Evolution of the Fallen

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AERIAL WS PASSENGER VAN DRIVING DOWN OLDER RESIDENTIAL STREET--MORNING.

It is a pleasant neighborhood where the streets are lined on either side by large, mature trees and sidewalks. The homes are rather large and imposing, dating from the turn of the 20th Century, but have clearly seen better days. A few of the (mostly older) residents can be seen mowing their lawns, raking, etc.

DISSOLVE TO

WS VAN DRIVING DOWN OLDER RESIDENTIAL STREET--MORNING.

Now that we're on the same level as the van, we can see the words "Glendale Regional Treatment Facility" painted on its sides. One of the older residents stops doing yard work just long enough to stare at the van with a disdainful look.

CUT TO

INT PASSENGER VAN--MORNING.

The van is driven by a male HOSPITAL EMPLOYEE who is so numb to his job that the remains constantly expressionless. In the passenger seat sits MARGUERITE, a thirtysomething caseworker for Glendale. She is dressed in a manner which can best be described as "professional on a very tight budget." At the moment, she seems preoccupied with getting some last-minute paperwork finished and in order. In one of the back seats sits MICHAEL STEVENSON, a tall, lanky 17 year-old who appears to be a hardened veteran of the state juvenile mental health system. Beside MICHAEL on the bench-type seat of the van is a military-style duffel bag with the initials "G.R.T.F." stenciled on it. MICHAEL is on "drug holiday" from his meds and seems to be experiencing some degree of withdrawal. As the reflections of the passing scenery go by on the van's windows, MICHAEL starts to zone out.

CUT TO

INT INSTITUTIONAL SHOWER--DAY.

CU of MICHAEL as he is showering. Out of the corner of his eye, he spots the white institutional bath towels, each embroidered with the initials "G.R.T.F." arranged on the towel rack. In his mind, he hears a deep, bass voice talking to him.

SATANIC VOICE (OC)

God reviles the fallen!

MICHAEL seems terror-stricken.

SATANIC VOICE (OC)

God reviles the fallen! Think about it!

MARGUERITE'S voice cuts in.

MARGUERITE (OC)

Michael...Michael!

CUT TO

INT PASSENGER VAN--MORNING.

MARGUERITE is now looking back at MICHAEL with great concern.

MARGUERITE

Are you OK, buddy? It looked like you were spacing out on me there.

MICHAEL

I'll be fine.

MARGUERITE seems relieved and almost cheerful.

MARGUERITE

Let's look alive...we're almost there.

EXT NEW HOPE HOUSE--MORNING.

New Hope House is a residential treatment facility for troubled teens housed in what must have been an elegant, stately mansion on a quiet, tree-lined street. Its burgundy paint is now peeling in places and its bright yellow trim has faded to a pale, sickly hue. The GRTF van pulls up and is met by BETH, resident director of New Hope House. BETH is a short, slightly plump middle-aged woman with a graying

CONTINUED: 3.

ponytail who dresses in what could be described as an "earth mother" fashion. She is smiling and seems pleased to meet her new resident as MICHAEL, MARGUERITE, and THE DRIVER all pile out of the van. THE DRIVER approaches BETH with a clipboard to sign.

DRIVER

Here you go...one delivery, fresh from the funny farm. Sign here!

Taken aback at THE DRIVER'S callousness and cynicism, MARGUERITE scolds him.

MARGUERITE

That was uncalled for! Get his bag and take it inside the house!!!

DRIVER

Yes, ma'am.

MARGUERITE attempts to smooth things over with both MICHAEL and BETH.

MARGUERITE

On behalf of Glendale Regional Treatment Facility, Fairfield County, and the State of Connecticut, I want to apologize and say that his attitude doesn't reflect that of most of us...

MICHAEL

Yeah, yeah...that's OK...I'm used to it.

MARGUERITE

No, it's not OK!

BETH

You must be Michael! I've heard so much about you!

MICHAEL

You can't believe everything you...

BETH

It's all good! I'm Beth, by the way, I'm the resident advisor for this place... sort of like a house mother. Welcome! Is that one bag all you brought with you?

CONTINUED: 4.

MARGUERITE

The rest of Michael's belongings are in patient storage and will be delivered later.

BETH

By a different driver, I hope...

MARGUERITE

I'll see what I can do.

BETH

Why don't we go inside and start getting you acquainted with your new home?

The trio walk up the steps, across the front porch, and into New Hope House.

BETH

Let's de-brief in the dining room, then I'll show you your bedroom and give you the nickel tour of the place.

MICHAEL

Sounds good to me.

CUT TO

INT FIRST FLOOR OF NEW HOPE HOUSE--MORNING.

BETH directs MICHAEL and MARGUERITE into the dining room, which contains only an old, scratched wooden dining table and several dining chairs, none of which seem to match any of the others. MARGUERITE points to one of the chairs and MICHAEL slouches into it. BETH disappears into another room momentarily. MICHAEL looks around somewhat uncomfortably, wondering if anyone he might have known from GRTF now lives here. BETH returns, carrying a notebook, a folder with MICHAEL'S name written on it, and some blank government forms. BETH takes a seat between MARGUERITE and MICHAEL and addresses him first.

BETH

Normally, we de-brief with the new resident present, but if you'd feel more comfortable waiting in the living room or the back porch, you're more than welcome to. In fact, I think that some of the other residents are hanging out on the back porch right now.

CONTINUED: 5.

MICHAEL

Naah, that's OK...this ain't nothin' I haven't heard before.

BETH

OK.

BETH smiles briefly, then addresses MARGUERITE.

BETH

Tell me what you know about this fine young man we have sitting in front of us.

MICHAEL feigns disinterest and pretends to zone out, but in reality is taking in every word.

MARGUERITE

Michael just turned 18 this month. His commitment was extended through the adult courts. He was a ward of the state before that.

MARGUERITE looks down at her notes to refresh her memory. MICHAEL gets up and begins to study the ornate woodwork of the dining room in great detail.

MARGUERITE

He's been with us for about 15 months now. He has some distant relatives, but his parents are both dead. Let's see...oh, he's schizophrenic...nonparanoid for the most part...heavy hallucinations controlled on Clozapine. Michael, have you had any hallucinations lately?

MICHAEL stops studying the woodwork long enough to look up and feign an answer.

MICHAEL

No, ma'am...no hallucinations at all.

BETH smiles warmly at MICHAEL. He comes back to his chair and sits down again.

BETH

Welcome to New Hope House, Michael! You'll find that things are a lot different here than they were at Glendale. You'll have a regular set (MORE) CONTINUED: 6.

BETH (cont'd)

of chores that I'll assign you later. You'll stay on your meds and participate in the one group session we have here every evening. It's not much, really. We basically just check in every night. I'm here five nights a week. There are others who cover the weekend. Your therapist from Glendale will come and go on a variable schedule and you'll travel back to the hospital once a month to see your psychiatrist once a month on an outpatient basis. We'll work on getting you your GED and maybe even a part-time job. How does all that sound?

MICHAEL

Sounds good. Sounds a little overwhelming, but I think I can figure it all out.

BETH again smiles warmly at MICHAEL.

BETH

You'll do just fine here. I know it. We have kind of a small group here right now. As I mentioned, I'm here 24/7...well, except for Friday nights, Saturdays during the day, and Saturday nights, but you'll have one of the substitute advisors who work here when I'm away. Since there are only four of you right now, I'm the only fulltime staff person.

MICHAEL

"Four of you...?"

BETH

Four residents. New Hope House actually has room for up to twelve teenagers. If the head count goes above 5 or 6, we'll add another fulltime staff member. Until then, I'm the one to go to for whatever you need. Sound OK?

BETH and MARGUERITE exchange some paperwork, then BETH gives MARGUERITE a hug before turning back toward MICHAEL.

CONTINUED: 7.

BETH

Let's go meet the others and, after that, we'll haul your stuff up to your room.

MICHAEL looks down, but not before he notices BETH giving him a brief, conspiratorial wink.

DISSOLVE TO

EXT. BACK PORCH OF NEW HOPE HOUSE--LATE MORNING.

JON PETEROWSKI is seated on a threadbare, overstuffed sofa. JON is 16 and of average height, but almost morbidly obese. Sitting at the opposite end of the davenport is STEPHANIE HARRIS, a pretty blonde girl of 17 who is deaf. JON seems to think that he's playing footsie with STEPHANIE, but he's the only one who thinks so. STEPHANIE is too busy ignoring him and completing a necklace that she's making from colorful wooden beads. JON is munching on a ham and cheese sandwich, which he tries to hide between the sofa cushions when he hears two sets of footsteps approaching. BETH enters the porch, followed by MICHAEL.

BETH

Well, here's two of them, anyway.

BETH gives JON a quick wave.

BETH

Hey Jon, this is the new resident I was telling you about. His name is Michael Stevenson.

BETH nods in MICHAEL'S direction.

BETH

Michael, this is Jon Peterowski. He's been with us for about two months now.

MICHAEL gives JON an almost imperceptible nod. JON waves but doesn't stand. STEPHANIE seems quite oblivious to all of it at the moment, lost in her world of beading.

JON

I remember you. From the cafeteria at Glendale. You were in 2C, right?

MICHAEL

Yeah, you were on 2B.

CONTINUED: 8.

JON

How'd you know that?

MICHAEL cracks a smile and looks JON straight in the eye.

MICHAEL

Last January.

JON appears embarrassed and takes a hard gulp.

MICHAEL

The break-in at the pantry. I heard you and some other guys stole the keys to the pantry and cleaned it out right down to the bare shelves. Nice job, my man.

JON

I stole the master key right off the janitor's cleaning cart. Then I got a bunch of the retarded kids to help me raid the pantry for food. We'd have gotten away with it, too, if the night nurse hadn't noticed one of the little 'tards was missing!

MICHAEL and JON high-five each other. BETH pretends to look the other way, then taps STEPHANIE lightly on the shoulder. She looks STEPHANIE straight in the eye as she speaks to her, as well as using ASL.

BETH

Stephanie, we have a new resident I want you to meet.

BETH motions for MICHAEL to move in closer.

BETH

His name is Michael.

STEPHANIE signs "Hello, Michael."

BETH

Michael, this is Stephanie Harris. She's what some people call a deaf mute. She can read lips a little bit, but if you want to have any real conversation with her, you'll need to learn at least a few words of sign language.

CONTINUED: 9.

BETH continues signing, so that STEPHANIE can understand what she's telling MICHAEL.

BETH

She's been here for about six months, so she knows her way around this place. If you need to know where anything is, just write it down on a piece of paper and she'll be able to direct you.

MICHAEL picks up one of the loose beads to examine it more closely. STEPHANIE gently removes it from his hand and places it in its proper color-coded pile, while giving MICHAEL a warm, gentle smile.

BETH

I'll teach you as much sign language as I can along the way, OK? Even Jon knows some sign language. Don't you, Jon?

JON signs "Fuck you!" in ASL. BETH pretends not to notice. MICHAEL simply shrugs in ignorance.

JON

See? I just said "Welcome to New Hope House" in ASL. Someday you'll learn it, too.

BETH

We have one more resident that you haven't met. Her name is Sara and she's out at a job interview, but she should be back by dinnertime. Group is at seven. I'll take you up to your room shortly, but I didn't have a chance to finish getting it ready for you.

BETH motions MICHAEL toward an empty chair.

BETH

So why don't you just hang out here for a few minutes while I do that?

MICHAEL sits. BETH exits. MICHAEL motions toward STEPHANIE.

MICHAEL

So what's with her? I thought they only took mental cases here.

JON finds the sandwich he'd been eating earlier and starts stuffing his face with it again.

CONTINUED: 10.

JON

Her??? She's mental, alright. In fact, she's got me and you both beat!

MICHAEL

Really?!?!

JON

She has fits almost every day. Knocked out cold half the time. When she isn't pacing the floor all night, her bed goes off every time she has a seizure in her sleep and bounces across the floor like a jackhammer. I haven't gotten a full night's sleep since I've been here, not with that one living right above me!

JON points to STEPHANIE, who remains apparently oblivious to this entire conversation.

JON

Plus I overheard Beth talking to her caseworker one day. This girl has done a lot of drugs for her age. She comes from some rich family that really doesn't give a shit about her, even though their money probably paid for all the drugs she took.

MICHAEL

Bummer.

JON

Listen, if you wait for psycho girl here to show you around, you'll probably get old before you even reach the attic. Let me show you around the place. Let's start with the kitchen and build up some strength before we climb our way through this maze.

JON steadies himself on MICHAEL'S shoulder to pry his massive body up from the sofa. He then exits to go into the main part of the house. STEPHANIE ties off her necklace, then looks up at MICHAEL and gives him a shy smile. MICHAEL gets up to follow JON into the house.

CONTINUED: 11.

MICHAEL

What the hell. I'm hungry.

DISSOLVE TO

INT. MICHAEL'S ROOM--NIGHT.

MICHAEL is laying on his bed, staring up at the ceiling. He seems lost in thought, but not unhappy. His concentration is disturbed by a sudden knock at the door.

BETH (THROUGH DOOR)
Michael? Group's down in the living room.

MICHAEL looks over at the alarm clock on his nightstand. It indicates 7:00. He groans and gets up.

CUT TO

INT. NEW HOPE HOUSE LIVING ROOM--NIGHT.

Three chairs and a sofa have been pushed from their normal locations to form a haphazard circle. BETH, JON, STEPHANIE, and SARA CROTOFIT, a tall, strikingly attractive 17 year-old brunette (and the other member of the household) are already present, joined by latecomer MICHAEL. He sits between BETH and JON. STEPHANIE is sitting at one end of the sofa, concentrating on some needlework she's working on.

BETH

OK, let me bring Michael up to speed on what this group's all about. This is mainly a goal-setting group, as well as a problem-solving group. If there are issues in this house, we discuss them here. This is also our time to set goals and to talk about the steps you'll need to take to begin your life on the outside...away from this house. So who wants to start?

There is a pregnant pause of several seconds, as everyone shifts uncomfortably, shuffles their feet, looks at the floor and ceiling, etc.

BETH

Don't everyone chime in at once now!

CONTINUED: 12.

JON

OK, I'll bite...I just want to say that if Sara doesn't stop screaming every night, I'm going to start screaming myself!

Heavily medicated for the evening, SARA struggles to comprehend what JON is saying.

JON

I just can't deal with it!

BETH

Jon, you know that Sara can't help it. She has nightmares. How about if I run downtown and get some earplugs for you...in fact, I'll get enough for everyone.

JON grunts and nods his reluctant acquiescence.

BETH

Now that you've opened up the floor, Jon, how are you doing on your goals?

JON

You mean my goal to lose fifty pounds?

The entire group, except for STEPHANIE and JON, breaks into spontaneous nerOCus laughter. SARA quickly signs what has been said, and STEPHANIE, too, erupts into laughter.

JON

What?!?! What did I say?!?!

BETH

We don't make fun of anyone's goals here...

STEPHANIE begins to sign that she has something that she wants to share. BETH translates for her.

BETH

I have a goal I want to share with everyone...I think I want to put some of my poems together and make a book out of them...but I'm not sure how to get a book published myself.

CONTINUED: 13.

JON remains silent for a few seconds, then bursts out into derisive laughter. BETH attempts to reprimand him by firmly putting her hand on his shoulder and giving him a stern look, but to no avail.

JON

You...? You wanna be a poet??? You're kidding, right???

BETH

Jon! You know very well that I don't tolerate that kind of behavior in group! Let Stephanie continue!

JON

But they all laughed at me!!!

BETH

Jon, let Steph continue!

STEPHANIE, clearly aware of Jon's outburst, found herself focusing instead on MICHAEL, who seems interested and is looking at her intently instead of focusing on JON. She thinks she sees him give her a subtle nod of approval. She smiles shyly in his direction. JON, with some effort, regains his composure.

BETH

Steph, I think that's great. I knew you write poetry, but I hadn't thought of putting together a book. Your poetry is always so beautiful, Steph. I know a woman here in town that I think could help you put something together. How does that sound?

STEPHANIE smiles, nods affirmatively, and signs "I would like that." She then goes back to her needlework.

BETH

Sara, we haven't heard from you yet this evening. Would you like to share anything with us?

SARA twists, fidgets, and squirms uncomfortably before speaking, finally mumbling her response as she stares at the floor.

SARA

CONTINUED: 14.

SARA (cont'd)

lot of money and I'm gonna get out of here.

BETH

Michael, how about you?

MICHAEL

I have two goals right now. (PAUSE) First, I want to study for my GED and get my high school diploma. Uh... Beth, she said she'd help me with that...

MICHAEL fidgets for a moment while the rest of the group remains totally silent, save for perhaps a muffled cough.

MICHAEL

Second...I want to learn a second language. Sign language...I want to learn sign language.

He pauses for a moment, hoping for a reaction from STEPHANIE. She gives him a slight but approving smile.

DISSOLVE TO

INT. MICHAEL'S BEDROOM--NIGHT.

All the lights are off and MICHAEL is tossing and turning fitfully in his sleep. He drifts off into a nightmare.

CUT TO

INT. CORRIDOR OF MENTAL HOSPITAL -- NIGHT.

In this dream sequence, MICHAEL is slowly walking down a long, dark corridor at Glendale. He hears a girl screaming in one of the rooms.

GIRL

Help me!!! You have to help me!
He's killing me!

MICHAEL frantically checks each door, each room, along the long corridor, but finds nothing. Finally, he reaches a door that's locked. The girl keeps screaming, wailing, pleading for help. He shakes the door violently. Just then, a male hand touches him on the shoulder.

CUT TO

INT. MICHAEL'S BEDROOM--NIGHT.

MICHAEL is awakened from his fitful sleep by JON, who is standing over him and shaking him by the shoulders. JON whispers to MICHAEL very loudly. SARA is screaming incoherently in the background.

