

MICHAEL BROWN

written by

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FADE IN:

EXT. VINTON GULCH - DAY

JEREMY BROWN, 26, energetic, kneels in front of LAUREN, 25, soothing voice, soulful eyes, always wears a cross necklace.

He presents a stunning engagement ring to Lauren. As Jeremy struggles to get the words out, his voice cracks.

JEREMY

You're all that I need and more
than I deserve. Will you marry me,
Lauren?

She cups his face then kisses him. They gaze at each other.

A tear rolls down Lauren's face and she chokes up.

LAUREN

Are you sure you want me, Jeremy?

JEREMY

More than my next breath, my
insecure angel.

Lauren wipes her eyes then nods.

His hands tremble as he slides the ring on her finger.

Jeremy pulls out a music player, then touches play and a beautiful love song begins.

After he stands, he pulls Lauren up and they kiss. The Highway 70 Bridge looms ominously in the background.

EXT. ABOVE VINTON GULCH - DAY

The music continues as an eagle watches Jeremy pick Lauren up and spin her around.

It flies to the main body of Lake Oroville, CA, boats dot the ripple free lake.

After it soars over the dam, the eagle heads toward Oroville.

Above a quiet older neighborhood, the eagle spots Mrs. Brown's house then swoops down for a closer look.

EXT. MRS. BROWN'S HOUSE - DAY

Jeremy and Lauren's hybrid SUV sits in the driveway, LAUREMY ENERGY - GREEN ENERGY SOLUTIONS stenciled on the sides.

Now 35, Jeremy makes one last pass with the electric push mower then pushes it into the garage.

On the porch, KYLIE, 4 and adorable, sits with Jeremy's mother, MRS. BROWN, late 60s and uses a cane. A table holds a pitcher of lemonade, glasses, brownies and a towel.

Now 34, Lauren and MICHAEL, 7, a lighthearted and confident genius, use weeders to weed a flower bed.

Jeremy walks over.

Michael wipes his brow and pretends to fling sweat.

MICHAEL

Can't... take... any... more.

JEREMY

That nut didn't fall far from your family tree.

LAUREN

Perhaps he gets it from your side of the family.

MICHAEL

No, Mom, I can read.

Michael looks toward Mrs. Brown on the porch.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)

And bake.

JEREMY

You crossed the line, buckaroo.

When Jeremy wrestles him to the ground and tickles him, Michael laughs and squirms.

After Jeremy lets Michael get on top, Michael snarls and shakes his fist in Jeremy's face. Jeremy puts his hands up.

JEREMY (CONT'D)

Sorry, mister, I ain't lookin' fer no trouble.

MICHAEL

That's mister "mister" to you, muchacho.

When Jeremy chuckles, Michael plucks his nose.

LAUREN

Let's get something to drink, my rugged desperados.

They jump up then run past Lauren and onto the porch.

MRS. BROWN
Have some lemonade and brownies.

Jeremy pours half a glass of lemonade and sets it in front of Kylie, then pours three more glasses.

JEREMY
Mom?

MRS. BROWN
No thank you, dear.

Michael, Lauren and Jeremy grab glasses and brownies.

Michael holds up the brownie and looks it over.

MICHAEL
Did you make these, Grandma?

MRS. BROWN
Yes, Michael.

Michael does the sign of the cross with the brownie.

Lauren gives him a look.

MRS. BROWN (CONT'D)
Thanks for your help today. What are you doing tomorrow?

JEREMY
Michael's taking us fishing after church.

Kylie knocks over her glass of lemonade. She cutely pronounces her "r's" as "w's" and "Michael" as "Micho."

KYLIE
Oops, sorry.

Chocolate smudged on his face, Michael furls his eyebrow.

MICHAEL
Now she takes after dad.

Lauren winks at Michael, then grabs the towel, wipes it up.

INT. RESTAURANT OFFICE - DAY

A RESTAURANT MANAGER sits behind his desk. In an ugly suit and tie, THOMAS, 51, a gaunt drunkard who's aged beyond his years, sits in front of the desk.

RESTAURANT MANAGER
I'm sorry, but we don't have
anything right now. We've really
been struggling recently.

THOMAS
Sorry to hear that.

RESTAURANT MANAGER
You could try Almont's.

THOMAS
Ain't much around for a beaten up
old man.

Thomas smiles weakly.

RESTAURANT MANAGER
Good luck.

Thomas stands up then walks out of the office.

EXT. STREET - DAY

After he walks out of the packed restaurant, Thomas glares
down at the "HELP WANTED" sign in the window.

THOMAS
Liar.

He smacks the window, then walks across the street and
disappears into a liquor store.

INT. MICHAEL'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Posters of Albert Einstein, Frederick McKinley Jones and
Stephen Hawking are on the walls. In pajamas, Michael studies
a spelling bee book at his neat desk.

Jeremy leans into the room.

JEREMY
Big day tomorrow, champ.

Michael closes the book then looks at Jeremy.

MICHAEL
Not yet, but I will be.

Jeremy walks in then kneels beside Michael.

JEREMY
I believe you will be, Michael.

MICHAEL
Dad?

JEREMY
Yes?

MICHAEL
Do we have to kill the fish
tomorrow?

JEREMY
We don't have to, we can catch and
release. What about the worms we
use?

MICHAEL
Hm.

Michael wrinkles his lips and thinks about it.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)
But that's what they were raised
for. If people didn't buy worms for
fishing, these worms would have
never existed.

JEREMY
But their lives still have value.
Every life is important and
beautiful.

MICHAEL
Touché mon adversaire, but I still
don't want to kill the fish.

JEREMY
You have a gentle heart, Michael.
Don't ever lose that.

MICHAEL
Was your dad a good dad, too?

JEREMY
I love you so much, Michael. I hope
you know how special you are.

Michael grins and extends his arms.

MICHAEL
Ah, come here, ya big lug.

Jeremy hugs Michael.

INT. THOMAS' APARTMENT - DAY

Empty liquor bottles and beer cans populate the dingy apartment. Drunk, Thomas scans the jobs ads in the newspaper.

Thomas crumples up the newspaper then tosses it on the floor.

He takes a swig from a half empty bottle of rum.

THOMAS

Screw it.

Thomas takes another swig of rum then screws on the top.

When he stands up he totters, clutching the bottle. He picks up his key ring then staggers to the door.

INT. BROWNS' LIVING ROOM - DAY

Jeremy stands at the bottom of the stairs.

Lauren carries Kylie down the stairs.

KYLIE

Can we have a puppy, Mommy?

LAUREN

We'll think about it, sweetheart.

KYLIE

Please, Mommy. I'll never ask for anything else.

JEREMY

My angels ascend. Where's Michael?

When she reaches the bottom of the stairs, Lauren sets Kylie down then kisses Jeremy on the cheek.

LAUREN

Descend, dear, and he's coming.

Lauren slaps him on the behind.

Jeremy picks Kylie up then kisses her on the cheek.

JEREMY

Ready to go, princess?

KYLIE

Yes, Daddy.

Jeremy carries Kylie to the front door, Lauren follows. He opens the door then turns around and yells.

JEREMY
Bye, Michael!

Michael yells from somewhere upstairs.

MICHAEL (O.S.)
Wait!

With his hair uncombed, shirt untucked and shoes untied,
Michael runs to the top of the stairs.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)
I'm coming.

Michael rushes down the stairs.

LAUREN
Will you take Kylie to the car?
I'll see what I can do about this
mess.

JEREMY
Yes, my queen.

Jeremy carries Kylie out the front door.

Lauren grabs Michael and stops him from going out the door.

LAUREN
Hold on, piscator.

MICHAEL
Hm.

LAUREN
It's a --

MICHAEL
Ahem.

Michael wrinkles his lips and thinks, then spells piscator.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)
P-I-S-C-A-T-O-R. Piscator. A
fisherman.

LAUREN
That's correct, handsome.

Michael gives an "of course" shrug.

Lauren kneels down then ties Michael's shoes.

MICHAEL
Bet you never thought about this
before you married dad.

LAUREN
I did and I still said yes.

MICHAEL
I'm glad you did, Mom.

She kisses his cheek.

EXT. BROWNS' HOUSE - DAY

Clouds intermittently block out the sun. Wind gusts come and go. Jeremy lifts Kylie into her car seat then straps her in.

KYLIE
Can we have a puppy?

JEREMY
We'll think about it, Kylie.

Better groomed, Michael runs to the other side of the SUV. He jumps in then puts on his seat belt.

Jeremy glances at Michael.

JEREMY (CONT'D)
You look a little better.

Michael grins and bats his eyes at Jeremy.

MICHAEL
Let's go. Ain't got all day. Times
a wastin', son.

Jeremy closes the back door then walks to the driver side door, holding in laughter.

INT. SUV - DAY

Jeremy slides into the driver's seat, then fastens his seat belt and puts the keys into the ignition.

Lauren enters the passenger seat and fastens her seat belt.

KYLIE
Can we go now?

Jeremy starts the SUV and drives.

MICHAEL
Hush up, you cursed beast.

Kylie shoots a snarling glance at Michael.

Michael wiggles his finger in front of Kylie's face. She snaps at it with her teeth. He yanks it away then grins.

KYLIE

Mommy!

Lauren looks back at Michael.

LAUREN

Don't tease your sister, Michael.

Michael shrugs innocently.

EXT. BRIDGE - DAY

A clunker stops in the middle of the Highway 70 Bridge.

The door opens and Thomas, even drunker, steps out with the now three-quarters empty bottle of rum in his hand.

He leaves the car door open then staggers to the west edge of the bridge.

He sways back and forth, looking down at the water.

Thomas screws off the top and it drops to the pavement. He takes a gulp. His eyes inflamed by the rum, he grumbles.

THOMAS

Dirty rotten bastards.

He spits at the world.

EXT. VINTON GULCH - DAY

Under the Highway 70 Bridge, Michael leads the way. Tackle box and fishing rod in his hands, he marches and whistles the "Colonel Bogey March."

Jeremy carries Kylie, a cooler and fishing rod. Lauren walks beside him, carrying a blanket and two portable chairs.

Michael stops at the northwest point of Vinton Gulch then sets the rod and tackle box down.

Jeremy sets Kylie, the cooler and his fishing rod down.

Lauren places the blanket on the ground then Kylie sits down.

Michael sets down his fishing rod and tackle box.

After he pulls out a Styrofoam container of worms from the tackle box, Michael hands it to Jeremy.

Jeremy digs out a worm then threads it onto the hook.

MICHAEL

Thanks, Dad.

Michael casts and the bobber plunks down on top of the water.

KYLIE
Can I fish, Michael?

MICHAEL
No. Sorry, Girlzilla.

KYLIE
You're mean.

MICHAEL
Then why do you talk to me?

KYLIE
I won't.

Jeremy stands beside Lauren, his arm around her waist.

LAUREN
Okay, guys, take a break. Let's try
to enjoy the day.

JEREMY
You think they'll ever get along?

LAUREN
Someday, when we're old and gray.

Jeremy kisses her cheek.

JEREMY
It doesn't get much better than
this.

LAUREN
It's nice to get out of the house
for a change. Kids, husband, oh,
you know.

JEREMY
I can only imagine the horror. And
right there is where it all began.

Jeremy points to the northeast point of Vinton Gulch where he
proposed to Lauren.

LAUREN
Thank you.

They hold each other and kiss.

JEREMY
You weren't my first choice. You
weren't my last choice...

JEREMY AND LAUREN
 You were my only choice.

Jeremy glances up at the bridge and sees Thomas.

Thomas stands on the edge, swaying and looking down.

Jeremy releases Lauren then looks back up at the bridge.

JEREMY
 Michael, please reel in your line.

MICHAEL
 Why do --

JEREMY
 Just reel it in. Now!

Michael reels in the line.

LAUREN
 What's wrong?

Lauren turns then looks up at Thomas.

LAUREN (CONT'D)
 Oh my God, is he going to jump?

JEREMY
 Don't look, just hold the kids.

Lauren kneels down and hugs Kylie.

LAUREN
 Michael, come here.

Michael sets down his fishing rod. He glances up at Thomas then walks over to Lauren. Lauren holds him and Kylie close.

Jeremy fumbles to pull his cell phone out of his pocket.

EXT. BRIDGE - DAY

Tears stream from Thomas' eyes. He gulps the last of the rum then looks up.

THOMAS
 Please, forgive me.

Thomas holds up the empty bottle and jiggles it. He tips it up to get the last drop then throws it down and it shatters.

He gazes down then jumps to the water below.

EXT. VINTON GULCH - DAY

Jeremy watches Thomas jump, flailing his arms as he plummets. Thomas crashes to the surface, disappears under the water. Jeremy hands Lauren his cell phone.

JEREMY

Stay out of the water and call nine one one.

LAUREN

Be careful!

