

THIS IS US

"These Kids Are All Right"

Written by

Lori Crawford

Email: [loribeth@preacherskidproductions.com](mailto:loribeth@preacherskidproductions.com)

Twitter: @loribcrawford

Instagram: @loribethcrawford

ACT ONE

INT. BETH & RANDALL'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

BETH, RANDALL, TESS & ANNIE crowd around the coffee table playing Monopoly. Randall rolls the dice. Goes directly to jail. The girls laugh.

RANDALL

I swear this game is rigged.

BETH

Is there something you wanna tell me, Babe. You keep going to jail.

RANDALL

Somebody loaded these dice. That's all I've got to say.

He side-eyes Annie and her big pile of cash. She giggles.

Tess rolls. Passes Go and lands on her own property. As she collects \$200.

TESS

I don't know, Daddy. The dice seem fine to me.

RANDALL

It's a conspiracy. Wanna help me out over here, Deja? Bring me some luck.

Sullen, Deja glances up from her book. Shrugs.

DEJA

My mom said jail's not so bad.

She returns to reading and ignores the awkward silence that just fell in the room.

Beth and Randall exchange helpless looks.

BETH

My turn. What's that? Seven?

She counts the spaces she wants and grabs the dice.

BETH (CONT'D)  
 Watch Mommy thread this needle and  
 land on my own property. Come on  
 seven!

She rolls. Gets an eight, putting her on Randall's property.

RANDALL  
 Hey now. Pay up.

BETH  
 You in jail, Boo. You in jail.

The doorbell RINGS. Randall gets up to answer it.

RANDALL  
 Not forever. Imma get out. You  
 watch.

EXT. BETH & RANDALL'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Randall opens the door to find MONICA SPIRES (23), polished  
 brunette with a winsome smile on the doorstep.

JASON ANTOINE (8), a fragile looking white boy, hovers behind  
 her.

MONICA  
 Mr. Pearson? I'm Monica Spires. I  
 work with Linda at DCF. Could we  
 speak for a moment?

INT. BETH & RANDALL'S HOUSE - FOYER - NIGHT

Randall steps back, allowing Monica and Jason to enter. The  
 woman inspects the house as she does.

Randall doesn't notice. His attention is on Jason.

RANDALL  
 And who might you be?

JASON  
 Jason.

RANDALL  
 It's a pleasure to know you, Jason.

Beth joins the group in the foyer. Tess and Annie hang back.  
 Deja eyes Monica, worried.

BETH

We weren't expecting a visit tonight. Is everything okay?

MONICA

Jason, that's Tess, Annie and Deja. Go play with them while we talk.

Beth eyes the brazen young woman who has the audacity to give orders in Beth's home.

Monica heads into the dining room.

MONICA (CONT'D)

In here should be fine.

Beth is about to snap. Randall squeezes her arm. She gives him a questioning look.

RANDALL

Caseworker from DCF.

They follow Monica.

INT. BETH & RANDALL'S HOUSE - DINING ROOM - NIGHT

Monica takes a seat at the table. Randall sits across from her while Beth hangs back a bit where she can keep an eye on the kids.

MONICA

Mrs. Pearson --

BETH

So now you speak?

MONICA

Huh?

RANDALL

Has something gone wrong with Deja's adoption? Is that why you're here?

MONICA

Deja? Oh. No. Nothing like that. I need to place Jason here.

BETH  
Just so I'm clear, you're here  
asking us for help.

MONICA  
It would only be for a few nights.  
A week at the most.

RANDALL  
Since you're not our usual  
caseworker, you may not be aware.  
We don't have anymore beds.

MONICA  
I've taken over Linda's files while  
she's out with the flu. I know you  
have space. It's such a short  
placement; I can waive that  
requirement.

BETH  
Linda usually calls first. To give  
us a heads up.

MONICA  
I've found that it's harder for  
parents to say no if they see the  
child they're turning away.

Beth smiles through her anger.

BETH  
I'm sorry. Like my husband said.  
We're full.

Randall stands; eyes pleading with Beth.

RANDALL  
May I see you in the kitchen for a  
moment?

Beth continues to eye Monica. Hates the smug expression on  
the woman's face. Follows Randall out.

INT. BETH & RANDALL'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Beth is already shaking her head as she enters with Randall  
on her heels.

BETH

Please tell me you're not falling for this woman's blatant manipulation.

RANDALL

I'm definitely not. I think she's a terrible person who will most likely rot in hell, but he's a boy. We always talked about getting a boy.

BETH

You've always talked about getting a boy.

RANDALL

It's only a few days. What's the worst that could happen?

INT. BETH & RANDALL'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

Randall cooks breakfast. Jason wanders in.

RANDALL

There he is. How was Fort Jason? Comfortable?

JASON

It was fine.

RANDALL

Come on over here. Sit. We've got yogurt with berries. Cereal. Peanut butter and banana toast. What's your pleasure?

JASON

My what?

RANDALL

What would you like to eat?

JASON

Can I have all of it?

Randall eyes the boy's small frame.

RANDALL

All of it. Coming right up.

Randall drops some bread in the toaster and grabs a bowl for Jason to get started on the yogurt. The boy is already eating straight from the container.

RANDALL (CONT'D)  
Okay then.

ANNIE (O.S.)  
Daddy, daddy! Look what Mommy did.

Annie runs in. Shows off her new "fro"hawk that makes an S across the top of her head.

Randall admires Beth's work.

RANDALL  
I love it. How long did it take Mommy?

Beth rushes in, still dressing for work.

BETH  
She got me up at four.

RANDALL  
That's where you went.

BETH  
Good morning, Jason.

JASON  
Hi.

BETH  
Tess, Deja? We've gotta go.

The toast pops up. Beth grabs it and smears Nutella on it for Annie.

JASON  
Hey! That's mine.

RANDALL  
They've gotta go. You'll get next.

BETH  
Girls! I'm not calling you again.

Tess hurries in. She eyes Jason eating all the yogurt.

