

FORGIVE NOT FORGET

Written by

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BLACK SCREEN

JOHN (V.O.)
I'm not sure if there is a God.
But I'm sure as hell there is a
Devil, for only him could have
written this play I lived.

FADE IN:

EXT. GREAT LAKE - DAY

JOHN (40) and his son BOB (9) are in a small sailboat. They are both handling the helm.

They sail. The name of the boat is 'Sea Adventurer,' written in big, shining letters on the rear.

ZOOM IN on Bob. He is cheerful. He sees that his father is now sitting on the edge of the boat.

Bob realizes he's driving on his own.

BOB
Dad! Dad!

John does not move.

BOB (CONT'D)
Daddy, look! There's a boat dead
ahead. We're gonna crash!

John looks at his son, but still not moving.

JOHN
You can do it, son. Remember our
training. All port, but not too
fast.

Bob focuses and maneuvers the sailboat.

The sailboat passes only inches from the other boat.

BOB
YES!

Bob now holds the helm like he's the king of the seven seas.

John takes pictures.

The boy raises both arms, hands closed in fists, as if celebrating a goal.

The sailboat takes a wild turn to reach land.

John stands beside Bob and brings a hand to the boy's shoulder.

They bring the sailboat to land. Father and son step outside and push the boat out of the water.

Father and son walk. Bob is happy as ever.

BOB (CONT'D)
I'll never forget this day.

John looks at his son with very gentle eyes.

EXT. FRONT YARD OF LIA'S AND JOHN'S HOUSE - DAY

Bob and John leave the car. LIA (39), John's wife and Bob's mother, greets them.

Bob runs to hug his mom. He shows her the picture.

BOB
I sailed on my own, mom! We were about to crash another boat, but I steered it and saved us both. Daddy just looked. I did it all, mom!

Lia looks at John, apprehensive.

But, Bob's cheerful look causes her to change her look to one of tenderness.

She blows a kiss to her husband.

They walk into the house.

INT. JOHN'S AND LIA'S LIVING ROOM - DAY (TWILIGHT)

John takes two bottles of beer and offers one to Lia.

They open their respective bottles.

LIA
May all our future moments be as lovely as this one.

Husband and wife raise bottles and toast.

Lia looks at Bob.

LIA (CONT'D)
Lord, this boy looks more like you everyday, same smile.

John meditates.

JOHN
Light of my life. He does make me a better person.

Lia comes closer to John. She hugs him, and John compresses her body against his.

LIA (FAKING ANGER)
With a husband and son like you,
what else could I possibly want?

JOHN
I don't know. More beer?

LIA
I was thinking of something else...

JOHN
How can this so unworthy vassal
serve you now, my queen?

John humbly hangs his head toward his wife.

Lia raises his chin with the tip of the beer bottle.

She fixes eyes on him and kisses him passionately in the mouth.

They place the bottles on the table, and to the room they go.

INT. JOHN'S AND LIA'S HOUSE - NIGHT

MONTAGE

A) John finishes shower and wraps himself in a towel.

B) Lia is sitting by the table, reading a magazine.

C) Bob is in his room, doing homework.

INT. LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

John stares at the dinner table. It's not made.

JOHN
Are we on a hunger strike or
something?

Bob glances at Lia.

Lia winks at Bob.

LIA
You know, hard day on the job,
didn't have time to stop by the
supermarket.

John looks at the empty table.

JOHN
We got no choice then. Pizza it is.
Again.

BOB
WEEEEEE!

Bob gives Lia a thumbs-up.

She returns the gesture.

MONTAGE

A) Lia sets the table.

B) Bob does his homework on the dinner table.

C) John works on the computer.

The doorbell RINGS.

Bob takes an amount of money left on the table and runs to open the door.

The boy leaves the house.

Lia and John wait.

A child scream is heard outside the house.

John and Lia run to the door.

EXT. STREET IN FRONT OF JOHN'S AND LIA'S HOUSE - NIGHT

John leaves the house in a hurry.

Another scream is heard, but is not one of fear, it's one of happiness.

JOHN'S P.O.V - pizza delivery guy rides the motorcycle in circles, with Bob on the back.

BOB
Faster! Faster!

John relaxes.

JOHN (SCREAMING)
Hey, Bob! Come on! Let's eat before
the pizza gets cold!

The delivery guy stops the motorcycle. Bob gets down. The delivery guy strokes Bob's hair.

DELIVERY GUY
This kid is pure gold.

Bob waves goodbye at the delivery guy and runs back to the house with the pizza.

John pays the delivery guy.

He gets on his bike and speeds away.

John looks suspiciously at him.

INT. JOHN'S AND LIA'S LIVING ROOM - DAY (MORNING)

John and Lia have breakfast, both dressed to go to work.

LIA (SCREAMING)
Bob! Get down! Breakfast is ready!

The boy runs downstairs and joins his parents.

BOB
I posted those pictures you took yesterday. Some of my friends said they were fake.

Bob enjoys his breakfast.

LIA
Never mind them. The important thing is you know they're for real.

BOB
Next time, I'll set sails all by myself.

He turns to his father.

BOB (CONT'D)
I'm not even taking dad this time.

JOHN
Watch your mouth, you little punk!

Laughter.

Bob grabs his backpack and walks to the door in a hurry.

BOB
Who's taking me? Come on. I need to get there early.

Lia takes her purse and turns to John.

LIA
Love and kisses. In that order.

John smiles and sips his coffee.

EXT. FRONT YARD OF JOHN'S AND LIA'S HOUSE - DAY

Mother and son walk to the car.

MAN

Hey, Bob!

Bob turns around and finds ALAN (22), gardener with short, blonde hair, parted to the right. Bob looks at his mother.

LIA

Go, but we haven't got all day.

Bob comes near Alan.

ALAN

Missing something lately?

Bob frowns.

BOB

My Yoda. I think I left it at school.

Alan shows him a big, shiny Yoda doll.

ALAN

No, you didn't!

BOB

WEEEEEE!

Alan gives him the doll. The boy hugs Alan.

Bob runs to his mother, but stops and turns around.

BOB (CONT'D)

Thank you, Alan.

Alan watches Lia and Bob get into the car and go.

INT. CAR - DAY

Lia drives, with Bob in the backseat.

Lia sees Bob through the rear-view mirror. He is distracted, looking out of the window.

LIA

Thinking of the big party, honey?
It's Saturday!

BOB

I can't think of anything else,
mom.

LIA
Have you already given the
invitation cards to your friends?

Bob nods a 'yes.'

BOB
But the coolest thing is, you and
dad are gonna be there!

Lia smiles.

EXT. SCHOOL GATES - DAY

Bob quickly leaves the car. He walks to the school gates, but stops.

He comes back to the car and kisses Lia in the cheek.

LIA'S P.O.V - Bob walks through the schoolyard, toward the main building.

Lia watches.

Bob stops and talks to a monitor. The monitor leans toward Bob and fixes his tie knot. He says something to Bob (inaudible), with a hand on the boy's shoulder.

Bob shakes hands with the monitor like an adult. The monitor watches Bob going into the school building.

Lia looks suspiciously at the monitor.

INT. CLASSROOM - DAY

Bob is sitting on his desk. He takes a paper and looks for something. He checks his backpack, to no avail.

Bob turns to the girl on his right.

BOB
Hey, Sue, I forgot my pen. Can I
borrow one of yours?

SUE
No, you cannot. Teacher said we
have to be responsible. You're on
your own.

Bob thinks.

The TEACHER (woman in her mid-thirties) comes into the room.

Bob is visibly worried.

BOB

Come on, Sue. I don't think the most beautiful girl in class will miss one stupid pen.

The girl smiles.

SUE

Like my mom says, flattery will take you everywhere.

She quickly hands a pen to Bob. He writes something on a paper.

TEACHER

Okay, class. Today, we'll follow through with the essays. I'm sure you all remember the topic...

CHILDREN

What I want to be when I grow up.

TEACHER

Very good.

The teacher checks a list on a paper.

TEACHER (CONT'D)

Let's see, our first presenter today is Robert Fulton. Bob, you're on.

Bob stands up and walks to the teacher's table.

He gives the teacher the piece of paper he was writing on. The teacher examines it.

TEACHER (CONT'D)

Okay... Looks good... Fine! Let's have the summary, please.

Bob faces his audience.

BOB

Well (clears throat), when I first thought about what I want to be when I grow up, first thing that came to mind was king of the world!

Laughter.

BOB (CONT'D)

But then I realized the world doesn't need kings. I want to help people. Then, I thought, I'm going to be a doctor or a cop. They really help people.

(MORE)

BOB (CONT'D)

But there is a profession that helps way more, something that really improves people's lives, because it guides us to the path of good. Without it, we would still be at the stone age. I want to be a teacher!

The teacher flushes, but pulls herself together and smiles.

TEACHER

Finally, somebody recognizes my merits!

Laughter.

TEACHER (CONT'D)

Well done, Bob. You've just got yourself an A, not only because you stated the sacred truth about my business, but also for the strength of your arguments. You may go back to your seat now.

Bob sits down on his chair.

The girl on his right turns to him.

SUE

Teacher's pet!

BOB

Like my dad says, flattery will take me everywhere.

They both laugh.

INT. JOHN'S AND LIA'S HOUSE - NIGHT

MONTAGE

A) John comes back from work.

B) Lia is in the kitchen, dealing with the microwave.

C) Bob sets the table.

D) Lia brings the food.

INT. LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

They sit down by the dinner table.

JOHN

Well, son, your birthday is just a few days away. Have you already decided how you want it to be?

Bob thinks.

JOHN (CONT'D)

I know! How about cowboys and Indians, eh?

BOB

What's a cowboy?

Lia smiles.

LIA

He doesn't know what that is, pop. What about sleeping beauty?

BOB

Mom, I'm a dude.

John laughs aloud. He and his son touch hands, closed in fists.

LIA

I know! I meant you can be the prince who kisses and wakes up the sleeping beauty.

BOB

Nah. I want to be a super hero!

LIA

In that case, tomorrow we'll go to the mall after school. Remember 'Party Down?'

BOB

The decoration shop!

LIA

That's right. We go there and you can choose whatever costume you like the most!

BOB

WEEEEEE!

INT. PARTY DOWN - DAY

Lia talks to the salesman (inaudible).

Bob tries a pirate costume. He nods negatively.

Lia takes another costume.

LIA
Try this one, darling.

Bob comes back dressed like Zorro.

LIA (CONT'D)
Oh, you look great in this one.

BOB
It's cool. But I don't know who
this guy is, either.

LIA
Then, you pick the next one.

More cheerful, Bob gets into an Iron-man costume. He nearly falls down. The costume is too heavy and hard.

Lia and salesman look at each other disappointed.

Bob opens big, shining eyes to a Spider-man costume. He wears it and looks in the mirror.

BOB
My spider senses are tingling!

INT. JOHN'S AND LIA'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

The house is decorated with Spider-man themes.

Lia is sitting on the couch, watching TV.

The table is set.

Bob plays, wearing his new Spider-man costume.

John comes from work.

Bob turns and throws a plastic spider web at his dad, which almost totally engulfs him.

Bob jumps for joy.

BOB
It works!

Bob talks on a toy walkie-talkie.

BOB (CONT'D)
Chief of police, you may leave
cover now, the bad guy is in the
net. No, mister mayor, you don't
have to thank me, it's my job.

Lia laughs while her husband is extremely uncomfortable.

Lia helps John getting rid of the spider web.

She takes a bottle of wine and fills a glass. John does the same, and they drink.

John and Lia sit down on the couch. Lia has the remote control.

She hesitates.

LIA

I'll have to go on a trip tomorrow.

BOB

But... What about my birthday?

JOHN

Do you really have to go, honey?
Bob's party is this Saturday, the
day after tomorrow.

LIA

I know, I got everything figured
out. I'll be back tomorrow
afternoon. I tried to get somebody
else to go, but Steve said it had
to be me.

John's face is one of concern.

Bob perceives the tension and sits down on the couch, in the middle of his parents.

The boy takes the remote control from Lia's hand and changes to a kid's show. He takes Lia and John's hands and places them on top of each other, onto his knee. Bob keeps his parents' hands together on his knee for a while.

John and Lia look at each other tenderly, and then to Bob, which is now awfully focused on the TV.

INT. JOHN'S AND LIA'S LIVING ROOM - DAY

Lia gets ready to leave. She kisses John.

LIA

Come on, Bob. I got a plane to
catch.

Bob finishes his orange juice, kisses his dad and leaves with mom.

JOHN'S P.O.V - from the window, he sees Bob wave a final goodbye at him.

John gets ready to leave as well.

He almost at the door when the doorbell RINGS.

John opens the door and sees a delivery man carrying a package, wrapped in fancy paper. The delivery van bears a logo that reads, 'Kidz Rulez.'

He signs the delivery and carries the package to the dinner table.

John examines the package. There is no card on it.

INT. JOHN'S OFFICE - DAY

IAN (29), John's assistant, brings coffee to John, who is sitting by his desk.

John's cell-phone RINGS. He checks the caller and happily answers it.

JOHN

Hey, honey, how was your trip? Is everything good?

INT. LIA'S OFFICE - DAY

LIA

We shook a little during landing, but I'm still in one piece. Looks like there's a storm coming to these parts.

INTERCUT BETWEEN JOHN AND LIA

JOHN

The most peculiar thing happened this morning, a little after you left. Looks like somebody sent Bob a birthday present, and not a cheap one, I can tell. But there is no card on the package. Who could possibly send an expensive toy to our son? I talked to my mom, she said she'll be bringing her present tomorrow. Your folks didn't send it, either. Weird, don't you think?

Lia's face is one of concern.

LIA

There must have been some mistake. I'll deal with it later. Don't show it to Bob or he'll want to open it, and then we can't return.

Lia checks her wristwatch.

LIA (CONT'D)
John, I'm late for a meeting. Talk
to you later. Love you. Bye.

