



wednesday's child  
wednesday's child  
wednesday's child

Our parents' lessons  
whisper through our  
lives like secrets  
in the wind.

*Write Angle Productions presents  
a film by Brad Marlowe  
winner Best Film - Austin Film Festival*

FADE IN:

EXT. HANSON HOUSE (1975) - DAY

OPENING TITLES begin on an overhead shot of dried leaves on a cracked sidewalk. A small foot walks through the leaves and the camera follows NATHAN, a beautiful five year-old boy, as he skips down the street. Nathan drags a stick across the slats of his neighbors' picket fences while moving toward the Hanson house. We hear a pleasant, 30-ish male voice.

NARRATOR (VO)

My mother once told me that my nightmares were like photographs. If I brought them out into the light - in time they'd fade. But if I chose to keep them hidden away in the dark... they would last a lifetime.

Nathan runs across the street and into his home, but the camera approached the Hanson's house slowly. A TOMBOY-ISH TEENAGE GIRL honks her horn as she whizzes past on her bike. HELEN Hanson turns toward her - and the camera - to give the girl a disapproving glare.

NARRATOR (VO) (cont'd)

Our parents' lessons echo through our lives like orphaned leaves complaining as they scrape across a sidewalk's surface. And the things they said *without words* whisper through our dreams like secrets in the wind.

ARTHUR Hanson is painting the outside of the house and making a mess of it while his wife, Helen, supervises. Arthur self-consciously wipes splatters of paint from his spectacles with a rag as the camera dollies in past Helen in her inappropriately dark and formal attire and then continues on into the house.

NARRATOR (VO) (cont'd)

When I think of the Hanson house, and him, I remember that smell: dusty and sweet, like death - or sad memories. The house always smelled that way to me, though it wasn't until later that I knew why.

The camera passes as Nathan returns to a disassembled appliance with one of his father's tools in hand. SAMSON, Nathan's little dog, gnaws on a bone nearby.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The camera moves through the dining room - past the best china and linen napkins that wait on the dining room table - and into an alcove where a work-bench sits cluttered with tools and testing equipment. The camera then travels into the kitchen where, in the oven, a pot roast cooks with sliced carrots and potatoes. The camera drifts up to the stove top and we see a birthday cake and a six-inch tall clown candle - whose wax is beginning to soften as he waits atop the oven. Gradually, his cheery smile begins to falter, the clown's happy facade cracks and the colors run together. OPENING TITLES END with the sound of a car backfiring.

INT. HANSON LIVING ROOM (1975)- DAY

Samson looks up from his bone, perks up his ears, and hurries off to investigate. The camera dollies back and pans up to reveal Nathan, a beautiful five-year-old, sitting on the polished hardwood floor in a shaft of filtered sunlight. He's been giving a half-hearted effort to restoring what once may have been a toaster. The appliance seems to have exploded - the various doohickeys and whatnots arranged around the child like toy soldiers guarding the gates of Eden. He looks up and sees Samson scooting out the front door, which is ajar.

NATHAN

M-o-m-m-y?

Helen moves closer to the window to check on her son. We see from Nathan's POV as her shadow blocks the light and then envelopes him. Nathan looks up at her, smiling, and we see the unquestioning love and trust that lives only in the eyes of a child.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. HANSON HOUSE (1998) - DAY

A man sits in the same spot as the child in the previous scene, staring up at a silhouette outside the window, which is trying to get a look inside - through the slats of the shutters. The seated man emerges from his reverie and retreats further back into the house.

EXT. HANSON HOUSE (1998) - DAY

Weeds grow wild in the yard and a broken wooden gate bangs in the wind as children trudge past the unkempt house on their way to school. The tree in the yard has been toilet-papered by the local kids and the house's facade is marked by all of the eggs that have been thrown at it over the years.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The daring child who had been peeping through the window runs away from the house and hurdles the rotting picket fence - eager to catch up with his friends.

NARRATOR (VO)

We moved to Desert Palms when I was ten. Later, I would hear people joke that if God was to give the world an enema - the Palms would be where he'd insert the nozzle.

JOANNE and JULIE walk down the street - toward the Hanson house. Joanne's younger brother BILLY follows, taking half-hearted shots at the neighborhood animals with his slingshot. Julie is dressed conservatively, while Joanne wears a short leather skirt, a transparent blouse and torn stockings. Joanne's already wearing too much make-up, but she reacts as if she's forgotten something after checking her reflection in the cracked mirror of a small plastic compact. She rummages through her purse. As they walk, Julie is careful to avoid the cracks in the sidewalk.

JULIE

My mother says girls our age have no business wearing make-up. Not that there's anything wrong with it by me. I mean, you do what you want - it's just that--

Joanne twists the lipstick's base, sending a waxy black projectile spinning into view.

JULIE (cont'd)

Wow. What kinda color is that?

Joanne applies the lipstick while walking. Julie casts a critical eye.

JOANNE

It's called Death Knell.

JULIE

Golly, what a name. Where'd you get that? I mean, what kinda place sells somethin' like that?

JOANNE

Anyplace but here.

JULIE

Really? And your parents let you buy that kind of stuff? My mother would have a cow.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

JOANNE

Have a cow?  
(disgusted)  
I need a smoke.

Joanne takes a joint from her purse and Julie's eyes nearly pop out of her head.

JULIE

(whispering)  
You smoke marijuana, too?

At that moment a group of guys ride by on their bikes and hoot at Joanne. Julie is uncomfortable.

JOANNE

I wear make up, I smoke... You'd be amazed at all the things I do - and at how well I do them. I do what I want, when I want...with whoever I want.

BILLY

Whoever.

JOANNE

Whoever? That sounds stupid.

BILLY

Sounds stupid, but it's right. If he, she, or they fits - it's who. If him, her, or them fits - it's whom.

Billy shoots at a cat, barely missing it.

BILLY (cont'd)

Shit!

JOANNE

Cut it out, Billy.

He pretends to pocket the sling shot. Joanne flips back her long, dyed, hair and takes a hit off of her joint. Julie looks around nervously, as if expecting a police raid at any moment. Billy shoots again.

JOANNE (cont'd)

GODDAMN IT BILLY!

Julie winces at the profanity, but can't take her eyes off of the joint. Billy returns the slingshot to one back pocket and extracts a notepad from the other.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

JOANNE (cont'd)

My mom said to thank your mom for the coffee cake. She really appreciates that kinda crap.

JULIE

It must be hard - moving every year. I mean, I've never really been anyplace else, but I can imagine.

JOANNE

Never?

JULIE

Well, no. I was born here - and all my family lives here. My dad says the grass isn't really greener on the other side - just farther away.

They are in front of the Hanson House now. Joanne finishes her joint and flicks away the residue.

JULIE (cont'd)

I gotta go off here.

Julie moves from the sidewalk to the street to skirt a particularly nasty web of cracks in the sidewalk.

JULIE (cont'd)

The cracks. You know.

JOANNE

(as if to a crazy person)

Oh...yeah.

(looking at the house)

Anyone actually live in that dump?

JULIE

Yeah, but he never comes out. My friend Lucy Wilks claims she saw him diggin' through her trash two summers ago - in the middle of the night - but she's always been a big talker. One thing's for sure - something bad happened in that house. Old Mrs. Henessy says he killed his folks, but you can't believe everything she says either `cause she's not really right in the head since her stroke. I don't really know what happened, but whatever it was - it must have been really bad, `cause they took him away for a long time.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

JULIE (cont'd)

Then he moved back into the house when I was five - and no one's seen him since. Unless you count Lucy, which I don't. The old people in town know what happened, but they don't like to talk about it.

(beat)

I've passed this house nearly every day of my life and it still gives me the heebie jeebies.

BILLY

Is he all hunched over and ugly?

Joanne laughs at Julie's unease.

BILLY (CONT'D) (cont'd)

With bug eyes and slobber hangin' from the sides of his mouth?

JULIE

You're disgusting.

BILLY

Does he eat bugs and sleep hangin' upside down like a bat?

JULIE

I don't know. And I don't care to know, thank you very much.

JOANNE

How does he eat?

JULIE

People leave broken stuff and food at his door. He fixes the stuff and keeps the food. The church takes donations once a month to pay his electric bill - and I think the Elks Club pays for his water.

BILLY

Nobody steals the stuff while it's sitting on his porch?

JULIE

I'd be afraid to even go into his yard, much less go up to the door.

JOANNE

Do you ever wonder what it would be like to be the guy in that house?

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (5)

JOANNE (cont'd)

Or to have really rich parents, or even to be gorgeous? To have something about you, something that you were born into, that makes people think about you in a certain way.

(beat)

It must be strange to meet a new person and for that person to think they know you before you've ever said a single word.

JULIE

No. And I don't know why you'd waste your time thinking about it, either. You're not rich...or gorgeous.

Joanne doesn't answer, but something is on her mind. Billy continues on with Julie, asking more ad-libbed question about the guy in the house. Joanne reaches for her lipstick again and realizes that it's gone. She hurries back toward the Hanson house.

JOANNE

Shit. I dropped my lipstick. Go on - I'll catch up.

Joanne finds her lipstick across the street from the creepy old house. She starts to move away - and then thinks that she sees movement inside. She studies the Hanson house for a moment longer, but sees nothing.

INT. HANSON HOUSE - DAY

As Joanne hurries to catch up to the others, the man in the shadows watches through the slats of his shutters. He raises a gloved hand to adjust the opening so that he can get a better look. A mutt with a bandaged leg watches the man as he watches Joanne.

INT. SCHOOL ROOM - DAY

Joanne sits at the back of the class, by a window, not paying much attention. She sketches rough caricatures of some of the other students. MISS ANDERSON, the teacher, drones on in the background as Joanne doodles and daydreams. The boys, however, are paying close attention - to Joanne. One of them makes eye contact and Joanne turns away. Julie sits in the front, with a group of other JULIE CLONES, hanging on every word the teacher says. Joanne looks out the window as BUCK and AVERY, two thugs, trip BOBBY ROTH, a geeky student, as he hurries by on his way to class. The thugs laugh as Bobby dusts himself off and retrieves his scattered books.

(CONTINUED)



CONTINUED:

JOANNE

Hey...

MISS ANDERSON

Did you say something, Joanne?

All eyes turn toward the new girl. Julie whispers something to another Julie clone. They giggle. TONY watches Joanne with a wolf's eye.

MISS ANDERSON (cont'd)

I'm sorry class. I haven't introduced our new student. Joanne and her family just moved to town. Her father is an officer in the Army and he's been stationed at Fort Tulane.

Joanne scans the room nervously. The boys are unanimous in their interest. The girls, picking up on the boys' approval, are unanimous in their contempt. Julie whispers to one of her friends. The bell rings. The students gather up their things.

MISS ANDERSON (cont'd)

All right everyone, I'll see you tomorrow. Don't forget - the vote for this year's dance lottery is coming up.

The students hurry out, except for Tony, who lingers a moment - watching Joanne as she gathers up her books. She looks up, meeting his eyes. Hungry eyes. They look at each other for a moment and then she breaks free, brushing past him on the way out the door. He smiles.

INT. HANSON HOUSE - DAY

The camera follows the dog with the bandaged leg as he walks with the shadow man to the front door. All we see of the man are his tattered pant legs and well-worn shoes. He goes to a window and peeks out. We see from his POV as the curtains part - only slightly - revealing two items that have been left on the front porch: a basket of food and a broken VCR.

EXT. HANSON HOUSE - DAY

A moment later, the front door opens...just enough to accommodate a broom handle equipped with the homemade hook apparatus that the man uses to drag the food and appliance into the house. As the door is opened wider, to bring in the basket, the bandaged dog slips out.

EXT. HANSON HOUSE - LATE AFTERNOON

Joanne and Billy are walking home. Billy sees the bandaged dog rooting around in a garbage can. When Billy approaches the dog - it runs toward the Hanson House, carrying a overripe banana in its mouth. Billy follows.

JOANNE

Billy, stay away from there...

The dog runs around the side of the house and slips through a loose plank in a rotting fence. Billy follows.

JOANNE (OS) (CONT'D) (cont'd)

B-i-l-l-y...

The dog goes around the back of the house to the back door, where he slips through an opening which has been cut just for him. After a moment of hesitation, Billy moves closer - to peer into the opening...and just as we sense that something is about to happen...Joanne yells:

JOANNE (OS) (CONT'D) (cont'd)

BILLY!

Billy turns away from the hole in the door, just in time, and then hurries to rejoin his sister.

INT. HANSON HOUSE - AFTERNOON

The shadow man watches from a window as Joanne and her brother head for home. We see from the man's POV as a WOMAN passes by the house, as well. She pushes a baby carriage and is followed by a beautiful, toddling TWO YEAR-OLD GIRL.

NATHAN AS A CHILD (VO)

M-o-m-m-y...

INT. HANSON HOUSE LIVING ROOM (1975) - DAY

NATHAN

M-o-m-m-y...

Nathan's mother stands on the front porch, casting her shadow on the boy, as Nathan's father continues to paint the front of the house. Nathan's mother hears, but does not respond.

NATHAN (cont'd)

M-O-M-M-Y...

EXT. HANSON HOUSE (1975) - DAY

NATHAN'S MOTHER

I'm not hard of hearing.

Arthur's brush slips as he paints the eave above his head and a large blob of paint drops onto his glasses, covering the entire left lens. He sweats and sneaks a sideways glance to see if she saw. Helen is not amused. Nathan pokes his head out of the front door.

NATHAN

Can I come out and sit with you and Daddy?

NATHAN'S MOTHER

May I.

NATHAN

May I come and sit with you and Daddy?

NATHAN'S MOTHER

No, you may not. Your father is making enough of a mess all by himself.

Arthur removes his wire-rimmed spectacles and nervously wipes the paint off with a rag.

NATHAN

But mommy...

NATHAN'S MOTHER

Have you finished putting my toaster back together?

NATHAN

No.

NATHAN'S MOTHER

Well then.

Nathan returns to his mess and tries to figure out how he got the toaster apart in the first place. Outside, Arthur grows increasingly nervous beneath Helen's intense scrutiny.

NATHAN'S FATHER

Helen, please stop staring at me like that.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

NATHAN'S MOTHER

"Helen please. Helen Pleeeeez." Have you any clue just how pathetic you sound? Have you?

He leans against a freshly painted area and then - noticing his mistake - jumps back, sloshing paint all over. Helen's face tightens and in this moment we know exactly what this woman is capable of. And then, just as quickly as it came...the clouds pass. She laughs, loud and hard. Caught off guard, Arthur begins to laugh, too. She laughs harder - and he laughs harder, and then Arthur slips in the spilled paint. He falls to the ground, still laughing.

NATHAN'S MOTHER (cont'd)

Sweetheart, come to Mommy. See what a fool your father is.

Nathan's father stops laughing. Nathan comes out timidly.

NATHAN

Daddy, are you okay?

Arthur looks ashamed. He tries to clean himself up.

NATHAN'S FATHER

I'm fine, son.

NATHAN'S MOTHER

Your father is a clod. Useless. All men are useless.

NATHAN

But, won't I be a man some day, mommy?

NATHAN'S MOTHER

I'm afraid so.

Helen takes Nathan firmly by the shoulders and turns him toward her. She becomes very serious.

NATHAN'S MOTHER (cont'd)

You see my love. *That* is why you must do *exactly* as I tell you. You want to grow into a big strong man someday, don't you?

NATHAN

Yes.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

NATHAN'S MOTHER

Well then, you must learn discipline.  
Without it...

She directs Nathan's eyes toward his pitiful father.

NATHAN

Yes mother.

She embraces him.

NATHAN'S MOTHER

Do you know how much I love you?

NATHAN

(by rote)  
More than anyone.

NATHAN'S MOTHER

That's right. More than anyone. Now, or  
ever. No one could ever love you as much  
as I do. You do know that?

NATHAN

Yes mother.

She hugs him again and then tidies up his hair and clothes.

NATHAN'S MOTHER

Oh, my love... What would you do without  
me?

NATHAN

(by rote)  
I'd be lost.

NATHAN'S MOTHER

That's right - lost in a sea of pain and  
despair. But don't worry, my angel. I  
will never ever leave you.

She gives him a gentle kiss on the lips. Samson spots a  
butterfly and chases it out into the front yard.

NATHAN'S MOTHER (cont'd)

Now go on. Back to your work. There  
will be no presents or cake until the  
work is done.

NATHAN

Yes mother. Can I... May I take Samson  
with me?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

NATHAN'S MOTHER

Yes you may, but only because it is your special day.

Nathan smiles and turns to locate his dog.

NATHAN

Samson... SAMSON!

Screeching brakes. All eyes turn toward the street.

NATHAN (cont'd)

Samson!

Nathan runs to the street. He reaches Samson just as the MISERABLE DRIVER gets out of his car. Nathan cradles Samson's limp carcass in his arms gently.

NATHAN (cont'd)

You killed him!

MISERABLE DRIVER

Oh, God. Kid...I'm sorry. He just came out of nowhere.

Arthur and Helen arrive approach as Nathan sits in the middle of the street with his dog in his arms...crying. Arthur, misty-eyed himself, stoops to comfort Nathan.

NATHAN'S FATHER

Son...

NATHAN

Don't touch him! Nobody can touch him, but me.

Nathan gently carries Samson back to the porch and sits.

NATHAN (CONT'D) (cont'd)

I'm going to make him better.

MISERABLE DRIVER

(to Arthur)

I'm really sorry. The dog just came outta nowhere.

NATHAN'S MOTHER

The boy will be fine.

(to Arthur)

Just leave him to his grief.