TESS  
Is there anymore yogurt?

RANDALL  
There will be tomorrow.

Tess rolls her eyes. Grabs a banana.

Deja strolls by.

DEJA  
I'll be in the car.

RANDALL  
Wait a minute. No breakfast?

DEJA (O.S.)  
I'm not hungry.

Beth and Randall share a concerned look.

BETH  
Okay, ladies. Let's get you to school. You know where Jason's school is?

RANDALL  
Got the directions already programmed.

She gives him a quick kiss then herds the girls out the door.

ANNIE  
Bye Daddy. Bye Jason.

TESS  
Bye.

RANDALL  
Love you all.

Jason doesn't respond. Still fuming over his lost toast.

INT. TESS & ANNIE'S ROOM - NIGHT

Tess and Annie are sound asleep.

Light enters the room as the door silently opens.

Jason creeps in. Stands over Annie's bed with a big pair of scissors. He slides the scarf off her head.



Snips one of the ponytails that gives the "fro" hawk shape and leaves it on her pillow.

Satisfied, he slips out.

INT. BETH & RANDALL'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

Beth assesses the fridge contents. Randall stands by with a note pad.

BETH

I've never seen such a little person eat so much in my life. Where does he put it?

RANDALL

I'm --

A SCREAM cuts him off.

They drop everything and run upstairs.

INT. TESS & ANNIE'S ROOM - DAY

Annie stands next to her bed, sobbing and holding her chopped off hair in her hands.

Beth gets to her first with Randall close behind.

BETH

Oh baby, what happened?

ANNIE

I don't know.

Tess, a toothbrush still in her mouth, runs in followed by Deja.

Beth hugs Annie while Randall inspects her scalp. Shows Beth the bald spot.

RANDALL

Do either of you girls know about this?

He reads the shock on their faces.

Beth and Randall exchange a look.

RANDALL (CONT'D)  
Jason? Could you come in here a  
moment?

After a few moments, Jason saunters in.

Randall shows him Annie's hair in his hand.

RANDALL (CONT'D)  
Do you know how this happened?

Jason shrugs.

JASON  
I cut it.

BETH  
You what? Why would you do such a  
thing?

JASON  
She ate my toast.

As if that settles it, he saunters out, leaving the family  
staring after him in shock.

BETH  
I want that child out of my house.  
Today, Randall.

Randall kisses Annie then follows Jason.

Deja and Tess gather around, trying to console Annie.

INT. BETH & RANDALL'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

Jason eats cereal at the table without a care in the world.

Randall comes in. Fights to remain calm.

RANDALL  
Get your things. We're gonna take a  
little ride.

INT. DEPT. CHILDREN & FAMILIES - MONICA'S OFFICE - DAY

Monica works at a pathologically clean desk.

Randall, with Jason in tow, knocks on the door.

MONICA

Mr. Pearson? Did we have an appointment?

RANDALL

No, but we need to have a word.

MONICA

Oh. Let me check my calendar --

RANDALL

Check your --? Now is good.

(to Jason)

Wait here just a moment.

Jason shrugs and leans against the wall outside Monica's office.

Randall smiles at him, but closes the door. Turns back to Monica.

MONICA

Mr. Pearson, this is highly irregular --

RANDALL

He cut my daughter's hair while we all slept last night. Because she ate toast that he thought was his.

MONICA

It's just hair. It'll grow back.

RANDALL

It's not just -- I cannot have that child in my house any longer. I will not allow my family to be in that kind of danger.

MONICA

All this over hair?

RANDALL

It's not just hair! What if he'd cut her throat instead of a ponytail? No.

MONICA

What if I have a word with him?

RANDALL

You can have all the words you like. He is not coming back to my home.

MONICA

I don't have anywhere else to place him.

Finished with the conversation, Randall opens the door.

RANDALL

You have a good day now.

INT. DEPT. CHILDREN & FAMILIES - HALLWAY - DAY

Jason pushes off the wall when Randall steps out of Monica's office. Prepared to go with him.

JASON

Can we go now?

RANDALL

Actually, Ms. Monica's gonna take care you now. It was nice to meet you, Jason.

Monica appears in the doorway. Her voice tinged with panic --

MONICA

Wait a minute. You can't just leave him here.

RANDALL

Please call first next time.

Randall walks away.

Jason looks up at Monica.

JASON

I'm still hungry.

Monica exhales an angry breath. Snatches her purse from behind the office door.

MONICA

Come on.

She strides off down the hallway leaving Jason to follow or not.

EXT. BETH & RANDALL'S DRIVEWAY - NIGHT

Flashing police lights from a cruiser illuminate the neighborhood. Nosy NEIGHBORS stand at the edge of the driveway. Watching and whispering.

Monica stands just outside the front door while OFFICER WOODARD escorts Randall from the house in handcuffs.

END ACT ONE

ACT TWO

\*

INT. HOLDING CELL - NIGHT

Officer Woodard escorts Randall in. Has him stand in front of the height chart.

RANDALL

This is all a mistake. I never laid  
a finger on that child.

Mug shot snap.

OFFICER WOODARD

Turn to your left.

Randall turns his body while still trying to connect with the Officer.

RANDALL

Who said I did? Maybe we can  
straighten this out with a simple  
conversation.

OFFICER WOODARD

We get all kinds of scum bags in  
here. You know what we don't get?  
People who didn't do it. And the  
worst of those scum bags are the  
ones who hurt children. Children  
they were supposed to protect. They  
hurt these kids. Damage them for  
life. Then a few years go by and I  
find myself arresting the next  
generation of scum bag created by  
the last. That's what you did. How  
exactly do you propose that we  
straighten any of this out?

Defeated, Randall gives up. Mug shot snap.

EXT. PEARSON YARD - DAY (1991)

YOUNG KEVIN (11) and a couple FRIENDS toss a frisbee around.

RANDALL (11) comes out of the house.

RANDALL  
What are you doing?

Kevin rolls his eyes.