JON

Michael...Michael...wake up! We have to take care of something!

MICHAEL

Whaaa...whaaat?!?!

JON

She won't stop. We need to go up there.

MICHAEL

What about Beth? Why isn't she going up there?

JON

She's not here. It's Saturday night, remember? Jerry night...

MICHAEL

Can't Jerry hear her?

JON

It's a great big house. Besides, he's probably sleeping on the job again.

MICHAEL

But...!

JON

No buts! We have to do something! Now get your butt out of bed!

Sluggishly, reluctantly, MICHAEL drags himself out of bed and follows JON out into the hallway and up the creaky staircase to the third floor of New Hope House. They knock softly on SARA'S door. JON tries the door handle and finds it unlocked. He and MICHAEL quietly make their way into SARA'S room.

CUT TO

INT. SARA'S BEDROOM--NIGHT.

A lamp next to the bed casts an eerie glow across the entire room. The bed is empty-- completely bare, with all of the sheets strewn about on the floor. MICHAEL stands next to JON, methodically scanning the room. A comforter is bunched up next to a cluttered oak window seat and hidden in one of the many shadows in the spacious room. He notices that the screaming is coming from the comforter and pointed it out to JON. JON approaches the comforter while MICHAEL hangs back. JON whispers to the comforter in a singsong VOICE.

JON

Sara...Sara...it's just us. Me and Michael.

SARA

Help me...he's going to kill me!

JON

It's OK. No one's going to hurt you. Me and Michael are the only ones here.

SARA sobs, intermittently drying her tears with the comforter.

SARA

No, he really is.

JON

There's no one here to hurt you now.

SARA

No!!! He's downstairs! He's coming to get me!

JON

No worries, girl.

While JON comforts SARA, MICHAEL begins picking up the bedding from the floor and systematically making and straightening SARA'S bed.

JON

I'll make sure no one comes to get you...really.

JON extends a hand to SARA, who was quiet now, except for and occasional hiccuping sob. She grasps his pudgy hand and allows him to pull her to a standing position. She still grips her comforter tightly with the other hand.

CONTINUED: 17.

SARA

He'll come later...I know it.

MICHAEL now has the bed made completely, except for the comforter SARA is holding. JON scans the room and sees a large upholstered chair next to the bed. It's covered in clothing and stuffed animals but, he thinks it will work.

JON

How about if I stay with you in that chair over there while you rest? I'll make sure that no one gets into this room to hurt you.

SARA

Not even Jerry?

JON looks both confused and concerned.

SARA

You won't let Jerry come in to get me?

JON

No, not even Jerry. Promise.

JON motions for MICHAEL to clean off the chair.

JON

I'll sit right next to you in this big chair here. No one will be able to touch you, OK?

SARA

I'm sorry to be such a bother...

JON lays SARA down very gently onto the bed, the scoots around and plops down in the now-inviting chair. He then whispers to MICHAEL.

JON

Thanks, man. I'm going to stay here with her for awhile...until she's definitely asleep. You can go back to bed, if you want.

MICHAEL nods, grateful for the sudden peace and quiet. He moves silently toward the door, which was still open from when they had entered. He starts to leave, when he hears JON softly call to him.

CONTINUED: 18.

JON

Hey, could you sneak downstairs and make me a couple of PB&Js before you go back to bed?

MICHAEL smiles, nods affirmatively, and heads downstairs.

DISSOLVE TO

INT. NEW HOPE HOUSE DINING ROOM--MORNING.

BETH is busy setting out boxes of cold cereal, cartons of milk and juice, etc., while she chats with STEPHANIE, who is seated in one of the chairs, earnestly scribbling poetry into her notebook. BETH checks her watch, then looks a bit concerned.

BETH

It's almost 9:30! Where is everyone? I've never known Jon to miss a meal ...any meal!

STEPHANIE shrugs her shoulders.

BETH

Michael told me he wanted to go to Mass, and Father Tim starts Mass at 10:00 sharp, Michael or no Michael. I guess I'd better go see what's keeping them.

While STEPHANIE starts to pick at her breakfast while she writes, BETH exits and runs up the staircase. First, she knocks on MICHAEL'S door. He answers the door looking very tired and very disheveled.

MICHAEL

Sorry...didn't sleep well. What time is it?

BETH

A little past 9:30.

MICHAEL

Oh shit! Did I miss church?

BETH

Not yet, but you probably will. Mass is in half an hour. Go on downstairs. Steph is already having breakfast and the eggs are getting cold.

CONTINUED: 19.

BETH moves on to JON'S room, where she notices that the door is slightly ajar. She pushes the door further open and notices that while his bed looks slept in, JON is nowhere to be seen. She quickly checks the second floor bathroom. No sign of JON there, either. Almost panicking, BETH quickly runs up the stairway to SARA'S room, where she finds the door fully closed but not locked. She opens it and the door makes a loud creaking sound which makes BETH wince. She finds that SARA'S bed has been slept in, but is now empty. JON is sleeping in the overstuffed chair next to the bed, with his head tilted back and he is snoring loudly. Curled up on his lap and wrapped in a down comforter was SARA, lying with her head resting on JON'S shoulder and sleeping soundly. Both are fully clothed. BETH clears her throat loudly and speaks JON'S name aloud. He jerks awake and looks alarmed to see BETH standing there, hands on her hips and looking grim. His alarm turns to surprise when he looks down to find SARA sleeping in his lap, her dark eyes closed and her thumb tucked firmly into her mouth.

DISSOLVE TO

INT. NEW HOPE HOUSE DINING ROOM--MORNING.

Everyone is seated around the dining table eating breakfast with an awkward silence, except for JON, who sidles in uncharacteristically late for a meal. For once, he doesn't seem to be all that hungry. BETH clears her throat.

BETH

<u>Now</u>...who here can explain <u>exactly</u> what happened last night?

There is a long pause. JON stares at his plate, chewing slowly. SARA sits, red-faced, her long black hair hanging forward across her chest. Her mouth is half-opened, as though she wants to say something, but she knows that whatever she had to say wasn't going to satisfy BETH.

MICHAEL

Beth, it was like this...Sara was totally freakin' out last night, screaming and all. She trashed her room, and when nobody went up to check on her, me and Jon decided to go up there.

BETH

I'm listening...

CONTINUED: 20.

MICHAEL

Anyway, the only way she would settle down was if one of us stayed with her. That's why Jon was there. He must've fallen asleep in the chair.

BETH

So why didn't one of you go and get Jerry?

JON

See, that was the problem...she was freaking out that Jerry was going to get her, so we couldn't even ask for his help. We didn't have a choice.

BETH

I see...so why was Sara sleeping in your lap?

JON

Honestly, I have no idea. When you woke me up, she was just there... honest!

BETH shoots SARA a disapproving look.

SARA

Beth, I swear...I must've climbed onto his lap in my sleep. I know I was kinda scared last night, but I don't even remember them comin' in. I swear. I have no idea.

Finally, BETH nods and smiles ever-so-slightly.

BETH

Jon, Michael, I really do appreciate your efforts to help Sara. I'll look into why Jerry was unavailable last night.

A collective sigh of relief seems to permeate the room.

INT. NEW HOPE HOUSE BACK PORCH--AFTERNOON.

STEPHANIE is seated on the back porch sofa anxiously transcribing her poetry from various scraps of paper into a new notebook. MICHAEL enters carrying an ASL textbook. He signs "What are you up to?" She responds by signing "Will

CONTINUED: 21.

you please look at this?" and proudly handing him the notebook. He opens it to a random page and begins reading aloud.

MICHAEL

How can he see my love? See my love through all his pain? How will he know my heart? Will he see my heart beat again?

MICHAEL appears moved by what he has just read, and more than a little surprised by its beauty and depth. He closes the notebook and hands it back to STEPHANIE, and attempts to sign as he speaks to her.

MICHAEL

That's beautiful...very beautiful! You're good!

STEPHANIE beams with pride and signs "Thank you!" She looks as if she wants to hug MICHAEL, but resists the urge. BETH enters with a message for STEPHANIE.

BETH

Stephanie, you have a visitor here to see you.

STEPHANIE looks genuinely surprised and even a bit perplexed.

BETH

It's your brother.

STEPHANIE'S expression quickly changes from one of confusion and apprehension to one of joy. She drops what she's doing and runs into the parlor to greet her older BROTHER. They hug warmly and sign animatedly. BETH looks on for a moment, happy for STEPHANIE, then goes on about her business.

DISSOLVE TO

EXT. NEW HOPE HOUSE--MORNING.

BETH juggles heavy bags of groceries and drops a sack of dirty laundry in front of the main door to the mansion as she fumbles to find the right key to unlock the door. Once she enters, she glances inside the living room where the other staff often slept. A video game was paused on the television set. Finding the room otherwise empty, she set her things down onto the dining room table and listened for the sound of JAKE, the hulking twentysomething part-timer, making breakfast in the kitchen. She listens harder. He must

CONTINUED: 22.

be checking on the kids, she thinks. Perplexed, she walks over to the bottom of the stairs. She hears muffled shouting coming from somewhere above her. She runs up the stairs to locate its source. Once she reaches the second floor landing, it becomes apparent that it's JAKE doing most of the yelling. He sounds extremely angry and agitated, and is somewhere on the third floor. She rushes to the third floor, soon hearing a pair of footsteps following behind her. She hurries to STEPHANIE'S room, the source of the noise. What she finds there is almost surreal. The bed was pulled away from the wall, almost to the middle of the room. STEPHANIE'S stuffed animals are scattered everywhere, and the pillows from the bed are on the floor. JAKE had his back to BETH, straddling the small form on the bed that was nearly covered with a sheet, except for a pair of feet behind JAKE and a tangle of blonde hair on at the head of the bed.

JAKE

Just stop it already!!! Get a goddamn grip on yourself, girl!!! Stop it, bitch!!!

BETH

Jake!!! What the hell is going on here?!?!

MICHAEL arrives in STEPHANIE'S doorway, nearly out of breath. BETH motions for him to step back.

BETH

Get off her!!! Now!!!

STEPHANIE is wild-eyed with fear, unable to move anything except her head and her legs. JAKE has her pinned to the bed, using the sheet to restrain her.

JAKE

Oh thank God you're here! I can't get her under control! She must've had a seizure or a fit or something.

BETH

Just get off of her, you idiot!

JAKE

She'll hit me if I let go!

BETH

I'll take it from here. Just get off now!!!

CONTINUED: 23.

JAKE relaxes the grip he had on both the sheets and STEPHANIE'S shoulders. She relaxes further as he climbs off the bed. He looks surprised that she just lays there, breathing in deep gulps of air.

JAKE

She was completely out of control when I came to check on her. She was jerking around on the bed and when I tried to calm her down, she just freaked on me.

JAKE turns to BETH. Beads of sweat stand out on his forehead and his t-shirt is damp from exertion.

JAKE

Really...she just wouldn't listen and I thought she was going to hurt herself.

MICHAEL ignores BETH'S order and steps around both her and JAKE, picking up a couple of stuffed animals and kneeling at STEPHANIE'S bedside. She was still just laying there, confused and trying to catch her breath. MICHAEL signs to her, "What happened?" STEPHANIE moves her stiffened hands to return the conversation. "I don't know," she says. "I just woke up and he was holding me down and yelling at me. My muscles hurt. Maybe I had a seizure. I get them in my sleep." MICHAEL signs back, "It's OK now."

JAKE

I couldn't get her under control without restraining her. She wouldn't calm down when I just talked to her. I didn't know what else to do.

JAKE shakes his head in disbelief, then glances back to STEPHANIE, who seems calm now and is still signing to MICHAEL. JAKE then slaps his own forehead in a gesture of revelation.

JAKE

Oh shit! I forgot! She's the deaf one. No wonder she didn't answer me or listen to what I said.

BETH stands, her hands on her hips, as tall as her 5'3" frame will allow. Normally, she would handle this downstairs but she was so angry and she felt STEPHANIE needed to see that what JAKE did was wrong.

CONTINUED: 24.

BETH

First of all...the term is hearing, and you should have remembered that Stephanie is hearing impaired. Second, she has a history of seizures which, if you weren't spending your night playing video games, you would've read about in her file.

JAKE visibly cowers.

BETH

And third, it is clearly stated in the employee handbook..<u>if</u> you had bothered to read that, either... that no teen is to be physically restrained unless the situation is a matter of life or death. You could've just stepped back if she was just laying there and flailing. What were you thinking?!?!

JAKE

God, I'm so sorry. I really effed up!

BETH

Big time! Go check on Jon and Sara. We'll discuss this more downstairs.

LATER.

JAKE exits and STEPHANIE, overcome with emotion, begins to sob. Tears began to roll down her cheeks and BETH, caught up in the moment, reaches out and takes the girl in her arms. She strokes her tangled hair and holds her close. BETH signs "It's OK. Jake was wrong. He forgot you were deaf and thought you were attacking him. " MICHAEL, somewhat embarrassed by this sudden outpouring of affection, begins picking up the pillows from the floor and otherwise tidying the room. The tranquility of the moment is quickly shattered by JAKE shouting from the next room.

JAKE

Beth, can you come in here... quick?!?!

CONTINUED: 25.

BETH breaks off her embrace with STEPHANIE and hurries out of the room.

BETH

Michael, will you stay with Steph while I go see what's wrong?

CUT TO

INT. SARA'S ROOM--MORNING.

The thick curtains are drawn and the room is nearly dark. BETH flips on the light switch, noting that SARA'S bed is empty. JAKE is hunched over in the far corner. BETH can see SARA curled up on the floor, her nightgown bunched up around her waist, revealing her flowered panties. BETH pushes past JAKE and bends over to help SARA, who appears awake and is vigorously sucking her left thumb while curled up on the bare floor. BETH takes a moment to pull the girl's nightgown down enough to cover her bottom. BETH speaks very softly to SARA, while cradling her head to her chest and rocking her gently.

BETH

Sara...it's OK now. Let's get dressed, go downstairs, and have some breakfast. Nothing bad has happened. It's really OK.

SARA looks up at BETH and removes her thumb from her mouth. At this point, she's speaking as if she's about three years old.

SARA

Is the bad man gone?

BETH

Sara, sweetie, there was no bad man. Steph just had a seizure, that's all. It was just a little bit noisy next door for a few minutes.

SARA sits up, and her speech now sounds much more age-appropriate.

SARA

Is Steph OK?

BETH

Of course, she's fine. Steph gets seizures sometimes.

CONTINUED: 26.

SARA

Was it my fault?

BETH

No, honey, it wasn't anyone's fault. Besides, she's all better now.

BETH notices that JAKE has left the room.

BETH

Now how about that breakfast, OK? It's getting late and the eggs are getting cold.

SARA

OK.

BETH helps SARA stand up and reaches for her hand to lead her so she could sit on her bed for a few moments. SARA'S fist is tightly clenched.

BETH

Open your hand, sweetie.

SARA unclenches her hand and BETH watches as dozens of shards of glass, once secretly tucked inside the girl's clenched fist, clatter to the wooden floor.

DISSOLVE TO

NEW HOPE HOUSE DINING ROOM--LATER MORNING.

STEPHANIE and MICHAEL are sitting together silently at the dining table, slowly eating their cereal and straining to listen to the argument going on in BETH'S office.

BETH (OC)

What could you have possibly been thinking?!?!

JAKE says something unintelligible.

BETH (OC)

That girl was horribly traumatized by what you did! And Sara...she came this close to harming herself, probably because she thought you were torturing the poor girl next to her! She has abuse issues and you can't just go off around her! She dissociates easily, especially around men!

CONTINUED: 27.

MICHAEL signs to STEPANIE, "Jake is really in trouble...I wonder if he's going to get fired." STEPANIE signs back "I hope not. It was my fault. I had a seizure. I was confused after I came out of it."

BETH (OC)

I don't give a rat's hind quarters!!! You do not restrain my kids unless there is absolutely no other option! Are you hearing me on this?!?!

JAKE says something unintelligible.

BETH (OC)

Next week, when you come in, you're going to read each and every chart over from cover to cover! This is your last chance! Do you understand? Your last chance!!!

BETH'S office door opens and JAKE bolts out. He quickly gathers his things and leaves abruptly. BETH emerges from her office. She also signs her remarks to STEPHANIE.

BETH

I'm sorry, you guys...sorry about all of this. I promise you that if anything like this ever happens again, he won't have a job here anymore. Promise.

BETH notices her forgotten bag of groceries on the table and takes it into the kitchen to unpack it. MICHAEL and STEPHANIE begin eating their soggy cereal somewhat more earnestly.

DISSOLVE TO

INT. NEW HOPE HOUSE LIVING ROOM--EVENING.

MICHAEL, JON, STEPHANIE, SARA, and BETH are all gathered in their usual spots for evening group. STEPHANIE has brought her needlework again; her poetry book is tucked behind her on the couch. SARA has dressed herself in a long, black dress and looks gothic with her shiny black hair flowing around her shoulders. MICHAEL is listening to his I-pod and humming along with the music. BETH motions for him to turn it off. JON, who obviously could hear the music, was deftly tapping out the beat with his fingers on each side of the chair. When the music stops and MICHAEL puts his I-pod away, JON keeps tapping out the beat, making up his own rhythm, absorbed in his own thoughts.

CONTINUED: 28.

BETH

Sara...why don't we start with you tonight? What are your latest goals?

SARA yawns and seems overmedicated.

SARA

Uh yeah...I guess. Tomorrow is my first payday at the store, and I think I'm going to open a checking account at the bank with my new money. Do I need an adult to cosign or anything?

BETH

I don't think so. But if they need someone to cosign for you, just have them give me a call. That's very good, Sara. How about you, Michael?

MICHAEL appears to be zoned out in his own little world.

BETH

Michael...? Earth to Michael, come in, Michael!