The miserable driver gets back into his car and pulls away as Nathan's parents return to the porch.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

Nathan sits on the garden wall, talking to the motionless dog. Helen and Arthur go into the house, leaving Nathan alone to pet Samson and cry...awaiting a response.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. HANSON HOUSE (1975) - SAME DAY - DUSK

We can see Arthur fixing something at his work bench as Nathan's mother puts dinner on the table. Nathan sits in the same spot, still petting Samson and talking to him. Suddenly, Samson begins to move.

NATHAN

Mommy! He's alive! Samson's alive!

Helen and Arthur hurry from the house to see what's going on and are stunned when they see the little dog moving around in Nathan's arms. Helen clutches the cross that hangs around her neck and whispers:

NATHAN'S MOTHER

It's a miracle.

Nathan lets Samson down. Helen and Arthur watch in amazement as Samson walks around on the front lawn - stiff, but undoubtedly alive. Nathan's grin stretches from ear to ear.

NATHAN

Look what I did, mommy! I fixed Samson. I touched him and I took away his pain. Like in the Bible, mommy.

Nathan's face looks pale and drawn. Helen puts a cold hand to his forehead.

NATHAN'S MOTHER

You're burning up.

(to Arthur)

Get him to bed.

NATHAN

(exhausted)

I made Samson better. Did you see, mommy? Did you see?

Samson runs past them on their way into the house.

NATHAN'S MOTHER

I see, my love.

Led by Helen, Arthur carries Nathan into the house.

INT. HANSON HOUSE DINING ROOM - NIGHT

Arthur returns to his coin collection, which has been laid out on the dining room table, carrying an additional coin in his gloved hand. The gloves he wears are the type that photographers use and are made of thin, white cotton. Helen enters the room.

NATHAN'S MOTHER

Don't walk away from me.

Arthur adds the new coin to the collection and avoids his wife's eyes. He seems even more nervous than usual.

NATHAN'S FATHER

Samson was just stunned.

NATHAN'S MOTHER

The animal was dead.

NATHAN'S FATHER

You're never gonna get me to believe that Nathan healed that animal. You believe what you want, but this time - you leave me out of it.

Helen storms out of the room and Nathan's father extracts a flask from his back pocket - then drinks.

INT. HELEN'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Nathan sits in his mother's bed eating birthday cake. Helen watches from the doorway for a moment before entering the room and sitting on the edge of the bed.

NATHAN'S MOTHER

My love, this thing that happened today with Samson. You have been given a great gift.

NATHAN

(mouth full)

A birthday present?

NATHAN'S MOTHER

Yes. The *best* birthday present ever. A present from God.

He puts down his fork and listens, wide-eyed.

(CONTINUED)



CONTINUED:

NATHAN'S MOTHER (CONT'D) (cont'd)  
And it is a sacred gift, but we must keep  
it a secret - just between you and mommy.  
Sweetheart, you must promise mommy that  
you will never tell anyone what you did  
with Samson today.

NATHAN  
But mommy...

NATHAN'S MOTHER  
And you must promise not to touch anyone -  
ever again.

NATHAN  
Why mommy?

She kisses his palms and presses his hands to her face.

NATHAN'S MOTHER  
The world is filled with sinners and none  
must know. So it will be our secret -  
just yours and mine. Forever.

NATHAN  
But mommy, if I have a gift - shouldn't I  
share it?

NATHAN'S MOTHER  
Promise me, Nathan. Not even your  
father.

NATHAN  
I promise, mommy.

She hugs him.

NATHAN'S MOTHER  
If they knew they would take you from me.  
Do you want that?

NATHAN  
No mommy! Don't let the sinners take me  
away from you!

NATHAN'S MOTHER  
But they would. If they found out about  
your gift they would take you away - and  
they would destroy you.

Nathan starts to cry.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

NATHAN'S MOTHER (cont'd)

They would hound you and hunt you down like an animal. They would lock you up in a cage and make you their slave. And if you refused to do their bidding - they would crucify you.

She weeps with him.

NATHAN'S MOTHER (CONT'D) (cont'd)

Please, sweetheart. Promise mommy that you will *never* tell.

NATHAN

I promise, Mommy. Don't let them take me away from you!

They hug. She wipes away his tears and he does the same to her, in imitation. Her face brightens at the warmth of her son's touch.

NATHAN'S MOTHER

You see. You *do* have the gift.

Nathan's mother takes his plate and moves to the door.

NATHAN'S MOTHER (CONT'D) (cont'd)

Now, off to your room. I'll be there in a few minutes to tuck you in. I love you, sweetheart.

NATHAN

I love you, too, mommy. ♦ More than anyone.

Nathan's mother smiles and leaves. Nathan thinks for a moment and then gets out of bed, goes to the dresser drawer which contains his father's best photographs and a spare set of cotton gloves.

EXT. HANSON HOUSE (1975) - NIGHT

Silhouetted in the window, Nathan puts on the gloves.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. JOANNE'S HOUSE (1998) - NIGHT

Billy stands silhouetted in an upstairs bedroom window. His arms are extended and he's talking to the TV. We hear the sounds of a video game.

INT. BILLY'S ROOM - NIGHT

Billy's eyes are glued to the TV and he frantically works his PlayStation game controller. His room is littered with boxes that have been partially unpacked.

BILLY

Come on come on come on...

ANGLE ON TV as Billy's opponent in Tekken 3 beats the crap out of him.

BILLY (CONT'D) (cont'd)

Oh, man - gimme a break!

JOANNE'S MOTHER (OS)

Billy...

BILLY doesn't respond. He's too wrapped up in the game. He winces and bobs in sync to his video counterpart. Billy punches buttons like crazy.

ANGLE ON TV as Billy's fighter executes an amazing move and does some serious damage to his opponent.

JOANNE'S MOTHER (OS) (cont'd)

B-i-l-l-y...

Billy's body tenses up and he focusses all of his energy into his flying fingertips.

BILLY

Just a second! I'm almost to level seven.

JOANNE'S FATHER (OS)

No, Bill... Now.

ANGLE ON TV as Billy is about to defeat his video opponent - and then the TV screen suddenly goes blank.

BILLY

No! Aw, man!

Billy goes to the PlayStation and presses the reset button, but nothing happens. He speaks to the machine.

BILLY (cont'd)

You suck!

JOANNE'S FATHER

Bill!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Billy turns off the TV and runs down the stairs to join the rest of the family.

INT. JOANNE'S DINING ROOM - NIGHT

Joanne, her MOTHER and FATHER are already at the dining room table. Her mother wears an unfrilled apron over a simple dress. She transfers the dishes of food from kitchen to dining room. Joanne's mother wears almost no make-up and would be described as a pleasant looking woman with a strong sense of order. Every hair is in place, as is every other element of both her home and her life. Joanne's father was once a powerful man, and he still carries with him that air of self-importance that is associated with leaders of men. He's big and gruff, but shows signs of softening around the middle. There is tension in the air, although it doesn't seem unfamiliar. Dad is seated at the head of the table, his wife to the right, his son's place to the left, and Joanne is seated as far away as possible. Billy enters he room and sits.

BILLY

I can't believe the stupid thing broke. I was kickin' Eddy's butt, too - and he's the toughest one.

JOANNE'S FATHER

Mother, this looks every bit as good as usual.

JOANNE'S MOTHER

I hope I didn't get the meat too salty.

Joanne looks bored. Her mother serves the food.

JOANNE'S FATHER

Bill, did you make any new friends today?

BILLY

Dad, we just got here.

Billy's father reaches over and puts a big hand on top of his son's. Joanne is very aware of the contact.

JOANNE'S FATHER

You've got to jump in with both feet, son. A man is nothing without the respect of his peers.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BILLY

Okay, I'll try. Dad, I really wanna beat Eddy. Do you think you could give me the money to--

JOANNE'S FATHER

That's what your allowance is for, Bill.

BILLY

But Dad, I don't have enough--

He cuts Billy off with a look - and then motions toward the gravy boat. Joanne's mother passes it to her husband. Billy looks depressed.

JOANNE'S FATHER

What did you do today, Dear?

JOANNE'S MOTHER

You know, it's really true. You never know just how much..."stuff" you've got, until you try to find a place for it all. This house is bigger than the last one, but I'd swear we have less than half the closet space. I'll be trying to find places for things from now 'till Kingdom Come.

JOANNE'S FATHER

Well, I guess Home and Garden will have to wait another couple of weeks before they come by for the photo shoot.

JOANNE'S MOTHER

Oh you...be quiet.

JOANNE

(softly)

Pass the potatoes, please.

Joanne's father ignores the request, even though the bowl sits right next to him. Billy quickly stretches to reach them - and then passes the potatoes to his sister. An uncomfortable silence sets in.

JOANNE (cont'd)

I met someone today. A guy. Well, I didn't really meet him. Not yet. But I'm sure I will.

Joanne's father continues to ignore her.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

JOANNE'S MOTHER

Joanne, please...

JOANNE

He's in my homeroom class. He looks like the kind of guy that might have killed someone. I think he likes me.

No reaction. Joanne tries to take a drink of milk from her glass, but her hand is shaking too badly. She returns the glass of milk to the table top.

JOANNE (CONT'D) (cont'd)

(quietly)

Daddy, please talk to me.

Joanne's mother refolds her napkin and pushes the food on her plate into neat little piles as Billy watches the drama unfold. Joanne's father stares into his plate.

JOANNE'S FATHER

Less than a week and they've already picked up the scent. But I can't blame them. No, she knows *exactly* what she's doing.

Joanne stares directly at her father as her eyes begin to well up with tears. Her mother moves to comfort her.

JOANNE'S MOTHER

Jason, please...

Joanne hurries from the table and bolts out of the house, slamming the front door. After a moment, Billy moves to follow his sister. As he gets to door, there's a knock. Billy opens the door and crashes into REVEREND WOODS.

REVEREND WOODS

My goodness. This is certainly a family on the move.

JOANNE'S MOTHER

Billy! Come back and apologize.

Billy returns unhappily.

BILLY

Sorry.

Reverend Woods smiles at the boy, sympathetically.

JOANNE'S MOTHER

I'm sorry Reverend...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

REVEREND WOODS

Woods. Joshua Woods. I just stopped by to welcome you to our little town, but I see that you're at supper...

JOANNE'S MOTHER

No, please...come in. I'll get my husband. Can I get you something?

REVEREND WOODS

No, thank you.

Billy sees his sister outside, crying, and begins to fidget.

BILLY

May I be excused?

JOANNE'S MOTHER

Why don't you sit down and...

REVEREND WOODS

That's all right. I have a girl of my own - Becky. I know how restless they can get. But, before you go, son, let me ask - how would you feel about helping some of the neighborhood boys with a little charity work?

Billy's not thrilled, but mom's giving him the look. Dad enters.

REVEREND WOODS (CONT'D) (cont'd)

There are a lot of unfortunate people that could use our help. And it might be a good way for you to meet other boys your own age. Make some friends.

Dad walks over to his son and rests his hands affectionately on Billy's shoulders.

JOANNE'S FATHER

Sounds like a good idea, Bill.

Billy's definitely not thrilled. Reverend Woods smiles.

EXT. JOANNE'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Joanne paces and smokes as she tries to pull herself together. Billy leaves the house, envisioning the tortures that lay ahead for him in the name of charity. The stars shine like diamonds on a field of black velvet. Billy stands near his sister, looking up into the night.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BILLY

You okay?

JOANNE

I wish he was dead. I dream about it sometimes.

BILLY

Why do you hate him so much?

No answer from Joanne. After a moment, headlights round the corner and head up the street toward Billy and Joanne. All of the windows have been rolled down, spilling laughter and music into the lonely night.

BILLY (cont'd)

Who's that?

The silver Mercedes passes them, then slams on its brakes and backs up again. It's Tony and his gang.

TONY

Ahhh...a damsel in distress. I've come to rescue you.

JOANNE

What makes you think I'm in distress?

TONY

Just a feeling. Wanna go for a ride?

JOANNE

No thanks.

TONY

Why not?

He lifts the four remaining members of a six-pack into view.

TONY (cont'd)

The bar's open - and I promise to be nice.

Joanne looks back at the house and sees her father's shadow looming by the window as he speaks to the Reverend. She returns her attention to Tony's toothy grin and then addresses Billy.

JOANNE

You won't tell?

(CONTINUED)



CONTINUED: (2)

BILLY

Do I ever?

She gives him a hurried hug.

JOANNE

Thanks.

Tony turns to his compatriots.

TONY

C'mon, guys - out.

BUCK

What're you talkin' about, T?

He lowers his voice, so that Joanne can't hear.

TONY

I'm talkin' about me and her - alone.

BUCK

But...

TONY

OUT. NOW.

BUCK and AVERY get out grumbling. Joanne gets in and pushes aside the empty beer cans that litter the front seat.

JOANNE

Thanks, Billy. Don't stay out here too late.

BUCK

(falsetto)

Yeah, Billy - don't stay out too late.

Buck and Avery laugh at Billy as Joanne and Tony drive off. The thugs wander off down the street. Billy sits on the curb to write in his ever-present notepad.

INT. TONY'S CAR - NIGHT

TONY

Name's Tony. Friends call me T.

JOANNE

I saw you staring at me in class today.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

TONY

Now you're gonna act like that bothers you, right?

JOANNE

No.

TONY

Need a beer?

JOANNE

I need something.

EXT. HANSON HOUSE - NIGHT

Billy approaches the dark house, carrying a backpack, and hesitates at the front gate. Rusty hinges groan as he opens the gate and steps onto the dirt driveway.

NARRATOR (VO)

I still see that night in my dreams sometimes. The summer breeze rustled through the trees - and there was an odd feeling in the air; an indefinable something that would have told me, if I'd cared to listen, that this place was a doorway. A doorway that was, perhaps, better left uncrossed.

Billy moves cautiously to the front door and quickly unloads the contents of his pack: the broken PlayStation, its power cords and signal cables, and some packaged food and fresh fruit that he's taken from his mother's kitchen. As he's placing the stuff by the front door - Billy jumps at a sound behind him.

A WINDBLOWN BRANCH SCRAPES A WINDOW PANE, creating a sound like fingernails dragged across a blackboard.

BILLY HURRIES AWAY FROM THE HOUSE and once he's safely back on the sidewalk, breathes easier. As he starts back home, Billy notices a light in a back bedroom of the Hanson house. He stops, adrenaline still pumping from his trip to the porch, and then decides to investigate. He steps into the yard again and sneaks along the side of the house - toward the light. As he creeps closer, Billy sees the shadow of a man cast against the gauzy curtains. The shadow just sits there - immobile. The wind whips through the trees as Billy stands on tip-toes to try to get a peek at the freak, but he can't reach. Moving branches throw wild shadows all around and the night is bathed in blue.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Billy looks around and finds a tree, which he climbs in order to reach the level of the window. Still, he can see nothing. Billy's feeling brave now, so he climbs further up the tree - and then steps quietly onto the roof of the Hanson house.

UP ON THE ROOF, he spots a skylight and begins to creep toward it. When he reaches the skylight, Billy gets on all fours and leans over to take a look. But the house is dark and he can see nothing. He leans further, but still - no sign of the freak. Finally, he leans too far and loses his balance. Billy calls out as he falls through the skylight, but manages to catch the edge of the roof's opening. Legs dangling into the house, Billy tries to pull himself back up to the roof. Billy hears footsteps below - inside the house - and he pulls with all of his strength, but it's no use - his grip is slipping.

INT. HANSON HOUSE - NIGHT

Billy struggles for a moment longer and then falls into the house, landing badly on one leg. He lies on the floor, terrified. He tries to get up, but the pain in his leg is too great. Billy can see light spilling out from under one of the doors that opens onto the hallway. He can also see feet - approaching the door. Billy watches helplessly the doorknob turns and the door opens - throwing a wedge of light directly onto him. And then he sees...The Freak.

INT. WAREHOUSE - NIGHT

Joanne makes her way down the aisle, pulling random video boxes from the stacks. She's a little drunk.

JOANNE

I can't believe it - your dad really sells porn. I'm surprised they haven't run him out of town.

TONY

They managed to close his store downtown, but he ended up making twice as much selling the stuff mail order.

Tony moves up behind Joanne and kisses her neck. She pulls away, teasing him.

JOANNE

I'm trying to read.  
(reading box titles)  
Forest Hump, The Sperminator, Position Impossible... Are they all named after movies?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Tony kisses her neck again and reaches around to grab her breasts.

TONY  
No, there's a `classics' section on the other side.

JOANNE  
Classics?

TONY  
A Tale of Two Titties...and an all male flick set in Hollywood - Of Mice In Men.

INT. ADJOINING ROOM - NIGHT

Buck and Avery eavesdrop of Joanne and Tony's conversation. Buck carries a video camera and Avery waits by the light switch. They speak in whispers.

JOANNE (OS)  
That's disgusting!

AVERY  
Did he say it?

BUCK  
Not yet.  
(beat)  
This is gonna be so fucking great!

Buck switches the video camera to "Night Shot" mode.

INT. WAREHOUSE - NIGHT

Tony slips an adult DVD into the player and it flickers to life on the little monitor over the shrink-wrap work bench.

TONY  
We're getting into DVD, too. This one's really hot.

Tony sucks on Joanne's neck as he backs her up against the work bench. He has one hand under Joanne's blouse and the other under her skirt.

JOANNE  
So, does your dad make a lot of money selling this stuff?

Tony is frustrated by Joanne's feigned disinterest.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

TONY  
(breathing hard)  
Huh? Yeah. This - and the website.

JOANNE  
What do you put on there?