KEVIN  
Playing baseball.

The friends snicker.

RANDALL  
Can I play?

KEVIN  
Ugh! Fine. Go long. You know what  
that means, right?

Excited, Randall nods and runs to the edge of the yard.

KEVIN (CONT'D)  
Keep going.

Randall runs to the street.

KEVIN (CONT'D)  
Keep going.

Randall pauses a moment, but runs across the street.

KEVIN (CONT'D)  
Here it comes!

Kevin throws the frisbee as hard as he can.

It sails way over Randall's head and lands on the sloped roof  
of the house across the street.

KEVIN (CONT'D)  
You missed it.

EXT. MR. CHUCK'S YARD - DAY (1991)

Randall stares up at the roof where he surmises the frisbee  
landed.

Kevin runs up.

KEVIN  
You missed.

RANDALL

I'm short. You threw it over my head. Of course I missed.

Kevin goes up on the porch. He uses a wooden swing to climb up on the railing to reach the frisbee. After a few moments, he tosses it down.

The friends join Randall in the yard to watch.

EXT. MR. CHUCK'S PORCH - DAY (1991)

Seeing his audience, Kevin does a bit of a victory shimmy before jumping down on the swing.

The wood is rotten, so Kevin goes right through the seat.

Stunned, he just stares at his leg for a moment. Then he springs into action trying to free himself.

Randall joins him on the porch to help.

RANDALL

Hold still.

Kevin keeps struggling. Randall breaks through the piece of wood that has him tangled. Kevin tumbles to the ground. He scrambles off the porch.

The front door slams open. MR. CHUCK DAVENPORT (76) stands there brandishing a broom.

MR. CHUCK

What are you kids doing?

Kevin and his friends take off running.

Mr. Chuck steps out onto the porch. Towers over Randall where he still kneels next to the broken swing.

INT. RIVAS HOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Kevin works hard at building the perfect sandwich. The phone RINGS. He ignores it. Concentrates on slicing the onions super thin.

The phone RINGS again.

KEVIN

Mom? Miguel? The phone.



No answer. The phone stops RINGING.

Kevin sprinkles some cheese on top of the bread.

The phone RINGS again.

KEVIN (CONT'D)  
Mom? Oh never mind.

He grabs the phone.

KEVIN (CONT'D)  
Hello. Rivas residence.

INTERCUT WITH:

INT. BETH & RANDALL'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Beth frowns and leans against the cabinet.

BETH  
Kevin? Where's Rebecca?

KEVIN  
Hey Beth. You would not believe  
this --

BETH  
I need to speak with Rebecca.

KEVIN  
What's wrong? Is everything okay?

Beth takes a moment.

BETH  
Randall's been arrested.

Kevin bursts into laughter.

KEVIN  
Good one. What? Did the "square"  
police finally come for him?

BETH  
Randall's in jail and you got  
jokes? I don't even know why I  
bother. Is Rebecca there or not?

KEVIN  
Wait. You're serious?

Rebecca comes in with an arm load of groceries. Sees Kevin's sandwich spread on the counter.

REBECCA

Kevin, sweetheart, I love you, but not enough to get another job keep feeding you like this.

He gestures to the phone.

KEVIN

(whispers)  
Randall's in jail.

Rebecca bursts into laughter. Kevin frantically covers the receiver.

BETH

Is that Rebecca?

KEVIN

Oh. Uh. No. Sorry. TV. In the other room. Mom turned it off. Here she is, Beth.

He hands Rebecca the phone.

KEVIN (CONT'D)

I don't think she's joking.

Rebecca sobers. Takes the phone.

REBECCA

Beth, honey. What happened?

BETH

We took in an emergency placement. A little boy. He cut off Annie's hair because she ate his toast or something. He did it while she slept, Rebecca. What if he wanted to kill her instead?

REBECCA

Oh sweetheart. Is she okay?

BETH

She's taking it better than I am. I told Randall to get that child out of my house.

(MORE)

BETH (CONT'D)

He took Jason - the little hellion -  
back to the caseworker. And we  
thought that would be that.

REBECCA

As you should.

BETH

Well, the cops just showed up here.  
Somebody apparently beat that child  
almost to death. They're saying  
Randall did it. Because of Annie's  
hair.

REBECCA

That's ridiculous.

BETH

I know. They just left.

REBECCA

What do you need?

Beth takes a moment to swallow her pride.

BETH

We sunk everything into the  
tenement. But I've got to bail him  
out. Oh God. He can't stay in  
there. He just can't --

REBECCA

It's okay, Beth. We'll figure it  
out. I'll see you first thing in  
the morning.

BETH

I hate to have to ask --

REBECCA

I'd be more upset if you didn't. Go  
hug the girls for me.

BETH

Thank you. Just -- Thanks.

Beth hangs up.

INT. RIVAS HOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Rebecca disconnects and thinks for a moment. Kevin cleans up his mess.

REBECCA

We've got to bail your brother out in the morning. First thing.

KEVIN

Jail'll toughen him up. What'd he do anyway. Help an old lady cross the street outside the crosswalk?

REBECCA

No. They're saying he almost beat a child to death.

Off Kevin's stunned face.

INT. MR. CHUCK'S SHED - DAY (1991)

Mr. Chuck sweats profusely as he saws some wood boards down to size.

Tentatively, Randall appears in the doorway.

RANDALL

Mr. Chuck?

The older man acknowledges Randall with a labored smile.

MR. CHUCK

What is it, kid?

RANDALL

Well -- Can I help? I feel really bad for breaking your swing.

Mr. Chuck pauses and regards the boy.

MR. CHUCK

You and me both know you weren't the one responsible. Don't we?

Randall fidgets. Not willing to rat his brother out.

Admiring the loyalty, Mr. Chuck relents.

MR. CHUCK (CONT'D)  
Sure, kid. Do you know anything  
about how to fix a swing?

Randall eagerly joins Mr. Chuck.

RANDALL  
No, sir.