MICHAEL

Oh...sorry...

BETH

Goals, Michael...we're talking about our goals.

MICHAEL cracks a joke, which gets a laugh out of the group.

MICHAEL

You mean before or after I become President of the United States?

BETH

Why don't we start with the next 24 hours?

MICHAEL

Cool...well, I'm feeling pretty good about my signing.

MICHAEL sneaks a smile to STEPHANIE, who responds in kind.

CONTINUED: 29.

MICHAEL

So now I'm working on getting my GED. Maybe I'll get into a college with that and then, who knows.

BETH

That's outstanding, Michael. What do you think you'd major in if you get into college?

MICHAEL pauses before answering.

MICHAEL

Music education, I think.

DISSOLVE TO

EXT. NEW HOPE HOUSE--AFTERNOON.

There is a Glendale PD car parked in front of the house as BETH pulls into the driveway, with JON as her passenger. They hurriedly enter the house through the front door, which is already standing open. A small crowd has gathered in the back porch of the house. When BETH enters, she sees that the focus of the gathering is SARA, perched on a chair in a fetal position, her head buried in her lap. She is rocking softly and humming a tune BETH doesn't recognize. MICHAEL is kneeling next to her and STEPHANIE is looking on from her place on the couch. Two police officers stand, looking absent and ineffectual in the corner. They appear bored by the events; the younger of the two is fiddling with his handheld police radio. The older officer is one BETH knows well. It is RICK, her ex-husband and the Chief of Police in Glendale. BETH isn't happy that RICK had taken this call. He doesn't approve of New Hope House, and he doesn't particularly like BETH anymore, either. BETH steps carefully toward SARA, ignoring RICK and HIS PARTNER. BETH lightly strokes SARA'S hair and speaks very gently to her.

BETH

Honey? It's Beth. You're home at New Hope House. Please come out and talk to me.

She kneels down and gently rubs SARA'S forearm, hoping that a little stimulation will pull her out of the state she was in. SARA stops humming but continues to rock, soothing her body and mind in the process of her rhythmic rocking. She doesn't want to talk with the police officers standing nearby.

CONTINUED: 30.

BETH

Sara, sweetie, you need to tell me what happened.

RICK interjects.

RICK

Apparently, there was a young man in the store, and the two of them were flirting while she was ringing up his groceries. The customer reached over to touch Sara's hair and then all hell broke loose. She completely flips out and begins screaming at the customer. The manager calls us, and instead of taking her to the hospital, we brought her back here.

BETH

Sara...I really need for you to talk to me.

SARA

Can you make them go away? I promise I'll talk then. Really, I'll talk. Just make them go away.

BETH

Give me a sec, OK?

BETH turns to face RICK and HIS PARTNER.

BETH

Rick, can we talk inside the house?

BETH and RICK walk inside to the living room.

BETH

I'm sorry you had to come out here today...I think we have the situation under control now.

RICK

Now Beth, I think we've had just about enough of your kids. I know they've got rights just like everybody else. but I can't be rounding them up and dropping them off here every time they decide to go loco on somebody. You cannot having these kids going berserk all over town!

CONTINUED: 31.

BETH

I know, I know...Sara's been doing really well, though. But she has a history of abuse. And I'm not too sure I'd be happy about some strange guy making a pass at me, either. You can't blame her for being upset. You need to cut her some slack on this one.

RICK

Yeah, but I get upset lots of times and nobody ever calls the cops on me.

BETH

You seem to forget that last big fight we had before the diOCrce... the one when you trashed the house.

RICK moves closer to BETH, his VOICE softer but more ominous.

RICK

You know I have more than a couple connections over at the county zoning commission. A few choice words from me and you might not have this fancy place here for your psycho kids to hang out.

BETH meets RICK'S steely gaze head-on.

BETH

Don't you dare! These kids deserve at least one decent break, or they'll end up as wards of the state...one way or another...for the rest of their lives. Just let me talk to Sara. I'm sure you'll have no more trouble.

RICK

OK, I'll write this up and downplay the seriousness of what the girl did back at the store. You go do whatever it is that you social worker types do and let's hope we won't have any more of this crap anytime soon. Are we clear on this?

BETH nods affirmatively and allows herself to relax just a bit.

CONTINUED: 32.

BETH

I need to talk to Sara now. Can you and your partner let yourselves out?

INT. NEW HOPE HOUSE LIVING ROOM--EVENING

The evening group therapy session is just getting underway.

BETH

I want to thank everyone for behaving so well this afternoon, and for helping Sara...especially you, Michael...until I got back. I know it would be nice to have staff here all the time, but for the time being, that's just not possible. When you guys shine like you did today, you make us all look good to the community.

SARA

I didn't exactly do my part today.

BETH

It's really OK, Sara. You couldn't help what happened, and no one will blame you for that.

SARA looks a bit exasperated. She fiddles with her hair.

SARA

I feel like I should be over all that by now. I mean I've had like a thousand years of therapy and I still freak out over the littlest things. Um...

SARA hesitates. She looks over at MICHAEL and JON, who is intent on beating out some kind of heavy metal rhythm on his thighs.

SARA

After what I did today and after you guys were so nice to me...

BETH is busy signing SARA'S words to STEPHANIE who is watching the group intently. STEPHANIE'S familiar needlework sits next to her on the couch.

CONTINUED: 33.

SARA

Beth...would it be OK if I told the guys a little bit about why I went off today?

BETH smiles warmly at her.

BETH

You don't have to say anything, but if you want to, it's OK.

SARA takes a deep breath and summons up her nerve.

SARA

OK, it's like this...my folks were really shitty parents who only cared about themselves and when I was nine, a babysitter...who was a guy...molested me a couple of times. And when I told my mom about it, she blamed everything on me and told me I was blowing the whole thing out of proportion. She kept inviting that babysitter over after she knew what he was doing to me and told me I should never say anything to anybody.

SARA pauses briefly and looks around the room, wondering if it's OK to continue. The others all look at her with great empathy and compassion.

SARA

And when I got older, I got into some bad shit with some other guys and I started cutting. Cutting was like sex for me, you know? It made me feel better, and after awhile, I couldn't stop. And that's about it.

BETH is having a difficult time fighting back her tears. She also looks at SARA with great pride.

JON

Hey, Sara, I just wanted you to know that if I was around when that happened, I woulda beat the crap out of that guy!

SARA smiles at him. STEPHANIE then starts signing "I know the story, Sara, but I think it was a good thing you said it out loud. It

(MORE)

CONTINUED: 34.

JON (cont'd)

isn't good to keep things inside you so much."

MICHAEL

Steph is so right. We all have shit that's inside our heads, and if we don't let other people know, we get lost inside of ourselves. Thanks for telling us your story.

BETH

Yes, thank you, Sara. Let's go on to goal setting and then call it a wrap for the night. I'm leaving right after supper tomorrow, so Jerry will lead the group tomorrow night. Saturday night, Jake will be back. I know you've all had some issues with those two, but I'm giving them both a second chance. After all, that's what New Hope House is all about, second chances. I know they made some mistakes, but if they learn from their mistakes, I think we should all give them the benefit of the doubt, OK?

Everyone nods, except SARA. Finally, she nods slowly.

DISSOLVE TO

INT. NEW HOPE HOUSE LIVING ROOM--NIGHT.

JON inserts a video into the VCR and plays with the fine tuning so that STEPHANIE can see the closed-captioning. They sit on the floor watching a comedy, along with MICHAEL, periodically laughing out loud. Meanwhile, BETH and SARA get on the phone with SARA'S boss to try to smooth things over.

BETH

Thank you very much for being so understanding, Ron. It means a lot to me, and I know it means even more to Sara...

SARA

Yes, I can't thank you enough... except to say that nothing like that will ever happen again.

CONTINUED: 35.

BETH

So Sara should show up at her regular time on Monday then?

SARA

I'm planning to take my very first paycheck and open a checking account!

BETH

Honestly, Ron, I wish there were more people like you in this town and fewer like that pigheaded ex-husband of mine.

SARA

Yes, I'm feeling much better. I'll see you on Monday! Thanks again!

BETH

Thank you, Ron. Good night!

BETH and SARA both hang up their phones. BETH checks her watch.

BETH

Well, it's almost 10:00. Do you know what that means?

MICHAEL

"Do you know where your children are?"

JON

More like "Do you know where your children's meds are?"

EVERYONE shares a good laugh.

BETH

Ding! Give that man a gold star! OK, everyone...start lining up while I go and get the merchandise.

The kids start lining up at the kitchen door. BETH returns shortly with a tray containing four glasses of water and four little paper cups, each containing an assortment of psychotropic medications. Each of the kids grabs a glass, and BETH hands each one the proper meds.

BETH

Jon, do you have any idea why your evening meds keep coming up short every month?

CONTINUED: 36.

JON

No.

BETH

Maybe I should talk to the pharmacist and see if he knows something...

DISSOLVE TO

INT. BETH'S LAKESIDE CABIN BEDROOM--EARLY MORNING.

BETH is sleeping soundly with the covers pulled over her head when the phone on her nightstand rings and wakes her up. Groggily, she answers it.

BETH

Hello???

JERRY (OC)

Beth, I hate to bother you on your day off. But it's that girl, Stephanie, again. I haven't touched her, but when I went in to check on her, she was having another one of those seizures. I've waited for almost five minutes, but she isn't coming out of it.

BETH is now sitting straight up in bed.

BETH

Call 9-1-1! If she isn't coming out of it on her own, she needs to go to the ER right away! I'll meet you at the house!

BETH stumbles out of bed and frantically gets dressed.

DISSOLVE TO

EXT. NEW HOPE HOUSE -- MORNING.

BETH'S aging Ford Bronco pulls up behind the ambulance, which is parked on the street in front of the house with the lights still flashing. Some neighbors are gathered on the sidewalk nearby and across the street talking amongst themselves, "tsk-tsking," etc. BETH races up the walkway and into the house. She hears the bumping of something on the stairs above her and heads toward the noise. She reaches the third floor stair landing just in time to see the gurney

CONTINUED: 37.

wheel into STEPHANIE'S room. MICHAEL and JON stand outside, looking worried and whispering to one another. SARA'S door is closed and BETH didn't see her anywhere. She meets JERRY just inside the door to STEPHANIE'S room. The room is almost dark; still, BETH can see two YOUNG PARAMEDICS kneeling beside STEPHANIE, who was still in the midst of a grand mal seizure. One of the PARAMEDICS is searching the teen's rigid arms for an IV site. Finding a good vein, he deftly inserts an IV into the girl and caps off the IV with one hand while ripping off pieces of surgical tape with his teeth from a small roll he holds in the other hand. BETH approaches the SECOND PARAMEDIC, who has just gotten off his cell phone.

BETH

Hi, I'm Beth. I run New Hope House. What can you tell me?

SECOND PARAMEDIC
I understand that this girl has a known seizure disorder, right?

BETH

Yeah, she takes medication for it.

SECOND PARAMEDIC

Well, I think she needs a little more. She's in status epilepticus. That's when you go into a seizure but don't come out of it on your own. I just got off the phone with the ER doctor. We'll give her something right now.

BETH slides in next to the first paramedic and kneels down next to STEPHANIE. She watched STEPHANIE'S face; the seizure had left her facial muscles contorted and she was ghostly white. She touches STEPHANIE'S leg and is surprised to feel the heat beneath her hand; her nightgown was drenched with sweat and her tense thigh muscles ripple under BETH'S fingers. BETH wonders if she should call STEPHANIE'S family, or perhaps even a priest. STEPHANIE looks terrible. BETH stays by her side, neither willing nor able to do anything else at the moment. One of the PARAMEDICS injects a clear-looking medication into the IV port and they all wait for something to happen. Finally, BETH feels the muscles in STEPHANIE'S thigh begin to relax and she watches STEPHANIE'S face lose some of its distorted features. STEPHANIE is now breathing more regular -- a deep sort of breathing, as though she were in deep sleep.

BETH

Why doesn't she wake up?!?!

CONTINUED: 38.

FIRST PARAMEDIC

Oh, she won't wake up for several hours yet. We just gave her a boatload of Valium. It stops the seizures cold but we'll still have to take her to the ER.

SECOND PARAMEDIC

She'll need to stay in the hospital for a few days. This sort of thing is NOT something to be messed with. It's very dangerous.

BETH stands back while they loaded STEPHANIE onto the nearby gurney and gather their equipment. One of THE PARAMEDICS pust an oxygen mask on STEPHANIE and hooks a small oxygen tank to the gurney. The only signs of life that BETH can see are STEPHANIE'S regular breathing pattern and the mist of exhaled air condensing on her breathing mask. MICHAEL and JON are met by SARA, who crept out of her room, wrapped in a huge quilt and looking wild-eyed at the spectacle. The three huddle together in the hallway. MICHAEL wonders if he should take them all downstairs so STEPHANIE can have her privacy. He wants to shout out loud to drown out the VOICEs in his head. They keep chanting, "She's of The Fallen now" in his mind, over and over, getting so loud that he can't think. His distress is partially relieved when JERRY and BETH come out of STEPHANIE'S room, followed closely by THE PARAMEDICS, who are skillfully managing both their equipment and their patient, now strapped firmly to the gurney. BETH opens her arms in an attempt to corral the teens in the hallway, pushing them toward the head of the stairs.

BETH

Come on guys. Let's go down to the kitchen and get out of their way. We'll talk downstairs.

MICHAEL grabs SARA and JON, and nods his head toward the kitchen. They busy themselves in the kitchen, getting down the dishes and searching for breakfast food. MICHAEL can't help but feel angry. As the eldest of the teens, he was beginning to feel as if he should be taking care of things at the house even though he had issues of his own he wasn't ready to share with anyone just yet. He is beginning to have feelings for STEPHANIE and he feels helpless, unable to make it all better for her. Lost in his angry thoughts, he slams a cereal bowl down onto the countertop, cracking the bowl and sending pieces of porcelain flying across the room. SARA jumps; her nerves were frayed already by the chaos of the morning and she was startled by MICHAEL'S anger. She wanted to shout, "Just shut the fuck up!" but she just stands there, frozen by the noise. JON shouts for her.

CONTINUED: 39.

JON

What the fuck?!?! Michael, what the hell are you doing?!?! Can't you show some respect?!?!

JON tries to stoop down to pick up a large chunk of the bowl that has fallen at his feet but found, like tying his shoes, there were some things his girth won't allow him to do.

INT. GLENDALE MEMORIAL HOSPITAL--AFTERNOON.

MICHAEL, JON, and SARA sit in tense silence in a waiting area in a hospital corridor. SARA'S t-shirt has been stained by tears, her face is still raw and puffy. Her head hangs low. MICHAEL stands up and begins to pace nervously. BETH enters the scene.

BETH

She's awake now...the doctors think she'll be home by tomorrow.

MICHAEL appears visibly relieved.

BETH

They rechecked her medication drug levels and they were normal. They're going to try a new medication to see if that controls the seizures. They did some other blood tests, but those won't be back for at least a week. In the meantime, we'll take her home tomorrow...if all goes well.

BETH leads them to STEPHANIE'S room, where STEPHANIE is busy licking the last chocolate pudding off the back of a spoon. She seems genuinely surprised that everyone has come to visit her. She signa a big "hello" and motions for them to all come closer. MICHAEL keeps signing "I'm very happy that you're OK," while JON keeps asking her what she's had to eat that day and what it felt like to have the IV in. STEPHANIE seems to catch everything and happily answered each question.

DISSOLVE TO

INT. LIVING ROOM, NEW HOPE HOUSE--DAY.

The doorbell rings and JON, who is studying nearby, answers the front door. Standing there is MARK, a thirtysomething/fortysomething man who is MICHAEL'S therapist from GRTF.

MARK

Hi, I'm here to see Michael.

JON

You a relative?

MARK

I'm his therapist...from GRTF.

JON

Beth...?!?!

BETH enters from her office and greets MARK.

BETH

Oh, hi Mark...Michael's in the back of the house. Let's talk in my office for just a minute first.

BETH leads MARK into her office and closes the door behind her.

BETH

I'm really happy with how well Michael's been doing. He's been studying for his GED and he's even mastered American Sign Language faster than anyone I've ever met. He's taken his medication without protest, and he's actually become something of a leader among the group here. But...

MARK

But...???

BETH

But he's really restless today and I don't know why. Maybe you can get more out of him. The real question that I have is whether or not Michael is still hallucinating.

MARK

Why do you say that?

CONTINUED: 41.

BETH

He seems to have episodes where he completely zones out...like he's in a trance. He acts like he's listening to something or someone, but he doesn't seem to be following the conversation going on around him. I just don't know and thought you were in a better position to ask him.

MARK is looking through MICHAEL'S file folder.

MARK

Sure. You say he's in the back?

BETH

Yeah, you know where the back porch is, right?

MARK gets up and exits BETH'S office.

DISSOLVE TO

INT. BETH'S OFFICE, NEW HOPE HOUSE--LATER.

BETH is seated at her desk, quietly going through files and doing paperwork, when her concentration is interrupted by a loud crashing sound. She immediately jumps up and runs out into the hallway to ascertain the source of the noise. She hears MICHAEL shouting from the back porch and runs toward him. MARK is seated on the couch with his papers scattered around him on the floor. He's holding what appears to be a tissue to his eye and BETH can see blood seeping through the tissue. MICHAEL is standing a distance away, with his back to both MARK and BETH. MICHAEL is visibly shaking, holding his hands on either side of his head. Instinctively, BETH grabs a handful of tissues from the end table and hands them to MARK before addressing MICHAEL.

BETH

Michael, what's going on here?

MICHAEL does not respond.

BETH

Mark, what happened?

MARK

He threw something at me. It hit me right here and then bounced off the window.

CONTINUED: 42.

MARK lets BETH remove the tissues to reveal a one-inch gash next to his right eye.