TONY  
Avery works on the site part time. He  
puts on the usual shit - videos... x-  
rated pictures...

He stands back, horny and frustrated.

TONY (cont'd)  
C'mon...

Joanne is thoroughly enjoying taunting him, but there is also  
desperation in her eyes.

JOANNE  
Do you want me?

Tony unbuckles his jeans and pushes them - and his shorts -  
down around his ankles, but Joanne is still looking into his  
eyes...looking for something that she needs badly.

TONY  
Isn't it obvious?

JOANNE  
Do you love me?

TONY  
(amused)  
What?

JOANNE  
Do you love me?

TONY  
(laughing)  
No.

At first Joanne looks disappointed, then she appears  
relieved.

JOANNE  
Good.

Joanne studies his face...and his body...and seems  
preoccupied by a troubling thought.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

It's as if she's preparing to discover the results of a lottery that she already knows she's going to lose.

TONY

Are we gonna talk or are we gonna fuck?

(beat, louder)

I said - are we gonna talk or are we gonna fuck?

Suddenly the lights go out. The place is pitch black, except for the flickering pool of light from the TV - which illuminates Tony and Joanne. Joanne crosses her arms over her breasts, defensively.

JOANNE

What's going on?

TONY

It must be midnight. The lights are on a timer - just in case someone closes up and forgets to shut them off.

BUCK'S POV THROUGH VIDEO CAMERA as he and Avery emerge quietly from their hiding place. We see Joanne and Tony from a distance, illuminated by the eerie green glow of the camera's infra-red system.

AVERY

(whispering)

Are you zoomed in?

BUCK

(whispering)

Shut up - she's gonna hear us.

JOANNE

I can't see anything but your face.

Tony takes one of Joanne's hands from her chest and brings it to his crotch.

TONY

You know where to find everything you need, baby.

Tony pulls Joanne close and yanks her underwear down. When he kisses Joanne, she reacts like a dessert traveler to water. She closes her eyes and kisses him back as if he was the love of her life. She clings to him desperately, lost in her fantasy.

BUCK AND AVERY creep closer. Tony tosses Joanne's panties and they fall at Buck's feet.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

He and Avery are trying hard not to give themselves away by laughing. Buck stuffs the underwear in his back pocket and returns his attention to the viewfinder.

THROUGH THE VIDEO CAMERA, we see Tony and Joanne kissing as he reaches down between their bodies and shudders as they connect. Tony begins to slam into Joanne unceremoniously and she continues to cling to him, eyes squeezed shut...trying to hold on to her romantic fantasy despite the harsh reality. A few seconds later, Tony tenses up.

TONY (cont'd)

Oh...shit! OH SHIT! O-H S-H-I-T!!!

He goes rigid - collapses onto Joanne - and then rolls away, leaving her feeling used and, as always, devastated. Suddenly feeling dirty and vulnerable, Joanne ventures out of the pool of light to blindly search the floor for her clothes.

BUCK AND AVERY duck behind a stack of boxes. Joanne continues to search on her hands and knees.

JOANNE

Take me home.

Tony reclines on the workbench, his pants still down around his knees.

TONY

Come over here and clean me up.

Joanne has found everything except her panties and one shoe. She continues to search the floor in the dark.

JOANNE

What?!

TONY

Clean me up. With your mouth.

Joanne puts on her blouse - and the single shoe.

JOANNE

Yeah, you go ahead and hold your breath on that one. Are you taking me home or not?

TONY

Sorry...no mouth - no ride.

JOANNE

Goddamn it!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

Joanne gives up on the underwear and the second shoe and starts toward the front door, but she keeps bumping into boxes in the dark - to Tony's delight. Tony gets dressed as Joanne finally finds the door and slams it closed on her way out. As soon as she leaves, Buck and Avery flip on the lights and laugh along with Tony.

EXT. SECLUDED ROAD - NIGHT

We see Joanne from a distance as she limps along with one shoe. She stops and throws the remaining shoe away and continues on - barefoot. Joanne doesn't even try to stop the occasional passing cars.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. ANOTHER SECLUDED ROAD - NIGHT

Joanne limps along in pain. Finally, a car slows as it approaches and then stops alongside Joanne. The car radio is tuned to a Rock-N-Roll oldies station.

REVEREND WOODS

What on earth are you doing out here in the dead of night, child?

Joanne recognizes the minister and keeps on walking - in no mood for a sermon. Reverend Woods follows.

REVEREND WOODS (CONT'D) (cont'd)

Can I give you a ride home?

JOANNE

What are you doing out here, father? Looking for little girls to save. Or is it little boys?

REVEREND WOODS

I think you've mistaken me for a Catholic priest.

Joanne stops and turns to Reverend Woods with an incredulous smile. He's smiling, too - but not enough to let on as to whether or not he was making a joke.

REVEREND WOODS (CONT'D) (cont'd)

Catholic priests are addressed as 'father'. Men of the cloth in my denomination are referred to as 'Reverend'. But you can call me John, if the formality will keep you from accepting my help.

(CONTINUED)



CONTINUED:

Joanne likes this man, despite her ever-present cynicism. She looks around and sees nothing but abandoned roads and sprawling hills. It would be a very long walk. Finally, Joanne sighs and gets into the car.

INT. REVEREND WOODS' CAR - NIGHT

Reverend Woods turns the radio down and he and Joanne travel in silence. The Reverend notices that Joanne's feet are bare, but he decides not to comment. Joanne looks out the window, feigning boredom, but she is in fact very uncomfortable.

REVEREND WOODS

Your brother volunteered to help us clean up the Hanson boy's yard.

JOANNE

Volunteered?

REVEREND WOODS

All right, perhaps *coerced* would be a more accurate description.

Another uncomfortable silence sets in.

REVEREND WOODS (CONT'D) (cont'd)

We all try to help that poor boy, but he won't come out - or even talk to anyone. We drop off our old newspapers and magazines - just so he can keep up with the times, but still...

He looks over at Joanne, who's obviously lost and alone.

REVEREND WOODS (CONT'D) (cont'd)

It must be lonely. Having no one to talk to. To feel that there is not one single person on God's green earth who truly understands you.

Joanne doesn't respond - she just continues to stare out the window at the passing landscape.

INT. JOANNE'S HOUSE - NIGHT

It's late and the house is silent except for the faint tick of a clock. Joanne's father drinks and waits in the dark. We hear a car's door closing before it drives away. A moment later, Joanne opens the front door as quietly as possible. Even by the dim light of the moon, we can see Tony's passion bite blooming on her neck.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JOANNE'S FATHER  
Where's your brother?

Joanne tries to hide the hickey.

JOANNE  
I don't know. He was out front when I-

JOANNE'S FATHER  
When you what? Went off with another  
guy, right?  
(beat, accusation)  
Your brother never came back in.

He moves closer and she backs away.

JOANNE'S FATHER (cont'd)  
You do what you want, but I won't lose  
Billy, too.

Joanne avoids his lecherous stare.

JOANNE (CONT'D)  
That make-up... Those clothes...  
(beat)  
Where are your fucking shoes?

Joanne remains silent and he moves closer, backing her into a corner.

JOANNE'S FATHER  
Do you have any idea how you look? Do  
you? You're so god damned ugly. And  
stupid. Stupid and ugly... stupid and  
ugly. You make me sick. You whore. You  
let him put it in you - didn't you?  
Didn't you?!

JOANNE  
(quietly defiant)  
Yes.

He kneels before her, a broken man. He closes his eyes and rests his fevered forehead on her bare stomach. She looks out the window and fixes her gaze upon a star.

JOANNE'S FATHER  
(distraught)  
You fucking whore. I can smell him on  
you. You make me...sick. You make me  
sick.  
(in a small voice, defeated)  
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

JOANNE'S FATHER (cont'd)

Can Daddy's little girl still keep a secret?

JOANNE

(numb)

Yes, Daddy.

Joanne just stares off into space, unattached, as her father brings his lips to her belly button.

JOANNE'S FATHER

I love you, baby. I love you...

JOANNE'S MOTHER SUDDENLY EMERGES from the bedroom and crosses the livingroom en route to the kitchen. She purposely does not look toward the corner where Joanne and her father are.

JOANNE'S MOTHER

I couldn't sleep. Anyone else want some cocoa?

Billy suddenly limps through the front door, wearing a makeshift splint on his leg. Joanne quickly moves away from her father - before Billy or her mother catch on.

JOANNE

Are you all right?

BILLY

I fell, but I'm okay.

Billy's father sits his son down and examines the dressing while he tries to pull himself together. Joanne gives her brother a look that's both angry and sad. Billy sees the hickie and gives her a knowing look as mom emerges from the kitchen and locks eyes with her daughter.

BILLY (cont'd)

Ow! Dad...it didn't hurt until you started touching it! Honest - I barely even feel it unless I try to walk on it.

JOANNE'S FATHER

We're taking you to the base infirmary first thing in the morning. And I expect to hear a damned good reason for this on the way down there, Bill.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

He picks up his son and carries him to bed. Joanne's mother breaks eye contact and returns to the kitchen while Joanne watches Billy and her father go, with a mixture of relief and concern.

INT. JOANNE'S ROOM - NIGHT

Joanne sits at her vanity mirror, staring through her own reflection as she smokes a joint. Her hair is still wet from the shower, yet Joanne's bedroom window stands fully open - allowing in the cold night wind. Her bedroom door squeaks as it inches open and she looks to the door's reflection, as if expecting her father.

BILLY  
(whispers)  
Jo?

JOANNE  
(relieved)  
Yeah.

BILLY  
Can I come in?

Joanne puts out the joint and replaces the lacy black shroud that she uses to cover her vanity mirror, as if she was in perpetual morning.

JOANNE  
Of course, stupid.

She sits on her bed, shivering in the breeze. Billy limps over to shut the window and then sits beside his sister.

BILLY  
The man in the house fixed my leg.

Joanne wants to be angry, but she's just so beaten down.

JOANNE  
I told you to stay away from there?

Billy becomes animated.

BILLY  
Yeah, but after you left with that guy, I went over. To see if maybe he would fix my PlayStation.

JOANNE  
And.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BILLY

And there was a light on.

JOANNE

So.

BILLY

So he was in there. I was climbing a tree to get a better look - and I saw a skylight. So, I got up on the roof-

JOANNE

You got up on his roof?!

BILLY

-and I was looking down through the stupid skylight when it broke and I fell into the house. It was kinda cool.

JOANNE

You are so stupid. You could have been killed. He could have killed you.

BILLY

He's not like that. He's not mean. He doesn't even talk.

JOANNE

What does he do in there all alone?

BILLY

He's not alone. He's got these TV people...and a dog he calls Zeppo... and books everywhere. I asked him what he does all day and he showed me where he fixes things.

JOANNE

I'd better not catch you over there again. This guy sounds crazy.

BILLY

He wore these dirty old gloves that looked like they'd been on him forever. And he never touched my skin the whole time he was fixin' my leg. I asked him about the gloves and he just hid his hands in his pockets and looked down at the ground. But I wasn't afraid of him, Jo, honest. There was something about him .

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

BILLY (cont'd)

I think he was more scared of me than I was of him.

JOANNE

You'd better not tell dad.

Billy hops to the door on one foot.

BILLY

I'm not stupid.

JOANNE

See if you still think that after they re-break your leg to put it in a cast.

BILLY

I'll worry about my leg, you worry about your neck.

She throws a pillow at him just as he closes the door and then her smile slips away.

EXT. SCHOOL - BASKETBALL COURT - DAY

Joanne leaves the building. Even though she's covered the hickie with make-up, it's still pretty obvious. Joanne looks lonely. Julie passes by.

JOANNE

Julie, wanna walk home with Billy and me?

JULIE

Gee, I'd like to, but I promised Jane I'd go with them.

JOANNE

Oh. Okay.

Julie walks off with a smug little smile and Joanne wanders over to the basketball court. She watches the boys as they play. Out of nowhere, Tony and his gang show up, disrupting the game, stealing the ball and passing it around between them. Tony is very aware of Joanne's presence. It's obvious that he's trying to show off for her. Joanne turns away. BECKY approaches.

BECKY

Hi. You're Joanne, right?

There is a fracas behind the girls. Becky turns to see what's going on. Tony's right in the middle of it.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BECKY (cont'd)  
He likes you.

JOANNE  
Lucky me.

BECKY  
You really should take advantage of that.  
Maybe you could influence him.

JOANNE  
No thanks. I'm not the Savior type.

BECKY  
I think there's always hope for the lost  
sheep. They just need the right  
shepherd. That's what my dad always  
says.

Tony and his gang approach.

TONY  
(to Becky)  
Hello beautiful.  
(to Joanne)  
Hey, Joanne - looks like you had a rough  
night. Been hanging out at the army base  
again?

Buck and Avery snicker and whisper to each other in the  
background. Becky watches Tony mop his sweaty body with his  
shirt and leer at her. Becky blushes.

BECKY  
You look...hot.

The guys laugh.

BECKY (cont'd)  
I mean... I was just...

TONY  
You know, you've got pretty nice legs for  
a preacher's daughter. I bet you could  
walk on water with legs like that.

Buck and Avery give Tony a high five. Becky gets flustered.

BECKY  
I...I should go. My father's waiting for  
me.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

Becky hurries away.

BUCK  
She wants you, T.

TONY  
Was there ever any doubt?

Joanne sees Billy on the other side of the school yard and starts toward him, walking along the fence. Tony and his buddies follow - on the inside of the fence.

TONY (cont'd)  
Hey Joanne, wanna do me - I mean - do something tonight?

JOANNE  
No thanks. I wouldn't want to break up the nightly circle jerk with your little buddies. Besides, I can think of better ways to spend thirty seconds.

The guys laugh - this time at Tony. Tony smacks Buck on the back of the head.

TONY  
Shut the fuck up! You think that's funny?! You think that's fucking funny?!

BUCK  
Well, yeah...kinda.

Buck cowers as Tony smacks him a few more times and then shoves him down into the mud.

TONY (CONT'D)  
Laugh now, fat boy! C'mon, faggot - laugh!

Billy, who is on crutches, finally reaches Joanne. They start toward home as Tony continues to pummel Buck. Tony pushes Buck's face into the mud.

TONY (CONT'D) (cont'd)  
C'mon, laugh!

Tony grabs Buck by the hair and pulls his face up out of the mud.

TONY (cont'd)  
Laugh or I'll break your fucking nose!

(CONTINUED)



CONTINUED: (3)

Buck tries to laugh, but is too scared.

BUCK  
I can't, T.

AVERY  
C'mon, T. We didn't mean nothin'.

Tony steps away as Buck sputters and coughs, his face and hair caked with mud. Tony laughs long and hard. Avery helps Buck to his feet.

TONY  
C'mon, guys - have a fucking sense of humor. He's okay. You're okay - right Bucky?

BUCK  
(coughing and hoarse)  
Yeah, T. I'm okay.  
(beat)  
But I think I pissed my pants.

Tony and Avery stifle a laugh as all three boys walk away.

BUCK (CONT'D) (cont'd)  
It's not fucking funny.

Tony and Avery walk for a moment and then burst out laughing.

EXT. STREET IN FRONT OF THE HANSON HOUSE - DAY

Joanne walks along, with Billy bringing up the rear. Reverend Woods approaches, being led by a hoard of dogs on leashes. He looks frazzled. Billy spots the bandaged dog again and follows him around the back of Hanson House.

REVEREND WOODS  
Hello Joanne. Have you seen Becky? She was supposed to help me exercise these beasts.

EXT. BACK OF THE HANSON HOUSE - DAY

We can hear muffled bits of the conversation out front between the minister and Joanne. Billy watches the dog slip into the Hanson House through the homemade doggy door. Billy leans in close to the hole in the door.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BILLY  
Hey - you in there?

A moment later the door is unlocked and Billy enters.

INT. HANSON HOUSE LIVING ROOM - DAY

Zeppo follows Nathan, who is still seen only in shadow/silhouette, to the window. Nathan kneels down to check Zeppo's leg. He removes the bandage and holds the dog in his arms as he stands.

NATHAN'S POV THROUGH SHUTTERS - Joanne is backlit as she speaks to the minister. She looks beautiful.

INT. HANSON HOUSE KITCHEN & WORK BENCH - DAY

Billy examines the tools, testing equipment, odd homemade sculptures and contraptions that clutter Nathan's kitchen and workbench. Several repair projects are in various stages of completion.

INT. NATHAN'S DINING ROOM - DAY

Billy finds the TV people seated at the table, which has been set with Mrs. Hanson's china, her tarnished silverware, and tattered linens. A third place at the table has also been set - though the seat is empty. The TV people have been fashioned from two old televisions that have been seated atop bodies that Nathan has made by stuffing his parents' clothes with newspaper. Both TVs are off.

INT. HANSON HOUSE LIVING ROOM - DAY

We watch from Nathan's POV as Reverend Woods says goodbye to Joanne and allows the anxious dogs to drag him down the street. After spending a moment looking around for Billy, Joanne continues on alone.

NATHAN strokes Zeppo with gloved hands as he turns away from the window. We follow him as he walks through the dining room on his way back to his mother's bedroom. As he walks, Nathan is aware of Billy's presence, but is too shy to acknowledge him.

INT. MRS. HANSON'S ROOM - DAY

The door swings open, we see that Nathan has kept the room exactly as it was when his mother was alive. An ornate brush and a cracked hand mirror wait at the vanity. Nathan enters the room and picks up the mirror to look at himself.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

NATHAN'S REFLECTION IN THE DUSTY MIRROR is fragmented and distorted almost beyond recognition. He returns the mirror to its place and looks around. The flowers on the wallpaper have faded, but still whisper music of a time gone by. Memories echo in his mind as Billy watches quietly from the doorway. Zeppo, who is still carried in Nathan's arms, gives him a lick. As he looks at the dog, we hear a sharp crack. Nathan doesn't look up right away. He hangs his head sadly, knowing what is to come...as he slips into the past.

