

ICE CREAM SODA

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FADE IN:

INT. NURSING HOME - NIGHT

It's late, the halls are dark. Visiting hours have long since ended. A JANITOR pushes a broom down the hall, turns a corner and disappears from sight.

INT. ROOM

Sink basin to the left, window ahead. To the right, ROSEMARIE LUNDEN (77) in bed, eyes half-open and glazed over. She gulps in a final breath of air, twitches, then goes still.

The light turns on. HELEN MCGRATH (44), blue scrubs, enters.

HELEN

How are you, Rosemarie? Rosemarie?

Helen touches her shoulder, then checks her pulse. She makes the sign of the cross, and sighs.

HELEN

Oh, Rose.

INT. NURSE'S STATION - LATER

Helen at her desk, phone pressed to her ear.

HELEN

Okay, Mister Lunden. Again, I'm so sorry for your loss. Okay. Bye.

She places the phone down, about to log in to the computer when...

An unusual *TAP TAP* noise from down the hall.

Helen rises, goes to the corner and peers down the corridor.

At the far end of the hall is the dark outline of a GIRL, back-lit by the red glow of the EXIT sign.

Helen gasps in fright.

The Girl's skipping rope, pig tails bouncing and...singing.

GIRL

*Ice cream soda, lemonade punch, tell
me the name of my honey bunch. A, B,
C, D...*

She stops abruptly when she notices Helen, then takes a step forward.

Helen can't move a muscle.

The Girl advances further until she reaches Rosemarie's room. She glances at Helen, then slowly enters the room.

Helen inches forward, her legs scarcely capable of holding her weight. She reaches the open door and looks in.

The Girl sits at the foot of Rosemarie's bed, head down.

Helen enters as the Girl looks up with forlorn eyes. She's no more than eight, her face unblemished but sad, and not quite as ominous as before.

HELEN

Are you lost?

The Girl shakes her head, then looks to Rosemarie, who clutches something in her hands.

ROSEMARIE'S HANDS

She's holding Rosary beads, with the image of a WOMAN wearing a veil dangling at its end.

Helen kneels beside the bed.

HELEN

That's Saint Gertrude, the patron saint of the recently dead. Rose was very sick. Are...are you a relative?

GIRL

E, F, G...

Something BANGS against the window pane. Helen, startled, leaps up to see the black face of a HOUND peering in.

Helen glances back to the girl - her face now dark, withdrawn, her hair gray, stringy. She smiles. No teeth.

The Girl raises her arm and points.

Helen falls back, clutches at her chest and vomits. She gnashes her teeth, grabs onto an IV stand and takes it with her as she crashes to the floor.

Her chest heaves up, down. In and out. Then ceases. That frozen look of dread engraved in her face.

The Girl is gone.

INT. NURSE'S STATION - LATER

The JANITOR (57) from earlier stops, leans over the counter.

JANITOR

Helen? Helen? Hmm...

He takes something and places it on the counter.

It's the jump rope.

An unusual *CLICK CLICK* noise from down the hall.

The Janitor peers around the corner, looks down the hall...

A BOY, no more than eight, dressed like a COWBOY, draws a toy six-shooter and sings.

BOY

*Born to be a cowboy, sure as the sun
will rise. If you think I can't do it,
boy, will you be surprised...*

FADE OUT.