

COUNTRY GIRL

an original screenplay

by Judy Klass

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FADE IN:

EXT. NASHVILLE -- DAWN

We start with a WIDE SHOT of the city skyline. The first light GLEAMS on the glass of the ATT/Bell South building, commonly called "The Batman Building" because it resembles Batman's mask, pointy ears and all.

We ANGLE AROUND these tall buildings, as . . .

We hear the sweet voice of a young girl, SINGING OVER GUITAR. Her gentle song plays over this TITLE SEQUENCE as a series of scenes go by:

GIRL

There's streaks of pink and pearl
And purple in the sky
And all the stars have gone to bed
The earth is warming, to a morning lullaby
As you lift your sleepy head

EXT. NASHVILLE DOWNTOWN -- DAWN

We MOVE IN CLOSER, on the Ryman Auditorium, the original home of the Grand Ole Opry. The light falls gently on its stained glass windows.

We MOVE OVER a few rooftops, and explore Lower Broadway.

The bars and touristy stores full of cowboy hats and boots are all closed. Jack's B-B-Q, the Ernest Tubb Record Shop -- dawn is pink against their unlit neon signs.

A homeless man sleeps on the sidewalk. A cat rubs its back against a building. Store signs say NASHVILLE.

GIRL (CONT'D)

CHORUS: MY EVERY HEARTBEAT SAYS I LOVE YOU
STRANGERS ON THE STREET CAN READ IT IN MY EYES
GUESS I'M NO GOOD WITH A SECRET
DO MY BEST BUT I CAN'T KEEP IT
THIS BLUSHING GLOW WEARS NO DISGUISE
OUR LOVE IS SHINING LIKE THE SUNRISE

EXT. CUMBERLAND RIVER -- DAWN

We are WIDE again and heading east. The early light hits the bridges that span the Cumberland. We travel over East Nashville and continue east in a very WIDE SHOT, and the winding river meanders in and out of view.

GIRL (CONT'D)

The birds are calling to us
 With their early song
 Tree branches reaching toward the light
 Thought I could hold back how I feel
 But I was wrong
 The day will always conquer night
 MY EVERY HEARTBEAT SAYS I LOVE YOU
 STRANGERS ON THE STREET CAN READ IT IN MY EYES
 GUESS I'M NO GOOD WITH A SECRET
 DO MY BEST BUT I CAN'T KEEP IT
 THIS BLUSHING GLOW WEARS NO DISGUISE
 OUR LOVE IS SHINING LIKE THE SUNRISE

EXT. FOREST -- DAWN

As she sings the chorus again, we are in the woods, where there are deer, birds and other small animals.

GIRL (CONT'D)

Oh, and it fills me with wonder
 After darkness for so long
 How the dawn comes up like thunder
 And how our love is like the dawn

EXT. PASTURE -- DAWN

We are on a rolling hill behind a farm. Horses stand with colts and cows with calves, within the fencing.

GIRL (CONT'D)

MY EVERY HEARTBEAT SAYS I LOVE YOU
 LOOK AT THIS HAZY MEADOW FILLED WITH BUTTERFLIES

EXT. HIGHWAY -- DAWN

This is an ugly patch of road sporting a poor man's strip mall. Even dawn light can't make it pretty. A stray dog noses around in garbage.

GIRL (CONT'D)

YES, THE NIGHT WENT BY SO SLOWLY
 BUT NOW YOU'RE HERE TO HOLD ME
 SO WARM, AND FULL OF SWEET SURPRISE

We pull off the highway onto a side road in bad repair.

GIRL (CONT'D)

OUR LOVE IS SHINING LIKE THE SUNRISE
 OUR LOVE IS SHINING
 (MORE)

GIRL (CONT'D)
 OUR HAPPINESS IS SHINING
 OUR LOVE IS SHINING LIKE THE SUNRISE
 THE SUNRISE . . .

As the TITLE SEQUENCE, her SINGING and the GUITAR MUSIC end, we FOLLOW a bend in the road, and enter:

EXT. TRAILER PARK -- MORNING

This community is a mix of tidy, well-kept trailers, with gardens, wind chimes, and pretty curtains at the windows -- and ramshackle trailers surrounded by junk.

We MOVE IN on one of the beat ones.

INT. TRAILER -- MORNING

KAITLYN THOMAS, seventeen, is sleeping on the upper bunk of a bed in the confined space. She wears a cotton nightgown beneath one thin sheet -- it's summer and it's hot.

Her cell phone RINGS. The RINGTONE is a snatch of a country song. She gropes for it, half asleep, and brings it to her face on the pillow. There's a slight Tennessee twang to her voice, and perhaps we can tell she was the girl singing:

KAITLYN

Hey.

CORY (O.S.)

Hey, yourself. You up?

Kaitlyn sits up a little, and pushes her hair back.

KAITLYN

I am now.

EXT. TREE-LINED STREET

CORY SARGENT lives in a poor, but slightly more upscale neighborhood than Kaitlyn. He is in his early twenties, good-looking and playful -- not cocky in a mean way.

He's heading down the walk of his house toward his car, a blue Toyota from the '90s, talking on his phone.

CORY

Well, sleepyhead, you know what day it is?

KAITLYN (O.S.)
Mmmm. What day is it?

CORY
It's the day we take a little trip.
If you're up for it.

INT. TRAILER -- MORNING

Kaitlyn is still not fully up, and her eyes are not fully open.

KAITLYN
Trip where?

CORY (O.S.)
To Music Row. Today you get the
grand tour.

This jolts Kaitlyn awake. She looks happy and excited. She kicks the sheet away, and swings her feet over the side of the bed.

KAITLYN
Oh my God, Cory, really?

CORY (O.S.)
(Laughs)
Hit the showers, and I'll pick you
up in twenty minutes, all right?

KAITLYN
Okay, I love you, bye!

She tosses the phone down and swings down from the upper bunk. There is no one in the bunk below. We follow her as she grabs her toiletry bag and towel, and heads through the trailer . . .

Past the little table where her MOM, early forties, has crashed the night before, drool running from her mouth onto her arm. One overturned beer can is leaking a little beer on the table. Another is on the floor.

Kaitlyn takes a napkin and wipes her mother's mouth. She brushes back hair from her mother's face. She wipes up the beer on the table, and takes the cans to the trash. Mom keeps on sleeping, her mouth open.

Kaitlyn navigates into a miniscule shower cubicle.

EXT. TRAILER PARK -- DAY

Cory drives slowly along the gravel road that runs through the park. Kaitlyn, in shorts and a tank top, comes out of her trailer, runs to his car and gets in.

INT. TOYOTA -- DAY

Kaitlyn opens a compact and puts on her lip gloss, as Cory navigates back out onto the road.

CORY

What time you get to sleep last night?

KAITLYN

I dunno. Late. Mom had Luke over and they were drinking and laughing up a storm.

CORY

See, you gotta put your foot down. They oughta do that at his place, he's got a double-wide, don't he? And his kids are gone --

KAITLYN

No, sometimes she tries to come home, late, from there, and I don't like her wandering around at night. S'okay.

(Puts away makeup)

So, now, what are you gonna show me? The Country Music Hall of Fame? The Grand Ole Opry?

CORY

No -- I'd like to take you to the Ryman sometime, but we're not going to Lower Broadway now, we're going to the Row, like I said.

KAITLYN

That stuff ain't on the Row?

Cory looks at her and grins.

CORY

Kaitlyn, how long have you lived about an hour outside 'o Nashville?

Kaitlyn swats at him for teasing her, in a good-natured way.

KAITLYN
Shut up. Only my whole life.

EXT. INTERSTATE -- DAY

They are about to get off, at the Broadway/Demonbreun exit.
We can HEAR the conversation in the car.

CORY
But if this don't work out -- I
don't want you feeling bad. And if
any of it don't feel right to you,
you just say so.

KAITLYN
I'm glad he's willing to meet me.
I like kids.

CORY
It's not the kids -- they're good
kids. A little bratty and spoiled,
sometimes, is all. It's . . .

KAITLYN
What, is Gavin Wakefield some kind
of monster?

INT. TOYOTA -- DAY

We're with them in the car again.

CORY
I wouldn't say "monster." I mean,
I work for the guy. He's payin'
me, finally. He's set me up with a
couple of cool co-writers, some
signed to Spearpoint, and someday,
God willing, maybe he'll give me a
publishing deal -- That's ASCAP.

EXT. THE CIRCLE BY MUSIC ROW -- DAY

The Toyota is waiting for a green light, about to turn onto
17th Avenue South. ASCAP is on the corner, and a statue
depicting many naked people dancing is nearby. Again, we
HEAR the conversation in the car.

CORY (CONT'D)
BMI is one block down. That's the
statue of all the nekked people
that gets everybody all upset.

The light changes and they drive onto 17th Avenue South.

INT. TOYOTA -- DAY

Kaitlyn is excited, drinking it all in.

CORY

And this is Music Row.

KAITLYN

Wow!

CORY

17th Avenue South. Spearpoint is on 16th. We'll drive to the end, and double back, so you get to see it all.

KAITLYN

What's that?

EXT. 17TH AVENUE SOUTH -- DAY

They drive along, past lovely homes that have been turned into the offices of various music publishing companies. Kaitlyn is pointing out the window at a large banner congratulating a writer on a hit.

CORY

Well, these are all publishers. And when somebody's writer gets an award or a hit, they put out a banner congratulatin' 'em.

KAITLYN

So, it's gonna be, what, a year, before Spearpoint's got a banner out front sayin' "Congratulations, Cory Sargent, On Your Grammy-Winning Number One Single."

INT. TOYOTA -- DAY

We see the buildings on the Row as they pass, through the window.

CORY

Well, maybe a little more 'n a year. Maybe it'll say "Congratulations, Cory and Kaitlyn."

KAITLYN

'Cause we'll both get signed.

CORY

That's right. You bet.

EXT. MUSIC ROW -- DAY

We are PULLED FAR BACK, and have a wider view of the Row. We HEAR LIVELY COUNTRY MUSIC as the car turns a corner, and doubles back onto 16th Avenue South.

It pulls down the driveway of a lovely house with a sign on the lawn that reads SPEARPOINT MUSIC. Cory parks in back of the house. There are people drinking out on the back deck.

INT. TOYOTA -- DAY

Cory pockets the ignition key, and glances at Kaitlyn. He speaks to her softly:

CORY

Here we go. I sure hope I don't regret doin' this.

KAITLYN

Cory, I won't let you down.

CORY

No, I mean, I hope you don't regret it, either. I hope you don't wind up hatin' me.

EXT. BACK OF SPEARPOINT -- DAY

Cory and Kaitlyn get out of the car. A man in a polo shirt with a glass of white wine out on the deck gets up and waves to Cory.

This is GAVIN WAKEFIELD, late forties or fifties, handsome, powerfully built, affable on the surface, but with tension underneath. Right now he is a little sloshed.

GAVIN

Hey, Cory.

CORY

Hey.

Cory leads Kaitlyn up the steps onto the deck.

GAVIN

I see you brought your friend.

CORY

I sure did. Kaitlyn, this is Gavin Wakefield, the man who makes things happen around here.

Gavin shakes hands with Kaitlyn, discreetly giving her the once over.

GAVIN

Good to know you, Kaitlyn.

KAITLYN

(shy)

Nice to meet you.

Gavin speaks curtly to the young woman and young man who have been lounging at the table with him.

GAVIN

Okay, siesta's over for you guys, call that S.O.B. and tell 'em they don't jerk me around like this. They've had the song on hold for a freakin' year -- they can shit or get off the pot. Either they cut it or it's up for grabs.

The two nod and drift back into the building. Gavin again favors Kaitlyn and Cory with his too-affable smile.

GAVIN

There's a little taste of the magic of the music business to start your day, Kaitlyn.

KAITLYN

This -- this is all really exciting for me. Just being here.

GAVIN

Sit down, you guys.
(to Cory)
Chablis?

CORY

I'm good.

He and Kaitlyn sit at the round table, beneath an umbrella, on the deck.

GAVIN
 Yeah, our Cory's a beer man.
 Kaitlyn, how 'bout you? You old
 enough to drink?

KAITLYN
 (shakes head)
 I'm seventeen.

GAVIN
 Seventeen! Goddamn, Cory, you are
 robbing the cradle!

He slaps Cory on the shoulder. Cory is uncomfortable, but
 manages a smile.

CORY
 I guess.

GAVIN
 (to Kaitlyn)
 How did you hook up with this
 character?

KAITLYN
 Well, Cory's taking classes at
 MTSU, that's in Murfreesboro, near
 where I live, and I had a
 craigslist ad last winter for
 somebody to write songs with --

GAVIN
 Okay, spare me the gory details.
 You want to be a nanny? Au pair,
 mother's helper, whatever the
 politically correct term is?

KAITLYN
 Yes, sir.

GAVIN
 You got references?

KAITLYN
 There's a couple families I baby-
 sit for. They'd give me
 references, I got their
 numbers . . .

GAVIN
 See, my ex-wife is a witch from
 hell.

(MORE)

GAVIN (cont'd)

And she wants us to use some fancy nanny service, and interview all these candidates, blah blah blah, now the kids are on summer vacation, as expensive as she can possibly make it, naturally, on my dime, 'cause she's too fucking lazy to raise the kids herself even though the courts gave her primary custody. 'Cause, you know, she's really busy, she leads such a hard life. Doesn't she, Cory.

CORY

(embarrassed)

I . . . guess . . .

GAVIN

Cory's been by the house, he's been interning with me since before I moved out. Deena likes him, likes his tight little ass, I guess, and the kids like him. Which is why this just may work. Lemme call her.

He gets out her phone and punches in a number. We hear RINGING, and a woman picks up.

DEENA (O.S.)

Hello?

GAVIN

Deena, I just may have found you the girl for the job.

EXT. BACKYARD GARDEN -- DAY

We are behind a sumptuous, large, new house. A Latino gardener is digging in the dirt, planting tulip bulbs. DEENA WAKEFIELD, forties, well groomed, but high-strung and unhappy, is supervising, as she talks on the phone.

DEENA

From what agency?

GAVIN (O.S.)

Well, she's not French or Swedish, or anything, she's homegrown.

DEENA

From what agency?

EXT. SPEARPOINT BACK DECK -- DAY

Gavin's got her ON SPEAKERPHONE, and he's grinning at Kaitlyn and Cory, demanding their sympathy as he deals with her. Kaitlyn and Cory are both uncomfortable, not sure where to look.