INT. FLASHBACK (1980) - NIGHT

As Nathan looks up, we see his mother. Her face drawn tight with anger. She has just smashed her hand mirror down onto the vanity, cracking it. Little Nathan holds Samson in his arms, stroking his coat with gloved hands. Nathan's father reads a book in bed, trying not to listen.

NATHAN'S MOTHER

I will not tell you again. Keep that *thing* out of my room.

NATHAN

But mommy, he's special now.

Helen looks at herself in the vanity's mirror while brushing her hair.

NATHAN'S MOTHER

You are special. He is unnatural, and must be destroyed - to keep the secret safe.

Nathan holds Samson close and backs away into a corner. Helen's expression changes to panic at the sound of a car door closing outside.

NATHAN'S MOTHER (cont'd)

Hurry - go to your hiding place and stay there until I come for you.

Nathan drops Samson and runs out of his mother's bedroom.

INT. HANSON HOUSE LIVING ROOM (1980) - NIGHT

Little Nathan runs to the fireplace, wearing clean and pressed pajamas, and climbs up into the chimney.

INT. CHIMNEY - NIGHT

Little Nathan crawls up until his feet can no longer be seen from within the house. And then he waits.

INT. HANSON HOUSE (1998) - DAY

Billy emerges from Mrs. Hanson's bedroom, scanning the area for Nathan and Zeppo.

BILLY  
Hey, where'd you go?

There is no answer from Nathan. Billy pushes open Nathan's bedroom door and enters the room.

BILLY (cont'd)  
You in here?

BILLY'S POV OF NATHAN'S ROOM - the room is decorated much as it was when Nathan was a child. A small bed sits in the corner of the room. The faded yellow bedsheets have an airplane print on them. An odd sort of mobile hangs over the bed - fashioned from dozens of hand made crosses that hang from the ceiling. Some are carved from wood, and the rest have been made from various odds and ends left over from Nathan's appliance repairs, held together with brightly colored pieces of electrical wire. The room's wallpaper is water-stained and peels away from the walls in spots. A small dresser stands against one wall with a few dusty, rusted child's toys on top. A framed photograph of Nathan's mother also sits atop the dresser. Stacks of books litter the floor. Dickens, Milton...Shakespeare.

BILLY (cont'd)  
You in here?

No answer.

INT. HANSON HOUSE LIVING ROOM - AFTERNOON

Billy wanders into the room, stumped. He addresses Zeppo, who sits on the fireplace's hearth.

BILLY  
Where's he hiding, boy?

Billy stops and listens intently, but he hears nothing. Finally, he gives up and heads for the front door.

INT. CHIMNEY - AFTERNOON

Filtered light from the exterior opening of the chimney illuminates Nathan, wedged into his hiding place and trapped in his paranoid fear. He's making a conscious effort to breath quietly, but he's unaware that he is slowly scratching the sooty inner walls of the chimney. We can see deep grooves in the brickwork that Nathan has carved with his nervous habit over the years. We hear the front door close and Nathan breathes normally again, but he still doesn't make a move to exit. Instead he continues to listen intently - and wait.

EXT. HANSON HOUSE - MORNING

Billy's attempting to mow the overgrown lawn while hopping on his one undamaged foot. BUDDY WEAVER and JOHN THOMAS sit on the sidelines, drinking sodas and giving orders.

BUDDY WEAVER

You missed a spot. Over there - by the tree.

JOHN THOMAS

It doesn't matter. He'll probably have to do the whole thing over again.

BILLY

It wouldn't kill you guys to help.

JOHN THOMAS

Did you hear something?

BUDDY WEAVER

Maybe it was a fly.

They laugh.

BILLY

What did I ever do to you guys?

BUDDY WEAVER

You came to our town. And you've got two more houses to go after this - so get movin' city boy.

JOHN THOMAS

The preacher's gonna be here soon - and if you get us in trouble, we're gonna kick your ass.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Billy has finished mowing. He picks up a large pair of gardening shears and starts to clip the tree near the front porch.

BUDDY WEAVER

You'd better not get too close to that door, city boy.

JOHN THOMAS

He'll drag you in there and tear your skin off with his bare hands.

Billy laughs.

BUDDY WEAVER

Go ahead. Laugh. I knew a guy who's sister heard of someone who went in there on a dare. They found him three months later, chopped into little pieces and pickled in jars like pig's feet.

BILLY

He's not like that.

JOHN THOMAS

How would you know, smart ass?

BILLY

I've seen him.

JOHN THOMAS

Bullshit.

BUDDY WEAVER

Here comes the preacher.

Buddy and John jump up, grab a rake and a broom, and start working like mad. Buddy rakes in Billy's vicinity.

BUDDY WEAVER (cont'd)

You didn't really see him. Did you?

BILLY

Sure. Talked to him, too.

JOHN THOMAS

Bullshit. No one's ever gone in there and come out alive.

BILLY

Someone has now.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

Buddy looks back at the house as if he was afraid that Nathan might hear him.

BUDDY WEAVER  
Is he like they say he is?

JOHN THOMAS  
Does he eat human flesh?

BILLY  
I didn't ask him.

Billy knows an opportunity when he sees one.

BILLY (CONT'D) (cont'd)  
But, I could tell you stories that'd make you sleep with the lights on for the rest of your life.

BUDDY WEAVER  
Yeah?

JOHN THOMAS  
Like what?

BILLY  
Not here. He might be listening. I wouldn't want him to get all worked up. He might get out the hook.

BUDDY/JOHN  
The hook?

Billy gives them a knowing look and nods slowly. Buddy and John jump when the Reverend speaks.

REVEREND WOODS  
Good morning, gentlemen. Looks like you're doing a fine job here.

Buddy and John are still dumbfounded. Billy smiles.

BILLY  
Thanks Reverend.

INT. JOANNE'S HOUSE - NIGHT

The family sits around in the livingroom. Dad reads the sports section as he cleans his revolver, mom polishes silver, and Billy organizes his baseball cards.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JOANNE'S MOTHER

Billy, I found my Cosmopolitan magazine under your bed when I was cleaning. I've been looking all over for that.

Billy blushes. Joanne comments as she passes from her room to the kitchen.

JOANNE

Were the pages stuck together?

BILLY

Shut up. At least I don't hang out with miscreants.

Silence.

JOANNE'S MOTHER

That's a very good word, Billy.

(beat)

Anyone want some cocoa?

Two short honks from a car's horn can be heard. Joanne rushes to the front door, carrying her purse.

JOANNE

I'm going for a walk.

BILLY

Me, too.

JOANNE'S FATHER

You're not going anywhere. Not this late.

BILLY

What about her? Why does she always get to do whatever she wants?

Joanne waits for her father to say something, but he doesn't. She leaves, slamming the door behind her. Joanne's mother is totally immersed in her cleaning, but the conflict has made her nervous. She spills some of the silver polish - and tries to clean it up, but it gets worse.

JOANNE'S MOTHER

Damn it!

Billy and his father are shocked by the uncharacteristic outburst.

(CONTINUED)



CONTINUED: (2)

JOANNE'S MOTHER (cont'd)

I can't stand this mess any longer! I  
just...can't stand this.

She runs out of the room, crying. There is a knock at the door.

BILLY

I'll get it.

He hops to the door. It's Buddy and John.

BILLY (cont'd)

Can I go out, just for a little while?  
The guys are here.

JOANNE'S FATHER

One hour. Don't be late.

Billy grabs his crutches and joins his new friends.

EXT. JOANNE'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Just as Billy steps out of the house, the silver Mercedes' door closes. Billy watches as his sister and Tony drive away. Billy and Joanne make eye contact and Joanne looks away, self-consciously.

JOHN THOMAS

C'mon. If my mom finds out I'm gone she's  
gonna shit bricks.

BILLY

Yeah... Okay.

They cross the street.

INT. TONY'S CAR - NIGHT

Tony drives as he drinks his beer. He wedges the bottle between his legs and fondles the opening as he leers at Joanne, whose beer remains unopened in her hand.

JOANNE

What the hell am I doing here?

TONY

(singing)  
Lookin' for love in all the wrong  
places...  
(beat)  
Gimme a fuckin' break.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Joanne doesn't respond. As they pass the Hanson House, she notices a light on in the back bedroom - and the shadow of a man. Tony takes a big swig of beer, looks over at Joanne with a smile...and belches loudly. He puts his hand on her bare knee and lets his fingers do the walking. She opens her beer and starts to drink.

INT. CLUBHOUSE - NIGHT

Billy, Buddy and John huddle around a camping lantern. Weird shadows dance on the makeshift walls as Billy whispers.

BILLY

I was almost up on the roof when I heard the back door open. The hinges screamed like an old lady gettin' beat to death with a baseball bat.

JOHN THOMAS

Shit.

BILLY

And then he grabbed me.

BUDDY WEAVER

Oh man...

BILLY

His bony hand wrapped around my ankle and his long fingernails dug into my leg.

JOHN THOMAS

*That's* what happened to your leg.

BILLY

And he said if I ever told, he'd come and get me - along with anyone else who knew the truth.

BUDDY WEAVER

Oh shit.

JOHN THOMAS

Then what happened?

BILLY

I must have hit my head when I fell off the roof `cause the next thing I knew I was in a bed. And there were all these weird women dancing around the bed...wearing nothing on top.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BUDDY/JOHN

WOW.

BILLY

But they weren't like regular women.  
Their heads were like a hawk's...and they  
had great big boobs.

BUDDY WEAVER

No way!

JOHN THOMAS

Then what happened?

BILLY

He was sitting in a kinda throne - with a  
crown and everything. He had the Hawk  
women give me some wine in a solid gold  
cup and told me that if I swore not to  
tell anyone - he'd let me come back  
anytime I wanted.

BUDDY WEAVER

Do you think he'd let us come?

BILLY

I don't know. I'd have to ask him.

JOHN THOMAS

Would you?

BILLY

I don't know if you guys could take it.

JOHN THOMAS

Were the Hawkwomen as good as Miss May?

He holds up a men's magazine, unfolding the centerfold.

BILLY

Better.

BUDDY/JOHN

WOW.

INT. JOANNE'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Joanne sneaks in, her hair mussed...clothes rumpled. Her  
father has fallen asleep in a chair by the window.

INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT

Joanne passes her parent's room, where her mother sleeps alone. She enters the bathroom and closes the door quietly.

INT. BATHROOM - NIGHT

Joanne strips off her clothes and looks at herself closely in the mirror. As she works a bar of soap into a lather, we notice the scars that run across each of her wrists. She studies her face. Her mascara has run, her lipstick smeared. She cries as she wets a wash cloth, rubs the soap into it, and scrubs her body viciously.

EXT. BILLY'S SCHOOL - DAY

Joanne wanders around looking for her brother. As she walks, some of the other kids and their older siblings whisper and stare at her. She asks some of the other kids if they've seen Billy...they nod their heads "no".

EXT. BOY'S RESTROOM - DAY

JOANNE

Billy? You in there?

Another boy exits the restroom and gives Joanne a look.

JOANNE (cont'd)

Don't make me come in and get you.

BILLY (O.S.)

Go away.

JOANNE

C'mon, Billy. We're late already.

BILLY (O.S.)

I'M NOT WALKING HOME WITH A WHORE.

Joanne bursts into the lavatory.

INT. BOY'S RESTROOM - DAY

The boys at the urinals panic, zipping up so fast that they escape castration by mere millimeters. A boy in a stall lifts his feet out of view.

BILLY

Hey! What are you doin'?

Billy has a black eye. Joanne's anger turns to concern.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JOANNE

What happened to your eye?

BILLY

I got in a fight.

The kid in the stall peeks out to see what's going on.

JOANNE

Why?

BILLY

John Thomas called you a slut.

JOANNE

So? Just because he said it - you believe it?

BILLY

Everyone saw you - and that guy. It's all over school.

JOANNE

What are you talking about?

BILLY

We were working on the computer - in science class - and someone had heard about it from someone else, so they pulled it up on the internet.

JOANNE

Pulled what up?

BILLY

You.

Joanne's confusion suddenly turns to panic and rage.

INT. BILLY'S CLASSROOM - DAY

The camera tracks out from behind a computer monitor to reveal Billy and Joanne at the computer. There is no one else in the classroom. Billy types nervously.

BILLY

If they catch us in here-

JOANNE

C'mon, Billy. Just do it.

ANGLE ON COMPUTER MONITOR as Billy types in the web address "www.newslut.com"

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JOANNE IS FUMING as she reads what Billy types - and sees what comes up. Billy averts his eyes.

ANGLE ON COMPUTER MONITOR as the web page is accessed. An edited version of the video that Buck and Avery shot in the warehouse begins to play, but they've overdubbed a woman's moans and groans from a porno movie. Frame grabs from the video form a border around the page and a flashing bold-faced text heading exclaims, "What A Slut!"

JOANNE WATCHES, until she can take no more - then bolts out of the room. Billy looks miserable as he watches his sister leave.

EXT. STREET - DAY

Joanne walks along, heartbroken. Billy trails about a block behind, trying to catch up with her, but his crutches aren't cooperating. Billy stops to pick a flower and then tries again to catch up with Joanne. He's sweating and panting.

BILLY

Jojo...c'mon - wait up.

A GROUP OF GUYS drive past, shouting lewd remarks about Joanne's "performance" on the Net. Billy picks up a rock and throws it at the car. It misses.

BILLY (cont'd)

Leave her alone!

We hear laughter from the car as it rounds the corner.

BILLY (cont'd)

Jeez Jo...I can't keep...chasin' you.

She leans against the rickety fence that runs along the front of the Hanson house - and waits.

INT. HANSON HOUSE - DAY

Nathan watches as Billy approaches - and then leans on the fence beside Joanne.

EXT. HANSON HOUSE - DAY

He hands the flower to his sister. Joanne removes her hair clip and sets it aside.

JOANNE

Do you remember two summers ago, when you got pneumonia?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BILLY

Yeah.

JOANNE

And how everyone made a big fuss over you  
and let you eat whatever you wanted.

BILLY

Yeah.

JOANNE

And even though you felt like crap, it  
made you feel a little better, knowing  
how much everyone cared about you.

BILLY

Yeah. I guess so.

She avoids his eyes.

JOANNE

Well, that's what it's like. With  
me...and guys. They make me feel special.  
Even if it is just for a little while.

(beat)

I just get so lonely sometimes. It feels  
like there's no place I can go where I  
won't feel like a freak. Where I can  
belong. I look at myself in the mirror  
and sometimes I swear I can see right  
through. It's like I'm not even there.  
Like I've lost my reflection or  
something. And I just...don't know how to  
find it. Do you ever feel that way?

BILLY

No.

She ruffles his hair and smiles.

JOANNE

I'm glad.

Joanne holds the flower to her cheek and closes her eyes.

BILLY

I'm sorry, Jo. I wanna understand, but I  
just don't.

Zeppo runs from around the back of the house, towards them.  
Joanne forces a smile and ruffles Billy's hair.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

JOANNE

Me neither.

Zeppo takes Joanne's hair clip and heads for the house.

JOANNE (cont'd)

Hey! Come back here!

BILLY

That's Zeppo - he belongs to the guy.  
Hey, you wanna meet him?

JOANNE

He doesn't bite, does he?

BILLY

Bite? He barely talks.

INT. HANSON HOUSE - DAY

Billy looks through a window for Nathan, but there's no sign of life. He tries the back door and finds it unlocked. Zeppo runs in through the hole in the door and Billy enters - followed by Joanne.

JOANNE

(nervous)

How do you know he's here?

BILLY

The smell.

She sniffs the air while following Billy past the work bench, where his PlayStation sits disassembled, and into the living room. Billy looks around for Nathan.

JOANNE

Smells like garbage.

BILLY

He doesn't like baths.

Zeppo barks, causing Billy and Joanne to stop. Nathan stands quietly in a shadowed corner of the living room. He wears an old Halloween mask and holds an open, tattered paperback book to his chest. Nathan is dressed in a way that causes him to blend into the house itself - and specifically into the wall in front of which he stands. Until Nathan moves, it is nearly impossible to spot him. Zeppo drops Joanne's hair clip at his feet and Nathan crouches to retrieve it and to pick up Zeppo. He holds the dog like a security blanket.

(CONTINUED)



CONTINUED:

BILLY (cont'd)  
It's just me. I brought my sister. She  
wanted to meet you.

No answer.

JOANNE  
Hhhh...hi. I'm Joanne.

No answer.

JOANNE (cont'd)  
Your dog...uh..took my clip.

Nathan moves slowly toward her, into the light. And for the first time, we really see him. His skin is so pale that it almost seems translucent. His hair is long and straight and red - and a greasy mess. Nathan is twenty-nine years old, yet his eyes are filled with a child's emotions: curiosity, insecurity, mistrust and wonder. Joanne is transfixed by this boy in a man's body. Nathan lowers Zeppo to the ground and takes a tentative step closer to offer Joanne the hair clip.

JOANNE (cont'd)  
Thank you.

He moves back into the shadows, still clutching his book to his chest.

BILLY  
Hey, can I show her the parents?

No answer.

BILLY (cont'd)  
(to Joanne)  
C'mon.  
(to Nathan)  
Where are they?

Nathan looks down the hall, but does not speak. Billy leads Joanne down the hall.