JOHN
Love you.

John hears the dial tone. Call was disconnected on Lia's end.

Ian organizes John's desk.

IAN
Darling, we have to sort out that
thing with the chain suppliers as
soon as possible. They are all over
me.

John is meditative.

IAN (CONT'D)
Earth to John...

JOHN
Ian, do you know a toy store called
Kidz Rulez, with 'Zs' instead of
'Ss'?

IAN
Yes, darling, very expensive one,
by the way.

JOHN
That explains why I've never heard
of it. Could you please call them
and tell them they sent a package
to my house by mistake? I'm worried
that some kid out there won't get
his gift.

IAN
Sure thing, boss darling.

Ian leaves. John works on his computer.

The computer screen is shown. There's a floor-plan of a house
on it.

Ian comes back.

IAN (CONT'D)
No mistake, darling. The present is
for your son. I asked them who sent
it, and they told me they can't
disclose such information. Store
politics, you know.

John frowns.

JOHN
Can you do something else for me,
please?

INT. JOHN'S AND LIA'S LIVING ROOM - DAY (TWILIGHT)

John walks to the living room and finds Bob watching TV.

John goes to his personal laptop. He talks to Lia, via the laptop. He sees her on the screen, and vice-versa.

LIA
Hey, what's up, honey?

JOHN
Same old, same old. Remember that
present I talked to you about?
Well, it turns out it's really for
Bob.

LIA
Um... We talk about that later,
okay?

JOHN
What about your meeting? Was
everything all right?

LIA
Oh yes. But the rain is really
coming down hard over here. All
flights are delayed. As soon as the
weather clears, I'll be on my way.

John looks over his shoulder.

JOHN (SCREAMING)
Hey, son! Want to say hello to mom?

Bob runs to the laptop and sees his mother on the screen.

BOB
Come back, mom. I miss you!

LIA
I miss you too, honey.

Lia is nearly crying.

LIA (CONT'D)
We'll be together soon, baby. I
promise.

The call is disconnected. Bob kisses his father.

BOB
Thank you, dad.

JOHN
For what, son?

BOB
For everything.

Bob goes upstairs.

John sits down on a chair, carrying a bottle of gin.

He receives a whatsapp message.

CLOSEUP of the message. Lia wrote, 'airport is closed due to bad weather, but they promised me I'll be in the first flight tomorrow. A thousand apologies, baby! See ya.'

John frowns and drinks a huge amount of gin straight from the bottle in a single gulp. He stares at the mysterious, expensive present to Bob.

He drinks more, drops the bottle and squeezes the chair armrests almost to the point of ripping them apart with his fingernails.

John grabs the cordless phone and makes a call.

INT. LIA'S AND JOHN'S LIVING ROOM - DAY (MORNING)

Lia arrives and smiles at the party decorations.

INT. COUPLE'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

John is sleeping.

Lia has to shake John hardly to wake him up.

LIA
Where's Bob? He's not in his room.
Did he sleep at Andrew's?

John rubs his eyes with his hands.

JOHN
He isn't in his room?

INT. BOB'S ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Father and mother look for their son. The room is empty.

JOHN
You know that kid. His birthday and all, he's probably just messing with us.

Lia agrees with a smirk.

INT. HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

John and Lia search the house for the kid, as if they are playing hide and seek. Lia abruptly opens the door to one closet.

LIA
Gotcha!

Bob is not there.

JOHN (PLAYFULLY)
I know where the little rascal is.

He opens a toy chest, but Bob is not there.

They search all over the house, no sign of Bob.

LIA
Where's his Spider-man costume?

JOHN
I don't know.

LIA
He probably left to show his Spider-man to the neighbors. It's just that. It's just that.

John and Lia breath heavily. Lia's face is anguished.

JOHN
I'm gonna give that kid an earful of a lifetime when I find him!

EXT. FRONT YARD OF THE HOUSE - DAY

John and Lia search in the cars.

EXT. JOHN'S AND LIA'S NEIGHBORHOOD - DAY

Desperate, John and Lia knock on the neighbors' doors. Inaudible dialogues, but the neighbors say 'no' with their heads.

LIA
How did you let this happen?

John looks at her aghast.

JOHN
What?

Lia hesitates.

LIA
He got to be on Andrew's. Where
else could he be?

John and Lia walk to a house a little farther away. They knock on the door. A boy about Bob's age opens the door.

LIA (CONT'D)
Hey, Andrew! How are you, sweetie?
Um, say... Is Bob in there with
you?

ANDREW
No. Last time I saw him was
yesterday, at school.

JOHN
Did he say anything to you as in...
a secret or something?

ANDREW
No. He just told me not to miss his
big party. By the way, tell Bob
I'll be there three o'clock sharp!

John and Lia look at each other with somber faces.

The couple keep walking, and Lia holds John's arm very tightly.

JOHN
Let's get the car and look around.
Maybe, he got lost and is trying to
find his way back home.

They get into the car and go.

INT. CAR - DAY

From the car, they see families with their children. Their eyes are sad. Lia sees a boy dressed like Spider-man.

EXT. STREET - DAY

The car is brought to an abrupt halt. John and Lia jump out of the car, stop the kid, but he's not Bob.

Car is back on the front yard.

INT. JOHN AND LIA'S HOUSE - DAY

John keeps searching the house for the boy.

Lia is standing, arms crossed to her chest. She rubs both arms with her hands. Something on the floor catches her eyes.

She walks to the couch and kicks an empty bottle of gin from underneath it.

John comes.

Lia looks at the bottle, then at John.

LIA
John, did you drink the whole
bottle?

John faces her.

LIA (CONT'D)
Do you have anything to tell me?

JOHN
That present... I think you might
have something to tell me.

They face each other for a few seconds.

John looks at the party decorations. He grabs his cell-phone and types.

JOHN (CONT'D)
I need you here, now.

Lia stares at him with a 'what face.'

JOHN (CONT'D)
I spoke to Ian. He knows how to
handle situations like this.

Lia walks back and forth.

LIA
Why is this happening? Lord
Almighty. If you hadn't drunk
yourself to sleep last night, we
wouldn't be in this mess.

John faces her, surprised.

JOHN
Are you saying this is my fault?

LIA
I wasn't home, remember? You were
supposed to look after our son. Why
did you have to drink?

John does not answer.

LIA (CONT'D)
I'm calling the police.

JOHN

And tell them what? Do you know
what happened, by any chance?

Lia looks angry at John.

John sees Ian through the window and signals him to come in.

Ian enters the house.

Ian waves at Lia and hugs John. As gently as he can manage,
John pushes Ian away.

JOHN (CONT'D)

Listen up, Ian, it seems our son is
missing. I need all help I can get.
Today, it's his birthday. The
guests will be here soon. I need
you to go out there and tell them
the party is over. While you're at
it, ask if any of them knows where
the heck my son is.

IAN

He's probably just lost,
sweetheart. When I was his age,
back in San Antonio, I decided to
take a walk. Then I realized I
walked too much and didn't know the
way back. I must have cried very
loud, 'cause this old man found me
and took me home. Today, I bet this
old man would be a pedophile or
something.

Lia looks at Ian with big, scared eyes. Ian seems to realize
his gaffe.

IAN (CONT'D)

This is my cue. I'm out of here.

Ian strides out the door.

Lia grabs the cordless phone and calls 911.

LIA

(...) Yes, I'd like to report a
kidnapping.

John is startled.

JOHN

Kidnapping?

INT. SMALL, SIMPLE HOUSE - DAY

Detective ELISABETH MENDEZ, or simply BETH (28), is having lunch with her mother. The mother seems gloomy.

MOTHER

Like the food?

DET. BETH

It's good. You're the one who doesn't look so good.

Mother looks the other way.

DET. BETH (CONT'D)

What is it, mom?

The mother hesitates.

MOTHER

It's just that I had some money put away, you know, for the rainy days, but it disappeared. Like, vanished in thin air.

DET. BETH

My God! Not again!

Detective Beth's brother and father come into the room.

DET. BETH (CONT'D)

We were talking about you, junkie.

The brother looks at her with a puzzled face.

DET. BETH (CONT'D)

Mom told me about the money, the one that disappeared. The one you took.

The brother is still looking at her in confusion.

DET. BETH (CONT'D)

Yer back to your old habits, aren't ya? Come on, where's the money? Already spent it all? Then a better question is, where did you hide the blow?

The brother's face is now one of disbelief.

FATHER

Wait a minute there. Are you talking about the money inside the cookie jar?

Detective Beth's mother nods a 'yes.'

FATHER (CONT'D)

I took it and put it in the bank.
It was too much money lying around.
Here, I got the receipt.

The brother stares at Beth.

BOTHER

I quit it, Beth. I'm clean now. I
know I screwed up, but I stopped. I
did all they told me to in the N.A.
and even apologized to all of you.
Have you forgiven me or not?

Detective Beth's cell-phone RINGS. She answers it.

DET. BETH

Yo, Pete, what's up? (...) Got it.
I'm on my way.

She puts the phone down and looks at her bother.

DET. BETH (CONT'D)

Forgiving is easy. Forgetting is
something else entirely.

EXT. FRONT YARD OF JOHN'S AND LIA'S HOUSE - DAY

Parents and their children arrive with presents. Ian talks to
them (inaudible).

They all look dismayed at the house. The windows are closed.
Behind the curtains, John and Lia see the commotion outside.

A police car pulls over.

Detective Beth and DETECTIVE PETER CRAWFORD (32) leave the
car, walk around the people, and to the house door.

The detectives look around and watch parents and children
leave the property, carrying presents.

John opens the door. The detectives show their badges.

JOHN

Come in, please.

INT. JOHN'S AND LIA'S HOUSE - DAY

JOHN

I'm John Fulton, this is my wife
Lia.

DET. PETER

Detectives Peter and Beth of
police.

The detectives look at the party decorations with Spider-man-related themes.

JOHN

It's my son's birthday. His name is Bob.

DET. BETH

He's the one who was supposedly abducted?

Lia and John exchange looks.

LIA

Yes.

DET. PETER

How old is he?

JOHN

Ten years old today.

DET. BETH

Any contact from the perpetrator?

LIA

No.

DET. PETER

May we have a look-see?

JOHN

Sure. Be my guest.

The detectives examine doors and windows locks. They see a bottle of gin and two glasses.

DET. BETH

Do you always have a drink before bedtime?

LIA

That was him. I wasn't even here. I had to travel on business. There was a storm, and I got stuck.

The two cops look at John, as if waiting for him to elaborate on that.

JOHN

I had a drink with Ian. He's my assistant at the firm I work for. He's that guy outside, talking to the parents.

DET. BETH

He came here on a Friday night and had a drink with you.

JOHN

I called him because we needed to sort a few problems out.

DET. BETH (SARCASTIC)

Right.

Lia stares at John, as if waiting for him to say something else. John does not oblige her.

DET. PETER

About Bob's belongings, have you noticed if there's anything missing?

LIA

We didn't see his baseball cap. He takes it everywhere he goes.

The detectives go upstairs.

INT. BOB'S ROOM - CONTINUOUS

The detectives look around. Everything is neatly organized.

INT. LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

The detectives come back down.

DET. PETER

Did you fix Bob's room after he went missing?

John and Lia nod negatively.

DET. BETH

Something doesn't add up in here.

John and Lia look at each other, then at Beth.

DET. BETH (CONT'D)

Kidnappers just get in here without breaking a damn lock, carry a boy all the way down, and out the house without a single mess, the kid surely didn't resist, and nothing was touched. They didn't even wake you up. That doesn't look right to me.

JOHN

I fell asleep. Lia woke me up, saying that Bob wasn't home. We went out to look for him.

DET. BETH

So, you actually thought that Bob left on his own to take a walk around the block.

John and Lia nod affirmatively.

DET. BETH (CONT'D)

Guys, there is big difference between kidnapping and missing person. Did you know that? Why did you report a kidnapping?

LIA

Because it can only be kidnapping.

Detectives Beth and Peter look at Lia, expecting that she adds to the subject. She does not.

DET. PETER

Um, you probably don't know that, but every year we receive more than ninety-thousand reports of missing people. Ninety percent of those people are found safe and sound or come back on their own.

LIA

But I'm sure he was kidnapped. Please, he's just a child.

DET. BETH

There's no sign of violence or forced entry. For 24 hours, we'll have to treat this as a missing person case. Things would be different if your son was a baby. But a ten years old is able to walk back home.

The detectives walk to the door.

Lia looks at them with desperate eyes. She and John follow the cops to the door.

DET. PETER

I'm sure Bob will come back. It's just a kid thing. But if he doesn't in 24 hours, go to the precinct and report the case, so we can act on it.

DET. BETH

Or, you can find me in here, twenty-four-seven.

Beth gives Lia her card.

EXT. FRONT YARD OF JOHN'S AND LIA'S HOUSE - DAY

The detectives pass by Ian. They observe him with not so friendly eyes.

Ian faces them with a suspicious look.

The cops continue toward the car. They get in and speed away.

John and Lia look at them go from different windows, with sad eyes.

INT. POLICE CAR - DAY

Peter drives the car. Beth receives a call.

DET. BETH
Yes, got it. (...) You take it easy
now. We'll be there in a minute.

She clicks off the call and faces Peter.

DET. BETH (CONT'D)
Turn around, Pete. Looks like our
dear couple received a message.

EXT. STREETS - DAY

Peter executes a dangerous u-turn. The car siren is blaring while it speeds back to John's and Lia's.

INT. JOHN'S AND LIA'S HOUSE - DAY

Lia is panting and John astonished.

Detectives Beth and Peter enter the house.

LIA
See what I've just got in my phone.
And it came from Bob's phone.

Lia plays the message.

BOB (V.O.)
Mom! Mom! Come pick me up. Come,
mom. Please, don't leave me, mom!

Bob's voice is slightly choked by sobbing.

Detective Peter stretches a hand, and Lia gives him the phone. Peter grabs his cell-phone and makes a call.