MARK

We were talking about the possibility that Michael may be having hallucinations and I guess something must've set him off.

BETH

Michael...Michael. we need to talk. If you can't calm down, I'll have to call the police, and I really don't want to do that.

MICHAEL slowly moves his hands toward his face and BETH can hear him softly crying. His shoulders droop and he suddenly seems unsteady on his feet. BETH, not really worried for her own safety, walks over to the teen and puts her arm around his waist.

BETH

Shhh...it's ok...tell me what happened. MICHAEL is now sobbing.

MICHAEL

I don't know...I was just so scared I wasn't thinking.

BETH

Scared? What were you afraid of?

MICHAEL sniffles and calms down just a bit.

MICHAEL

He knows. The bastard knows.

BETH looks at MARK for clarification but he just shakes his head, equally confused by the statement.

BETH

Michael, you need to talk to me. Who knows what? Try to be as clear as you can for me.

MICHAEL

He knows about the VOICEs. He knows. They haven't gone away yet.

Fresh tears fill MICHAEL'S eyes and he can't say any more.

CONTINUED: 43.

BETH

Michael, I want you to listen to me. Just because you still hear VOICEs, that doesn't mean you'll be sent back to the hospital. It sometimes happens. I'm cool with it. We just need to put in a call to your psychiatrist and see what he says about increasing your medication. How does that sound?

BETH stands and turns her attention to MARK, who is gathering papers with one hand while holding his eye with the other. She helps him put the chart back together as they talk.

BETH

I think you need some stitches... and I need to know your stance on filing assault charges.

MARK

Yeah, I'll head to the hospital for some stitches, but I really don't want to press any charges. I think I came on a little too strong with him, that's all. I don't think he really thought about what he was doing. He just exploded.

MICHAEL stands and turns toward MARK, tears streaking his face,

MICHAEL

God, Mark...I am so sorry, man! I just freaked when I thought you were going to send me back. I just couldn't deal with it. I didn't mean to hurt you.

MARK stands and allows MICHAEL to approach him.

MARK

We're cool, man, OK? I know you didn't mean it. But you gotta get some help for those VOICEs. There's always more medications to try, or maybe Dr. Franklin will just increase the meds you're already on.

CONTINUED: 44.

MICHAEL

Oh, God, I'm so relieved! I didn't want to tell anybody, but I was about to explode.

BETH

Let's get Mark off to the hospital then. Do you need a ride?

MARK

Naah! It's not that far from here. Hey, Michael, we're cool. I'll come back in a few weeks.

MARK turns to BETH.

MARK

And you'll call Dr. Franklin?

BETH

As soon as you leave, I'll take care of it.

DISSOLVE TO

INT. MICHAEL'S ROOM--EARLY MORNING.

MICHAEL groans and rolls over in his bed as the first streaks of sunrise begin to softly illuminate his room. His sleep is interrupted by a periodic loud bumping noise as well as muffled cries. He grabs a pair of shorts and a t-shirt and throws them on, having decided to investigate the noise. He almost starts up the stairs by himself, then decides to bang on JON'S door.

MICHAEL

Jon!!! Wake up!

JON awakens with a start.

JON

What the hell?!?!

MICHAEL

It's Sara again. I need you to go up there with me to help!

JON

I guess so. Jake's not around?

CONTINUED: 45.

MICHAEL

I didn't even check. She hates him anyways!

The two boys quietly make their way up the stairs. Upon reaching SARA'S room, this time, they don't knock. MICHAEL grasps the doorknob and the door slowly swings open by itself. MICHAEL steps into the dim, unlit room. SARA is flat on her back, lying almost spread eagle on her bed. Her wrists are tied to the stanchions on the headboard with what look like old kitchen rags. She is nude from the waist down, her nightgown shoved up around her waist. Wearing only a t-shirt, a man is crouched between her legs, forcefully raping her. Jon stepped in and saw what was happening. By this time, the man has turned around and both boys can clearly see JAKE'S face, filled with a sudden alarm. JON says nothing. As if on instinct, he rushes toward JAKE, clasping his neck with one arm and ripping him off the bed and onto the floor. SARA screams. JON straddles the semi-nude JAKE and pummels him about the face and chest. JAKE squirms and tries to return a few blows himself but is nearly completely immobilized under JON'S bulky body. MICHAEL hurries to SARA'S bedside. He covers SARA'S nude lower body. Her shrieks have now fallen away to gulping sobs as MICHAEL unties the rags that had tightly bound SARA'S wrists. As soon as she was freed, he scoops her up and, stepping over JAKE'S legs, moving toward the door of the bedroom.

MICHAEL

Jon! You're gonna kill the guy!
Just keep him held down until I get
help!

JON gives JAKE one last blow to the side of his head before rearranging his body to completely immobilize JAKE. JON is struggling to control his rage. Finally, he spits in JAKE'S face and focuses his efforts on making sure JAKE was going nowhere.

JON

Whatcha gonna do? Call Beth?

MICHAEL

I don't know yet.

STEPHANIE emerges from her room into the hallway. MICHAEL does his best to wave her off.

MICHAEL

Don't go in there! Don't go in there!

CONTINUED: 46.

MICHAEL runs downstairs, grabs the house phone, and dials 911.

MICHAEL

Yeah, I need to report a rape. I need the cops right away.

EXT. NEW HOPE HOUSE--MORNING.

BETH has to park her Ford Bronco several doors down the street because of two city police cars and a county sheriff's vehicle parked in front of the house. A deputy sheriff whom BETH doesn't recognize met her at the door. He lets her pass once she tells him who she is. He directs her toward the living room. As she steps through the threshold and into the room, she is surprised by how crowded it is. SARA is seated on the couch between STEPHANIE and MICHAEL. JON sits next to MICHAEL. SARA and STEPHANIE are still in their nightgowns; SARA is wrapped in an old quilt and STEPHANIE'S arm is draped over her friend's shoulder. SARA looks tearful and is staring blankly at the floor. MICHAEL is talking to BETH'S exhusband, Police Chief RICK BRANNAN.

MICHAEL

It happened just like I said, Officer Brannan. I just heard the noise upstairs and thought I'd better go up and check on her, y'know...just to make sure she was OK. And this guy Jake was in the middle of raping her when me and Jon got there.

JON nods along with MICHAEL. He looks silly in his plaid boxers and bathrobe. There are spots of blood on his face.

RICK

So why was the guy so messed up?

JON straightens up and appears defensive.

JON

Look officer, I couldn't help myself. When I saw what that asshole was doing to her, I just went totally ballistic. I had to drag him off of her and then I just sat on him.

RICK

You sat on his face?

CONTINUED: 47.

JON

Uh, no...I kinda lost control for a
few minutes.

RICK continues making notes in his logbook.

RICK

So basically, you beat him up?

JON

Well, yeah...I just lost it, OK?

RICK

Well, young man, I'm not sure I would've done much different. I think we'll just let that go for now. He'll probably get that and more when he's locked up in jail as a suspected child rapist.

RICK chuckles to himself before noticing BETH.

RICK

Beth...let's talk outside in a minute.

Before joining her outside, RICK turns to two officers in the room.

RICK

Take the rest of their statements. I'm going to talk to the lady of the house here.

BETH leads RICK to the parlor near the front of the house. She opens her mouth to speak but RICK is faster. He speaks in a harsh, no-nonsense whisper.

RICK

What the hell kind of a place are you running here?!?! You got these psycho kids living here and you hire college dropouts who just happen to be rapists to watch over them? What the hell kind of therapy is that supposed to be?!?!

BETH

Rick, I had no idea this would happen. Jake has been a good employee so far...

RICK cuts her off, his VOICE steadily rising.

CONTINUED: 48.

RICK

So far?!?! What do you mean "so far???" The victim states that this wasn't the first time this has happened! It seems that your "great employee" has been raping her on a regular basis. At the rate he's been going, it's a wonder he hasn't knocked her up!

BETH is completely mortified.

BETH

I never knew. She never said anything.

RICK

Well, you'd better get your shit together or I swear I'll shut this psycho place down! Anyway, you got a job to do right now. We'll discuss the future of this house at a later date.

BETH

What do I need to do?

RICK

Well, don't look at me! I'm not going to be the bleeding heart that holds that girl's hand while she has a rape kit taken down at the hospital in about an hour.

BETH

Oh, shit.

DISSOLVE TO

INT. HOSPITAL EMERGENCY ROOM--LATER MORNING.

BETH arrives with a still-traumatized SARA, who is still wearing the same nightgown, to a scene even more chaotic than the one she had just left. The injured and infirm seem to be almost everywhere. BETH asks a nurse where she needs to take SARA to have her rape kit done and is pointed in a direction. On her way there, she spots JAKE laying in a bay with the curtains partially open. He is getting stitched up to repair the damage that JON did, and appears to be in some degree of pain. There are two Glendale POLICE OFFICERS guarding this bay. They arrive at their assigned bay, and are soon met by an ER NURSE, who appears somewhat neroCus.

CONTINUED: 49.

ER NURSE

You know we don't get too many of this kind of thing in here, so please be patient with me... I mean, Glendale is a pretty quiet town...I mean we have a bunch of things we have to do and we can't afford to mess up.

The ER NURSE disappears for a moment, leaving BETH and SARA alone.

BETH

Sara...I am so sorry that this happened to you! I had no idea. I want you to know that Jake will never get anywhere near you again!

SARA nods, still mute.

BETH

Sara, I need to ask you something, and you really need to listen and to answer me honestly. Do you understand?

Another nod, but nothing more.

BETH

I know this is not the first time that Jake raped you. The officer told me. I just need to know why you didn't feel it was OK to say anything to me.

SARA stares at the floor as she speaks.

SARA

I dunno. I guess I thought I deserved it or something. I was gonna tell you but then Steph got sick and I felt so bad about it. I thought maybe the whole thing was some kind of punishment I was supposed to have.

BETH

No, Sara! There is no reason for you to ever think that you deserve what happened to you today! Jake was wrong and he will be punished for what he did to you. Do you understand me?

CONTINUED: 50.

SARA

I guess so. I just didn't know if I should say anything or not.

BETH

Sara, please...if anything like this ever happens again, or if you think someone is hurting you, you absolutely must tell me, OK?

SARA nods, tears welling up in her eyes.

SARA

I'm sorry, Beth.

The door opens and the ER NURSE reenters carrying a paper bag, followed by ANOTHER NURSE, who pulls the curtains closed behind them.

ER NURSE

A police officer is standing just outside. He's going to wait there until we're done.

She motions for SARA to hop onto the exam table.

ER NURSE

I have a gown for you, dear. You're going to have to put your nightgown into this paper bag and then we'll walk you through the rest of the exam. The doctor will come in at the end, OK?

BETH holds SARA'S hand through the whole procedure and talks her through the moments when she seems overwhelmed. Several swabs are inserted into her vagina and the ER NURSE hands her a special comb.

ER NURSE

I need for you to comb your pubes with this for me.

SARA

My...?

ER NURSE

Your pubic hair...your hair down there.

BETH

It's OK, sweetie. Do what she says.

CONTINUED: 51.

SARA complies and hands the ER NURSE the comb. The ER DOCTOR then enters while SARA'S feet are still in the stirrups.

ER DOCTOR

I'm Doctor Greene, the emergency room physician on duty. I'm really sorry this happened to you, Sara. I just need to do a pelvic exam and the lab has to run a pregnancy test. Then we're all done.

SARA meekly speaks up.

SARA

Oh, I'm not pregnant. I'm on the pill 'cuz my periods were so weird.

BETH

Thank God!

ER DOCTOR

Great. We'll still have to run the test just to make sure. In the meantime, you can get dressed in the extra clothes that you brought.

The ER DOCTOR concludes the pelvic exam and exits, followed by the two NURSES.

DISSOLVE TO

INT. NEW HOPE HOUSE DINING ROOM--NIGHT.

MICHAEL, SARA, STEPHANIE, and JON are lined up for their bedtime doses of medications. All proceeds smoothly until it's JON'S turn. JON accepts his, along with his glass of water, and then looks at BETH somewhat peevishly.

JON

Say, Beth...?

BETH

Yes, Jon?

JON

Why do I only have one of these yellow ones here? Don't I usually get at least three of these babies?

BETH

No, Jon. That's your antipsychotic. If you take more than one of those (MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: 52.

BETH (cont'd)

a night, you'd be a zombie. You always take one.

JON

No, I don't. I definitely remember taking three of them last night, and on some other nights, too. I thought it was one of those things where you had to take a "bump" every now and then to keep the levels up.

BETH

Jon, I've never given you more than one of these. Are you positive you got three last night?

JON

At least three...come to think of it, it's only on the weekends that I take an extra dose of these pills ...oh, shit...Jake...he always gave me extra but I never thought nothin' of it.

BETH heaves a sigh of both anguish and relief.

BETH

Thank you for telling me. Now we know why your pills always come up short at the end of the month. I'll take care of it. He's not coming back here, anyway. It's my fault for not picking up on it.

JON

No, it's cool, Beth. Like you said, he's not coming back here, anymore. I'm OK.

JON takes his pills and trundles off to bed.

DISSOLVE TO

INT. BETH'S OFFICE, NEW HOPE HOUSE--DAY.

BETH is sitting in her office, sipping coffee with MARGUERITE.

CONTINUED: 53.

BETH

Honestly, Marguerite, I don't know what I should do. Rick could very well be serious about shutting this place down, even though the latest issue was nobody's fault but Jake's.Part of me feels like just laying off all the employees and just staying here fulltime for awhile just to keep things in order.

MARGUERITE

Actually, that might not be a bad idea. If the county officials know that you're the only staff person here, they may be less likely to take any action. They like you down there. And besides, the kids will feel a lot better having you around to watch over them all the time. This whole thing must've been devastating for all of you.

BETH

No kidding...I'm ready for things to settle down around here.

The phone on BETH'S desk rings. She answers it.

BETH

Hello? (PAUSE) Thank you for telling me. I'll let her psychiatrist know, too. Bye.

BETH hangs up the phone, then buries her head in her hands.

MARGUERITE

What's wrong?

BETH

When it rains, it pours. I can't believe this! If Rick finds out, we're done for.

MARGUERITE

What is it?

BETH

That was the hospital. Stephanie's drug test came back positive for methamphetamines. That's why she's been seizing so often lately.

DISSOLVE TO

INT. NEW HOPE HOUSE LIVING ROOM--DAY.

MICHAEL, JON, SARA, and STEPHANIE are all lined up, as if for military roll call. They look worried. BETH emerges from her office and addresses them. She instructs them to all sit on the sofa, while she pulls up a chair directly in front of them.

BETH

I have something very serious to discuss with all of you this morning.

JON

It's already afternoon.

BETH

This afternoon, then. Lunch will be late today, and none of you are leaving New Hope House today ...not even you, Sara.

SARA appears frightened.

BETH

Normally, I would talk to you one at a time about something like this, but I think things have gone too far lately here at the house, and I want everyone to come clean about what's been going on around here. One or more of you has not been honest with me, and I want to get the whole thing out in the open.

MICHAEL

What are you talking about, Beth?

BETH

What I'm about to disclose is confidential information, but I think that it's important that we all know about it and talk about it.

BETH pauses for a moment to gather her thoughts and her nerve.

CONTINUED: 55.

BETH

Steph's drug test from when she was in the hospital came back today...and it was positive for meth. Anyway...we all know that Steph never leaves this house without a staff member. What I want to know...no, what I need to know...is exactly how she got those drugs and who knows what about all of this.

JON

I knew she seemed a little different sometimes...like she was high or something...but I never did nothin' and I never knew a thing about nothin' going on.

MICHAEL

Me neither. She never said anything to me about any drugs and I don't use drugs anymore.

SARA is silent, staring at the floor and stealing glances with STEPHANIE, who is also not revealing anything.

BETH

Girls? I need to hear from both of you.

STEPHANIE starts signing. "It's my brother. He brought me the drugs and I only used a little bit. Nobody else knew about it." SARA looks up, not believing what she is hearing. She speaks up, albeit quietly.

SARA

That's not true. It's not all Steph's fault. That's what I've been trying to tell you these last few days. What Jake did to me was punishment for what I did to Steph. I knew I'd be punished and it happened.

BETH

Sara, what do you mean?

SARA

I mean that Steph's brother just gave her the money for the meth. I was the one who scored it for her when I was out...after work. I met (MORE)

CONTINUED: 56.

SARA (cont'd)

a guy who was a dealer and he's the one who I got the meth from. I swear, I didn't know it would hurt Steph!

SARA starts to cry and MICHAEL hugs her. STEPHANIE stares straight ahead, attempting to zone out and escape the reality of this moment. BETH sits back, taking it all in and pondering what her next step should be. She gets up, walks into her office, then silently returns with four notebooks and four pens, which she hands out to the group.

MICHAEL

What are these?

BETH

I want all of you to open your notebooks to the first page. I want you to write the words "Behavioral Contract" at the top. Underneath that part, I want you to write "What I have done."

BETH watches as the teens comply with her instructions.

BETH

Now I want you to skip a few pages and write down the words "What I am going to do to make this better." This is what's called a behavioral contract. Each of you will fill in the things that you have personally done that was outside the bounds of the rules of New Hope House. After you're done, I'll review what each of you has written and we'll both sign the contract that you've created. Does everyone understand what I'm saying?

The group all nods affirmatively.

JON

Now can we eat lunch???

DISSOLVE TO

INT. MICHAEL'S ROOM, NEW HOPE HOUSE--AFTERNOON.