INT. HANSON HOUSE BATHROOM - DAY

Billy opens the door and pokes his head in.

BILLY  
Here they are.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BILLY AND JOANNE'S POV of the bathroom. We see the male TV parent seated on the toilet and the female parent positioned in the bathtub.

BILLY (cont'd)  
Pretty neat, huh?

JOANNE  
Billy, this guy is really fucked up.

BILLY  
I think his name is Nathan. At least  
that's what was written inside his books.

Joanne backs toward the door and when she turns to leave, she sees - NATHAN STANDING IN A SHADOWY section of the hallway, near the bathroom.

Joanne jumps back, startled...

JOANNE  
Shit!

...and sends the bathroom door swinging back into one of the TV parents. The parent's TV head topples from its shoulders and crashes to the ground. Joanne tries to catch it, but is too late.

Nathan, who has pushed his mask up onto his head - revealing his face for the first time - makes a sharp little sound, like an animal caught in a trap. But he's too afraid to get close to Joanne, so he remains in the shadows.

JOANNE (cont'd)  
I'm sorry. I think I broke it.

Nathan moves forward, and then back...frustrated. Joanne moves away from the crushed set and Nathan rushes over to it. He kneels, head down...picking up the pieces and trying to fit it all back together. He carries what's left of the TV set to his work bench and starts to work.

JOANNE (cont'd)  
I'm so sorry. I didn't mean to.

BILLY  
C'mon, we'd better go.

They leave, but Nathan never looks up from his work bench.

INT. JOANNE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

It's late. Joanne sits in her pajamas, by the window, looking up at the stars.

EXT. ALLEY - DAY

Joanne and Billy walk and talk as they pull Billy's old red wagon behind them, loaded with groceries. Billy's hair is a little longer and he's no longer on crutches. Buddy and John pass by on their bikes and snicker.

BILLY  
This really sucks.

JOANNE  
Tough.

BILLY  
Would you stop worrying about that stupid TV. He's probably fixed it by now. I'm more worried about the crap they're gonna give me at school tomorrow.

JOANNE  
What's your problem? Everyone's had a wagon.

BILLY  
I don't care. It's still embarrassing to be seen with it.

JOANNE  
Would you rather carry all this stuff home?

Billy grumbles. As they pass an appliance store, MR. HENESSEY, the owner, comes out the back door carrying a TV with duct tape covering a big crack in the cabinet. He sets it out near the dumpster. Joanne calls back:

JOANNE (cont'd)  
Hey - are you throwing that away?

Mr. Henessey gives Joanne a dirty look and then returns to the store, still grumbling.

JOANNE (cont'd)  
(to Billy)  
C'mon.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BILLY

What if he's not throwing it away?

JOANNE

He is. It's cracked.

Joanne wheels the wagon back to the store and picks up the broken TV.

JOANNE (CONT'D) (cont'd)

C'mon - give me a hand.

EXT. BACK OF THE HANSON HOUSE - LATE AFTERNOON

Joanne stands on the inside of the fence as the TV is lowered by a rope that's been thrown over the fence.

JOANNE

Be careful.

BILLY (O.S.)

(straining)

Hurry up and grab it! I can't hold on much longer.

Joanne grabs the TV.

JOANNE

All right - I've got it.

BILLY (O.S.)

Okay, I'll see you later.

Joanne is untying the rope.

JOANNE

No way! Get in here and help me, Billy.

Billy slides the loose plank in the fence aside and speaks through the opening.

BILLY

Mom's taking me to the doctor to check my leg. I've gotta go Jo.

Joanne looks at the back door and seems nervous.

JOANNE

Fine - go. But if I'm not home by the time you get back - call the cops.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Billy lets the plank swing closed and hurries away, dragging the wagon behind him.

BILLY

Okay.

Joanne knocks on the back door. No answer. She sets the TV down, tries the doorknob and finds it locked. She knocks again - and then tries the knob again. This time it's unlocked.

INT. HANSON HOUSE - DAY

Joanne is apprehensive as she lugs the television into the house. She takes a few steps into the kitchen and Nathan, who is standing behind the door, pushes it closed and locks it. Joanne jumps, but manages to hold on to the TV.

JOANNE

I...brought this for you.

Nathan eyeballs the TV and moves slowly toward Joanne. She continues to back up into the dining room. Nathan's smell is particularly offensive today.

JOANNE (CONT'D) (cont'd)

It's broken, but I thought maybe... since you fix things...

Joanne sets the TV on the floor and then notices an open, coverless paperback and a plate of food sitting on the work bench. Billy's reassembled PlayStation sits nearby, as does a basket that contains a non-functional blender.

JOANNE (cont'd)

I'm sorry, I didn't mean to... I just wanted to... I don't know. I'm sorry.

Nathan moves to his work bench and Joanne turns to leave. But then Nathan makes a strangled, coughing sound as he tries to speak after years of silence. Joanne turns back.

JOANNE (cont'd)

Did you say something?

The sound, more determined this time. Nathan shifts his weight from one foot to the other and searches the walls for words. Finally, he picks up his book and thumbs through the pages, then reads its words as if they were his own - quietly and with great difficulty.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

NATHAN

Now this was my kinda Dame. A dame with smarts, class, and legs that started at the floor of my shabby office and stretched straight up to heaven. I wanted to say, 'Why me. Why now?', but all that came out was, 'What can I do for you, sister?'

JOANNE

I...don't understand.

Nathan looks down at the book and turns the page.

NATHAN

You gotta problem that you think I can fix. Right? So let's stop dancin' and get to it. What can I do for you?

JOANNE

Do for me? Nothing. I just felt bad about what happened the other day.

(beat)

Do you want me to leave?

Nathan lowers his eyes to the ground and shakes his head "no". Joanne indicates the television.

JOANNE (cont'd)

What should I do with this?

He looks at it and fidgets - eager to get his hands on it. Joanne backs away and Nathan hurriedly picks up the TV and brings it over to the work bench. Nathan sits down and starts to tinker with the set, seemingly oblivious to Joanne's presence. Joanne watches, amazed at how happy Nathan seems to be. She sits in an old easy chair and Zeppo jumps up onto her lap. She pets the dog as she watches Nathan.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. HANSON HOUSE - MORNING

A PREGNANT LATIN WOMAN approaches the front porch. She leaves a basket at the front door and retrieves a second basket that was waiting there, along with a toaster. As she walks away, the woman inspects the appliance, impressed. It looks as good as new.

INT. SCHOOL ROOM - DAY

Joanne sketches the Hanson House as a volunteer circulates through the class collecting slips of paper from the other students. The volunteer stares at Joanne as he passes, while the other students look at Joanne and whisper.

MISS ANDERSON

Vote yes if you want the dance lottery again this year - and are willing to abide by the random selection of partners. Vote no if you would prefer to choose your own partner. Once all of the votes are counted, the majority will decide, and all will be expected to participate graciously.

Julie writes "Yes" on her ballot. Becky votes "Yes", as well. Joanne votes "Hell No", and Tony uses his ballot to wrap a used piece of chewing gum.

EXT. SCHOOL - DAY

Students come flooding out of the building. Becky and Joanne exit together. Becky hasn't opened her envelope.

BECKY

Who did you get?

Joanne looks at her slip of paper.

JOANNE

Bobby Roth.

BECKY

He's on the honor roll.

JOANNE

Great. I'm not going.

BECKY

Why not? He seems nice.

JOANNE

Who did you get?

Becky opens up her envelope, reads, and turns pale.

BECKY

Tony. I got Tony.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Tony and his gang join them, grinning from ear to ear. Joanne glares at him.

TONY

Looks like I got a date with an angel.

BECKY

I'd better go.

She leaves. The guys laugh.

TONY

Hey Jo, hear you got "the gas man".  
Better luck next time.

The guys snicker.

JOANNE

You think you're a big man? Believe me - you're not. And your little friends with the video camera - they got more shots off your ass than they did of me. You might wanna keep an eye on `em in the locker room.

Joanne walks away, leaving the guys to their rage.

EXT. ALLEY - DAY

Joanne passes a dumpster behind an appliance store. She spots something. A thought crosses her mind and she leans over the edge - reaching inside. Frustrated, she crawls into the dumpster and begins to dig in earnest.

INT. HANSON HOUSE - DAY

Nathan sits on the floor, at the feet of the "TV dad". He watches a nature show (like "Wild Kingdom"), losing himself totally. The new TV has been fixed, and now sits in its proper place atop the "mother's" shoulders. Joanne enters carrying the radio. Nathan hides behind a closet door. He studies his own reflection, made eerie by the shiny curved surface of the doorknob. When he recognizes Joanne's voice, he relaxes a little, revealing himself to her. She looks terrible - covered with sludge from the dumpster, but her face glows with excitement. She hands him the radio.

JOANNE

Hi. I brought this for you. Oh, you were able to fix that other TV. That's great. I uh, just happened to see this one lying around, so I thought I'd...

(CONTINUED)



CONTINUED:

He stands close, noticing the grime. She catches a glimpse of herself in a mirror and does her best to tidy up, but it's useless. He sniffs the air like an animal.

NATHAN

You...ssss...smell funny.

JOANNE

I smell funny? When's the last time you took a bath?

He backs away, embarrassed.

JOANNE (cont'd)

I'm sorry.

(beat)

If I go home looking like this my parent's are gonna kill me. Do you have someplace I can clean up?

Nathan points toward the bathroom. Joanne sets her books aside and walks down the hall.

INT. BATHROOM - DAY

Joanne wipes the grimy mirror clean and then tries to wash the greasy dirt from her face, but it's putting up quite a struggle. She debates for a moment - and then opens the shower door. The shower stall is stacked with stuff from floor to ceiling. Joanne looks over at the tub, which is also filled with stuff - but less stuff...and after another moment of consideration, she starts to empty it. We see a shot of her transferring something from the tub to the floor...and then a CU of the rusty water pouring from the faucet as she turns it on for the first time in years...and then we see a MCU of Joanne using a bowl that had been in the tub to rinse the dirt and colored mousse from her hair. The camera drifts over to Joanne's filthy clothes, which lie in a pile on the floor.

INT. LIVINGROOM - DAY

Nathan sits in the middle of the floor, hugging his knees to his chest, rocking back and forth as the sound of running water fills his ears. He stops, and begins to build a fortress around himself using stacks of books.

INT. BATHROOM - DAY

Joanne pokes her head out of the bathroom and decides that the coast is clear.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

So she pads across the hall, and into Nathan's bedroom, covering herself with newspapers from the shower stall. As she leaves the bathroom, we see that her clothes are now wet, and have been draped over the side of the tub to dry.

INT. NATHAN'S BEDROOM - DAY

Wet feet leave puddles on the hardwood floor as Joanne enters. She sees the crucifix "mobile" that hangs over Nathan's bed (a child's bed). She feels the eyes of Nathan's mother as they burn into her from the old photograph that stands by the bedside. Joanne opens Nathan's closet and slips into one of his father's shirts.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

Joanne pads down the hall, barefoot. She sees Nathan, sitting in his book fortress, sharing a sandwich with Zeppo - and is captivated by his innocence. She quietly takes a pad of paper and a pencil from among her school things and begins to sketch. He reads and talks in whispers to the dog as Joanne watches...and draws. At some point, he senses her presence and stops what he's doing. She tries to hide the drawing as he approaches cautiously.

NATHAN

Are you...okay?

She becomes painfully aware of her own lack of clothing.

JOANNE

Me? Yeah, the bathtub didn't eat me or anything - if that's what you mean.

He relaxes a little. Nathan looks into her eyes, without a single lecherous or impure thought. He's just curious.

NATHAN

You look different. Nice.

JOANNE

The make-up came off with the dirt.

He looks at the shirt.

JOANNE (cont'd)

My clothes were wet. I hope you don't mind. I must look awful.

NATHAN

No.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

He looks at her with untainted honesty. She blushes.

JOANNE

Yeah? I don't like my face.

Joanne shifts her weight nervously beneath his candid appraisal. He notices a corner of the drawing that she tried to hide. She shows it to him, a little embarrassed.

JOANNE (cont'd)

I'm sorry. I should have asked first. You just looked so... God, I never say I'm sorry except when I come here. You make me nervous.

(beat)

Why do you stay in this house all alone.

His smile fades.

NATHAN

My mother.

JOANNE

Your mother...?

Nathan's face reveals such conflict. After a moment, he begins to speak. And when he does, the two images, that of his tortured face...and a long shot of a child approaching his mother's deathbed, overlap.

NATHAN

I let her die in this house.

JOANNE (OS)

I don't understand.

The double exposed image fades to only that of the child, as Nathan's voice explains. He's seven years old.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. NATHAN'S MOTHER'S BEDROOM - DAY (FLASHBACK)

NATHAN (VO)

It was my birthday, again.

(beat)

She'd been sick for a long time. My father said she was going to leave us. I was drawing ducks.

Nathan as a boy, sits in a corner, on the floor. Arms crossed...withdrawn. He still wears his little party hat.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

His mother lies motionless. She stares at the boy from across the room...accusing him. He stands, moving slowly toward her, gloved hands buried in his pockets.

NATHAN (cont'd)  
I knew what she wanted.

Nathan stands near his mother, her eyes like flint. He cries - she smiles. Nathan removes his hands from his pockets. He raises them. His mother closes her eyes in preparation. Her breath rasps. He removes the gloves and reaches for her, slowly. Closer...closer...but then, right before the moment of contact...he stops.

NATHAN (cont'd)  
But I couldn't do it. I was afraid.

Little Nathan withdraws his hand and his mother's eyes register fear for the first time. Nathan searches for forgiveness in her eyes, but none is given...and then they close for the last time. After a moment, he puts the gloves back on and sits beside the bed, destroyed. His father appears in the doorway, bottle of booze in hand, crying like a baby. He goes to the bed and throws himself across her, sobbing uncontrollably while Nathan sits on the floor in shock, still wearing the party hat.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

NATHAN  
So she died. I killed her.

Nathan looks so tortured. Joanne reaches out to touch him. He recoils.

NATHAN (cont'd)  
You don't know. The sinners would have come for me.

JOANNE  
It wasn't your fault.

Nathan scratches at the gloves.

NATHAN  
It was, it was, it was, it was. I could have saved her. I am The One.

He curls up into a fetal position.

JOANNE  
I'm sorry.

She starts down the hall to retrieve her clothes.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

NATHAN

You don't have to leave.

Joanne stops and looks at him. His eyes beg for her help. She moves slowly over to Nathan, but not too close. Joanne takes out the sketch that she did of him and sets it on the ground where he can see it. He starts to giggle through his tears.

NATHAN (cont'd)

That's Zeppo and me. Can you draw ducks?

JOANNE

I don't know. No one's ever asked me to.

NATHAN

Will you draw a duck for me?

JOANNE

Okay.

NATHAN

Will you draw it big? Over there?

JOANNE

On the wall?

NATHAN

And lions, and bears, and snakes. And people. Lots of people. Nice ones.

She laughs.

JOANNE

Okay, whatever you want. But I'm not very good.

NATHAN

And trees...and flowers. Purple ones.

JOANNE

Whatever you want.

NATHAN

Promise?

JOANNE

I Promise.

Nathan's excitement is contagious.

INT. CHURCH BASEMENT - DAY

Reverend Woods lets Joanne into the musty room. She wears considerably less make-up than in the previous scenes. With the temporary dye washed out of her hair, Joanne is now a natural blonde.

REVEREND WOODS

Help yourself. Just save a little black and gold for the homecoming banners.

JOANNE

Thanks.

REVEREND WOODS

It's nice of you to help that poor boy. Lord knows he's had a hard time of it.

He leaves and Joanne continues to browse through the various poster paints.

MURAL MONTAGE

(Scene 80) Joanne, Nathan, and sometimes Billy - working on the mural, in its various stages - sketching, outlining, and rendering.

(A80) Nathan and Billy test Billy's newly repaired PlayStation by playing Tekken 3. Billy is kicking Nathan's butt. Joanne works on the mural in the background.

(B80) Joanne and Tony making out in car.

(C80) Joanne and Tony make out at school. Joanne is less enthusiastic.

(D80) A spontaneous paint fight breaks out as the three "artists" act like uninhibited children.

(E80) Nathan reads aloud to Zeppo - and the happy people in the mural - while Billy and Joanne work.

INT. HANSON HOUSE - DAY

Billy and Nathan play Tekken 3 as Joanne puts the finishing touches on the mural.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

NATHAN  
Triangle, triangle, circle...Triangle,  
triangle, circle...Triangle, triangle,  
circle...

ANGLE ON TV as Nathan's fighter executes the same devastating move - over and over. Billy's character is fading fast.

NATHAN (cont'd)  
Circle, circle, square...Circle, circle,  
square...

ANGLE ON TV as Nathan's fighter does a bizarre, dance-like move that also inflicts serious damage.

BILLY  
Hey - knock that off. You're not even  
giving' me a chance.

Nathan seems pleased with himself as he continues to whisper his two favorite move codes - until finally...

ANGLE ON TV as Billy's character collapses and Nathan's wins.

NATHAN LEAPS TO HIS FEET and imitates his character's victory move.

NATHAN  
I win! I win!

Nathan starts pantomiming the fighting moves and making sounds, as if he's was Bruce Lee. Billy jumps up and they play fight until Joanne announces:

JOANNE  
Okay... That's it.

Nathan stops to look at the mural, in awe.

NATHAN'S POV of the mural, which wraps around the entire living room. Trees and flowers and animals - both real, and unreal - and happy people cover the walls. They all touching one another in some way. It's almost as if the walls had disappeared...revealing a wonderful fantasy world. Joanne has even painted a starry sky on the huge, domed ceiling.