MR. CHUCK  
Of course you don't. But you got  
drive. That means you can learn.

RANDALL  
Who taught you how to fix a swing?

Mr. Chuck snorts. Points to a library book on carpentry and  
woodworking next to an array of various tools.

MR. CHUCK  
I got drive, too. I'm learning as I  
go.

RANDALL  
Is that why all your tools look so  
brand new?

MR. CHUCK  
Yep. Why don't you sand while I cut  
the next piece?

Randall starts work as requested while Mr. Chuck goes back to  
sawing. The boy frowns at the man's technique.

RANDALL  
You know, you've got to angle it a  
little. Here, let me show you.

Randall takes over sawing the wood. Mr. Chuck watches,  
impressed.

MR. CHUCK  
I forgot your old man is a  
carpenter. I probably should've  
just asked him for instructions.

RANDALL  
That's okay. We can figure it out.  
If we get stuck, we'll get him.  
Deal?

MR. CHUCK

Deal.

Mr. Chuck sands the wood while Randall saws away. The man pauses to catch his breath.

MR. CHUCK (CONT'D)

You know, you're a pretty good kid.

RANDALL

Thank you.

MR. CHUCK

Some advice though? You gotta - uh - be careful about covering for your brother - all the time. If he never - has to suffer the consequences, he'll never learn - to do the right thing.

Randall looks up from his work when he hears how winded Mr. Chuck sounds.

RANDALL

Mr. Chuck? Are you okay?

MR. CHUCK

I'm fine, kid. Just not used --

The man grimaces and grabs his left arm. Crumples to the ground in pain.

RANDALL

Mr. Chuck?

Randall drops everything and races out of the shed.

RANDALL (CONT'D)

Help! Mom!

INT. HOLDING CELL - NIGHT

Woodard locks Randall in the cell with a little more force than necessary.

RANDALL

That was uncalled for.

OFFICER WOODARD

Have a good night.

The officer smirks and walks away.

Rubbing his wrists, Randall turns and comes face to chest with TINY TOT (24), 6'8" wall of muscle and no fucks. Tattoos cover his neck and arms.

Randall stares up at the guy.

INT. RANDALL'S CAR - DAY

Deja stares out the passenger window while Randall drives.

DEJA

Mom said that picking a fight with the baddest person in the joint doesn't work anymore. With all the gang allegiances, you can't tell who that person is anyway.

INT. HOLDING CELL - NIGHT

Randall works up a weak smile for Tiny Tot.

RANDALL

What are you in for? Me? I bought some shoes from a drug dealer.

No reaction from Tiny Tot. He just stares Randall down. He forges ahead.

RANDALL (CONT'D)

I don't know what he laced them with, but I was tripping all day.

Still nothing from Tiny Tot.

Randall prepares to get the first one-sided beat down of his life.

END OF ACT TWO

ACT THREE

INT. HOLDING CELL - NIGHT

The men stare at each other. Suddenly, Tiny Tot bursts out laughing. Claps a meaty hand on Randall's shoulder.

TINY TOT  
Trippin' all day? You a straight up  
fool, dude. That's some mess like  
my old man used to say.

The new besties take a seat in the cell to pass the time.

TINY TOT (CONT'D)  
Tell me another.

EXT. MR. CHUCK'S PORCH - DAY (1991)

Randall meticulously measures then marks the rotten wood to cut away. He's so engrossed in his work that he fails to notice CARIN DAVENPORT (52) as she lugs several grocery bags to the front door.

She doesn't notice him, either, until he starts sawing through the swing. She jumps.

CARIN  
You there. What are you doing to my  
mother's swing?

He can't hear her over the saw.

She drops her bags and pokes him on the shoulder. He nearly jumps out of his skin. Smiles at her once he calms.

RANDALL  
Oh. Hello.

CARIN  
What are you doing? Destroying my  
parents' property?

RANDALL  
Uh, no. I'm helping --



CARIN  
Get out of here before I call the  
police.

RANDALL  
I'm not finished here.

She unlocks the door and pushes her way inside.

CARIN  
On second thought, you stay right  
there. The cops can take you away  
for vandalism. And trespassing. And  
whatever other crime you're  
committing here.

Starting to freak out, Randall tears up.

RANDALL  
I didn't do anything. Please don't  
call the police.

She comes as far back out on the porch as the phone cord will  
allow.

CARIN  
Yes. I'd like to report a vandal.

In an outright panic, Randall drops all his tools and races  
back across the street to his house.

EXT. PEARSON DRIVEWAY - DAY (1991)

A perplexed Jack steps out from under the hood of their car  
as Randall tears by and into the house.

INT. PEARSON KITCHEN - DAY (1991)

Shaking like a leaf, Randall races to Rebecca and latches on  
to her. She drops the pan she was washing in the sink to hold  
him.

REBECCA  
Randall? What's the matter,  
sweetheart?

RANDALL  
Please don't let them take me away.  
Please, Mom, please. I'll be good.

Jack comes in. He and Rebecca share confused looks.

JACK

Hey, buddy. Nobody's going to take you away.

RANDALL

That's not what the lady at Mr. Chuck's said. She said the police would come get me because I committed a crime.

REBECCA

I'm sure it's just a misunderstanding. Your father will go see.

JACK

I'm on my way right now.

EXT. MR. CHUCK'S PORCH - DAY (1991)

Carin inspects the swing. Jack calls out when he enters the yard.

JACK

Hello?

She stands and looks at him with a relieved smile.

CARIN

Oh. You scared me.

JACK

Did you threaten to call the police on my son?

CARIN

What? Of course not. There was some other little hooligan here. Destroying my mother's swing.

Carin turns to pick at the jagged wood pieces.

CARIN (CONT'D)

God, she loved this thing. And now with Dad in the hospital -- I don't need this.

Jack joins her on the porch. Picks up Randall's forgotten tools.

JACK

And my wife and I didn't need to have to spend tonight reassuring our son that the cops weren't coming to take him away. All because he wanted to help. I guess we both have our crosses to bear.