MICHAEL is laying on his bed, pen and notebook in hand, as he thoughtfully works on his contract. While he lays there, he takes in the sounds around him, especially the groaning of the old house. The wind is rattling the loosened windows and he hears the leaves outside, rustling in the trees. Something else catches his ear. He smiles when he realizes what it is. It's JON, tapping on something like he often did during group and at mealtimes. Only this time, he's tapping on something firm and it didn't sound like he was just drumming his fingers on something. Actually, JON is playing a catchy beat, loud enough to be heard in MICHAEL'S room next door. The upbeat rhythm gave MICHAEL an idea. Still hearing JON'S "drumming," he gets up and reaches into his closet. Underneath his pile of dirty laundry is his Warlock electric quitar. He knows it wouldn't play very loud unless it was plugged in but he doesn't want to disturb anyone, either. He listens to the beat and, sitting on the chair next to the wall that the two rooms shared, begins to play. He follows the beat and hums a tune along with his guitar and imagines he was singing some kind of rock ballad. The guitar wasn't loud but he guessed JON could hear him because neither of them stopped. They play for a few minutes, allowing the music to speed up, get louder, and then drift to a slower speed. MICHAEL turns his humming into a song he had been working on during the times he'd been spending in his room over the last few weeks. MICHAEL thinks he's hallucinating when he hears some music playing in perfect harmony to his own. JON was still drumming so he knew it wasn't him. It sounds like acoustic guitar music. The music followed his almost perfectly and he can hear the most beautiful VOICE hovering above his own, humming the tune he sang, also in perfect harmony to his own VOICE. It's SARA. MICHAEL can barely believe his ears.

CUT TO

INT. SARA'S ROOM, NEW HOPE HOUSE--AFTERNOON.

SARA is laying on her bed, industriously writing entries in her Contract notebook and humming along with the music coming from downstairs. Becoming increasingly distracted by it, she retrieves her acoustic guitar from the closet and begins playing along, as well. Her door opens slightly, and STEPHANIE quietly slides in and watches SARA hum and play, carefully watching the positioning of SARA'S fingers as she plays. STEPHANIE then disappears for a moment and returns with a cello almost as big as she is. She sets the cello on the floor, and watching SARA play the guitar, STEPHANIE begins playing rich, sonorious music. SARA realizes that STEPHANIE is playing by vibration.

CUT TO

INT. BETH'S OFFICE, NEW HOPE HOUSE--AFTERNOON.

BETH is busy doing paperwork when she thinks she hears something unusual. She stops what she's doing to listen. It's music, but where is it coming from? And why? She gets up and heads for the stairs. She stops outside each door, completely enamored by the music.

DISSOLVE TO

INT. LIVING ROOM, NEW HOPE HOUSE--EVENING.

MICHAEL, JON, SARA, and STEPHANIE are seated in their usual positions, somewhat nervously waiting for group to start. BETH enters, looking slightly harried.

BETH

Sorry I'm late. I had a phone call that I had to finish. I want you to know that I've laid Jerry off for awhile, until things settle down around here. I'm going to have Rebecca stay during the day on Saturdays. Otherwise, you're pretty much stuck with me, 24/7.

The group reacts fa0Crably, but tries not to let on too much.

BETH

Now, I hope that everyone has their notebooks tonight...and I trust you spent some quality time really thinking about what you wrote in them.

All four teens hold up their respective notebooks.

BETH

Great! Now I want each of you to toss your notebook onto the floor in the middle of the circle here.

Confused, the teens nonetheless comply with her request.

BETH

Excellent! I'll gather the notebooks after group and take a look at them later, but...

CONTINUED: 59.

As BETH pauses for effect, the teens look at each other and at her rather quizzically.

BETH

I've changed my mind and I've decided to give you guys a completely different task... one that I hope will prove to be both therapeutic and educational.

The boys look at each other. JON raises his eyebrows, wondering what other punishment BETH could possibly give them.

BETH

We'll start tomorrow. Early. Wear your old clothes and be prepared to do some heavy work. We have a job to do, and then I'll tell you the rest of my plan. I have some things to do tomorrow while you're working and when I get back, we'll have group early. How about, say, 4:00?

Everyone nods, even though they're clearly still just as confused as before.

DISSOLVE TO

INT. NEW HOPE HOUSE DINING ROOM--EARLY MORNING.

MICHAEL, STEPHANIE, JON, and SARA, all wearing grubbies, are seated around the table silently eating breakfast. BETH seems unusually cheerful and bubbly. MICHAEL starts to clear the table, but is stopped by BETH.

BETH

I'm doing all the dishes today. You guys are coming with me.

BETH leads them into the laundry room and opens a huge, heavy wooden door that none of them had ever paid any attention to before. She goes through the door, then switches on a light.

BETH

Come on down, guys.

They descend a narrow flight of stairs into what can only be described as a 19th Century cellar of sorts. It's fairly big; in fact, it's more like a basement than a cellar but MICHAEL has to duck in order to get down the stairs. There

CONTINUED: 60.

is old furniture, lampshades, old bedposts, and lots of ancient-looking paintings lining the walls. The junk is scattered throughout the basement, which isn't otherwise finished.

BETH

Welcome to the basement!

MICHAEL, SARA, JON, and STEPHANIE all look at each other as if to wonder if BETH has lost her mind.

BETH

This is your task for today. You get to get rid of anything in this basement that is clearly broken or just plain junk. Use the far corner over there to stack the paintings and any furniture that you don't want. By that I mean you're going to create a space about fifteen feet by fifteen feet near the stairs here and you're going to assemble whatever furniture you like or you think fits into a room of that size. Everything else goes out to the dumpster I've ordered. It should be arriving any minute now. Does this all make sense to you guys?

JON

Are we going to have to live down here, Beth? I mean, it's kinda dingy...and the lighting is crappy.

BETH

Oh, that reminds me. The electrician should be here about eleven to rewire the basement. Be nice to him and let him do his thing. And no, Jon, no one is going to live down here, but we are going to do some therapy here, so pretend like you're making space for a group or something.

JON mutters under his breath, then coughs from inhaling dust.

JON

Cheery place for the mentally ill...

CONTINUED: 61.

BETH

Oh, one more thing...it's pretty dusty down here, so don't forget to dust everything, wipe everything down, and vacuum. I'll be in Hartford for most of the day, so I expect nothing but the best behavior from you guys. Trust me on this one. It's going to be really cool when you're done.

BETH heads back up the stairs alone, leaving the four teens in the basement, wondering where to begin.

MICHAEL

You heard the lady, let's go! Jon, let's pick out the furniture we want to keep. Steph and Sara need to gather up all the paintings and start a pile in the far corner there.

The teens go to work, spending the entire morning organizing and throwing out the things they don't want or didn't even know what they were. There was some kind of contraption that MICHAEL recognized as an old ringer washer. JON and MICHAEL haul it out of the basement, while the girls grab all the rags, paper towels, and cleaning supplies they can find. The dumpster was sitting out on the street and, by noon, it is more than half full. STEPHANIE makes sandwiches for lunch and brings them downstairs. Things were still dusty but STEPHANIE couldn't believe the progress they were making. They all dropped onto the oddly-matched furniture about three hours after lunch. JON was chomping on his third sandwich and everyone was enjoying some lemonade and their considerably cleaner surroundings. The dumpster outside is almost full. A few items are stacked along the far wall of the basement, along with the paintings and an old bicycle. SARA has vacuumed the basement and the boys unrolled a nice area rug they used to outline their space. All that was left to do was dust and wipe down the furniture. The electrician was gone; he had wired in several fancy-looking outlets near the stairs and the lighting was better. BETH descended the steps just before four o'clock. She looked clean compared to the ragged bunch of teens she met in the basement. She couldn't help but laugh.

BETH

You guys are going to need more water than this place can actually provide when you shower tonight. You look filthy!

CONTINUED: 62.

JON

You forgot tired.

BETH

You smell tired, too.

JON

Thanks a lot.

BETH laughs.

BETH

Sorry. Yes, you all look tired, too.

She finds an empty seat and sits down to address the group.

BETH

OK, you guys are probably wondering what kind of therapy we have in mind here...

JON

I think we have it figured out.

BETH

Oh?

JON

You're hiring us all out to be movers, right?

BETH roars with laughter.

BETH

Great idea, but no, not even close. We're going to use this beautiful space that you guys have created for a completely different kind of therapy than that.

SARA

I give up.

JON

You're killing me. Tell us already.

BETH

I am, so shush...we're going to use this space every day for music therapy.

The teens look around at the space and at each other.

CONTINUED: 63.

MICHAEL

She knows.

BETH

Yep, I do. I just happened to be checking on a bunch of unruly teens yesterday when I realized that each and every one of them is very talented in music.

There's some blushing.

BETH

In fact, I was so impressed that I decided New Hope House would begin a new therapy program designed to help teens work together and use music instead of things like self-harm, drugs, or aggression to solve their problems.

A few shy smiles erupt, but no one says anything.

BETH

So I had the electrician put in enough OCltage that you won't short out the place every time you play, and I thought we'd clean out the best place in the house to make a little noise without disturbing the neighbors.

MICHAEL

Especially Old Man Collins.

They all laugh.

JON

Uh, Beth? How much noise can four people make? I can only get so loud playing my drumsticks on the back of a chair.

BETH

We'll deal with that part later. I first want to ask you all what you think of this idea.

JON

Do we get a choice?

CONTINUED: 64.

BETH

Not exactly. Besides, it's therapeutic. It's not supposed to be too much fun.

BETH suddenly stands up.

BETH

Now...since you're rested up but still dirty, I need you to help me get a few things out of the truck. Then you can all take a nice, hot shower, change into clean clothes, and meet me in the dining room for dinner. Sound cool?

The teens trudge upstairs, almost too tired to care anymore.

CUT TO

EXT. NEW HOPE HOUSE--LATE AFTERNOON.

BETH ushers the teens out the front door and points them toward her aging Ford Bronco parked nearby.

BETH

Go ahead...empty it out.

MICHAEL reaches the back of the Bronco and looks in before turning the latch and opening the back of the SUV. JON lets out a low whistle and SARA shrieks. The back of the vehicle and the entire back seat are filled to the roof with professional-quality musical instruments. JON, however, is looking at just one thing--the pearl-colored barrel of just one piece of the most amazing drum set he had ever seen.

DISSOLVE TO

INT. NEW HOPE HOUSE DINING ROOM--EARLY MORNING.

The teens are surprisingly silent and all (except for JON) are picking at their breakfast. Finally, SARA speaks up.

SARA

Beth? Do we have to start music therapy today?

BETH seems almost flummoxed by this question.

CONTINUED: 65.

BETH

Well, considering that I used the grant money from the Carnegie Foundation that I'd been saving for a special project to buy all those instruments, I'd say yeah.

SARA

Oh.

BETH

I don't get it. I thought you guys would think music therapy was fun.

JON

Oh no, Beth. We all think it's cool and all, but...

BETH

But what?!?! I really don't get it!

MICHAEL

See, we all talked...last night... and we were wondering...

BETH

I give up!!!

MICHAEL

What if we suck?

JON

Yeah, we could absolutely blow big time!

BETH bursts out laughing.

BETH

It doesn't matter if you suck...or blow. That's not the point! The point is to have fun doing something you like that lets you work together and helps you let out some of that bundled-up tension inside of you. The point is...just play!

There's visible relaxation among the four teens, who resume eating. MICHAEL thinks for a moment before responding.

MICHAEL

So basically, we just hang out down there and play music, right?

CONTINUED: 66.

BETH

Right.

MICHAEL

Cool.

He turns to JON.

MICHAEL

So, you wanna play some music?

DISSOLVE TO

INT. NEW HOPE HOUSE BASEMENT--MORNING.

A half hour later the four have assembled in the basement. JON is testing out the positioning of the drum set and SARA is helping STEPHANIE tune her bass. MICHAEL has plugged in his guitar alongside SARA'S new one and begins plucking out a tune that was rolling around inside his head. MICHAEL signs "Steph, how do you know what to play?" She signs back "My parents wanted me to be like all the other kids, so they signed me up for music lessons. The only thing I could really play was the bass. It has a nice vibration to it and I can tell the pitch by the way it vibrates. It doesn't sound like the way you hear music, but it feels nice on my fingers when I play it. When we played the other day, I could feel the vibration of Sara's guitar but, in order to play along, I have to watch what her fingers are doing. I can do the same thing with you, too."

MICHAEL

Show me.

MICHAEL starts playing a piece of his own composition. To his amazement, STEPHANIE watches for a minute and then began to play along, harmonizing perfectly, using only her delicate hands, her eyes, and raw talent. He can't believe how well she did. SARA and MICHAEL begin to sing the lyrics together.

SARA/MICHAEL (SINGING)
I'd die to hear your VOICE one
time... I'd kill to see your
eyes...my rage-filled tears washed
you away...I was never good with
goodbyes.

MICHAEL breaks it off and signals to cut. The music stops.

CONTINUED: 67.

MICHAEL

Uh, that was kinda cool, dontcha think?

JON

Michael, you're a genius, my man. A regular Gene Simmons. You got any more?

MICHAEL shrugs, grabs a soda, and takes a long swallow.

MICHAEL

I think I just might. Try this.

MICHAEL starts a song on his guitar, and the others quickly join in.

DISSOLVE TO

INT. NEW HOPE HOUSE LIVING ROOM--EVENING.

MICHAEL, JON, SARA, and STEPHANIE gather for group, and are joined by BETH, who sits down last. MICHAEL and STEPHANIE are seated together, and are starting to act more like a couple.

BETH

Well...this has been a very long week. I thank all of you for participating in New Hope House's first-ever music therapy sessions, and I want to add that you guys are doing a fantastic job.

MICHAEL and STEPHANIE look at each other and grin.

BETH

Perhaps I should rephrase that. You all did a fine job of working together and staying out of trouble for the entire week. But...

All four look at BETH quizzically. MICHAEL looks almost panic-stricken.

BETH

But what I mean by fantastic is that you guys are...well...fantastic! You are all truly outstanding musicians and way more talented than I first thought. Great job! CONTINUED: 68.

MICHAEL relaxes and moves slightly closer to STEPHANIE.

BETH

So, for your great efforts this week, I hereby decree that no one has to set any goals tonight...except for me, of course. And I only have one goal for the weekend.

The teens all cheer and applaud, then listen with rapt attention, suddenly curious as to what BETH'S weekend goal might be.

BETH

And here it is. You ready? On Sunday night, my goal is to sit in a comfortable chair amongst friends, listening to my faOCrite new band performing their first concert. So what do you think, guys? Will you take the gig?

MICHAEL

You are kidding, right? We've been playing for what...a week already... and you want us to play in public?

JON breaks out laughing, thinking it's a joke.

SARA

Yeah right, Beth. You want us to make fools of ourselves in front of strangers? I already feel foolish down there sometimes. No way! I'm not touching that one.

BETH

I'm not talking about strangers, and I'm not even talking about a crowd. I'm just talking about my friend Marguerite, her husband, and me. I only wish that I could get you guys to believe in yourselves the way I believe in you.

JON

You sure you're not goofing on us?

BETH

Positive.

CONTINUED: 69.

JON gives BETH a little kick and points in STEPHANIE'S direction. STEPHANIE is signing "You're not kidding are you, Beth? You really want us to play for your friends, don't you? Tell me. Tell me, why?"

BETH

I know I've teased you guys about this being "music therapy" and all, but really, I've come to see it as more than that. You guys are really talented, and I didn't realize that you can't see it yourselves. You've been caught up in all the excitement of playing music and you haven't noticed what I've noticed... that you're really good musicians!

JON has stopped giggling and has resumed drumming on the arm of the chair. All are listening attentively.

BETH

I'm really sorry, guys. It never occurred to me that you might still feel a little unsure of your abilities. Let's forget the whole thing. You can play for other people when you're ready and not before.

MICHAEL clears his throat.

MICHAEL

Beth, I'm guessing that you probably already invited your friends to listen to us, am I right? And it wouldn't be right to go back on that invitation. You know what I mean?

MICHAEL squeezes STEPHANIE'S hand to reassure her.

MICHAEL

So what I'm saying is that if your friends don't mind that we're not really polished and all, I think we should play for them.

BETH seems pleased and proud.

MICHAEL

I guess that's it, then. We got a rehearsal tomorrow, guys. Right after breakfast, OK?

CONTINUED: 70.

DISSOLVE TO

INT. NEW HOPE HOUSE BASEMENT--DAY.

BETH interrupts their rehearsal with a plateful of sandwiches and a bag of potato chips. She drops off her load and heads upstairs to bring down some drinks for everyone. Tired, the group sits sprawled out on the furniture spread out in the basement and eats their lunch. JON, who normally eats at least four sandwiches himself, only grabs a couple today, along with a handful of chips.

JON

Maybe this ain't the right time to bring this up, but shouldn't this group have an actual name or something?

MICHAEL nods affirmatively, followed by STEPHANIE.

JON

I got it! We could be the New Hope Nut Cases! What do you think?

JON laughs at his own joke, as do the others. Finally, STEPHANIE signs "What about that last song we played, she signed. Remember the last line?"

MICHAEL

You mean "Black Shadow?"

SARA

Yeah, Steph, I like it. "Black Shadow." It sounds a lot like my whole life. You know what I mean?

STEPHANIE runs upstairs and quickly returns with sheets of blank paper and some markers. In a very elegant script, she designs a logo reading "Black Shadow."

DISSOLVE TO

INT. NEW HOPE HOUSE BASEMENT--EVENING.

BETH, MARGUERITE, and MARGUERITE'S HUSBAND, TED, are seated in the front row, comprised of eclectic but comfortable junk chairs, as BLACK SHADOW gives a flawless performance. BETH and MARGUERITE whisper back and forth; BETH can barely hold back her pride and applauds loudly after each song. TED simply sits back, alone with his thoughts, watching the group intently. He applauds with the other two and, along

CONTINUED: 71.

with the women, gives the group a standing ovation after the last song. After the applause dies down, he walks over and shook each band member's hand.

TED

So...who's the leader of this band?