Detective Peter says something (inaudible).

DET. PETER

I need you to trace this call. Come back to me as soon as you have something.

John walks to Lia and hugs her.

JOHN

You see, Bob is alive. He'll be back soon.

Lia's face still shows despair.

DET. BETH

Let's check the boy's room again.

Detectives Beth and Peter go upstairs.

INT. BOB'S ROOM - CONTINUOUS

The detectives now comb Bob's room. Nothing out of order. They examine the window and look under the bed.

DET. BETH

No baseball cap.

Peter checks the pillow. It has red drawings on it. A more particular red stain catches the detective's eyes.

DET. PETER

Hey, Beth, get a load of this. I think it's blood.

Beth sees the 4 inches long red stain. She grabs her phone.

INT. LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

DET. BETH

Do you know if Bob got hurt or bruised somehow, perhaps at school or playing outside?

JOHN

No, he got no bruises. I would know if he had. Why?

Beth and Peter do not answer.

DET. PETER

Do you know of anybody who could possibly want to hurt your son?

JOHN

No. Everybody likes him. He's a good kid.

LIA
Was he wounded? Why are you asking
all these questions?

Lia walks to the stairs. Peter blocks her way.

LIA (CONT'D)
What's going on? Tell me, please.

DET. BETH
I'm afraid we all have to leave.
This is a crime scene now.

LIA
What are you saying...?

DET. PETER
That you were right, Mrs. Fulton.
Your son might have been kidnapped.

Lia and John hold each other tightly.

EXT. FRONT YARD OF JOHN'S AND LIA'S HOUSE - DAY

Lia and John are hugging. Detectives Peter e Beth talk
(inaudible).

Another police car pulls over. Two forensic experts, a man
and a woman, leave the car with suitcases. They enter the
house.

DET. BETH
How's the neighborhood?

JOHN
It's great. That's why we moved
here.

DET. BETH
Do you have employees, maids, a
cook?

John thinks.

JOHN
No. We buy frozen food and go to
restaurants.

LIA
Don't forget Alan, John. Our
gardener. He comes every now and
then.

Beth writes everything down.

One of the forensic experts, the woman, opens the house door
and signals to Detective Beth.

Beth goes to her, and they talk (inaudible). Beth comes back to Peter, John and Lia.

DET. BETH
We found blood on Bob's pillow.

Lia and John look at the detectives with frightened faces.

DET. BETH (CONT'D)
There's a possibility the blood is not Bob's, but the perpetrators'. It could also be your blood, so we need to take some samples from you, too.

John and Lia nod affirmatively and walk to the house.

INT. JOHN'S AND LIA'S HOUSE - DAY

The lady forensic expert takes blood from John and Lia.

The pillow is already in a plastic bag. The forensic expert carefully places the blood samples into her suitcase.

LADY EXPERT
I'll contact you as soon as I have the results.

DET. BETH
Hurry up, please.

The forensic experts leave the house.

DET. PETER
Time to take a little tour around the block.

Detectives Peter and Beth walk to the door. John walks with them, but Peter blocks him with an arm.

DET. BETH
Police work, Mister Fulton. Besides, your wife needs you here.

EXT. FRONT YARD OF JOHN'S AND LIA'S HOUSE - DAY

From their garden, Lia and John watch Detectives Peter and Beth knock on doors and talk to neighbors (inaudible). John wraps an arm around Lia's shoulder.

Detectives Peter and Beth walk back to Lia and John.

LIA
So? Found anything?

DET. BETH

They like you a lot. According to them, you are excellent neighbors, no trouble whatsoever. Only one of them told us that a couple of years ago, your living room lights stayed on until very late at night.

JOHN

Oh, that was me, guilty as charged.

John shows them a N.A. badge, stating he has been clean for two years.

JOHN (CONT'D)

I'm free from cocaine and all other addictions.

DET. BETH (SARCASTIC)

Free. Right.

DET. PETER

Mister Fulton, I need you to level with us. Your son's life may depend on it. Drug dealers are known to abduct sons of addicts who don't pay their debts.

Lia turns to John abruptly.

LIA

Did you take more than gin last night? Was I a fool for believing in you all these years?

John faces Lia with furious eyes.

JOHN

What are you talking about, Lia? You know I'm clean! It was just the gin, for crying out loud!

DET. BETH (SARCASTIC)

Right.

Beth grabs her cell-phone and types just one number.

DET. BETH (CONT'D)

Yo, Deborah. You know that blood you've just collected here in Lake Beach? (...) No, John's. Please, test it for cocaine, too.

Detective Beth clicks off the call.

DET. BETH (CONT'D)
Anything else you wish to share
with us, John? Now's the time.
Every second counts.

John looks at Detective Beth with angry eyes.

JOHN
I don't have anything to say to
you.

DET. PETER
Don't have or don't want?

John mutes. Lia eyes him. He comes closer to Lia.

JOHN
I don't care for what they say. I
only need you to believe in me.

John tries to hug Lia. She rejects him.

LIA
Then answer their questions.

John is desolate.

JOHN
For the last time, I have been
totally clean for two years, and
counting.

Detective Beth still looks at John disdainfully.

DET. BETH
No more secrets. Everything you
know, you'd better tell us. For
Bob.

Lia and John nod their heads negatively.

A police car pulls over. A woman jumps out of it.

She opens the car rear door, and a K-9 dog jumps out of the
car.

WOMAN
Do you have any clothes that were
recently used by the victim?

Lia goes into the house.

The woman pets the K-9 dog. Detective Peter comes near her.

DET. PETER
You can give me one of your clothes
later.

(MORE)

DET. PETER (CONT'D)

On Friday night, I'll ask Beauty here to find you, only I'll be the one doing the sniffing.

The woman smiles.

WOMAN

There are easier ways to find me, detective.

Lia comes out with a small coat. She gives it to the woman.

The woman brings the coat to the dog. The dog sniffs the coat, then the air, and barks.

The dog runs around the house. They all follow the animal.

EXT. BACKYARD OF JOHN'S AND LIA'S HOUSE - DAY

In the back of the house, there is a wall with a door. The dog barks at it. John opens the door.

The back of the house faces a small grove.

DET. BETH

You stay here.

EXT. GROVE - DAY

The dog sniffs. Detectives and woman follow it.

They reach a lake.

WOMAN

Here. Footprints. A child and an adult, walking in a single line, with the boy leading.

The detectives examine the footprints.

The dog tracks the footprints to the edge of the lake, and it stops, as if lost. The humans look at each other with frustrated faces.

WOMAN (CONT'D)

Smart guy. This is as far as Beauty here can track.

DET. BETH

Great. Was there a boat waiting for them or something?

WOMAN

I don't think so. They probably walked on the shallow part. Beauty cannot get their scent.

The detectives sigh in frustration.

DET. PETER
Well, at least we know there was
somebody with him. But the boy
didn't seem to resist the adult.

DET. BETH
Maybe he was under threat.

EXT. BACKYARD OF JOHN'S AND LIA'S HOUSE - DAY

The detectives, woman, and Beauty come back.

LIA
Did you find anything?

DET. BETH
There was somebody with your son.

Detective Beth's phone RINGS. She answers it.

DET. BETH (CONT'D)
(...) Great. Bye.

She puts the phone down and turns to Lia.

DET. BETH (CONT'D)
They located Bob's cell-phone.
What's its ringtone? Do you know?

LIA
It's the sound of that Imperial
March from Star Wars, that song
they play every time Darth Vader
appears. You know...

Lia hums the song.

EXT. FRONT YARD OF LIA'S AND JOHN'S HOUSE - DAY

The woman takes the dog back to the car.

Detective Peter waves goodbye at her.

The detectives get into the car and speed away.

EXT. OPEN COUNTRY - DAY (AFTERNOON)

Detectives Peter and Beth walk down a clearing.

They find a gas station with a restaurant.

They split. Detective Peter goes to the restaurant door while
Beth walks around the fuel dispensers.

Detective Beth types a number on her cell-phone. A ringtone is heard nearby. It's the Imperial March. Detective Peter signals to Beth, pointing a forefinger at the restaurant.

INT. RESTAURANT - DAY (AFTERNOON)

The detectives enter the restaurant and walk to a table, where a man drinks beer on his own.

DET. PETER
Fan of Star Wars?

The man does not raise his head to look at him.

MAN
Maybe. Now, get lost.

The detectives flash badges to his nose. The man now smiles uncomfortably.

MAN (CONT'D)
Just kidding, you know. What can I do for you, officers?

DET. PETER
The cell-phone, please.

The man gives Peter the cell-phone. Peter and Beth examine it.

MAN (SMILING)
It's my son's, you know.

DET. BETH
No, it's not. And stop saying 'you know.' By the way, you're under arrest for possession of stolen merchandise.

Detective Peter swings the handcuffs to the man.

MAN
Whoa! Wait...! Please!

DET. BETH
Get down on your knees, fingers crossed behind your head and spread these legs. Now!

MAN
L-look, officers, I-I-I didn't steal the phone. I found it. Scout's honor!

DET. BETH
Cut the shit and do as I said!

The man obeys her. Peter cuffs his wrists.

DET. PETER
Where did you find the phone?

MAN
In a boat near here, where I work,
by the way. I swear to God!

DET. PETER
Then, take us to this boat.

EXT. DOCKING AREA - DAY (AFTERNOON)

There are a good number of small boats in the docking area.
The man leads the detectives to one of them.

MAN
That's the boat.

DET. PETER
What exactly is your work?

MAN
I'm a kind of janitor around here.
I took care of the boats, and when
I got to this one, I found the damn
phone. It was off, then I turned it
on. I was gonna give it to my son.

Detective Peter goes into an office. He leaves with an
employee carrying a folder.

DET. PETER
Who owns that boat over there?

The employee runs fingers through the papers in his folder
and pulls out a paper. He shows it to the cops.

EMPLOYEE
That is your guy.

The detectives turn to the boat. It bears the letters 'Sea
Adventurer' on the rear.

INT. JOHN'S AND LIA'S HOUSE - DAY (AFTERNOON)

Detectives Beth and Peter enter the house.

Lia runs from the kitchen to meet them.

LIA
So?

DET. BETH
We found the cell-phone.

The detectives face John.

DET. BETH (CONT'D)
It was in your boat, John.

John opens his eyes very much.

Lia looks at John with a interrogative face.

DET. BETH (CONT'D)
Everything points to you, John. You
might as well start talking.

JOHN
Talk what? Do you think I did it?
Jesus, this can't be happening!

DET. PETER
Mister Fulton, I can see you guys
get by, but you're clearly not
millionaires. I don't think
somebody would try to extort a big,
fat ransom from you. And, when
money is not a player, chances are
good that a family member is
involved.

John sweats and swallows hard.

Lia looks at John as if he was a stranger.

John opens wide eyes again all of a sudden.

JOHN
You're forgetting one thing.

DET. PETER
What's that?

JOHN
Lia received Bob's message at three
in the afternoon. How could I have
sent the message if I was here with
you?

DET. BETH
Even a toddler knows you can send a
message on a previously programmed
time, including at those hours you
claim you were sleeping.

John swallows hard again.

Lia keeps looking at her husband like he was somebody else.

DET. BETH (CONT'D)
Come on, John. What did you do to
the boy?

John sweats.

JOHN

I would never do anything to harm
my son. Never! How could I
possibly?

The detectives face him.

DET. BETH

John, your story is cloudy to say
the least. I think you'd better
come with us.

John faces her with eyes of despair.

JOHN

Are you seriously asking me to
leave Lia at a time like this?

DET. PETER

Tomorrow morning then, around nine.
You pay us a visit at the precinct,
so we can take your statement. The
address is in that card my partner
gave your wife.

Detective Beth lifts an eyebrow to her partner, but he walks
to the door.

Beth follows Peter, but stops and turns to John.

DET. BETH

Nine o'clock sharp. You'd better be
there or you'll be signing your
confession.

John nods affirmatively.

The detectives leave the house.

John tries to hug Lia, but she rejects him again.

She walks to a corner far from him.

John keeps looking at her.

She returns his look with eyes of doubt.

INT. JOHN'S AND LIA'S LIVING ROOM - DAY (TWILIGHT)

Lia is sitting down, looking at nothing. She holds tightly
the present she was going to give her son.

Through the window, John sees the police car speed away.

LIA

My God! When this ordeal will end?
This is the Play-Station he wanted
so much. My son! He must be
suffering beyond belief...

John walks to Lia. He takes the toy from her hands and puts it aside.

JOHN

He'll be back, Lia, safe and sound.
And everything will be like it was
before.

They hug each other.

EXT. FRONT YARD OF JOHN'S AND LIA'S HOUSE - DAY

Through the window, from the front yard, it's possible to see John waving goodbye at Lia.

Alan is watching them.

John leaves the house, passes by Alan without looking at him, gets into the car and goes away.

Alan walks to the house door.

INT. CAR - DAY

John drives and turns on the radio. He changes stations until settling for a particular one.

RADIO PRESENTER

So far, no sign of Bob Fulton, the boy kidnapped from his house in Lake Beach. For three days now, he's in the hands of abductors, who still didn't contact the family. A source connected to the police finds this very strange, a kidnapping with no ransom demands. We heard Brad Nichols, a former FBI agent who is now a consultant in security affairs, and he said that this whole incident looks more like a family issue than an attempt to extort money...

John turns off the radio. His face is contorted.

INT. POLICE PRECINCT - DAY

John enters the precinct and talks to a clerk (inaudible).

Ian, the assistant, comes in as well, and John acts surprised.

IAN
They call me, too. Can you believe these people? Should I talk about the present, the one from mister mystery?

John nods negatively.

Detectives Peter and Beth come.

DET. PETER
This way, please.

Peter leads Ian to a room. John is about to go with them, but Beth stops him.

DET. BETH
Huh-uh. You and I are going there.

Beth leads John to a different room.

INT. INTERROGATION ROOM 1 - CONTINUOUS

DET. PETER
You seem to be, how can I say, very devoted to John.