GAVIN

Now, slow down. You remember Cory, the boy you think is so polite and charming? This girl is his girlfriend, and he says she's saving money for college, and she's got references --

DEENA (O.S.)

How old?

GAVIN

Seventeen, but she's been baby-sitting for a good long time, let me put her on.

He hands the phone to Kaitlyn, who takes it uncertainly.

GAVIN

Here you go!

KAITLYN

Oh! M-Mrs. Wakefield --

EXT. GARDEN -- DAY

Same as before.

DEENA

I go by Ms., now, not Mrs.

KAITLYN (O.S.)

Ma'am -- I'm -- I'm sorry.

DEENA

It's all right.

(to Gardener)

No, not so close together, dig that one up.

(to Kaitlyn)

How long could you stay here for?

KAITLYN (O.S.)

Well -- I could stay the whole summer, mostly, I got my senior year coming in the fall --

DEENA

Come by the house tonight, and we'll see if this even works. I'll be having some people over. There's a spare room. Bring your things, in case it works out and you're staying for longer. How much is Gavin paying you?

KAITLYN (O.S.)

I don't . . . I'm not . . .

DEENA

Don't let him screw you, in any sense of the word.

She snaps her phone shut.

INT. TRAILER -- NIGHT

There is a small bureau by the bunk-bed, and Kaitlyn is packing. She doesn't have a suitcase, as such. She folds her things neatly, and places them in a laundry bag. She pulls it shut, and pulls a guitar case out from under the bed.

INT. FRONT ROOM OF TRAILER -- DUSK

Kaitlyn comes out to find her mother sitting by the table, with an open bottle of beer, smoking a cigarette. She's got an old radio on, PLAYING A COUNTRY SONG.

KAITLYN

That's pretty, Mama. Is it new?

MOM

It's the new single.

KAITLYN

Gonna be a hit!

(beat)

Mama, I'm going away -- maybe for just a day or so -- maybe for longer. See, Cory's got me a summer job, it pays real good, it'll help me pay for college. So, if this works out, I could be gone for the summer. 'N you can have Luke stay over.

(beat)

Mama?

Her mother has not really reacted. Neither her expression nor her voice suggests that she is focused on Kaitlyn.

MOM

Okay, baby, have fun.

Kaitlyn steps over to her, gives her arm a squeeze and kisses her forehead.

KAITLYN

I'll call, soon as I know what's goin' on.

She picks up her guitar and the laundry bag full of her things and heads out the door.

EXT. WAKEFIELD MANSION -- NIGHT

Cory's car pulls up onto the long gravel drive in front of the huge house, CRUNCHING gravel beneath its wheels.

INT. TOYOTA -- NIGHT

Cory drives slowly. Kaitlyn is amazed by what she sees.

KAITLYN

My Lord, it's a mansion!

CORY

The term people use round Nashville is McMansion. But don't go tellin' the Wakefields I called it that.

KAITLYN

Is this gonna help your career? Me workin' for these people?

CORY

(shrugs)

It could help both our careers, I guess. Or, Gavin or Deena or the kids could throw a tantrum for no reason, and we could both land out on the street. That's just how it is. And if it happens I sure won't blame you.

KAITLYN

Well, I'll just try to get along with them --

CORY

Don't let 'em push you around,
Kaitlyn. Any of 'em. Anything
happens that you don't like, you
call me and say the word and I'll
come get you on out of here.

He parks in front of the house. Kaitlyn is scared to go in.

KAITLYN

They're just -- are they from here?

CORY

Deena's from Florida. She sang
pop, for a while. Gavin's from New
York City, his mom still lives
there. They were all there until
four years ago. You know how it
is, a big label buys a little
company like Spearpoint, and some
executive from New York or L.A.
gets sent down here to run things,
even if he don't know jack about
country music.

KAITLYN

They don't -- they ain't mean to
the kids, are they?

CORY

No, I think they love the kids, in
their own way. But, you know --
you're good at taking care of
people, like your mom. Like she's
your kid, almost. This is, sorta,
the rich people version of that.

KAITLYN

Well, it's an adventure.

They sit for another moment. Then Cory turns, takes her in
his arms and kisses her. He holds her for a long moment,
stroking her hair.

CORY

If they make you feel like you're
nobody, just remember you're
somebody. Remember how much I love
you.

INT. WAKEFIELD MANSION -- NIGHT

The DOORBELL RINGS. Deena, wearing too much make-up, in a sexy party dress, comes to answer it. JAZZ is playing in another part of the house. The opened door reveals Cory and Kaitlyn with her things.

DEENA

Hey, Cory.

CORY

Hey.

DEENA

Come on in, I'm having a party.

CORY

Oh, no, I don't want to come busting in, I just brought Kaitlyn by -- Kaitlyn, this is Deena Wakefield.

KAITLYN

Nice to meet you in person, ma'am.

DEENA

Call me Deena.

(eyeing laundry bag)

Did you -- bring your laundry?

KAITLYN

What? Oh, no, that's -- I'm just using it as a bag for my stuff.

DEENA

Oh. And you've got your guitar.

KAITLYN

Yeah, if that's okay, I don't play loud late at night, or nothin'.

DEENA

No, it's sweet, actually, it's very *Sound of Music*. Come in, both of you.

She leads them into the house. She gestures to a grand staircase, leading to an upstairs hallway visible above a railing, and addresses Kaitlyn:

DEENA

Your room is by the children's rooms.

(MORE)

DEENA (cont'd)

Go up the stairs and down the hall,
third door on your left. There's a
blue bedspread on the bed, and a
little private bathroom in the
room.

There's a beat, and then Kaitlyn realizes she has been
Dismissed From the Presence. She and Cory exchange a look --
they feel constrained, in front of Deena.

KAITLYN

Oh, okay, goodbye, Cory.

CORY

Goodbye, talk soon!

Kaitlyn heads up the staircase. Deena, a little sloshed,
moves closer to Cory.

DEENA

Stay and join the party, Cory.
There are some people here I'd like
to introduce you to. From Curb,
from Sony. It might be good for
you.

CORY

I appreciate it. But -- I
shouldn't be drinking and driving.
It's better I head on back home.
Kaitlyn's a nice kid, I -- I really
hope this works out.

DEENA

(slightly miffed)
Well, I hope so, too. It was sweet
of you to put it together.

CORY

(backing out the door)
Goodnight!

INT. MAID'S ROOM -- NIGHT

Kaitlyn switches on the LIGHT. It's spare, but it has a
dresser and a bed. She sets down her bag and her guitar.

She hears Cory's car CRUNCHING GRAVEL as it pulls away. She
sits down on the bed, looking a little forlorn.

She begins to pull folded shirts and jeans and socks out of
her laundry bag, and arrange them on the bed.

Her head snaps up when she hears a voice from the doorway:

ALYSSA
Are you the new maid?

We see Kaitlyn's POV: thirteen-year-old ALYSSA WAKEFIELD is standing in the doorway. She is impatient and patronizing. Kaitlyn gets up off the bed.

KAITLYN
No, I'm -- I'm the new mother's helper, or -- nanny. Nice to meet you. I'm Kaitlyn.

She goes to Alyssa with a hand stretched out to shake. Alyssa looks amused, incredulous at this. Behind her we hear GIGGLING. Alyssa shakes with Kaitlyn, with exaggerated good manners.

ALYSSA
Well, how do you do, it's so very nice to meet you.

There is more GIGGLING, and Alyssa steps aside to reveal her siblings: ten-year-old TREVOR and six-year-old SIENA. They are less obviously mocking than the oldest, but they follow her lead.

ALYSSA
This is my brother Trevor, and my sister Siena. Won't you invite us in, to visit with you?

Kaitlyn sizes her up, but decides to ignore the sarcasm.

KAITLYN
Well, sure, come on in. Siena, Trevor, it's good to know you.

The kids troop into her room.

TREVOR
How long you gonna be here for?

KAITLYN
I'm not sure. Cory Sargent just drove me over --

ALYSSA
(excited)
Is Cory here?

She runs out into the hall and looks over the railing to the ground floor. Kaitlyn and the other kids follow her out.

EXT. UPSTAIRS HALLWAY -- NIGHT

KAITLYN

Well, no, I -- I think I just heard
his car driving away.

ALYSSA

(disappointed)

Oh.

SIENA

You wanna see my room?

KAITLYN

Sure.

Siena leads the way down the hall, and opens a door. She runs in and Kaitlyn and Trevor follow.

INT. SIENA'S ROOM -- NIGHT

It's a small, pretty room, over-stuffed with toys and dolls and frippery. There is a child's computer at a small desk.

SIENA

I've got my own personal computer!

TREVOR

Yeah, she plays games on it. She can't actually *do* anything with it.

KAITLYN

It's a beautiful room, Siena.

SIENA

I've got over fifty dolls, three that talk, two with porcelain heads.

KAITLYN

That's great!

TREVOR

Yeah, whatever. If you want to see a room with some serious stuff in it, check out mine.

KAITLYN

Okay . . .

INT. TREVOR'S ROOM -- NIGHT

Trevor leads Kaitlyn and Siena into the room. It is cluttered with action figures, elaborate toy-sized weapons, gameboys and sports equipment.

There are stars on the ceiling. There is a large, beautiful computer on the desk.

TREVOR

See, now this is a *real* computer, and this is a real room. I got every kind of action figure, Batman, Spider-Man, Iron Man, Hulk, X-Men, everybody from Star Wars, every kind of Pokemon -- go on, name an action figure!

KAITLYN

I -- can't.

TREVOR

Well, whatever it is, I got it.
(points)
And Cory's gonna come around this summer and we're gonna build the model airplane in that box over there.

KAITLYN

That's wonderful. I'd like to watch you guys do that.

TREVOR

Dad was supposed to help me with it. Like, a year ago.

SIENA

Cory works for my dad.

TREVOR

Yeah, he was an intern at Spearpoint, and now he's Dad's personal assistant.

KAITLYN

That's right.

ALYSSA

(poking her head in)
So, are you, like, his girlfriend, or what?

KAITLYN

Yeah, I am. And his co-writer.

Alyssa saunters through the half-opened door. She is carrying Kaitlyn's black guitar case. She puts it on the floor and starts to open it. Kaitlyn notices.

KAITLYN

Hey, now. Alyssa, honey, please don't be touching my things without asking.

Alyssa makes a show of putting her hands in the air and backing away.

ALYSSA

Whoa, excuse me! I just hope, then, you'll stay out of my room, while you're here.

KAITLYN

Okay, I'll try to. Do you play guitar?

ALYSSA

No.

KAITLYN

I'd be glad to teach you, if you like.

ALYSSA

Yeah, and what do you play on it -- country hillbilly crap?

KAITLYN

As a matter of fact, yes, that's exactly what I play.

ALYSSA

I'll take a rain check.

KAITLYN

Well, that goes for all of you. Anybody who wants to learn to play guitar, just let me know.

TREVOR

What is it -- a Takamini?

KAITLYN

It's a Taylor. Let me show you.

She kneels down to open the guitar case.

TREVOR

Dad has, like, this *amazing* collection of guitars, like one that Jimmy Page played, and these custom-made Martins, and he's got all these old Fender amps. He took all that stuff with him when he moved to his apartment.

KAITLYN

(tuning)

Well, that's wonderful. Old guitars can have an amazing sound. Cory got me this one in a pawn shop for my birthday. Before that, I used to stay late at school and use one in the music room there.

TREVOR

Play something.

ALYSSA

Just not country.

SIENA

Play Twinkle Twinkle!

KAITLYN

Well, sure.

(singing, playing)

Twinkle twinkle little star . . .

She sings the whole song, and Siena sings along with her. Siena is largely won over, just by the singing.

SIENA

Play Old McDonald!

ALYSSA

Please don't. I'll pay you not to.

KAITLYN

What kind of music do you like, Alyssa?

TREVOR

She likes weepy Emo guys crying on her iPod: Oh, I love you, I'm so sensitive, I love you!

ALYSSA

Shut UP!

She pokes him and pulls on his hair. More amused than hurt, Trevor pretends to howl in pain:

TREVOR
Aaaah! Owwww! She's hurting me,
ow!

INT. UPSTAIRS HALLWAY -- NIGHT

Alyssa leads Trevor out into the hallway by the hair.

ALYSSA
This isn't hurting you. You want
to feel *real* pain?

She presses him over the side of the railing.

ALYSSA (CONT'D)
Would you like to take the plunge?

KAITLYN
(moving into the doorway)
Easy, guys.

Alyssa releases Trevor. He bounds back into his room, around Kaitlyn, unharmed and unfazed.

INT. TREVOR'S ROOM -- NIGHT

Alyssa comes back in, and challenges Kaitlyn, who is still wearing her guitar.

ALYSSA
You gonna run get my mom out of the
party for hurting him? She's busy,
she's got big guests over.

KAITLYN
I'd just like you to take it easy.
I'm glad to be hanging out with
you --

TREVOR
Play something you wrote.

ALYSSA
Yeah, fine, why not. Let's hear
some of that country music magic.

KAITLYN
All right.
(singing and playing)
(MORE)

KAITLYN (cont'd)

I'm a country girl, I walk the line
 Between the laughs of Minnie Pearl
 The tears of Patsy Cline
 And I don't need no fancy man
 What I need is a guy who understands -
 The country girl I am
 I don't go for that city life
 It don't feel right to me
 Let me run barefoot in wet grass
 A big sky sets me free
 I'll park beside a winding stream
 And sleep in my RV
 A wildflower shows how wild
 This country girl must be
 I'm a country girl, I've got to thank
 The fighting, restless side of Merle
 The lonely songs of Hank
 For how I love life on the road
 And if a guy don't treat me right
 Then down that dusty road
 This country girl must go
 I don't appreciate the lines
 Some think I want to hear
 And when I ride in my own rig
 You know I'm gonna steer
 You can't buy me with pretty gifts
 I better make that clear
 But you can be my friend if you will buy
 This country girl a beer
 I'm a country girl, I move between
 The George and Tammy heartache world
 And the wild party scene
 Though I have fun, my conscience is clean
 I try not to hurt anyone, the dreams
 Of this country girl ain't mean
 I like my chicken fried
 My juke joints countrified
 Charlie Pride and Freddy Fender,
 Being tough and being tender,
 Playing ball, and Tom T. Hall
 And old Steve Earle
 I'm a country girl
 I'm a country girl

She sounds good and plays well, but Alyssa and Trevor are not yet ready to acknowledge these things.

ALYSSA

Well. I guess you are.