Jeremy yanks off his shoes and shirt. He pulls out his wallet and keys then drops them on the shore. He runs into the

LAKE

then swims toward the spot where Thomas jumped in. Thomas' head pops out of the water. Jeremy reaches out for Thomas, but he submerges. Jeremy takes a deep breath then dives

UNDER WATER

As he sinks, Thomas peacefully closes his eyes. Jeremy grabs Thomas by the collar and Thomas' eyes pop open. Jeremy pulls him to the

LAKE SURFACE

They surface, gasping for air.

JEREMY

Hold on, buddy, I got you.

Thomas tries to break free of Jeremy's grip.

THOMAS

Leave me alone!

Jeremy pulls Thomas to him then tries to swim back to shore.

THOMAS (CONT'D)

Stop!

Thomas grabs Jeremy's arms. Jeremy gasps for air and can't escape Thomas' hold. They disappear

UNDER WATER

Thomas has a death grip on Jeremy and won't release him.

Jeremy struggles wildly to break free, but can't.

They drift downward and out of sight.

Air bubbles rise toward the surface.

ON SHORE

Lauren panics.

LAUREN

Oh my God, Jeremy. Jeremy!

Lauren releases Michael and Kylie then scans the lake for Jeremy.

Michael trembles and Kylie starts to cry.

LAUREN (CONT'D)

Michael, keep Kylie here.

Lauren sprints along the shore, desperately searching.

LAUREN (CONT'D)

Jeremy! Help! Jeremy!

EXT. LAKE OROVILLE - DAY

A mile or so away, Thomas' corpse pops up in the water. Gently it rocks as it drifts to shore.

Thomas' body catches on a weathered log and his legs open, then close. Again, they open then close in the lazy current.

EXT. BOAT LAUNCH - DAY

Michael and Kylie peer out the windows of their SUV.

A Department of Parks and Recreation pickup backs a boat down the ramp at the Lime Saddle boat launch.

Two male Butte County DEPUTIES sit inside the boat.

A female PARK RANGER jumps out of the pickup then unhooks the boat from the trailer.

She pulls it beside the dock and the Deputies hold it there.
 Lauren stands beside the Butte County SHERIFF.

SHERIFF

Why don't you go home, ma'am? We'll
 call you as soon as we know
 anything.

LAUREN

Please, find him.

SHERIFF

We'll try, ma'am.

The pickup rushes away, pulling the trailer out of the water.

The Ranger hops out of the pickup, then runs to the boat and
 jumps in.

She backs the boat away from the dock then flies toward the
 Highway 70 Bridge.

EXT. LAKE OROVILLE - DAY

The shadows from the trees grow large as the sun begins to
 set. Past the Highway 70 Bridge, the boat slows down.

The Deputies scan the shore with binoculars.

Something on shore gets Deputy Cole's attention. He taps the
 Ranger on the shoulder then points.

DEPUTY COLE

Over there!

The Ranger jams the throttle forward.

The boat lurches ahead and the front end lifts as it races
 toward the shore.

The Ranger slows the boat down and guides it to Thomas' body.

The bow stops on the shore. The waves from its wake slap the
 hull and rock the boat and Thomas' body.

The Deputies jump into the water, then pull Thomas' body onto
 the shore and check for signs of life.

Deputy Cole looks at the Ranger.

DEPUTY COLE (CONT'D)

He's gone.

The Ranger tosses Deputy Cole a body bag.

The Deputies put Thomas' body in the bag. They heave it into the boat then jump in.

The Ranger backs the boat up then rushes toward the Highway 70 Bridge.

EXT. BOAT LAUNCH - DAY

An Oroville ambulance is now in the parking lot.

Lauren sits with the Sheriff at a picnic table. She jumps when a call comes in on the sheriff's radio.

DEPUTY COLE (V.O.)
We found a body, Sheriff.

Lauren puts her hand over her mouth.

The Sheriff stands up, then walks a few paces away and talks into the radio.

SHERIFF
Which one?

Lauren listens intently.

DEPUTY COLE (V.O.)
It's the jumper, Sheriff. We're bringing him in.

Some relief comes over Lauren's face.

LAUREN
Where are you, Jeremy?

She walks over to the shore then scans the lake. The sun has disappeared and a dusky gloom shrouds the landscape.

The Sheriff looks at the ambulance, then points to the boat dock and walks over to Lauren.

SHERIFF
We'll resume the search in the morning, Mrs. Brown.

LAUREN
Oh no. You have to find him. You can't stop looking.

SHERIFF
Ma'am, we're not equipped to conduct a night search.

LAUREN
Just give me the boat and I'll do it.

SHERIFF

Mrs. Brown...

Lauren plops down then begins to cry.

The ambulance backs up to the boat dock.

The ranger's boat rushes toward the dock.

INT. BROWNS' KITCHEN - NIGHT

Lauren, Michael and Kylie sit at the kitchen table, same clothes they wore at the lake.

Kylie eats her sandwich.

Lauren forces down a bite and tries to hide her agony.

LAUREN

Please eat, Michael.

MICHAEL

I'm not hungry.

Michael pushes his plate away.

LAUREN

You'll need the energy for school tomorrow, sweetheart.

Lauren slides the plate back in front of Michael.

He speaks in a slower and stronger tone.

MICHAEL

I'm not hungry.

Again, Michael pushes it away.

KYLIE

When will daddy be home?

Michael snaps at Kylie.

MICHAEL

God you're stupid!

Michael jumps out of the chair then storms away.

LAUREN

Michael.

Tears drip from Michael's eyes and his lips quiver as he exits the kitchen.

LAUREN (CONT'D)

Michael!

Kylie watches with a puzzled look on her face.

INT. MICHAEL'S ROOM - NIGHT

Michael runs into his room, then flips on the light switch and slams the door shut.

He runs to a corner then squats down. He hugs his trembling knees, sobbing uncontrollably.

Michael pinches and twists the skin on left forearm.

INT. BROWNS' UPSTAIRS HALLWAY - NIGHT

When Lauren leans her ear against Michael's door, she hears Michael's muffled sobs.

Just when she's about to knock on the door --

KYLIE

Mommy.

Lauren drops her hand, then puts on a happy face and turns toward Kylie.

LAUREN

Yes, Kylie?

KYLIE

I'm tired.

LAUREN

Okay, sweetie, let's get ready for bed.

Lauren picks Kylie up then carries her toward Kylie's room.

INT. KYLIE'S ROOM - NIGHT

In her cheery room, Kylie is in bed and holds her tattered teddy bear. Lauren tucks her in.

KYLIE

Mommy?

LAUREN

Yes, sweetie?

KYLIE

Why did Michael call me stupid? I'm not stupid, he's stupid.

LAUREN
 You're not stupid, and neither is
 Michael. He's just hurting inside,
 sweetheart.

KYLIE
 I am too, Mommy.

LAUREN
 We all are, Kylie.

KYLIE
 Daddy can't come home, can he?

LAUREN
 I don't know, Kylie. I don't know.

Lauren strokes Kylie's hair then kisses her cheek.

LAUREN (CONT'D)
 Good night, sweetheart.

KYLIE
 Good night, Mommy.

Lauren walks to the door, then flips off the light switch and
 eases the door closed.

INT. MICHAEL'S ROOM - NIGHT

The door opens and Lauren peeks into Michael's room.

Now asleep, Michael is still crouched in the corner.

Lauren tiptoes over to the bed and pulls back the covers.

Then she tiptoes over to Michael. She picks him up, then
 carries him to bed and lays him down.

Lauren removes Michael's shoes and socks. She pulls the
 covers over him then kisses his cheek and whispers.

LAUREN
 Good night, Michael.

Lauren walks to the door then looks back at Michael and
 sighs. She flips off the light switch then exits.

EXT. LAKE OROVILLE - DAY

Daybreak near the dam, the Ranger controls the boat. The two
 Deputies toss grappling hooks in and drag the bottom.

A DIVER dives into the water from another boat, a second PARK
 RANGER at the helm.

VOLUNTEERS in boats scour the shoreline.

EXT. BROWNS' HOUSE - DAY

The SUV is parked in the driveway. Lauren carries Michael's backpack and walks with him to the end of their driveway.

Lauren kneels, then spots a bruise on his left forearm and inspects it.

She adjusts Michael's shirt.

LAUREN
You look very nice, Michael.

Michael pushes her hand away and stares at nothing.

Lauren looks down the highway and sees the Oroville school bus coming. She tries to sound excited.

LAUREN (CONT'D)
Here comes the bus. You have a
great day in school, sweetheart.

The bus arrives and the door opens.

Lauren hands Michael his backpack.

LAUREN (CONT'D)
I love you, Michael.

Michael doesn't respond, just trudges into the bus.

INT. BUS - DAY

Michael steps inside the bus.

The BUS DRIVER closes the door.

Michael trudges to the back then plops down, away from the other CHILDREN.

Backpack in his lap, Michael stares forward.

ETHAN, 7, wiry and tall, walks over to Michael then sits down beside him.

ETHAN
Hey, Michael, did...

Michael frowns and glances at Ethan. Ethan nods then they both stare forward.

The Driver puts it into gear and drives.

EXT. BROWNS' HOUSE - DAY

Brokenhearted, Lauren watches the bus drive away, then turns and walks toward the house.

INT. BROWNS' KITCHEN - DAY

At the kitchen table, Lauren sits with her effervescent and unconventional sister, SAM, 32.

Lauren lethargically stirs her coffee, then sets the spoon down and looks at Sam.

LAUREN

I don't know what I'll do. I can't do this alone.

SAM

He could have crawled onto shore. We don't know yet.

LAUREN

How am I going to raise two children by myself?

SAM

Please don't give up, Lauren.

LAUREN

This wasn't supposed to happen. Why would God let something like this happen?

SAM

I don't --

LAUREN

Why did I let Jeremy go in the water? God I'm stupid. I should have stopped him.

The phone rings and startles Lauren.

LAUREN (CONT'D)

Oh God, no.

Lauren stands up then trudges to the phone.

She stares at it as it rings.

Cautiously Lauren picks it up then speaks into it.

LAUREN (CONT'D)

Hello?

SHERIFF (V.O.)
Mrs. Brown?

LAUREN
Yes.

EXT. BOAT LAUNCH - DAY

Two EMERGENCY MEDICAL TECHNICIANS load a gurney, a filled body bag strapped onto it, into the ambulance.

The Sheriff talks into his cell phone.

SHERIFF
We found your husband's body, Mrs. Brown.

The ambulance drives away.

INT. BROWNS' KITCHEN - DAY

Lauren drops the phone and slumps to the floor.

SAM
Lauren!

Sam leaps up then rushes over to Lauren.

She waves her hand in front of Lauren's glassy eyes.

SAM (CONT'D)
Lauren, can you hear me?

Lauren grabs Sam's arm and looks up at her.

LAUREN
Will you talk to him?

Sam nods, then picks up the phone and speaks into it.

SAM
Hello?
(beat)
I'm her sister.
(beat)
We'll be there.

Sam hangs up then helps Lauren stand up.

SAM (CONT'D)
I'm so sorry, Lauren.

When Sam tries to hug her, Lauren pushes her away.

LAUREN
What did he say?

Sam struggles to get out the words.

SAM
He, um, he wants you to go to the
coroner's office to --

LAUREN
Will you watch Kylie for me?

Sam nods.

Lauren walks out of the kitchen.

INT. CORONER'S LAB - DAY

A CORONER leads Lauren into the lab then to a storage unit.

The Coroner opens its door then slides out the drawer.

A sheet covers Jeremy's body.

The Coroner moves his hand to the sheet then waits for
Lauren's approval.

Lauren inhales then exhales.

LAUREN
Okay.

The Coroner uncovers Jeremy's cold pale face.

Lauren whirls around, clasping her hand over her mouth.

The Coroner covers Jeremy's face then begins to slide the
drawer back in.

Lauren turns around then stops him.

LAUREN (CONT'D)
May I have a moment alone?

The Coroner nods then exits the lab.

Lauren uncovers Jeremy's face then strokes his hair.

LAUREN (CONT'D)
You and I, my love, we created two
wonderful children. I will always
be grateful...

Tears drip from Lauren's eyes and her voice trembles.

LAUREN (CONT'D)
 ... that you asked me to marry you.
 Please watch over us. I need you so
 much.

She caresses Jeremy's face.

LAUREN (CONT'D)
 I love you, Jeremy. Thank you for
 wanting me.

After she wipes away her tears, Lauren smiles.

LAUREN (CONT'D)
 You were my only choice.

Lauren kisses his forehead, then pulls the sheet over his
 face and walks out of the lab.

The Coroner walks into the lab then over to Jeremy's body.

He slides the drawer in then closes the door.

EXT. ELEMENTARY SCHOOL PLAYGROUND - DAY

MICHAEL'S CLASSMATES burst out the school door to the
 playground. They scramble to their favorite spots and play.

Michael and Ethan trudge out the door, followed by a female
 TEACHER, 30s.

Michael and Ethan walk off by themselves. They sit down and
 stare into nothingness.

The bruise on Michael's left forearm continues to grow.