Ian looks at Detective Peter with an air of indifference.

IAN
Is this a question, darling?

Detective Peter faces Ian with unfriendly eyes.

DET. PETER
On the eve of the abduction, what time did you come to the Fulton's house?

IAN
Ten o'clock sharp, sweetheart.

DET. PETER
Did you see Bob?

IAN
No. Not even a shadow of him. John said he was already sleeping.

DET. PETER
Why did you go there?

Ian hesitates.

IAN

John called me and asked me to come.

The detective's eyes get unfriendlier by the second.

IAN (CONT'D)

He wanted to speak to me about a present to Bob.

INT. INTERROGATION ROOM 2 - CONTINUOUS

JOHN

A very expensive present came to Bob by express delivery. There was no card on it.

DET. BETH

What's so special about this present?

JOHN

Well, for starters, I don't know who sent it.

INT. INTERROGATION ROOM 1 - CONTINUOUS

IAN

Do you know that old saying, 'curiosity killed the cat?' That's right, darling, I couldn't resist. I opened the bloody thing. And it was so expensive. John knew that, of course.

DET. PETER

Did you know that John owns a boat?

IAN

Sure thing, honey, the 'Sea Adventurer.' John and I even sailed on it a couple of times. Wonderful moments!

INT. INTERROGATION 2 - CONTINUOUS

DET. BETH

Why Ian took the present, if it was meant to Bob?

JOHN

I talked to Lia on the phone, and she also said she knew nothing about it. She told me to get rid of the present.

Detective Beth frowns at him.

JOHN (CONT'D)

I found that weird, too. After all, the present was damn expensive. That's why I called Ian to my house. I asked him to take that thing away from me and give it to whoever might want it.

Detective Beth looks suspiciously at John.

DET. BETH

Why would a person you don't know send an expensive gift to your son?

John looks around the room.

Beth doesn't take her eyes off him.

INT. INTERROGATION ROOM 1 - CONTINUOUS

DET. PETER

How was John that night?

Ian thinks, hesitates.

IAN

He was upset, like never before. He drank two glasses of gin in twenty minutes. He got nasty with me. I confess he hurt my feelings a little.

DET. PETER

Why do you think he was acting like that?

IAN

I think it was something that Lia... Mrs. Fulton did.

DET. PETER

What makes you think that?

IAN

It was something about that present. That's for sure.

INT. INTERROGATION ROOM 2 - CONTINUOUS

DET. BETH

Were you mad at your wife?

JOHN

Why should I?

DET. BETH

Do you think this mysterious present was sent by, let's say, a boyfriend of your wife? Do you think she's cheating on you?

John downs his head.

JOHN

It looks that way.

DET. BETH

Then, you lost your temper and took it all out on the smallest person you could find.

John frowns at her.

DET. BETH (CONT'D)

Come on. You can tell me. Let me take this load off your shoulders. What did you do to the boy?

John looks at her with desperate eyes.

JOHN

What's that supposed to mean?

DET. BETH

I know your kind, John. You junkies based your whole lives on lies.

JOHN

I told you I'm not a junkie anymore!

DET. BETH

A former junkie. There's no such thing, John.

John faces her.

JOHN

Are we done, detective? Or should I call you Beth since you keep calling me John?

DET. BETH

You can call me Beth, and yes, we're done, Mister Fulton.

John stands up.

JOHN

Good. Because if you have time to waste, detective, I don't. I need to find my son.

John leaves the interrogation room.

EXT. POLICE PRECINCT CORRIDOR - CONTINUOUS

Ian also leaves the interrogation room.

John and Ian exchange looks, but don't talk to one another.

EXT. NEIGHBORHOOD OF JOHN AND LIA - NIGHT

A nosy man observes the house of a mysterious gentleman.

The mysterious gentleman puts the garbage out. He is very meticulous. He organizes one and another trash can.

The mysterious gentleman goes in the house and leaves again in quite a little time. He gets into his car and goes away.

The nosy man comes closer to the mysterious gentleman's house and peeks inside, window by window, until he stops in front of one.

The nosy man looks with wide open eyes.

INT. JOHN'S AND LIA'S KITCHEN - DAY

John comes and pours himself some coffee.

Lia is sitting on a table with her own cup of coffee, which is nearly empty.

John opens the refrigerator.

LIA

What did they ask you at the precinct?

JOHN

We talked about that present.

Lia looks down.

JOHN (CONT'D)

It's time for you to tell me what you know about this.

Lia is meditative.

LIA

I know it's past, John. Better leave it at there.

JOHN

You're being awfully vague right now.

LIA

That's because it doesn't matter.
We should focus on finding Bob

JOHN

That's what I'm talking about. This
guy who sent the present might as
well be some perv who has his eyes
on Bob.

Lia's facial expression is anguished and meditative.

The doorbell RINGS.

INT. LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Still carrying the cup of coffee, John opens the door.

Detectives Peter and Beth come in and stand in the middle of
the room.

John sips his coffee as if the two cops weren't there.

DET. BETH

The lab came back to us with the
analysis of the blood we found on
Bob's pillow.

Lia comes to the room. She and her husband hold each other
tightly.

DET. BETH (CONT'D)

There's no easy way to say this.

Lia looks at them, afflicted.

Detective Beth faces Detective Peter as if asking his
approval. He nods a 'go ahead.'

DET. BETH (CONT'D)

Lia, the blood belongs to your son,
'cause its DNA matches yours.

Lia holds John even tighter.

LIA

Oh no! They hurt my baby!

DET. BETH

Judging by the amount of blood,
nothing serious, but...

John and Lia fix eyes on Beth.

DET. BETH (CONT'D)

This same analysis also revealed
the boy is not John's son.

John lets go of Lia and walks to the detectives.

JOHN

What? No! This can't be right. You have to be mistaken.

DET. PETER

We thought that at first. That's why we asked them to repeat the tests two more times. The results were the same.

JOHN

Bob is not my son?

Detective Peter nods in agreement.

It's John's turn to look at Lia as if she was a stranger.

Lia comes near John. He walks away from her. John fixes punitive eyes on Lia.

JOHN (CONT'D)

He's not my son. How could you? I thought we were a family. I lived a lie you created nine years ago. You just used me to play house. You're nothing but a leech, Lia.

Lia comes closer to John again.

LIA

John, please, stop! I love you!

JOHN

No more lies, Lia. The game is over.

John scratches his chin.

JOHN (CONT'D)

Now I know who sent those mysterious presents to Bob. It was him, right? And me, trying to convince myself it was nothing. How could I be so stupid?

Beth lifts an eyebrow, and Peter bites his lip.

DET. BETH

Presents? As in, more than one?

JOHN

Well, I only received that one I told you about, the expensive package addressed to Bob that Lia told me to get rid of. But I left something out.

The detectives turn unfriendly faces to John.

DET. PETER
What you left out?

JOHN
Ian, my assistant, went to Kidz Rulez, at my request, and he did some pushing over there. He found out that this same person sends Bob very expensive presents every year, for his birthday. Funny I've never seen them, except for this last one. Guess Lia hid them all.

DET. BETH
Who's the guy, Lia?

Lia does not answer. She shrinks in a corner. She looks at John with pleading eyes. John only returns a disdainful look.

LIA
Forgive me, John. It's in the past. It meant nothing.

JOHN
Forgiving you? It's not like you fooled me once. You fooled me everyday for nine years. You made me live a lie, and, even worse, you made me part of the lie. I just can't forgive you, it's not that simple.

DET. BETH
Lia, I don't think you realize how a game changer this is. For starters, it can explain why the kidnapper didn't ask for any ransom.

John now looks at Lia as if disgusted by her. Lia sobs.

DET. BETH (CONT'D)
This is not helping, Lia. Now, tell us, who's the guy? We know of cases where a father kidnaps his own son for believing the kid would be better with him.

Lia is silent and overwhelmed.

Somebody knocks on the door rather loudly.

John opens the door. It's the nosy man who spied on the mysterious gentleman's house.

NOSY MAN

I nailed it! I nailed it!

Astonished, John signals the nosy man to get in. He does it and sees the detectives. The nosy man walks right to them.

NOSY MAN (CONT'D)

I solved the case! I know who has the boy!

Clumsily, the nosy man shows them a lot of newspaper clippings. The detectives examine the papers, but they don't look impressed.

DET. PETER

This is all a bunch of articles about one... Oliver. So what?

DET. BETH

And you are?

NOSY MAN

Oh, sorry. Wally. My name is Wally. I live down the road.

Detective Peter stares at Wally with inquisitive eyes.

WALLY

I worked in the newspaper business my entire life. I knew I had seen that perv before.

John checks the pictures of Oliver, but frowns at them.

Lia tries to look as well, but John returns the newspaper clippings to Wally.

WALLY (CONT'D)

This guy lives right here, just a couple of blocks away. Only he changed his name. Now, he goes by Tony, Anthony Salazar. Come, I'll take you to him. I'm sure he's keeping Bob somewhere in his place. He has a kids' room, with toys and everything.

The detectives still don't look impressed.

DET. PETER

You realize, of course, this is all circumstantial.

WALLY

Come on, he got no kids, no nephews no grandchildren, nothing. I've checked. Let's go get the freak.

DET. BETH
No. Certainly not you, Wally.
Please, give us the address of this
Oliver, and we take it from here.

Wally talks to Detective Peter (inaudible). The detective takes notes. Detective Beth looks at Lia.

Lia rubs her arms with an apprehensive face. John is sitting down, looking disoriented.

The detectives leave the house.

EXT. FRONT YARD OF JOHN'S AND LIA'S HOUSE - DAY

In the garden, Detective Beth notices Alan on her way to the car.

Alan looks at Detective Peter.

Beth goes to Peter near the car and speaks something to him (inaudible). Only Peter gets into the car.

The car goes away.

Detective Beth walks back to Alan.

DET. BETH
You're Alan, the gardener, right?

ALAN
In flesh and blood.

DET. BETH
Uh-huh.

Detective Beth checks her notes.

DET. BETH (CONT'D)
John told me about you. You're here every now and then, right?

Alan nods a 'yes.'

DET. BETH (CONT'D)
What can you tell me about Bob?

ALAN
He was a good kid, almost didn't see him. When I come, he's at school, when he comes, I'm no longer here.

DET. BETH
Was a good kid.

ALAN
Err... He is a good kid.

DET. BETH
John and Lia?

ALAN
Oh, they are 'The Waltons' alright,
all the way.

DET. BETH
And you've never seen anything
weird?

ALAN
Nope. Sometimes, the father yells
at Bob when he's late for school.
Just that.

Detective Beth gives Alan her notebook.

DET. BETH
Write your name, address and
telephone, please.

Alan writes and gives back the notebook.

Detective Beth hears a loud argument in the house and walks
in.

INT. JOHN'S AND LIA'S HOUSE - DAY

LIA
Forgive me, John. I don't know what
else I can say. It was an
impulse...

John looks horrified at Lia.

JOHN (IRONIC)
Oh, that makes me feel a lot
better!

DET. BETH
Guys, I know this is hard on you,
but we need to focus here, if we
are to bring your boy back home.

Lia and John walk to different corners, like two fighters in
the ring after hearing the boxing bell.

DET. BETH (CONT'D)
Time is against us, Lia. You need
to tell me the name of Bob's
father.

Lia looks meditative at John. John still fulminates her with a look of hatred.

LIA
His name is Bailey Gamal.

DET. BETH
His phone and address, please.

LIA
I don't know.

Detective Beth lifts an eyebrow.

LIA (CONT'D)
It was just an affair, nothing more, ten years ago. We've never seen each other again.

Detective Beth grabs her cell-phone and types. She shows the cell-phone to Lia.

DET. BETH
Is this the one?

Lia hesitates. Her eyes take turns between the phone screen and John.

John walks to Detective Beth, but she does not let him see the picture on the screen.

LIA
Yes, that's him.

Detective Beth walks to the door. Lia reaches her and says something to her (inaudible).

Beth leaves the house.

Lia and John stand in different corners, with desolate faces.

EXT. STREET IN FRONT OF ANTHONY SALAZAR'S HOUSE - DAY

Detective Peter studies Salazar's house. He knocks on the door. Nobody answers.

He walks around the house, looking through the windows.

He stops in front of a window and sees a kids' room, with a baseball cap on the bed. Peter takes a picture of it.

Someone opens the door. The detective flashes his badge.

DET. PETER
Am I speaking with Anthony, Oliver perhaps?

Anthony is startled.

ANTHONY
Anthony Salazar.

DET. PETER
Detective Peter Crawford of police.
May I come in, Mister Salazar?

Anthony does not move, still blocking Peter's way.

DET. PETER (CONT'D)
I'm investigating the disappearance
of a boy who lives around these
parts.

ANTHONY
Why should I care?

Detective Peter shows Anthony a picture in his cell-phone.

DET. PETER
Do you know this kid?

ANTHONY
I must have seen him, yes.

DET. PETER
Where were you on the night of
September 17?

ANTHONY
I was here.

DET. PETER
Here at the house, or here around
the neighborhood?

Anthony hesitates.

ANTHONY
I always take a walk in the
evening. That's what I did that
night.

DET. PETER
What time exactly? Where did you
go? When were you back?

ANTHONY
I usually have trouble sleeping. I
walk around because it makes me
sleepy.

Detective Peter bites his lip.

DET. PETER
Do you have kids, nephews or...?

ANTHONY
I don't have kids, only nephews,
but they live far from here and
never come to visit me. Ungrateful.

DET. PETER
Then why do you have a kids' room
at home?

Anthony shrinks.

ANTHONY (AGGRESSIVE)
Is that a crime?

DET. PETER
With your record, maybe.

Anthony looks scared.

ANTHONY
I assure you, detective. That was a
big, fat mistake!

DET. PETER
Justice saw things differently.

ANTHONY
There was no justice. I was
arrested for a crime I didn't
commit. But nobody ever forgets.

