INT. THE ALL-MART DEPARTMENT STORE

It’s huge. Cavernous. Looking out over the sea of aisles this place seems to have its own horizon.

Fluorescent lights so white they sting the eye.

A bland SIXTIES POP TUNE -- even more bland when rendered in horns and violins -- oozes from ubiquitous yet hidden loudspeakers.

SPIDERMAN

Not the real one. A stuffed one. A child’s hand snatches Spiderman from his perch on the shelf.

THE TOY AISLE

A curly-haired young boy, GERALD (5), examines the doll.

He squeezes Spiderman’s hand to make him talk. He does this several times.

    SPIDERMAN
    I’m Spiderman!
     (squeeze)
    Time to swing into action!
     (squeeze)
    I’m Spiderman!
     (squeeze)
    Let’s be pals!

Gerald’s face brightens. He turns to his mother.

    GERALD
    Mom...can we get...?
But Mom isn’t there.

MOM, in a pretty flowered dress, is just now exiting the far end of the aisle. She turns the corner and disappears from sight.

Gerald drops the toy and races after her.

A NEW AISLE

Gerald races from the toy aisle into one of the wider center aisles.

He looks in the direction Mom was heading, but she is nowhere to be seen.

He glances the other way, but of course, she’s not there either.

Gerald turns back to the toy aisle.

GERALD’S P.O.V.

On the shelves, every doll has now turned. They are all looking directly at him.

A rubber ball -- the big kind -- nearly as large as Gerald, rolls from off a high shelf and bounces towards him.

THE AISLE

Gerald turns around to run -- and runs SMACK into the broad girth of a plump OLD WOMAN (60+).

She looks down at Gerald. He looks to the floor, shy and more than a little embarrassed.

OLD WOMAN

My, my...aren’t we in a rush?

The bouncing ball rolls to a stop against Gerald’s leg.

OLD WOMAN

Where’s your mommy?

Gerald shrugs without looking up.
The Old Woman smiles, realizing she has found a lost child.

OLD WOMAN
Now did your silly old mommy
go and get herself lost?

Gerald nods, still looking at the floor.

OLD WOMAN
(chuckles)
Well, maybe we ought to go find
her before she gets into any
trouble, you think?

Gerald giggles to himself. She holds her hand out to the boy.

OLD WOMAN
C’mon. Let’s go find her.

Gerald turns to her outstretched palm.

GERALD’S P.O.V.

Her hand is black and writhing -- coated with an army of
swarming ants.

Gerald looks to her face. It is now the face of warthog.
The warthog tilts its head with a ghastly, tusked smile.

THE AISLE

Gerald inhales sharp -- then runs down the aisle as fast as
his sneakers will carry him.

The Old Woman looks after him, confused and shaking her
head. A normal head. Not that of a warthog.

THE FROZEN FOOD AISLE

Packages of frozen foods and ice cream are stacked within a
long line of refrigerated compartments with glass doors.

Gerald turns the corner and skids to a stop in this aisle.
He peers back around the corner, then, satisfied that he is safe, he relaxes against one of the glass doors.

Gerald notices something odd on the door across the aisle from him.

One of the doors is fogged up, having been recently opened. And someone has drawn a smiley face on the fogged-up glass.

Gerald steps up to admire this drawing.

GERALD’S P.O.V.

Now an unseen finger slowly traces a large “V” between the eyes, giving the face angry eyebrows.

With these two simple strokes the friendly smile is now transformed into a malevolent sneer.

There is LOUD RATTLING O.S.

THE FROZEN FOOD AISLE

Gerald turns to find an unmanned shopping cart rattling towards him, its front wheels jittering as if stricken with epileptic spasms.

Gerald turns to run. But there is someone behind him.

It is a male store CLERK (70+) wearing a blue ALL-MART vest.

CLERK
Whoa there, sonny!
(wags his finger)
We’ve been looking for you.

Gerald regards the Clerk with suspicion. The exasperated Clerk now stands with his fists on his hips.

CLERK
Are you Gerald?

Gerald nods yes.
CLERK
You know your mother has had us turning this store upside down lookin’ for you? (reaches for Gerald’s arm) C’mon now, son.

Gerald leaps back, wary of the man. The Clerk frowns at first, but then he smiles.

CLERK
Hey. Would you like a sticker?

Gerald nods that he would. The Clerk kneels down beside Gerald and rummages around in his breast pocket.

CLERK
Let’s see what I got in here...oh, yeah...

GERALD’S P.O.V.

The Clerk grins as he pulls a rusty, dripping syringe from his pocket.

CLERK
...I got a big ol’ sticker for ya’! Gimme your arm!

THE FROZEN FOOD AISLE

Gerald SCREAMS in the Clerk’s face and runs away.