Jack walks away. Leaves a speechless Carin in his wake.

INT. BETH & RANDALL'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

Tess, Annie and Deja all studiously do their homework at the table while Beth protectively watches over them.

She checks the refrigerator. Forgets what she was looking for and ends up just standing there with the door open.

TESS

I thought we weren't supposed to stand with the refrigerator door open too long.

BETH

Oh -- Yes. You're right, baby. Mommy just forgot what she was looking for. I was trying to remember. You'll see what it's like when you get older.

Beth guiltily closes the door.

ANNIE

Did you forget because Daddy isn't here?

BETH

You don't worry about that. Mommy's taking care of everything.

She opens the refrigerator again. The doorbell RINGS, distracting her. Beth goes to answer it, leaving the door wide open again.

After she leaves, Deja closes it. The girls exchanged worried looks.

INT. BETH & RANDALL'S HOUSE - FOYER - DAY

Beth opens the door to find Rebecca and Kevin standing on her door step loaded down with dinner for everyone.

REBECCA

We thought you all might be hungry.

KEVIN

Mom thought you all might be hungry. I'm just the muscle.

Beth fights back tears.

BETH

Bless you two. C'mon in.

While Kevin takes the bulk of the food to the kitchen, Rebecca hangs back to talk to Beth.

REBECCA

How did it go today? Is he home?

BETH

No. There was a stupid water main break in the courthouse. They couldn't arraign him. Can you believe it? My husband, who'd never hurt a fly, is stuck in jail for another night because of faulty city maintenance.

REBECCA

That's unacceptable.

BETH

That's our tax dollars at work.

REBECCA

How are the kids holding up?

BETH

Better than I am, apparently. I keep trying to be strong for them, but I get the feeling that they are the strong ones right now.

Rebecca drapes an arm around Beth. They head for the kitchen.

REBECCA

Kids have a funny way of stepping up just when you need them to the most.

INT. BETH & RANDALL'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

Beth and Rebecca join Kevin and the girls in the kitchen.

TESS

Grandma!

REBECCA

Hello my sweethearts.

Beth watches in relief as Rebecca greets the girls. Even Kevin pauses in setting out the food to give her hand a quick squeeze. She dashes away a tear.

KEVIN

Don't go getting soft on me now.

BETH

Never.

INT. BETH & RANDALL'S HOUSE - FOYER - NIGHT

The door bell RINGS.

Beth opens the door to find Monica standing on the porch with a nervous Officer Woodard backing her up.

BETH

Monica? You have got your nerve showing up here again. No. I want nothing more to do with you. Ever.

Beth moves to close the door, but the officer stops her.

MONICA

I'm afraid that's not how this works. Some other disturbing details about your home have come to light.

BETH

Disturbing details? What?

MONICA

I've been ordered to remove the girls pending further investigation.

BETH

Remove what girls? MY girls? No. It's not bad enough you took my husband? You want to take my babies? Nope. Not today.

She tries to close the door again, but the officer forces it open.

DEJA (O.S.)

Beth?

Beth turns to see Deja peeking out from the dining room.

BETH

It's okay, Deja. This is all a mistake.

MONICA

Deja, I need you, Tess and Annie to get your things. You have to come with us.

Rebecca joins the group.

REBECCA

You're trying to take my grandbabies away from their mother? After you had my son arrested? What exactly do you have against my family?

MONICA

It's not personal, ma'am.

REBECCA

What exactly is not personal about taking children from their parents?

Kevin comes out of the dining room with Annie riding piggy back. Tess holds on to his hand.

MONICA

We just have to make sure this is a safe home.

BETH

It was plenty safe before you entered our lives.

MONICA

If that's the case, then they'll be home in no time. But for now, we have to go.

BETH

Go where? Where are you taking my babies?

MONICA

I've arranged a good home. They'll be safe and cared for.

Beth glares at the woman.

BETH

Oh, that's comforting. Seeing that your poor judgement is what caused all this to begin with.

Monica's hackles rise. She pushes around Beth.

MONICA

Girls, get your things.

KEVIN

Wait a minute. Why do they have to go with you? We're family. They can stay with us. How about it girls? Wanna have a staycation with Uncle Kevin and grandma?

ANNIE

Yes!

TESS

Can we get a fancy hotel suite and order room service?

KEVIN

You bet.

MONICA

That's not how this works.

BETH

I don't care how this works --

Deja puts a hand on Beth's arm, stopping her.

DEJA

It's okay, Beth. I'll watch over them.

(to Monica)

You won't separate us?

MONICA

I've arranged for you all to remain together.

Beth turns uncertain eyes on Deja. Can she trust her? After a fortifying breath.

BETH

Get some things together.

EXT. BETH & RANDALL'S DRIVEWAY - NIGHT

Monica packs Tess, Deja and Annie into her car.

The officer keeps a watchful eye on Beth who watches from the doorway.

Rebecca keeps her arms around her. Supportive.

Beth holds on to her composure while Monica drives away with her babies.

REBECCA

Come on inside. They're going to be okay.

INT. BETH & RANDALL'S HOUSE - FOYER - NIGHT

Numb, Beth follows Rebecca back inside. On a tear, Rebecca marches right past Kevin.

REBECCA

This is ridiculous. I tell you what. First thing in the morning, we're calling your lawyer. That woman will regret the day she ever tangled with the Pearsons.



Defeated, Beth slumps against the door. The first tears slide down her cheeks. She starts to slump to the floor, but Kevin rushes to catch her.

He holds her while she sobs out her heartbreak.

END OF ACT THREE

ACT FOUR

EXT. ASTON MAUI KAA NAPALI VILLAS - PATIO - DAY

Kate relaxes and splits her attention between a brochure of activities and the marvelous view of the main pool with its ocean backdrop.

KATE

Hey Tobe? Have you thought about what you'd like to try today?

No answer. She looks over her shoulder at the sliding glass doors.