Anthony tries to close the door. Detective Peter holds the
door open with his arm. Anthony looks angry at him.

DET. PETER
Just one more question.

Anthony opens the door again. Detective Peter takes his cell-
phone, types, and shows its screen to Anthony.

DET. PETER (CONT'D)
Where did you get the baseball cap
in the kids' room? The boy who
disappeared had one like this, and
we didn't find it in his house.

Anthony sweats. Peter waits, fixing eyes on Anthony.

ANTHONY (STAMMERING)
I-I found it on Friday night. B...
By the lake.

DET. PETER
You're fucking my balls, Anthony!
We're talking about a crime
evidence here!
(MORE)

DET. PETER (CONT'D)
You'd better start cooperating,
because right now you look a lot
like somebody who kidnapped a kid.

Anthony looks over Detective Peter's shoulder all of a sudden.

Detective Peter also looks over his shoulder and sees Wally coming.

Peter nods at the house, and Anthony lets him in. Anthony closes the door, almost hitting Wally's nose.

INT. ANTHONY SALAZAR'S HOUSE - DAY

Peter puts the baseball cap in a plastic bag. He also draws the handcuffs.

DET. PETER
You're coming with me.

EXT. STREET IN FRONT OF SALAZAR'S HOUSE - DAY

Peter leaves, bringing Anthony in handcuffs.

Some neighbors watch. Some do a little more than that.

NEIGHBOR 1
Freaking perv!

NEIGHBOR 2
There goes the pedo! About time!

NEIGHBOR 3
Finally! Get this creep outta here!

NEIGHBOR 4
I hope they rape you in prison!

Detective Peter puts Anthony in the backseat and gets into the car as fast as he can.

Neighbors pound on the police car windows, screaming insults at Anthony.

Through the window, it's possible to see Anthony in the backseat, totally desolate.

The police car honks and goes away.

EXT. FANCY BUILDING IN A FANCY NEIGHBORHOOD - DAY

Detective Beth jumps out of the car. Her eyes are impressed by the building lavishness. It even has a name - Gamal Towers.

INT. BUILDING HUGE LOBBY - DAY

Beth shows her badge to two security guards and talks (inaudible). A clerk presses the intercom button.

INT. BAILEY'S LUXURIOUS PENTHOUSE - DAY

Once again, Beth shows her badge. BAILEY GAMAL (52) lets her in.

BAILEY
Sorry I took long to open the door,
Detective Mendez. I was praying.

Beth looks around with wide open eyes.

Bailey wears typical Muslim garments.

BAILEY (CONT'D)
Why do you look so amazed,
detective?

DET. BETH
This place looks like one of those
escape-the-room games, you know,
when you have to... Never mind.

Bailey frowns.

BAILEY
To what do I owe the honor of your
visit, Detective Mendez?

DET. BETH
Are you a Muslim, Mister Bailey?

BAILEY
What does it look like?

DET. BETH
But your name...

BAILEY
Bailie, Baily, different versions
for the same name. In Arab, it
means fortunate prince.

DET. BETH
Very fortunate, indeed.

Detective Beth studies her surroundings. She does not seem to find what she's looking for.

Bailey watches her.

BAILEY

But... You didn't come here to talk about my name.

DET. BETH

No. I'm here to talk about Bob. I'm sure you know who that is.

Bailey's facial expression is unchanged.

BAILEY

Yes. What about him?

DET. BETH

He's missing. Kidnapped.

Bailey changes his look to one of shock.

DET. BETH (CONT'D)

According to Lia, oh, you know who that is too, I gather, he's your son.

BAILEY

I've never had a single doubt in my mind about that, not even for a split second. So much that every year I send a present for his birthday.

Detective Beth fixes suspicious eyes on him.

DET. BETH

Where were you on Friday night of September 17?

Now, it's Bailey's turn to fix irritated eyes on her.

BAILEY

Am I a suspect?

Detective Beth keeps staring at him, impassibly waiting for an answer.

BAILEY (CONT'D)

I was praying at the mosque!

DET. BETH

All night long?

BAILEY

Yes!

DET. BETH

Any witness?

BAILEY

Of course! The Iman!

Detective Beth takes notes.

DET. BETH

Lia, currently Mrs. Fulton, told me that, about eight years ago, you sent a card with the present, stating that, as the kid is yours, you should be the one to raise him.

Bailey is taken aback, but remains composed.

BAILEY

I wrote that card, yes. It's one of our most sacred beliefs that boys shall be raised by their fathers.

DET. BETH

Then you did kidnap the boy, right, Mister Bailey?

Bailey's facial expression is one of extreme anger.

BAILEY

This is an outrage! I take you here, in my home, I ask you if I'm a suspect, and you don't answer! Now, you talk like I'm the kidnapper. Is it because I'm a Muslim, detective?

DET. BETH

No. It's because a boy's gone missing, and I need to clarify some points.

BAILEY

And I believe you already did. I appreciated your visit, detective.

Bailey nods at the door.

Detective Beth hesitates, but leaves.

Bailey opens a drawer and takes some pictures.

CLOSEUP of a particular photo. It's a picture of Bob entering the school building, after talking to a monitor.

INT. POLICE PRECINCT - DAY

Detective Beth comes in and meets Peter.

DET. BETH

So, what do we got on this Salazar character?

DET. PETER
Did time for molesting a minor.

DET. BETH
Solid case?

DET. PETER
Not really. He was convicted more
by hatred than hard evidence.
He was released on good behavior.
Even so, he does fit the profile of
a child's kidnapper. And let's not
forget he had the baseball cap.

DET. BETH
So, it's just a matter to apply the
right persuasion

DET. PETER
And I can be very persuasive.

INT. JOHN'S AND LIA'S HOUSE - DAY

Lia is sitting on the couch. John is standing in front of
her.

JOHN
How could you do that to me? My
life's upside down all of a sudden.
I just want to understand. Was it
revenge? Against what?

Lia just nods negatively.

JOHN (CONT'D)
Don't I have what it takes? Don't I
satisfy you enough? Why did you
have to resort to this?

Lia keeps nodding.

JOHN (CONT'D)
I just want to understand, mind
you. 'Cause forgive you I will
never.

LIA
I'm so sorry. I should've never
done that. It was an impulse!

John looks at her with a mild smirk.

JOHN
I heard you the first time. You
know the name they give to that
kind of thing, right? How could I
be so stupid.

Lia comes near John. He walks away from her.

LIA

I know it's hard. But you have to let bygones be bygones. I made a mistake. I love you.

JOHN

Bygones be bygones? Seriously? Well, those bygones have just exploded to your face! Have you really thought I'd never find out that Bob wasn't my son? The perfect scam, alright. You got yourself a sucker to raise your son.

LIA

I thought he was your son. Jesus, I give you my word!

JOHN

It means nothing.

John grabs a bottle of Jack Daniel's and drinks a generous dose straight from it. He sits down before Lia.

LIA

John, you have to believe me. I'm way more miserable than you are.

JOHN

Don't you have a lies threshold or something?

Lia holds Bob's Yoda doll very tightly.

JOHN (CONT'D)

Well, I love Bob, even knowing he's not my son. If it wasn't for that, I'd be long gone, leaving you to your little cheating games.

INT. POLICE PRECINCT INTERROGATION ROOM - DAY

Detective Peter interrogates Anthony. Detective Beth is standing in the room.

DET. PETER

Where's the boy, Anthony? What did you do to him? At this point I remind you, we got the whole day.

Anthony is cornered.

ANTHONY

I swear to God I don't know what you're talking about.

DET. PETER

Anthony, you could make things so much easier on yourself. There's a mother suffering out there. Doesn't that stir your feelings, not even a bit? What did you do to the boy? Where did you take him?

ANTHONY

Nowhere. That house is the only thing I have. I'm a different person now. I know you won't believe me, but I changed.

DET. PETER

Right.

Anthony is nearly sobbing. Detective Beth does not take her eyes off him.

DET. PETER (CONT'D)

Forensic is combing your house as we speak. They'll be here soon. You're screwed, Anthony. You talk to me now, and I'll try to work something out.

Both cops stare at him.

ANTHONY

Sometimes, I saw the boy going to school with his parents. He was always happy. I saw him in the lake... But I've never touched him. I've never even spoken to him.

DET. PETER

But his cap was in your house, in the very room you made for him.

Someone knocks on the door. Detective Beth opens it. It's Deborah, the forensic expert, and she signals to Beth, who leaves the room.

INT. CORRIDOR - CONTINUOUS

DEBORAH

It seems we got a problem, Beth.

DET. BETH

That's a switch. Come on, the suspense is killing me.

DEBORAH

We turned his house upside-down, looking for the kid. Nothing.

(MORE)

DEBORAH (CONT'D)

All fingerprints we found are Salazar's. It means he didn't bother to clean a damn thing. If he has the kid, he didn't take him home.

Detective Beth sighs in disappointment.

INT. INTERROGATION ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Beth comes back to the room. She signals to her partner, which stands up and walks to her. They talk (inaudible).

Anthony watches.

Detective Peter sits down again, facing Anthony.

The interrogation continues (inaudible).

Anthony nervously gesticulates with hands and head, always to say 'no.'

Detective Peter is no longer wearing his jacket, and his tie is loose.

ANTHONY

We've been here for hours! I told you everything I know. Can I go now? Please?

The detectives look at one another.

DET. BETH

You're free. For now. But don't even think of leaving town.

Anthony stands up and pulls himself together.

Before leaving, he turns to the detectives and scoffs.

ANTHONY

Free? I'll never be free. The past always comes back to bite us. Justice forgave me. But you'll never forget.

DET. PETER

You should have thought of that before molesting that kid.

INT. JOHN'S AND LIA'S HOUSE - DAY

A ringtone from Lia's cell-phone announces the arrival of a new message. She plays it nervously.

BOB (V.O.)
Mom! I'm waiting for you. It's been
so long. Come, mom! Please, come!

Lia gasps for air. She signals John to come near her, and she plays the message again. John listens.

LIA
He's alive, John. He's alive!

She jumps for joy.

LIA (CONT'D)
We need to find him.

Lia makes a call.

The doorbell RINGS. John opens the door and meets a total stranger, standing by his doorway.

BAILEY
Is Lia, um, Mrs. Fulton in?

John does not move and stares at the stranger with suspicious eyes.

JOHN
And you are?

BAILEY
Please, I know what you're going
through.

John is still staring at him.

BAILEY (CONT'D)
I'm also suffering because of this
whole thing. More than you can
possibly imagine.

John frowns.

Lia comes to the door. Her face turns whiter than marble.

JOHN
Do you know this man?

LIA (EMBARRASSED)
This is Bailey.

John looks at Bailey with an extremely shocked face.

BAILEY
Um... May I come in... Please?

John is motionless and speechless.

LIA

Sure.

BAILEY

Excuse me.

Bailey walks around a still stunned John.

Very slowly, John closes the door and walks to the couch.

Bailey stands still. So does John. They look like statues.

Lia points to a chair, in front of the couch.

LIA (INSECURE)

Have a seat, please.

Bailey does not move, frozen like a robot.

John also remains in the vertical.

LIA (CONT'D)

Coffee, tea?

JOHN

What's this, the Twilight Zone?
What in blazes is this man doing in
my house?

BAILEY

I want to help you finding my son.

JOHN

Your son?

BAILEY

Yes. Although Lia never let me
raise him.

Lia covers her face with a hand.

John's face is red in anger.

JOHN

What the heck is going on here?
Jesus, Lia! What kind of mess you
got me into? Just tell this pimp of
yours to leave us alone!

BAILEY

I'm not moving until my son is
found! If the problem is ransom, I
have the money!

JOHN

Take your money and shove it up
your ass! While you're at it, get
out of my house!

John and Bailey walk around each other, like two dogs ready to fight.

EXT. STREET IN FRONT OF JOHN'S AND LIA'S HOUSE - DAY

Detectives Peter and Beth leave the car. Screams are heard from the house. They run to the door. Detective Peter pounds on it.

DET. PETER
Police! Open up!

INT. JOHN'S AND LIA'S HOUSE - DAY

Lia opens the door.

Detectives Peter and Beth enter and find John and Bailey at each other's throat.

The detectives break the fight.

John and Bailey stand in different corners, sweating and panting.

Detective Beth turns to Bailey.

DET. BETH
Now, what are you doing in here?

BAILEY
It's my son. I just wanted to help bringing him back. I have resources they don't have.

Detective Beth faces him.

JOHN
Nobody asked your help!

BAILEY
By Allah, I just want to sort things out in a civilized manner!

JOHN
Civilized manner!

John pulls himself together.

JOHN (CONT'D)
You did it, right? You kidnapped Bob to force Lia to stay with you. Alright, you can take her, you deserve each other. But give back my son!

Lia is almost in shock.

DET. BETH

Enough of that crap. We're on this case, not any of you. And, Mister Bailey, I really think you should leave.

BAILEY

But it's my son you're talking about!

John is red in anger. Bailey looks at Lia, as if asking for her intervention. Lia is silent. She looks at John.

Detective Peter takes Bailey to the door by his arm. Bailey frees himself from the detective's grip, but keeps walking to the door.

Bailey stops by the doorway and turns to Lia. She does not return his look. Her eyes are lost on John.

BAILEY (CONT'D)

Lia, we'll be together again soon.
You, me and Bob.

John gives Bailey a furious look.

DET. PETER

Sir, please...

BAILEY

Alright, alright.

Bailey leaves.

JOHN

By Jehoshaphat! This is freaking unbelievable! My life is a freak show all of a sudden!

Detective Beth turns to Lia.

DET. BETH

You said on the phone you got a new message from Bob.

Lia nods nervously.

LIA

He's alive! My baby!

Lia plays the message. Peter and Beth listen.

Detective Beth grabs her cell-phone and makes a call.

DET. BETH

Yo, Buck (...) Mrs. Fulton has received a new message at 2 PM, approximately.