Several customers turn to see what the fuss is about as Gerald races past them.

The startled Clerk can only shrug, holding a large, yellow happy face sticker.

THE WOMEN’S CLOTHING DEPARTMENT

Gerald runs past a few mannequins. His eyes grow wide as their heads turn, following him as he runs past.

He scurries into the racks of clothes, then looks around him, seeking somewhere to hide.
The STORE MUSIC dies with a fuzzy CLICK as someone keys the store’s loudspeaker system.

Now a LOUD VOICE BOOMS from every corner of the store -- omnipotent but unseen -- like the mighty Oz -- repeating Gerald’s name over and over.

LOUDSPEAKER (O.S.)
Gerald...Gerald...Gerald...

It’s too much for the boy. He claps his hands to his ears, then drops to his knees sobbing.

GERALD
Stop it! Stop it!

VOICE (O.S.)
Shut-up!
(quieter)
Shut-up or they’ll find you.

It’s a smoker’s voice, raspy with phlegm. The loudspeaker clicks off and the bland in-store music returns.

Gerald looks up. Sniffles. Looks around. But he doesn’t see the source of the voice.

VOICE (O.S.)
Over here.

Gerald turns to a circular rack packed tight with women’s skirts and blouses on wire hangers. A clearance rack. The clothes hang nearly to the floor.

The voice is coming from somewhere in there.

VOICE
You know...they were lookin’ for me once. Just like you.

Gerald stands, wary but intrigued. He sniffs again.

GERALD
Really?

VOICE
You gotta’ know how to hide.
GERALD
My mom says I’m not supposed to
talk to strangers.

The blouses separate, just a crack. Someone is peering out
at him, but it’s too dark to see who it is.

VOICE
Your mom’s in here, too.

GERALD
No she’s not.

VOICE
Yeah. She is.

GERALD
You’re lying.

VOICE
She said you better get in here
or you’re in big trouble.

Gerald pauses, as do all children when faced with the
prospect of big trouble.

He takes a single, tentative step forward. But that’s it.

Now the hangers rattle as a stuffed Spiderman doll slides
out from between the blouses.

The callused hand holding the doll jiggles it around.

VOICE
Hey. Look what I got.

SPIDERMAN
Let’s be pals!

VOICE
This is where all the best
toys are...in here.

Gerald draws nearer, and reaches for the doll.

A grimy arm with satanic tattoos shoots out from the
clothes rack and latches onto Gerald’s wrist.
Gerald SCREAMS. Then he SCREAMS again as he is grabbed from behind.

The woman in the flowered dress whirls Gerald around to face her -- it’s Mom to the rescue.

Gerald hugs her fiercely and buries his face in the folds of her dress.

MOM
Honestly, Gerald...such a fuss.
Where have you been? I’ve been worried sick!

Gerald can only sob apologies into her skirt. She gently lifts his chin.

MOM
Were you scared?

Gerald looks up and nods at her, his cheeks streaked with tears.

But he frowns when he notices that the Clerk is there, too. And there is the Old Lady, watching from a distance.

Gerald looks back to the Clerk and points to the clearance rack of clothes.

GERALD
There’s somebody in there.

MOM
Now don’t be silly, honey.

GERALD
(to Mom)
There IS!
(to Clerk)
He tried to get me...

Mom and the Clerk exchange concerned glances. Surely the kid isn’t serious.

The Clerk shifts his eyes towards the rack of blouses.

Then he steps over to the clothes.
He hesitates for a moment -- truth be told, the old man looks a little nervous --

-- but he grabs the blouses and spreads them, revealing anything that might be hiding behind the clothes.

The Clerk heaves a small sigh of relief to find nothing there. Only a stuffed Spiderman doll.

MOM
See, baby...there’s nothing there.

Gerald’s eyes are locked on the doll. The Clerk stoops to pick it up.

Gerald retreats behind his mother as the Clerk holds the doll out towards them.

CLERK
Did you want to buy this?

Gerald looks up at his Mom and shakes his head no.

INT. CAR - DAY

Mom unceremoniously plops Gerald into a car seat and straps him in with rough movements suggesting anger.

Gerald winces as she SLAMS the car door next to him.

Mom climbs into the driver’s seat. She also SLAMS her own door a bit too hard.

Gerald looks at the seat next to him and gasps.

There is the Spiderman doll.

SPIDERMAN
I’m Spiderman!

MOM
You were very naughty in that store, Gerald...

Mom turns around in her seat.
GERALD’S P.O.V.

Mom’s face is now molten and hideous. Her eyes are bulging and black and gelatinous.

Her lower jaw drops impossibly low -- her mouth a gaping, black hole ringed by jagged, pointed teeth.

MOM
...now I’m gonna have to kill ya’!

She lunges towards Gerald.

FADE OUT.