KATE (CONT'D)

Tobe?

TOBY

Yeah.

He hurries toward the patio, cellphone clenched in his hand.

KATE

What's going on in there? You're not arranging another surprise are you? 'Cause that last --

She gets a good look at his troubled expression when he joins her on the patio.

KATE (CONT'D)

What is it? What's wrong?

TOBY

It would seem - uh - that your brother has been arrested.

KATE

What? Not another DUI. Kevin was doing so well. He was sober --

TOBY

Not that brother.

KATE

Randall? Now I know you're messing with me.

She pushes a brochure his way.

KATE (CONT'D)  
I think a spa day might --

TOBY  
Kate! Kevin left the message last night.

KATE  
So Kevin is messing with us. What did Randall supposedly do?

TOBY  
He didn't leave details.

Kate gets up to go inside their honeymoon villa.

KATE  
I have to call him.

INT. BETH & RANDALL'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Phone to his ear, Kevin roams around the room, restless.

KEVIN  
I don't know, Kate. I'm out of my depth here. Things are a mess. Last night was -- Awful doesn't seem adequate.

INTERCUT WITH:

INT. KAA NAPALI VILLA - SEATING AREA - DAY

Kate paces with her phone on speaker. She bats away wedding bell shaped balloons with "Congratulations" emblazoned on them with every pass.

Toby tries to get her to sit. She waves him off.

KATE  
Where's Mom?

KEVIN  
She's gone all warrior princess and went to meet Randall's lawyer.

Kate and Toby exchange surprised looks.

KATE  
Without Beth?

KEVIN

Beth is darn near catatonic. We're  
in the upside down over here.

KATE

They just took her kids, so --

KEVIN

I know they took -- I was there.  
I've never seen her like that. So --  
God. I don't know - broken. We've  
gotta get Randall and the kids back  
here pronto.

TOBY

Do you think we should call a  
doctor. For Beth. If she's in that  
bad a shape --

KEVIN

No. That'll just make things worse.

KATE

Are you going to see Randall? Tell  
him about the girls?

KEVIN

We can't tell him about the girls.  
Not while he's in there and can't  
do anything. He'll go mad worrying.

KATE

God, I know. So what do we do?

A noise from the kitchen startles Kevin. He investigates.

KEVIN

I'll know more when Mom --

INT. BETH & RANDALL'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

Kevin walks in to find Jason struggling to reach the milk on  
a high shelf in the refrigerator. The cast on his arm makes  
the task harder.

KEVIN

Who the heck are you?

Jason nearly jumps out of his skin. The milk drops at his  
feet, spilling everywhere. He turns frightened eyes on Kevin  
who is shocked at his bruised, swollen face.

KATE

Kevin?

JASON

I'm sorry. I'll clean it up.

KEVIN

There's some little boy here with a broken arm. He's making cereal.

KATE

Are you kidding me? You've got to get him out of there before Beth sees him.

KEVIN

Wait. Is this the kid -- Aren't you supposed to be in a hospital? How'd you even get in here?

JASON

I was hungry. There's food here.

He struggles to wipe up the mess with a paper towel and one arm. Kevin gets more towels to help.

KEVIN

I'll call you back, Kate.

He hangs up and kneels next to Jason. They wipe up the mess.

KEVIN (CONT'D)

You know you can't be here, right?

JASON

I can't be a lot of places.

Kevin studies the kid.

KEVIN

You know. They put my brother in jail because they think he did that to you.

JASON

Who is your brother?

KEVIN

Are you serious right now? You're in his house stealing his food.

JASON  
Randall? He was nice.

KEVIN  
He was -- What?

Kevin stares at Jason in disbelief.

BETH (O.S.)  
Kevin? What are you doing --

She comes around the island. Freezes when she sees Jason.

BETH (CONT'D)  
You! You've got your --

She trails off, stunned when she gets a good look at his injuries. Softens toward him.

BETH (CONT'D)  
What on earth? What happened to  
you, sweetheart?

Jason stands and shows her the last of the paper towels they used to clean up the milk.

JASON  
You need more milk.

BETH  
Forget the milk. Tell me how you  
got hurt?

She moves toward him, but he backs away. Frightened by her intensity.

JASON  
Cereal's no good without milk.

He grabs a box of breakfast bars off the counter and scampers away leaving a stunned Beth and Kevin staring after him.

Beth recovers first. Follows the kid.

EXT. BETH & RANDALL'S YARD - DAY

Beth runs outside and looks around. Spots Jason just as he rounds a neighbor's hedge. She takes off after him.

Kevin comes out.

KEVIN

Beth?

But she's gone.

Kevin sighs. Goes back in the house. Returns moments later with a set of keys.

EXT. STREET - DAY

Winded, Beth bends over trying to catch her breath.

Her car glides to a stop beside her.

BETH

That little boy is fast.

She gets in her car. Kevin drives away.

INT. GROUP HOME - BEDROOM - NIGHT

The room is functional with two sets of bunks beds on either side. Scared, Annie huddles against Tess on a bottom bunk.

ANNIE

It smells funny.

TESS

I know. Try not to think about it.

Deja comes in. Starts to ignore the girls and climb in the bunk over them. She sits on the edge of the bed instead.

DEJA

This is a good bed.

TESS

A good bed?

DEJA

No one is likely to mess with you here. You're safe.

ANNIE

You've been here before?

Deja shrugs.

DEJA

Ms. Monica either expects us to go back soon or to find another permanent home.

Annie starts to cry.

TESS

We - we - already have a permanent home.

DEJA

They're not going to let Beth and Randall complete my adoption if they're charged with child abuse.

ANNIE

That's not fair. They didn't do anything.

DEJA

They don't have to do anything. Jason has a broken arm and Monica says Randall did it. She had to say something about Beth, too, to get us removed.

ANNIE

But those are lies!

DEJA

It could take a while to get to the truth.

TESS

We have to help them get there faster.

DEJA

How?

TESS

I don't know. Start thinking.