JOANNE STEPS BACK to look at her masterpiece. Billy and Nathan applaud from the sidelines.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

BILLY

I like my bird the best.

She ruffles his hair. Joanne turns to Nathan.

JOANNE

What do you think?

He just smiles. A smile that could light up a city. Billy goes to the front door.

BILLY

You know, you're not bad. For a girl.

She's touched.

BILLY (CONT'D) (cont'd)

But these fumes are killin' me.

Billy throws open the front door and Nathan panics. He runs to a shadowed corner.

BILLY (cont'd)

What's his problem?

JOANNE

Nathan... It's okay.

Nathan squints against the light, shaking all over.

JOANNE (cont'd)

We're not going to let anyone hurt you.  
C'mon, let's just go outside for a  
minute. Let the house air out a little.

BILLY

Don't be such a baby.

They each take Nathan by an arm and he starts to squirm. Billy and Joanne mutter reassurances as they guide Nathan toward the front door. When they get him to the door's threshold, Nathan goes wild - thrashing and kicking... screaming like a tortured animal. Finally, Nathan manages to get free, and he runs to the fireplace and crawls inside. Billy and Joanne look at each other - neither knowing what to do next.

INT. CHIMNEY - DAY

Nathan squeezes his eyes closed, trying to fight off the memory.

(CONTINUED)



CONTINUED:

As the camera zooms in on his face, we see Nathan scratching away at the inside of the chimney with his hands as the sound of a shot makes him flinch - and pulls him back to...

INT. HANSON HOUSE (1980) - NIGHT

Nathan's father falls to the floor and both a bottle, and the gun, slip from his fingers. The camera holds on him for a long time, with the fireplace in the background, and then slowly pushes in to the black void of the fireplace.

INT. CHIMNEY - NIGHT

Little Nathan cowers in the dark as his father lays dead in the living room.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. CHIMNEY - AFTERNOON

Little Nathan continues to hide, scratching at the inside walls of the chimney.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. CHIMNEY - MORNING

Little Nathan continues to hide, now humming to himself without realizing what he's doing. Then a pair of hands reach up into the chimney and pull him down.

INT. HANSON HOUSE (1998) - DAY

Billy and Joanne have pulled Nathan down out of the chimney, but Nathan is still lost in his memories.

BILLY

Is he okay?

JOANNE

I don't know.

INT. HANSON HOUSE (1980) - MORNING

The two concerned townspeople who have just pulled little Nathan down look at him with genuine concern.

TOWNSPERSON #1

Let's get him outta here.

They try to coax little Nathan out - and he freaks out - screaming and kicking like a lunatic.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Finally, the two men are forced to grab the child by the legs and drag him across the floor - toward the front door.

LITTLE NATHAN'S POV of his father, lying dead, as he is dragged past the body. Then the front door is throw open and the light blinds Nathan.

INT. HANSON HOUSE (1998) - DAY

Nathan blinks at the light that spills onto him from a nearby window. Then the fog behind Nathan's eyes begins to clear.

NATHAN

I...I'm sorry.

JOANNE

That's okay. Here, let me help you.

He sniffs the air and pulls away. Joanne looks rejected.

NATHAN

(embarrassed)

I...smell bad.

She smiles. He tries to smile back.

INT. BATHROOM - DAY

Joanne stands outside the closed door as Nathan works up the courage to step into the steaming bubble bath. He stares into the water, his reflection staring back...afraid and distorted.

JOANNE (OS)

You all right?

NATHAN

No.

JOANNE (OS)

Are you ready for me?

NATHAN

NO!

JOANNE (OS)

Okay, okay. It's not going to hurt you - it's only water.

NATHAN

(unconvinced)

Yeah.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Nathan gets into the bathtub, still wearing his gloves. He sits, bug-eyed. Paralyzed with fear.

                  JOANNE (OS)  
Are you in?

                  NATHAN  
I can't move.

                  JOANNE (OS)  
Don't panic. I'm coming in.

She enters, averting her eyes. She sits on the floor, next to the tub, wearing bath mittens used for bathing children.

                  JOANNE (cont'd)  
Are you covered?

He checks the bubble placement.

                  NATHAN  
Yeah. Do you have those things on?

                  JOANNE  
Don't worry. This won't be bad at all.

                  NATHAN  
Promise?

He looks at her, pleading. She smiles reassuringly.

                  JOANNE  
Promise.

She soaps up a mitten and starts to scrub an arm. He grips the side of the tub with all of his strength.

Joanne speaks soothingly as she works on the grime.

                  JOANNE (cont'd)  
Maybe you should take off your gloves, so they don't get wet.

                  NATHAN  
NO!

                  JOANNE  
All right. Relax.  
                  (beat)  
Why do you wear them?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

NATHAN

My hands.

JOANNE

Is there something wrong with them?

NATHAN

Yes.

JOANNE

Can you tell me?

NATHAN

No.

JOANNE

Okay, just try to relax. I'll get your arms and your back - and I'll even wash your hair, but the rest is up to you.

Nathan starts to relax. He tries to convince himself.

NATHAN

This isn't so bad.

JOANNE

All right, now the hair.

She pours water from a pitcher onto his head. He starts to breathe faster.

JOANNE (cont'd)

You okay?

NATHAN

I don't think so.

She pours shampoo onto his head and works it in.

NATHAN (cont'd)

I'm all right. I'm all right. This isn't so bad.

Joanne has worked the lather into a big frothy crown on top of Nathan's head. She laughs.

NATHAN (cont'd)

What?

JOANNE

You look like a soap king.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

NATHAN

A king? Me.

He suddenly stands up in the tub and raises his scrub brush high. Joanne averts her eyes.

JOANNE

What are you doing?!

NATHAN

I am the king of the bathtub. Bow,  
peasant.

Joanne is still looking away. Nathan suddenly realizes what he's done and sheepishly sits back down. Joanne looks back at him and doesn't know quite what to say.

NATHAN (CONT'D) (cont'd)

Sorry, I forgot about my pee-pee.

Joanne laughs.

JOANNE

Now *that's* a first.

She smiles and he smiles back. She puts her hand on his head and pushes him down into the water.

JOANNE (CONT'D) (cont'd)

All right, your highness, time to give up  
the crown.

Cut to his POV as he looks up through the cloudy water...

INT. HANSON HOUSE BATHROOM (1978) - DAY

We see from Nathan's POV as he looks up through the soapy water - and sees his mother pulling him out of the water...and then submerging him...pulling him out...and submerging him. She sings "Shall We Gather At The River" as she enacts this bizarre "baptism" ritual.

INT. BATHROOM (1998) - DAY

Nathan comes up for air, gasping...panicked. Joanne tries to comfort him, but he pulls away, jamming himself against the wall of the tub. Joanne backs off, wondering what the hell has made him so warped.

INT. SCHOOLROOM - DAY

The teacher drones on as Joanne daydreams. Joanne is dressed and made-up much more conservatively. A few of the other girls whisper about her in the background.

INT. HANSON HOUSE - AFTERNOON

Nathan, Joanne and Zeppo sit in the middle of the living room floor sharing a sandwich. They are surrounded by their wonderful mural. The TV parents are silent.

JOANNE

I wish my mom could see this.

Nathan turns quickly.

JOANNE (cont'd)

Don't worry.

Nathan looks back to the mural and smiles.

NATHAN

Thank you.

She's touched. A dark cloud passes behind Nathan's eyes.

JOANNE

What?

NATHAN

My birthday.

JOANNE

When is it?

NATHAN

Soon.

JOANNE

Soon when?

NATHAN

Tomorrow.

JOANNE

How old are you going to be?

NATHAN

Don't know.

She just sits, not knowing what to say.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

NATHAN (cont'd)  
Bad things happen on my birthday.

JOANNE  
Not this time. It's gonna' be you and me.

Zeppo barks.

JOANNE (cont'd)  
And him.

NATHAN  
Promise?

JOANNE  
Promise.

He smiles at her - and then goes back to studying the mural.

INT. JOANNE'S PARENT'S ROOM - NIGHT

Joanne sits at the dressing table in what is by far the most traditionally "feminine" attire thus far. She watches in the mirror as her mother labors over her hair. Billy watches from the sidelines.

JOANNE  
I look so dumb.

JOANNE'S MOTHER  
You look beautiful.

BILLY  
She looks like a Barbie doll.

JOANNE  
Shut up, jerk.

BILLY  
You shut up, Barbie.

JOANNE  
Jerk.

BILLY  
Barbie.

JOANNE  
Jerk.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JOANNE'S MOTHER

That's enough.

Joanne's mom looks at her daughter with pride.

JOANNE'S MOTHER (cont'd)

It's going to be just fine.

Joanne smiles gratefully. She and her mom make eye contact and there is a moment of recognition.

BILLY

(quietly)

Barbie.

Mom shoots him a look. He grins at Joanne broadly.

INT. LIVINGROOM - NIGHT

Joanne's mom leads her into the room. Her father looks up from his newspaper.

JOANNE'S MOTHER

Ta da!

JOANNE

(embarrassed)

Mom.

JOANNE'S MOTHER

Well, come in. Let your father see how beautiful you look.

Joanne looks uncomfortable. She avoids her father's eyes. We see regret and longing in his expression. Regret for what he's done - and longing for the daughter that she might have otherwise become. For the first time in his life, he's at a loss for words - so Joanne's father says nothing...and pretends to return his attention to the newspaper.

INT. SCHOOL AUDITORIUM - NIGHT

The streamers and balloons are all in their proper places, as requisite chaperones watch over the natives. Joanne meets her date at the front door and they move stiffly together into the great hall. BOBBY ROTH is a nice looking boy, but unfortunately, his fly is open. Joanne hasn't noticed yet, because she hasn't got up the nerve to really look at him yet. Tony and Becky hang out near the punch bowl with Wylie, Buck, Avery and their dates. Becky stands out like a sore thumb in such seedy company. Bobby looks a little wobbly.

(CONTINUED)



CONTINUED:

He turns to Joanne to speak, but as he opens his mouth...out comes an unintentional belch.

JOANNE  
You all right?

BOBBY ROTH  
I'm nervous. It happens when I get nervous. You want some punch, or something?

She looks over to the punch bowl and sees Tony.

JOANNE  
No thanks. Maybe later.

BOBBY ROTH  
Yeah, okay. Uh...how about dancing. You wanna' dance, or something?

JOANNE  
I don't think so. Okay - yes, I'd like to. Dance.

A little belch.

BOBBY ROTH  
You would? Okay. You sure? Never mind. Sorry.

They make their way onto the dance floor. The music goes from fast to slow. They assume the position, trying their best not to look into one another's eyes as they clump gracelessly across the dance floor. Joanne notices Bobby's zipper condition.

BOBBY ROTH (cont'd)  
Gas runs in my family.

JOANNE  
Oh.

BOBBY ROTH  
It could be worse, I guess. Epilepsy ...cancer...or warts. I don't have any of those. What about you?

JOANNE  
No, I don't have warts either.

BOBBY ROTH  
I meant your family.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

JOANNE

None of us have warts.

He turns his head, releasing a small one, then grows silent.

JOANNE (cont'd)

We just moved here.

BOBBY ROTH

I know. I mean, I've heard...about you.

Bobby bites his tongue and Joanne searches for something to look at. She finds Tony, watching her with his buddies, yucking it up. Joanne suddenly kisses Bobby. His eyes bug out. Tony stops laughing. Joanne reaches down and zips up the stunned Bobby's fly as she says...

JOANNE

How about some punch?

BOBBY ROTH

Sure thing. Be right back.

He wanders off to the punch bowl as Tony glares at Joanne. The guys laugh silently in the background. Tony throws an arm around Bobby fraternally. Joanne steps outside for some air. As a slow song starts - Tony whispers a final word of encouragement to Bobby and sends him on his way, punch in hand. Bobby spots Joanne outside and moves to rejoin her. Tony and Becky are slow dancing, now. His hands keep straying, and although she does right their positioning...she doesn't move away.

EXT. SCHOOL AUDITORIUM - NIGHT

Bobby has Joanne in a lust clutch. She pushes him away.

JOANNE

What are you're doing?!

BOBBY ROTH

You know you want it, baby.

JOANNE

"Baby"? "I want it"? Believe me, I don't. And even if I did - it wouldn't be from a geek like you.

She storms off down the street. Bobby stands there for a moment, stunned, and then hurries after her.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BOBBY ROTH

Hey, wait up! I just thought... Well, he told me-

She whirls around.

JOANNE

What? What did he tell you?!

Bobby looks away, ashamed. Joanne moves closer to challenge him.

JOANNE (cont'd)

Oh, you wanna fuck me. All right - let's go! Right here! C'mon, fuck me.

Bobby looks back at the crowd that has begun to gather at the doors to the dance.

JOANNE (cont'd)

C'mon - fuck me! FUCK ME!

(beat)

Fuck you.

She starts walking again. Bobby is left speechless.

EXT. HANSON HOUSE STREET - NIGHT

Bobby round the corner and tries to catch up with Joanne.

BOBBY ROTH

You shouldn't go around calling people names like you did. You know what a geek is?

Joanne remains silent as she walks. Bobby follows.

BOBBY ROTH (CONT'D) (cont'd)

A geek is a carnival performer who bites the heads off live chickens.

She stops - laughing, despite herself.

JOANNE

What?!

BOBBY ROTH

God, you're pretty when you smile.

(beat)

When I drew your name, I thought... well, I thought one thing. And then when I saw you looking so nice, I thought something else.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BOBBY ROTH (cont'd)

And then when that guy told me... I didn't know what to think. I'm sorry.

She tries to hold onto her anger, but he's so sincere.

JOANNE

(tired)

Fine. You're sorry. Now leave me alone.

She walks away. He walks silently beside her.

JOANNE (cont'd)

What are you doing?

BOBBY ROTH

Making sure you get home okay.

JOANNE

Don't bother. I do this every day.

They approach the Hanson House.

BOBBY ROTH

My family, we may have gas, but we know what's right.

Joanne stops and looks at him, perplexed. They laugh.

JOANNE

You stopped...doing it.

He takes a quick internal inventory.

BOBBY ROTH

Hey, I did. Maybe it's a sign. Maybe we're destined to be together.

INT. HANSON HOUSE - NIGHT

Nathan's watches in silhouette from the darkened bedroom window as Bobby and Joanne stop in front of the house. They kiss.

EXT. HANSON HOUSE - NIGHT

BOBBY ROTH

What was that for?

JOANNE

Thank you for walking me home. Apart from the groping and insults, I had a nice time.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BOBBY ROTH

Can we...I mean...maybe we could do something, sometime. Tomorrow?

She smiles.

BOBBY ROTH (cont'd)

No insults. I promise.

JOANNE

Call me in the morning. Not too early.

He heads back toward the school.

BOBBY ROTH

Great. I'll call you. Is eight too early? It is, isn't it? How about nine? Or ten - ten's better isn't it? You sure you want to. I mean...you know what I mean.

JOANNE

Don't you want my number?

BOBBY ROTH

Shit. I mean, yes. I forgot. I've got a pencil and paper here somewhere.

He searches his sport coat's pockets as he walks back toward Joanne.

BOBBY ROTH (cont'd)

I always carry them around in case I have an idea.

JOANNE

Yeah? My brother does that, too. I always wonder what kind of perverted stuff he writes in there.

Joanne writes her phone number down and hands it back to Bobby. He trots away.

BOBBY ROTH

So I'll see ya. I mean I'll talk to you tomorrow...and I'll see you after that.

He waves as he rounds the corner. Joanne removes her high heels and crosses the Hanson House lawn.

INT. HANSON HOUSE - NATHAN'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Nathan lies on his bed, staring up at the starry ceiling that he painted there. Joanne's footsteps can be heard. Strips of moonlight lay in swatches across the room. Joanne stops in the doorway. She looks young, innocent, and beautiful.

JOANNE

Are you in here? I can't see anything.  
I wanted to show you my costume. Don't I  
look different?

She does a dramatic turn.

NATHAN

You look the same to me.

He looks back up to the ceiling. She sits beside him, but not touching, on the bed. The crucifix mobile jangles gently above them in the evening breeze.

JOANNE

What are you looking at?

NATHAN

Lies.

Joanne lays down beside him, in order to see what he sees. And there, up above them...are stars. Glowing dots of phosphorescent paint on the ceiling. Twinkling as the dark shapes of the mobile move, blocking and revealing...blocking and revealing.

JOANNE

They're stars.

NATHAN

They're lies. Wishes that never came true. My mother...she stopped letting me go outside. At first, I hated it. But later I knew she was right. She was always right. (beat) I thought - at least I could pretend that I was outside...and make wishes like everyone else. But they never came true.

JOANNE

What do you mean?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

NATHAN

I'm still the One. I can fix people. Like in the Bible.

JOANNE

She told you that?

NATHAN

It's true.

JOANNE

And that's why you live like this?

No answer.

JOANNE (cont'd)

Nathan, listen to me. She was wrong. It's impossible. Nobody can do that.

He looks her directly in the eye and says, sadly.

NATHAN

I can.

INT. JOANNE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Joanne sneaks in, still preoccupied with Nathan and his "gift". As she's about to undress...she notices her own reflection in the dressing table's mirror. She really sees herself for the first time. Pretty and happy. She approves.

INT. FATBURGER - DAY

Joanne and Bobby sit in a corner booth with a group of Bobby's GEEKY FRIENDS, sipping sodas as the jukebox plays in the background.