KAITLYN

I guess I am.

She puts the guitar back in its case, and shuts it.

ALYSSA

What are all those weird names in the song? All those people?

KAITLYN

They're people in country music. From a little ways back. Your dad would know them.

ALYSSA

(snorts)

Not.

KAITLYN

How 'bout you, Trevor? You like country music?

TREVOR

Naah. Country music sucks.

He hops around, as if pogoing. He turns his hands into claws, and snarls at Siena. She screams and runs into the hall. Trevor chases her.

INT. UPSTAIRS HALLWAY -- NIGHT

Kaitlyn follows them, carrying the guitar. Alyssa trails them.

KAITLYN

Trevor, quit that.

TREVOR

What, she likes it!

SIENA

I do not!

KAITLYN

Now, what's so bad about country music?

TREVOR

It sucks. Dad was in rock and roll A&R, and then they sent him down here to run Spearpoint, and he hates this shit, and so do I.

KAITLYN

Would your parents want you to be using that kind of language?

She heads back into her room with the guitar.

TREVOR
 (shrugs)
 They don't care.

INT. MAID'S ROOM -- NIGHT

Kaitlyn puts the guitar down. The kids follow her in.

TREVOR
 Anyhow, Dad's been miserable since we moved here and he hates everybody, and that's a big part of why our folks split up, so country music can bite me.

SIENA
 I'll bite you!

TREVOR
 Shut up, twerp.

SIENA
 Shut up yourself, dumb-ass!

ALYSSA
 Shut up, both of you. You're cranky and, Siena, it's past your bedtime.

(to Kaitlyn)
 What did you say your name was?

KAITLYN
 Kaitlyn.

ALYSSA
 Well -- good night.

KAITLYN
 Oh. Good night.

The kids troop out the door, Alyssa still cool and arrogant and leading the way. But Siena turns around as she leaves and whispers in a friendly way:

SIENA
 Good night, Kaitlyn!

Then she runs on after her siblings. With a quizzical smile, Kaitlyn moves to shut the door.

INT. SUV -- MORNING

Kaitlyn is in the back of this gorgeous vehicle, sandwiched between Siena in her car seat and Trevor. Deena is driving, in shades, and Alyssa sits beside her. They move along Hillsboro Road, toward the Green Hills Mall.

DEENA

I just need to hit a couple stores in Green Hills. There's a new collection at Dillard's.

KAITLYN

I've never been to Dillard's.

Alyssa gives a snort of contempt.

DEENA

Well, it's not Bloomingdale's, but for Nashville it's nice.

Kaitlyn points out the window, for the kids in the back seat:

KAITLYN

See that Krystal Hamburger sign? They say when Crystal Gayle was coming to town to launch her career, and she didn't have her stage name yet, her older sister, Loretta Lynn, was driving around, and she passed a Krystal Hamburger place and said: That's it! We'll call her Crystal!

TREVOR

So? Who cares?

ALYSSA

Who even remembers these people? Country *now* is bad enough.

KAITLYN

Well, I like to watch old clips of the Opry -- or, like, the first clips of Dolly Parton on the Porter Wagoner Show, you can see 'em on youtube --

ALYSSA

That's your idea of something to watch on youtube?

TREVOR

Yeah, really.

ALYSSA

Are you, like, on redneck steroids?

DEENA

Alyssa, look in my purse and make sure I took my Amex.

(slaps wheel)

Damn! I didn't even bring the shoes to return.

INT. DEPARTMENT STORE -- DAY

The kids and Kaitlyn hang around while Deena paws at a rack of very skimpy dresses. Alyssa is interested in some of the clothes. Kaitlyn is dazzled by the price tags. Siena and Trevor are bored out of their minds.

DEENA

(exploding suddenly)

Shit! Shit, shit, shit, shit!
Nothing but size four! Do they think the whole fucking world is size four? This is so unfair!

KAITLYN

Um -- is it okay if I take the kids outside for a walk?

DEENA

Yes -- I've got your number, I'll call you when I'm done.

SIENA

I want Godiva!

DEENA

(handing money to Kaitlyn)
Here's forty, go and buy them something at Godiva Chocolate.

KAITLYN

(wide-eyed at the money)
Yes, ma'am.

DEENA

(snaps)
I said, call me Deena!
(beat. realizing how nasty she sounded, tries to be friendlier)
Please. Just call me Deena.

INT. MALL PASSAGEWAY -- DAY

The kids are eating chocolate truffles outside of Godiva. Siena is very happy, her face smeared in chocolate.

KAITLYN

I don't -- I've never seen a mall like this.

ALYSSA

Do they even have malls, back in Bumfuck, or wherever it is?

KAITLYN

Darnelle. It's east of Murfreesboro. And yes, they have malls, but not quite like this.

TREVOR

Do people, like, cook up crystal meth there?

KAITLYN

Some do. I don't.

ALYSSA

(gruffly becomes friendly)
Here, have a rum ball.

KAITLYN

No, that's okay.

ALYSSA

Come on, Mom gave us forty, she wouldn't mind you having some.

KAITLYN

That's okay, I'm good, but thanks, hon. Thanks for the offer.

SIENA

Kaitlyn, if you don't eat any chocolate, it means you don't like us.

TREVOR

Yeah, it means you think we're greedy pigs. So, you have to try one.

KAITLYN

Oh. In that case . . .

She grins, and tries a chocolate truffle.

EXT. WAKEFIELD MANSION -- LATE AFTERNOON

The SUV rolls up the long drive, the people positioned in it much as before, except that Deena's boxes and bags of purchases are on Kaitlyn's lap. We hear the voices inside:

SIENA

I wanna watch *Beauty and the Beast*!

TREVOR

No, I'm watching *Pirates*!

DEENA

Okay, Siena honey, you watch your movie on your computer.

SIENA

No!

DEENA

Trevor needs to watch on the big screen. No arguing.

TREVOR

Yes!

The car stops and they pile out. As Deena opens the back door, Kaitlyn unhooks Siena from her car seat, and Deena lifts her down. Kaitlyn awkwardly clambers out with all the purchases.

DEENA

I'll take those. Kaitlyn -- I'd like you to look around here. And in the tulip area of the garden. I lost an earring.

(roots in her pocket,
produces an earring)

It goes with this one, it's from the Paloma Picasso collection.

KAITLYN

Okay.

EXT. TULIP GARDEN -- LATE AFTERNOON

Kaitlyn is down on all fours, scouring the ground for signs of the earring.

Gavin Wakefield comes around the side of the house and watches her for a moment.

GAVIN

They got you hunting for truffles?

KAITLYN

Ms. Wakefield lost an earring.

GAVIN

Oh no. Alert the media.

(beat)

You know, Kaitlyn, don't do that, don't let her degrade you like that. Get up off the ground, please.

He pulls her up. She brushes herself off.

KAITLYN

Oh, I don't mind.

GAVIN

Well, you should. You're a sweet, pretty girl, you're not some farm animal, she's just -- she's delusional. I'm sorry. So, Cory tells me you're a songwriter. Are you an aspiring artist?

KAITLYN

Well -- for now, I'm just glad to be writing with him . . .

GAVIN

But do you play out at all?

Embarrassed, she grins and ducks her head as she shakes it.

KAITLYN

Not yet, nothin' like that.

GAVIN

He shouldn't be hiding you away. I feel like he's been holding out on me, not introducing us. 'Cause you know, young is hot right now, more than ever, Miley, Taylor, young is good, especially if you've got the face and the body for it.

He puts out a hand, and lifts her chin in the air. The way he keeps touching her, a little too lingeringly, is creeping her out.

GAVIN (CONT'D)

And you do. If you just believe in yourself enough to really work it. The high school angle is good, the poor girl angle is good. And if you can't really write, we can set you up with pros, we can arrange it so it seems like you're writing --

KAITLYN

I do write!

GAVIN

Well, great, I'd love to take you to dinner and discuss it sometime.

DEENA

Oh, I just bet you would.

They both look up to see her watching, disgusted.

DEENA (CONT'D)

Watch out for him, Kaitlyn, he can't really launch you as an artist, but he's a letch from waaaay back.

GAVIN

Watch out for her, Kaitlyn, she's a mean old cougar and she's hot for Cory. She'll have you digging in the dirt on your hands and knees all summer, just 'cause he won't let her get in his pants.

DEENA

(shouting)

Oh, that is just ridiculous, of all the disgusting, stupid -- lines -- just 'cause I ruined your little pick-up moment --

Gavin waves to the Latino gardener we saw planting tulips.

GAVIN

Guillermo, hey, how are you?

(to Deena)

Why don't we just take it inside, huh?

He leads Deena by the elbow around the side of the house. Kaitlyn runs ahead of them. Deena jerks her arm away from Gavin, and hisses at him.

DEENA

I don't want you in the house, I don't even know what you're doing here today . . . Keep your hands to yourself!

INT. WAKEFIELD MANSION -- LATE AFTERNOON

As Gavin and Deena enter and argue by the front door, Kaitlyn, badly freaked out, makes her way up the staircase to her room.

GAVIN

Well, hey, maybe I wanted to see how the kid was working out, did you ever think of that?

DEENA

Oh, I'll *bet* you wanted to see her working out --

GAVIN

Shut up, I'm paying her salary, they're my kids too, I want them to be in a good environment. And Cory's a good guy, I wanted to make sure you weren't jerking his girlfriend around --

DEENA

We were all doing fine until you decided to come waltzing --

GAVIN

And so I come here, and I find her crawling around on her hands and knees because you felt --

DEENA

Oh, don't even start . . .

INT. MAID'S ROOM -- LATE AFTERNOON

Kaitlyn enters and closes the door. Her guitar is lying on the bed, out of its case. She picks it up, and finds her hands are too shaky to play for a moment. At last, she begins to strum.

The door opens and Trevor comes in.

TREVOR

I can't watch my freakin' movie down there. Not with that shit going on.

KAITLYN

Well, hang out with me, then. And we'll have a party.

The door opens again. Siena and Alyssa come in, and close the door behind them. Siena is near tears.

KAITLYN

Hey.

ALYSSA

Hey.

TREVOR

He shoulda just waited till his visitation day.

ALYSSA

Yeah, really, it's tomorrow.

TREVOR

I wish we never left New York.

ALYSSA

Oh, come on, you don't even remember New York.

TREVOR

I totally remember New York!

ALYSSA

From visiting Grandma, but not from living there.

TREVOR

(to Kaitlyn)

You know how you thought those Asian lettuce wraps, whatever, were so freaking exotic, at the mall, at The Cheesecake Factory? They got restaurants with all that stuff, all over New York. Thai, Korean, Indian, Szechuan, Shanghai, Vietnamese, everything. It's not as good here. It's all hamburger joints, and meat and three, hick stuff. New York is so much better. We were a fucking family in New York.

KAITLYN

Trevor, don't talk that way --

TREVOR

Oh, why the hell not?

In the pause that follows, we hear the angry voices from downstairs floating up -- we AUDIO BLEED into:

INT. WAKEFIELD MANSION -- LATE AFTERNOON

We are downstairs in the grand main room. Deena and Gavin are screaming in each other's faces.

DEENA

You turn around and you leave right now, or else --

GAVIN

Or else what, what, go ahead, threaten me, let's hear it --

DEENA

Or else I get a restraining order, so they keep you away from here, and you stop poisoning the lives of my children --

GAVIN

Oh, "your children," except when you need a check from me, right? Then suddenly I owe them, I'm the irresponsible parent --

DEENA

This is just like you, you sense when things are quiet, when they're healing from all the fighting --

GAVIN

Oh yes, you're the calm and peaceful one, you're the hands-on parent helping them heal, nurturing them, having quality time with them by parking them in front of the fucking TV set --

DEENA

And you burst in and you smash it all, the calm, the sense of home, everything! Everything we're trying to build!

INT. MAID'S ROOM -- LATE AFTERNOON

Kaitlyn and the three Wakefield kids are transfixed by the fighting, listening to it. Siena crawls onto the bed, and Kaitlyn puts her arm around her.

GAVIN (O.S.)

And you tell me only come on
visiting days, right? Only call
when I'm allowed -- so you can make
sure they're not even free on
visiting days, so you make sure
they won't pick up my calls --

DEENA (O.S.)

Has it ever occurred to you that
maybe, just maybe, they don't want
to talk to you? They don't want to
see you?

GAVIN (O.S.)

With you poisoning them against me
and making your love conditional on
them hating me, maybe, who knows?

Something BREAKS downstairs. The kids jump. Kaitlyn starts talking, saying anything to drown out the fight below.

KAITLYN

So. Um. Want to hear the first
song I wrote with Cory? Five
months back. I was just a high
school junior, we met on-line, he
didn't know if I could write. It's
pretty country, I'm warnin' you.
It sounds a whole lot prettier when
he's here to sing it as a duet.

ALYSSA

(upset about the fighting
downstairs)

We're not going to help your
career, you know. Or Cory's.
We're kids, we have zero power, and
our dad's not going to help Cory or
you, you don't have to play us all
these songs.

KAITLYN

I know. I just thought I'd sing it
'cause you guys like Cory . . .

TREVOR

You can play it if you want to.

KAITLYN

Well, okay. It's kind of old-fashioned . . .

(playing and singing)

There's a peaceful, gentle feeling
 When we're walking by the river and
 We're holding hands
 And I wonder does it come to
 Every woman when she knows
 She really loves a man?
 Like a song by Bobbi Gentry when
 She sang with Glen Campbell
 And they'd harmonize
 That's what I'm put in mind of
 When I see my love reflected in your eyes
 When you hold me close and whisper
 Sweet nothings that mean everything
 And kiss my hair
 It's a cloak of warmth and kindness
 I can wrap around me later on
 When you're not there
 No, the world ain't lost its wonder
 This little town is shining like a
 Spring sunrise
 That's what I'm put in mind of
 When I see my love reflected in your eyes
 You carry me away
 To a peaceful, private place
 Like we're swimming in the cove
 Of an island all our own
 Now I believe in magic
 But it don't need a carnival and
 Fancy words
 It's natural and quiet
 As a man who finds his love
 And curls up next to her
 Feels like we've always known it
 But every day it startles us with
 Sweet surprise
 That's what I'm put in mind of
 When I see my love reflected in your eyes
 That's what I'm put in mind of
 When I see my love reflected in your eyes

EXT. WAKEFIELD MANSION -- DUSK

The front door opens. We hear a SCREAM and a SLAP, and Gavin comes charging out the door, disheveled and simmering. A woman's shoe flies through the air, following him. He wheels around, furious, picks it up and shouts:

GAVIN

I'm gonna get the restraining order! I'll have them put you away, you psycho witch! I'm gonna take this Jimmy Choo, or whatever the fuck, and shove it up your shriveled crone rich bitch asshole!