(MORE)

DET. BETH (CONT'D)
 You have her number, right? (...)
 Good. I need you to get everything
 you can about the sender, pronto.

JOHN
 Aren't you going to investigate
 that Arab?

DET. BETH
 He's Egyptian.

Detective Beth's phone RINGS, she answers it.

DET. BETH (CONT'D)
 That was fast, you son of a bitch!
 (...) Oh, sorry, lieutenant, I
 thought it was somebody else. (...)
 Yes, sir, it's not far from here.
 We'll be there in three.

Beth puts down the phone and turns to Peter.

DET. BETH (CONT'D)
 We gotta go.

John acts surprised.

The detectives open the door and leave.

EXT. STREET IN FRONT OF ANTHONY'S HOUSE - DAY

Most walls of Anthony's house now bear heavy insults, spray
 painted on them. A truckload of garbage that does not belong
 to Anthony litters his garden. About fifteen people gather
 around the front yard. Three of them carry signs with
 offensive words toward Anthony.

NEIGHBOR 1
 Get out of my neighborhood! Let us
 raise our kids in peace. Go leave
 somewhere else, creep!

A shot is heard.

The group runs for cover. Detectives Peter and Beth draw
 their weapons and duck.

ANTHONY (S.O.)
 Get out of my garden! Leave me
 alone!

Detectives Peter and Beth cautiously approach the window
 where the voice came from.

DET. PETER
 Anthony, put down the gun. Don't do
 anything stupid.
 (MORE)

DET. PETER (CONT'D)
You may get out now, coast is
clear. Thanks to you, by the way.

A van from the local TV news pulls over.

DET. PETER (CONT'D)
On a second thought...

Two reporters, a man and a woman, and their respective cameramen, jump out of the vehicle, without even waiting for it to stop completely. The reporters speak to their respective cameras (inaudible).

They stride to the detectives.

The door to Anthony's house is opened. Anthony stands by the doorway.

The reporters now run to Anthony.

LADY REPORTER
Mister Salazar, what did you do to
the boy?

MAN REPORTER
Is the boy still alive, Mister
Salazar?

ANTHONY (MURMURING)
This hell will never end...

Anthony goes inside the house again and closes the door.

The detectives hesitate. They look at each other in confusion.

DET. PETER.
Anthony, come out, please. We need
to talk.

More reporters come closer to the house.

People in the neighborhood stop whatever they are doing and come to enjoy the spectacle as well.

Neighbors call Anthony names again and make obscene gestures.

It's possible to see Anthony watching the commotion through the kids' room window. He disappears inside the house.

A shot is heard from inside the house.

The detectives run to the door and break into the house.

INT. ANTHONY'S HOUSE - DAY

The detectives close the door to stop the reporters from coming in.

INT. KIDS' ROOM - CONTINUOUS

They enter the kids' room and see Anthony lying on the bed, covered in blood. There is a gun on the floor. Anthony is still breathing. Peter grabs his cell-phone.

DET. PETER
Send an ambulance to 3245, Campbell
Street right now. We got a man
down.

Detective Beth walks to the bed.

DET. BETH
Help is on the way. Stay with me,
man!

Anthony looks at Beth, desolate.

ANTHONY
For what? They won't let it go.

Detective Beth takes a deep breath.

Through the window, it's possible to see that the neighbors with signs insulting Anthony are back.

The paramedics arrive.

Peter and Beth leave the house to let them work.

EXT. STREET IN FRONT OF ANTHONY'S HOUSE - DAY

The paramedics bring Anthony out on a gurney.

The reporters ask questions to the detectives (inaudible).

Two of them reach Anthony and bring microphones to his mouth.

REPORTER 1
Before you die, please tell us
where the boy is. Is he still
alive?

PARAMEDIC 1
Hey! Are you nuts? Get out of here!

The neighbors keep calling Anthony names.

NEIGHBOR 1

I hope you die and go to hell,
freaking perv!

Anthony looks at Detective Beth, as if saying 'you see?'
Detective Beth returns a sympathetic look.

The ambulance speeds away with the siren screaming.

Beth's cell-phone RINGS. She answers it.

DET. BETH

(...) Yes, I know the place, thanks
a bunch.

She turns to her partner.

DET. BETH (CONT'D)

We gotta go, Pete. They identified
the area Bob's message came from.

EXT. POOR NEIGHBORHOOD - DAY

Detectives Peter and Beth walk around the neighborhood.

Peter types a number on his cell-phones, but only gets a
'disconnected number' voice message. He turns to Beth and
nods a 'no.'

They make a door-to-door search, showing a picture of Bob.
Residents nod negatively.

They knock on the door of a particular house, and an old man
opens the door. The detectives show their badges, and Peter
shows him the picture.

DET. PETER

You saw this kid?

The old man gazes at the picture like he's seeing a ghost.

OLD MAN

This is my grandson! Have you found
him?

The detectives do not answer. They peek inside the house.

DET. BETH

Peter and Beth, police detectives.

OLD MAN

Prescott.

DET. BETH

When was the last time you saw Bob?

Prescott thinks.

PRESCOTT

The most curious thing. We live in the same city, but almost don't see each other. I was planning to visit him on his birthday. But I guess it's been three months since I last saw my grandson.

The detectives stare at the opened door.

DET. PETER

May we come in?

PRESCOTT

Please!

INT. BOB'S GRANDFATHER'S HOUSE - DAY

Detectives Peter and Beth look around. The house is small.

PRESCOTT

Have you got any leads?

Detective Beth ignores him and combs the house. Detective Peter comes out of a room, carrying children's clothes.

DET. PETER

Are these Bob's clothes?

PRESCOTT

Yes. We played in the mud last time he was here. His clothes got all dirty, and I told my daughter I'd return them as soon as I had them cleaned.

The detectives exchange disappointed looks.

INT. CAR - DAY

DET. BETH

This is definitely not a kidnapping.

DET. PETER

Well, the boy didn't leave on his own.

DET. BETH

That's not what I meant. This is not a typical kidnapping. The abductor is not after money, he's sending messages, Bob's phone was found in daddy's boat, and now this place. Everything is too familiar.

(MORE)

DET. BETH (CONT'D)

In the messages, Bob begs his mom to pick him up. This is a game, Pete. Somebody is trying hard to show us he can outfox the police.

DET. PETER

And it seems we're back to square one.

DET. BETH

Let's go back to the precinct, read each and every statement all over again, see if we missed something. That's all we can do for now.

Detective Peter puffs.

DET. PETER

My marriage will go down the drain.

DET. BETH

You should've thought of that before becoming a cop.

INT. JOHN'S AND LIA'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Lia speaks on the phone.

LIA

No, dad, you don't have to come. (...). No, we don't need any money. But thanks anyway (...). We're praying, too. Love you, bye.

Lia clicks off the call. She grabs the Yoda doll and sits down on the couch, caressing it.

John stands before her.

JOHN

Why would the kidnapper send a message from that neighborhood? He knows who we are, Lia.

Lia hesitates.

JOHN (CONT'D)

Do you have any other boyfriend who believes he's Bob's dad?

Lia is silent. John looks at her, waiting for an answer.

LIA

No, John. I only had one boyfriend in my old neighborhood.
(MORE)

LIA (CONT'D)

We broke up, and I've never seen him or heard from him ever again. Simple as that.

JOHN

Only one, huh?

Lia faces him with furious eyes.

LIA

Maybe it was one of your drug dealers, because you failed to pay him!

John returns an equally furious look.

JOHN

It's not the same! I only hurt myself when I was an addict. Your deception harms us all. Especially Bob! And now, this Muslim type thinks he's part of the family. All because you can't keep your legs crossed.

Lia stares at him with an scandalized face.

LIA

Oh no! Don't you dare calling me a whore! Not you, a junkie whose partners are probably hurting my baby!

JOHN

Stop it, Lia! How do you call what you did? Bob is not my son, but I love him just the same. And when he comes back home, he won't have a family anymore, thanks to you.

Lia faces him.

LIA

Are you saying you're gonna leave me? Just like that? Is that it?

JOHN

And don't make it sound like it's my fault. You finished this marriage ten year ago, when you decided to date that Muslim.

LIA

I told you it meant nothing. At least I admit my mistakes. I forgave your past. But you refuse to forgive mine.

John looks at Lia disdainfully.

JOHN

I might be able to forgive you,
Lia. But, never mind how hard I
try, I just can't bring myself to
forget.

EXT. WOODS - DAY

A group of young adults practices mountain cross country, on
bikes.

MONTAGE

A) They speed and jump over a trail in the middle of the
woods.

B) They compete, chat, and laugh.

C) More jumps, steep hills, and harsh curves.

One of them falls with his bike all of a sudden.

He's lying down, trying to pull himself together.

The biker is startled by the sight of a small shoe, covered
in blood.

He jumps to his feet and staggers to his friends.

INT. DETECTIVE PETER'S HOUSE - DAY

Detective Peter and his beautiful wife MEGAN (30), which by
the way happens to be the K-9 dog handler, are sleeping
soundly, when the landline on the nightstand RINGS. Detective
Peter is the one to answer the phone.

DET. PETER

Hello (...) Don't 'yo Peter' me,
Beth! Do you know what time it is?

Detective Peter's wife frowns deeply.

DET. PETER (CONT'D)

Did they? Where?

Peter drops the phone and jumps to his feet.

MEGAN

Why don't you invite Beth to live
with us? We might have a threesome.

Detective Peter finishes dressing up.

DET. PETER
Megan, you'll always be the family
comedian. That's why I love you.

MEGAN
Who's being a comedian?

Peter smiles and holsters his gun.

He turns to his wife, which is now sitting on the bed.

DET. PETER
Write this down.

Megan pretends she's writing.

DET. PETER (CONT'D)
I owe you the sex of a lifetime.

Megan pretends her hand is a calculator machine and fingers
on it.

MEGAN
That makes it ninety-seven.

Detective Peter blows her a kiss and leaves in a hurry.

EXT. WOODS - DAY

Police cars are parked in an area that surrounds denser
woods.

A coroner leaves a car with his suitcase.

Detective Peter's car stops. He comes out and watches the
scene.

He goes deeper into the woods and finds Beth facing a corpse
in a small area surrounded by yellow tape.

Detective Peter comes closer and sees Bob's dead body.

A coroner examines the body.

Detective Beth looks at Peter, desolate.

The detectives walk out of the crime scene.

The coroner walks to them.

DET. PETER
So?

CORONER
The kid's neck is broken, that's
the cause of death. No other sign
of violence.

DET. BETH
When did he die?

CORONER
I'd say four, maybe five days ago.

Peter's and Beth's eyes goggle.

The coroner walks away.

DET. BETH
Bob was murdered on his birthday.

Detective Peter bites his lip.

DET. PETER
Then, why the messages? The killer
must hate the family. But why?

Peter scratches the back of his head and turns to his partner.

DET. PETER (CONT'D)
You were right, Beth. It's a game.

EXT. FRONT YARD OF JOHN'S AND LIA'S HOUSE - DAY

Detectives Peter and Beth leave the car.

They both hesitate.

Detective Peter is the first to walk to the door. Beth follows him.

Peter knocks on the door.

DET. PETER
It's better if you talk. Women are
better at this than men.

DET. BETH
You picked a hell of a time to
acknowledge women's power.

John opens the door and invites the detectives in.

INT. JOHN'S AND LIA'S HOUSE - DAY

Lia stands up and rushes to them.

LIA
Any news? Did you find Bob?

Detectives Beth and Peter hang their heads.

DET. BETH
I'm afraid I have bad news.

Lia and John are inert, like statues.

DET. BETH (CONT'D)
We found Bob, I-I mean, his body.
Unfortunately, he's dead.

Lia falls on her knees, bursting in tears.

Detective Beth rushes to help her. Lia tries hard to get a grip, but can't stop crying.

LIA
Why, Lord! My life was good! This
can't be happening! Are you really
sure it's him? He looked so good in
the messages!

DET. BETH
We are sure, madam.

Lia and John are desolate.

JOHN
Where was him?

DET. PETER
In the woods, north of Lake
Grasshopper.

Lia and John frown.

JOHN
Did he suffer any kind of, um,
sexual violence?

DET. BETH
No. Initial exams did not reveal
anything of the sort.

JOHN
How did he die?

DET. BETH
His neck was broken. We're not sure
how it happened.

LIA
Where is him? I want to see my
baby!

DET. PETER
One of you will have to identify
the body. He is in the lab. We'll
let you know.

JOHN

And you still don't know who did this.

Detective Peter hesitates.

DET. PETER

We're investigating, we have some leads. We'll get the perpetrator soon.

Detective Peter looks at Beth and bites his lip, as if confessing they actually have nothing.

John nods negatively.

JOHN

But if there was no sexual assault, no ransom or anything, then why would somebody take Bob and kill him?

DET. PETER

Look, Mister Fulton, I understand what you're going through, but we're not at liberty to discuss the case with you. But, believe me, we are as rattled as you are. Everything points to somebody who knew Bob.

JOHN

But, so far, you don't have a single suspect.

Detective Peter does not answer.

Beth walks to the door and signals Peter to do the same.

The cops leave.

Lia places a hand on John's shoulder.

John rejects Lia's touch as gently as he can manage.

INT. CITY MORGUE - DAY

John and Lia look at the body. Lia cries again.

Both parents nod affirmatively.

Detective Peter covers the boy's face.

John signs papers.

John and Lia leave without talking to each other.

EXT. SIDEWALK IN FRONT OF THE BUILDING - DAY

John and Lia walk to different cars and go in different directions.

EXT. CEMETERY - DAY

Bob is being buried.

John and Lia stand close to the grave.

There are children there, friends of Bob. Some of them bring flowers to the grave and pray (inaudible).

Detectives Peter and Beth observe from afar.

Bailey comes, accompanied by five other men, all in typical Muslin garments. Bailey walks alone to Bob's grave and places flowers next to it. He walks back and stands beside Lia.