ANNIE

Why can't Jason just tell the truth? Dad didn't hurt him.

Tess and Deja look at one another. Nod. Maybe Annie's on to something.



EXT. SCHOOL - DAY

Annie and Tess stand at the school bus stop. They're the only still figures among the other frolicking CHILDREN.

Deja and RAVEN join them. Raven hands Tess a slip of paper.

RAVEN

Get your beds back.

Deja and Raven exchange a meaning-filled nod before the latter walks off.

A line of school buses pull up to the curb. They pull away one by one taking the children with them. The last one leaves.

Annie, Tess and Deja remain on the curb. Together, they walk off down the street to a city bus stop.

EXT. VACANT LOT - DAY

All types of discarded junk litters the area. Broken furniture. Dented appliances. Straight up trash.

Jason aimlessly kicks a dirty, one-eyed teddy bear around. It kinda resembles his own beat up face.

He reaches the edge of the lot. Turns to kick it back the other way.

The bear lands between a pair of pink-sneakered feet.

Jason freezes.

Annie stands over the bear. Tess and Deja flank him.

Off the girls' determined faces.

END OF ACT FOUR

ACT FIVE

INT. PEARSON GARAGE - NIGHT (1991)

Randall works hard at sanding the wood boards. He's exhausted.

Kevin comes in. Watches his brother labor away for a moment.

KEVIN

Mom said it's time for bed.

RANDALL

Mr. Chuck comes home tomorrow. I need to finish before then. So he doesn't worry and have another stroke.

Kevin studies his brother for a moment. Picks up some sandpaper and gets to work on the other board.

Off the brothers working in rare harmony.

EXT. PEARSON PORCH - DAY (1991)

Randall sits on the steps and watches as Kevin puts the finishing touches on the rebuilt porch swing.

Carin watches over Kevin's shoulder. All smiles.

Jack joins Randall on the porch. Follows his gaze then sits next to him.

RANDALL

I didn't get to finish Mr. Chuck's swing.

JACK

I know you were only trying to help. But some times, it's not up to you who you can help.

RANDALL

That's silly.

JACK  
It is. And the folks who think that way? They miss out on a lot in life. A lot.

Jack regards Randall for a moment.

JACK (CONT'D)  
But promise me something.

Randall looks expectantly at his dad.

JACK (CONT'D)  
Just because you get trouble while doing something good, never let that stop you from doing something good in the future. Okay?

RANDALL  
Okay.

Jack's attention returns across the street just as Carin hands some cash to Kevin.

JACK  
I'll be right back.

Jack jogs across the street.

EXT. MR. CHUCK'S YARD - DAY (1991)

Jack meets Kevin in the yard as he's leaving. The boy proudly holds up the cash.

KEVIN  
Look what I've got.

JACK  
I see. Now give it back.

Carin stops testing the newly repaired swing to join Jack and Kevin in the yard.

CARIN  
He earned it. The swing is good as new. Enterprising young man you've got there.

JACK

A little too enterprising. If I let him keep this, he'll learn that he can break stuff then get paid to fix it. That's not a lesson I want to teach.

Carin frowns. Looks at Randall who has crept up behind Jack to listen.

CARIN

But I thought --

JACK

I think we both know what you thought.

Carin shifts uncomfortably under the implication.

Jack nudges Kevin.

JACK (CONT'D)

Return the money.

KEVIN

But, Dad--

JACK

Don't make me ask you again.

Kevin sulks, but hands the cash back to Carin. He stomps out of the yard heading home.

JACK (CONT'D)

Enjoy the swing.

Jack turns to follow Kevin. Almost trips over Randall.

JACK (CONT'D)

C'mon, son.

RANDALL

How's Mr. Chuck?

Carin looks taken aback by Randall's genuine concern.

CARIN

He's doing so much better. Thanks for asking.

RANDALL

Could you tell him that I hope he gets better real soon?

The woman softens toward him.

CARIN  
 Would you like to tell him  
 yourself?

Randall looks to Jack for permission. Jack hesitates.

CARIN (CONT'D)  
 I just figured out you're the  
 neighbor boy he's been asking  
 after. The one who saved his life.

RANDALL  
 Please, dad.

JACK  
 We can stay for a minute.

The three head inside. Jack makes sure he's between Randall and the woman at all times.

EXT. VACANT LOT - DAY

Jason faces off with Annie, Tess and Deja.

JASON  
 What do you want?

ANNIE  
 We brought you something.

She reaches in her backpack. Jason flinches away.

Relaxes again when she pulls out a juice box. Hands it to him.

He looks at each girl. Suspicious.

ANNIE (CONT'D)  
 It's your favorite, right?

JASON  
 What's the catch?

TESS  
 No catch.

DEJA  
 We just want to talk.

Annie holds up a bag of sliced cucumbers. His eyes light up.

ANNIE

And give you these.

Unable to juggle both the juice box and cucumbers, Jason sits on some crumbling stairs. The girls join him.

Tess indicates his broken arm.

TESS

How did you really get hurt?

JASON

What do you care?

ANNIE

My daddy's in jail because they think he hurt you.

JASON

That sucks.

TESS

Seriously? Why would you even tell them he hit you? You know that's a lie.

Jason pops a cucumber in his mouth. Annoyed, Tess snatches them back. Holds them out of his reach.

TESS (CONT'D)

Why, Jason?

JASON

I didn't tell anyone he hit me.

DEJA

What? Then who did?

He shrugs. A shocked Tess lowers the cucumbers. He snatches them back.

JASON

I dunno. Monica, I guess.

TESS

That doesn't make any sense.

JASON

I don't think she wants anyone to know she took me home.

Annie gently touches his cast.

ANNIE

Did your mommy do that?

JASON

Nah. Her boyfriend. He's kind of a jerk. Especially when he drinks a lot.

DEJA

I think you need to tell us everything.

The girls settle in to listen.

Deja's phone records in her back pocket.