SARA signs to STEPHANIE, who points to MICHAEL. JON and SARA do likewise.

MICHAEL

Uh...I guess I must be.

TED

You're Michael, right?

MICHAEL nods. TED shakes MICHAEL'S hand again.

TED

Great. Nice to meet you, Michael. You guys have some serious raw talent here. How long have you been playing?

MICHAEL

A week maybe?

TED

Really? You guys planning on staying together as a band?

MICHAEL

Yeah, we're havin' a lot of fun doin' this. Why?

TED

Because if you think you've got some staying power as a group, I think I can help you get on your feet. See, I only live in Connecticut. I actually work in The City.

TED stops there, assuming that MICHAEL is following what he's saying. He isn't.

TED

Beth didn't say anything to you about what I do for a living?

MICHAEL shrugs.

CONTINUED: 72.

TED

Hmmm...maybe she doesn't know. You see, Michael, I'm a talent agent. You know, for rock bands, country bands, you name it...

The light finally goes on in MICHAEL'S head. He seems excited.

TED

Of course, I can't promise you anything, but I would like to schedule a meeting with you about maybe...just maybe... signing you guys on with me. How does that sound?

MTCHAEL

Sure...I mean, we all make decisions together, but sure...we'll let our manager...Beth...we'll let Beth...uh... find a time that works for you.

TED shakes MICHAEL'S hand for a third time, and gives him a business card.

TED

Excellent. Have Beth give me a call.

DISSOLVE TO

INT. NEW HOPE HOUSE DINING ROOM--EARLY MORNING.

Breakfast is almost finished. An uncomfortable silence hangs in the air. Finally, BETH breaks it.

BETH

I'm only going to say this one more time and you absolutely have to believe me on this one. I swear, I really did not know that Marguerite's husband was a talent agent. I always thought he worked on Wall Street or something. Really, I had no idea.

Silence again, but this time MICHAEL actually looked up at her as she spoke. BETH passed around some freshly made muffins. MICHAEL took one but set it down on his plate, which was hardly touched anyway.

CONTINUED: 73.

MICHAEL

I believe you. It was just a really cool moment when we played for you guys, but it was like we were playing house or something. It wasn't real. It was way too much of a shock to end it that way. It kinda weirded me out, y'know?

BETH

I know. I still haven't set up a time for him to have a meeting with you guys. I told him I'd call him. I can just blow him off and we'll never have to talk to him about anything.

SARA

It's not that we don't want to talk to him...it's just that, well...it's too soon, and...

SARA breaks off as soon as she notices STEPHANIE beginning to sign. STEPHANIE signs "We just feel really exposed. We feel like people will care more about the fact that we're all crazy and won't appreciate our music for what it is."

SARA

That's what I was trying to say. We just got out of a psychiatric hospital and we all live in a group home. People are going to expect us to be drooling or something. We'll be treated like freaks.

BETH

Or you can serve as an example that people with mental illnesses are just like everyone else. The group ponders that thought for a moment.

BETH

Listen, what if we cross that bridge when we come to it? It's not like you're going to be celebrities or anything. We can just leave out the part about your past and hope that people are more interested in you as musicians than they are about anything else about you. I would just hate to see you pass up a terrific opportunity just because you're worried about what people

(MORE)

CONTINUED: 74.

BETH (cont'd)

think of you. My God! It's what you think about you that really matters here!

STEPHANE starts signing "It's just so hard for me to see myself as a musician. For me, my mom used music to convince herself that I was normal. I feel like I'm giving in to my mom's dream to actually play my music in front of others. I'm afraid and it makes me feel strange."

MICHAEL

Steph, we all have shitty baggage like that. You need to decide if you love the music for you or if you're doing it because your mother made you do it. We all have to decide things like that. I used music to drown out the VOICEs I was hearing and to learn how to feel things again after my parents died. Music protected me and is very personal for me. Last night was the first time I played for an actual audience...even if it was just three people.

JON finishes his plate and drinks the last of his milk.

JON

Yeah, like what Michael said. I learned to drum in a fucking closet, for God's sake. My mom would bring over her "customers" to the trailer where we lived. She goddam stuffed me in a closet for a couple of hours while she "entertained" these dudes. I thought I'd lose my mind having to sit still for so long so I used to drum my fingers in different rhythms to pass the time. Then my uncle taught me how to really play a drum set but every time I play now, I'm thinking I'm stuck somewhere in a fucking closet.

JON pauses for a second and pours a second glass of milk.

JON

But, you know something? I like drumming. I don't care if I learned how to do it in a closet. I love to (MORE)

CONTINUED: 75.

JON (cont'd)

do it and nothing else really matters. I personally don't give a rat's ass what anyone else says or thinks. I say we should talk to the guy.

MICHAEL

Me too. Jon's right. We've all got our issues and music means different things to all of us. But, right now, the music belongs to us and I don't think we have to tell the whole world where we came from just to play.

Slowly, STEPHANIE begins to nod, followed by SARA.

MICHAEL

So what are we waiting for then?

DISSOLVE TO

INT. NEW HOPE HOUSE BASEMENT--EVENING.

MICHAEL, SARA, JON, and STEPHANIE are on their makeshift stage tuning their instruments when BETH descends the staircase, followed closely by agent TED BOWMAN.

MICHAEL

We can move this upstairs, if you want. It's kind of dingy down here.

TED

No, that's fine. We'll just grab these chairs and sit over there by the sofa.

MICHAEL grabs a seat between BETH and STEPHANIE.

TED

First of all, thanks for agreeing to meet with me. I've been doing a lot of thinking about you guys and I love the fact that you play nothing but your own music. I mean whoever writes for you could have a career doing just that.

CONTINUED: 76.

MICHAEL

Actually, sir, I write the music myself with Stephanie here. She's deaf, you know, but she can write amazing lyrics and can write out the music without ever having to hear it. She's like that Beethoven guy, you know.

TED

Wow! And I'm not "sir." You can call me Ted. I had no idea you guys wrote the music yourselves. That's a major selling point.

BETH

Ted, you already know these guys are talented. They have a raw, natural talent you hardly ever find anymore.

TED

I know, I know. That's why I'm going to cut to the chase and come right out and ask if you want to sign on with me. What do you think?

MICHAEL

Well...sir...Ted...I think we really need to know what it means to "sign on" with an agent. We've never done this before.

TED straightens in his chair.

TED

Well, since I figured you'd have some questions, I spared you the lengthy contract talk tonight. Most of the time, a band signs on with an agent so they can get networked into the music industry. You need promotion so other people can know who you are, and you need access to key players and to equipment...things like a sound stage and the use of professionals who will help you cut your first CD. You may end up doing a music video, and you'll benefit from the networking I can provide. In return, I get a percentage...a small percentage...of what you guys (MORE)

CONTINUED: 77.

TED (cont'd)

earn. I only sign on bands if I think they can make it and I think you guys can. That's my story and I'm sticking to it.

Everyone, including BETH, shares a chuckle.

JON

So how are you going to market us...a bunch of teenage psychos fresh out of the loony bin?

TED

Marguerite knows all of you guys pretty well from Glendale and I know you've had your share of troubles, but what rock or heavy metal band doesn't have troubles? You have a manager, Beth, here who keeps an eye out for you, you're all fine musicians, and I don't think we need to make an issue of whatever happened in your past. Bands like yours carry a lot of mystique anyway, so you'll be no different. If anyone gets too close for comfort, you'll be well-protected by your manager and by an agent who'll field any questions that people might have about you.

TED clears his throat.

TED

You're musicians...damn good ones, too. That's all people need to know. Let them grow to love you first and then no one will give a flying f about what went on when you were kids.

MICHAEL

Kinda nice to be thought of as adults.

BETH

Almost adults.

JON

Whatever.

CONTINUED: 78.

BETH

I agree with Ted. Let's just let you guys play your music. We'll handle the rest. Ted already said he's giving me lessons on how to be a good manager.

BETH winks at TED.

BETH

Isn't that right, Ted?

TED

For where you guys are right now, she's the best manager you could ask for. She'll take good care of you.

MICHAEL

So what's our next move?

TED

I say...I say you guys need a little taste of the music industry before diving into all of the rest of it. How about coming over to New York one day soon and we'll test you out on a sound stage? We'll record you guys for a few songs and then, if you like it, we'll go ahead and talk about a contract.

None of the teens can contain their excitement.

DISSOLVE TO

INT. BETH'S FORD BRONCO--EARLY MORNING.

BETH is driving down 1-84 at 6:30 A.M. toward Manhattan, with MICHAEL, SARA, STEPHANIE, and JON as passengers. All of their instruments are loaded into the cargo area. The teens are all sleeping peacefully as the vehicle crosses the Connecticut/New York state line. BETH looks over at her sleeping charges and smiles like a proud parent.

DISSOLVE TO

INT. BETH'S FORD BRONCO--MORNING.

It is now a couple of hours later, and BETH is navigating the streets and traffic of lower Manhattan. The teens are now mostly awake, taking it all in, chatting animatedly but nervously, and passing around a large fast-food bag containing breakfast sandwiches. MICHAEL is sitting in the front passenger seat, map unfolded, helping BETH navigate.

JON

We should've worn something fancy today. We should go shopping for some fancier clothes before we get there.

BETH

What you're wearing is fine. You're a drummer, not a Wall Street investment banker. They really don't care what you wear.

SARA

Yeah, Jon...stop acting like a girl!

BETH

As long as you don't show up for the session naked.

MICHAEL

Especially you, Jon.

JON

Hardy har-har!

MICHAEL

Turn here! It's Clinton Street and that's where we need to go!

BETH turns deftly and they pull into a parking garage.

DISSOLVE TO

EXT. TENEMENT STUDIOS -- MANHATTAN, MORNING.

BETH, MICHAEL, JON, STEPHANIE, and SARA, instruments in tow, are all looking at the exterior of the building, at a painted sign reading "Tenement Studios, One Flight Up"

BETH

Well, this is it!

CONTINUED: 80.

MICHAEL

This is it.

CUT TO

INT. LOUNGE AT TENEMENT STUDIOS -- MORNING.

TED is waiting for the band in one of two lounges the studio houses. It looks like a page out of a magazine. There are pictures of rock groups, hip-hop groups, and a few singers all over the walls. The furniture is deep brown leather and a foosball table and a full-sized refrigerator are near the far wall. There are the faint sounds of music playing somewhere in the distance. A door opens on one wall. Five guys in their twenties pile out, a couple of them carrying their guitars. One guy had a state-of-the-art violin and another carried his drumsticks.

JON

See, I'm not the only one with lucky sticks!

TED

You guys will be up next.

TED waits until the other group left and turns to face BETH and the teens.

TED

This...this is Tenement Studios. In these walls, every one of these singers and groups whose pictures hang here, was recorded. One day soon, if all goes well, your pictures will also grace these hallowed walls. Something to strive for, anyway. Right?

TED ushers them all out of the lounge and into the main studio area.

TED

Here we have all the magic it takes to make good artists great. The first room here is what we call the "brain room." He lets everyone enter the room first and then closes the door behind him. CONTINUED: 81.

TED

This is the control room. This here, is Adam and Sean. They do all our mixing.

ADAM and SEAN acknowledge the group's presence.

TED

Over there is our Live Room. Why don't we leave these two alone and head out to that room? TED, BETH, and the teens all enter the Live Room, which is Tenement's main recording studio.

TED

We sometimes have whole groups play in this room, and then the guys behind the glass...Adam and Sean...do their magic with the recording afterward. With you guys, we might use one or more of our iso rooms.

TED points to four glassed-in rooms, one of which has a huge drum set. Another housed a grand piano. The other two look emptier but are still equipped with mikes. JON walks over to one of the emptier iso rooms and tests its door. Finding it to be unlocked, he enters and sits down.

JON

Man, I can't believe it! I can't wait to play in here!

BETH

Jon! Get back here! Wait until Ted says it's OK!

TED

No, it's fine. He needs to get a feel for it, anyway. It's OK, Jon. Just shut the door behind you.

JON happily obliges him and is soon perched on a stool, adjusting the drums, trying to feel comfortable behind the unfamiliar drum set. Nobody noticed when he started playing because the microphones were shut off and the room was entirely soundproofed.

TED

So, are we ready to start laying down some tracks?

CONTINUED: 82.

After some jockeying, MICHAEL and SARA are plugged into the live room. STEPHANIE is connected via the mike system from iso room two. JON is already firmly entrenched in iso room one. MICHAEL sends a worried glance to BETH.

BETH

Just pretend. You can do it.

MICHAEL puts on a headset and hears the VOICE of sound man ADAM.

ADAM

OK, Michael and all of you...when you see the light above you flash, follow Michael's lead and just begin. Just nod if you can hear me.

MICHAEL nods. He takes a deep breath, looks over at SARA who was staring at the light, and finally composes himself. The light blinks and MICHAEL, feeling calmer, begins to play.

DISSOLVE TO

INT. SMALL ROADSIDE DINER IN CONNECTICUT--EVENING.

BETH is sipping her water, while JON, MICHAEL, STEPHANIE, and SARA are looking over the menu. The place is otherwise nearly empty.

JON

So, Beth...did Ted tell you anything about what we're supposed to do next? I mean, I hate just waiting around for something to happen.

BETH

Well, what he told me was all preliminary, but while you guys were finishing up, he told me he might have a small...I mean really small...gig for you to play, just to get your feet wet.

SARA nearly drops her water glass. MICHAEL is patiently signing the entire conversation to STEPHANIE.

SARA

You're kidding! Why didn't you say something??? Now I'm gonna be nerOCus!

CONTINUED: 83.

BETH

Something. There, now I've said it.

SARA

Very funny.

BETH

It's nothing to panic about. He told me that there's this coffee house in Waterbury, only a short drive away from Glendale. He said they have "New Talent Night" every Thursday and he thinks he can get you in there. I didn't say anything because he wasn't sure yet.

MICHAEL

You know, before today, I would've said "No way, we can't play in front of people," but after that session, I'm more and more convinced we can really do it without blowing it or freaking out.

JON pretends to drum on the table with his silverware.

JON

I'd love it. It would be so cool just to let it rip in front of a live audience.

MICHAEL

You do that anyway. But this time, you'll actually be able to play some music for them.

JON

Ha-ha.

SARA

I really don't know. It's easy for Jon. He gets to hide behind his drum set and bang on things. The rest of us are right out there...exposed. I mean, what if my VOICE cracks or something?

BETH

I don't think that any of us ever thought that anything like this would happen when you guys first started playing. Maybe... just maybe...we need to slow down a (MORE)

CONTINUED: 84.

BETH (cont'd)

little bit and spend some quality time in group, talking about how everyone feels about this chance to play in front of an audience. I don't want anyone to be overly stressed out. I want all of this to go at a pace everyone can handle.

STEPHANIE begins to sign "I'm holding everyone back, aren't I? Everyone knows I'm the most neroCus about (MORE) playing in public. I feel embarrassed to be the one holding everyone back. Maybe you need to play without me." MICHAEL looks her deeply in the eyes and signs back "No way! We're a band, remember? Nobody gets left behind."

SARA

Steph, you're the best musician out of all of us. We'll wait until you're ready.

The WAITRESS returns with their drinks, ready to take their orders.

WAITRESS

Ready to order yet?

BETH

Give us a few more minutes.

WAITRESS

Take your time. That's one thing I have plenty of tonight.

THE WAITRESS exits. STEPHANIE signs "If Ted says we can play and it's just a coffee shop, I think I can do this once. After that, I'll see how I feel."

JON

That's my girl!

JON pounds down his diet cola, then lets out a loud belch.

JON

Sorry. Anyway, I think we should do it. If Steph gets stage fright, couldn't she be hypnotized or something? Maybe give her some relaxation exercises?

BETH

CONTINUED: 85.

BETH (cont'd)

exercises in relaxation would help everyone loosen their tensions. We'll talk about it in group tonight.

BETH'S cell phone rings, she fishes it out of her purse, then walks away to take the call. While she's gone, the teens fidget and stare at each other, not quite sure of what to say. JON flags down the WAITRESS to get a refill on his soda. BETH returns.

BETH

That was Ted Bowman.

JON

And?

MICHAEL

And?

SARA

And?

STEPHANIE signs "And?"

BETH

And he says that if you decide to sign with him, he has a gig for you.

SARA

Tell us more.

BETH

He wants to meet with us regarding a contract within the next week.

MICHAEL

And?

BETH

And he tentatively has you down on the "new talent night" roster at the Jammin' Java Coffeehouse in Waterbury three weeks from this Thursday. Will that be enough time?

MICHAEL starts to laugh, followed by JON, then SARA, and finally STEPHANIE. THE WAITRESS returns with JON'S soda refill, and to take their orders.

INT. JUMPIN' JAVA COFFEEHOUSE--NIGHT.

JON and MICHAEL are huddled near the stage in quiet conference. They, like STEPHANIE and SARA, are clad entirely in black on this evening. MARGUERITE and TED have a table near the stage.

MICHAEL

You gonna be OK? If we don't pull our shit together tonight, this will be the only concert we'll ever give.

JON

Yeah, man. We're cool. I'm gonna do that solo the same way we always do it, and if Sara don't like it, I don't know what else to do.

MICHAEL

Cool. Let's do it like we did it in New York. We got our best four songs up there tonight and, hey, we got nothin' to lose, right?

JON.

Nothin' to lose but our cherry.

MICHAEL

That's the general idea.

Just then they hear the emcee announce "Black shadow!" and a wave of cheers and applause come up from the audience. They all run out on the stage, instruments in hand.

(NOTE SONG LYRICS TO COME)

DISSOLVE TO

EXT. JUMPIN' JAVA COFFEEHOUSE--NIGHT.

With help from TED, BLACK SHADOW are busy loading their instruments into BETH'S Bronco following the show. They are approached by a group of about ten fans, most of whom want the group to sign their napkins or something similar.