MONTAGE - INT. HANSON HOUSE - DAY

- 1) The bathroom. Nathan squares off against the enemy as he prepares to step into the tub.
- 2) Nathan scrubs his body with gloved hands. He hates it, but he does it.
- 3) He picks up a razor and scrutinizes his grubby countenance in the mirror. His hands are shaky...but he manages.
- 4) He greases up his shaggy mop of hair, parts it down the middle and attempts to comb it into submission.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

5) Nathan even dresses for the occasion, digging out a coat and tie that have certainly seen better days.

(A104) Nathan dresses for the occasion in a coat and tie that have seen better days.

(B104) Finally, he waits by the window, watching the empty street as if it would come to life.

EXT. HANSON HOUSE - AFTERNOON

Joanne and Bobby walk past the Hanson House with the group from the soda shop. Joanne is the center of attention, and is clearly loving her new found popularity.

INT. HANSON HOUSE - DAY

Nathan's heart breaks as Joanne passes without a glance. He raises his hand to the glass, pressing his glove to the cold surface...wanting so badly to feel what she is feeling. As Joanne rounds a distant corner, a remote chorus of Happy Birthday can be heard echoing in Nathan's mind. He leaves the window in a daze and shuffles out of his room, into the upper floor's main hallway. As he follows the singing down the dark hallway, past one room after another, we cut back and forth between the present...and the past. In the present - Nathan moves in a fog, dragging his cloth covered fingertips along the peeling wallpaper.

IN THE PAST,

he passes a kitchen doorway. The foster parents talk in whispers near an uneaten birthday cake. We see the scene from Nathan's POV.

FOSTER FATHER 1  
I won't tolerate his silence.

FOSTER MOTHER 1  
He's only a child. Give him time.

FOSTER FATHER 1  
I don't care what he is... They stop and stare as a ten year old Nathan passes by. The foster mother attempts a smile.

IN THE PRESENT,

tattered shoes shuffle across threadbare carpeting as he moves on.



IN THE PAST,

he passes another room on one of Nathan's birthdays, and another set of foster parents, also seen from his POV.

## FOSTER MOTHER 2

When I tried to take them off, he went crazy.

They stop and stare as Nathan passes by.

IN THE PRESENT,

Nathan wanders into the living room. He stands surrounded by the people in the mural.

IN THE PAST,

Nathan stands in the center of a circle of people, in what appears to be some sort of institution. His arms folded tight, rocking back and forth in his own little world. They sing Happy Birthday to him in an eerie monotone.

IN THE PRESENT,

Nathan looks toward the front door.

IN THE PAST,

the trustee of Nathan's estate enters the house, which has been closed for eleven years. The furniture is draped in white drop-cloths. The trustee sets Nathan's luggage down and looks around. He shakes his head, hands Nathan a set of keys, an aging document, and leaves the eighteen-year-old Nathan alone. We see from outside the front door as Nathan closes the door and draws the bolt.

INT. JOANNE'S ROOM - MORNING

Billy comes bounding through the bedroom door, wearing his Sunday clothes. Joanne is still asleep.

## BILLY

Breakfast!

Joanne covers her head with a pillow. Billy sits on the edge of her bed and bounces up and down as he speaks.

## BILLY (cont'd)

C'mon...get up...mom told me...to make sure...you were out...of bed...before ...I came...to the table.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JOANNE

If you don't leave me alone I'm gonna tell dad what you do with his national geographics.

BILLY

C'mon, Jo. I'm hungry.

Joanne sits up suddenly, trying to clear the brain fog.

JOANNE

What day is this?

BILLY

Sunday.

She bounds out of bed and gathers her clothes.

JOANNE

Shit! I missed it.

BILLY

Missed what?

JOANNE

His birthday.

She starts to take off the oversized T-shirt that serves as her nightgown.

JOANNE (cont'd)

Out.

He leaves, she slams the door.

INT. KITCHEN - MORNING

Mom is doing the breakfast dishes. She wears an Apron over her Sunday clothes. Joanne bursts in.

JOANNE

Mom, you've gotta help me.

JOANNE'S MOTHER

Sweetheart, you can't go to church dressed like that.

JOANNE

I can't go today.

JOANNE'S MOTHER

What do you mean you--

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JOANNE

Mom, please. I really need your help.

Joanne's mother sees how much this means to her daughter.

JOANNE (CONT'D) (cont'd)

Please. I need you to show me how to bake a cake.

JOANNE'S MOTHER

Joanne, I can't send your brother and your father off to church without me.

JOANNE

I was hoping Billy could come with me.

JOANNE'S MOTHER

Joanne...

(beat)

You *really* want me to teach you how to bake a cake?

Joanne looks irritated by the delay. Joanne's mother is amused, at first, and then touched.

EXT. STREET - AFTERNOON

Tony is parked a few houses down from the Hanson house, scowling and thinking. He watches Joanne and Billy approach, and then slip through the loose plank in the fence.

INT. NATHAN'S ROOM - DAY

Nathan reads alone in his room. We hear the back door slam, and then movement in the house. Nathan looks around for a hiding place. After a moment, Joanne appears in his bedroom doorway, her face still dusted with flour.

JOANNE

(out of breath)

It's just me. I know - you're mad. I'm sorry. But just...stay up here until I call you, okay?

His eyes are like a wounded deer's.

JOANNE (CONT'D) (cont'd)

C'mon, I said I was sorry. Just wait, okay?

She runs away from the room. Nathan goes to the doorway and listens.

INT. HANSON HOUSE - DAY

Tony spies on Joanne through the partially opened back door as she gets things ready. When she goes to get Nathan, he sneaks into the house and hides. Joanne calls down the hall to Nathan:

JOANNE

All right...we're ready.

Nathan appears in the dining-room doorway a moment later and smiles broadly at what he sees. Zeppo, Billy, and both the "mother" and "father" TV people have been seated around the dining room table. All three wear party hats. The TVs have been tuned to an appropriately male or female program. Joanne's cake, an ugly thing, sits in the center of the table, bulgy and cockeyed with candles aflame. Joanne puts on her own hat and carefully puts one on Nathan, as well, being sure not to actually touch him.

JOANNE (cont'd)

Happy birthday to you...

Tony watches from his hiding place.

JOANNE (CONT'D) (cont'd)

Happy birthday to you. Happy birthday - a day late - dear Nathan... Happy birthday to you.

Nathan's grin stretches from ear to ear. Tony watches Nathan's gloves with great interest.

JOANNE (cont'd)

I know it's a little late, but... Don't blame me for the cake - Zeppo baked it.

Zeppo cocks his head. Nathan turns to Joanne.

NATHAN

It's...beautiful.

They make eye contact. Zeppo barks.

JOANNE

C'mon, let's get this party going.

As Nathan sits down, Tony sneaks through the master bathroom and Nathan's mother's room.

(CONTINUED)



CONTINUED:

TONY  
Especially guys.

BECKY  
(embarrassed)  
Kinda.

TONY  
And especially guys like me. All right,  
forget it. I'll manage.

He turns to leave.

BECKY  
Is it important?

TONY  
I don't want to get you in trouble. I  
just needed some advice.

BECKY  
Advice? From me?

TONY  
Well...yeah.

BECKY  
Um... I guess it wouldn't hurt anything  
if you came in for just a minute. He  
won't be home for a while.

Tony smiles gratefully.

INT. REVEREND WOOD'S HOUSE - AFTERNOON

Tony sits politely on the edge of the embroidered sofa,  
looking lost and alone. The den is lined with bookshelves  
and paneled with wood. Becky brings in two glasses of  
lemonade and hands one to Tony.

TONY  
Thanks.

BECKY  
What's wrong?

TONY  
Joanne. She dumped me.

BECKY  
Oh. I'm sorry.

He moves closer. She squirms, but doesn't move away.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

TONY  
It just hurts so bad.

BECKY  
She just doesn't realize how sensitive  
you are.

He moves closer. She tries to look away from his eyes, but  
is hypnotized.

TONY  
You think?

BECKY  
That's the only good reason I can think  
of.

He moves even closer. Her breath comes quicker.

TONY  
I...

She interrupts him with a kiss. After Tony recovers from the  
shock, he's all over her. Becky responds.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. REVEREND WOOD'S HOUSE - LATER

Soft sobs from Becky as Tony dresses. She's disheveled and  
has several hickies on her neck.

TONY  
It's my fault.

BECKY  
I could have said no.

TONY  
That wouldn't have stopped me.

He looks dejected. She goes to him.

BECKY  
Why do you say those kinds of things  
about yourself?

She tries to comfort him, but he knocks her away -  
"accidentally" smashing her in the face with his elbow. Becky  
cries out and she falls to the floor.

TONY  
Stay away from me!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BECKY

Why? I...I don't understand.

TONY

I'm no good.

BECKY

Don't say that. You *are* good. It's *me*.  
It's *my* fault. I gave into temptation.

She looks at herself in a mirror that hangs over the mantle.  
Cuts and bruises cover her innocent face.

BECKY (CONT'D) (cont'd)

What am I going to tell my father? He'll  
know. I've never lied to him before.

TONY

He'll have me locked up. I deserve it.

Despite her own anguish, Becky goes to comfort him.

BECKY

No. What can I do to help you? What  
should I say?

She hugs him desperately, and Tony reaches into his pocket -  
retrieving what he took from Nathan's dresser...an old pair  
of his gloves.

EXT. SMALL SHOP - DUSK

The SHERIFF and DEPUTY sit on the porch, drinking Cokes.  
Billy enters the store. The two lawmen nod. A moment later,  
HATTIE, the town ambulance driver walks up.

HATTIE

Hi boys. Got any dirt.

SHERIFF

Sorry Hattie. Nothing juicy today.

Hattie looks disappointed. Until Reverend Woods' car  
screeches up and slams to a stop. The Reverend bounds out of  
the car. Becky waits in her seat, staring down at the  
floorboards.

DEPUTY

You okay, Reverend?

(CONTINUED)



CONTINUED:

REVEREND WOODS  
He raped her, Sheriff. He raped my  
little girl.

INT. SMALL STORE - DUSK

Billy strains to hear what's being said outside. As the muffled voices build in intensity, Billy grows increasingly worried.

EXT. HANSON HOUSE - NIGHT

Joanne runs toward the house. She stops dead in her tracks when she sees the police car out front, lights flashing - and the hostile throng of people being held at bay by volunteer Deputies. She worms her way through the crowd, finally breaking through and making a run for the front door.

INT. HANSON HOUSE - NIGHT

Joanne bursts in.

JOANNE  
Nathan...

She sees the Sheriff, his Deputy and a few burly volunteers. They ransack the place as they search for Nathan.

JOANNE (cont'd)  
Where is he?

SHERIFF  
We were hoping you could tell us.

DEPUTY  
He must have heard us coming for him and slipped out. But, don't you worry, we'll find him. In the mean time, it's evidence we're after. Nails for your pervert friend's coffin.

SHERIFF  
Walter, do me a favor.

DEPUTY  
What is it, Sheriff?

SHERIFF  
Stop talking.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JOANNE  
He's not here?

SHERIFF  
Not unless you know something we don't.

They go back to searching. Joanne tries not to look at the fireplace. The Sheriff turns to his deputy.

SHERIFF (cont'd)  
All right, that's enough. He's not here.  
We'll take shifts out front. He's bound  
to show up, eventually.

Joanne leaves the house, unable to help Nathan.

INT. CHIMNEY - DAY

Nathan listens, trying to remain as quiet as possible.

EXT. HANSON HOUSE - DAY

Joanne and Billy pass by. A police car stands watch at the curb.

INT. SCHOOL ROOM - DAY

Class hasn't started yet. Everyone is buzzing over the "rape". Tony sits in the window sill, holding court with his gang. Joanne walks in and the buzzing intensifies.

TONY  
Hey Joanne, heard about your friend.  
Maybe he got you, too - but you didn't  
mind so much.

Buck and Avery laugh. Joanne walks over to Tony. She's been crying.

JOANNE  
Did you do this?

He smiles and gives her a "Whatcha' gonna' do about it" look. Joanne looks around at all of the curious faces. Joanne slaps Tony hard and his buddies snicker. Tony's jaw drops, she turns to walk away, and then - she turns back and smacks him again.

JOANNE (cont'd)  
That one's for him.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

She returns to her seat as gasps and whispers skip across the room.

BUCK

Oh, man!

AVERY

You okay T?

TONY

Shut the fuck up.

Avery begins to laugh. Tony turns on him, but he just keeps on laughing. Becky enters, finding the way to her seat by following the cracks in the floor's linoleum. She passes Joanne and Joanne gives her an accusatory look. Becky stops, but can't make eye contact. Instead, she looks to Tony, but he is having problems of his own. The teacher arrives and the students take their seats.

INT. HANSON HOUSE HALLWAY - NIGHT

Nathan stands beneath the broken skylight with his face upturned as the rain falls into the house and drenches him. Leaves and debris have fallen in, as well.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. NATHAN'S BATHROOM - DAY

Nathan tries the bathroom sink. The water has been turned off. He takes the top of the toilet's tank off and scoops water into his mouth.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. HANSON HOUSE - DAY

The house is a disaster. The TV parents have been destroyed, the work bench demolished. The painted faces on the wall smile with frozen cheer as Nathan peeks out the window, from between the slats, in search of the food which is not there. Nathan wanders the lonely house kept company only by the characters in the mural. He paces, looking gaunt and haunted. His imagination distorts the happy images on the walls, twisting them into gawking, nightmarish specters - laughing at his pain. He goes to what's left of his work bench, picking up odds and ends that lie around. Then he gets an idea and looks for specific items.

INT. JOANNE'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Joanne helps her mom wash the dinner dishes. Her mom's nerves are stretched to their limit.

JOANNE

If I told you something... Would you believe me?

Joanne's mother looks at her daughter - panicked, believing that the moment she has feared so desperately over the last five years has finally come. She closes her eyes, holding back tears.

JOANNE'S MOTHER

I can't. I just...can't.

JOANNE

It's him. He's still in the house.

Joanne's mother looks relieved. She wipes away a tear.

JOANNE'S MOTHER

How do you know?

JOANNE

I just know. I don't really know, but I have a feeling.

JOANNE'S MOTHER

Having a feeling isn't the same as knowing, Joanne.

(beat, changing gears)

Besides, it's been almost two weeks.

JOANNE

He needs food, but if I tell - they'll lock him up.

JOANNE'S MOTHER

Well maybe that wouldn't be such a--

JOANNE

Nathan *didn't* do it.

EXT. HANSON HOUSE - NIGHT

Joanne sneaks past the patrol car and slips around the side of the house, carrying a large brown paper bag filled with food. Suddenly, the deputy turns away from a shrub where he was urinating.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DEPUTY  
Can I help you?

Joanne jumps back.

JOANNE  
Ah... I was just...

The Deputy spots the bag.

JOANNE (cont'd)  
My mom sent me over with some food. She  
thought you might be hungry.

The Deputy picks up the bag and rummages around, extracting  
wrapped leftovers.

DEPUTY  
Well that's real nice of her. But you  
have no business pokin' around back here.  
This guy's dangerous.

INT. NATHAN'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Nathan listens to the conversation between Joanne and the  
deputy. With the little energy he has left, he works with the  
odds and ends he took from the work bench, though we can't  
see what he's making. Zeppo lays by his side.

DEPUTY (CONT'D)(OS)  
I'd hate to think what would happen if he  
got hold of you. You'd better get on  
home. I don't want your mother worried  
on account of me.

EXT. HANSON HOUSE - NIGHT

JOANNE  
Yeah. Okay.

The Deputy waits for Joanne to walk back, ahead of him. She  
looks back at the house, thinking about Nathan.

DEPUTY  
Pretty creepy, huh?

JOANNE  
Huh? Oh, yeah... Pretty creepy.

DEPUTY  
He's lucky he got out. If I'd have  
caught up with him, he'd be through.  
That's it. Finished.  
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DEPUTY (cont'd)

Know what I mean? POW! Right between those beady little eyes of his. I don't care what the Sheriff says...but don't tell him I said that - okay? Yes sir, he's lucky he got out.

Joanne is lost in thought. Her eyes brighten a little.

JOANNE

Yeah, maybe he did...

DEPUTY

Did what? To who?

JOANNE

Nothing. I'll let you eat your food.

She gives up, for now, forces a smile - and leaves.

DEPUTY

You tell your mom thanks for me. After the Deputy returns to his car - Zeppo slips through the opening that Joanne created.

INT. JOANNE'S ROOM - NIGHT

Moonlight illuminates the immobile shape beneath the covers of Joanne's bed.

EXT. JOANNE'S HALLWAY - NIGHT

Joanne's father walks up quietly to the door and taps on it. There is no answer, so he turns the knob - but the door is locked. He takes another drink from his glass.

JOANNE'S FATHER

(whispering)

If you don't let me in, I'll huff and I'll puff...and I'll blow the door down.

He continues to tap on the door.

INT. JOANNE'S ROOM - NIGHT

We see that the shape beneath the covers is not Joanne, but her pillows arranged to act as her counterfeit.

INT. JOANNE'S PARENTS' BEDROOM - NIGHT

Joanne's mother lies awake, listening to her husband tapping at his daughter's bedroom door.

EXT. JOANNE'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Joanne creeps around to the front of the house wearing jeans and a T-shirt and lights up a joint. Then she notices Tony parked across the street. She turns to re-enter the house and he steps out of the car.

TONY  
(raising his voice)  
What - you're not even gonna say hello?

Joanne walks away from the house and toward Tony, in order to keep her father from hearing him.

JOANNE  
Leave me alone?

TONY  
No can do. We belong together.

Joanne gives him a hard look. He walks around until her back is to the car.

TONY (cont'd)  
What, you don't have time for you old friends anymore?

