crazy idea that you'd miraculously changed your mind about us. Just drop us off at Gramma's and go back to your day passed out in front of the tv, or whatever it is you do, and we'll go back to our lives. You can forget about us for another three years. Maybe show up at my graduation. Or just send a generic dollar store card. That's cool too. I don't care, because we have mom and she's awesome.

Al's fingers TIGHTEN on the steering wheel. He's silent for so long the kids steal WORRIED GLANCES at each other, wondering if Laurel's crossed the line and he's about to explode.

Suddenly, Al veers the car in a wide U-TURN across four lanes of traffic. Horns BLARE. Franklin SCREAMS.

LAUREL (CONT'D)

What the hell are you doing?

AL

You know what, Gramma Sandy's house can wait. We are going for ice cream.

Franklin's scream changes from terror to glee.

EXT. PALLY'S ICE CREAM PARLOR, FRONT ENTRANCE - DAY

Everyone stands outside of a closed, dark ice cream shop.

CASEY

Ice cream!

Laurel rolls her eyes and walks back toward the car.

AL

Wait. I can fix this. Come on.

Al runs around the side of the building.

EXT. PALLY'S ICE CREAM PARLOR, LOADING DOCK - DAY

Al and the kids end up at the LOADING DOCK, full of equipment and plastered with ominous WARNING SIGNS.

FRANKLIN

I don't think we're supposed to be here.

HENRY

Are we stealing the ice cream?
'Cause that would actually be cool.

AL

It's fine. I know the morning guy.

Al pounds on the back door. Casey reaches over and makes a little knock too. JESSE (40s), stringy and lean, flings open the door wearing a HAIR NET.

JESSE

What? Oh. Hey.

FRANKLIN

(whispering)
He doesn't look like an ice cream man.

JESSE

Dude. I can't smoke with you right now. I'm at work. You're interrupting my process.

AL

Hey, man. I'm not trying to mess you up. I just wanted to get my kids some ice cream.

Jesse eyes the kids.

JESSE

I'm not supposed to let anyone in while the machines are spinning.

AL

Come on, man. I just wanna give 'em some ice cream before I bring them to their grandmother's house.

JESSE

Then go to the grocery store. I can't let you in here.

Franklin peers into the warehouse.

FRANKLIN
Is that the ROKK Mix Plant 600?

JESSE
Yeah.

FRANKLIN
That model has a built-in
pasteurizer!

JESSE
Uh. That it does.

FRANKLIN
You must have imported this model
from England. They don't make these
here. Can I see the control panel?
I promise not to touch anything.

JESSE
Sure, kid. You gotta put on a hair
net. I'm making product.

Franklin and the kids pull HAIR NETS out of a dispenser and
put them on. Al takes one and shoves it into his pocket.

FRANKLIN
This is a top of the line model,
but you can't do mix-ins with this
one. It's too powerful and it
breaks up the chunks.

AL
(to Laurel)
How does he know all this?

LAUREL
YouTube? Reddit? Discord?

Jesse shows Franklin a batch of smaller ice cream mixers.

JESSE
You're right, I take out the soft-
serve and fold in the extras with
these mixers. They're more gentle
than the big one. And the really
special limited batch flavors I do
by hand on the chill table.

FRANKLIN
Whoa!

HENRY
You need a chill table, dude.

JESSE

Hey, you guys can't stay back here cause the cleaning crew is due any minute, but I'll open up the front of the house and let you sample some freshly-made ice cream.

CASEY

Ice cream!

JESSE

(to Casey)
You first, I guess.

INT. PALLY'S ICE CREAM PARLOR, DINING ROOM - DAY

The kids eat sundaes in the ice cream parlor. LIGHTS FLASH and JAUNTY MUSIC PLAYS, but the place is empty. Franklin wears his HAIR NET under a new paper PALLY'S EMPLOYEE HAT.

FRANKLIN

That was amazing! I got *five* different flavors. Mom never lets me get more than two!

(to Henry)
Why is yours black?

LAUREL

It matches his heart.

HENRY

(to Franklin)
It has charcoal in it.
(to Laurel)
Bite me.

CASEY

(covered in ice cream)
Bite me!

LAUREL

(to Al)
When she throws up, you're gonna have to clean it up.

AL

There's a hose out back.

The kids stare at him in horror.

LAUREL

What about, like, a bath?

AL

A hose is a perfectly reasonable way to clean up a messy kid.

Casey babbles something incomprehensible.

FRANKLIN

I agree.

AL

What did she say?

LAUREL

She said your parenting skills are substandard and rooted in a 1980s form of benign neglect.

AL

Benign neglect. Your mom used to say that all the time. Jesus. It's not neglect to let a kid figure things out for themselves.

HENRY

Is that how I almost drowned in a grain silo?

FRANKLIN

What?

HENRY

Oh you never heard that story?

LAUREL

Please don't tell him. He's already obsessed with our house falling into a sinkhole.

FRANKLIN

One of the signs of a sinkhole is windows and doors not closing properly!

HENRY

Those are also signs of not having a dad around to fix things.

AL

Is the back door sticking again? I told your mom the hinges get loose. She has to tighten them every so often.

LAUREL
She's a little busy being a single
mother to four kids.

HENRY
(to Laurel)
She's not a single mother, she has
you as a narc.

LAUREL
I'm not a narc.

HENRY
Oh so who told mom about my
magazine collection?

LAUREL
I didn't.

They both look to Franklin.

FRANKLIN
Pornography is inherently exploitive.

HENRY
You're such a little--

AL
Why do you have girlie magazines
anyway? You know all the porn is
online now, right?

LAUREL
Wow, you're such a good dad.

HENRY
Mom has one of those internet blockers.

AL
Yeah, she used one of those on me, too.

Al's phone rings... the X-Files theme song. It's Dan again.

FRANKLIN
Uncle Dan is calling you a lot today.

AL
I gotta take this.

Al gets up and goes into the back room.

INT. PALLY'S ICE CREAM PARLOR, STOCK ROOM - DAY

Al picks up the call among the boxes of SPRINKLES and CANDY.

AL

Hey.

(beat)

We're on our way to Sandy's. I just stopped to get them some ice cream.

(beat)

Because you're about to tell them their mother is dead. I figured an ice cream sundae might make it a little bit better.

(beat)

It fucking might! You don't know!

(beat)

Fuck you, Dan. We'll be there in an hour.

Al hangs up. Jesse meanders over from the machines.

JESSE

Dude. Lauralee died?

AL

Shhh. Yeah. This morning she got into a car accident after dropping off the kids. They don't know yet.

JESSE

Oh that's so fucked up. So you brought them for ice cream to soften the blow of telling them their mom is dead. Wow. Are you gonna tell them now? Should I bring out more ice cream? Or some napkins in case they start crying?

AL

No way, man. I'm not gonna tell them *now*. Lauralee's mom is gonna do it. I have to drive them over to her place.

JESSE

So you're gonna, like, keep this huge secret from them? That's so fucked up.

AL

Dude, I haven't said six words to these kids in years. They don't want to hear this heavy stuff from me.

(MORE)

AL (CONT'D)

They want Nana Sandy to like hug 'em and shit. Besides, it's only for an hour, man. Just until I get them to their grandmother's house.

JESSE

Oh shit! What if they pass the wreck on the way to grandmas?

AL

I'm sure highway patrol cleaned it up by now.

JESSE

Can you imagine? They're like, "That looks like mom's car all crunched up in the median. Oh my god, it *is* mom's car!"

Al considers this possibility.

AL

Shit. I'll take the back roads.

JESSE

Oh man, I feel sick just thinking about those cute kids out there eating banana splits and not knowing their whole life is gonna change in mere moments. They have one good hour left in their lives and they don't even know it. I really wanna throw up. Shit.

Jesse shoves a bunch of pre-packed pints into Al's hands.

JESSE (CONT'D)

Take these. They're gonna need 'em. I gotta go smoke up. Man, this is not the lighthearted Saturday of ice cream making that I thought it was gonna be.

Jesse goes out onto the loading dock and lights up.

Al shoves the pints back into a freezer. He looks out into the restaurant. The kids are laughing and flicking ice cream at each other.

He watches for a long moment. He makes a decision.

INT. PALLY'S ICE CREAM PARLOR, DINING ROOM - DAY

Al trots up to the table, a twinkle in his eye.

AL

Change of plans, we're not going to
Gramma's just yet.

LAUREL

Why not?

AL

I just thought, I never get to see
you guys and we should do some fun
stuff before...

HENRY

Before what?

AL

Before you all have to go. Before
you're somewhere else. Before whatever.

Laurel eyes him with suspicion.

AL (CONT'D)

Don't look at me like that. You
don't like benign neglect? Well
this is the opposite of that...
malignant attention.

FRANKLIN

That sounds very threatening.

AL

It's gonna be amazing. This is
Dad's Day. We're gonna do all the
fun things. Anything you want.

HENRY

Anything?

AL

Anything at all.