The DOOR SLAMS as he finishes this speech. He has flung the shoe but it hits the door. He stumbles over to his Mercedes, fumbles for his keys, and climbs in.

Deena is watching from one of the large downstairs windows. Alyssa and Trevor are watching from a window up above.

Gavin turns the car around in a sharp, brutal U-turn, and SCREECHES off down the drive, with gravel flying.

INT. MAID'S ROOM -- DUSK

The room is DARK. The door opens and the light is suddenly SWITCHED ON.

Kaitlyn and Siena have both been resting in the dark on Kaitlyn's bed. Siena has her thumb in her mouth. Kaitlyn looks up to see Deena standing in the door frame, shaky, disheveled, with a drink in her hand.

DEENA

Okay. Let's go. Everybody up.

Kaitlyn sits up on the bed.

DEENA (CONT'D)

Do you have a driver's license, Kaitlyn?

KAITLYN

I have a learner's permit.

DEENA

That'll work. That's enough ID to get you onto the plane.

KAITLYN

Plane?

DEENA

Yeah. There's a direct flight to New York in three hours and we're gonna be on it.

KAITLYN

What, you . . . you want to go to New York? Tonight?

DEENA

I think that's what I just said. Gavin made a big mistake. Trespassing. Violating our space and disrupting our home like that. If he thinks he's going to come by tomorrow and see the kids, he's sadly mistaken. They're gonna be far away.

KAITLYN

But -- but we can't --

DEENA

I'll lend you a bag for your things, you don't have to bring that laundry bag. And I'll get your guitar on the plane with us, in carry-on, you don't have to stow it below, that's bad for guitars.

KAITLYN

Listen, Ms. Wake -- Deena --

DEENA

Siena, honey, you've got to pack a bag, too. Some pretty clothes and some jeans. Kaitlyn will help you pack your bag, and then she'll pack the one that I lend her. Okay?

She stares at them for a beat with a frozen smile.

DEENA (CONT'D)

Hurry, please.

She leaves, closing the door.

INT. PLANE -- NIGHT

The plane is in the air. We PAN SLOWLY along the left-hand aisle. Deena is in the window seat, with no one beside her, holding a martini. We MOVE back a row and see Alyssa and Trevor, looking solemn.

We MOVE BACK another row. There is Kaitlyn and Siena. Kaitlyn is terrified, trying to keep her cool. Siena senses her tension, and puts a hand on Kaitlyn's, on the seat divider.

SIENA

It's okay, Kaitlyn. Planes are pretty safe.

KAITLYN

I -- I know that. Thanks. This is just my first one. My ears are poppin,.

(squeezes Siena's hand)

So, how you doin'? You excited to go visit New York City?

SIENA

(mournful)

I've been there before.

KAITLYN

We can try all those kinds of food Trevor was telling me about, huh? What's wrong, baby?

SIENA

(shrugs)

I dunno. I just feel sad. Bored.

Kaitlyn gets her handbag from beneath the seat, and gets out pad and a pen.

KAITLYN

Well, let's draw something. Let's draw a pasture with horses and cows. You ever draw them?

Siena shakes her head.

KAITLYN (CONT'D)

They got real big eyes. We'll draw some straight on, and some in profile.

INT. TAXI -- NIGHT

Deena is in front, as they pull away from JFK Airport. In back, Kaitlyn holds Siena on her lap, Trevor and Alyssa next to her. Deena snaps at the Indian driver.

DEENA

The Plaza Hotel. What Plaza do you think I mean? Not some other Plaza, THE Plaza. Near Central Park. It's residential now, but it's still a hotel.

INT. PLAZA HOTEL LOBBY -- NIGHT

Kaitlyn and the kids wait as Deena checks in. Uniformed attendants take their bags. Deena is being snippy to the person behind the desk.

DEENA

No, as a matter of fact, that is not acceptable. I have a reservation for a suite with one double bed in one room, and two double beds in the other -- two adjoining rooms.

INT. FRONT ROOM OF SUITE -- NIGHT

The kids take their bags from the men. Kaitlyn grabs hers and Deena's, and Deena tips the men and they leave.

DEENA

Isn't this cool, we're staying at the Plaza! You guys are in there, and I'm out here.

Alyssa pokes her head into the next room.

ALYSSA

So, where are we supposed to sleep?

DEENA

You're with Trevor, and Kaitlyn's with Siena.

ALYSSA

I'm not sharing a bed with him! You've got two beds out here, Mom!

DEENA

Alyssa, please don't start, I've had a really hard day. Okay, we'll get a cot for Siena in there, and you'll just have to share with Kaitlyn. I'm sorry, don't freak out.

ALYSSA

No, it's -- it's okay. We'll figure it out.

The kids go into the next room. Kaitlyn is following them, but Deena calls to her.

DEENA

Kaitlyn?

Kaitlyn stays. When the door closes, Deena breaks down. She clearly hopes to be comforted.

DEENA

Just don't judge me too hard, okay?
 You don't know what it's like!
 You've seen how inappropriate Gavin
 can be -- how would you like that
 kind of threat hanging over your
 home, menacing your children . . .
 Sneaking back into your life when
 you're just beginning to feel like
 it belongs to you . . .

Kaitlyn is not quite sure how to respond. But she tends to comfort those who are upset. She takes a Kleenex from a fancy box provided by the hotel, and offers it to Deena.

KAITLYN

I guess -- I guess I can't know
 what it's like.

DEENA

But we're not going to make this
 about running away. This is a
 vacation, this is family time.
 Time to go out!

KAITLYN

You know, I think the kids are kind
 of beat --

DEENA

You're gonna take them to a place
 that kids love!

KAITLYN

I am? Where?

INT. TOYS R US -- NIGHT

We are CLOSE on a giant T-REX as it ROARS. We PULL BACK to see that Kaitlyn is a little freaked out by it, but the kids, especially Trevor, are heartened by the sight. Siena squeals, and hides her eyes against Kaitlyn's shirt.

We see a MONTAGE of the kids running wild in the store: Siena going mad in a Barbie corner, Trevor having fun with motorized vehicles, and the kids with Kaitlyn riding on the ferris wheel within the store.

EXT. TOYS R US -- NIGHT

The four exit the store.

TREVOR

Why do they have to close at ten?
That's bogus.

ALYSSA

Let's go into Virgin and check out
the music.

TREVOR

Yes!

KAITLYN

Guys, I think Siena's fading.

Trevor and Alyssa glance down at Siena. Her eyes are closing, and she looks unsteady on her feet.

ALYSSA

I guess that's true. We better get
a cab. Let's get out of the
pedestrian zone.

Kaitlyn scoops Siena up and Siena dozes on her shoulder.

Kaitlyn looks around, at the flowing screens and rivers of neon, at all the people of different backgrounds, the billboards for Broadway shows. She is dazzled.

KAITLYN

My Lord. This is Times Square. I
am in Times Square, New York City.

TREVOR

Pretty cool, huh?

INT. FRONT ROOM OF SUITE -- NIGHT

The kids enter the room, Kaitlyn holding the room key card. The lights in the beautiful room are down, except for one lamp. Deena is asleep in a comfortable chair, a liquor glass in her lap.

The kids tiptoe past into the other room. Kaitlyn puts the bolt on the door, takes the glass out of Deena's hand, and turns out the lamp.

INT. KIDS' ROOM IN SUITE -- NIGHT

Trevor and Alyssa are indeed in one bed, in pyjamas. Kaitlyn, in her nightgown, is carrying a sleeping Siena, in her pyjamas, to the other bed, and tucking her in. The lights are low. Alyssa speaks softly.

ALYSSA

Kaitlyn?

KAITLYN

Yeah?

ALYSSA

I just wanted to say -- like, I'm sorry if we kind of gave you a hazing, or -- I'm sorry if I've been kind of obnoxious. And I'm glad you're here. I think I speak for all of us.

Trevor chimes in, without opening his eyes.

TREVOR

Yeah, you do.

KAITLYN

Well, thanks, guys. That means a whole lot to me. See you in the morning.

EXT. PLAZA HOTEL -- MORNING

The sun is rising over Central Park and this whole lovely area of the city.

INT. KIDS' ROOM IN SUITE -- MORNING

The kids are asleep in their beds. Kaitlyn comes out of the bathroom, wrapped in a towel. She fishes in her bag for her cell phone, swings the bathroom door a few times, to disperse steam, and takes the phone back into the bathroom.

INT. BATHROOM -- MORNING

It's a sumptuously appointed bathroom. Kaitlyn closes the door and calls Cory, perching on the edge of the tub. Cory picks up.

CORY (O.S.)

Mmmm . . . what?

Kaitlyn conducts this whole conversation with whispered urgency, so the kids in the next room don't hear.

KAITLYN

Hey.

INT. CORY'S BEDROOM -- MORNING

He lies naked beneath a sheet on a mattress on the floor.

CORY

Hey.

KAITLYN (O.S.)

Oh no, did I wake you? You must be an hour earlier!

CORY

Earlier than what? I'm glad to hear from you, I tried last night at like, seven, I couldn't get through.

KAITLYN (O.S.)

I was on a plane.

CORY

On a plane where? I was gonna stop by with Gavin today and see you and the kids --

KAITLYN (O.S.)

She didn't want the kids to see Gavin. He came by and they had a fight, and she took us all to New York.

Cory sits up, fully awake and indignant.

CORY

New York City? You're serious! That's crazy, Kaitlyn, I'm so sorry. Why -- did you even go? You're scared to fly!

INT. BATHROOM -- MORNING

Same as before.

KAITLYN

It wasn't so bad. I didn't want to lose the job . . .

(MORE)

KAITLYN (cont'd)

I was scared for the kids. Deena didn't seem to be really thinking straight . . .

CORY (O.S.)

Well, but she's responsible, for them and for you, and to take you so far away with no warning . . . She should have *some* sense of *in loco parentis*, or whatever.

KAITLYN

Well, there's plenty of loco around here. Not so much parentis. But we're hangin' in here, we're okay. Maybe Gavin'll fire me for goin', but it seemed like the right thing, to try 'n keep an eye on the kids. I just -- I just wanted to let you know what was goin' on.

INT. CORY'S BEDROOM -- MORNING

Cory rubs his eyes. This is a major headache and he's worried.

CORY

Where are you calling from?

KAITLYN (O.S.)

A big hotel. It's called The Plaza.

Cory smiles.

CORY

The Plaza, huh? Well, that doesn't sound too terrible.

KAITLYN (O.S.)

It's insane! You should see this bathroom! Everything is just so beautiful!

CORY

Well, just enjoy it, make Deena buy you and the kids some good meals, maybe talk her into a Broadway show . . . Get what you can out of it, a trip to New York. Heck. But I'm so sorry, baby, I know you didn't sign up for this freak show.

(MORE)

CORY (cont'd)

(beat)
I love you.

KAITLYN (O.S.)

I love you.

CORY

Gavin's gotta know you're not the one who pulled this. I'll try to do damage control on this end. You just keep the kids calm, like you said.

INT. BATHROOM -- MORNING

Same as before. A voice reaches Kaitlyn from the other room. It's Deena calling:

DEENA (O.S.)

Kaitlyn?

KAITLYN

(into phone)
Okay, Cory, gotta go.

She ends the call, and realizes she would rather not discuss it with Deena. She leaves the phone on the edge of the tub and opens the door.

KAITLYN

Yeah?

INT. KIDS' ROOM IN SUITE -- MORNING

Deena stands in the suite doorway. She has put herself together and put on her make-up. Her outfit is a little too fabulous for this early in the day. Her voice has woken the kids. They are stirring, mumbling, shifting around in bed.

She addresses Kaitlyn, who stands in the bathroom doorway.

DEENA

I'm going downstairs for breakfast. You and the kids can order room service -- whatever you like. I'll be back up in an hour, and we can plan our day.

With a tight little smile, she closes the door. Kaitlyn stares around at the waking children.

KAITLYN

Okay, frankly, I ain't sure how room service works --

ALYSSA

I am. The pancakes are good here.

KAITLYN

Well, order me whatever you're havin', and I'll finish gettin' dressed, so y'all can wash up.

INT. THE PALM COURT -- MORNING

Deena dines in solitary splendor in this stunning part of the hotel, with a delicate floral stained glass ceiling above her. Couples and families are scattered at tables nearby. LIGHT CLASSICAL MUSIC plays.

INT. KIDS' ROOM IN SUITE -- MORNING

Trevor is dressed. Kaitlyn is dressed, and helping Siena get dressed. Siena is not cooperating. She angles her foot this way and that, to keep Kaitlyn from putting the shoe on.

KAITLYN

Siena, honey. Come on, now.

Alyssa comes out of the bathroom dressed, toweling her damp hair. Even when Alyssa is sarcastic now, it doesn't have the nasty edge it had before. There is a KNOCK at the door.

KAITLYN

Come on in.

A uniformed butler enters to carry away the tray full of mostly eaten pancakes, waffles and syrup.

BUTLER

Will you be needing anything else from the butler service this morning?

KAITLYN

Nope, thanks, we're good.

There is a momentary pause.

ALYSSA

Tip him. We gotta tip him.

KAITLYN

(jumps)

Oh! I --

ALYSSA

I got it.

She moves to tip the man, who inclines his head. She hands him a few bills and he glides out of the room with the tray.

KAITLYN

So, what are we gonna do today?
Are we gonna go see the Statue of
Liberty, or the Empire State
Building?

TREVOR

(scornfully)

That's for tourists. We're
natives.

KAITLYN

Oh. Well. Okay. So what do y'all
think we'll be doing?

ALYSSA

(sarcastic)

I'm sure Mom's got some thrilling
activity planned, unless she wants
us along to help her shop.

SIENA

I just -- don't feel like going
out. I feel sad. I'm sad Mom and
Dad are fighting.

TREVOR

Yeah, we kind of shouldn't even be
here right now. Still, twerp, you
know what they say, the more
divorced parents mess up, the more
they feel guilty and buy you toys.

SIENA

(sadly)

I guess.

ALYSSA

What do you want to do, Kaitlyn?
If you want to take the ferry to
the Statue of Liberty or something,
what the hell, maybe we could do
that.