John looks at Bailey with angry eyes.

Family and friends frown at Bailey.

John walks to Bailey.

JOHN (WHISPERING)
Why are you here?

BAILEY (LOUDER)
I came to bury my son.

Family and friends look at them with stunned eyes.

John takes Bailey by his arm, trying to lead him away.

Bailey harshly rejects John's hand.

John and Bailey face each other angrily.

Detectives Peter and Beth come and stand in the middle of Bailey and John.

A buzz echoes from the people around.

Bailey's entourage gets agitated as well.

John walks to Bob's grave, takes Bailey's flowers, and gives them back to Bailey.

Bailey gives John the evil look, but accepts the flowers.

John, Lia, Bailey, and the detectives watch Bob's coffin go down, very uncomfortable with each other's presence.

INT. JOHN'S AND LIA'S KITCHEN - DAY

Lia brings glasses to the kitchen. She organizes a few items with tearful eyes. She's still wearing the same clothes she wore in the cemetery.

INT. LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

She enters the living room and sees John, standing and carrying a suitcase.

Lia paralyzes.

LIA
What's going on?

JOHN
What does it look like? I'm going.

LIA
Please, don't. I beg you. This is just too much to handle.

JOHN
Lia, I love you, but...

Lia takes the suitcase from John's hand and drops it on the floor.

LIA
Please, not today!

John hesitates.

LIA (CONT'D)
We still can be how we were before.

JOHN
That's the trouble with you, Lia. You think time erases everything. You thought that, if you hadn't told me what you did, time would just wash it away. Well, I can't function like this.

LIA
Are you really gonna make me lose both you and Bob, all at once?

John looks at her.

JOHN
Alright, Lia. I'll give you a little more time, but that's all there is.

Lia brings both hands to her chest.

EXT. FRONT YARD OF JOHN'S AND LIA'S HOUSE - DAY

Alan tends to the garden.

Through the window, he can see Lia and John having breakfast.

INT. JOHN'S AND LIA'S HOUSE - DAY

John is distracted.

Lia offers him more coffee. He declines with a gesture.

She looks at the window and sees Alan.

LIA

Ah! We need to pay Alan. The boy's been working for free for two weeks now.

JOHN

That's about the same time I don't show up at the office. I need to go there. I'll pay him on my way to the car.

John finishes his coffee and leaves.

Lia is typing on her computer. Someone knocks on the door.

She opens the door. It's Alan. He shows her an empty bottle of spring water.

ALAN

Looks like I'm out. Could you refill it for me, please, ma'am? It's really hot today.

Lia grabs the bottle and goes into the kitchen. Alan waits by the doorway. She comes back with the bottle filled with water.

ALAN (CONT'D)

I'm sorry I couldn't come to Bob's funeral.

LIA

Oh, no worries. Bob liked you very much.

Lia cries. Alan holds her hand.

ALAN

It's such a pain to lose a son. I know what you're going through. I had my share of losses.

Lia looks tenderly at him.

Alan's eyes glow.

INT. POLICE PRECINCT - DAY

Detective Peter is sitting by his desk. An employee brings him internal and external mail.

Detective Peter flips the papers. There's one letter without envelope. He puts the others aside and reads the one without envelope. He opens his eyes very much.

He stands up, walks to Beth and shows her the letter.

DET. BETH
Can we trust this thing?

DET. PETER
They are pretty thorough. If they
screwed up, it's a first.

Detective Beth scratches her head and makes a call.

DET. BETH
Lia? (...) This is Detective Beth,
how ya doin? (...) Are you home
now? (...) Then, you stay there. We
got one, better saying, two pieces
of information we need to share
with you.

Detective Beth hangs up and nods a 'let's go' to her partner.

INT. JOHN'S AND LIA'S HOUSE - DAY

The detectives come in and nod at the couple.

Neither John nor Lia signal them to take a seat.

DET. BETH
There are some new facts regarding
the case we need to talk to you
about.

John and Lia look at them in anticipation.

DET. BETH (CONT'D)
Well, first piece of information,
they tested Bob's DNA, and it
matches John's.

John's eyes goggle.

DET. BETH (CONT'D)
Bob really was your son.

Lia turns glowing eyes to John.

John looks down and nods his head negatively.

JOHN
I always knew. My poor son!

He turns to the detectives.

JOHN (CONT'D)
So, looks like your tests were
wrong the first time.

DET. BETH
No.

John and Lia face the detectives in awe.

DET. PETER
That takes us to the second piece
of information. The blood we found
on the pillow wasn't Bob's, but its
DNA matches Lia's.

Lia's facial expression is one of shock. John looks them with
a 'what face.'

JOHN
But... Are you telling me the
kidnapper bled on the pillow? How
come? Bob wounded him?

DET. PETER
No. My guess is, he did it on
purpose. He wounded himself and
left a pint of his blood on the
pillow.

JOHN
But why?

DET. BETH
To make you quarrel. To split you.
He knows we take samples and make
DNA tests. Part of the game.

The detectives turn inquisitive eyes to Lia.

DET. BETH (CONT'D)
Did you have another kid?

JOHN
No. Just Bob.

Lia is lost in thoughts.

DET. BETH
I was talking to you, Lia.

JOHN

But I already answered your question.

Beth ignores John and does not take her eyes off Lia.

DET. BETH

Lia?

Lia seems lost in space.

LIA

I had another kid.

John gazes at Lia.

LIA (CONT'D)

I got pregnant when I was seventeen. I was still living with my parents. I didn't tell them at first. My boyfriend at the time said we could raise the child together. That was before he vanished without a trace. It was too late to get an abortion. And I was in no conditions to raise a child.

Lia chills for a moment.

LIA (CONT'D)

I gave it to adoption. I didn't even see the baby after I gave birth. I just wanted to get rid of the problem.

Lia sobs again. John stumbles away from her.

JOHN

Any other secrets you want to share, Lia?

Lia looks at John with supplicating eyes.

DET. PETER

And who's the father?

Lia keeps looking at John.

LIA

Fernandez... Benjamin Fernandez.

Detective Peter writes the name down.

DET. BETH

What hospital did you have the child? When was this?

Inaudible dialogue. Detective Peter takes notes.

DET. BETH (CONT'D)
What about the kid?

LIA
I swear I've never seen it.

Lia's facial expression is one of confusion. But her eyes suggest she remembers something.

LIA (CONT'D)
Are you saying that the blood on Bob's pillow belongs to this other child of mine?

DET. BETH
Assuming you're not hiding anything else, yes.

The detectives leave the house.

John and Lia are inert in the living room.

JOHN
This is yet another thing you kept from me, Lia.

LIA
But it's such a distant past, John. You weren't even in it.

JOHN
Yeah, but it came back to terrorize us just the same.

EXT. STREET IN FRONT OF BENJAMIN'S HOUSE - DAY

Detective Beth knocks on the door. Peter studies the house.

DET. BETH
We're wasting time in here. Why a person who never wanted a son in the first place would kidnap Bob and kill him all of a sudden?

Detective Peter is about to answer, but somebody opens the door. It's an old, sick man. There's another man by his side, dressed like a nurse.

The detectives show their badges. The nurse whispers something to the old man's ear (inaudible). The old man nods.

DET. BETH (CONT'D)
Is this the house of Benjamin Fernandez?

OLD MAN

In a way.

Beth frowns at him.

OLD MAN (CONT'D)

He lived here until his country called.

DET. PETER

He's your son.

The old man confirms with a nod.

DET. BETH

We need to talk to him.

OLD MAN

Oh, so do I, my dear.

Detective Beth moves impatiently. Detective Peter signals her to calm down. That's when they notice the old man's eyes are blurred.

OLD MAN (CONT'D)

Where are my manners? Please, come in, officers.

INT. OLD MAN'S HOUSE - DAY

Detective Beth sips tea, and Detective Peter a coffee. They are sitting on a couch. The old man is sitting on a chair, right in front of them, with the nurse standing by his side.

DET. BETH

Mister Fernandez...

OLD MAN

Abe, please.

DET. BETH

So, you don't know where your son is, Abe.

ABE

Oh, I do. Arlington Cemetery. He died in Iraq three years ago.

Detective Beth looks at Peter, as if saying, 'I told you.'

DET. PETER

I'm sorry to hear that.

DET. BETH

Thanks for the drinks.

The cops place their respective mugs on the center table and stand up to leave.

ABE

What do you want with him?

The detectives sit down again.

DET. BETH

It's about something he did a long time ago.

ABE

Is he in any trouble with the law? 'Cause he's a war hero, you know.

DET. BETH

No, not him. Did you know he had a child?

ABE

Not until two years ago.

DET. BETH

But your son died three years ago. Who told you that?

ABE

He came here. Um... Bob, if I'm not mistaken. He came here.

The detectives stare at Abe with wide open eyes.

DET. PETER

Did you say Bob?

ABE

That's what he told me his name was.

DET. PETER

Can you describe him?

ABE

I wish I could. For years, I only have 20% of my vision. Diabetes. I only see shadows.

DET. PETER

What about Charles over there?

Peter nods at the nurse.

ABE

He can't help you, either. He started working in here only six months ago.

DET. BETH
What did Bob want?

Abe looks scared all of sudden.

ABE
He wanted to know more about his dad. He got really upset when I told him his father was dead, cried a lot and everything. I thanked the Lord at first, for He sent me Bob to compensate for the loss of Ben. He was the only link to my deceased son. But soon I learnt how very wrong I was.

Beth lifts an eyebrow, and Peter bites his lip.

ABE (CONT'D)
Soon I realized that boy was sent by the devil.

Abe has a mild convulsion. The nurse takes measures to make it stop.

ABE (CONT'D)
I'm fine, I'm fine.

Abe takes a deep breath.

ABE (CONT'D)
The boy was really sad, so I decided to show him some pictures of his father.

BEGIN FLASHBACK

ABE'S P.O.V. - the silhouette of a man flips pages of a big book.

ABE (V.O.) (CONT'D)
I showed him a family album. Big mistake.

ABE'S P.O.V. - the man's silhouette furiously throws the album to the floor. He then breaks lots of picture frames and tosses Ben's medals everywhere. He also breaks in two a saber that was decorating a wall.

END FLASHBACK

ABE (CONT'D)
I tried to stop him, but the kid was out of control, bat-shit crazy. He pushed me, so violently that I fell, and out the door he went.

DET. BETH

Didn't you go to the police?

ABE

No. Actually, I blamed myself for that. I chose to understand Bob. Deep inside, I felt sorry for him. He neither forgave nor forgot the ones who abandoned him. Tough luck. When you think bygones are bygones, the past comes back and kicks you in the face.

INT. POLICE CAR - DAY

Detectives Peter and Beth look at each other before going.

INT. HOSPITAL - DAY

Peter and Beth show their badges to a middle-aged woman, working in front of her computer. Peter hands her a paper.

DET. PETER

We need information about a child who was born on this date. The mother's maiden name is Lia Martens.

The lady quickly types on her keyboard.

LADY

He was born in here alright, but the mother didn't want anything to do with him, something that's disturbingly usual nowadays. I'm a Catholic, but I believe abortion is a better solution in cases like this.

Detective Peter signals the woman to go straight to the point.

LADY (CONT'D)

We sent the child to the nuns at Immaculate Conception Orphanage.

INT. JOHN'S AND LIA'S HOUSE - DAY

Lia is sitting on a chair. John stands before her.

John faces Lia.

LIA

Why are you looking me like this?

JOHN
I'm having a real hard time dealing
with your deceits and secrets.

LIA
I know I was wrong, but everything
I did, I did to keep our family
together.

JOHN (IRONIC)
That includes the cheating part?

Lia scratches her chin.

LIA
I know it sounds crazy, but that
made me realize how much I love you
and how important it is to me to
have a family.

John changes his look to one of doubt.

LIA (CONT'D)
Together, we can put this all
behind us.

John neither answers nor looks at Lia.

EXT. STREET IN FRONT OF THE ORPHANAGE - DAY

Peter and Beth leave the car and study the construction in
front of them.

INT. ORPHANAGE - DAY

A nun comes to greet the detectives. They talk (inaudible).

The nun leads them through a corridor, and they stop by a
door.

NUN 1
It's here.

Peter and Beth enter the room.

INT. OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

They show their badges to the nun in the room, and they talk
(inaudible).

Nun 2 consults her computer.

NUN 2
You must be talking about Matthew.
That's the name we gave him.

DET. PETER

No. The boy we're looking for is called Bob.

NUN 2

Detective, we took only one child on this particular date. And we named him Matthew because it means God's gift.

DET. BETH

And what happened to him?

NUN 2

You should know that, by law, I'm not allowed to give you this information, unless a judge tells me to.

She thinks for a moment.

NUN 2 (CONT'D)

However, the boy was strongly connected to a young woman who worked in here for a while, as a volunteer. I'll give you her address and phone number. She actually adopted the boy.

Nun 2 writes on a piece of paper and gives it to Detective Beth.

EXT. PUBLIC SQUARE - DAY

ANA (40), an attractive African-American woman, is distributing food to a group of homeless people, one by one, in a single line.

Detectives Beth and Peter come to her, badges in hand.

DET. PETER

Are you Ana?

ANA

For quite some time now. Ana was born when I started working with the nuns. And she's just alive now because of it.

DET. PETER

We want to talk to you about Matthew.

Ana keeps distributing the food.

A homeless person tries to cut the line.

ANA
Hey, you! End of the line!

He obediently walks to the end of the line, hanging his head.

The detectives don't take their eyes off Ana.

ANA (CONT'D)
I knew this day would come. Did he
kill anybody? Was he killed by
anyone?

The detectives do not answer.

Ana continues to work.

DET. PETER
Do you know where he is?

ANA
No, I don't.

DET. BETH
Really? Didn't you adopt the kid?

ANA
He ran away from home when he was
fourteen. I pray for him every day,
but never tried to find him.

DET. BETH
Sorry, but I'm not buying that.

Ana sighs.