LAUREL

Don't make offers that you can't
follow through on.

Al's phone rings again. He glances at the screen, then shoves
it deep into his pocket.

AL

I fully intend to make all your dreams come true. Come on. What do you want to do?

FRANKLIN

I want to do a science experiment!

AL

Done. What about the little gal? What does she like? Teletubbies?

HENRY

What the fuck is a Teletubby?

LAUREL

She likes dinosaurs.

AL

Then we'll find some goddamn dinosaurs!

LAUREL

Can I get my nose pierced?

HENRY

Mom will absolutely kill you.

Al hesitates at the mention of their mom.

AL

Yeah. You can get your nose pierced.

LAUREL

Oh my god, really? She will be so mad at you!

AL

I'll deal with it.
(to Henry)
How about you?

HENRY

I dunno. I'll think about it.

AL

That's cool. We got all the time in the world. Go wash up and let's get Dad's Day started!

The kids cheer and head off to the bathrooms.

Al's phone rings again. He takes the call.

AL (CONT'D)

Hey. Listen. I'm gonna need a little time with the kids today. We're just gonna have a little fun before I drop them off.

(beat)

You don't get it. I'm being *nice* to them. You're the one who wants to fuck up their lives ASAP. I just want to give them a few good memories before a pile of shit comes crashing down.

(beat)

Bite me. We'll get there when we get there.

Al hangs up, seething.

EXT. PALLY'S ICE CREAM PARLOR, PARKING LOT - DAY

As the chattering kids and Al walk out to the car, Laurel's phone rings.

LAUREL

Why is Uncle Dan calling me?

She picks up the call.

LAUREL (CONT'D)

Hello?

Al SLAPS the phone out of her hand. It hits the gravel. The screen SHATTERS.

LAUREL (CONT'D)

What the hell? I saved up for two years to get that phone!

AL

I'll buy you a new one. Just... today is a no phones day.

Henry pulls out his own RINGING phone. Al grabs it away.

AL (CONT'D)

No phones day!

Franklin's backpack buzzes. He pulls out a single-function KID PHONE. Al yanks that one too.

AL (CONT'D)

What the fuck? Does the baby have a phone too?

HENRY

No, but she does have a--

LAUREL

You'd better get me the brand new model to make up for whatever the hell that was.

AL

I'll get you whatever you want. As long as there's no phones today. Just live in the moment.

HENRY

The moment is overrated.

Al dumps all the phones into the GLOVE COMPARTMENT and gets in after all the kids.

AL

Okay first is... a science experiment. You want like a baking soda volcano or a key, a kite, and some lightning or what?

FRANKLIN

No, something *bigger*.

AL

What's bigger than lightning?

INT. DOLLAR SCHOLAR STORE, TOY AISLE - DAY

Al and the kids watch as Franklin pulls tubs of dehydrated WATER BEADS off the shelf.

FRANKLIN

...so you see, if you dump enough of these into a swimming pool, they expand when they hit the water and fill up the whole thing! You can swim in rainbow water beads!

LAUREL

Didn't mom say you're banned from doing TikTok challenges? You just stopped coughing up cinnamon.

FRANKLIN

This isn't a "challenge" per se. It's more of an engineering experiment.

Al examines the jug of TINY BEADS.

AL
They're two for a dollar. How many
do you need?

FRANKLIN
(calculating)
I think two or three should...

AL
Fuck it, let's take them all.

Al swipes ALL the jugs into their cart and heads toward the register.

FRANKLIN
Wait! That's like a billion beads!

INT. DOLLAR SCHOLAR STORE, CHECKOUT - DAY

JUNE (23), perky everything, leans over the counter to kiss Al on the cheek.

JUNE
Hey, cutie!

AL
Hey.

JUNE
You babysitting?

LAUREL
We're his kids.

JUNE
Oh wow, there's a lot of you. Big
ones, little ones, medium ones.

June reaches out and pinches Franklin's cheek.

JUNE (CONT'D)
How old are you, sweetie?

FRANKLIN
Nine, going on one thousand.

June sizes up Laurel.

JUNE
And you must be about fifteen?

LAUREL

Sixteen.

JUNE

I'm gonna give you a present. On account of me and your dad being so very close.

June reaches into a huge purse and pulls out a FAKE ID. She hands it over to Laurel like a priceless treasure.

JUNE (CONT'D)

I had so many great times with this, and now I'm passing the fun times along to you.

Laurel reads it with wide eyes.

LAUREL

We don't even look alike.

June scans jars of water beads while shaking her head.

JUNE

Nobody cares, honey. It's called plausible deniability.

HENRY

If you don't want it, I'll take it.

Laurel hands the ID to Casey, who gnaws on it.

JUNE

(whispering to Al)
Hey, I think I left my daisy underwear at your house.

AL

Uh, I didn't see them when I was *vacuuming*.

HENRY

They're in the kitchen sink.

JUNE

How did they get-- oh yeah. I'll pick them up later. I need them for church tomorrow 'cause I got in trouble for going commando at services last week.

HENRY

(breathless)
Do you just have... the one pair?

Al hands June a five and shoves the kids out of the store.

AL
Okay. Great visit. See ya later,
Junie.

JUNE
Bye Al! Bye Al's kids!

INT. AL'S IROC Z - DAY

Laurel gives Al the side-eye.

AL
Don't.

LAUREL
What?

AL
Just don't.

FRANKLIN
(from the back)
Do you have an in-ground pool or an
above-ground pool, because we need
to shut off the filtration system.

AL
I don't have a pool, kid. Who do
you think I am, Jay-Z?

FRANKLIN
Well then how are we going to
hydrate the water beads?

AL
I got you covered.

EXT. HUEYVILLE TOWN CENTER, FOUNTAIN - DAY

Al and the kids get out at the Hueyville Town Fountain, which depicts three GIANT STONE CATFISH spouting water into a pool.

FRANKLIN
I don't think this is an
appropriate venue for our needs.

AL
Why not? You need a big container
of water. I found you a big
container of water.

Before anyone can stop him, Al unscrews the first jug of beads and DUMPS them into the fountain.

FRANKLIN

But you can't--

AL

What're they gonna do? Arrest us for making a rainbow in the town fountain?

LAUREL

They might actually do that here.

Al pours in JUG after JUG.

AL

You guys need to loosen up. Look, they're already growing!

The super-absorbent beads start SWELLING. In moments, they fill the entire pool.

CASEY

Bubble bath!

HENRY

How do we keep them from... oh no.

The beads head up through the pipes and start SPEWING out of the catfish mouths.

LAUREL

Oh that's actually pretty.

A few cars SLOW DOWN to look at the fountain. Al shoves the empty jugs into a nearby trash can.

AL

Just pretend we found it this way.

The beads in the pool continue to SWELL, spilling over onto the sidewalk, moving like a LIVING CREATURE.

FRANKLIN

Oh no! This is why you need a swimming pool!

Traffic is at a standstill as people get out of their cars to see the rainbow-vomiting catfish. Al turns to a DOG WALKER.

AL

(mock outrage)
Did anyone see who did this?

DOG WALKER
I bet it was liberals.

AL
Some asshole came by and rainbow'd
the fountain!

PEDESTRIAN
It's the opening salvo of the war
on heterosexuals!

The pedestrian pulls out a HANDGUN.

PEDESTRIAN (CONT'D)
Jesus give me strength to resist
the gay onslaught!

A POLICE CRUISER pulls up and BEEPS its siren to clear a
path. Al grabs the kids and drags them to his car.

AL
I'm gonna go read the Bible to my
quiverfull of children!

The crowd murmurs their approval.

INT. AL'S IROC Z - DAY

Al weaves between ABANDONED CARS as more people hear about
the "incident" in town and head for the fountain.

FRANKLIN
(moaning)
I didn't intend to kick off a
culture war.

LAUREL
You didn't do anything wrong. Dad
should have known the beads would
go all over the place.

AL
How would I know that? You think I
sit around and play with beads all
day? Jeez, you guys are something
else. I bring you to do an amazing
activity and you shit all over it.

HENRY
I thought it was awesome.

AL

Thank you. Just for that, you get to pick next.

HENRY

Cool. I want to go to Funland and ride the Raptor Drop.

FRANKLIN

(quoting the ad)

Six inverted loops of Raptorious Adventure! Can you handle it?

AL

Funland the amusement park that costs \$59 a person to get into? That's like five hundred dollars for all of us!

FRANKLIN

Two ninety-five plus tax.

LAUREL

Casey gets in for free.

FRANKLIN

Two thirty-six.

AL

If I had two hundred and thirty-six extra dollars do you think I'd be driving around with expired tags?

HENRY

You said we could ask for *anything*.

AL

Anything that's a *reasonable* price. Franklin's thing was only five dollars.

HENRY

Which you paid out of our cash anyway. Don't think we didn't notice.

AL

It's not your cash. It's my cash.

HENRY

We won it.

AL

(shouting)

Take it to a judge!