KAITLYN

Well . . . Is there any place to
hear music? Not like classical or
Broadway, but --

ALYSSA

(snorts)

Country? They don't even have
country radio here.

KAITLYN

(incredulous)

No country radio?

ALYSSA

Not a single station. Maybe you
can turn them on to it. You can
play guitar in the subway and sing
your songs.

SIENA

Yeah. Kaitlyn, sing us a song,
sing another song you wrote with
Cory.

KAITLYN

Well, let's see. It's another
twenty minutes till your mom's
meeting us . . . most of the songs
I write with Cory are for him to
sing -- guy songs.

She opens the guitar case, and takes her guitar out for minor
tuning.

KAITLYN (CONT'D)

Tell you what. I'll sing you a
song I wrote about Cory, about how
happy I felt when we first got
together and started co-writing,
and he liked my songs and all. And
Siena, I bet you won't feel sad
after hearing this one. If I wrote
a song any darn happier, I'd take
off and float away. . .

(singing and playing)

I saw my life spelled out in black and white
All the colors had washed out
The days on the horizon were such a sorry sight
A shadow-play of grays and doubts
Then you arrived like a Technicolor sunset
I'll make you one bet, boy
You don't realize what you've done yet
CHORUS: YOU LIFTED ME UP TO THE SKY

(MORE)

KAITLYN (CONT'D)

TOLD ME TO SPREAD MY WINGS AND FLY
 YOU HELD A PRISM TO THE LIGHT AND
 MADE A RAINBOW
 I'VE REDISCOVERED HOW TO LAUGH
 AND I BLESS EVERYTHING I HAVE
 WHEN I WAS LOSING HOPE
 YOU SPUN ME AROUND LIKE A
 KALEIDOSCOPE
 The galaxy is wide, and when worlds collide
 I bet they send off blazing sparks
 Fireworks ignite and blossom in the night
 As we go dancing through the dark
 I spark to you, see the colors changing hue
 You're changin' up my point of view
 With everything you do
 REPEAT CHORUS
 I dream in color now
 Especially when I'm awake
 This telescope holds wonders
 Let's give it one more shake
 REPEAT CHORUS
 Like a kaleidoscope
 You held that crystal prism up to
 the light And made a rainbow, I
 watch the colors flow Like a
 kaleidoscope . . .

As she sings the song, the kids cheer up. Siena in her socks jumps up and down on the bed. Perhaps Alyssa and Trevor help sing the chorus the second and third time it comes around.

Kaitlyn comes to the end of the song, and the kids clap and whoop as she laughs and catches her breath. Siena yells:

SIENA

Yeeeeeeaaaah!

EXT. CENTRAL PARK SOUTH -- MORNING

Deena, Kaitlyn and the children walk away from the Plaza. Deena is taking a wad of twenties out of her wallet and handing the bills to Kaitlyn.

DEENA

It's a nice day, take them
 someplace they can walk around.
 The Village, maybe -- Washington
 Square Park.

KAITLYN

Sure, but -- I can't take all this.

DEENA

Put it away fast, don't argue about money on the street in New York.

Kaitlyn stuffs the bills in the pocket of her jeans.

DEENA (CONT'D)

And take them wherever they want for lunch. Just be at Columbus Circle at 2:30. We'll do something together, and maybe see a show. Call me if there's a real problem. Bye, kids!

She puts her hand out, a cab stops, and she gets in. They watch her drive away.

KAITLYN

So, we just do that also -- get a cab? Where we goin' again?

ALYSSA

Washington Square Park, I guess.
(she puts her hand up,
like her mother)
Taxi!

EXT. WASHINGTON SQUARE PARK -- DAY

Kaitlyn and the kids wander through the park, and take in the dog run, the skateboarders on their mounds, the arch and the fountain, and a young man juggling knives. Alyssa trails behind. She has her cell phone out, and speaks furtively.

ALYSSA

No, we're supposed to meet her at 2:30 at the corner of the park. At Columbus Circle.
(listens to voice on the other end)
I don't know how long she's keeping us here . . .

EXT. NASHVILLE BNA AIRPORT -- DAY.

Gavin has parked his car and he's walking toward the airline terminal for departures, speaking on his phone.

GAVIN

Well, you keep her at that corner if I'm a little late.

(MORE)

GAVIN (cont'd)

I'm gonna try to be there to meet you, baby, I need to see you kids . . . I didn't get to see you last night . . . No, don't worry, I don't want to fight with her -- I just want to see and your brother and sister. I love you, baby, I'm gonna fly there as fast as I can. Bye.

He ends the call. There is a hard, mean, determined look on his face as he enters the terminal.

EXT. WASHINGTON SQUARE PARK -- DAY

Alyssa puts her phone away, looking troubled, and rejoins the others. The juggler is still throwing knives in the air, but the kids are getting bored with it.

KAITLYN

There sure are a lot of different people in New York. But there's not a whole lot goin' on here for kids, is there?

TREVOR

Yeah, Mom comes up with these ideas -- "oh, take them to Washington Square" -- without really even thinking it through. She just wants us out of her hair.

Alyssa snaps at him with guilty intensity because she feels she has betrayed her mother by talking to her father:

ALYSSA

Trevor, don't pick on Mom, that's not true. Sometimes there's a street fair or something in the Village. She just wanted us to get off our butts and stretch our legs for a change.

TREVOR

Okay, calm down.

KAITLYN

Kids, your Mom gave me enough for -- quite a day out. What is it you'd like to do?

TREVOR

Well, I'm starting to feel a little
bit like eating --

ALYSSA

You always feel like eating.

TREVOR

(to Kaitlyn)

And I was thinking maybe we could
show you a dim sum parlor down in
Chinatown.

KAITLYN

A what?

INT. DIM SUM PALACE -- AFTERNOON

Kaitlyn and the kids sit at a large round table. They share one teapot. The place is packed, and a Chinese family that speaks no English, including elderly grandparents, shares the table with them. Kaitlyn takes everything in.

Young women pushing carts of food make their way through the vast space. One stops at their table. Trevor takes charge.

TREVOR

Let's see what you got.

The young woman speaks no English. She simply opens one round bamboo or metal steamer after another.

TREVOR

Yeah, definitely, the crystal
shrimp. And the shrimp in rice
noodle. Yeah, and is that pork and
shrimp shumai? Let's start with
just one of those.

The woman puts each kind of dim sum he's requested down on the table. Then she shows them a metal container full of chickens' feet. Kaitlyn recoils in horror; so does Siena.

SIENA

Ew!

TREVOR

Naah, no chicken's feet. But that
fried thing with shrimp -- one o'
those. Yeah, and another crystal
shrimp.

As the woman picks up their bill paper and stamps the items they have chosen, Alyssa gets annoyed with Trevor.

ALYSSA
Calm down, eat what you have before
you order anymore.

Trevor rubs his hands together, very happy.

TREVOR
Oh, yeah. This is gonna be good.

EXT. CHINATOWN -- AFTERNOON.

The kids browse around a display of items out on the street in Chinatown: happy Buddhas and delicate carved objects and mechanical dragons which move, live baby turtles in a bowl, and mechanical fish which swim in their own tub.

Kaitlyn is writing something on a scrap of paper. Siena wants to buy a mechanical fish and looks around for Kaitlyn, then notices what she's doing.

SIENA
Kaitlyn? What are you writing?

KAITLYN
Just a sec, hon. I got a song by
the tail.

SIENA
What's it about?

ALYSSA
Sssh. Let her write. I'll buy
you that thing. You want it for a
bathtub toy?

SIENA
Uh huh.

Alyssa peels off money to buy a fish toy for Siena, and a dragon puppet for Trevor.

TREVOR
You're supposed to haggle for it.

ALYSSA
No frigging way.

Then, all three kids crowd around Kaitlyn and watch her write.

KAITLYN

Done!

SIENA

You write a song about Chinatown?

KAITLYN

Well, more about Times Square last night. And Washington Square, and yeah, I guess about here, too. Every place we been so far.

TREVOR

(grinning)

So, sing it.

KAITLYN

(laughs)

Not out in public, have you lost your mind?

EXT. COLUMBUS CIRCLE -- AFTERNOON

Deena is waiting at the southwest corner of the park as the kids and Kaitlyn approach her.

DEENA

Oh, good. There you are. Did you have a nice day so far?

SIENA

Yes, Mommy.

DEENA

Wonderful. Me, too. Let's go.

ALYSSA

Um -- wait a minute, Mom. Let me -- let me show Kaitlyn and the kids that horse and carriage.

She points to the spot, ten yards away, where a horse-drawn carriage is standing on the road, and the horse has its face in the feedback.

DEENA

Oh, all right, but hurry up. We've got a few hours for fun, and dinner reservations for six, and then we've got to get to the theater.

Alyssa leads Kaitlyn, Trevor and Siena over to the horse. An Irish young driver sits holding the reins.

DRIVER
Care for a ride?

KAITLYN
No, we're just lookin' 'cause he's
so pretty. What's his name?

DRIVER
Secretariat. A fine old name for a
horse.

SIENA
(squeals)
Look at him chomping! Look at the
bag move!

DRIVER
Yes, he's on very close terms with
that feed bag.

We are CLOSE AGAIN on Deena as she waits for them to finish
and checks her watch impatiently.

Suddenly, a little gray Toyota Camry from the 1990s rears up
onto the sidewalk, where she stands alone.

There is a LURCH and the sound of a COLLISION, then of the
CAR TAKING OFF, but we are already BACK ON Kaitlyn and the
children as they stare at the scene in horror.

Siena opens her mouth and screams. Trevor's mouth hangs wide
open. Alyssa falls apart like a little kid:

ALYSSA
Mommy!

INT. POLICE STATION -- LATE AFTERNOON

Kaitlyn is being interrogated by two detectives.

FIRST DETECTIVE
Can you tell me anything about the
car?

KAITLYN
(shaky, still in shock)
It was -- gray, I think. It was a
Toyota Camry from the late
nineties. But I didn't see -- I
didn't think in time to get the
license number.

The detectives exchange a glance.

FIRST DETECTIVE
You some kind of car expert?

KAITLYN
No, but my boyfriend drives a car
like that.

Again, the men exchange glances.

KAITLYN
But that wasn't him! He's in
Nashville, and his car is blue,
this was, like, a silver gray.

FIRST DETECTIVE
And do you have any sense of who
might have done this? I mean -- a
car climbs a curb and takes out one
lady, that doesn't sound like a
typical hit and run.

KAITLYN
I don't -- I don't know. I've only
been taking care of the kids for a
few days. It's my second day in
New York, and I -- the parents were
fighting, but I don't know anything
more than that.

FIRST DETECTIVE
Well, it was not Mr. Wakefield. At
least driving the vehicle. His
cousin Steve met him at the
airport, and we got his cell phone
picture, taken with his cousin, in
the cab -- same time as Deena
Wakefield was struck by the car.

KAITLYN
Okay. I wasn't accusing --

FIRST DETECTIVE
Who would you accuse?

KAITLYN
I'm sorry, I don't -- I'm just the
baby-sitter.

FIRST DETECTIVE
Okay, then, why don't you go stand
outside with the kids. This is
pretty rough on them.

(MORE)

FIRST DETECTIVE (cont'd)

We may need to ask them some more questions -- and their dad -- before he can take them on out of here.

INT. POLICE STATION WAITING ROOM -- LATE AFTERNOON

There are other people with other problems sitting or standing/swaying in the big, ugly space under the neon light. One man sits hand-cuffed next to an officer, who is filling out a report.

Kaitlyn finds the three kids standing huddled together. Their faces are streaked with tears. Alyssa's facade of cool is totally gone. When she sees Kaitlyn she crumbles and hides her head in her shoulder, wailing something incoherent.

KAITLYN

Alyssa, shush, shush, honey, I'm here, you got your brother and sister here with you. What did you say?

Alyssa pulls her face away from Kaitlyn's shirt and wails again, this time it's more understandable.

ALYSSA

It's -- my fault -- she's dead!

Kaitlyn puts her arms around her and smooths her hair.

KAITLYN

Oh, honey, honey, no, why would you even think that?

ALYSSA

Because I told him where she'd be! I talked to him, and he told me he was flying here, he --
(coughs)
He told me to -- keep her there -- if he was late, and I . . . I took you -- to the horse . . .

KAITLYN

Sssshhh, honey, he didn't do it, it was another driver --

ALYSSA

(very agitated)
He had Steve pick him up as an alibi, he hates Steve! He sent the car! And I helped him set it up!

Gavin has exited some police interrogation room and is now standing by the door of the waiting room. Kaitlyn sees him, and he smiles at her awkwardly. The kids see him, and shrink away, en masse, to chairs against the wall, looking down.

Kaitlyn goes over to him, to keep him away from the kids.

KAITLYN

Hello, Mr. Wakefield. I'm -- so sorry.

GAVIN

Hey, it wasn't your fault she dragged you off here, Cory explained it to me, it's good the kids had somebody responsible around.

KAITLYN

No, I -- I mean, I'm so sorry about the loss . . . of --

GAVIN

Yeah, it's tough on the kids. I think they're in shock right now. But crazy hit and run people, what are you gonna do? Once we get home, and we're back in the house together, we'll be all right. This whole crummy atmosphere, the tug of war, back and forth, Deena kidnapping the kids, all her drinking . . . She wasn't very stable, and they were the ones who had to suffer.

(Puts his hand on her arm)

But you can have the job for the rest of the summer, you know. The continuity will be good for them.

His smile is too friendly, his hand too caressing, and once again, Kaitlyn is badly freaked out. She steps away from him.

The First Detective sticks his head into the waiting room.

FIRST DETECTIVE

Mr. Wakefield? We'd like to ask you a few more questions.

GAVIN

Sure thing. My kids are in good hands.

He gives Kaitlyn a few more pats and heads off to be questioned by the detective. Kaitlyn turns, and sees the kids slinking off toward the hallway. Alyssa asks something of a black young woman officer, and she directs her:

YOUNG OFFICER

Both the men's room and the women's room are just down the hall.

Kaitlyn watches the kids go through the door -- and something tells her to follow.

INT. LONG HALLWAY -- LATE AFTERNOON

Kaitlyn emerges from the waiting room, and sees the children going out the front door -- not receiving much interest from a half-dozing guard behind a desk. Kaitlyn follows.

EXT. POLICE STATION -- LATE AFTERNOON

Alyssa and the younger kids are on the curb and Alyssa's hand is in the air. A taxi stops and they pile inside. Kaitlyn runs down the steps and gets in with them.

INT. TAXI -- LATE AFTERNOON

The driver is Jamaican.