Children play and fill the air with laughter.

MICHAEL'S PRINCIPAL, 50s, female, solemnly walks out the
 school door then over to Michael.

The Principal bends down then says something to Michael.

She takes Michael's hand then leads him into the school.

EXT. CEMETERY - DAY

On a dreary and overcast day, THOMAS' MOTHER, late 70s and
 frail, is the only one that attends Thomas' burial.

She weeps as a MAN lowers the cheap casket into the ground.

THOMAS' MOTHER
 Oh, Thomas, why did you do that?

She wipes the tears from her eyes.

THOMAS' MOTHER (CONT'D)
You hurt some good people.

Thomas' Mother walks away.

INT. MICHAEL'S ROOM - DAY

Lauren tries to be cheery as she kneels and ties a tie on Michael, preparing him for the funeral.

Ethan, dressed for the funeral, sits and watches.

LAUREN
You look very handsome, Michael.

Lauren stands up.

LAUREN (CONT'D)
We'll get through this, sweetheart.

She leads Michael and Ethan out of the room.

EXT. CEMETERY - DAY

On a bright sunny day, Jeremy's casket rests on the lowering device above the grave. FAMILY and FRIENDS attend.

Lauren sits between Kylie and Michael, Ethan beside Michael.

Sam, Mrs. Brown and LAUREN'S UNCLE, 60s, power oozes from his pores, sit behind them.

Lauren fights back tears.

Michael's lips quiver as he stares at the casket.

Music plays as the casket descends into the grave.

Kylie waves goodbye to Jeremy's casket.

The music stops and the crowd stands.

Some people briefly console Lauren, Michael and Kylie. Some hug Lauren and others pat Michael on the shoulder.

Lauren's uncle hugs Lauren then releases her. His voice is powerful and comforting.

LAUREN'S UNCLE
I love you, Lauren. If there's
anything I can do to help, please
let me know.

Lauren grabs his hands.

LAUREN
Will you take Jeremy's mother home?

LAUREN'S UNCLE
Of course I will.

He kisses Lauren's cheek, then walks over to Jeremy's Mother and escorts her away.

After the crowd has dispersed, Lauren, fire in her eyes, stands with Sam, Michael, Kylie and Ethan.

LAUREN
Please take the kids to the car for me, Sam.

SAM
Where are --

LAUREN
Thank you.

Lauren storms off through the cemetery.

Sam leads the kids away.

THOMAS' GRAVE

Lauren stops on Thomas' grave.

Headstone reads: THOMAS SCOTT WISE - BELOVED SON - DEC. 16, 1963 - APR. 6, 2015

She glares at the headstone.

LAUREN
You are a coward. Why couldn't you have just put a bullet in your mouth... Why couldn't a gun... God, I can't even talk.

Lauren kicks the grave and breaks off a heel.

LAUREN (CONT'D)
You son of a bitch.

She picks up her heel.

LAUREN (CONT'D)
Why didn't you just have the decency to put a bullet in your brain and leave us alone?

Lauren paces a bit.

LAUREN (CONT'D)
You stole my husband from me. You
stole our children's father.

She points at the headstone.

LAUREN (CONT'D)
You are a bastard, a rotten,
miserable, heartless bastard. How
dare you be buried here; after what
you did to our family.

CEMETERY ROAD

Michael and Ethan sit in the SUV.

Sam and Kylie stand beside the SUV and watch Lauren.

KYLIE
What's mommy doing?

SAM
Um, I, I think she's praying.

Kylie cocks her head and looks up at Sam.

KYLIE
I don't think so, Auntie Sam.

Lauren paces and flails her arms, then turns toward the SUV
and hobbles toward it.

SAM
Here she comes, Kylie. Please don't
say anything.

KYLIE
Why?

SAM
Please, just don't, okay?

KYLIE
Okay, Auntie Sam.

Lauren returns like nothing happened.

LAUREN
Thank you, Sam.

Sam smiles and nods.

Lauren hands Sam her heel.

They climb into the SUV then drive away.

INT. MRS. BROWN'S LIVING ROOM - DAY

After Jeremy's funeral, family and friends gather. Food trays and drinks adorn Mrs. Brown's living room.

Mrs. Brown sits on the sofa with her walking cane. An end table with a lamp and tissues is beside the sofa.

With drink in hand, Lauren's uncle sits down beside her.

LAUREN'S UNCLE

Is there anything I can get for you, Mrs. Brown?

MRS. BROWN

No thank you.

LAUREN'S UNCLE

If there's anything I can do for you during this difficult time, I would be happy to help.

MRS. BROWN

I appreciate the offer. I'm not sure what I'll do without him.

When Mrs. Brown starts to cry, Lauren's uncle puts his arm around her.

LAUREN'S UNCLE

Jeremy was a wonderful man because he had a wonderful mother.

Mrs. Brown takes a tissue and dries her eyes.

MRS. BROWN

He was a wonderful man, wasn't he?

LAUREN'S UNCLE

Indeed he was, Mrs. Brown.

Mrs. Brown uses her cane to help her stand.

MRS. BROWN

Care for something to eat?

Mrs. Brown swings her cane and knocks over the lamp.

It shatters on the floor.

EXT. MRS. BROWN'S HOUSE - DAY

Cars fill Mrs. Brown's driveway and line the street.

Lauren and Sam, same clothes from the funeral but Lauren now wears tennis shoes, sit on the porch.

LAUREN

How did this happen? All he was trying to do was help.

Sam holds Lauren's hand.

SAM

Jeremy --

LAUREN

Jeremy never hurt anyone.

Lauren jumps up.

LAUREN (CONT'D)

That damn drunk stole my life. What gives him the right to murder my husband? I hope he burns in...

Shocked at what she was about to say, Lauren clasps her hand over her mouth.

Sam stands up beside her.

SAM

What can I do, sis?

Lauren shakes it off. Exhausted, she plops down on the chair.

LAUREN

Will you please go feed the kids for me, Sam?

Sam nods then walks into Mrs. Brown's house.

Lauren removes her cross necklace then tosses it into the yard. She rests her head in her hands.

INT. MRS. BROWN'S KITCHEN - DAY

Michael, Kylie and Ethan sit at the kitchen table.

Sam enters.

SAM

Hello, guys.

KYLIE

Hi, Auntie Sam.

ETHAN

Hi, Sam.

Michael stares at nothing.

SAM
Are you hungry?

KYLIE
Yes.

ETHAN
A little.

SAM
Michael?

She waits for a response, but receives none.

SAM (CONT'D)
I'll fix you up a plate.

Sam goes to the counter then places food on three plates.
She sets the plates in front of Michael, Kylie and Ethan.

KYLIE
Thanks, Auntie Sam.

ETHAN
Thank you.

Kylie and Ethan eat.

Michael stares forward and pushes his plate away.

Ethan glances at Michael then pushes his plate away, too. He tries to be inconspicuous as he chews then swallows.

Sam looks down at Michael and agonizes.

INT. ELEMENTARY SCHOOL CAFETERIA - DAY

The elementary school cafeteria buzzes at lunch time.

Michael and Ethan walk into the cafeteria. Ethan points to the lunch line.

Michael shakes his head no, then walks to a table and sits by himself.

Ethan gets his school lunch, then carries his tray over to Michael and sits down.

Ethan slides his pudding cup over to Michael.

Michael shakes his head no and Ethan pulls it back.

INT. ELEMENTARY SCHOOL CLASSROOM - DAY

Michael, Ethan and his classmates enter math class. The female Teacher stands in front.

The children find their seats.

The Teacher writes "16 - 9 = ?" on the chalk board.

TEACHER

Can anyone tell me what sixteen
minus nine equals?

Michael stares at nothing.

TEACHER (CONT'D)

Do you know, Michael?

Silence looms in the classroom.

A BOY throws a wad of paper at Michael and hits him in the back of the head. Michael doesn't move.

A few children giggle.

Ethan leaps out of his chair then hits the boy in the shoulder with a devastating punch.

The boy yelps.

Ethan glares at him.

ETHAN

You want another?

The boy begins to cry.

TEACHER

That's enough!

The Teacher rushes over to Ethan then drags him to the front of the room.

The Teacher walks to Michael, then grabs his hand and gently coaxes him to the front of the class. She turns to the class.

TEACHER (CONT'D)

Study and I'll be right back.

The only sounds come from the sniveling boy as the Teacher leads Michael and Ethan out of the classroom.

INT. ELEMENTARY SCHOOL HALLWAY - DAY

The hallway is lined with lockers. Michael and Ethan sit on the bench outside the principal's office.

INT. PRINCIPAL'S OFFICE - DAY

The Principal sits behind her desk, Lauren in front.

PRINCIPAL

I'm deeply concerned about Michael's behavior, Mrs. Brown. He won't talk to anyone.

LAUREN

I'm sorry. Everything is falling apart and I don't know what to do about it.

PRINCIPAL

Don't be sorry, there's nothing to be sorry about. Michael is a brilliant and wonderful boy.

Lauren tears up.

The Principal slides a box of tissues over to her.

PRINCIPAL (CONT'D)

It is so difficult for you, I can't even begin to imagine. We really do want to help. I've spoken with our counselor and we believe we have a solution that can help you and Michael.

Lauren takes a tissue then wipes her eyes.

LAUREN

I'll try anything if you think it'll help Michael.

PRINCIPAL

We think it may be best for Michael to take a little time off and get some therapy.

LAUREN

But then he'll have to return and do the entire school year over again.

PRINCIPAL

Don't worry about school. Michael is light years ahead of the other students. He's probably ahead of most high schoolers. You have done an amazing job with him. Next fall he can rejoin his class without any setbacks and still be eligible for the spelling bee.

LAUREN

How is that possible?

PRINCIPAL

We've spoken to the district superintendent about this. The only thing he'll need to do is pass this year's final exams before the start of school in the fall. For Michael, that will be easy.

LAUREN

That would be wonderful. I want him to come back to me. I need him to come back to me.

The Principal hands Lauren a therapist's card.

PRINCIPAL

She's a wonderful therapist. Please give her a call.

A glimmer of hope returns to Lauren's eyes.

INT. ELEMENTARY SCHOOL HALLWAY - DAY

Michael and Ethan still sit outside the principal's office.

Lauren walks out of the office then kneels beside Michael. She glances at Ethan.

LAUREN

Thank you, Ethan.

Ethan smiles and nods.

The Principal peers out of the office.

PRINCIPAL

Ethan.

Ethan rolls his eyes and pats Michael on the back.

He walks into her office then the Principal closes the door.

LAUREN

Are you ready to go home, Michael?

Michael stands up then they walk to his locker.

He opens it then pulls out his backpack.

LAUREN (CONT'D)

Let's bring everything home today.

Michael stuffs all his belongings into the backpack.

Lauren picks up the backpack and Michael closes the locker.

She holds his hand as they walk to the exit.

INT. PRINCIPAL'S OFFICE - DAY

The Principal sits behind her desk, Ethan in front.

PRINCIPAL

You can't go around hitting people,
Ethan.

ETHAN

If he does it again, I'll clobber
him again.

PRINCIPAL

I know you were protecting Michael
so I'll let it go, just this once.

The Principal leans forward and shoots a stern look at Ethan.

PRINCIPAL (CONT'D)

But no more hitting people, okay?

ETHAN

I won't hit him if he doesn't hit
Michael. He hit Michael first.

PRINCIPAL

I know he threw paper at Michael,
and that was wrong. Next time, tell
your teacher.

ETHAN

Okay, I'll tell the teacher. But
after school...

PRINCIPAL

After school what, Ethan?

ETHAN

Nothing, ma'am.

It isn't sinking in and the Principal sighs.

MICHAEL'S PRINCIPAL
No more "clobbering" at school,
after school, or before school. Am
I making myself clear?

ETHAN
Yes, ma'am. I'll wait till summer.

The Principal shakes her head and almost laughs then leans
back in her chair.

PRINCIPAL
Go back to class, Ethan.

Ethan stands up then strolls out of the office.

INT. BROWNS' KITCHEN - NIGHT

Spaghetti noodles, bread and drinks are on the table. Lauren
walks to the kitchen exit and shouts.

LAUREN
Michael, Kylie, dinner is ready.

Lauren brings a bowl of spaghetti sauce to the table then
prepares three plates.

Michael and Kylie walk into the kitchen then sit down.

LAUREN (CONT'D)
I made your favorite, Michael.

KYLIE
Yummy, Mommy.

Kylie digs in.

LAUREN
Try some, Michael.

KYLIE
It's good, Mommy.

LAUREN
Thank you, Kylie. Michael, will you
try some?

Michael stares into space and pushes his plate away.

LAUREN (CONT'D)
Please eat, Michael.

Kylie, sauce dripping from her chin, glances at Michael.

KYLIE
Please, Michael.

Michael stands up then trudges out of the kitchen, into the

LIVING ROOM

Michael's knees buckle and he collapses to the floor.

Lauren rushes in, then kneels beside Michael and sits him up.