LAUREL

We can do mine next! Where's the mall?

AL

We don't need the mall. I know a piercing guy.

FRANKLIN

You don't have any piercings.

AL

They're not where you can see 'em.

The car goes quiet.

INT. HAUS OF PAIN TATTOO AND PIERCING, LOBBY - DAY

Al and the kids enter the filthiest tattoo place on the planet. HUEY (40s), a huge guy with tons of intricate ink, looks up from his work with BUG-EYED MAGNIFYING GOGGLES.

HUEY

Yo. You finally scraped up enough cash to finish your lighthouse?

AL

No, actually. It's my kid here. Laurel. She'd like her nose pierced.

Huey eyes up Laurel.

HUEY

Sure, we can get that done tout suite. Ninety plus tax.

AL

Ninety? It's like nine in the mall!

HUEY

This isn't some Claire's, Al. I'm an artisan and I deserve a living wage.

Laurel shakes her head nervously.

LAUREL

Mom will never agree. Forget it. Let's just go.

AL

No, you wanted this, I got it.

He extends Casey's \$100 to Huey.

AL (CONT'D)
 One artisanal nose piercing
 courtesy of President Benjamin
 Franklin?

Huey doesn't miss a beat.

HUEY
 It's a common misconception that
 Franklin was a president. He
 actually only made it to governor
 of Pennsylvania and also the
 ambassador to France.

FRANKLIN
 I like this guy.

HUEY
 Come on back.

INT. HAUS OF PAIN TATTOO AND PIERCING, PIERCING ROOM - DAY

Laurel sits in the chair as Huey pulls out a heavy-gauge
 PIERCING NEEDLE.

HENRY
 Oh shit.

FRANKLIN
 I can't watch.

LAUREL
 What the hell is that for? Are you
 giving me novocain? Where's the
 little plastic gun thingy?

HUEY
 Those piercing guns are trash. We
 do it the right way.

Laurel starts to get up.

LAUREL
 I'm good. I'll pick something else.
 How about we dye my hair blue? Or
 go skydiving?

AL
 I do know a guy with an old Cessna.
 I bet he'd let you jump out of it.

Laurel hyperventilates.

LAUREL

I changed my mind. That's too big a needle and what if you miss and hit my brain. I'll be lobotomized. Oh my god. I have to get out of here.

Al puts a hand on Laurel's shoulder to keep her from getting out of the chair.

AL

It'll be fine, Laurel. It's over in like five seconds.

Al crouches next to her, holding her hand.

LAUREL

I think I'm gonna pass out.

HENRY

This is amazing. Can I go get my phone to record this?

AL

No.

(to Laurel)

You're not gonna pass out. You want a nose ring, right?

LAUREL

(whining)

Yeah. Maybe.

AL

Well you're gonna walk into school on Monday and everyone's gonna be like, "Oh shit, look at Laurel, she's so fucking cool!" Right? You wanna be cool?

LAUREL

Yeah.

AL

So this is what cool girls have to do. They take a deep breath and they get the hard stuff done so they can look hot. If you wanna be cool, you gotta do the hard shit.

LAUREL

Okay.

(to Huey)

Do it.

Laurel takes a deep breath. Huey pierces her nose.

FRANKLIN
Holy crapola!

AL
You shush.

HUEY
(to Laurel)
You can breathe now.

Laurel lets out her breath.

AL
You good?

LAUREL
Yeah. Lemme see.

She looks in the mirror.

LAUREL (CONT'D)
It's looks really awesome.

AL
See? You did the hard shit.

CASEY
Hard shit.

LAUREL
Yeah. And now I'm cool.

AL
And now you're cool.

HENRY
No, you're not.

Franklin hands Laurel a BINDER full of papers.

FRANKLIN
I read the sterilization procedures
for this place and I'm confident
you're unlikely to get an
infection.

HUEY
Thank you.

EXT. HAUS OF PAIN TATTOO AND PIERCINGS - DAY

Al and the kids head for the car. Laurel touches her nose gingerly.

HENRY
(to Laurel)
Mom is absolutely going to *drop*
dead when she sees what you did.

Al flinches. He looks everywhere except at the kids. Laurel narrows her eyes.

LAUREL
What?

AL
Nothing. Okay, what's next?

FRANKLIN
Casey had to give her hundred
dollars to the piercing guy, so she
should get a turn next.

AL
(to Casey)
What do you like to do for fun? Go
carts? Base jumping?

Casey giggles at him and chews her fingers.

LAUREL
I told you, she likes dinosaurs.

CASEY
Dinosaurs!

FRANKLIN
(excited)
Maybe the natural history museum?

AL
I'm banned for life.

HENRY
Neanderthals, remember?

Franklin MEEPS in distress.

AL
(to Casey)
Don't worry. I got you covered, squeaky.

EXT. OBIE'S MOTOR INN - DAY

As Al's car drives past the motel, a couple of maintenance guys gather near the pool.

MAINTENANCE GUY
How did they get in there?

PLUMBER
They're coming out of the pipes.
I'm telling you, they're in the
city water system.

Hundreds of RAINBOW WATER BEADS float on top of the water.

EXT. GATORVILLE, PARKING LOT - DAY

Al and the kids stand outside of a janky homemade REPTILE EXHIBIT. There are no other cars under the faded hand-painted signs that say GATORVILLE: HOME OF A THOUSAND EXOTICS.

HENRY
What's Gatorville?

AL
Only the state's most exciting
reptile and reptile-adjacent live
captive animal exhibit.

FRANKLIN
I've read a lot of articles about
this place. Last year, they had an
outbreak of salmonella--

AL
It's freaking great. Especially
after a few-- nevermind. It's just
great. Anyways, this dude owes me a
favor.

LAUREL
Did you help him get rid of a body?

HENRY
He has the gators for that.

INT. GATORVILLE, ENTRYWAY - DAY

In what looks to be someone's living room, heat lamps SIZZLE. Casey wriggles out of Laurel's arms and stands in front of a wall of SNAKES in tanks, enchanted.

CASEY
Ssssssss... snake!

ERNIE (60s), with a tight buzz cut, meanders in.

ERNIE
Best not get too close there,
missy. That's a spitting cobra.
He'll catch you in the eye at fifty
paces and blind you just like that.

He snaps and she jumps.

FRANKLIN
Is it legal to own one of those?

ERNIE
(gets real close)
I don't own him, buddy. No one can
truly own someone else. You
understand? Not the government. Not
their parents. Not even their wife.
You're free from the constraints of
other people's expectations.
(he waves his hands)
Be free!

Franklin ducks behind Laurel. Ernie notices Al.

ERNIE (CONT'D)
Al! That kid looks like the Revenge
of the Nerds version of you. Little
Al Einstein over here.

AL
These are my kids.

Ernie puts his arm around Laurel.

ERNIE
Any kid of Al's is a kid of mine.

Laurel slips out from under his grasp.

LAUREL
I'm good, thanks.

ERNIE
You all here for the grand tour of
Gatorville? It's almost feeding time.

AL

Yeah, I was thinking that cause of that thing I did a few weeks back, you could let the kids in without, maybe, the admission fee.

ERNIE

Oh Al. Al. Al. I'm a free man, but that freedom comes at a cost. Someone always has to pay. In this case, it's you.

AL

But I--

ERNIE

And I will return the favor in kind when you encounter a similar situation, but this is not that, is it?

AL

No, it isn't.

ERNIE

So then you'll have to compensate me for my time, won't you?

AL

Yeah.

Al digs in his pocket and pulls out a wad of SWEATY BILLS. He peels off a few for Ernie, who SNIFFS them with relish.

ERNIE

That's what I like to smell. The stink of a man who's worked for his money the way I've worked for mine.

HENRY

(to Al)

What, exactly, is it that you do?

ERNIE

You don't know? Oh my boy. Your father is one of the top septic pumpers in the county. I've never been so clean since the day your dad pumped me out.

The kids stifle their laughter.

AL

Whatever, it's honest work.

HENRY

It tracks that your job is
shoveling shit.

CASEY

Shoveling shit!

ERNIE

That's right, chuckles. Shoveling shit
pays for the clothes on your back.

LAUREL

Actually, my mom pays for those.

HENRY

He doesn't pay child support.

ERNIE

Nor should he. Child support is not
the proper interpretation of
natural selection, my boy. You see,
your mother has become separated
from her provider, so henceforth
the provider has no obligation to
provide. That's the law of the
jungle, son.

AL

Exactly.

ERNIE

Listen, I'm no heartless bastard.
There seems to be a lingering
tension between the two parties
here, so I'm willing to throw in a
complimentary drive through the Big
Cat Enclosure for all five of you.
That's normally a \$20 add-on per
visitor. When you look into that
tiger's eyes and understand that he
sits above you in the food chain,
all your other problems will seem
minuscule in comparison.

Ernie scratches his forehead with a HOOK HAND.

HENRY

Great, we get to watch a bunch of
depressed cats shit in the dust.