DRIVER

Where can I take you?

ALYSSA

Anywhere. Just drive.

DRIVER

I'm sorry, Miss, I must have a destination of some kind.

ALYSSA

Just -- just take us down the nearest transverse to the Central Park Zoo, all right?

DRIVER

That's fine.

KAITLYN

Alyssa, what are you doing?

ALYSSA

I'm going to the zoo. It's favorite place of mine, all right? It might have been where Mom was planning to take us . . .

She breaks down weeping.

KAITLYN

Sweetie, but you can't just waltz out of the station like that --

ALYSSA

(shouting)

Well, I can't go live with him, can I? You heard him, he wants to just move back home with us and get custody, and he's covered his traces, and he KILLED MOM!

Siena begins to cry again.

KAITLYN

Oh, baby -- Trevor, take care of her, okay?

Trevor grabs on to Siena's hand, and she squeezes it tight.

KAITLYN (CONT'D)

Now, Alyssa, you don't know for sure that's true --

ALYSSA

His flight wasn't delayed. I heard him talk to them. He showed them his itinerary. The plane got in just before Mom was killed. If he knew he wouldn't be there at 2:30, why would he tell me to keep her there? He arranged for that car.

KAITLYN

You still can't know --

ALYSSA

I know. I know him, I know how it was with them. And you have to decide now -- are you with us or against us? 'Cause I'm not going back there. I wouldn't feel safe. Trevor, Siena, how 'bout you?

Trevor and Siena both shake their heads solemnly.

KAITLYN

Well, then, I guess I'm staying
with you guys . . . until we've had
a moment to figure this thing out.

EXT. ZOO -- LATE AFTERNOON

The seals are sunning themselves in their outdoor tank. Some are underwater, spinning and swimming, some splash along the surface, and some have crawled up on the raised area, and snooze. Kaitlyn is still quietly conferring with Alyssa.

KAITLYN

Look, if you -- if you tell the
police about your concerns, maybe
they'll let you go live with
someone else for awhile. You must
have a relative, or --

ALYSSA

I read a book of true crimes. O.J.
Simpson got custody of his kids,
right?

KAITLYN

Well . . . I think so . . .

ALYSSA

Even if they think it's Dad, he
gets to keep us until they pin it
on him. I don't want him anywhere
near me now.

(to Trevor)

What time is it?

TREVOR

It's almost four.

ALYSSA

Take Siena. The Delacorte clock is
about to spin.

KAITLYN

What?

ALYSSA

You go too. It's nice.

EXT. DELACORTE CLOCK -- LATE AFTERNOON

There are bronze statues of animals playing musical instruments in the gazebo beneath the high-up clock: an elephant playing an accordion, a hippo playing a violin and so on. Trevor, Kaitlyn and Siena stand with those watching.

As the clock STRIKES FOUR, the MUSIC STARTS. It's pretty, delicate music, and the statues of animals begin to rotate around the tower, and spin around. As they watch, Siena begins to cry again.

SIENA

Mommy . . .

Kaitlyn comforts her.

EXT. SEAL TANK -- LATE AFTERNOON

Alyssa does not look toward the clock, from which the MUSIC EMANATES FAINTLY. She stares in at the seals, a strong, determined look on her face.

EXT. PATH THROUGH PARK -- DUSK

The kids and Kaitlyn walk away from the zoo. Kaitlyn trails behind, making a call.

KAITLYN

Cory?

INT. CORY'S HOUSE -- LATE AFTERNOON

Cory is in his barely furnished house, on a Nautilus machine. RAIN patters outside.

CORY

How are you? I got a message from Gavin that he's flying to New York --

KAITLYN (O.S.)

Yeah. He's here.

CORY

Well, are they fighting, how's it going?

KAITLYN

Not good . . .

From a DIFFERENT ANGLE, at a greater distance, we see Alyssa, Trevor and Siena sit on a bench. Alyssa takes out her wallet, and takes stock of how much money she has. A moment of MUSIC underscores the tension.

Now we FIND Kaitlyn again, on a bench a good ways away from them.

KAITLYN

No, Cory. No, don't blame yourself.

INT. CORY'S HOUSE -- LATE AFTERNOON

Cory is terrified for her, now that he's heard the news.

CORY

But I told him the kids weren't home. . . I told him you were in the city . . . He asked me to leave him your number. But I won't do that now. I won't take his calls.

KAITLYN (O.S.)

Yeah, I sure don't want to talk to him. In fact -- Cory, I hate to say it, but I may have to ditch this phone you got me. I'll call you from other numbers.

CORY

My God. Kaitlyn. I get how horrible this is for them. For Trevor and Alyssa and Siena. And I know how you like to take care of people. But -- you realize, that by doing this, by helping these kids do this, you are placing yourself way outside of the law. I mean, this could get you in a whole lot of trouble, this could affect your life in so many ways --

KAITLYN (O.S.)

I know. I -- Cory, I can't take them back there and tell them it's the right thing to do.

CORY

Okay. I'll come for you, I'll be there. But I don't know if I can get on a flight tonight.

EXT. PATH THROUGH PARK -- DUSK

Same as before.

KAITLYN
You don't have to --

CORY (O.S.)
I *do* have to. As fast as I can.
If I can't get there tonight, what
are you going to do?

KAITLYN
I don't know. We can't go back to
the Plaza, that's for sure . . .

She realizes that Alyssa is standing by her.

ALYSSA
Can I talk to Cory?

KAITLYN
(handing her the phone)
Sure.

ALYSSA
Cory? It's Alyssa.
(beat, as he gives his
condolences)
Thanks.
(beat)
Yeah, we'll take care of her.
She's been taking care of us.

She hands the phone back.

KAITLYN
Cory, we gotta go.

INT. CORY'S HOUSE -- LATE AFTERNOON

Cory is off the machine, and pacing.

CORY
Just call me, soon, I'm gonna be
there!

The call ends, and he grabs a shirt, a jacket, and a small
knapsack, eager to leave.

EXT. CORY'S HOUSE -- LATE AFTERNOON

Cory runs in the rain to his car and gets in.

EXT. CENTRAL PARK -- DUSK

Kaitlyn is leading the kids toward a pond, holding her phone and Alyssa's.

KAITLYN

Anybody else have a phone?

TREVOR

Not on me.

SIENA

Not a real one.

KAITLYN

Okay. One thing I learned living in a trailer park . . . There are some bad people there, and some people who ain't so bad, maybe, but they mess up . . . And they say phones got a GPS in 'em now. The police can find you right away with a phone. So we gotta toss these where nobody can trace us, and nobody can find them and use them, either. That's if we're serious about not going back.

ALYSSA

Do it.

Kaitlyn take a breath, and tosses the two cell phones into the pond.

KAITLYN

All right, now. We got some money left. But it wouldn't buy us a room, and we can't go get our stuff -- and any place we try to stay, we're gonna look kind of suspicious.

TREVOR

We could sleep in the park.

ALYSSA

Trevor, be quiet.

TREVOR

No, seriously, we could. It's got some homeless guys at night, and, like, gay guys, but if we find a part that's woods, like up in the North Woods --

KAITLYN

Honey, I don't think that's a good idea.

TREVOR

But we could hide out in the woods! You could teach us how to kill birds and cook them.

KAITLYN

I don't know how to do any of that stuff.

ALYSSA

You told Cory you'd call him from another number.

KAITLYN

Yeah. I DO know how to do that. Let's find a drugstore, and pick up a couple o' Go Phones.

INT. CVS -- EARLY EVENING

People move through the store. The kids stand and watch as Kaitlyn buys a couple of Go Phones from a dispenser. She leads the kids out the door.

EXT. TENNESSEE HIGHWAY -- LATE AFTERNOON

The RAIN continues to POUR DOWN.

INT. TOYOTA -- LATE AFTERNOON

Cory can barely see through the windshield. He is still soaked from running to the car. The traffic is crawling along through the storm. He bangs on the dash in agitation.

CORY

Come on. Come on . . .

EXT. NYC CITY STREET -- EARLY EVENING

Kaitlyn and the kids trail along the street, subdued and anxious, amidst pedestrians headed home, just after rush hour.

KAITLYN

I just don't . . . We can't sleep
in a doorway. It's too dangerous.

ALYSSA

We can find an all-night
restaurant. We can take turns
sleeping.

KAITLYN

Honey, I just don't think this is
gonna work.

ALYSSA

It's got to work. There's no
alternative.

A Latina in her early thirties is walking along the street. She looks friendly. She holds the hand of an eight-year-old boy, and pushes a baby boy in a stroller.

Her warm look makes Kaitlyn approach her impulsively.

KAITLYN

Excuse me, Ma'am --

ALYSSA

Kaitlyn, what are you doing?

KAITLYN

Ma'am, I'm sorry to bother you -- I
just -- me and these kids -- if you
know a place we could crash for the
night, someone who has a room, we
have a little money we could pay --

MOTHER

Desculpe. I no understand what you
saying.

NELSON, the eight-year-old boy, a confident New Yorker,
speaks up.

NELSON

She doesn't have a lot of English.
Are you on the run, or what?

KAITLYN

We're just -- we're good people,
but these kids here have been in a
bad situation, and I'm taking care
of them right now --

Nelson explains it to his mother in Spanish, and Kaitlyn and the kids watch her face closely.

MOTHER

No tienen padres?

KAITLYN

We -- they can't go home. I
promise, they just can't.

MOTHER

Okay. You come with us.

EXT. MUSIC ROW -- EARLY EVENING

Cory's car drives along 16th Avenue South in the pelting rain, and turns into the drive at Spearpoint Music.

EXT. BACK OF SPEARPOINT -- EARLY EVENING

Cory parks, bolts out of the car and up onto the deck. No one is around. He stands near the door, out of the rain, fumbles for his keys and lets himself in the back door of the building.

INT. HALLWAY -- EARLY EVENING

Cory makes his way down the hall of the handsome suburban home converted into a music company, and flicks on a LIGHT.

INT. OFFICE -- EARLY EVENING

Cory puts on another LIGHT, and seats himself at Gavin's computer.

We PAN AROUND the room as he boots the computer up. A framed picture of the kids is on the desk. There are gold records on the wall, and pictures of Gavin with various music celebrities. Cory murmurs to himself:

CORY

Come on . . . come on . . .

He goes into a gmail account, and enters a password.

CORY

Bingo.

INT. SUBWAY -- NIGHT

Kaitlyn has never been down in the subway before. Her eyes are wide as she sits on a bench with the others and takes in the people, the tracks, the light of the train at the end of the tunnel.

Siena is holding the mother's hand, and having a staring contest with the baby.

The older boys are getting acquainted.

TREVOR

I'm Trevor.

NELSON

Nelson.

TREVOR

So, like, where do you guys live?

NELSON

East 103rd Street. Upper East Side.

A train ROARS into the station, hiding them all from view.

INT. SUBWAY TRAIN -- NIGHT

Siena, Trevor, Nelson and Alyssa are seated. The mother stands, holding onto the stroller handle with one hand, strap hanging with the other, along with Kaitlyn.

The train is fairly crowded; it rattles uptown. It stops, and the doors open with CHIMES, and three black men in their fifties get on. They are a doo-wop singing group. They snap their fingers and sing:

MEN

She's a honey, honeybee
 Honeybee, come after me
 She's a honey, honeybee
 Honeybee can sting!
 She calls me sweet, calls me sugar
 Says I am the man for her
 Makes me smile, makes me dizzy
 Makes me think of spring
 But watch that girl, watch her closely
 Love ain't all that she's after

(MORE)

MEN (cont'd)

When she knows you really trust her
The honeybee will sting!
'Cause she's a honey, honeybee . . .

The men move through the car singing. One holds a coffee can, and some people put money into it. Kaitlyn puts a dollar into the can, and one of the men nods in thanks.

The train reaches another station, and the men get off.

EXT. NASHVILLE BNA AIRPORT -- EARLY EVENING

The rain continues to POUR, as Cory dashes into the building.

INT. NASHVILLE BNA AIRPORT -- NIGHT

He runs up to the first ticket counter he sees -- it could be any airline. The woman behind the counter is pert and patient -- and may sense his desperation.

CORY

Please. I need a flight to New York. The next flight to New York.

TICKET COUNTER WOMAN

I'm sorry, sir. It looks like all our flights this evening are canceled.

CORY

No. Then I'll try -- somebody's gotta be flying out, this'll clear soon.

TICKET COUNTER WOMAN

If it does, then the earlier flights have priority, and they're all booked. I'm very sorry, sir, but I think all the airlines are in that situation. I can sell you a ticket for a flight tomorrow morning. That's about the best I can do.

INT. AIRPORT GARAGE -- NIGHT

Cory makes his way through the concrete tiered lot as the rain POUNDS outside.

We see him get into his car and put his head down on the wheel, despondent.

EXT. AIRPORT EXIT ROUTE -- NIGHT

Cory drives through the rain.

INT. TOYOTA -- NIGHT

We are in the car with him. Through the rain, signs loom. He sees a highway sign for heading east. He takes it.

CORY

I'm coming, Kaitlyn. It'll be a long night, but I'm coming . . .

EXT. UPTOWN STREET -- NIGHT

They are approaching the building that is home to Nelson, the mother and the baby. As the mother stops to fold up the stroller, while Kaitlyn holds the baby, the mother tells Nelson something in Spanish, and he translates for her.

NELSON

My mom says we don't have a lot of room, or extra beds. She's sorry -- she'll have to put some clothes on the floor, and you guys can sleep on top of them -- plus, there's a rug.

KAITLYN

That sounds fine. We really appreciate it.

She hands the baby back to the mother, who smiles, and Kaitlyn takes the stroller and carries it up the stoop for her, all the kids trailing along.

INT. APARTMENT -- NIGHT

It's a studio: neat but cramped. On the shelves are items bought at a *botanica*: a statue of a Virgin Mary standing on a large sea shell, other statues and *muñecas*, beads, candles and incense.

There is a dilapidated chair, and on it, a heavy man in an undershirt, who looks up as the mother, Kaitlyn and the kids enter. Kaitlyn and the rich kids look around wonderingly.

The mother explains the situation to the man in Spanish. Nelson makes introductions for Kaitlyn and the kids.

NELSON
That's mi tío Miguel.

KAITLYN
How do you do.

MIGUEL
Hi.

He waves. Like the mother, he does not have much English. Alyssa has been withdrawn, for the most part, since the death of her own mother, but the strangeness of this place draws her out of herself.