LAUREN
Michael!

Kylie runs over to them.

KYLIE
Michael.

Kylie hugs Michael.

KYLIE (CONT'D)
Wake up, Michael.

INT. SUV - NIGHT

Michael is unconscious and strapped into the passenger seat. Kylie is in her car seat. Lauren drives toward the Oroville hospital emergency entrance.

LAUREN
We're almost there, Michael. Kylie,
you stay close to mommy.

KYLIE
Okay, Mommy.

The SUV screeches to a halt in front of the entrance.

Lauren jams the SUV into park.

EXT. EMERGENCY ENTRANCE - NIGHT

Her door flings open and Lauren jumps out of the SUV.

She opens the rear passenger door then unbuckles Kylie from the car seat. She pulls Kylie out then sets her down.

Lauren yanks the front passenger door open then lifts Michael out of the seat.

She carries Michael to the entrance, Kylie beside her.

The door opens and they rush inside.

INT. EMERGENCY ROOM - NIGHT

Lauren carries Michael to the front desk, Kylie beside her.

A lone ER NURSE, mid 20s, rushes over.

Lauren tries to catch her breath.

LAUREN
Please, help us.

NURSE
Let's lay him down, ma'am.

They lay Michael on the floor and kneel beside him. The Nurse checks his vitals.

LAUREN
Please, help my baby.

Kylie holds onto Lauren's waist.

NURSE
What happened?

LAUREN
He just collapsed. He's been
through a lot lately.

The Nurse notices the bruise on Michael's forearm and gives a suspicious glance at Lauren.

NURSE
He's going to be fine, ma'am. I'll
be right back.

The Nurse rushes away.

Lauren sits Michael up and strokes his hair.

LAUREN
You're going to be okay, Michael.

Kylie sits beside Michael and holds his hand.

KYLIE
It's okay, Michael.

The Nurse pushes a gurney to them.

Lauren picks up Michael then lays him on the gurney.

NURSE
Wait here.

Kylie holds onto Lauren's leg as they watch the Nurse roll the gurney down the hall.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - NIGHT

In a hospital gown, Michael lies awake in bed with an IV in his arm. An empty IV bag hangs on its stand.

A surly male DOCTOR, 30s, examines the bruise on Michael's left forearm.

The Nurse holds gauze that's stuck to tape over the IV needle in Michael's arm.

NURSE

Okay, Michael, I'm going to remove the needle. This may sting a bit.

The Nurse removes the IV needle from Michael's arm and tapes on the gauze. Michael doesn't wince.

NURSE (CONT'D)

You're a brave young man.

The Nurse removes the IV bag from the stand.

DOCTOR

Are you feeling any better, Michael?

Michael stares at the ceiling and ignores him.

DOCTOR (CONT'D)

You get some rest and we'll check on you later.

The Doctor leads the Nurse out the door and into the

HALLWAY

DOCTOR

This poor boy is not being properly cared for. This is a classic case of neglect and he show signs of abuse. We need to report this. Call Ms. Hill.

NURSE

But, Doctor, I spoke to the mother and she said --

The Doctor snaps at her.

DOCTOR

Just do what your told!

NURSE
Yes, Doctor.

DOCTOR
Where's his mother?

NURSE
She's in the waiting room.

The Doctor sighs.

DOCTOR
I hate dealing with these idiots.

He walks away.

INT. WAITING ROOM - NIGHT

Asleep on Lauren's lap, Kylie cuddles her teddy bear. Sam sits beside them.

The Doctor walks into the waiting room.

Lauren slides Kylie over to Sam's lap, then jumps up and steps to the Doctor.

LAUREN
Is Michael alright, Doctor?

The Doctor is gruff.

DOCTOR
He's awake and stable.

LAUREN
Thank God.

DOCTOR
Michael is malnourished and dehydrated. I'm not even going to ask why you allowed this. I'll let Child Protective Services investigate it.

LAUREN
Child Protective Services?

DOCTOR
CPS will be notified of the situation.

LAUREN
Situation?

DOCTOR
I'm sorry, Mrs. Brown, but I had no choice.

LAUREN
Oh my God, what is wrong with you people?

DOCTOR
I might ask you the same thing.

Sam raises her voice and Kylie wakes up.

SAM
You listen up, you arrogant piece --
Lauren turns toward Sam.

LAUREN
Please.

Lauren turns back to the Doctor.

LAUREN (CONT'D)
May we see him?

DOCTOR
You can have five minutes.

The Doctor looks at his watch then rudely walks away.
Lauren turns to Kylie then picks her up.

SAM
What a jackass.

Sam stands then follows Lauren out of the waiting room.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - NIGHT

Kylie sits in a chair and clutches her teddy bear.

Michael lies in bed. Lauren and Sam stand beside the bed.
Lauren strokes his hair.

LAUREN
Please come back to us, Michael.

Michael ignores her.

The Doctor opens the door and leans in.

DOCTOR
It's time.

The Doctor walks away and the door eases closed.

Lauren bends down and kisses Michael on the cheek.

LAUREN

Get some rest and we'll see you in the morning. Good night, Michael. I love you.

SAM

You get better, mister.

Kylie slides out of the chair then walks over to the bed.

She sets the teddy bear next to Michael.

KYLIE

When I miss daddy I hug Mister Paws.

Michael stares at the ceiling.

Near a breakdown of her own, Lauren picks up Kylie and carries her to the door. Sam follows.

They flip the light switch off then exit.

Street lights partially illuminate the room. Michael rolls over and hugs the teddy bear, a teardrop rolls from his eye.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

Michael lies in bed and stares at the ceiling, the teddy bear beside him.

A falsely pleasant female CPS Case Worker, MS. HILL, 40s, walks into the room carrying a pen and clip board.

MS. HILL

Hello, Michael, I'm Ms. Hill.

She walks over to the bed.

MS. HILL (CONT'D)

May I sit down?

Michael ignores her and Ms. Hill sits down.

MS. HILL (CONT'D)

I'm going to ask you a few questions, Michael. You don't have to be afraid of me. You can tell me the truth and nothing bad will happen to you, I promise.

Michael grabs the teddy bear and rolls over.

MS. HILL (CONT'D)
When was the last time that you had
a meal, Michael?

Ms. Hill waits for a moment then scribbles something.

MS. HILL (CONT'D)
Has your mother ever hurt you?

Michael closes his eyes and squeezes the teddy bear.

INT. HOSPITAL HALLWAY - DAY

Ms. Hill carries her pen and clipboard out of Michael's room
then walks down the empty hallway.

INT. BROWNS' KITCHEN - DAY

Lauren makes breakfast.

Kylie enters, then rushes over to Lauren and hugs her leg.

KYLIE
Morning, Mommy.

Lauren kneels down and hugs Kylie.

LAUREN
Good morning, sweetheart. Did you
sleep well?

She kisses Kylie on the cheek.

KYLIE
Yes, Mommy.

Kylie walks to the table then crawls onto a chair.

KYLIE (CONT'D)
I miss Michael.

Lauren brings two plates of breakfast to the table.

LAUREN
I do too, Kylie.

She sits down.

KYLIE
When's he coming home?

LAUREN
I don't know, but I think it'll be
soon.

KYLIE
It's not like daddy?

LAUREN
No, Kylie, Michael's coming home.
He just needs a little rest. Do you
want to go see him?

KYLIE
Of course, Mommy.

LAUREN
We'll go right after breakfast.

Kylie attacks the food, bringing joy to Lauren's weary face.

INT. HOSPITAL HALLWAY - DAY

Beside Michael's room, Deputy Cole sits in the hallway.

Lauren carries Kylie down the hallway to Michael's room.

When Lauren and Kylie get close, Deputy Cole stands up then
slides in front of the door.

DEPUTY COLE
Ma'am, you can't go inside,
hospital personnel only.

Lauren panics and sets Kylie down.

LAUREN
What happened? Is Michael okay?

She tries to squeeze past Deputy Cole.

DEPUTY COLE
He's fine, ma'am, but I can't let
you go in there.

LAUREN
What are you talking about,
Officer? I'm his mother. You have
to let me in there.

DEPUTY COLE
Ma'am, Michael Brown is under
protective custody. CPS issued the
order today.

LAUREN
Protective custody? Let me see my
son.

Lauren tries to push past Deputy Cole, but he doesn't budge.

LAUREN (CONT'D)

This is not right. You have to let me see Michael.

DEPUTY COLE

I'm sorry, ma'am, I can't do that. I don't want to have to arrest you, but I will. Think about it, ma'am.

Deputy Cole nods toward Kylie.

KYLIE

Mommy, I'm scared.

Lauren kneels down and hugs Kylie.

LAUREN

It's alright, Kylie.

KYLIE

Why is the bad man doing this?

LAUREN

He's just doing his job, sweetheart.

KYLIE

Can't we see Michael?

LAUREN

Not right now.

Lauren picks Kylie up then carries her away.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

Michael walks out of the bathroom then climbs into bed.

He pulls the teddy bear to his chest then closes his eyes.

INT. BROWNS' KITCHEN - NIGHT

Lauren sits with Sam at the kitchen table. A CPS document is in front of Lauren.

LAUREN

I think I'm losing my mind. It's too much to deal with. I don't think I can take any more, Sam.

SAM

Yes, you can. You're the strongest person I know.

LAUREN
CPS is trying to take Michael away.

SAM
They can't do that, can they?

LAUREN
They've placed him in protective custody.

SAM
You didn't even get a hearing?

Lauren picks up the document and reads.

LAUREN
Exigent circumstances which justify a social worker placing a child into protective custody are those circumstances in which a social worker has reasonable cause to believe...

She looks at Sam and waves the paper.

LAUREN (CONT'D)
Could they possibly be any more ambiguous? Reasonable cause to believe?

SAM
They just word it like that to cover their asses.

Lauren continues to read.

LAUREN
... the child is a person described by WIC section 300 (b) or (g), and the child has an immediate need for medical care, or the child is at imminent risk of serious physical injury and there is no time to obtain a court order.

She slaps the document on the table.

SAM
Don't they understand what you've been through? Don't they understand what Michael's been through?

LAUREN
They think I'm killing my son.

SAM

What the hell do they know anyway?
This will never stand up.

LAUREN

They won't even let me see him,
Sam. How can they be so cruel?

Silence looms for a moment.

LAUREN (CONT'D)

Maybe it would be best for Michael.
Maybe I'm not the mother he needs.
God knows I'm failing miserably.

SAM

Don't you dare say such stupid
things, sis. You are a wonderful
mother. My God, you're the
responsible one. You're the gentle
and caring one. If you aren't a
good mother, then there's no hope
for any of us.

Lauren sighs.

SAM (CONT'D)

After all, you looked out for me
after mom and dad died. You carried
me through that, sis.

LAUREN

Sam, you were sixteen.

SAM

Sixteen going on six. And I turned
out rather peachy, don't you think?

LAUREN

Now I'm really concerned.

She smiles and winks at Sam.

Kylie walks into the kitchen.

KYLIE

Mommy, I'm hungry.

LAUREN

What would you like, my little
angel?

KYLIE

Um, pizza.

LAUREN
Pizza it is. Sam, will you please
stay for dinner?

SAM
As long as it's...

Sam makes a circular motion with her hands then points to
Kylie.

KYLIE
Pepperoni.

INT. KYLIE'S ROOM - NIGHT

Kylie is under the covers. Sam sits beside the bed and closes
a book, then sets it on the night stand.

SAM
That was good.

KYLIE
Thanks, Auntie Sam.

SAM
You're welcome, snuggle bug.

Sam tickles Kylie.

In her bathrobe and hair wrapped with a towel, Lauren enters
the room.

Sam stops.

LAUREN
And what do we have here?

Sam winks at Kylie.

SAM
Shh.

KYLIE
Nothing, Mommy.

Lauren walks over to the bed.

LAUREN
Oh, really? I thought I saw
something like this.

She tickles Kylie.

KYLIE
No, Mommy.

Lauren smiles at Sam.

LAUREN
It feels good to laugh again.

KYLIE
It does, Mommy.

SAM
Then I guess we need to tickle you
some more, young lady.

KYLIE
No, we need to tickle you.

Kylie tries to tickle Sam, but Sam moves away.

LAUREN
No, we need to get to sleep.

KYLIE
Okay, Mommy.

Lauren kisses Kylie's cheek.

LAUREN
Good night, sweetheart.

KYLIE
Good night, Mommy.

Sam feigns a tickle attack and Kylie shrieks.

SAM
Good night, Kylie.

Sam kisses Kylie's forehead.

KYLIE
Good night, Auntie Sam.

Lauren turns off the light and Sam follows her into the

HALLWAY

Lauren eases the door closed.

LAUREN
Thank you for staying tonight.

SAM
You know me, sis, a little ray of
sunshine...

LAUREN AND SAM
On a cloudy day.

LAUREN
Yes, you are.

SAM
You get some sleep and I'll clean
up the kitchen.