Al glares at Henry.

CASEY

Shit in the dust!

ERNIE

This little one reminds me of my mother, who has come down with a case of the dements. The old girl says whatever pops into her fuzzy little head these days.

AL

Thank you, Ernie. We appreciate your generosity.

ERNIE

Follow me to the crocodile pond. Anyone know the difference between an alligator and a crocodile?

FRANKLIN

Alligators have a u-shaped snout and prefer fresh water, while crocodiles have a pointy snout and like to live in saltwater.

ERNIE

Nope. One will see you later and one will see you after a while.

FRANKLIN

That's... I....

CASEY

Shit in the dust!

LAUREL

Mom is going to absolutely die.

As the kids follow Ernie, Al grabs Laurel and pulls her aside.

AL

You gotta stop saying that.

LAUREL

Why? It's fine. It's a joke. And she really is going to lose her freaking mind at the nose ring and all the new stuff Casey is saying, but at least she's gonna be mad at you and not me for once.

Laurel storms off, leaving Al speechless.

MONTAGE:

Ernie setting Casey on the back of a half-dead crocodile and Laurel snatching her right back off.

Franklin nervously sitting beside the half-dead crocodile for a tense picture.

Henry putting his head inside of the half-dead crocodile's open mouth.

Franklin feeding raw chicken to an alligator while Laurel shields her eyes.

Casey holding a monitor lizard, beaming.

END MONTAGE:**EXT. GATORVILLE, BIG CAT SAFARI - DAY**

The kids ride on a GOLF CART driven by Ernie, who points out various SLEEPY ANIMALS as they ride through a tunnel made of jury-rigged chain link fence. The boys are interested. Casey sleeps curled on Al's lap.

AL

She's missing all of this.

LAUREL

It's fine. She'll be cranky this afternoon if she doesn't get a nap.

AL

I'm the same way myself.

Al and Laurel smile despite themselves.

LAUREL

You go to that tattoo place a lot?

AL

I get a little work done when I have some extra cash.

LAUREL

The guy said you're getting a lighthouse done.

Al shows her his arm, covered in a detailed RED-AND-WHITE LIGHTHOUSE TATTOO.

LAUREL (CONT'D)
Pretty. What's it mean?

AL
It's stupid, I guess.

LAUREL
No, tell me. You didn't have it when you were with us. Why's it so important now?

AL
It's a place I used to go. I just kept going back to that lighthouse, trying to figure out stuff. But I wasn't figuring out shit. So I put it here so it was always with me. I dunno.

LAUREL
Well I like it. You should show Mom when she comes to pick us up.

Al turns away. Clears his throat.

AL
So you almost lost it back there at the tattoo shop, huh?

LAUREL
Yeah. Thanks for helping me out.

AL
Any time.

LAUREL
I get these panic attacks sometimes and mom says they're ridiculous because there's nothing really wrong, but it doesn't feel that way when they're happening.

AL
The world really is shit. Once in a while, you just have to freak out.

LAUREL
Is that what happened? With you?

AL
You mean when I left. I dunno. It was that and it was more than that. Your mom and I were both freaking out and no one was helping us.

(MORE)

AL (CONT'D)

It just got to the point that we were both so tightly wound, like your little brother back there, that every time we looked at each other we came totally unglued. Yelling and fighting. I thought maybe things would be better if we didn't look at each other so often.

LAUREL

Well, three years is a long time to not look at each other. You think you might be ready now?

Al doesn't answer.

LAUREL (CONT'D)

What?

AL

Nothing.

LAUREL

There is something up and you're not telling me.

AL

I'll tell you later.

Laurel pouts. The GOLF CART suddenly runs out of juice.

ERNIE

Oh crap.

FRANKLIN

What's wrong?

ERNIE

Sometimes I forget to charge the safari, that's all. I'm gonna go get us a fresh battery.

HENRY

You're leaving us here with a bunch of hungry predators?

ERNIE

Try to act like you're not juicy.

Ernie hops out and disappears through a side door.

HENRY

We can't just sit here! Casey is very juicy!

At her name, Casey shifts in Al's lap.

CASEY
(drowsily)
Hi kitty.

FRANKLIN
We can't outrun them. Their land
speeds far outstrip ours. We should
just sit and wait.

LAUREL
(to Franklin)
You're being very calm about this.

FRANKLIN
I think my adrenal gland is empty
from too much excitement. Can that
happen?

AL
I think you're having fun. Admit it,
you're all having a fantastic time.

FRANKLIN
I liked the capybara.

HENRY
Feeding the gator was pretty cool.

LAUREL
That leaves us with Henry's wish.

AL
Well maybe not a *wish*, more like a
reasonable and affordable request.

LAUREL
You said anything.

HENRY
Except Funland.

AL
Except that.

HENRY
Then I don't want a wish.

AL
Come on. I'm doing my best here. I
take you to Funland and it's Kool
Aid and oatmeal for a week.

HENRY

So sorry to make you give up your
Lucky Charms.

AL

Man, you've been on my ass all day.
I'm doing my best here.

HENRY

Fine. I thought of something.

AL

Great.

HENRY

And it's free.

AL

Perfect. Ask away.

HENRY

I want to drive the Camaro.

The kids react loudly enough to fully wake Casey. Laurel
takes her.

LAUREL

Absolutely not.

FRANKLIN

(to Al)

You should see the way he drives
the lawnmower! This is a very
dangerous idea!

AL

Now hold on a second.

LAUREL

You're not actually going to let
him drive?

AL

He's practically a man. I was
driving a John Deere at his age.

LAUREL

This is insane.

HENRY

No more insane than getting your
nose pierced.

Laurel is silent.

CASEY
Shit in the dust!

Unnoticed by everyone, RAINBOW WATER BEADS start bubbling up through the big cats' "watering hole." A crocodile emerges from the depths, his back studded with RAINBOW BEADS.

EXT. GATORVILLE, PARKING LOT - DAY

In the driver's seat, Henry's grin stretches from ear to ear. Laurel tightens Franklin and Casey into their seatbelts, then HUNKERS DOWN in the back next to them.

LAUREL
How old are the airbags in this thing?

AL
What airbags?

FRANKLIN
We're gonna die.

Al turns to say something and is flung back in his seat as Henry TAKES OFF.

AL
Right! Right!

The car SWERVES to the right, narrowly missing a light pole.

LAUREL
Watch the--

Henry CAREENS past a minivan pulling into Gatorville. The van lays on the horn.

AL
Stay in the parking lot. Not the highway!

FRANKLIN
I have two turtles to feed, I can't die this young!

Henry pulls onto a four-lane highway as everyone in the car SCREAMS at him to stop. He passes six cars and drives a few hundred feet on the rumble strip, VIBRATING everyone.

AL
Pull over! Pull the fuck over!

Henry starts to pull over... into the side of a semi. Al CLUTCHES the wheel and SHOVES his foot over Henry's to guide them onto the shoulder. Traffic whizzes past as Al gets out and drags Henry out of the driver's seat.

AL (CONT'D)
What the fuck was that?

HENRY
You said I could drive, so I was driving!

AL
I said to stay in the parking lot!

HENRY
The parking lot isn't driving, it's parking. You're so full of shit. Every single fucking time you promise something, it's a lie. The little kids don't remember, but I remember. You were a shit then and you're a shit now. I'm glad you left. At least we have a mom who takes care of us so we don't need to endure your half-assed attempts at being a dad.

Al looks like he's been punched in the gut.

AL
Pick something different, man.
Anything else.

HENRY
Fuck off. Just bring us to
grandma's house.

Henry gets into the passenger seat. Al stands on the side of the road, cars and trucks speeding within inches of him.

Al gets into the car and pulls into traffic. Casey's spooked from all the screaming.

CASEY
(crying)
Mama.

LAUREL
Not yet, bean. A few more hours.

CASEY
Mama!

LAUREL

We're gonna see Gramma Sandy.

They drive in tense silence. Casey snuffles and hiccups.

INT. AL'S IROC Z - LATER

A GREEN EXIT SIGN looms into view. Al thinks hard. Grips the steering wheel. Blows out a big puff of air.

He swerves off the highway at an exit labeled FUNLAND.

LAUREL

This isn't Nana Sandy's exit.

AL

Nope.

FRANKLIN

It's the exit for Funland.

AL

Yep.

Henry doesn't say anything, but a TINY SMILE creeps up one corner of his mouth.

EXT. FUNLAND, ENTRANCE GATE - DAY

Al hunches into the plexiglas hole in the ticket booth while the hot, tired kids shift uncomfortably in line.

AL

Okay, but I'm buying all five tickets, I just want to put each ticket on a different credit card.

He holds out VARIOUS CARDS of suspect origin. The TICKET TAKER isn't having it.

TICKET TAKER

I'm sorry, sir. All minors must accompany an adult.

AL

I'm going to *accompany* all of them, I just want to buy each of the tickets separately.

TICKET TAKER

Right, sir. We need to have a minor accompanied by an adult in *each* transaction.