ANA
I really got attached to Matthew.
He was always different. Every time
I tried to put him in the cradle,
he grabbed on to me with all he got
and wouldn't let go of me for
anything in this planet. I was
moved by that.

Ana looks over her shoulder.

ANA (CONT'D)
More soup, please!

Another woman comes and pours soup into the pan.

The detectives move impatiently.

ANA (CONT'D)
Our first years together were a
barrel of happiness. But as he grew
up, things changed.
(MORE)

ANA (CONT'D)

All other kids were being adopted,
but him. That made him very sad.

DET. PETER

And why do you think nobody wanted
him?

ANA

I'm not sure, those eyes of him...
He was a good kid, but there was
something about the look on his
face that scared people.

She serves a spoonful of soup to another homeless person.

ANA (CONT'D)

I felt sorry for him and decided to
adopt him. I had to leave the nuns
to take care of him. God knows I
tried.

Ana takes a deep breath.

ANA (CONT'D)

I had to get a job to support the
kid. That was when the problems
started. The boy didn't want to be
left alone, not even for a second.
The school principal called me to
her office almost every day, for
some trouble Matthew had gotten
himself into. He even wounded
another kid with a scissor. One
day, I came home, and he wasn't
there. I must confess I didn't go
look for him. Maybe, he wanted
that.

DET. BETH

So, you don't know where he is.

Ana thinks, hesitates.

ANA

I saw him about four years ago, on
Washington Square. And he saw me,
for sure. I believe he recognized
me, by the look on his face. But,
he just turned around and walked
away.

DET. PETER

Can you describe him?

ANA

Thin, about five-foot-five, long,
dark hair. That was four years ago,
mind you.

DET. PETER

Do you have any picture of him?

Ana grabs her wallet and takes a picture out of it.

ANA

I only have this one with me, now.

She gives the photo to Peter. He shows it to Beth.

DET. BETH

Damn, he looks like a baby in here!
Young people change a lot.

The detectives sigh frustrated.

ANA

But it's gonna be easy to recognize
him if you see him...

The detectives face her in anticipation.

ANA (CONT'D)

He has the eyes of evil.

EXT. FRONT YARD OF JOHN'S AND LIA'S HOUSE - DAY

Alan works the garden.

He stops what he's doing to peek inside the house, through
the window.

INT. JOHN'S AND LIA'S HOUSE - DAY

JOHN

I left two suits in the laundry. I
have to pick them up today.

LIA

But you're coming back, right?

John nods an insecure 'yes,' and leaves.

EXT. FRONT YARD OF JOHN'S AND LIA'S HOUSE - DAY

Lia accompanies John to the car.

He gets in, and the car speeds away.

Lia watches the car go, until it disappears.

INT. POLICE PRECINCT - DAY

Detectives Beth and Peter examine the photo Ana gave them.

DET. PETER

Let's cross references with the police internal network, see if anyone knows this kid.

DET. BETH

It's worth a shot.

Detective Peter takes the photo to a table.

Over there, he speaks with a lady (inaudible). She takes the photo and nods.

Detective Peter comes back to his desk.

INT. POLICE CAR - DAY

Beth drives, with Peter on the passenger's seat.

DET. PETER

Three days, and not even a shadow of this freak.

Peter's cell-phone RINGS. He answers it.

DET. PETER (CONT'D)

(...) Is that so? (...) You think that could work? (...) I don't mean to rain on your parade, buddy, but we don't have much time (...) Fine, we'll be there in ten.

Beth watches him inquisitively.

DET. PETER (CONT'D)

A nutcase in the lab, who also happens to be a friend of mine, said he can try something on Matthew's photo.

DET. BETH

This better not be another witch hunt.

EXT. STREET - DAY

Beth executes an extremely dangerous u-turn.

EXT. FRONT YARD OF JOHN'S AND LIA'S HOUSE - DAY

Alan tends to the garden.

EXT. SIDEWALK IN FRONT OF A BUILDING - DAY

Police car pulls over in a rather abrupt way.

EXT. FRONT YARD OF JOHN'S AND LIA'S HOUSE - DAY

Alan is cutting some bushes with a garden knife.

He stops to observe a tree.

Alan walks to the house and knocks on the door.

Lia opens it. Her eyes are red of crying.

LIA

Hi, Alan. I didn't even notice you
were here.

ALAN

What's wrong?

Lia wipes off tears and comes back inside.

Alan follows her and closes the door.

INT. FORENSIC LABORATORY - DAY

Detectives Beth and Peter walks into a room.

People work there, on long benches.

DET. PETER

Hey, Ted, what's going on?

A man wearing an apron turns to him.

TED

Nothing and everything, Pete.

DET. PETER

Okay, I'm listening.

TED

I won't promise you anything.

DET. BETH

It figures.

TED

I have a computer software that can
age the guy in the picture. It's
made to work on big time-slots, but
it can be adjusted. It's worth a
try.

Peter looks at Beth. She returns a 'whatever' look.

TED (CONT'D)
It takes some time. Do you guys
have an hour?

Beth turns to Peter. He returns a 'what can I do?' look.

INT. JOHN'S AND LIA'S HOUSE - DAY

Lia cries. Alan embraces her with an air of happiness on his face.

Alan goes to the kitchen and comes back with a glass of water. He gives it to Lia.

She accepts it and drinks the water.

LIA
Thank you, Alan.

She dries her eyes with a sleeve.

Alan watches her.

LIA (CONT'D)
I think John wants to leave me.

Alan stares at her with wide open eyes.

ALAN
I know the feeling.

Alan hugs her again and even caresses her back.

Lia pushes Alan away rather abruptly.

ALAN (CONT'D)
Rejecting me again?

Lia looks astonished at Alan.

ALAN (CONT'D)
It seems God created this moment so
we could be together again.

Lia fixes eyes on him.

LIA
What are you talking about, Alan? I
really don't understand.

ALAN
Mom.

Lia looks at him, shocked.

LIA

Have you gone mad? You should know better than kidding about such things. I've just lost a son, for crying out loud!

ALAN

Ah, mom, not funny! You're the one kidding now. And you shouldn't. You didn't lose me, mom, I'm right here! And we're gonna be together forever and ever.

Lia's facial expression changes to one of dreadful fear.

ALAN (CONT'D)

I'm back, mom. I forgave you for abandoning me. If John wants to go, so be it. I'm taking care of you now.

Lia's eyes are now angry.

LIA

You kidnapped and killed Bob...

ALAN

I didn't want to. We were having so much fun! Even the messages were a game to him. But then, he wanted to go home. It wasn't time yet. I held him, I pulled him. He struggled, and I grabbed his neck. He forced my hand! Next thing I knew, he was down.

LIA

You are a murderer, Alan.

ALAN

No, I'm your only son. We're gonna be a family.

Lia swallows hard.

LIA

You ruined my life!

ALAN

No, mom, I fixed it. Now, it's just you and me.

LIA

Soulless killer! This is all my fault. I should have aborted you when I had the chance.

Alan's eyes are now ferocious and evil.

He jumps to Lia with the garden knife.

EXT. FRONT YARD OF JOHN'S AND LIA'S HOUSE - DAY

John comes near the house. He listens to a loud argument inside the house.

He runs, opens the door, and gets in.

INT. JOHN AND LIA'S HOUSE - DAY

John sees Alan raising the garden knife to Lia.

JOHN

Alan! What the heck are you doing,
man? Put that thing down!

Alan turns to John with furious eyes. John is startled.

ALAN

What are you doing in here? You
don't belong anymore. Stay away
from my family!

John stares at him in awe.

LIA

John, Alan is the son I had in the
past.

John faces her.

ALAN

Got the picture now, Johnny boy? Go
get your own family!

He points the knife at John.

JOHN

My God! You killed Bob, didn't you?
For God sake, why? He liked you!

INT. FORENSIC LABORATORY - DAY

Ted fingers his keyboard like a madman.

TED

This is so very unreliable...

Beth rolls her eyes impatiently. Ted notices it.

TED (CONT'D)

I'm doing this thing off records,
alright! I'm sticking my neck out
for you!

DET. BETH (SARCASTIC)

Right.

Detectives Beth and Peter stare at the computer screen with intrigued eyes.

DET. PETER

Can you make him blonde?

Ted works the keyboard. He turns the screen to the cops.

The detectives fix eyes on the screen.

DET. PETER

(CONT'D)

Can you shorten his hair and part it to the right?

Ted does as told and again turns the screen to the detectives.

They seem to approve what they see.

DET. PETER (CONT'D)

Just one more thing.

Ted waits.

DET. PETER (CONT'D)

Put a diabolic look on his face.

Ted frowns, but works the program.

TED

He'll start looking like the detective woman over there.

DET. BETH

Ha, ha, very funny. And the name's Beth.

Ted turns the screen to the cops.

CLOSEUP of the computer screen. The person in the picture looks a lot like Alan.

The cops leave in a big hurry.

TED

You're welcome.

EXT. FRONT YARD OF JOHN'S AND LIA'S HOUSE - DAY

Through the window, it's possible to see Alan, John and Lia arguing in the living room.

INT. JOHN'S AND LIA'S LIVING ROOM - DAY

JOHN

You killed my boy, you son of a bitch!

ALAN

You don't get it, do you? Just leave! You're in private property.

Alan turns to Lia.

John advances toward Alan, but stops short, for Alan raises the garden knife to him.

JOHN

You bastard! Two-bits murderer! Bob never did anything to you!

Lia comes closer to John. Alan watches them with an angry face.

LIA

Go away! Leave us alone, you monster! You caused us nothing but misery!

Alan faces Lia.

ALAN

I caused you misery? Don't talk to me about misery! My whole life was misery because you abandoned me!

JOHN

Get lost, you freaking psycho!

John jumps Alan.

Alan stabs John with the garden knife.

John staggers to the couch, bleeding a lot.

ALAN

You're the one who's lost, my friend.

Lia stands between John and Alan.

Alan still walks to John, which is bleeding like a waterfall.

Lia blocks Alan's way.

LIA

He did nothing to you. If you want to kill somebody, kill me. I'm the one who brought you misery. Please, leave him alone!

Alan stops.

EXT. FRONT YARD OF JOHN'S AND LIA'S HOUSE - DAY

Detective Beth sees the whole scene through the window, but can't hear it. The sound coming from the house is muffled.

INT. JOHN'S AND LIA'S HOUSE - DAY

ALAN
I don't want to harm you, mom!

Alan advances to Lia, raising the knife.

A shot is fired.

Alan falls down.

The window glass is shattered. Detective Beth is the one who shot.

Detective Peter breaks into the house with gun in hand.

Alan is not moving. Peter grabs his cell-phone.

DET. PETER
I need an ambulance at 2040
Bellroad, Lake Beach, pronto!

He kicks the garden knife away from Alan.

Detective Beth runs inside.

Lia tries to stop John's bleeding.

DET. PETER (CONT'D)
Help is on the way.

ALAN
Mom! Mom!

Lia listens, but does not move.

Slowly, she comes near Alan and looks at him.

Alan stretches a hand to her. She hesitates, but takes his hand.

Alan brings Lia's hand to his face, as if she was caressing him.

ALAN (CONT'D)
Are you gonna visit me at the
hospital, mom?

Lia is silent. But she strokes Alan's hair. Alan's eyes glow.

ALAN (CONT'D)
Are you gonna visit me?

Lia slightly nods a 'yes.'

Alan closes his eyes.

Two paramedics come and run to Alan.

Lia holds Alan's hand.

PARAMEDIC 1
Lady, if you please...

Lia makes way for the paramedics.

Alan has a seizure.

One of the paramedics oxygenates the patient.

Alan is now motionless.

One of the paramedics nods negatively, and they both stand up.

Lia looks at Alan's body with merciful eyes.

DET. BETH
There are more people wounded.

The paramedics tend to John.

Lia looks tenderly at Alan.

LIA
I created this monster.

Detective Peter goes to her.

LIA (CONT'D)
When his dad told me he didn't want to be a dad, I spent the next four months nagging about being pregnant. I began rejecting Alan when he was still in my womb.

Lia cries.

LIA (CONT'D)
It's all my fault.

DET. PETER
Lia, who can possibly know why Alan became what he became? If all adopted children turned out like this, I'd be a monster, too.

Lia turns to Peter.

DET. PETER (CONT'D)
I was adopted myself.

EXT. FRONT YARD OF JOHN'S AND LIA'S HOUSE - DAY

John is taken out on a gurney. Lia follows them to the ambulance.

John holds Lia's hand tightly.

Lia faces the paramedics, as if asking if she can go with John.

The gurney is placed inside the ambulance.

A paramedic signals Lia to hop in.

INT. AMBULANCE - DAY

John receives medical attention. Lia is by his side.

JOHN (WHISPERING)
You would have given your life for me. I'll never forget it.

The machines connected to John beep loudly.

A paramedic gently pushes Lia away.

John closes his eyes.

Lia stands on a corner.

FADE OUT.

FADE IN:

EXT. LAKE BANK - DAY

Lia is sitting on a bench, watching a boy play by the edge of the lake.

LIA
Careful, dear!

John comes and sits with her, wrapping an arm around her shoulder.

The boy is desperately looking for something. He comes closer to John and Lia.

LIA (CONT'D)
What's the matter, sweetie?

BOY
Mom, I lost my car. I can't
remember where I left it.

LIA
Then, you haven't lost it.

The boy frowns at her.

BOY
I lost it, mom.

LIA
No, you didn't. You just forgot
where you put it.

BOY
Forgot?

LIA
This happens when we don't remember
something.

The boy scratches his head.

BOY
Is this bad?

JOHN
My son, sometimes, forgetting is
the best thing that can ever happen
to you.

The boy looks at him with a big 'what face.'

Lia smiles and looks surprised at John.

They kiss.

JOHN (V.O.)
Now, I'm sure there is a God.
Because if the Devil wrote my
misery, God is surely the author of
my happiness.

FADE TO BLACK.