Lauren hugs Sam.

LAUREN
Good night, Sam.

SAM
Night, sis.

Lauren turns then walks away.

INT. BROWNS' KITCHEN - NIGHT

At the table Sam sits and holds the document, talking on her
cell phone.

SAM
Duh, she's still insecure about
asking for help. Me, on the other
hand...
(beat)
Yeah, yeah. Love you too, and I'll
see you tomorrow.

Sam hangs up then flippantly tosses the document on the
table. With a mischievous grin on her face, she stands up.

As she strides out of the kitchen she flips off the light
switch.

INT. OROVILLE AIRPORT - DAY

Sam holds Kylie's hand as they enter the small Oroville
Municipal Airport Terminal.

The wall clock displays 12:24.

They sit down and Sam watches the runway.

KYLIE
What are we doing here, Auntie Sam?

SAM
We're waiting.

KYLIE
What for?

SAM

The cavalry, snuggle bug.

Kylie cocks her head.

KYLIE

What's a calberry?

A light executive jet touches down on the runway.

Sam grins and leaps to her feet.

SAM

Come on, Kylie.

Kylie stands up then they rush to the window.

INT. CPS BUILDING - DAY

A clock displays 12:58.

Lauren stands in front of the counter in the CPS building.

The RECEPTIONIST sits behind it and points to a hallway.

LAUREN

Thank you.

The Receptionist coldly nods.

Lauren walks down the

HALLWAY

and stops outside Ms. Hill's office. She checks her clothes then inhales deeply.

Lauren raises her hand to knock on the door.

INT. MS. HILL'S OFFICE - DAY

Ms. Hill sits behind her desk and reviews documents. Knocks on the door.

MS. HILL

Come in.

Lauren walks into the office.

LAUREN

Ms. Hill?

MS. HILL

Yes.

Lauren walks over to Ms. Hill then extends her hand.

LAUREN
I'm Lauren Brown.

Coldly Ms. Hill shakes her hand.

MS. HILL
Please have a seat, Mrs. Brown.

Lauren sits down.

LAUREN
Why didn't you even bother to ask
me what happened?

MS. HILL
Over the years, Mrs. Brown, I've
found the mothers in these cases to
be the least credible sources of
information.

LAUREN
Do you even have any...

Like she's done it a thousand time, Ms. Hill turns a photo of
her, MR. HILL and her college aged SON for Lauren to see.

Lauren glances at it.

Ms. Hill turns the photo back around.

MS. HILL
And not once has he gone without a
meal.

LAUREN
I doubt he's ever gone through
anything close to what Michael is
going through.

MS. HILL
No, Mrs. Brown, he certainly
hasn't.

LAUREN
Do you even know what's happened,
or does it even matter? Will you
tell me why you're doing this?

MS. HILL
I had no choice but to place
Michael under protective custody,
Mrs. Brown, and I have full
authority to do so.

LAUREN

Please don't do this, Ms. Hill, it
will kill Michael.

MS. HILL

That's what I'm trying to prevent,
Mrs. Brown. Your hearing is on --

The door flings open.

Ms. Hill looks up.

Lauren's uncle, holding a folder and in a grim mood, steps
into the office followed by Ms. Hill's female BOSS, 50s.

Sam holds Kylie's hand and leads her into the office.

LAUREN'S UNCLE

Please come with me.

Ms. Hill glances at her boss.

Her boss nods.

Ms. Hill stands up then walks into the hallway with Lauren's
uncle and her boss. Sam closes the door.

Kylie runs to Lauren then jumps into her lap.

KYLIE

Hi, Mommy.

LAUREN

Hello, sweetheart.

Sam sits down beside Lauren.

KYLIE

We brought the calberry.

Lauren kisses the top of her head.

LAUREN

Yes, you did.

There's a stern one-sided lecture by Lauren's uncle occurring
in the hallway, but it can't be understood.

SAM

Bet she'd rather be getting a
pelvic exam from Freddy Krueger.

LAUREN

How did you get him to come here so
fast?

SAM

You know he'd do anything for his favorite niece. He always did like you best, brown-noser.

LAUREN

Thank you.

Sam imitates Igor.

SAM

It's what I do.

The door eases open and Ms. Hill, now holding the folder, looks at Lauren's uncle.

MS. HILL

Yes, Senator.

Ms. Hill steps into the office then eases the door closed.

She sheepishly sits down behind her desk and lays the document down.

MS. HILL (CONT'D)

I apologize for any inconvenience my actions may have caused you, Mrs. Brown. I wish you luck and if there's --

LAUREN

Thanks.

Lauren stands up then carries Kylie to the door.

Sam stands up and grins at Ms. Hill.

SAM

Consume butt mud and expire.

Sam follows Lauren out of the office.

EXT. HOSPITAL - DAY

Outside the main entrance of the hospital, a jovial male ORDERLY wheels Michael out in a wheelchair.

Lauren, Sam and Kylie, teddy bear in hand, follow.

The Doctor timidly brings up the rear.

The Orderly stops the wheelchair.

ORDERLY

End of the line, big man.

Michael stands up then looks back at the Orderly.

ORDERLY (CONT'D)
Get that bill paid. I got kids, ya
know.

The Orderly winks at Michael.

Michael nods.

The Orderly wheels the chair back into the hospital.

DOCTOR
I'm truly sorry for what we put you
through, Mrs. Brown. Anytime you
need anything --

LAUREN
Thanks.

Lauren whirls around then grabs Michael's and Kylie's hands
and they walk away.

Sam grins at the Doctor.

SAM
You're not a dog's ass, but you
sure dropped outta one.

Sam whirls around then strides away.

EXT. BROWNS' BACKYARD - NIGHT

A billion stars twinkle in the sky on this calm night.

The back porch light is off. The kitchen lights are on. A
tent is set up in the backyard.

Lauren, Sam, Michael, Kylie and Ethan sit around a crackling
campfire that blazes inside a fire pit.

LAUREN
It's a beautiful night for camping.

SAM
Yes, it is.

KYLIE
Can we eat now?

SAM
Feed the beasts. Feed the beasts.

Kylie and Ethan join in.

SAM, KYLIE AND ETHAN
Feed the beasts. Feed the beasts.

Lauren stands up then walks into the house. The porch light comes on.

SAM
Well, that worked nice.

Kylie and Ethan grin.

Sam walks to the porch, then picks up the sticks for roasting and sits back down beside the fire.

Lauren returns with a tray of hotdogs, buns, marshmallows and condiments.

LAUREN
Okay, beasts, dig in.

Lauren sets the tray down.

Sam threads hotdogs onto the sticks and passes them out.

Michael refuses his.

SAM
Alright, mister, you need to eat.
You don't want to get your mother
in trouble, do you? She's got them
vultures hovering over her.

Michael reluctantly takes a stick.

As they roast them over the fire, the hotdogs sizzle.

ETHAN
Mine's ready.

Sam grabs his stick then slides the hotdog into a bun.

SAM
What do you want on it, kind sir?

Ethan giggles.

ETHAN
Kind sir. Ketchup and mustard,
please.

Sam fixes the hotdog then hands it to Ethan.

After the hotdogs, Lauren opens the marshmallow pack.

Sam threads them on the sticks and passes them around.

Kylie's immediately catches fire. She drops the stick into the fire and starts to cry.

LAUREN

That's okay, sweetheart. Come here.

Kylie sits down in between Lauren's legs and Lauren prepares her a golden brown marshmallow.

Lauren blows on it to cool it then hands it to Kylie who munches it down.

KYLIE

It's yummy, Mommy.

Ethan and Michael eat their roasted marshmallows.

Michael points his stick to Sam who slides on another marshmallow.

SAM

There you go, stud. That'll get you back in the game.

They roast and eat a few more marshmallows.

LAUREN

What a wonderful evening, thank you all. Do you have your flashlight, Michael?

Michael nods and turns his on.

LAUREN (CONT'D)

Ethan?

ETHAN

Yes, ma'am.

He turns his on.

LAUREN

Then we shall bid adieu.

Lauren douses the fire with a water hose.

LAUREN (CONT'D)

Let's leave the jungle men to their quest.

Ethan giggles.

ETHAN

Jungle men.

Lauren picks up the platter. Sam and Kylie follow her into the house.

Michael and Ethan crawl inside the tent then zip it closed.

INT. BROWNS' KITCHEN - NIGHT

Lauren peers out the window.

The flashlights shine inside the tent.

She flips off the porch light switch then strides into the

LIVING ROOM

On the sofa, Sam cuddles with Kylie and they watch TV.

INT. MICHAEL'S ROOM - DAY

Lauren carries a laundry basket into Michael's room.

She sets it down then makes his bed.

Lauren picks up dirty clothes and puts them in the basket.

When she pulls the trash bag from the trash can she notices the weight.

Lauren shuffles through it then pulls out Michael's spelling bee book.

LAUREN

Oh Michael.

She brushes it off, then puts it in the laundry basket and walks out of the bedroom.

EXT. BROWNS' BACKYARD - DAY

Michael sits in the backyard gazing at nothing.

The bruise on his left forearm is fading.

Lauren walks out the back door, then over to Michael and sits down beside him. She puts her arm around him.

LAUREN

Michael, I know you're hurting.
Tell me what to do and I'll do it.

Michael ignores her.

LAUREN (CONT'D)

I'm sorry for everything. I should
know what to do, but I don't.

Kylie rushes out the back door then over to them.

KYLIE
Mommy, can we --

LAUREN
Not now, Kylie.

KYLIE
But can't --

Lauren snaps.

LAUREN
I said, not now!

Kylie tears up and runs back into the house.

Lauren sighs then stands up.

LAUREN (CONT'D)
Please come back to me, Michael.

Lauren trudges into the house.

INT. KYLIE'S ROOM - DAY

Kylie storms into her room and to her closet.

Kylie pulls out a backpack from her closet. She opens it and stuffs clothes inside.

Lauren stands in the doorway and knocks.

KYLIE
What?

LAUREN
May I come in, sweetheart.

KYLIE
No.

LAUREN
I'm sorry, Kylie. I shouldn't have yelled. Where are you going?

KYLIE
I'm going to live with Sam.

LAUREN
Can't you stay here?

KYLIE
No.

LAUREN
But Michael and I really need you
here. We can't live without you.

KYLIE
Really?

LAUREN
Really, sweetheart.

KYLIE
You can come in.

Lauren walks over to Kylie then kneels beside her.

LAUREN
I love you, Kylie, and mommies make
mistakes, too.

Kylie scoffs.

LAUREN (CONT'D)
Can you forgive me?

KYLIE
Of course, Mommy.

Kylie grins.

KYLIE (CONT'D)
Can we get a puppy?

Lauren hugs her.

LAUREN
I'll think about it, sweetheart.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Lauren gazes out the window at Michael.

She looks down at the therapist's card and taps it.

Lauren picks up the phone then dials.

INT. THERAPIST'S OFFICE - DAY

Lauren holds Michael's hand as they enter the therapist's
office, a bright and cheery room with toys and child decor.

The office clock displays 3:00.

The female THERAPIST, 30s and gentle, closes the office door.

THERAPIST

Welcome, you must be Michael.

Michael pays no attention to her.

The Therapist shakes Lauren's hand.

THERAPIST (CONT'D)

Please, let's sit.

Lauren leads Michael to the chairs then they sit down.

The Therapist sits down across from them.

THERAPIST (CONT'D)

I'm glad you made it, Mrs. Brown.
How are you holding up?

LAUREN

I'm doing fine, thank you.

THERAPIST

Michael, your mother has told me
what a brilliant young man you are.

Michael looks away. Lauren frowns.

LAUREN

Will you talk to her, Michael?

THERAPIST

That's quite alright. I know it's
not easy to talk right now.

Lauren motions to the door.

The Therapist nods.

Lauren kisses Michael on the cheek then leaves.

THERAPIST (CONT'D)

Michael, your mother is very proud
of you. She told me how courageous
you are.

Michael ignores her.

INT. THERAPIST'S HALLWAY - DAY

Lauren exits the office then eases the door closed. She
rushes down the hall then exits.

EXT. LAUREMY ENERGY - DAY

Lauren's SUV parks in front of Lauremy Energy on Main Street.

Lauren gets out then trots into the small contemporary Lauremy Energy building.

INT. LAUREMY ENERGY OFFICE - DAY

In a no frills office, Lauren sits behind the desk speaking with her male office manager, TIM, 30s.

TIM
But I can't handle Jeremy's
customers and manage the office.

LAUREN
I'll see if Sam can run the office.

TIM
God help us.

LAUREN
She'll do fine.

TIM
Any port in a storm, I guess.

Lauren gives him a pleading glance.

Tim sighs.

TIM (CONT'D)
We'll make it work.

LAUREN
What about the mill, Tim?

TIM
It's running at seventy percent
capacity. They need the fix by
tomorrow or they're going to cancel
the contract.

LAUREN
Can you buy some time?

TIM
I already have.