ALYSSA
What -- what is all this?

NELSON
Oh. Yeah, my mom's into stuff from the *botanica*. She's not a *Santeria* freak or anything -- she just likes it. You know, one of her *abuelas* was Haitian.

This means nothing to Kaitlyn or the kids.

MOM
I -- bring food.

KAITLYN
Thank you. We sure do appreciate it. I'm just -- I'm gonna run downstairs and outside, for one second. I gotta make a call.

EXT. GAS STATION -- NIGHT

Cory has pulled off the highway to fill his tank. He holds the hose, sheltered by the station, as the RAIN BEATS DOWN all around him. His PHONE RINGS. He whips it out.

CORY
Hello?

EXT. A STREET IN SPANISH HARLEM -- NIGHT

Kaitlyn walks down the block, holding the phone. SALSA MUSIC is playing somewhere, and people are sitting out on fire escapes. A man in a doorway calls to her:

MAN
Sssssss. *Hola*.

She hurries past.

KAITLYN

Cory?

CORY (O.S.)

Kaitlyn! Tell me what's going on.
Are you guys still out on the
street?

KAITLYN

No, we've found some real nice
people who took us in. I just
stepped out to call you on the Go
Phone.

CORY (O.S.)

I couldn't get a flight, it's
raining.

KAITLYN

I can hear it, I think.

CORY

But I'm coming, baby. I'll be
there by tomorrow.

INT. APARTMENT -- NIGHT

Dinner is almost over. There is not enough room for everyone at the table, so the kids eat there, and Kaitlyn, the mother and Miguel balance plates on their laps. Miguel sits in his chair and the mother and Kaitlyn on a battered couch.

The mother spoons baby food into the baby's mouth. Everyone else is eating chicken and rice.

SIENA

Nelson, what's your brother's name?

NELSON

His name is Iván. I call him
gordito.

TREVOR

What does that mean?

NELSON

It means he's little and he's fat.

The mother gets up and begins to collect plates from people.

MOTHER

Listo? Okay?

ALYSSA

Yes, I'm done, thank you.

The mother takes her plate. Kaitlyn rises to help.

KAITLYN

Can I ?

The mother waves her back down.

KAITLYN

Well, ma'am, I don't know what you put on that chicken, but it was just the best thing I've ever tasted! It's like you poured Accent all over it!

ALYSSA

Kaitlyn, do you know what Accent really is?

KAITLYN

Well -- no. What's in it?

ALYSSA

MSG. That's all it is. And some people think that's bad for you.

KAITLYN

(astounded)
Really?

ALYSSA

Take a look on a bottle. What did you think was in there?

KAITLYN

I don't -- I don't know. Magic, I guess. Anyway, great chicken, and those big fried bananas! They were wonderful.

MIGUEL

Platanos.

KAITLYN

What?

NELSON

Plantains. Fried plantains.

KAITLYN

Oh.

MIGUEL

I like *platanos*. For the reason
that I am a *platano*.

NELSON

It's a joke. He just means he's
Dominican.

The mother continues to clear. Miguel gets up and gets a
guitar off a hook on the wall. He asks:

MIGUEL

You like music?

KAITLYN

Yes. Yes, we do.

MIGUEL

You like *bachata*?

KAITLYN

I -- don't know what that is.

TREVOR

It's, like, Dominican stuff.
Right?

Nelson nods. Miguel launches into a *bachata* tune. His
guitar playing follows a spidery, distinctive pattern. His
voice on this song of love and heartbreak is beautiful and
plaintive.

Nelson has a small set of congas, and plays rhythm. Trevor
watches. Siena goes to Alyssa, who puts her arms around her.

EXT. HIGHWAY -- NIGHT

The rain has cleared up.

INT. TOYOTA -- NIGHT

Cory sees a sign that says KNOXVILLE -- 130 Miles. We see
that he's driving at eighty miles an hour.

He keeps on driving.

INT. APARTMENT -- NIGHT

The plates are cleared away, and the mother is bringing armfuls of clothing and blankets from a chest in the corner, to arrange in nests on the floor. Miguel has finished his song. He's messing around with the guitar.

MIGUEL
(to Kaitlyn)
You touch the guitar?

NELSON
He means, do you play?

KAITLYN
Yeah, I do.

TREVOR
Kaitlyn writes songs, and she sings good.

Miguel offers her the guitar.

MIGUEL
Please.

KAITLYN
I don't -- it's been a real long day. I wouldn't know what to play.

SIENA
Play that song you wrote. Down in Chinatown.

KAITLYN
The . . .

TREVOR
Yeah, let's hear it.

Kaitlyn stands up and reaches into the pocket of her jeans. She is almost surprised to pull out the folded piece of paper she put there earlier in the day.

KAITLYN
I'd forgotten I wrote a song today.

ALYSSA
Go on and sing it.

Kaitlyn takes the guitar from Miguel. Nelson moves to hold the paper for her to see.

KAITLYN

I guess I know what chords I had in
mind . . . This is more a guy
song, somethin' I could hear Cory
singing, but here goes:
(singing and playing)
Even kids here act like they've heard it all
But their heads spin 'round
When they hear his drawl
And when he tips his hat, all the ladies stare
He's a tumbleweed, tumbling through Times Square
The buildings look to him like a mountain range
He's another stranger
In the land of the strange
Still not rightly sure how he got there
Oh, he's a tumbleweed, tumbling through Times Square
Liquid lights and TV screens
He don't know what it all means
Crowds rush and flow in a surging flood
The human family is here
A mix of joy and pain and fear
Pulsing on, and everyone
Is blood of his blood
There's a windblown beauty to a New York dawn
He'll drink in the sights
And then he'll be gone
He's on a mission, bound for God knows where
Oh, this tumbleweed, tumbling through Times Square
Thorny as a bramble, on a lazy ramble
Without a twenty dollar bill or a prayer
He don't care
He's a tumbleweed tumbling through Times Square
A tumbleweed, tumbling through Times Square

EXT. TRUCK STOP -- DAWN

A snake slithers through the weeds. There is an all-night diner, and a gas station, and a number of vehicles are parked there, including Cory's Toyota.

INT. TOYOTA -- DAWN

Cory is lying back in his driver's seat, asleep. His CELL PHONE on the seat next to him, starts BEEPING, playing the role of an alarm clock going off. Cory jolts awake. He fumbles for it and turns it off. It says 4:40 a.m.

CORY

Shortest damn forty minutes I ever
saw.

(checking the phone)

(MORE)

CORY (cont'd)
Come on. Call me, Kaitlyn. Find a way to call me.

He puts the key in the ignition.

EXT. TRUCK STOP -- DAWN

His car pulls out of the rest station, heading back toward the highway.

INT. APARTMENT -- EARLY MORNING

We see how everybody's been sleeping. The mother, Nelson and Siena are up on the double bed. Miguel is on a cot against the wall above the street. Kaitlyn, Trevor and Alyssa each sleep in and on a nest of clothes and blankets.

The mother sits up and surveys the scene. She calls over to her brother:

MOTHER
Miguel. *Serías tarde.*

He stirs. So do the rest.

MOTHER
I bring breakfast.

She puts on the TV and goes to the kitchen area. As she pours cereal into bowls for everyone, a morning show in Spanish plays. There is a news report. A Latina anchorwoman is in mid-sentence, speaking seriously about:

ANCHORWOMAN (ON TV)
Porque este mañana hay un "Amber alert" por todo la ciudad. Tres niños, que se llaman Alyssa, Trevor y Siena Wakefield, han desaparecido con su conguro, Kaitlyn Thomas.

As the TV flashes pictures of the kids, not Kaitlyn, all react to this startling news. The mother looks especially troubled. The anchor continues to talk in Spanish about the case, and shows a clip of Gavin Wakefield:

GAVIN (ON TV)
My message to my kids is I love you, I miss you, I'm so worried about you -- please get in touch with the police.

ANCHORWOMAN (ON TV)
*Al pesar de eso, hay sospecha por
 el en el muerte de la madre.*

The mother moves and switches the TV off. She goes to the far wall and talks quietly with Miguel.

NELSON
 Wow. You guys really are in trouble. I'm sorry.

ALYSSA
 We can't go out now. They'll nab us. How much money do we have left, Kaitlyn?

KAITLYN
 \$33.50. I was gonna offer it to these folks.

The mother looks up and speaks at length in Spanish, apologetically. Nelson translates.

NELSON
 She says she's sorry. You can't stay here. After breakfast, Miguel will take you in a car, anywhere in the city you want to go. He has citizenship. She feels bad for you, but she doesn't want to get in trouble and lose her greencard.

KAITLYN
 Okay. We understand. We're so grateful that you took us in.

EXT. A STREET IN SPANISH HARLEM -- MORNING

The kids, Nelson and Kaitlyn troop down the front steps of the building. Miguel drives up in front of it in a battered old Lincoln.

The mother bursts through the door of the building, with a bundle, as the kids get into the back of the car.

NELSON
 See ya, Trevor.

TREVOR
 See ya.

Trevor and his sisters get into the back of the car.

The mother hugs Kaitlyn, who tries to press money into her hand.

MOTHER

No. Pero, por favor, este es para ellos.

NELSON

She says it's some food for the kids.

Kaitlyn takes the package. The mother presses an envelope into her hand.

MOTHER

Y aquí está polvo mágico, para ayudarte.

NELSON

It's magic powder to help you, she says.

Uncertainly, Kaitlyn takes it from her.

The mother kisses Kaitlyn's head, and embraces her. The mother is near tears.

MOTHER

Vaya con Dios.

KAITLYN

Thank you.

INT. LINCOLN -- MORNING

Miguel is driving -- he seems to be a gypsy cab operator. Alyssa, Siena and Trevor are in the back seat, and Kaitlyn is in the front, dialing the second Go Phone.

CORY (O.S.)

Hello?

KAITLYN

Hey, babe. How are you?

INT. TOYOTA -- MORNING

Cory is driving along endless highway. He is delighted to hear from her.

CORY

I'm good. I was weaving, so I pulled over for a little while.

KAITLYN (O.S.)

Good.

CORY

But I'm out of Pennsylvania. I'm in New Jersey now. I'll be there soon. Where are you?

INT. LINCOLN -- MORNING

They are driving downtown.

KAITLYN

Well, we gotta move . . . The kids have decided to try their grandmother's place. It's -- in Murray Hill, they say.

CORY (O.S.)

Okay, I got the address in the Blackberry Gavin gave me.

KAITLYN

They called her on this phone -- she said she wouldn't tell the police we're going there. I gotta ditch the phone now . . .

CORY (O.S.)

I'll see you soon.

Kaitlyn ends the call. The Lincoln waits at a traffic light. Kaitlyn rolls down the window, and offers the phone to a black teenage girl, also waiting for the light to change.

KAITLYN

Hey there. Would you like a Go Phone? It's got five more minutes on it.

EXT. A STREET IN MURRAY HILL -- MORNING

Miguel waves as he takes off.

MIGUEL

You take care, okay?

KAITLYN

You too, thank you.

The kids and Kaitlyn are huddled on the curb. They watch Miguel's car pull away.

They head toward a nearby building. It's not a glamorous or upscale neighborhood.

KAITLYN

And you guys are sure about this?
'Cause, you know, your grandmother
is someone they'd expect you to
contact.

ALYSSA

She promised not to call them.
Grandma's pretty cool.

TREVOR

Dad gives her, like, *no* money, so
her place isn't so great. She
loves him, but she won't lie for
him. Like, when Mom and Dad were
having the custody battle and he
wanted Grandma to say in court that
Mom abused us -- she wouldn't do
it.

KAITLYN

Okay, then. I'd sure be glad to
get you guys to someone you trust.

INT. GRANDMA'S APARTMENT -- MORNING

Grandma, a lovely, well-groomed, gentle woman in her late sixties or seventies, opens the door and throws her arms around each of the kids in turn. Siena starts crying again.

GRANDMA

Oh, Siena, baby. Oh, my goodness.
I'm so glad to see you! Come in,
all of you, I'm so glad you called
me.

They enter the apartment. It's modest but well-kept. The main decorations on the walls are framed family pictures. There are a lot of pictures of Gavin Wakefield and the kids at various ages.

GRANDMA

Alyssa, Trevor. You kids must have
been so scared.

(MORE)

GRANDMA (cont'd)

Where were you last night, when the whole world was looking for you --

ALYSSA

We stayed with -- some nice people. We can't really say . . .

TREVOR

Actually, I don't think we know their last name.

GRANDMA

And you must be Kaitlyn.

KAITLYN

Yes, ma'am.

GRANDMA

Thank you. Thank you for staying with my grandkids when they were feeling so alone and scared. It must have been hard on you also.

KAITLYN

I just -- I wasn't sure, but I was tryin' to do the best thing I knew how --

GRANDMA

Well, it's all going to be all right now. Thank you.

KAITLYN

The, uh, folks we were with, gave me some food for the kids . . .

She holds out the package.

GRANDMA

Well, I'll take that, but I'd rather make you all some lunch myself. Kaitlyn, will you stay for lunch?

KAITLYN

(shrugs)

Sure. Thank you.

Grandma starts opening the packed food and examining its contents, and heads for the kitchen.

GRANDMA

My goodness, it looks like home-made chicken. Kids, if you like, you can go play around on my computer in the other room.

ALYSSA

You're on-line now, Grandma?

GRANDMA

Well, just barely. There's a nice Korean family across the hall, and the father's teaching me . . .

EXT. GEORGE WASHINGTON BRIDGE -- DAY

The blue Toyota pulls onto the bridge.

INT. TOYOTA -- DAY

Cory pops a CD marked DEMOS into the CD player. We hear a fully produced Nashville demo, and Kaitlyn singing:

KAITLYN (ON CD)

There's something everybody needs
 And that's for certain, every person
 Who hopes and breathes
 You know it's got a lot of power
 We spend years waiting, anticipating
 That magic hour
 AND I'M NOT THE KIND OF
 GIRL WHO WOULD STALK OR STEAL IT
 I CAN'T DEFINE LOVE
 BUT I KNOW IT WHEN I FEEL IT
 AND I FEEL IT WITH YOU
 YEAH, I FEEL IT, I FEEL IT WITH YOU
 I got friends who chose to settle
 Oh, but you saved me, you made me
 Take it on up to that next level
 My body trembles when we touch
 My heart's like thunder, it's a wonder
 I can feel so much
 I ALWAYS WIND UP
 WITH ALL MY SENSES REELING
 I CAN'T DEFINE LOVE
 BUT I KNOW IT WHEN I FEEL IT
 AND I FEEL IT WITH YOU
 BOY, I FEEL IT, I FEEL IT WITH YOU

The song energizes Cory and he sings along with parts of it as he drives over the bridge.