AL

That's such bullshit.

The ticket taker points to a life-size cutout of a cartoon bear holding a list of RULES.

TICKET TAKER

Sir, Funland Freddy asks that you watch your language. If you'd like to step out of line for a moment--

Al eyes the lengthy wait they've just come through.

AL

No... Jesus.

Al holds out his open palm to Laurel.

AL (CONT'D)

Mom gave you a credit card, right?

LAUREL

Yeah, but it's for emergencies, not roller coasters.

AL

This is an emergency.

LAUREL

What's the emergency?

Al stares at her for a long moment. His eyes well up and he turns away.

AL

I dunno-- I just-- I thought...

FRANKLIN

It's a funmergency! Henry's in critical need of fun!

Al tries not to smile through his tears.

AL

It's a funmergency, Laurel.

LAUREL

I'm not going to have Mom mad at me over this too. Let's just go.

(MORE)

LAUREL (CONT'D)

Henry can get, like, a pack of
Magic cards or something.

Henry huffs and starts to slink away.

HENRY

(grumbling)

Every fucking time...

Al puts a hand out to stop Henry. His phone BUZZES in his pocket. Al doesn't take it out, but he starts to PANIC.

AL

No. Wait.

(to Laurel)

I know my word is shit to you, but
I promise that this is not going to
matter to your mom one bit. We're
gonna do Henry's wish and it's
gonna be awesome and she won't mind
at all. 'Cause she wants us to have
a great day, right?

LAUREL

(hesitant)

Yeah.

AL

And if she comes down on you, I'll
take the heat.

(suddenly tears up)

But she won't. It'll be okay. This
won't matter at all. Maybe it'll
matter a little bit. I don't know.
I'm just trying to do the right
thing here in the face of an
insurmountable mountain of shit.

CASEY

Mountain of shit!

AL

That's right. We're about to climb
a huge mountain of shit and I just
want to go on the goddam Raptor
Drop before shit mountain hits us.

Laurel hands him the emergency credit card with disgust.

LAUREL

Fine. Here.

FRANKLIN

Yay! It's a funmergency!

EXT. FUNLAND, MAIN STREET - DAY

The kids practically skip through the crowds. Franklin and Casey trail behind. Al keeps checking his phone. Text messages pour in.

AL

Step it up. We gotta get to the ride pronto.

FRANKLIN

Casey has little legs.

Al plucks a STROLLER out of a stroller corral. It has BALLOONS and a sign tied to the handle: TODAY I AM FIVE!

Laurel grabs the stroller and shoves it back into the corral.

LAUREL

That belongs to someone else! You have to pay to rent a stroller. Oh my god, you are so embarrassing. Do you even know how to be a dad? Maybe you need to go back to that lighthouse and figure it out.

AL

(furious)

Yes, I know how to be a dad. I was a great dad before things went to shit. I was fun and silly and I jumped on the trampoline with you guys and made those grilled cheese sandwiches with the pickles that everyone loved.

FRANKLIN

I didn't love them.

AL

That's right! So I made you peanut butter and jelly instead. Bread toasted. See? I remember. I may have been a shitty husband, but I was a good dad. I *am* a good dad. Now let's get on that fucking Raptor Drop.

Al picks up Casey and carries her for the rest of the day.

EXT. FUNLAND, RAPTOR DROP ENTRANCE - DAY

Al and the kids stare in disappointment at the Raptor Drop Standby Wait sign. It reads 155 minutes.

LAUREL
That's like two hours.

FRANKLIN
Two-point-six hours.

Henry's face falls. Al shoves them into line.

AL
We came all this way, we're not leaving now.

Al's phone rings. The caller ID says "Sandy."

FRANKLIN
Who is it now? Is it mom checking in? Tell her about the beads and the ice cream but not about the nose ring.

AL
It's a work thing. Be right back.

Al slips out of line with Casey and takes the call.

EXT. FUNLAND, KIDDIE KOPTERS - DAY

AL
Sandy, hey.

SANDY (O.S.)
You little shit.

AL
Just listen--

SANDY (O.S.)
No, you listen. My daughter's body is smeared all over the West Side Highway and you have kidnapped her children and refused to bring them back to us.

AL
I'm not kidnapping anyone. We're having a Dad Day--

SANDY (O.S.)
 You missed your chance for Dad Day a
 long time ago. You leave me no choice
 but to involve the authorities.

AL
 Sandy, wait--

Sandy hangs up.

AL (CONT'D)
 Shi-- crap.

CASEY
 Dada Day!

Casey points urgently at the Kiddie Kopter ride.

CASEY (CONT'D)
 Go around!

AL
 Oh, I don't know, kid.

CASEY
 Birdie! Tweet tweet!

AL
 Okay. One ride.

Al buckles Casey into a seat. The ride attendant comes over
 the PA system.

KOPTER RIDE ATTENDANT
 An adult must ride, sir.

AL
 Jesus. Fine.

Al gets in and rides with Casey. The Kiddie Kopter spins and
 Casey screams with delight. Al starts to enjoy her delight.

AL (CONT'D)
 Fuck yeah! Let's go!

The other parents glare at him.

Al and Casey get off the helicopter. Casey spots another baby
 ride nearby.

CASEY
 Dat's a boat!

AL
Aw kid, we gotta get back.

CASEY
In da water!

AL
You're killing me.

MONTAGE:

EXT. FUNLAND, BABY RIDES - DAY

Al and Casey splashing each other on the boat ride, finding RAINBOW BEADS in the water.

...pretending to ride bucking broncos on a carousel.

...soaring above the park on a fake hot air balloon.

...Al buying Casey a bubble fan.

END MONTAGE

EXT. FUNLAND, BABY RIDES - DAY

Al finally drags Casey away from the baby rides.

AL
We gotta go, the kids are gonna be done soon.

EXT. FUNLAND, RAPTOR DROP ENTRANCE - DAY

The big kids have BARELY MOVED from the spot where Al left them. Casey blows BUBBLES over everyone.

LAUREL
Where did you guys disappear to? I almost sent out a search party.

AL
I took her on a few kiddie rides since she can't do the Raptor Drop.

FRANKLIN
This is taking a very long time.

Henry mopes.

AL
I'm gonna go see what I can do.

Over the protestations of the kids, Al and Casey push past everyone to get to the front of the line.

LAUREL
No! Come on!
(to her siblings)
He's so embarrassing.

HENRY
At least he doesn't have any more cash to bribe people with.

EXT. FUNLAND, RAPTOR DROP LINE - DAY

People GRUMBLE and SWEAR at Al as he moves up the line.

AL
Sorry, I need to get to the front!
I'm not taking your spot! Coming through! Just need to ask a question! Not cutting!

CASEY
Not cutting!

EXT. FUNLAND, RAPTOR DROP LOADING DECK - DAY

Al approaches a STAFF MEMBER (early 20s), drunk on power.

AL
Excuse me--

STAFF MEMBER
Sir, we have a strict no line cutting policy.

AL
I'm not going on the ride, I just need to ask...
(he pulls the guy close)
...is there any way you can get my three big kids on the Raptor Drop right now?

STAFF MEMBER
No, sir. The line is the line.

AL

Right. I understand. But this is a special situation.

STAFF MEMBER

We encounter a lot of "special situations..."

AL

No, this one is real bad.

Al uses one hand to press Casey's head against his chest, so she can't hear. With the other he pulls out his phone.

AL (CONT'D)

You see it's their mom. She died in an accident this morning--

STAFF MEMBER

(admonishing)

Sir...

AL

No, for real. Listen.

Al holds the phone up to the guy's ear and plays Dan's voicemail. The staff member's eye goes WIDE, then fills with TEARS.

STAFF MEMBER

(aghast)

Holy shit. That's real?

CASEY

Holy shit.

AL

It's 100% real.

STAFF MEMBER

Then why are you *here*?

AL

Because I'm just trying to give my kids one last good day before I tell them about their mom. Nobody gets it. But you get it, right? Their lives are gonna get real bad in a few hours and maybe this will be a little memory they have of something good to get them through the next few months of hell.

The staff member considers. Wipes his eyes. He reaches behind the podium for a set of three RIDE PASSES in the shape of MUSHROOM CLOUDS.

STAFF MEMBER

Yeah. Okay. Show these passes to Leon at the gate.

AL

Thank you so much! You don't know how much this means to us.

(he turns, comes back)

Listen, you can't say anything to them about their mom. They don't know yet.

STAFF MEMBER

Yeah man. Phew. This is some crazy shit.

AL

I know. Thank you.

CASEY

Crazy shit.

AL

You're telling me, kid.

EXT. FUNLAND, RAPTOR DROP LINE - DAY

Al snakes back down the line with Casey. As he goes, he spots DAN (30s), an absolute wreck, searching the area for them.

AL

Oh shit.

(to Casey)

Don't you even.

Al CROUCHES DOWN and sneaks back to the big kids. He pulls them into a LOW HUDDLE.