LAUREN
Okay, I'll e-mail the design
changes to you tonight. Do you have
the file?

He hands her a USB.

TIM
There's also the matter --

LAUREN

Save it for later. I've got to go
pick up Michael.

Lauren rushes out of the office.

INT. THERAPIST'S HALLWAY - DAY

Lauren enters the building then walks to the therapist's
office. She plops down and waits.

INT. THERAPIST'S OFFICE - DAY

The clock now displays 4:00.

The Therapist walks to the door then opens it.

THERAPIST

Please come in, Mrs. Brown.

Lauren walks over to Michael then sits down.

The Therapist sits down across from them.

THERAPIST (CONT'D)

Michael, will you let me speak with
your mother for a moment?

Michael stands up then walks out the door.

LAUREN

How did it go?

THERAPIST

He's not going to open up to me. I
don't think coming here is the
solution to Michael's problems.

Lauren panics.

LAUREN

Are you saying there's nothing that
can be done to help him?

THERAPIST

No, no, a lot can be done to help
Michael, just not here.

LAUREN

Then where can he get help?

THERAPIST

Have you ever heard of canine
therapy?

LAUREN

I buy him a dog and all his problems are supposed to go away?

THERAPIST

Canine therapy can do great things for people of all ages, especially those who resist therapy and are struggling to communicate verbally. I would suggest a puppy.

LAUREN

That's it, that's the best that modern science can offer?

THERAPIST

Don't be too quick to dismiss this, Mrs. Brown. A puppy would need Michael to be healthy in order to take care of him. Does Michael have any allergies?

LAUREN

No, he doesn't.

THERAPIST

How is he with animals?

LAUREN

He adores them. I guess we got a little busy and never got around to getting him a pet.

THERAPIST

Would you be willing to give it a try?

LAUREN

I'll try anything to get him back.

THERAPIST

I would suggest that you let Michael pick out the puppy. Let him decide who he wants to bring into his world.

LAUREN

I will do that, Doctor.

THERAPIST

Give a puppy a little time to work its magic. When Michael comes around, then you can bring him in for therapy. How does that sound?

LAUREN

It sounds like a wonderful plan.
Thank you.

Lauren stands and shakes the Therapist's hand, then turns and walks to the door. She opens it then walks into the

HALLWAY

Michael sits alone beside the wall. Lauren reaches her hand to him.

LAUREN

Are you ready to go, Michael?

Michael grabs her hand then stands up. They walk down the hallway.

INT. BROWNS' HOME OFFICE - NIGHT

Lauren slogs away at an electrical system design on her computer. She yawns and leans back.

Lauren briefly closes her eyes. Her head bobs and she snaps to, then wipes her eyes.

LAUREN

Help me.

Lauren reaches for her cross necklace. She looks down, when she realizes it's not there she looks up and pleads.

LAUREN (CONT'D)

Please, it's too much.

She sighs then continues on the design.

EXT. BROWNS' BACKYARD - DAY

A male CARPENTER, 40s, finishes constructing the new wire mesh fence attached to the back of the house.

He picks up his tools, walks to the back door then knocks.

Lauren opens the door then scans the fence.

LAUREN

It looks wonderful. Come inside and
I'll write you a check.

The Carpenter enters then Lauren closes the door.

INT. BROWNS' KITCHEN - NIGHT

Lauren, Michael and Kylie sit at the table and eat dinner.

LAUREN

I have a surprise for you two.

Michael shrugs.

Kylie's eyes light up.

KYLIE

What surprise, Mommy?

LAUREN

We'll go get it after dinner.

Kylie tears into her dinner.

LAUREN (CONT'D)

Michael, will you eat a little?

Kylie glances at Michael, chewing as she talks.

KYLIE

Hurry, Michael.

Michael listlessly forces down his food.

LAUREN

Thank you, Michael.

Kylie finishes her meal before Lauren and Michael are halfway through. Kylie smiles, her face a mess.

KYLIE

I'm ready, Mommy.

LAUREN

That certainly was fast. Go get cleaned up, sweetheart.

Kylie crawls off the chair then rushes out of the kitchen.

Michael pushes his plate away.

LAUREN (CONT'D)

Can you eat a little more? How about two more bites, handsome?

Michael forces down a bite then frowns.

LAUREN (CONT'D)

One's fine, thank you. Go clean up and we'll find out what awaits us.

Michael trudges out of the kitchen.

Lauren clears the table.

INT. PET SHOP - NIGHT

Lauren holds Michael's and Kylie's hands as they walk into the pet shop.

Kylie is excited and Lauren holds her back.

They stroll down the aquarium aisle.

Kylie stops and gazes at the fish.

KYLIE
Are we getting these, Mommy?

LAUREN
Something better, sweetie.

KYLIE
Better than this, Mommy?

Lauren nods and Kylie grins.

KYLIE (CONT'D)
Wow.

Lauren leads them away.

They walk toward a row of puppies in cages.

Kylie's eyes light up and she points to the puppies.

KYLIE (CONT'D)
Mommy, Mommy, look, doggies.

LAUREN
Should we go look at them?

KYLIE
Yes, Mommy.

After Lauren releases her hand, Kylie dashes to the puppies.

Lauren and Michael walk over to Kylie mesmerized by the puppies.

There are several cages of puppies containing two or more playful puppies.

One cage has an adorable brown German Spitz puppy all alone and curled up in the back corner of its cage.

Kylie puts her finger inside a cage with two puppies. She touches a puppy and barks playfully.

KYLIE (CONT'D)
Ruff, ruff.

The puppies lick Kylie's finger and she giggles.

Kylie turns to Lauren.

KYLIE (CONT'D)
They're so cute, Mommy. Can we have one?

LAUREN
Ask your brother.

Kylie grabs Michael's arm.

KYLIE
Can we, Michael? Please, can we?

Michael nods. Kylie hugs him.

KYLIE (CONT'D)
Thank you.

Michael takes an interest in the German Spitz puppy. He stands in front of the cage and stares.

LAUREN
Which one should we get, Michael?

Michael shrugs his shoulders then points to the German Spitz.

LAUREN (CONT'D)
He's adorable, Michael. That's a very good choice.

Kylie curiously looks at the motionless German Spitz puppy.

KYLIE
Is he dead?

LAUREN
No, sweetie. You two stay here and guard the puppy. Don't let anyone take him. I'll go find someone that works here.

KYLIE
Okay, Mommy.

Lauren grins mischievously and walks away.

Kylie is in heaven, rushing from cage to cage.

Michael stares at the German Spitz puppy.

A young COUPLE walks toward the puppies.

Kylie sees them then tugs on Michael's arm.

KYLIE (CONT'D)

Michael.

She points to the couple.

Michael turns then glances at the couple.

Kylie jumps in front of the German Spitz's cage. She stands spread eagle and scrutinizes the couple as they walk past.

INT. BROWNS' LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Lauren carries a dog carrier, the puppy inside, through the front door. She flips on the light switch.

Kylie and Michael enter, each carrying a bag of puppy supplies.

After she sets the carrier down, Lauren closes the door.

LAUREN

Michael, would you care to show him
his new home?

Michael hands Lauren his bag then opens the carrier door.

The puppy peeks out of the carrier then cautiously walks out.

Michael walks over to the sofa. The puppy wags his tail and follows him.

LAUREN (CONT'D)

Will you help me, Kylie?

KYLIE

Okay, Mommy.

Kylie follows Lauren into the

KITCHEN

Lauren flips on the light switch. Kylie follows her to the table then climbs into a chair.

Lauren empties the bags onto the table. Food and water bowls, a box of puppy food, play toys, dog bed and a puppy pee pad.

LAUREN
Will you help me take off the
wrappers?

Kylie attacks the packages.

Lauren takes the trash to the waste basket then returns to
the table.

Kylie squeezes a squeak toy.

KYLIE
I think the puppy will like this.

LAUREN
I think you're right, sweetheart.

Lauren brings the food and water bowls to the sink then
washes and dries them.

She walks to the kitchen exit.

LAUREN (CONT'D)
Michael, will you come in here for
a moment?

Michael walks into the kitchen. The puppy follows.

LAUREN (CONT'D)
Okay, Michael.

Lauren walks to the table, then picks up the box of puppy
food and hands it to Michael.

LAUREN (CONT'D)
You can give him food and water in
the morning.

Michael walks to a lower cabinet then puts the box inside.

The puppy attacks Michael's shoes and he almost smiles.

Lauren opens the back door then sets the dog bed outside.

She chases the puppy down, then sets him outside and closes
the door.

LAUREN (CONT'D)
I think he likes his new home.

Lauren claps her hands.

LAUREN (CONT'D)
Is everybody ready for bed?

Michael shrugs.

KYLIE

Yes, Mommy.

The puppy starts to whine outside.

KYLIE (CONT'D)

I think he's scared, Mommy.

LAUREN

He'll be alright in a few minutes,
sweetheart.

Lauren flips off the light switch when they exit the kitchen.

INT. LAUREN'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Lauren tosses and turns in her dark bedroom. The puppy whines outside and Lauren groans.

LAUREN

Please be quiet.

Lauren covers her head with a pillow then rolls over. The puppy continues to whine.

EXT. BROWNS' BACKYARD - NIGHT

Lauren's bedroom light is on upstairs. The kitchen light turns on inside the house.

The puppy sits by the door and whines. The back porch light comes on.

In a robe, Lauren opens the door, then snatches up the puppy and brings it into the house. The back porch light goes off.

The kitchen light turns off.

INT. BROWNS' KITCHEN - DAY

With little sleep last night, Lauren struggles to make breakfast.

The puppy sniffs around the kitchen.

Michael walks into the kitchen in his pajamas.

The puppy yips and playfully attacks Michael, biting down on the back of his pajama leg.

LAUREN

Good morning, Michael.

Michael walks to the cabinet, dragging the fighting puppy along.

LAUREN (CONT'D)
Tonight he sleeps in your room.

Michael shrugs, then opens the cabinet and pulls out the box of puppy food.

He pours food into the puppy's food bowl then sets it on the floor. The puppy starts to wolf down the food.

Michael runs water into the puppy's water bowl then sets it on the floor beside the food bowl. He sits down beside the puppy and stares at it.

Kylie runs into the kitchen, then to Lauren and hugs her leg.

KYLIE
Morning, Mommy.

LAUREN
Good morning, sweetheart.

Lauren bends down and kisses her cheek.

LAUREN (CONT'D)
Are you hungry?

KYLIE
Yes, Mommy.

Kylie rushes to the table then crawls onto a chair.

Lauren brings breakfast to the table.

LAUREN
Michael, are you hungry?

Michael walks over to the table then sits down. He starts to eat with no hesitation.

Kylie glances at Michael.

KYLIE
Good boy, Michael.

Michael gives Kylie a look and almost smiles.

EXT. BROWNS' BACKYARD - DAY

In the backyard, Michael sits beside Ethan and they stare at nothing. The bruise on Michael's left forearm is gone.

Kylie giggles and chases the puppy.

Lauren sits beside Sam.

SAM

That's such a cute puppy.

LAUREN

Michael picked him out.

SAM

Do you think it'll help?

LAUREN

I think it already has. He's almost smiled a couple of times.

SAM

Is he talking?

LAUREN

Not yet, but at least he's eating normally.

SAM

That's a start, sis. Keep them damn vultures off your back. You should sue the hell out of 'em.

LAUREN

I don't think that would be good for anyone. I wouldn't want their jobs. Years of dealing with abused children has to take its toll.

SAM

You're a lot more forgiving than I am.

Lauren reaches out and holds Sam's hands.

LAUREN

Thank you for helping me through this. I don't know what I would do without you.

SAM

I love you, Lauren, and I'll do anything you need me to do.

LAUREN

The dishes aren't going to wash themselves, missy.

SAM

I see your sense of humor is coming back, too.

Lauren grins and Sam slaps Lauren's thigh.

SAM (CONT'D)

Didn't say it was a good thing.

LAUREN

Would you have any interest in managing the office? I think --

SAM

Isn't jerk and a third managing it?

LAUREN

That was a long time ago, Sam. Aren't you over him yet?

SAM

Gawd, I told you I'm not as forgiving as you.

Uncomfortable silence looms for a moment.

LAUREN

Anyway, I think it's important we keep the business going. Jeremy wanted to make the world a cleaner place to live.

SAM

I know nothing about green energy systems?

LAUREN

You don't have to. I just need someone I can trust to steer the ship.

Sam rolls her eyes.

SAM

If that's what you need, I'll do my best. Give me a week to clear things up at the office.

Kylie walks over to Michael and Ethan, the puppy follows.

She picks the puppy up then plops it on Michael's lap.

KYLIE

Your turn, Michael, I'm tired.

Michael nods and holds the puppy. Ethan pets it.

INT. MICHAEL'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Michael is in his pajamas. The puppy hovers at his feet.

Lauren carries in the puppy bed and pee pad.

LAUREN

Keep this in your room and if he
needs to go in the night, maybe
he'll use this.