YOUNG MALE FAN

Is there a CD of your music I can buy?

CONTINUED: 87.

MICHAEL

Well...

TED

Sure there is! Look for it in local stores within the month. The group is just finishing recording their first full-length CD. Here, take a demo tape!

TED hands out a CD of BLACK SHADOW'S demo session to about five of the fans. About then, the EMCEE emerges from the building and approaches them.

EMCEE

Hey...I'm glad I caught you! I just spoke to the manager here. He wants to know if you guys have time to play on regular nights...you know, not just the night for newcomers. How about it?

TED shakes the EMCEE'S hand and slips him a business card.

TED

Great. I think we may have some dates still open for you next month. Have the manager call me.

EMCEE

Thanks...I'll do that.

THE EMCEE takes TED'S business card and heads back inside. As soon as he's out of earshot, TED starts explaining some of the nuances of show business to BETH as they help load the Bronco.

TED

We can't appear too eager, you know. And we probably need to think about cutting some more songs. Do you think they have enough material for a full-length CD? I can't just keep handing out demos.

BETH

Now he asks.

MICHAEL

Ted, let me tell you something. We've got enough material to cut a full-length CD and still have a few songs left over.

CONTINUED: 88.

TED

Michael, you guys were awesome tonight! You all handled the pressure like real pros. But you need to know that the pressure only goes up from here. I want you to be prepared for it.

MICHAEL

We're prepared. Bring it on.

DISSOLVE TO

INT. NEW HOPE HOUSE BASEMENT--DAY.

BLACK SHADOW is practicing in the basement when BETH comes down the stairs to fetch STEPHANIE. BETH looks a bit unnerved. She signs to STEPHANIE "Stephanie, you have guests here to visit you." STEPHANIE follows BETH upstairs to the parlor. STEPHANIE'S brother, JASON is standing by the fireplace. Standing next to him is her adoptive mother, RACHEL HARRIS, an obviously high-maintenance woman of about fifty. STEPHANIE looks frozen as her mother approaches her and gives her a brief hug. "Stephanie," she says, making sure her daughter was looking at her but failing to use American Sign Language.

RACHEL

How wonderful it is to see you! It's been much too long since we've seen each other, hasn't it?

Exasperated, STEPHANIE begins signing at RACHEL "Mother, you know I can't read lips that fast. Could you please sign?"

RACHEL

Oh, you know I'm out of practice and it hurts mommy's hands to do that so much.

RACHEL signs only the word "hurts." JASON steps forward and sits on a chair where STEPHANIE could see him sign for RACHEL.

JASON

If it's that much trouble, I'll sign for you, Mother.

RACHEL

Jason tells me that you're going to be a famous musician someday. He said that he heard you playing at a (MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: 89.

RACHEL (cont'd)

coffeehouse last week and that you were fabulous. Tell me, dear, which concerto did you play? Was it one of my faOCrites?

STEPHANIE looks at JASON oddly and he quickly signs "She never asked me what you were playing. I only told her I heard you play and that you were wonderful. She dragged it out of me where I was that night. She said she'd take away the car if I didn't tell her." STEPHANIE hastily signs "Mother, I didn't play that kind of music. I played music I helped write."

RACHEL

That's wonderful, dear. I knew all those music lessons you took would pay off someday. Now you write classical music, too? I'm so excited! I can hardly wait to tell everyone at the club tomorrow that my daughter has finally made a name for herself. I can't wait to hear you play. Is it a solo or a duet?

JASON

Mother, she doesn't play music like that. She's in a band.

RACHEL

A concert band? I didn't know they had concert bands way out here in Glenview.

JASON

It's Glen<u>dale</u>, Mom, and it's not a concert band. Stephanie plays in a heavy metal band.

RACHEL looks sharply at JASON and then at STEPHANIE, who just stands there.

RACHEL

That's not music!!! That's just noise for drugged-out teenagers to fornicate to! You will not play in any kind of band like that!

STEPHANIE'S eyes fill with anger. She signs to RACHEL "Mother, I wrote that music. My friend and I did. It's not just music for drug addicts. I haven't been using any drugs since I had the seizure."

CONTINUED: 90.

RACHEL

I really don't care. Where is that woman, Becky or whatever? We need to have a little chat about this!

RACHEL turns on her heels and exits in a huff. JASON starts to follow her, but STEPHANIE blocks him with her arm. She signs "Leave her be. It doesn't matter what she says."

DISSOLVE TO

INT. NEW HOPE HOUSE DINING ROOM--MORNING.

It's before breakfast, and JON meets MICHAEL in the dining room.

JON

Hey, Michael...let's postpone breakfast for half an hour and go jogging!

MICHAEL

You are kidding, right?

JON

Not at all. It's a nice, cool morning and I thought we'd get in a little exercise. You game?

JON points at the new pair of jogging shoes on his feet.

JON

See? I'm going jogging with or without you.

MICHAEL

OK, where is he??? And what have you done with him???

JON

Where is who?

MICHAEL

My friend Jon. You, obviously, are some sort of extraterrestrial who has either commandeered his body, or replaced him with a clone!

JON

Sheesh! If you don't want to go, all you have to do is say so.

JON exits to go jogging. A short time later, SARA enters.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: 91.

SARA

Who was that?

MICHAEL

It was either Jon, or his exercise-loving evil twin. Says he's going jogging, if you can believe that.

SARA

Wow...he's getting pretty serious about dropping the weight. A few more pounds and he's going to be a real hottie in those tight black jeans.

MICHAEL

If you say so.

DISSOLVE TO

INT. JAMMIN' JAVA COFFEEHOUSE--NIGHT.

The place is packed and BLACK SHADOW has finished playing their set. They are in the process of autographing everything from paper napkins and concert flyers to articles of clothing and body parts. TED, who is hovering protectively nearby, is approached by a young man in his twenties, RUSTY SNOW, with the BLACK SHADOW demo CD in hand.

RUSTY

Excuse me, are you Black Shadow's manager?

TED

No, I'm their agent.

RUSTY

Good enough. I'm Rusty Snow. Perhaps you've heard my show...afternoon drivetime on WWER-FM? I'd like to play a few of these songs on my show. I could help promote Black Shadow, and my listeners would really love their music.

TED warmly shakes RUSTY'S hand.

TED

Sure, I've heard of you. You're from 94.1 "We Rock Radio," right?

CONTINUED: 92.

RUSTY

That's the one.

TED

Go right ahead. Play it all you want. Their full-length CD is coming out soon, too.

RUSTY

Hey thanks, man!

The two shake hands again and RUSTY disappears into the crowd.

MICHAEL

I wish you'd stop promising everyone that we have a new CD out when we don't have squat.

TED

I'm serious. I have a meeting scheduled for tomorrow with the producer I work with. If he likes what he hears, at least we can lay down some more tracks and get a real CD out of it. I'm thinking that the publicity on that radio station won't hurt our case. We will get the CD out, though, even if we need to seek out a different producer.

MICHAEL

Awesome. We're ready with at least fifteen songs, plus a few more we're still working on.

TED

Cool. Just keep your fingers crossed.

DISSOLVE TO

INT. OFFICE OF RICH MARKS, MANHATTAN--DAY.

TED waits in the luxuriously-appointed outer office for his name to be called, chatting with the RECEPTIONIST and fiddling with the CD case that was tucked into the inside pocket of his gray suit coat. The RECEPTIONIST takes an internal call.

CONTINUED: 93.

RECEPTIONIST

Mr Bowman, Mr. Marks will see you now. Go right in.

TED passes through the outside door and down a short hallway to the main office. Perched near the top of an all-glass skyscraper, the office revealed a fantastic view of much of the skyline of Manhattan. A large, leather chair faced the outer glass wall of the office. TED can see the top of RICH MARKS' graying hair along the top edge of the chair.

TED

Rich!

RICH MARKS' chair swivels around so that he can face TED.

TED

I haven't seen you since the last time we played golf with Billy Joel.

TED extends his hand, and the two men shake.

RICH

Glad to see you, too, Ted. We haven't done any business together in what, nearly a year now? Have a seat. What brings you in to see me today?

TED

Well, you know and I know that you're the best in the industry. And whenever I represent the best performers in the business, naturally I come to you first.

RICH

Flattery will get you everywhere.

The two men laugh.

RICH

You must have a big name who's just jumped ship and needs a great producer. I haven't read anything in the trades or heard anything on the grapevine. Care to name names?

TED

Actually, it's not a seasoned performer. Truth is, it's a band. I've been their agent for only (MORE)

CONTINUED: 94.

TED (cont'd)

about a month or so, but I can smell hit singles from this group a mile away.

RICH grumbles under his breath as he responds.

RICH

Now Ted, you know I quit signing unknowns almost a decade ago. Too risky. Especially in this economy. Labels are cutting back on the talent they already have, not signing new talent.

TED

I know, but I think you might just make an exception this time. They're hot and people love their music. I brought a demo...

TED reaches into his coat to retrieve the CD, but RICH raises his hand to cut off the conversation.

RICH

Look, Ted, I can't even remember the last time I listened to a demo. You may like them because they make a buck or two for you, but I got costs that can't be recovered if they flop. I'm really sorry, but I just don't have the time.

TED

OK, Rich, I hear ya...I'll make you a deal...just listen to one song, and if you hate it, I'll buy you the thickest, juiciest steak you've ever eaten for lunch today.

RICH

Smith & Wollensky?

TED

Smith & Wollensky, Sparks, you name it.

RICH

I'm guessing, Ted, that I won't get you to leave until I've heard a few bars of this mystery band?

CONTINUED: 95.

TED

Not without calling security.

RICH

Oh, very well...what's their name, by the way?

TED

Black Shadow...but if you hate the name, they're not married to it.

TED inserts the CD into a state-of-the-art audio system located on one wall of the office, then adjusts the OClume to level where he and RICH could talk.

TED

You won't believe this group. For starters, they're clean-cut kids. Listen to that bass. Would you believe that the bass player is totally deaf? Like I said...

RICH

Just shush for a second. I need to listen to this undisturbed.

RICH sits on his large leather chair, tapping his pencil. His scowl quickly disappears. When the song was over, TED gets up to shut off the CD but is directed back down by RICH. The second song begins. Still, there was no word from RICH. TED seems edgy, uncomfortable.

RICH

How many songs on this demo?

TED holds up five fingers. Halfway through the fourth song, RICH calls his receptionist on the interoffice intercom.

RICH

Angel? Could you bring in a bottle of Dom Perignon and a couple of glasses? Thanks!

The CD finishes its last track when the receptionist walked in with a tray of champagne glasses and a bottle of Dom Perignon. She sets them on RICH'S desk and promptly exits. RICH removes the CD and holds it up.

RTCH

You do have other copies, right? Leave this one with me.

RICH pops the cork on the Dom Perignon and pours a couple of glasses.

CONTINUED: 96.

RICH

Too bad about that steak.

DISSOLVE TO

INT. NEW HOPE HOUSE DINING ROOM--MIDDAY.

JON and SARA return from jogging just in time for lunch. JON is looking noticeably thinner and healthier now. BETH is in the process of putting lunch on the dining table as MICHAEL and STEPHANIE enter from the back porch. As everyone sits down and starts to reach for food, BETH clears her throat as if she has something important to say.

BETH

You can still eat, but I have a couple of items on the agenda for lunch. First, I just got off the phone with Ted...

The group perks up instantly and gives her their rapt attention.

BETH

Don't get too excited, guys. It's both good news and bad news.

The group simultaneously looks excited, intrigued, and worried.

BETH

The good news is really good news. Triton Metro Records has agreed to bankroll the production of a full-length CD. We start cutting it next week down in The City.

SARA

So what's the bad news?

BETH

Well, this means two things. First, it means you'll have a great many more concerts to do, including opening for some big bands in Manhattan.

JON

I thought you said you had some bad news. I like playing...bring it on!

CONTINUED: 97.

BETH

Secondly, because you'll be on the radio and will be signed on as a band with a major record label, we can't just keep calling this music therapy. I'm going to need to contact each of your parents and get their permission. We've done everything for free up until now. It's time to tell them what's happening because you all need to sign on and you'll be getting paid for this.

SARA

Oh my freaking God! This can't happen! I can't let my parents find out!

BETH

Not to mention that any of you could lose your disability status and may not be able to live here.

JON

Not a big deal for me. My mom doesn't give a shit what I do.

BETH

The way I see it...is that Sara and Stephanie will need parental permission. You will too, Jon. You're only 16. I'm thinking that your mom may not be that big of a problem. Now, I've spoken with an attorney friend of mine...the same guy who did our contract with Ted. He's going to meet with us this afternoon to discuss your options before you need to talk with your folks.

DISSOLVE TO

INT. OFFICE OF ANTON RICHARDSON--AFTERNOON.

The office is that of a modestly successful attorney in independent practice in a small New England town. The décor is not ostentatious, but is tasteful, conservative, and expensive. Seated behind the desk is ANTON RICHARDSON, a sandy-haired, soft-spoken attorney approximately the same age as BETH. BETH, SARA, MICHAEL, JON, and STEPHANIE are all

CONTINUED: 98.

crowded into his office as he glances down at the notes from his earlier conversation with BETH.

ANTON

So basically, we have a couple of things to handle today. I believe we got around the issue of your minor status before by making the contract under the name of Michael Stevenson. Which one of you is Michael?

MICHAEL

I am, sir. I'm 18, and I have no close living relatives.

ANTON

Ah, yes...and how about the rest of you? I'll need your names and ages...one at a time, of course...and who your immediate relatives are.

JON raises his hand.

ANTON

Yes, young man...

JON

I'm Jon Peterowski. I'm almost 17 years old, and I sort of have a mom.

ANTON

Sort of have a mom? Or have sort of a mom?

JON

She's a hooker.

ANTON

Does she have a permanent address? Can you find her?

JON

I think so. She has a trailer near Hartford. I haven't heard from her in a couple of years, though.

ANTON

I'll have Beth give me whatever information she has, and I'll try to track her down. Who wants to go next?

CONTINUED: 99.

SARA

My name is Sara Crotofit. I'm 17, and my parents have a home in Hartford, but they travel a lot. They also own a villa in Florence, Italy. I don't have any brothers or sisters. I don't know what they'll say about this. I also don't know how to reach them in Italy.

ANTON

We'll find a way.

BETH speaks for STEPHANIE, who signs her response.

BETH

I'm Stephanie Harris, and I am 17 years old. My parents live in New London, and I have a brother, Jason, who is 20.

ANTON

OK, so Michael's an adult and the two girls are close to adulthood. Jon has a mother that may be hard to locate. I think our first step is to try to get permission from their parents. If we run into trouble with that, I may be able to get at least some of you emancipated, so you'd be considered adults. That may be easier than you might think, since you all have high school equivalency status, and, technically, a job.

ANTON RICHARDSON rifles through some more papers in the BLACK SHADOW case file folder on his desk.

ANTON

Now, we need to figure out how you can maintain your status as disabled until you can get on your feet...no pun intended...I'm thinking that all of you who are minors can have trust funds set up for you. Anyone who is emancipated or over 18 may lose their status and may need to pay out of pocket to stay at New Hope House.

CONTINUED: 100.

MICHAEL

I'm cool with that.

ANTON

OK...Beth, will you contact the parents and get back to me? Make sure you tell the parents that we plan to go for emancipation if they don't agree with their kid being in the band or to the trust fund. I don't want the parents to rake money off what these kids are doing.

DISSOLVE TO

INT. BETH'S OFFICE, NEW HOPE HOUSE--DAY.

SARA is sitting in BETH'S office talking to her.

SARA

I'm scared, Beth. I haven't felt like cutting for a long time now, but now that we need to talk to my parents, I just keep having these images of slashing my arms. I don't know if I can stop myself.

BETH

Well, you have a lot on your plate right now, what with Jake's trial coming up soon and all. I'll be honest...I've been postponing calling them. But if we get it over with now, I think you'll feel better.

SARA

Uh, I don't know...I'm just so scared.

BETH reaches over to her filing cabinet, pulls out SARA'S folder, ruffles through the pages, and locates her contact phone number.

BETH

Here it is...let's give it a try.

BETH picks up her desk phone, punches in the number and the phone at the other end rings.

CONTINUED: 101.

SARA'S MOTHER (OC/FILTER)

Hello?

BETH

Mrs. Crotofit?

SARA'S MOTHER (OC/FILTER)

Yes. Who's this?

BETH

I'm Beth Brannan, the administrator of New Hope House.

SARA'S MOTHER (OC/FILTER)

I don't mean to be rude, but my husband takes care of all charitable contributions through his office. Why do you people always insist upon calling us at home?

BETH

Ma'am, New Hope House is in Glendale. It's the facility where your daughter, Sara, lives.

SARA'S MOTHER (OC/FILTER) Oh. Has that girl gotten into some kind of trouble again? We cannot be held financially responsible for any damages!

BETH

It isn't that at all. Sara is a member of a band here that's going to be performing some public concerts, and we need you to sign some forms giving parental permission.

SARA'S MOTHER (OC/FILTER) Well, this is a fine time to tell me this! Ben and I are leaving tomorrow for Italy! We won't be back for a month. Anyway, I don't see why you need our input. Didn't the people at Glendale tell you anything?

BETH

I'm not sure I follow.

CONTINUED: 102.

SARA'S MOTHER (OC/FILTER) You need to understand. Sara was in the hospital a lot, even before Glendale. My husband and I would have stood to lose a great deal of money if we had to pay out of pocket for all of that therapy and hospitalization.

BETH

Yes, I see, but...

SARA'S MOTHER (OC/FILTER)
My husband is a well-respected

lawyer. We couldn't afford to live like paupers just because our daughter was defective!

BETH

Defective???