INT. GRANDMA'S BEDROOM -- DAY

Trevor, Siena and Kaitlyn are by the computer on the desk. There is one big window, with a cage on it because it looks out onto a fire escape above an alley. The window has been raised on this hot day, inside the cage.

Kaitlyn has the computer on youtube, and she's typing in Glen Campbell and John Hartford. She explains to the kids:

KAITLYN

See, here's Glen Campbell singing "Gentle on My Mind," and that was a big hit for him, but he's singing it with John Hartford, the guy who wrote it, who died young. Most of his other hits were by Jimmy Webb -- Glen Campbell, I mean.

She makes the old video clip fill the screen, and she and the kids watch it.

Alyssa watches them from the doorway, sad and kind of amused. Her attention is called away by the sound of a DOOR CLOSING, elsewhere in the apartment. She turns around to see . . .

INT. GRANDMA'S APARTMENT -- DAY

Gavin Wakefield has entered the apartment. He stands by the door, talking quietly with his mother.

INT. GRANDMA'S BEDROOM -- DAY

Alyssa pokes her head back in and whispers urgently:

ALYSSA

Dad's here!
(she looks around)
Open the window cage, go down!

INT. GRANDMA'S APARTMENT -- DAY

Alyssa heads back into the hallway, and looks at her grandmother accusingly. Gavin gives her a weak smile.

GAVIN

Hey, baby. I'm so glad to see you.

GRANDMA

Alyssa, your father needs to talk to you all.

(MORE)

GRANDMA (cont'd)

He understands that you're very upset about what happened to your mother. But he didn't have anything to do with that, and you need to be together as a family.

Alyssa stares from one to the other, and then runs back toward the bedroom.

INT. GRANDMA'S BEDROOM -- DAY

Alyssa runs in and slams the door. Trevor and Siena are already out the window onto the fire escape. Kaitlyn runs over with the chair from the computer desk, and jams it under the doorknob to the room.

KAITLYN

You go on, I'll follow!

Alyssa runs to the window and climbs out onto the fire escape to join her siblings, who start climbing down from the fifth floor apartment. The bedroom door SHAKES and nearly EXPLODES as Gavin tries to open it.

GAVIN (O.S.)

Alyssa! Open the door NOW!

Kaitlyn runs to the window.

INT. GRANDMA'S APARTMENT -- MORNING

Gavin pounds, kicks and pulls on the door, and his mother, dismayed by his behavior, tries to mollify him.

GRANDMA

Gavin, not so rough, you'll frighten them.

GAVIN

(ignoring her, frenzied)
Alyssa, open the FUCKING DOOR!

INT. GRANDMA'S BEDROOM -- DAY

The door shakes, and the chair is dislodged. Gavin gets the door open with a BANG and a CLATTER, and enters as Kaitlyn, on the fire escape, coaxes the window down.

He approaches her, and she reaches under the window and throws the powder from the envelope the Dominican mother gave her into the room, then SLAMS the window shut. Outside, she follows the kids down the fire escape.

The powder in the air takes Gavin by surprise. He squints and coughs and waves it away. It blinds him for a moment. He gets to work on opening the window, but it is stuck.

EXT. FIRE ESCAPE/ALLEY -- DAY

The kids and Kaitlyn have made it down to the second floor balcony. Those on the ladder climbing down and those waiting to climb look up when they hear the CRASH of SHATTERING GLASS. Gavin has busted through the window with a chair.

He heads onto the fire escape, and yells down at Kaitlyn:

GAVIN
You little bitch! Come back here
with my kids!

He starts climbing down the fire escape.

Trevor has made it to the first floor balcony. He sends the last ladder down as low as it will go, then climbs down it.

Trevor jumps to the ground and looks up at his sisters and Kaitlyn.

Alyssa climbs down and jumps to the ground also. Kaitlyn tries to coax Siena down. But Siena shakes her head, crying.

SIENA
I can't, I'm scared to jump.

KAITLYN
Siena --

SIENA
I'm scared!

KAITLYN
Okay, baby, I'll go first and I'll
catch you, okay?

She climbs down the ladder and jumps to the ground, landing on her feet like the older kids. Siena looks down fearfully at her, and up at her father, who is only one fire escape balcony above them.

KAITLYN

Siena, honey, jump, I'll catch you,
I promise!

Siena jumps. Kaitlyn catches her, although she is knocked to the ground. They get up.

KAITLYN

You okay?

Siena nods.

KAITLYN (CONT'D)

Good girl!

The four kids dash out of the alley. Gavin watches them go, cursing under his breath:

GAVIN

You fucking bitch. You goddamned
little cunt . . .

He climbs down the final ladder and jumps to the ground. He lands clumsily, and picks himself up. He goes to the end of the alley.

EXT. A STREET IN MURRAY HILL -- DAY

Gavin emerges from the alley and looks up and down the street. He sees no sign of Kaitlyn and his kids.

INT. MULTI-LEVEL GARAGE -- DAY

Cory in his car, putting on the knapsack from his house, is talking to a young Latino guy who mans the garage.

CORY

No, man, I don't want it all day,
just a couple of hours . . .

ATTENDANT

Eighteen bucks, for five hours.

CORY

Sold.

Cory's phone RINGS, and he snaps it up and answers:

CORY (CONT'D)

Hello?

GAVIN (O.S.)
 I'll be short and to the point. I
 think you're in with her on this.

EXT. A STREET IN MURRAY HILL -- DAY

Gavin stands talking into his cell phone, furious.

GAVIN (CONT'D)
 I think you're sitting down there
 in Tennessee giving her
 instructions on how to kidnap my
 kids and fuck with me. How to
 endanger their *lives*, and try to
 use *my mother*, now that I almost
 had them again.

CORY (O.S.)
 Gavin?

GAVIN
 And I just want you to know that
 once my kids are safe with me, and
 once I throw her skinny little
 white trash ass in jail, I am going
 to go back down to Tennessee and I
 am going to *tear you limb from
 limb!*

He snaps the phone shut.

EXT. A STREET IN MURRAY HILL -- DAY

Cory walks down the street, not sure where to look or what to
 do. Clearly, now, the kids won't be at Grandma's house . . .
 But he consults the address on his Blackberry, anyhow.

EXT. A DIFFERENT STREET IN MURRAY HILL -- DAY

Gavin walks along, searching, also. We are in a Little India
 part of town. There are many curry fast food places and
 fancier restaurants, and shops selling saris. Gavin
 approaches an Indian deli, and enters.

INT. DELI -- DAY

There is some traditional deli sandwich food at the counter,
 and also an array of *gulab jaman* and other Indian sweets --
 some in round balls, some shaped as animals.

There are shelves of goods, again most of it Indian: rice and *dal* and Mrs. Patak's chutneys and *achahs* and so on. Gavin looks around the store.

ANGLE ON: The kids hiding behind one display of goods, where he can't see them. We see KAITLYN'S POV: Gavin at the front of the store, and headed toward the right aisle.

Kaitlyn motions to the kids to shrink around to the left. Gavin hits a number on his cell phone. He speaks into it.

GAVIN

Yeah. Yeah, the kids and the
sitter are somewhere in my mother's
neighborhood, around 3rd and 29th.
If you could send a car . . .
Thanks.

He ends the call and bangs out through the door. After a beat, Kaitlyn rises from her crouch behind the display and says softly to the Indian man behind the deli counter.

KAITLYN

Thank you.

The kids also murmur "Thanks" as they emerge. The deli man who has protected them shrugs it off.

DELI COUNTER MAN

I don't see or hear anything, I am
just minding my store.

Suddenly, we hear SHOUTING from the street outside.

GAVIN (O.S.)

Hey! Don't move!

EXT. MURRAY HILL -- DAY

Cory has been walking down the sidewalk, but has stopped at the sight of Gavin, who advances on him in a rage.

GAVIN (CONT'D)

You piece of garbage. You've been
in on it all along . . .

Cory steps into the street, and Gavin runs into the street, grabs him and throws him down. Cory narrowly avoids being hit by a passing car which BLASTS its HORN.

Gavin lunges at Cory again and grabs him by his shirt, shaking him. Cory does not want to fight.

CORY
Hey, hey, Gavin, talk to me about
this for a moment --

GAVIN
You fucking piece of shit!

He is pounding on Cory with his fists, and at last Cory must fight back. He grabs Gavin by the wrists and pushes him backward, away from him. But Gavin lunges once more.

Kaitlyn and the kids have emerged from the deli, and join a crowd of people on the sidewalk watching the fight in the street. Gavin punches Cory, hard. An older man passing by remarks:

OLDER MAN
Oh. You *know* that hurt.

KAITLYN
Cory!

Cory and Gavin snap their heads around to see her and the kids, who are crying.

ALYSSA
Daddy, please stop. We'll go with
you, just stop.

A young woman in a business suit in the crowd remarks:

WOMAN
My God, it's them! That's the kids
in the Amber alert!

Gavin considers going toward his kids for a moment, but then goes back to beating up Cory. He is a little taller and in good shape, and he is in a vicious frenzy, slamming Cory into the nearby parked cars, as the crowd reacts negatively.

Kaitlyn is crying too and she begs the people around her:

KAITLYN
Please! I don't have a phone,
please, somebody call 911.

An older black woman tells her:

OLDER WOMAN
Here come the cops right now.

A police car has rolled onto the street, and the officers have had time to see some of what Gavin has been doing to Cory. The car stops and two officers get out. One has his gun trained on Gavin and says:

OFFICER

Mr. Wakefield, please stop. Please put your hands in the air.

Red-faced, panting, still furious, Gavin complies.

Kaitlyn makes her way through the crowd toward Cory.

OFFICER (CONT'D)

Stay back, Miss, please.

KAITLYN

(terribly worried)

Cory!

Cory, bleeding, panting and crumpled on the street, pulls himself up. He reaches around to the little knapsack on his back, and pulls out a thin jewel case, which is cracked . . . but he takes out the CD Rom inside, and it looks fine.

CORY

It's okay . . . I think it'll work. This is evidence -- that maybe you shouldn't give the kids to that guy. To Gavin Wakefield. He uses my computer sometimes, and I go on his, I know all his addresses and his passwords . . . He's been contacting a hitman, it sounds like, for a month, he talks about needing to take out the "crone," the "witch," those are words he's always used for Deena, you can -- you can read it, I downloaded some of the letters. And I can show you on-line . . .

He hands the CD to the second officer.

The first officer has, meanwhile, cuffed Gavin and put him into the back of the patrol car.

The second officer helps Cory to his feet.

SECOND OFFICER

Okay, don't worry about that now, can you stand, are you okay?

CORY

I think so.

SECOND OFFICER

How's your head?

CORY

(managing a smile)

Solid rock.

SECOND OFFICER

Okay, we got an ambulance on its way, they're gonna check you out.

KAITLYN

Can I?

The officer nods, and Kaitlyn and the kids crowd around Cory, hugging him. He gives the arm or shoulder of each kid a squeeze, in turn, and smiles at Kaitlyn.

CORY

I'm glad y'all are safe. It's good to see you.

An EMS unit drives up, sirens BLARING. The first officer, standing by his patrol car, tries to disperse the crowd.

OFFICER

Okay, folks, that's it, there's nothin' to see now, Elvis has left the building . . .

EXT. HOSPITAL -- AFTERNOON

Kaitlyn and Cory exit the building. He is bandaged in a few places. He is happy; she is indignant.

KAITLYN

How does it feel?

CORY

Everything feels pretty good.

KAITLYN

I can't believe they took so long to see you.

CORY

Are you kidding? That nap in the waiting room was golden! That was the best part. Let's go get your stuff.

INT. PLAZA HOTEL LOBBY -- AFTERNOON

Kaitlyn now has her guitar, and the suitcase that Deena Wakefield lent her. She signs a receipt at the desk, the uniformed clerk nods to her, and she and Cory head for the door.

KAITLYN

It's good to have my guitar back.
I guess the stuff for the kids --

CORY

Their grandma can send over for it.
I think you can stop worrying about
all that, now.

KAITLYN

Yeah. I guess they could do worse
than to end up with her. She meant
well.

CORY

The kids say she's a nice lady.
And if she really gets custody and
Gavin does time -- maybe she'll
finally get some of his money.

EXT. CENTRAL PARK SOUTH -- AFTERNOON

They walk toward Columbus Circle.

KAITLYN

So, now what?

CORY

Well, let's see. I maxed out my
debit card on gas, driving down
here. Bank account is basically
empty. And I don't have much cash.

KAITLYN

I still got \$33.50 Deena gave me.

CORY

That won't get us back to
Tennessee. It would be nice to
spend a few days checking out the
city. But there's nowhere to stay.

INT. ENCLOSED ESCALATOR -- AFTERNOON

They are riding down to the platform at Columbus Circle.

KAITLYN

My goodness, this is quite an escalator!

CORY

Steady now. That's my girl.

KAITLYN

Well, Cory, what are we gonna do?

CORY

I dunno. Find somebody who needs a lift to split gas with us, on craigslist?

KAITLYN

We can't even *split* gas.

CORY

Hey, I'm just glad to be with you. And I guess there *is* one way we could make money.

KAITLYN

How?

They have arrived down on the platform. Cory takes the guitar case from her, lays it flat, and opens it up.

KAITLYN

What? Oh, come on now. Cory, you can't be serious.

CORY

You got a better idea? Kaitlyn Thomas, your New York career starts right now.

KAITLYN

Cory, I don't think . . .

He starts to strum. And then he starts to sing the first song they wrote together:

CORY

There's a peaceful easy feeling
When we're walking by the river
And we're holding hands

He cocks an eyebrow at her, and grins. Kaitlyn gives in, and sings back to him:

KAITLYN

And I wonder does it come to
Every woman when she knows
She really loves a man?

Together, they sing the song:

CORY & KAITLYN

Like a song by Bobbi Gentry
When she sang with Glen Campbell
And they'd harmonize
That's what I'm put in mind of
When I see my love reflected in your eyes

They sing the whole song together. Commuters glance at them, and some stop to listen. Some people toss quarters and dollar bills into the open guitar case.

The song goes on over the CREDITS, and it's followed by others: the two of them singing "Kaleidoscope," and Cory singing "Tumbleweed in Times Square," after we:

FADE OUT

END OF FILM