Lauren hands Michael the pee pad, he sets it on the floor.

LAUREN (CONT'D)

Where do you want this?

Michael points to the foot of the bed.

She sets the dog bed down there.

Michael crawls into bed. Lauren kisses him on the cheek.

LAUREN (CONT'D)

Good night, Michael.

Lauren strides to the door then flips off the light switch
and closes the door.

The puppy whines and Michael rolls over.

The puppy continues to whine and Michael pulls the covers
over his head.

Just when it appears the puppy is done, it whines again.

Michael turns on the night stand lamp. He gets out of bed
then grabs the puppy.

The puppy wags its tail and Michael sets it on the bed.

Michael crawls back into bed.

The puppy rushes to his face then starts to lick him. Michael
brushes him away then turns off the lamp.

INT. MICHAEL'S BEDROOM - DAY

The next morning, Michael is asleep in bed. The puppy crawls
beside him then licks his face.

Michael brushes the puppy away then rolls over.

The puppy puts his paws on Michael's head and chews his hair.

Michael rolls over then stares at the puppy. The puppy wags its tail and yips.

The puppy licks Michael's face. Michael smiles for the first time in a long time.

He reaches out from under the covers then pets the puppy.

Michael gets out of bed then sets the puppy on the floor.

He walks out of the bedroom, into the

HALLWAY

Michael leads the puppy to the stairs then walks down a few steps.

The puppy sits at the top of the stairs and whines.

Michael whirls around then rushes to the puppy.

MICHAEL

Shh.

Michael picks up the puppy then carries him down the stairs into the

LIVING ROOM

Michael sets the puppy down then walks into the

KITCHEN

The puppy follows on his heels.

Michael walks to the lower cabinet then pulls out the box of puppy food.

The puppy yips and dances.

Michael pours food into the food bowl. He sets it down and the puppy eats.

Michael picks up the empty water bowl. He takes it to the sink, then washes it out and fills it with water.

He sets the water bowl beside the puppy, then sits down on the floor and stares at the puppy as it eats.

The puppy crawls into Michael's lap then begins to play.

Lauren walks into the kitchen.

LAUREN
Good morning, Michael.

He doesn't look up.

LAUREN (CONT'D)
Have you thought of a name for him?

Michael shrugs.

LAUREN (CONT'D)
Are you hungry?

He looks up, then smiles and nods.

This brings a twinkle to Lauren's eyes and she smiles widely. Lauren claps her hands together and rubs them.

LAUREN (CONT'D)
Okay, breakfast for my man.

Lauren strides to the refrigerator then opens the door.

LAUREN (CONT'D)
Michael, will you please go get
your sister?

Michael stands up then walks out of the kitchen. The puppy follows close behind.

After she cooks breakfast, Lauren sets it on the table then sits down.

Now dressed, Michael walks into the kitchen. The puppy and Kylie follow him to the table.

Michael and Kylie sit down.

KYLIE
What's his name, Michael?

Michael shrugs.

KYLIE (CONT'D)
I think Cocofluff is good.

LAUREN
As soon as we finish eating we can
go outside and play. I bet he would
like that.

KYLIE
Everybody likes that, Mommy.

LAUREN
Is that okay, Michael?

Michael nods.

EXT. BROWNS' BACKYARD - DAY

Kylie bursts out the back door and the puppy follows.

Lauren follows Michael out the door.

The puppy explores the backyard and Kylie follows it, then Kylie runs and the puppy chases her.

The puppy runs to Michael and wags his tail.

LAUREN

He loves his new home.

Michael smiles then kneels down beside the puppy. Michael grabs the puppy then rolls on the ground with him.

With Michael is on his back, the puppy walks on his chest to his face then licks him. Michael starts to laugh.

Lauren covers her mouth as she fights back tears.

Michael plays a bit more, then sits up and cradles the puppy.

Lauren kneels beside Michael and pets the puppy.

LAUREN (CONT'D)

You're such a good boy.

Michael hesitates then speaks, barely audible.

MICHAEL

J.B.

Lauren cocks her head.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)

J.B.

Lauren is overjoyed.

LAUREN

J.B.?

MICHAEL

His name is J.B.

Her eyes sparkle and she whispers.

LAUREN

Jeremy Brown.

(excited)

J.B., I love it. That's a beautiful name, Michael.

Michael sobs.

MICHAEL
 Mommy, I miss daddy. I miss him so
 much.

Lauren hugs Michael.

LAUREN
 I do too, Michael. I'm so sorry.

MICHAEL
 It's all my fault. I made him take
 us fishing.

LAUREN
 Oh no, sweetheart. Your father
 loved to fish. He insisted we go.

Kylie runs over and looks puzzled, but joins in on the hug.

INT. THERAPIST'S HALLWAY - DAY

Lauren and Michael walk down the hallway to the therapist's office. Lauren knocks on the door and the Therapist opens it.

LAUREN
 Hello, Doctor.

THERAPIST
 Hello, Mrs. Brown. Hi, Michael.

MICHAEL
 Hi, Doctor.

THERAPIST
 I'm so happy to see you again.
 Please come in.

Lauren kisses Michael on the cheek.

Michael follows the Therapist into her office.

EXT. LAUREMY ENERGY - DAY

As Tim exits Sam is about to enter.

TIM
 Sam.

SAM
 Monkfish face.

Sam enters and Tim walks away.

INT. MICHAEL'S ROOM - DAY

In a nice dress, Lauren kneels beside Michael, in a suit, and ties a tie around his neck. Also in a dress, Kylie watches. J.B. hovers at their feet.

LAUREN

You look very dashing, Michael.

Michael smiles and bats his eyes.

MICHAEL

And you look dadgum purty, Ma.

KYLIE

What about me, Mommy?

LAUREN

You are beautiful, Kylie. I'm the luckiest mother in the world.

KYLIE

The whole world, Mommy?

LAUREN

The whole, entire, big beautiful world, sweetheart.

Kylie beams and Lauren kisses Kylie's cheek.

Lauren stands up then turns to Michael.

LAUREN (CONT'D)

Are you sure you want to do this?

Michael nods.

Lauren leads Michael and Kylie out of the bedroom.

EXT. CEMETERY - DAY

Lauren's SUV rolls to a stop in the cemetery on a sunny day.

INT. SUV - DAY

Michael holds a bouquet of flowers in the passenger seat. Kylie sits in her car seat.

Lauren, a bouquet of flowers on the console beside her, sits in the driver's seat and turns to Michael.

LAUREN

Are you ready, Michael?

Michael unbuckles his seat belt.

MICHAEL

Yes, Mom.

Michael deeply inhales then exhales. He opens the door then steps outside.

EXT. CEMETERY - DAY

Lauren, carrying a bouquet of flowers, holds Kylie's hand and they walk to Jeremy's grave.

Michael, carrying a bouquet of flowers, walks behind them.

Jeremy's headstone is now in place and reads: JEREMY WESTON BROWN - BELOVED SON, HUSBAND AND FATHER - SO BRIGHT YOUR SMILE, SO PRECIOUS YOUR LOVE - FEB. 23, 1980 - APR. 6, 2015

Lauren and Kylie stop beside Jeremy's grave. Michael cautiously steps up beside them.

Lauren gives a reassuring nod to Michael.

Michael sets the flowers on the headstone then lurches back.

LAUREN

Do you want to sit down and talk to your father, Michael?

Michael wrinkles his lips and pauses. He eases his way onto the grave then slowly sits down.

LAUREN (CONT'D)

We'll leave you alone, Michael.

KYLIE

I want to talk to daddy, too.

Michael reaches out for Kylie's hand then pulls her in front of him.

Kylie sits down between Michael's legs and Michael holds her.

LAUREN

I'll leave you two alone.

Lauren walks away.

KYLIE

Hi, Daddy. I hope you're happy. I miss you. Your turn, Michael.

Michael clears his throat.

MICHAEL

Hi, Dad. I, um, miss you a lot.
Thanks for...

Michael chokes up.

KYLIE

It's okay, Michael, I cry
sometimes.

Michael holds her tight.

MICHAEL

Thanks for being such a great dad.
I wish you were here. Mom misses
you, too.

THOMAS' GRAVE

Lauren stands in front of Thomas' headstone.

LAUREN

I'm sorry for the cruel things that
I said to you. I'm sorry your life
was so awful that you felt the need
to do what you did. I do hope that
you find peace.

Lauren sets the bouquet of flowers in front of the headstone.

LAUREN (CONT'D)

Goodbye, Thomas.

Lauren turns then walks away.

INT. MICHAEL'S ROOM - NIGHT

Michael scoops J.B. up then sets him on the bed.

Lauren walks in, hiding something behind her back.

Michael crawls into bed. Lauren sits down on it then strokes
his hair.

LAUREN

Are feeling any better?

MICHAEL

Yes, Mom.

LAUREN

I'm really proud of you, Michael.

Michael shrugs.

Lauren pulls the spelling bee book from behind her back.

Michael grins.

MICHAEL

Thanks, Mom.

Lauren kisses him on the cheek then sets the book on his desk. She flips off the light switch when she exits.

EXT. MRS. BROWN'S HOUSE - DAY

Mrs. Brown sits on her porch. Lauren's SUV is parked in the driveway. The lawn has been mowed.

Lauren wheels the lawn mower into the garage.

With a weeder in his hand, Michael shows Kylie how to weed the flower bed.

MICHAEL

See the weed, Kylie?

KYLIE

Yes, Michael.

MICHAEL

You take the weeder and put it behind the weed.

Michael puts the weeder behind a weed.

KYLIE

Okay.

MICHAEL

Stick it into the ground then pull out the weed.

He slides the weeder into the ground then yanks out the weed.

Kylie's eyes light up.

KYLIE

Can I try?

Michael hands Kylie the weeder.

She struggles a bit and Michael helps her pull out a weed.

MICHAEL

Good job, Kylie.

Kylie grins.

KYLIE
Thanks, Michael.

Michael continues to help Kylie with another weed.

On the porch, Lauren sits down beside Mrs. Brown.

MRS. BROWN
Michael certainly has patience with
Kylie.

LAUREN
They're becoming inseparable, she
hardly leaves his side.

Mrs. Brown slides the cross necklace across the table to
Lauren and catches her off guard.

MRS. BROWN
Thank you for marrying Jeremy. You
made him so happy. I wanted to make
sure you knew that.

Lauren reaches out and holds Mrs. Brown's hand.

LAUREN
You raised a beautiful son, and for
that I am so very grateful.

She nods to Michael and Kylie.

LAUREN (CONT'D)
And Jeremy continues to make me
happy. Thank you.

Lauren puts on the cross necklace.

INT. MRS. BROWN'S KITCHEN - DAY

After the yard work, Lauren, Michael and Kylie sit at the
kitchen table, glasses of juice in front of them.

Mrs. Brown turns off the oven then puts on an oven mitt. She
opens the oven then pulls out a sheet of cookies.

MICHAEL
Smells good, Grandma.

Mrs. Brown sets the sheet on the stove. She lifts the cookies
off with a spatula, placing them on a plate.

MRS. BROWN
I hope this is payment enough for
the work you did.

Mrs. Brown sets the plate on the table then turns back to the stove.

Michael looks down at the terrifying half-burnt cookies.

MICHAEL
Thank you, Grandma.

Lauren furls her eyebrow.

Michael lifts the plate for Lauren.

LAUREN
No thank you, Michael, I'm not hungry.

Michael offers the cookies to Kylie.

MICHAEL
Kylie?

Kylie's eyes open wide and she vigorously shakes her head no.

Mrs. Brown sits down.

Michael takes a warm cookie. He lifts it to his mouth and blows on it, then reluctantly takes a small bite.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)
Mmm.

Michael chews quickly then takes a swig of juice.

Mrs. Brown takes a cookie from the plate then takes a bite. She spits it out into her hand.

MRS. BROWN
Oh my goodness, these are awful.

Mrs. Brown stands then holds the plate for Michael.

Michael gladly places his cookie on it.

Mrs. Brown throws the cookies in the trash. She washes her hands in the sink then rinses out her mouth.

MRS. BROWN (CONT'D)
I'm going to keep an eye on you, young man.

MICHAEL
Grandma?

MRS. BROWN
You pretended to like those cookies. Anyone who did that is either very kind or very sinister.

MICHAEL
 Maybe a little bit of both.

An ominous chuckle from Michael.

MRS. BROWN
 I guess we have two choices, I can
 bake another batch of cookies or we
 can go get ice cream.

KYLIE
 Ice cream.

LAUREN
 And we can buy Kylie's fishing pole
 when we're downtown.

MICHAEL
 I was going to say cookies,
 Grandma, but...

Michael points to Lauren and Kylie.

MRS. BROWN
 And I was born yesterday.

KYLIE
 I don't think so, Grandma.

EXT. BROWNS' BACKYARD - DAY

Kylie proudly holds her new fishing rod while Michael ties a
 chew toy onto the line. J.B. hovers at their feet.