JOANNE  
We were never friends.

TONY  
But you and that freak are. Is that it?  
What's the story with those gloves,  
anyway?

JOANNE  
You wouldn't understand.

TONY  
Try me.

JOANNE  
Do you believe in miracles?

TONY  
Yeah, right.

He moves in close, penning her in.

TONY (cont'd)  
Let's go for a ride.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JOANNE

Sorry, you'll have to find another sucker for your web page. I'm not interested.

TONY

Oh yeah?

He takes her hand and pushes it down to his crotch.

TONY (cont'd)

Now tell me you're not interested.

She tightens her grip without warning and Tony winces.

JOANNE

(slowly and succinctly)  
I'm not interested.

Joanne lets go and Tony doubles over. She starts toward the Hanson house.

TONY

(enraged)  
You fucking bitch. You think people like us can change into people like them?! You're fucking fooling yourself!

JOANNE

Maybe I *do* believe in miracles.

She rounds the corner and Tony tries to go after her, but he's still in too much pain.

TONY

FUCKING BITCH!

EXT. HANSON HOUSE - NIGHT

Joanne sneaks past the sleeping Deputy. She looks at the house sadly and moves to the front porch. Joanne sits, leaning back against to front door, and closes her eyes.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. HANSON HOUSE - EARLY MORNING

Zeppo barks at Joanne, waking her.

JOANNE

Hey, where'd you come from?

(CONTINUED)



CONTINUED:

He barks again and runs around the side of the house. Joanne sits up and sees what Zeppo has left on her lap: A flower. Made out of the odds and ends from Nathan's work bench. When she touches the flower, the lights in the blossom sparkle. Joanne checks to make sure that the deputy is still asleep, then hurries around the side of the house.

INT. HANSON HOUSE KITCHEN - EARLY MORNING

Joanne enters through the back door, which has the doorknob removed, and whispers:

JOANNE

Nathan?

There is no answer. She walks through the dark house, using the lights in the flower to find her way.

INT. NATHAN'S BEDROOM - EARLY MORNING

Nathan lies on the bed, staring up at the stars on his ceiling through drooping eyelids. He is severely dehydrated and delirious. He mutters incoherently as his head lolls from side to side. We see Nathan from an overhead view as a woman's hand reaches out to touch him. He allows the touch and seems to calm - until another hand gropes him from the other side of the bed. A third, fourth, and fifth hand enters the frame as Nathan panics and tries to fight off the "sinners" in his mind. Finally, he pulls into a fetal position and screams:

NATHAN

NO!

Joanne withdraws her hand.

JOANNE

Nathan... It's me.

After his confusion dissipates, Nathan allows Joanne to sit down beside him and stroke his hair. Finally, he allows himself to really feel her hand on his face and he begins to weep.

NATHAN

You came back.

JOANNE

I wish I could heal you. I'm so sorry.

Joanne gets an idea and runs out of the room.

INT. HANSON HOUSE BATHROOM - EARLY MORNING

Joanne enters and sees that the top is off of the toilet tank. She reaches in and gathers the last remaining drops of water in her cupped hands.

INT. NATHAN'S BEDROOM - EARLY MORNING

Joanne pours the water from her hands, into his mouth. He sputters and coughs, rolling onto his side as he hugs his fragile arms to his bony ribs. His complexion is as pale as the gloves he wears.

NATHAN

Please, ddd...don't go away again.

Joanne's eyes are filled with love.

JOANNE

I'm not going anywhere.

She smiles and touches his cheek again. He leans toward her touch.

NATHAN

I didn't know it would feel like this. So warm.

She weeps for him.

JOANNE

I'm going to get you some food. I'll be right back. I promise.

She stands to leave and as she removes her hand, he replaces it with his own, gloved hand.

INT. JOANNE'S ROOM - MORNING

Billy bounds through the door, doing his morning wake up routine. He wears his Sunday clothes.

BILLY

Up...up...up! I'm getting...sick of having...to wake...your ugly butt up. He stops bouncing.

BILLY (cont'd)

C'mon Jo.

Billy pokes the pillow figure.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BILLY (cont'd)  
Hey...what's...

He pulls back the covers and discovers the deception - pillows and clothes piled beneath the blankets. His mother calls from the other room.

JOANNE'S MOTHER (OS)  
Billy! Joanne!

INT. KITCHEN - MORNING

Billy enters, trying to figure out how to cover for Joanne. His mother scrubs the floor slowly and mechanically, lost in her thoughts.

JOANNE'S MOTHER  
Where's your sister?

BILLY  
She's really tired. She thinks she might be getting a cold. Maybe she should stay home.

JOANNE'S MOTHER  
A cold? I'll get the thermometer.

Just then, Joanne appears in the window. She motions to Billy, trying to get him to come outside.

BILLY  
I already did that. It's only 99. I think she's sleeping again already.

JOANNE'S MOTHER  
I guess it won't hurt to let her sleep a while longer.

Mom leaves the room and heads toward her own bedroom. Billy tears off toward the kitchen.

INT. JOANNE'S KITCHEN - DAY

Billy lets Joanne in quietly through the back door.

BILLY  
Now you're really gonna' get it.

JOANNE  
I need your help.

BILLY  
Where were you? Dad's gonna--

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JOANNE

Would you just shut up? It's him. He's still in the house.

Billy realizes the gravity of the situation.

BILLY

What do you want me to do?

EXT. HANSON HOUSE - DAY

The police radio squawks, jolting sleeping beauty awake. The noise assaults his pounding head.

SHERIFF

(on the radio)  
Walter. Come in, Walter. Do you read me?

DEPUTY

Yeah. I mean, yes Sheriff. I'm awake. I mean, I'm here.

SHERIFF

Come on in. John's out sick. I'll get someone else over there later.

DEPUTY

Don't you want me to wait?

SHERIFF

Go home. Get some sleep. I'll send Joe junior down in a while.

Walter starts up the car, and just as he drives away... Joanne shows up, with another bag of food.

INT. HANSON HOUSE - DAY

Nathan sits as Joanne feeds him.

JOANNE

Better?

NATHAN

She knew the sinners would come for me. She knew.

JOANNE

I won't let them hurt you.

He hides his hands.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

NATHAN

And you won't...tell them.

She takes one of his gloved hands in hers. He looks nervous, but doesn't pull away.

JOANNE

No. I won't. Now, c'mon - eat.

INT. JOANNE'S KITCHEN - DAY

JOANNE'S FATHER

I don't care how tired she is, she's not missing church again.

Joanne's mother moves like a robot, removing the dishes from the kitchen cabinets, cleaning the insides of the cabinets, and replacing the dishes. Joanne's father storms out of the room and Billy follows.

INT. JOANNE'S BEDROOM - DAY

Joanne's father stomps into Joanne's bedroom and tears the covers off of the bed, revealing Joanne's deception.

JOANNE'S FATHER

Goddamn it, Bill! Where is she!?

He turns over furniture and shreds his daughter's clothes with his hands as he rants.

BILLY

She's at church already. She said she felt better and that she wanted to get there early...to...to help the preacher...or something. With something, I mean.

JOANNE'S FATHER

Whore! Slut! Off with that God damned punk. Ugly, stupid, scheming whore! I won't stand for it any more. No more. NO MORE!

Terrified, Billy slips out of the house, while his mother watches her husband's jealous tirade from the bedroom's threshold. After a moment, she tries to stuff her rage and then walks wordlessly into her bedroom.

JOANNE'S FATHER (OS) (cont'd)

God damned whore!

EXT. HANSON HOUSE - DAY

Tony slips through the loose slat in the gate. Buck and Avery are wearing their Sunday best.

BUCK

Hey T. What're you doin'?

TONY

What does it look like, asshole. I'll bet she's in there. Or he is. Gotta be some reason she's been pokin' around here.

AVERY

Why would she be in there?

TONY

Waitin' for her boyfriend to come back.

AVERY

We should get out of here before the police show up.

TONY

She started it. Now I'm gonna finish it.

BUCK

But what if...what if he does come back?

TONY

You guys aren't afraid of a little murdering psycho rapist, are you?

The looks on their faces tell us that they are very afraid. Tony crawls through the hole.

TONY (OS) (cont'd)

C'mon pussies.

They follow reluctantly.

INT. NATHAN'S ROOM - DAY

Joanne hears Tony's voice outside, so she hurries Nathan out of the room.

INT. HANSON LIVING ROOM - DAY

Joanne helps Nathan into his hiding place, just before Tony and his buddies enter through the kitchen door. She moves toward the kitchen to investigate and Tony leaps out at her. He covers her mouth with his hand, while struggling to control her flailing arms. Buck looks frightened and Avery seems to want no part of this.

INT. HIDING PLACE - DAY

Nathan hears Joanne's muffled screams, but is too afraid to show himself.

INT. HANSON HOUSE DINING-ROOM - DAY

Tony throws Joanne onto the dining-room table - sending china crashing to the floor. He leans down close to Joanne's face and hisses:

TONY

You and me belong together.

She bites his hand hard. Tony screams and removes it from her mouth - and she spits his own blood in his face.

JOANNE

Fuck you!

He slaps her.

TONY

Hold her down!

The guys approach timidly.

TONY (CONT'D) (cont'd)

Do it!

They do it. Tony grabs a linen napkin from the table and stuffs it into Joanne's mouth to silence her, as the TV parents watch from their seats. Tony then throws off his jacket and tears opens his pants.

BUCK

Whhh...what are you gonna do, T?

TONY

We're gonna' give her what she really wants.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Joanne sobs and struggles to get free. Avery and Buck look at each other, petrified. Joanne screams. Tony slaps her again, then tears open her blouse.

INT. HIDING PLACE - DAY

Nathan is torn between his fear - and his desire to help Joanne. He rocks back and forth in his hiding place, fingers digging into the wall.

EXT. HANSON HOUSE - DAY

Billy runs to the front door and pounds on it. He hears his sister's screams and then catches a glimpse of the attack through the dining room window.

BILLY  
Leave her alone!

Billy beats on the door as he screams.

BILLY (cont'd)  
LEAVE HER ALONE! LEAVE HER ALONE!

Finally, Billy gives up and runs back down the street - screaming for help. Neighbors begin to emerge from their houses.

BILLY (cont'd)  
Somebody call the cops!

INT. HANSON HOUSE - DAY

BUCK  
It's that kid - her brother. He saw us, T. Let's get outta here. You were just kiddin'...right T? You're just playin' a joke.

Tony kicks off a shoe and removes one of his sweat socks to use as a gag on Joanne. He then tears off her blouse. Avery backs away, until Tony yells:

TONY  
Hold her fucking hands!

AVERY  
Don't do this. Please don't do this.



EXT. JOANNE'S HOUSE - DAY

Joanne's mother folds clothes nervously, and then tries to squeeze a comforter into her husband's already-overflowing closet. She stands on a step stool to put the blanket on the top shelf, but it won't fit. When she pulls the comforter back out - a shoebox topples to the floor.

ANGLE ON SHOEBOX on the floor. A stack of Polaroid pictures have fallen out of the box, as has a heavy object wrapped in a cloth diaper and a small jar of metal polish.

JOANNE'S MOTHER STOOPS to retrieve the box and kneels on the floor before it. She stares down at the photographs for a long time, without touching them.

ANGLE ON POLAROIDS showing Joanne semi-nude in provocative poses, though her expression is uniformly vacant and sad. We can now get a better look of the other object, as well. It is Joanne's father's service revolver.

JOANNE'S MOTHER Goes numb, as she is confronted with the inescapable proof of her husband's crime. She gingerly moves aside the diaper, which her husband had used to polish his weapon, and stares down at the gun. Joanne's father can be heard approaching the room - still ranting about Joanne. When he gets to the doorway - he stops dead still. He sees the shoebox - and the photographs - and makes eye contact with his wife. They hold that eye contact for a long time, with him in the doorway, her in the closet...and the gun between them.

EXT. JOANNE'S HOUSE - DAY

We hold on an establishing shot of the house for a long time - before we hear the shot.

INT. HANSON HOUSE - DAY

Buck snivels, as speaks.

BUCK

Please no, Please no. Don't do this.  
Please T, don't do this.

TONY

Shut up!

He pulls Joanne's jeans down. She struggles desperately.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

TONY (cont'd)

Take notes, Avery. You're up next.

AVERY

Stop this, man. Stop!

Avery tries to stop Tony, but is knocked away with ease. He picks himself up and tears out of the house. As Tony tries to get between Joanne's flailing legs, Buck's eyes jump to the fireplace - from which Nathan has just emerged, covered in soot. Buck looks like he's seen a ghost.

BUCK

Holy shit. It's *him*.

Nathan takes a step forward, confused by what's going on in the dining room. Buck makes a run for the back door, tripping over his own feet as he goes. Suddenly Nathan realizes what's about to happen to Joanne - and he rushes Tony.

NATHAN

N-O-O-O-O-O!

Nathan throws his body into Tony as hard as he can - sending Joanne's attacker sprawling to the floor. Nathan's eyes fill with tears as he removes the gag from Joanne's mouth.

JOANNE

Get out of here, Nathan! Go get help!

TONY

I'm not through, yet.

Tony kicks Nathan in the midsection and Nathan crumples to the floor, offering no resistance. Nathan's glasses are thrown from his face.

TONY (cont'd)

So, you're the freak. You don't look too scary to me.

Tony laughs and kicks him again. Nathan drags himself back toward his hiding place as Tony follows, using his feet and fists to punish Nathan brutally. Finally, Nathan lies still, but Tony continues to kick. Joanne then attacks Tony with her remaining strength.

JOANNE

NO! Get away from him!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

Tony turns his rage back onto Joanne, this time straddling her body while he strangles her.

TONY

Stupid bitch. Stupid, back stabbing  
bitch! You think you're better than me?!  
Do you?! You're fucking better than me?!

After Joanne has given up all resistance, Tony stands away. He stares at her for a moment as he lights a cigarette with trembling hands. The reality of what Tony's just done suddenly hits him - hard. He hears police sirens approaching and panics. Hoping to eradicate his crime, Tony uses his lighter to set the dining room curtains ablaze before running out the back door. Joanne stirs, but only slightly. Nathan finally musters the strength to crawl over to Joanne.

NATHAN

They came, mommy. The sinners came.  
Please - let me help her. Please.

Nathan listens for approval, as his house begins to burn, but none is forthcoming. Nathan looks down at Joanne, his face filled with the pain of a lifetime. Filled with such emptiness. He raises his hands slowly and removes the gloves. We see the perfect pink skin, like a baby's. Untouched by life - almost translucent. He touches her face...gently...and then he lays his hands on her and closes his eyes - concentrating. His lips move silently as he rocks back and forth. His tears fall upon her face. He opens his eyes and looks at her. Nothing. He stares at her for a moment in disbelief...and then screams.

NATHAN (cont'd)

NO! NOOOO!

He attacks the burning house, ripping the wallpaper off with his bare hands. Nathan goes wild, destroying anything that's left. Beating the walls - and then sinking to the floor.

NATHAN (cont'd)

no.

The police sirens are joined by those of the fire department, now. A shaft of sunlight falls across Nathan's face and he opens his eyes, suddenly understanding: he never had the power to heal. His whole life was based on a lie. Nathan goes to Joanne, picks her up in his arms, and carries her out the front door.

EXT. HANSON HOUSE - DAY

As Nathan stands in the smoke-filled doorway, Joanne in his arms, the town gathers around them. He closes his eyes, feeling the sun on his face for the first time in years. Gradually, he tries to open his eyes. Squinting against the light, he tries to make out the faces of the people around him. Some are vaguely familiar.

Billy sees Nathan - and his sister - and tries to break through the crowd, but Reverend Woods holds him back. Hattie rushes from the ambulance and tries to take Joanne from Nathan, but he won't let her go. Finally, another paramedic joins Hattie and together they convince Nathan to relinquish Joanne.

A) Hattie does a quick check of Joanne's vital signs, and responds to the question in Nathan's pleading eyes.

HATTIE

She's alive, but you have to let us help her.

B) Hattie does a quick check of Joanne's vital signs, and responds to the question in Nathan's pleading eyes.

HATTIE (cont'd)

She's gone. Please...you have to let me take her.

Nathan reluctantly lowers Joanne onto the Gurney. Reverend Woods and Billy are out of earshot of this last dialog. As Hattie and her partner wheel Joanne to the ambulance, the Reverend says:

REVEREND WOODS

She'll be all right, Billy. Don't you worry.

Joanne is transferred into the back of the ambulance - and it hurries off to the hospital. Nearby, the Sheriff has Tony and the other boys in the patrol car. Avery stands next to the Sheriff. Becky breaks down and Reverend Woods turns away from Billy to comfort her.

NATHAN WALKS FEARFULLY from his front porch, but seems unable to step away from his house - even as it burns. Something in the house crashes to the floor, sending sparks flying, and Nathan turns to look at his home. When Nathan turns away from the house, he is greeted by a sea of sympathetic, curious faces. Everyone awaits his next move. Finally, Billy steps forward and offers his hand.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Nathan accepts it - and allows Billy to lead him through crowd, which parts like the Red Sea. Nathan holds on for dear life as he and Billy walk down the street together...following the distant ambulance. Away from the house, away from the past - and toward whatever lies ahead.

NARRATOR (VO)

With time, all things seem to fade. Family photographs, new paint, old friends...even painful memories. I don't know if they really fade, or if we just...get used to them. The things we learned from our parents, echo through our lives like orphaned leaves as they scrape across a sidewalk's surface. Things they said - without words...whisper through our dreams like secrets in the wind.

FADE OUT.