LAUREL

What are you doing?

FRANKLIN

Are we making a game plan? Because I have some ideas to improve this experience.

AL

Hey, just a question, do any of you have a tracker on your phones?

HENRY

God no.

FRANKLIN

We're not babies.

LAUREL

But Casey has a tracker on her shoe.

HENRY

I tried to tell you.

They all look to Casey's TINY SNEAKER. A little METAL SPHERE is clipped to her laces.

AL

Who can see where she is?

LAUREL

Me, Mom, Grandma--

AL

Jesus.

Al grabs the big kids out of line.

AL (CONT'D)

Come on.

HENRY

I knew it. We're leaving.

AL

We're not leaving. Here. Give these to Leon at the front.

He hands them the passes.

HENRY

Nuclear passes! These are like \$100 each! How did you get them? Did you steal them?

AL

Don't worry about it. Go get on your ride and meet me at the exit.

The big kids CHEER and excitedly make their way to the front.

EXT. FUNLAND, MAIN PARK - DAY

Al sprints through the park, bouncing Casey, who HUMS to hear her own weird vibrating voice.

AL
Everything is fun to you, huh?

CASEY
Dats bouncy, dada.

Al runs alongside the Funland Express--a train circling the park. He pulls off Casey's sneaker and tosses it onto the seat of a passing train car.

CASEY (CONT'D)
Oh no, bye bye shoe.

Al catches his breath. He ducks into a bush as Dan trots past, looking at a MOVING DOT on his phone. Al doubles back and heads for the Raptor Drop exit.

EXT. FUNLAND, RAPTOR DROP LOADING DECK - DAY

Al and Casey breathlessly climb to the loading platform where the kids are just coming back from their ride, exhilarated.

STAFF MEMBER
You guys wanna go again?

LAUREL
Yeah!

HENRY
Hell yeah!

FRANKLIN
My eyes are gonna fall out!

The staff member looks to Al for approval. Al glances behind him and makes a great big sigh.

AL
Okay, fine. One more.

The kids scream in delight. Al watches the ride take off. Hears their screams. They get back in just over a minute, windswept and elated.

STAFF MEMBER
One last time?

AL
(mumbling)
You're killing me, man.
(out loud)
One **last** time!

The kids lose their freaking minds. They go around for one more run on the Raptor Drop.

EXT. FUNLAND, RAPTOR DROP ENTRANCE - DAY

The kids come off the ride, high on adrenaline.

FRANKLIN

Those inversions were over two Gs!
That's seventy-five pounds of force!

HENRY

Nobody in my class can say they did
the Raptor *three times in a row!*

LAUREL

It was pretty cool.

Al hurries toward the park exit, scanning the crowd for Dan. Casey puts her head on his shoulder.

AL

Awesome. Fantastic. Let's get outta here.

HENRY

But we're already in the park,
can't we just go on a couple more
rides? We have Nuclear Passes. We
can get to the front of every line.

AL

No, we gotta go now.

Franklin parks himself in front of Al. Everyone has to stop.

FRANKLIN

But wait! *You* didn't get a wish!

AL

Dads don't get wishes.

FRANKLIN

Maybe dads *should* get wishes, so
they won't be so mad all the time.

AL

Uh, I wish we could go back to my
place and eat Lucky Charms.

HENRY

Come on, do it for real. What would
you pick if you could pick anything
to do with us right now?

Al gets serious.

AL

I'd take you guys to the lighthouse
were your mom and I met.

FRANKLIN

I've never been to a lighthouse!
How many feet tall is it? How many
lumens is the bulb?

AL

I don't know. We can't go. We don't
have any more time.

LAUREL

There's still a while before mom
comes. We should go.

Al nearly loses it.

AL

(tearfully)
Okay, I guess.

FRANKLIN

See, I can tell that you really
want to go.

The kids grab him and move him toward the exit, still
chattering happily about the Raptor Drop.

EXT. FUNLAND ENTRANCE GATE - CONTINUOUS

Al and the kids are just about to exit through a turnstile
when a voice calls out to them from the crowd.

DAN (O.S.)

Hey Alan! Stop! Laurel, wait!

LAUREL

(searching)
Is that Uncle Dan?

AL

It's just some other dad.

FRANKLIN

No, it's Uncle Dan. Hi Uncle Dan!

Dan comes over and holds up a single baby shoe.

DAN
You lost this.

AL
Oh, uh. Thanks. We're just on our way out. Good to see you though.

DAN
You tell these kids right now or I'll do it for you.

LAUREL
Tell us what?

AL
Nothing, honey.
(to Dan)
Are you nuts? Here in the middle of fucking Funland?

DAN
You had your chance to do it at home, but you decided to come on this little bullshit "Dad's Day" adventure instead.

HENRY
It's not bullshit!

FRANKLIN
It was very educational. We did a science experiment.

LAUREL
(to Al)
What is he talking about, tell us?
(to Dan)
Is that why you've been calling all our phones all day long?

DAN
(tearfully)
Listen kids. I'm so sorry...

Al lifts Franklin in his free arm and sprints toward the exit, yelling back at the big kids.

AL
Run for it!

Laurel and Henry follow, bewildered.

LAUREL
Why are we running?

AL
Because... I... I don't know.

Al shoves Casey into a stolen stroller and hands it off to Laurel. He tosses Franklin into a different stolen stroller.

FRANKLIN
Hey! I'm not a baby!

AL
Yeah, but you have little legs and you're slowing us down.

Dan huffs and puffs but he can't keep up.

DAN
(mumbling)
This fucking day.
(shouting)
Fuck you, Al!

A cast member dressed like a BEAR wags a finger at Dan.

FUNLAND FREDDIE
Now now, no potty mouths at
Funland! We're all here for fun!

Dan SHOVES the bear. It topples over and rolls around on the ground, stuck. Other employees come running to help the bear to his feet and escort Dan to security.

DAN
No, wait! I have to catch up with
them!

EMPLOYEE
You've assaulted Funland Freddie,
sir. You're invited to take a time
out in the Funland Cool Down Room
with the other angry dads.

EXT. FUNLAND, PARKING LOT - DAY

Al and the kids hop back into his car, looking frantically behind them for Uncle Dan.

HENRY
That was awesome! Uncle Dan is such
a douche.

Al SCREECHES out of the Funland parking lot.

LAUREL

What was he talking about? He kept saying you need to tell us something. And all day he's been calling you and me and Henry. And Gramma Sandy called you too. What's going on?

AL

I'll tell you later.

LAUREL

You should tell me *now*.

AL

It's not... I can't...

He starts to cry. Laurel looks at him for a long time. He glances at her between driving and wiping away tears. She starts to look scared.

FRANKLIN

Are we going to the lighthouse now?

AL

I dunno, bud. We don't--

LAUREL

(quietly)
We should go.

AL

What?

LAUREL

I want to see the lighthouse.

Laurel looks out the window of the Camaro, lip quivering.

AL

(quietly)
I'm sorry.

LAUREL

Just get to the fucking lighthouse.

EXT. THE LIGHTHOUSE - DAY

Al pulls into a gravel driveway next to an old RED-AND-WHITE STRIPED LIGHTHOUSE.

HENRY

This is it? Looks kinda boring.

LAUREL
(snapping)
No, it doesn't. This is Dad's wish
so shut up.

HENRY
Fine. Jeez. Jerk.

AL
Hey, you guys shouldn't talk to
each other like that. You're family
and family's gotta stick together.

Al gets Casey from her car seat. Laurel steps away to wipe
her face.

HENRY
What's her problem?

FRANKLIN
Probably hormones.

AL
Come on. We gotta get to the top.

FRANKLIN
Is there an elevator?

AL
Nope. Just a lot of stairs.

CASEY
(at the lighthouse)
Dat's a lollipop.

INT. THE LIGHTHOUSE, STAIRS - DAY

Al and the kids trudge up 318 SPIRAL STEPS in darkness.

Franklin WHINES and Casey COUNTS every step.

CASEY
One... and two... and three! One...
and two... and three!

FRANKLIN
(panting)
How many more stairs?

HENRY
According to Casey, only three.

EXT. THE LIGHTHOUSE, CATWALK - DAY

They BURST OUT onto the DAZZLINGLY BRIGHT catwalk high above the coastline. The view stretches for dozens of miles. Casey points out into the horizon.

CASEY

Dat's a boat! Choo choo!

LAUREL

(to Al)

Don't let her go.

AL

I got her.

FRANKLIN

Wow, I can see a container ship.
And an oil rig. And a cruise ship.

HENRY

There's the Raptor Drop!

LAUREL

Look at all the fire trucks by the town fountain.

FRANKLIN

Do you think it's because of my rainbow beads?

HENRY

Definitely. I'm pretty sure I saw a cop following us from Funland.

FRANKLIN

Oh dear! Now I see police cars pulling up to Dad's car. Do you think they're coming to arrest me?

HENRY

Probably. You'll be charged with intent to gay up the town.