MICHAEL
 May I show you how to cast, mi
 lady?

She hands the fishing rod to Michael.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)
 See this button?

Michael points to the line release button on the reel.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)
 Push this to cast.

He swings the rod back then casts the toy.

J.B. runs after it.

Michael quickly reels in the line.

J.B. chases the toy.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)
Do you want to try?

KYLIE
Okay.

Michael hands her the rod then stands behind her.
Kylie swings the rod back then forward with all her might.
The rod flies out of her hands.
J.B. runs to it then tugs it around the yard by the toy.

MICHAEL
J.B.!

Michael catches J.B. then wrestles it away from him.
Michael walks back to Kylie who is almost in tears.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)
That's okay, it takes practice. Do
you want to try again?

He tries to hand the rod to Kylie, but she shakes her head
no.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)
What if I cast and you reel in the
line?

Kylie smiles and nods.
Michael casts then hands the rod to Kylie.
J.B. runs after the toy.
Kylie starts to reel it in with Michael's help.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)
Hurry! The shark's coming!

J.B. gains on the toy.
Kylie reels as fast as she can.
J.B. catches the toy then pulls out line.
Kylie giggles as she fights J.B.
Michael runs to J.B. then scoops him up.
Lauren joyfully watches through the kitchen window.
Michael holds J.B. and plays the role of fish.

Kylie reels them in.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)
That was good.

Michael pulls the toy out of J.B.'s mouth then sets him down.

Kylie beams and hugs Michael.

KYLIE
I love you, Michael.

MICHAEL
I love you, too, Girlzi... Kylie.

Kylie steps back.

KYLIE
Can we do it again?

Michael grabs the rod, then casts and hands it to Kylie.

J.B. chases the toy.

INT. KYLIE'S ROOM - NIGHT

Michael sits beside Kylie's bed and reads a book to her.
Kylie is under the covers and holds her teddy bear.

MICHAEL
And they lived happily ever after.

He closes the book.

KYLIE
Read it again, Michael.

Lauren peeks into the room and smiles, then walks away.

MICHAEL
We should get to sleep.

KYLIE
But I'm not tired.

MICHAEL
Don't you want to be strong to
fight the fish tomorrow?

Kylie thinks about it for a moment.

KYLIE
Okay.

Michael tucks her in then kisses her on the cheek.

MICHAEL
Good night, Kylie.

KYLIE
Good night, Michael.

He walks to the door then glances back. After Michael flips off the light switch, he eases the door closed.

EXT. MCCABE COVE - DAY

It's a sunny day with barely a ripple on the lake.

Tackle box and fishing rod in hand, Michael leads the way to the secluded and picturesque McCabe Cove on Lake Oroville.

Fishing rod in hand, Ethan walks beside Michael and they whistle the "Colonel Bogey March."

Kylie carries her fishing rod and walks beside Lauren who carries a blanket, chair and cooler.

They get to the shore and Michael barks out.

MICHAEL
Company, halt.

Everybody stops.

Michael paces in front of them.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)
Men and women, all this stuff you hear about America not wanting to fish, wanting to stay out of the lake, is a lot of balderdash. Americans love to fish.

Kylie raises her hand.

KYLIE
Michael.

MICHAEL
Yes, private.

KYLIE
Can we fish now?

MICHAEL
Yes, you may.

Lauren sets down the chair and cooler then spreads the blanket on the shore.

Michael pulls out a container of worms from the tackle box.

Kylie waits for him to put a worm on the hook.

Michael reaches in for a worm then yanks his hand back.

KYLIE
Hurry, Michael.

Michael rubs his hands together.

Lauren starts to chant.

LAUREN
Michael. Michael.

As he pulls out a worm, Michael winces.

Ethan and Kylie join in the chant.

LAUREN, ETHAN AND KYLIE
Michael, Michael, Michael.

Michael threads the worm onto Kylie's hook to a round of applause.

Michael leaps up then takes a bow. He takes Kylie's fishing rod then casts for her.

The bobber plunks down on the calm water.

Kylie sits down on the blanket and Michael hands her the fishing rod.

Michael and Ethan bait their hooks then cast their lines.

Their bobbers sit on the water, away from Kylie's.

Lauren relaxes in the chair.

Michael and Ethan sit down on the blanket.

It's not long before Kylie's bobber starts to move and bounce on the water.

Kylie jumps up and shouts.

KYLIE
Michael!

Michael jumps up then stands behind her.

The bobber goes under the water.

Michael helps Kylie set the hook.

MICHAEL
Reel it in, Kylie.

With Michael's help, Kylie fights to reel in the line.
When she pulls the tiny fish out of the water, Kylie shrieks.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)
It's a monster.

KYLIE
Look, Mommy!

LAUREN
It's huge, sweetheart.

Lauren pulls out her cell phone then takes a photo.
Michael removes the hook from the fish.

MICHAEL
Say goodbye, Kylie.

Kylie waves to the fish.

KYLIE
Bye, fishy.

Michael sets the fish in the water and the fish floats on its side. It flaps its tail once.

MICHAEL
Mom, it's not swimming.

LAUREN
It needs oxygen.

Michael reaches for the fish, but it is just out of reach. He looks at the water and hesitates.

After he inhales, Michael steps into the water.

Michael plucks up the fish then blows into its mouth. He panics and looks at Lauren.

LAUREN (CONT'D)
You need to put it in the lake and
move it back and forth to force
water through its mouth.

Michael sticks it in the water then moves it back and forth.

The fish is revived and Michael, wide-eyed and grinning, releases the fish and it swims away.

MICHAEL
Woo-hoo, it's alive.

Michael playfully splashes water on Kylie and Ethan then grins at Lauren.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)
Wow, Mom, an ichthyologist.

He walks out of the water.

LAUREN
You have been studying.

MICHAEL
We're going to win nationals, Mom,
and Ethan's been helping me.

ETHAN
No, I just watch.

LAUREN
Thank you, Ethan, for everything.

MICHAEL
How did you know how to save the
fish?

LAUREN
Your grandfather taught me that
when I was your age.

KYLIE
Let's do it again.

Michael pulls out a worm from the container.

INT. BROWNS' LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Lauren sits on the sofa. Michael lies on the sofa with his
head in her lap. Kylie lies in front of Michael, his arm
draped around her. Kylie snuggles J.B. and they watch TV.

LAUREN
That was fun today, Michael, thank
you.

KYLIE
I got the most fish.

MICHAEL
Yes, you did. I'm proud of you.

Michael looks up at Lauren.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)
Thanks for bringing me back, Mom.

Lauren strokes his hair.

LAUREN
Thank you for coming back, Michael.

Lauren fiddles with her cross necklace.

LAUREN (CONT'D)

I think we should start going back to church.

MICHAEL

Okay, Mom.

KYLIE

Can we please watch this?

MICHAEL

Sorry, Kylie.

They quietly watch TV.

EXT. FOREST - DAY

At a logging site the burly TRUCK DRIVER, 40s, tightens a binder chain on his loaded logging truck.

The Truck Driver stretches and yawns, then gets into the cab and drives away.

INT. BROWNS' LIVING ROOM - DAY

Michael stands at the front door, Kylie and J.B. look at him. He yells to Lauren who is somewhere upstairs.

MICHAEL

Mom, I'm going to check the mail!

LAUREN (O.S.)

Okay. Be careful!

Michael yells again.

MICHAEL

And don't yell in the house!

Michael grins mischievously.

KYLIE

Can I come, Michael?

MICHAEL

I'll be right back. You stay here and watch J.B.

Michael scoops up J.B. then hands him to Kylie. Michael opens the door, then steps outside and closes it behind him.

Kylie sets J.B. down then reaches for the door knob.

EXT. BROWNS' HOUSE - DAY

Birds chirp on a brilliant sunny day. Butterflies flutter as Michael whistles and strolls down the driveway, past the SUV.

Kylie opens the door then steps outside.

KYLIE

Michael, wait for me.

Michael stops then turns around.

MICHAEL

Kylie, don't.

J.B. yips and runs out the door, then runs toward Michael.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)

No, J.B.

J.B. runs past Michael's feet.

Michael tries to catch him, but J.B. sprints toward the highway.

Michael screams.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)

J.B., stop!

J.B. runs onto the highway then stops.

Michael stops on the shoulder, glancing down the highway.

The logging truck, two hundred yards or so away, races toward J.B.

Michael runs onto the highway then scoops J.B. up. He runs to the other side of the highway then stops on the shoulder.

Facing away from the highway, Michael lifts J.B. up to his face.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)

You have to be careful out here.

J.B. licks Michael's face. Michael laughs then holds J.B. away from his face.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)

I don't want anything to happen to you. Okay?

He hugs J.B.

INT. TRUCK - DAY

Music blasts inside the cab of the logging truck as it speeds toward the Browns' driveway.

Truck Driver looks down, grabs his soda then takes a swig.

When he looks up, his eyes bulge out. He drops the soda then clenches the steering wheel.

EXT. HIGHWAY - DAY

The logging truck's horn blasts then slams on the brakes. The tires scream and smoke billows from them.

Michael, puzzled, turns as the logging truck screeches past him. His eyes follow the truck.

The truck stops a hundred yards or so past Michael and J.B.

Michael looks at the back of the truck then his eyes follow the black skid marks down the highway.

The life drains from Michael's face and he collapses to a seated position.

His hands slide away from J.B., then J.B crawls off his lap and sits down beside Michael.

With his mouth open and tears streaming from his eyes, Michael stares at Kylie.

Kylie lies motionless on the shoulder of the road.

EXT. ABOVE BROWNS' HOUSE - DAY

The eagle looks down on the chaos below.

Lauren runs out of the house. She stumbles and falls on the driveway, screaming.

The Truck Driver rushes out of the truck then runs over to Kylie. He kneels down then cradles her.

Michael sits in agony beside J.B.

EXT. HIGHWAY - DAY

Scraped up from her fall, Lauren stands then sprints to Kylie and kneels beside her.

LAUREN

Kylie!

Lauren grabs the Truck Driver and shakes him.

LAUREN (CONT'D)
What did you do?!

TRUCK DRIVER
I, I think she...

LAUREN
Kylie! Kylie!

Lauren sobs.

TRUCK DRIVER
She just...

Groggy, Kylie opens her eyes.

KYLIE
I'm hungry, Mommy.

Laughter bursts through Lauren's tears. She picks Kylie up then carries her toward the house.

Michael stands up, then scoops up J.B. and runs after them.

TRUCK DRIVER
Fainted.

INT. BOARDING KENNEL - DAY

Lauren and Kylie watch Michael as he kneels in front of the boarding cage, J.B. inside.

MICHAEL
I'll miss you, J.B.

When he reaches in to pet J.B., a tear falls from his eye.

LAUREN
Okay, Michael, we have to go.

MICHAEL
Wish me luck.

Michael leans in and J.B. licks him through the cage.

LAUREN
He'll be fine sweetheart. It's just for a few days.

MICHAEL
I know, Mom.

Kylie waves.

KYLIE

Bye, J.B.

J.B. whimpers as they exit.

EXT. BROWNS' HOUSE - DAY

The SUV is loaded down with luggage. Lauren straps Kylie into her car seat.

Lauren and Michael climb in.

The property is now surrounded by fencing. The SUV drives to the new gate and it opens then closes when the SUV exits.

INT. ETHAN'S LIVING ROOM - DAY

Ethan sits on the sofa beside his MOTHER and FATHER in their comfortable living room watching Michael on stage at the national spelling bee.

ETHAN

Come on, Michael.

INT. LAUREMY ENERGY OFFICE - DAY

Sam and Tim sit beside each other.

SAM

Jerk.

TIM

I know.

Sam slides her hand over and holds Tim's hand, their eyes glued to the TV watching Michael.

INT. MRS. BROWN'S LIVING ROOM - DAY

Mrs. Brown sits in her living room, staring at Michael on TV.

INT. SENATE OFFICE - DAY

Lauren's uncle beams as he watches Michael on TV in his senate office.

INT. AUDITORIUM - DAY

Lauren and Kylie sit in the crowded auditorium at the national spelling bee finals.

Michael stands on stage in front of a microphone.

A FEMALE JUDGE sits behind her table and speaks into the microphone.

FEMALE JUDGE

If you correctly spell this next word, you will be declared this year's national spelling bee champion.

Applause comes from the crowd.

MAN'S VOICE (V.O.)

Encephalon.

Michael glances down at the photo of Jeremy in his hand.

He inhales deeply then exhales.

MICHAEL

Encephalon. E-N-C-E...

Michael wrinkles his lips and thinks for a moment.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)

... P-H-A-L-O-N. Encephalon.

FEMALE JUDGE

You are correct.

Applause from the crowd as confetti rains down on Michael.

MAN'S VOICE (V.O.)

There you have it ladies and gentlemen. By sixty-three days, our youngest champion ever, Michael Brown.

Lauren and Kylie rush onto the stage and celebrate.

FADE OUT.

THE END