SARA'S MOTHER (OC/FILTER)

Just before Sara was committed to Glendale, we severed our parental rights. She's a ward of the State of Connecticut.

BETH

Does Sara know this?!?!

SARA'S MOTHER (OC/FILTER)

I honestly have no idea. I haven't even spoken to the girl in several years. Besides, isn't she 18 already?

BETH

No, she's 17.

SARA'S MOTHER (OC/FILTER)

Whatever. If it were up to me, I wouldn't care. She's too messed up to do anything more than weave baskets, if you know what I mean.

BETH

Actually, I have no idea what you mean. I'll speak with the proper people, then. Thank you very much for your time. Goodbye, ma'am.

BETH hangs up the phone, then looks straight at SARA.

CONTINUED: 103.

BETH

I guess you heard most of that. I'm so sorry!

SARA is sobbing.

SARA

I always hated my parents. But I never wanted to be an orphan! Now I don't know what to do!

BETH

Let's not worry, Sara. I'm going to call the county. I can't believe they didn't say anything or send someone out to check on your welfare every so often.

BETH stands up and walks around her desk, extending her arms to warmly hug SARA.

SARA

I wish you were my mom, Beth.

SARA begins a fresh torrent of sobbing, while BETH holds her close, gently rocks her, and strokes her hair.

DISSOLVE TO

INT. BEDROOM OF JON'S MOTHER'S MOBILE HOME--DAY.

The walls are paneled in faux-wood paneling from the '70s, badly faded. The furniture appears to be mostly original to the trailer cheap, gaudy, and worn out. There are several overflowing ashtrays situated around the room, in addition to a couple dozen empty cans of bargain-brand beer and a container of box wine. Tawdry, gaudy clothes and lingerie are also strewn haphazardly about. In the bed, we see JON'S MOTHER, a woman of about 40 who actually looks much older because of years of smoking, hard drinking, and abusive relationships. She is apparently sleeping off a hangover. Beside her in the bed is an unidentified CUSTOMER. The bedside phone rings, and after some fumbling, she manages to answer it.

JON'S MOTHER

'Ay...who's this???

BETH (OC/FILTER)

Is this Jon Peterowski's mom?

CONTINUED: 104.

JON'S MOTHER

Who wants to know?!?! Is he in some kind of trouble?

BETH (OC/FILTER)

This is Beth Brannan, administrator of New Hope House in Glendale. Jon is staying with us.

JON'S MOTHER

Well, don't come looking to me for money! I got my own problems!

JON'S MOTHER gets out of bed, fumbles for a cigarette, then lights it and leans against an extremely messy, cluttered bureau while she talks on the phone. Her CUSTOMER starts to stir, but she motions to him that there's no need to get up.

BETH (OC/FILTER)

It's not that, Miss Peterowski...

JON'S MOTHER

Then what is it?!?! And it's MS Peterowski!

BETH (OC/FILTER)

Jon is playing in a band here...

JON'S MOTHER

I'll bet Jonny plays the drums!

BETH (OC/FILTER)

As a matter of fact, he does...but the reason I'm calling you is that the band is going to be having several public performances, and we need your written permission.

JON'S MOTHER

I see...

BETH (OC/FILTER)

Also, Jon is on state disability, so we need to set up a trust fund for any earnings he might make before he turns 18.

JON'S MOTHER drops the phone, then fumbles to pick it up as if in a stupor. Also, she pours herself a glass of straight rotgut OCdka. Upon hearing the mention of money, she instantly becomes more interested and animated.

CONTINUED: 105.

JON'S MOTHER

My Jonny's in a band?!?! What were you saying about a trust fund??? You mean Jonny's gonna make some money doing this?!?!

BETH (OC/FILTER)

It's possible, but not guaranteed. We need to set up a trust fund to make sure that whatever he does earn before 18 goes to him and not to someone else.

JON'S MOTHER

No way, José!!! I raised that little prick by myself for 16 years and now I want a cut of the cash! I'm his mom and I deserve it!!!

BETH (OC/FILTER)

Ms. Peterowski, with all due respect... Jon has been in and out of psychiatric hospitals for most of his life, so you didn't raise him for an entire 16 years. If you refuse to sign the trust fund papers, Jon will apply for emancipated minor status, and I will help him do so.

JON'S MOTHER

Fuck him!!! Fuck you!!! Over my dead ass!!!

JON'S MOTHER slams the phone down, takes another drag off her cigarette, and another swig of her OCdka. She's beyond furious.

CUT TO

INT. HOSPITAL NURSE'S STATION--DAY.

DR. HARRIS, a distinguished-looking white haired man in his fifties, walks up to the nurses' station carrying a patient chart.

DUTY NURSE

Dr. Harris, there's a call for you parked on six.

CONTINUED: 106.

DR. HARRIS

Who is it?

DUTY NURSE

It's a woman named Beth. She says it's about your daughter.

DR. HARRIS

I'll take it here.

DR. HARRIS puts the patient chart on the counter and picks up the phone. He seems in a good mood.

DR. HARRIS

Ah, so this is the infamous Becky!

He and BETH both share a laugh.

DR. HARRIS

So what's going on with Stephanie? I hear she's in a band.

BETH (OC/FILTER)

Yes, in fact they're about to cut a CD.

DR. HARRIS

Rachel was pretty upset about the whole thing, but I think if it makes Stephanie happy, then I'm all for it. Steph always had a lot of talent, despite her disability.

BETH (OC/FILTER)

Thank you for being so supportive, Dr. Harris. We'll need your written permission to establish a trust fund for Steph, to shelter her earnings until she's 18.

DR. HARRIS

Not a problem. In fact, I'd like for that trust fund to remain intact until she turns 21. I'd feel better if she had the extra money when she was a little more mature. Oh, and one other thing...

BETH (OC/FILTER)

Name it.

CONTINUED: 107.

DR. HARRIS

I'd appreciate it if you kept this just between us. Rachel is just now quieting down about the fact that Stephanie is playing in a heavy metal rock band, and I don't want to get her started again.

BETH (OC/FILTER)
It'll be our little secret.

DISSOLVE TO

INT. BETH'S FORD BRONCO--NIGHT.

BETH is driving the group back to New Hope House from another gig. Everyone seems tired but happy. In fact, most are nearly asleep when BETH hears something on the radio and lets out an excited, joyous squeal.

BETH

Listen!

MICHAEL

What?

BETH

There on the radio!

BETH turns up the OClume so everyone can hear. It's BLACK SHADOW, singing "Lovers' Parade." They all start singing along in the car. When the song finishes, STEPHANIE excitedly signs "We're on the radio! We're almost famous!" MICHAEL kisses STEPHANIE on the mouth. He signs back to her "Yes, my dear. We are fucking famous!" Then the group quietly relaxes in the glow of newfound fame.

DISSOLVE TO

INT. COURTROOM, LITCHFIELD COUNTY COURTHOUSE--MORNING.

BETH, SARA, JON, MICHAEL, and STEPHANIE are all in attendance for JAKE'S rape trial. The BAILIFF calls the court to order.

BAILIFF

Oyez! Oyez! All rise! The Superior Court for the County of Litchfield, State of Connecticut, is now in session, with the Honorable Adam Cortland presiding.

CONTINUED: 108.

JUDGE CORTLAND enters from his chambers and takes the bench.

JUDGE CORTLAND

Please be seated.

The courtroom complies.

JUDGE CORTLAND

Our first case today is The People of Connecticut v. Jacob Mason, charged with one count of aggravated rape in the first degree. Is the defendant in the courtroom?

JAKE'S ATTORNEY stands up.

JAKE'S ATTORNEY

He is, your honor.

JUDGE CORTLAND

Mr. Manners, how does your client plead?

JAKE'S ATTORNEY

Guilty, your honor.

An audible gasp permeates the courtroom, followed by considerable conversation among the spectators. JUDGE CORTLAND gavels the courtroom back to order.

JUDGE CORTLAND

Mr. Mason, is it your wish to plead guilty?

JAKE stands up and nods affirmatively.

JUDGE CORTLAND

Very well. As per our guidelines, we need to give the victim a chance to make a Victim Impact Statement. Ms. Briscoe, is the victim prepared to make such a statement?

The ASSISTANT COUNTY ATTORNEY stands up.

ASSISTANT COUNTY ATTORNEY

One moment, your honor.

The ASSISTANT COUNTY ATTORNEY leans over the rail to where SARA sat between JON and BETH to quietly conduct a sidebar.

CONTINUED: 109.

ASSISTANT COUNTY ATTORNEY

They want to sentence him today. You don't have to testify, but if you want, you can give a quick statement regarding how the rape has affected you. Now, you don't have to...

SARA

No, I want to say something. I feel like I need to do this, and I'm not afraid.

BETH

Go ahead, then. We're all behind you.

The ASSISTANT COUNTY ATTORNEY turns back around to address JUDGE CORTLAND.

ASSISTANT COUNTY ATTORNEY The victim would like to give a statement. May she approach the witness chair?

JUDGE CORTLAND motions for SARA to approach. She steps across BETH, STEPHANIE, and MICHAEL, walks toward the bench and sits in the witness chair. She is trembling slightly and takes a few deep breaths to calm herself. She can't bring herself to look at JAKE directly but focuses on what must have been his family sitting directly behind him.

JUDGE CORTLAND

You may begin.

SARA

Well, uh, you probably already know that Jake...uh, Mr. Mason...was supposed to be watching over us at New Hope House. Instead, he hurt me the morning he got caught and he hurt me many times before that. I was afraid all the time and my moods were crazy and I wanted to die. I suffered many nights because of him and I think that he deserves to know that what he did was wrong.

JUDGE CORTLAND

Thank you, Miss Crotofit. You may step down now. I feel I now have all the information to sentence Mr. Mason. Would the defendant please rise?

CONTINUED: 110.

SARA steps down and JAKE stands up. The judge reads solemnly from a sheet of blue paper.

JUDGE CORTLAND

I hereby sentence you, Mr. Jacob Riley Mason, to the sentence of one year and one day, to be served at the state correctional facility. You will receive credit for time already served, and will, from this moment on, be required to register as a dangerous sex offender, wherever you live and for the rest of your natural life.

JUDGE CORTLAND pounds his gavel and calls the next case.

JUDGE CORTLAND

So be it. The next case is The People of Connecticut v. Eric Lloyd Hawley, one count of grand larceny and two counts of concealment of stolen property. Is the defendant in the courtroom?

JAKE is remanded into custody, and his family quietly leaves. BETH, SARA, MICHAEL, JON, and STEPHANIE also exit the courtroom. Shortly after they reach the hallway, BETH is approached by her friend BARBARA, from the Department of Child Services.

BARBARA

I'm glad I ran into you today! How's the trial going?

BETH

It's over already. Jake pled guilty. Sara gave a statement and he's going to prison.

BARBARA

Sounds like he deserves it. Oh...and I'm taking Sara's case myself. I have the stack of papers you'll need to fill out if you're serious about adopting her.

BETH

I am.

BETH takes the forms.

CONTINUED: 111.

BETH

How long do you think it might take?

BARBARA

Well, it may take a few months for the final adoption, but as her caseworker, I think you can go through with her being in the band and signing on with that producer. Matter of fact, I think it might be the best thing for her.

BETH

Great! Thanks!

BETH turns to leave, then remembers something.

BETH

I have another one, 16, who's applying for emancipation from his hooker mother. Is that something your office ever gets inOClved with?

BARBARA

Yes we do, in fact. We interview the kid to find out whether or not he has a right to be emancipated. Of course, your opinion will be factored in, as well.

BETH

Excellent. The lawyer said to go ahead with the contract, but when she tries to take his money, it's going to look even worse for her.

BARBARA

We'll talk more when you bring the paperwork back.

DISSOLVE TO

INT. TRITON METRO PRODUCTIONS--DAY.

The members of BLACK SHADOW are undergoing a makeover. JON gets his hair shortened and spiked with his bangs kept long and streaked with hot pink highlights. MICHAEL gets just a trim. He was growing his hair long and straight so the ends are trimmed a bit. The HAIRDRESSER put an oil in MICHAEL'S hair that makes it look sleek and even blacker than it

CONTINUED: 112.

normally was. The girls keep their hair long although STEPHANIE has her blonde hair highlighted a little to bring out the color. SARA has a trim and the same oil put in her hair as MICHAEL.

DISSOLVE TO

INT. COURTROOM, LITCHFIELD COUNTY COURTHOUSE--DAY.

BETH and JON are in the courtroom for JON'S emancipation hearing. JON'S MOTHER enters, obviously somewhat intoxicated and dressed like a tart. She came with a "friend" who was obviously intoxicated. He kept pasting slobbery kisses on her, wrecking her overdone makeup. JON is noticeably thinner and healthier looking now.

JON'S MOTHER Where's my Jonny?!?!

BETH

He'll be here. Don't worry.

BETH approaches ANTON RICHARDSON, who quietly offers her some advice.

ANTON RICHARDSON

Don't point out Jon. She doesn't recognize her own son. We'll use it against her.

Once the JUDGE is seated, ANTON RICHARDSON calls JON'S MOTHER to the witness stand. After she is sworn in, he cross-examines her.

ANTON RICHARDSON

Ms. Peterowski, do you know why you're here today?

JON'S MOTHER

I think so. My Jonny wants to be on his own and forget about his mommy. Oh, and call me Patricia.

ANTON RICHARDSON

OK, Ms. Peterowski. Can you first tell me your occupation?

JON'S MOTHER

Yeah, I'm a massage therapist.

Some titters break out in the courtroom. The JUDGE gavels the room to order.

CONTINUED: 113.

ANTON RICHARDSON
Are you licensed by the State of
Connecticut to be a massage
therapist?

JON'S MOTHER Well, no. Nothing like that.

ANTON RICHARDSON Have you taken any courses in massage therapy?

JON'S MOTHER Well, not exactly.

ANTON RICHARDSON
Ms. Petrowski, isn't it true that
you are, in fact, a prostitute?

JON'S MOTHER
Well, I never! I...I...I mean a
woman has to earn a living somehow!

ANTON RICHARDSON
Ms. Petrowski, I need to remind you that you are under oath. You're not a massage therapist, are you?

JON'S MOTHER

No.

ANTON RICHARDSON Ms. Peterowski, do you see your son in this courtroom?

JON'S MOTHER
No. If I had, I would've said "hi"
to him. Ain't he supposed to be
here, too?

ANTON RICHARDSON
Your honor, may I point out that
the gentleman sitting over there
is, in fact, Jon Peterowski. I have
no further questions for this
witness.

JON'S MOTHER

But...but...

ANTON RICHARDSON You're excused. You may step down now.

DISSOLVE TO

EXT. CONCERT VENUE--NIGHT.

MICHAEL, JON, SARA, and STEPHANIE, in BLACK SHADOW attire, get out of MICHAEL'S new black SUV near the entrance, wherethey are mobbed by adoring fans (including some cougars) before they can even get inside the building. They sign autographs and have their pictures taken with several fans.

DISSOLVE TO

INT. MICHAEL'S SUV--NIGHT.

As they drive back to New Hope House from another concert, they are listening to the radio and are suddenly floored by what they hear.

FIRST DJ (OC)

You know, that's a pretty great song for such a new group.

SECOND DJ (OC)

Yeah. But did you know that Black Shadow has a little secret?

FIRST DJ (OC)

What's that?

SECOND DJ (OC)

Black Shadow started as a bunch of psychiatric patients from a state hospital in Connecticut. Maybe they should've called themselves "The Psycho Revolution."

Both DJs laugh.

JON

Oh shit! Our lives are toast now!

FIRST DJ (OC)

Let's take a few calls and see what our listeners think about that... You're on the air with Steve and Barry...

FIRST CALLER (OC)

I think it's really lousy what you just did! It's nasty to say that (MORE)

(CONTINUED)

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FIRST CALLER (OC) (cont'd)

about Black Shadow! They totally rock and I don't care if they're from Mars!

FIRST DJ (OC)

Thank you! You're on the air with Steve and Barry...

SECOND CALLER (OC)

Barry, you ass...

FIRST DJ (OC)

Thank goodness for the three-second delay or we might've lost the station's license. You're on the air with Steve and Barry...

THIRD CALLER (OC)

All cool bands have issues! If they were all white bread and sunshine, they wouldn't be cool. I love their music!

MICHAEL

I have the feeling it's gonna be a long ride home tonight.

DISSOLVE TO

INT. RICH MARKS' OFFICE--DAY.

TED sits nervously as he waits for RICH to finish up a phone call. When he does, RICH glowers at TED.

RICH

I think there were a few things you neglected to tell me about Black Shadow.

TED

I didn't neglect to tell you. I just didn't think that it mattered in this day and age.

RICH

What if one of them goes psycho on us?

TED

You mean like smashing their guitars on stage or trashing a (MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: 116.

TED (cont'd)

hotel room? Rock musicians have never been known to do anything like that.

RICH

You know damn well what I mean.

TED

Do I? Rich, they are responsible, mature young adults.

RICH

Something like this could be bad for business.

TED

Really? Their new CD has sold 500,000 since it was released just a few weeks ago.

RICH

500,000?

TED

500,000.

RICH

That's decent for a first release from a new band.

TED

That's not all. Book them on a coast-to-coast concert tour and they'll hit platinum by the end of next summer.

RICH

OK, I have a gig for them that's to die for. Block off June 18th.

TED

I take it you have something in mind.

RICH

I know the producer for Savatage. He's looking for a band to open for them in Madison Square Garden. What do you think?

EXT. MADISON SQUARE GARDEN--NIGHT.

A stretch limo pulls up and the members of BLACK SHADOW emerge to a throng of cheering fans. They are whisked inside and onto the stage by security.

MICHAEL
Thank you, New York! This one is for you, Beth!

We see BETH in the audience, looking on proudly.

FADE TO BLACK.