LAUREL

(to Al)

So is this it? This is all you wanted to show us?

HENRY

I think it's pretty cool.

AL

Just one more thing.

Al leads them to a SMALL METAL DOOR around the back side of the lighthouse.

The rest of the structure has been painted over many times, but when Al pulls open the panel, this spot has a square of the original paint.

AL (CONT'D)

Look.

He points to two sets of INITIALS:

AR + LH '86

HENRY

So?

LAUREL

Alan Rudyard and Lauralee Herman.

FRANKLIN

That's you and mom!

AL

Yep. We came here on our first date and scratched our initials into the paint. We knew right off the bat that we were in deep for each other. My buddy Mel makes sure they don't cover over it.

FRANKLIN

But then why did you leave?

Al swipes a hand across his face.

AL

I don't know, man. Sometimes you try to do the right thing and it turns out wrong anyway. Maybe I shoulda stayed. Tried harder. I dunno. I felt bad about staying and I felt bad about leaving too. Maybe it was just gonna be bad either way. But listen, it wasn't you guys. Not one bit. Okay? You're awesome and I'm glad we had today together. I got one last thing...

Al waves to the LIGHTHOUSE KEEPER in the lens room. He makes a "pulling motion." The guy gives a thumbs up and mimes covering his ears.

AL (CONT'D)
Plug your ears.

The kids plug their ears and Al covers Casey's.

The FOGHORN BOOMS out over the ocean, RATTLING everyone.

CASEY
Dinosaur! Raaar!

FRANKLIN
My bones are vibrating!

HENRY
Heh. Cool.

AL
Ready to go down?

FRANKLIN
At least climbing down is easier.

HENRY
Lemme go first. You're slow.

Laurel just looks over the side.

AL
You ready?

LAUREL
I don't want to go down. I'm gonna
live up here forever.

AL
Well then you gotta marry Mel and
he's not that good of a kisser.

They look to Mel, who is picking his nose behind the glass.
Laurel laughs despite herself, then starts to lose it.

LAUREL
(crying)
I don't wanna go.

AL
I know. It's gonna suck ass down
there. But it's gotta happen.

LAUREL
Why did you make us do all that
stuff? You could have just told us.

AL

I wanted you to have one last good day before it all starts to suck.

LAUREL

That was stupid. You're stupid.

Laurel STUMBLES down the lighthouse stairs in tears. Al gives Casey a tiny KISS on the cheek and carries her down.

AL

Did you hear a big dinosaur?

CASEY

Big. Rawr!

EXT. THE LIGHTHOUSE, LAWN - DAY

Al steps out of the lighthouse door, BLINKING in the sunlight. A fleet of POLICE CARS and OFFICERS surround him.

POLICE OFFICER

Do not move. Hand the child over.

HENRY

(hands up)

What the hell?

FRANKLIN

I'm sorry about the rainbow beads!

AL

No, buddy. You're not in trouble. I am.

A police officer snatches Casey out of Al's arms and hands her to SANDY (60s), pale and paunchy. Dan herds the other kids toward his car as Al is handcuffed.

AL (CONT'D)

Wait! I have to tell them! Don't you fucking do it!

SANDY

(livid)

You had your chance! Instead of telling them about their mother, you stole them away and took them on some completely irresponsible joyride. They should have been home this whole day with their real family who loves them.

AL
I love them. I'm their Dad.

SANDY
Not anymore, you aren't.

Laurel pulls away from Dan and steps in front of the officers who are holding Al.

LAUREL
What the hell is happening? He didn't kidnap us.

OFFICER
We received a report of abduction by your next of kin. We have to take it seriously.

Franklin goes to Al's side. He JUMPS and WAVES to get the attention of officers.

FRANKLIN
But our mom dropped us off with him! We're supposed to be together!

Henry takes off his hood.

HENRY
It was Dad's Day. We did all kinds of fun stuff. He didn't kidnap us.

Casey leans out of Sandy's arms toward Al.

CASEY
Go to Dada!

SANDY
(to Casey)
No, you're coming with me.

Casey starts to whine and struggle.

FRANKLIN
Mom will explain it. Where's Mom?

Sandy steps between the boys and Al, while trying to contain Casey.

SANDY
Your dad was too chickenshit to tell you, but this morn--

AL
No! No!

Handcuffed, Al drops to his knees to be at Franklin's level.

AL (CONT'D)

I'm so sorry, buddy. Like more sorry than I can even say. This is gonna suck so bad, but your mom was in a car accident this morning. She got hurt real bad.

FRANKLIN

Oh no.

AL

You guys... she died.

Al breaks down, tries to recover. Franklin is open-mouthed. He has nothing to say. Henry puts his hood back up and sinks deep into it.

AL (CONT'D)

(breaking)

I know. This is so shitty. It feels like getting hit by a Mac truck. There's nothing I can do or say to make it suck less. Your mom was amazing. You know that. Even I knew that. I think that's why I took off. I fucked things up and now she's gone. I'm so sorry you guys. There's no easy way to lose somebody you love.

CASEY

(pushing away from Sandy)

Dada!

SANDY

Stop, honey!

(to the big kids)

You guys are gonna come live with me--

FRANKLIN

I don't wanna live in the retirement community! I want to live at my house!

DAN

It's not going to be your house anymore. After probate, we'll probably sell it and put the money in a trust for all of you. Nana Sandy's house is real good. There's even an in-ground swimming pool.

Franklin hyperventilates. Henry kicks the patrol car.

Laurel takes Casey from Sandy and approaches the boys.

LAUREL

I know this is really awful, but we'll figure it out. And we're gonna stick together.

HENRY

(to Al)

Is that why Uncle Dan was calling all day? Like, did you know the whole day?

AL

Yeah.

HENRY

And you didn't tell us? You just let us fuck around with alligators and go on roller coasters while you knew mom was gone?

AL

I thought it was the best thing.

HENRY

That is so fucked up.

AL

Listen, it's gonna suck for a long while. From today on out. I know how this works, trust me. You're gonna wake up in the morning and things will start out fine and then BAM you'll remember she's gone and it all comes crashing down on you again. And for a long time it's just gonna be that, over and over, every time you smell her perfume or hear somebody with a laugh like hers. It's gonna be fucking awful and you just have to get through it, minute by terrible minute. That's why I did this. I wanted you guys to have one last day where you weren't getting crushed by remembering. One last day of being normal and feeling good, no strings attached. 'Cause it's gonna be a long while before you get that back.

DAN

That is the most immature pile of tripe I've ever heard. Withholding information from children in order to satisfy your own ego.

LAUREL

Shut up. He was nice to us. He took us everywhere we wanted to go and did all the things we wanted to do.

SANDY

Is that a nose ring?

LAUREL

At least he *listened* to us.

FRANKLIN

Where will my turtles live? Archimedes has a Vitamin A deficiency.

DAN

We'll figure this all out at home.

HENRY

At *our* home or *your* home?

AL

I could go stay with them at their place. Just for the night.

SANDY

Absolutely not. You abandoned them and disappeared out of their lives. The best thing you can do right now is disappear again.

Dan and Sandy herd the kids into Dan's car. Laurel hangs back. Casey reaches for Al, but he can't take her with hands cuffed behind his back.

AL

I'm sorry. About all this. Your mom. Not telling you. I thought I was doing the right thing.

LAUREL

Maybe there's not a right thing in a situation like this. It's shitty either way so you just have to make a choice and stick with it.

AL

Maybe.

LAUREL

And also, it was a pretty good day.
There's a lot that's gonna be hard
now, but cool girls do hard stuff.

AL

That they do.

LAUREL

Thanks. I hope we get to do it
again some time.

The officers usher Al into a waiting POLICE SUV.

INT. POLICE SUV - DAY

In the back of the police car, Al presses his face against
the metal grate.

AL

I didn't kidnap my kids.

OFFICER

Sit back, sir.

AL

I was just trying to give them one
good day.

OFFICER

You can explain it all in court.

Al swivels to watch the kids pile into in Dan's car. In the
back window, Laurel turns around and raises a hand to him.

At the base of the lighthouse, on the shore, a runoff pipe
trickles RAINBOW BEADS into the ocean.

INT. ANACLETA COUNTY COURTHOUSE, JUDGE'S CHAMBERS - DAY

THREE MONTHS LATER

In the Judge's chambers, Al sits stiffly in a suit, hair
slicked down. Sandy and Dan sit opposite, shooting dirty
looks across the way.

At her desk, the JUDGE (60s) stern and intense, addresses Al.

JUDGE

Mr. Rudyard, because the charges of kidnapping were ultimately proven to be unsubstantiated, those charges will have no bearing on these proceedings.

AL

Thank you, your honor. I just want to be able to see my kids.

DAN

He was out of their lives completely for three whole years, then suddenly he wants back in?

JUDGE

I understand. While your sister Lauralee had full custody of the children, she unfortunately did not leave a will that indicated her wishes for them after her death.

SANDY

She clearly wanted us--

AL

I think she would have--

JUDGE

I appreciate that both of you would like to play a role in the lives of these kids. It's clear from the reports that in the last few months, you have provided a safe and loving home for them.

Sandy and Dan beam and nod.

SANDY

It's our pleasure. Dan and I--

JUDGE

(to Al)

What's less clear is whether you will be able to provide a suitable environment for the children to visit.

AL

I cleaned up my place. I made the bedrooms look nice with wallpaper and some decorations and stuff like those little glow-in-the-dark stars on the ceiling. Look at the pictures.

The Judge flips through grainy printed photos with amusement.

JUDGE

I see that. You even have a little aquarium set up with a heat lamp.

AL

For the turtles.

JUDGE

Indeed, the turtles. Mr. Rudyard, I do see that you are making an effort--and that does go a long way--but in the absence of your ex-wife's guardianship wishes, I think the best thing to do is hear from the children themselves.

(to Sandy)

Are they here?

SANDY

Yes, we brought them along.

JUDGE

(to the bailiff)

Bring them in, please.

Laurel, Henry, Franklin, and Casey follow the bailiff into the chambers. Laurel nods to Al, Henry ignores him, Franklin makes an exaggerated wave, and Casey blows a kiss.

CASEY

Hi Dada.

JUDGE

Wow, what a cute bunch! I'm Judge Conrad and you are...

(reading)

Laurel, Henry, Franklin, and Casey?

LAUREL

We are.

Casey points to the Judge in her robe.

CASEY

Dat's a bird. Tweet tweet!

JUDGE

(smiling)

So, I'd like to talk to each of you about your feelings on visiting your dad more regularly.

(MORE)

JUDGE (CONT'D)

As I understand it, you've only seen him one time in the last three years, and that was quite a doozy of a day.

AL

Two times.

JUDGE

Excuse me?

AL

I saw them two times. Once for Dad's Day and once at the funeral.

JUDGE

All right. Fair. Two times.

(to the kids)

Your grandma and your uncle think you'd be better off not visiting your Dad at all, that he's not too good of an influence, but I'd really like to hear what you think.

FRANKLIN

I had a really fun time with dad. We did some science and learned a lot about reptiles and even though we filled up the city's wastewater system with rainbow beads, it was pretty much the coolest day ever, apart from the traffic infractions.

JUDGE

I'm glad to hear that. Though I think perhaps you might not want to admit to being an accomplice in the Hueyville rainbow bead incident while you're in a court of law.

FRANKLIN

It's okay, I'm under ten so technically my testimony is inadmissible in family court.

The Judge laughs.

JUDGE

Okay, I see. And... Henry? What are your thoughts about visiting your dad?

HENRY

I dunno. It's fine, I guess.

JUDGE

Do you feel safe at his home?

HENRY

Oh yeah. He has lots of cereal.

AL

Healthy stuff now! Like Raisin Bran!

Henry rolls his eyes.

AL (CONT'D)

Listen Judge, Henry's a little pissed off at me because I did that whole Dad's Day thing, and I get it. I tried to do the right thing and maybe it wasn't right so I'm gonna keep trying to make it right in little ways until it's better.

(to Henry)

I kept a box of Lucky Charms for you. Marshmallows and everything.

Henry tries not to smile.

Casey giggles and points to Al.

CASEY

Dat's Dada!

JUDGE

It is, indeed. Did you have fun with Dada?

CASEY

Dinosaurs shit in the dust.

FRANKLIN

Casey!

JUDGE

All right. Thanks for your input.

(to Laurel)

And as the oldest, I suspect you have the most clarity on the situation. What are your thoughts on visiting your dad?

LAUREL

I think it's a good idea. I also want to say--

She hesitates.

JUDGE

Go ahead. You're free say anything you want. I can ask the adults to leave, if you prefer.

LAUREL

No, they should hear this too. I just think that Dad was right, doing all those fun things with us that day. Every day since then has been packing up stuff and moving. Everything is weird and hard, but... he was right.

(touches her nose ring)

We have a bunch of great memories of that one awesome day, before it all changed. I think that it would be good to have more days like that. Maybe not so crazy, but a little bit fun. Like it used to be.

JUDGE

Thank you. That's very helpful. And do you think your father's home is a safe environment for you and the little ones?

LAUREL

Yeah. And also, I have... um. My mom... This is a hard thing, but can I play a voicemail that my mom left me on the day we were at Dad's house? I think it's important.

JUDGE

Of course.

Laurel pulls out her STILL-CRACKED PHONE and manages to play the message.

LAURALEE (O.S.)

Hi Laurel, I got your message about picking you up. Listen, honey. I know your dad's a bit of a mess, but I really want you guys to get to know him. He's a good guy at heart. He gets a little overwhelmed sometimes, so go easy on him. Try to have fun. He's like a really big kid, so do something crazy, like have a water gun fight or take the dog for a walk. He loves that kind of stuff. I think you'll really like each other.

(MORE)

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

He was maybe not the best husband,
but I think he'll be a really cool
dad if you give him a chance. Okay?
See you later.

Al wipes away tears. Sandy and Dan look deeply uncomfortable.

JUDGE

That was very helpful, thank you.

LAUREL

She wanted us to hang out and get
to know each other that day. And we
did.

FRANKLIN

We *really* did.

LAUREL

I think we should be able to visit
Dad's place once in a while and eat
the marshmallows out of the cereal
and make a mess and just... have
our weird little family back.

FRANKLIN

We promise not to open any more
illegal pull tabs.

JUDGE

I'm not even going to ask. It's clear
to me that Mr. Rudyard's home is safe,
relatively clean, and the kids have no
aversion to visiting. I'm going to
recommend weekly unsupervised
visitation with the possibility of
overnights in the future.

AL

Yes! Thank you, your honor.

Sandy and Dan HUFF INDIGNANTLY and shuffle the kids out of
Judge's chambers.

EXT. ANACLETA COURTHOUSE, STEPS - DAY

Sandy and Dan pull the kids toward the parking lot.

SANDY

If we hurry, you can all be back to
school in time for lunch.

HENRY

I don't wanna go back, I thought we had the whole day off.

SANDY

I have pickleball this afternoon.

Al runs to catch up.

AL

Hi guys.

(to Sandy)

Can I talk to them for a sec?

DAN

You don't get them until Saturday.

AL

Really? I just wanna say hello.

SANDY

(to the kids)

We'll be right over here if you kids need us.

HENRY

If he tries to kidnap us again, we'll let you know.

Sandy gives him a sour look. She and Dan wait near Dan's sensible car.

Casey leans over and extends her hands to go with Al. He takes her from Laurel. Casey plays with his ponytail.

CASEY

Hi Dada.

AL

Hey little gal.

FRANKLIN

One of my turtles died. It was Archimedes. We had a funeral, but it wasn't as big as Mom's. I thought you'd like to know.

AL

I'm very sorry for the loss of your turtle. You all having fun at Gramma Sandy's?

FRANKLIN

It doesn't smell as much like pee because we got an ionizing air filter. I insisted.

HENRY

Now that we're allowed to see you, can you tell them we should have the rest of today off?

AL

Buddy, I don't even get the rest of today off and also I'm not gonna antagonize your grandma. She's already busting my balls every chance she gets.

HENRY

Mine too.

AL

I wanna hear all about it on Saturday.

(to Laurel)

What did everybody at school think of your nose?

LAUREL

Nana Sandy tried to get me to take it out, but I told her it would leave a hole in my nose so she let me keep it. My friends were like, holy crap Laurel your dad is so cool, which you're not, by the way. But they asked if maybe you can go with us to get tattoos?

AL

Young lady, I'm on shaky ground right now as it is. No tattoos, no older boyfriends, no pull tabs, and *definitely* no rainbow beads.

FRANKLIN

I saw a cool experiment with sixty industrial sized cans of chocolate pudding.

Al gives him a look.

FRANKLIN (CONT'D)

Okay, fine. But I would like to go back to the lighthouse.

HENRY

Yeah, that was cool. And I wanna drive the Camaro again.

LAUREL

No way! Absolutely not.

HENRY

Fine. I have your fake ID. I'll use that to drive Uncle Dan's car.

LAUREL

Oh have fun cruising around town in your 2010 PT Cruiser.

FRANKLIN

It has sixty-three feet of cargo space.

AL

It's really good to see you guys. Oh, hey. I got a vacuum!

CASEY

Tweet tweet!

AL

No, the bird's still dead.

Sandy stops ten feet away, as if afraid to catch something.

SANDY

Time to go, kids. Say goodbye to your father.

AL

All right guys. See you Saturday.

The boys give him high fives. Laurel offers a hug. Casey pecks his cheek.

CASEY

Bye, Dada. Shit in the dust.

AL

Shit in the dust, kid.

Al waves as the kids leave with their grandparents. As he steps off the curb, disintegrating in the gutter are a handful of RAINBOW WATER BEADS.

FADE OUT.