INT. LINDA'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

Deja's phone is in playback mode on the counter. Tess, Annie and Deja stare hopefully up at a flu-stricken LINDA as she listens.

JASON (V.O.)

Monica didn't have anywhere else to take me. She said she wanted to reuni-- reunicastation --?

DEJA (V.O.)

Reunification --

JASON (V.O.)

Yeah. That.

INT. GRUBBY APARTMENT - NIGHT

VIOLET (23), lay sprawled and non-responsive on the couch. Various drug paraphernalia surrounds her. A needle still hangs from her vein.

Alone, Jason comes in. He spots his mom on the couch and runs to her. Tries to wake her up.

JASON

Momma?

He shakes her harder. Nothing. Calls louder --

JASON (CONT'D)

Momma!

SPYDER (37), short but muscular, pads out of the bedroom. He rubs his eyes.

SPYDER

What's with the noise?

JASON

I think Momma OD'd again.

Jason grabs for the phone. Spyder knocks it away.

SPYDER

What do you think you're doing?

JASON

Momma needs help.

Spyder casts an unconcerned look at Violet.

SPYDER

No foam. She's fine.

Jason retrieves the phone. Starts dialing. He gets two digits in before Spyder picks him up by the scruff of his neck. Rips the phone from his hand.

SPYDER (CONT'D)

What did I just say?

Furious, Spyder stomps over to the balcony and slams the door open.

Jason squirms with all his might. Trying to get away.

JASON

Momma!

Spyder drops Jason over the bannister.

TESS (V.O.)

Oh my God. That's terrible.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

Jason lands in heap on the concrete stairs leading up to his building. His arm twists underneath him.



Clutching her chest in fright, Monica steps out of her car that's still parked at the curb. Assesses the scene.

MONICA

No, no, no, no, no!

She looks up to see Spyder staring down at them. Unconcerned, he strolls back inside.

She grabs her phone to call 9-1-1.

OPERATOR

What's your emergency?

Monica pauses. Bites her nails. Paces near Jason where he's starting to move. Trying to get up.

OPERATOR (CONT'D)

Is it safe for you to speak?

MONICA

Oh my God. I'm so sorry. Butt dial.

Freaking out, she hangs up.

MONICA (CONT'D)

Fuck, kid. Let's go.

She loads him into the back of her car and drives off.

INT. LINDA'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

Linda rubs her aching temples as Deja continues to play the recording. Annie and Tess wait on pins and needles.

JASON (V.O.)

It's fine. Monica took me to the hospital.

His matter of fact tone is heartbreaking.

LINDA

Please stop it. I've heard enough.

Deja turns off the playback.

TESS

Can you help us, Ms. Linda?

LINDA  
Yes, sweetheart, I most certainly  
can.

INT. DEPT. CHILDREN & FAMILIES - LINDA'S OFFICE - DAY

Linda glares at an unrepentant Monica.

LINDA  
This is the exact kind of  
corruption and overreach that gives  
our department a bad name. I never  
thought I'd see it in person.

MONICA  
I did what I believed was best for  
the children.

Linda drops a surveillance photo of Monica taking Jason home  
on the desk between them. The younger woman gets real scared.

LINDA  
You did what was easiest for  
yourself. You placed a child in a  
home with three other children when  
his file specifically indicates  
that he'd be a danger to them. When  
that predictably didn't work out,  
you returned him to an unsafe home  
situation. To continue your  
impressive streak of horrible  
decisions, you blamed his resulting  
injuries on one of the safest  
foster homes we have and endangered  
their biological children for a  
second time.

A series of sneezes interrupts Linda's tirade. She blows her  
nose.

Monica seizes the opportunity.

MONICA  
If you'll just let me explain --

LINDA  
Explain to someone who wants to  
hear it.

Linda gestures behind Monica. She turns as Officer Woodard  
grabs her arm to slap the cuffs on.

Tess watches everything from just outside the door.

OFFICER WOODARD  
You're under arrest.

LINDA  
And fired. In case that wasn't  
clear.

END OF ACT FIVE

ACT SIX

EXT. JAIL - DAY

Randall steps outside the building. Takes a deep a breath of freedom. He opens the bag of his personal items to retrieve his cell phone. The battery's dead.

RANDALL

Of course.

He looks back at the building a moment. Decides against testing his luck. Starts walking.

A patrol car pulls up beside him. The siren blares briefly when he doesn't stop.

RANDALL (CONT'D)

Unbelievable.

Officer Woodard steps out.

OFFICER WOODARD

Mr. Pearson. I heard you'd been released.

RANDALL

And what? You thought you'd go for round two? See how much humiliation I'm willing to take from you? You didn't cut me down enough --

OFFICER WOODARD

I came to apologize.

That brings Randall up short. He studies the officer for a moment. Nods.

RANDALL

Okay. Go ahead. I'm listening.

OFFICER WOODARD

I am truly sorry for how I treated you. I heard the charges and just -- My wife miscarried that morning. So any crime against a child would've set me off, really.

RANDALL

Oh. I'm sorry for your loss. That's tough. My sister -- It's tough.

Officer Woodard nods, fights back his emotions.

OFFICER WOODARD

Anyway, if you would allow, I'd like to offer you a ride home.

Randall contemplates the options. Breaks into a huge smile.

RANDALL

With lights and siren?

OFFICER WOODARD

Lights no siren.

RANDALL

Oh c'mon. My brother is at my house. Just a little siren in the driveway?

OFFICER WOODARD

Let me think about it.

RANDALL

Fair enough.

Randall and Bob get in the car.

The flashing lights go on as they drive off.

EXT. BETH & RANDALL'S HOUSE - PORCH - DAY

An anxious Beth paces. Rebecca takes her hand.

REBECCA

Any minute now.

Linda's car comes up the driveway.

Tess & Annie hop out. Run to their mother who holds them super tight and showers them with kisses.

BETH

Are you guys all right? I've missed you so much.

ANNIE

We had a big adventure, Mommy.

BETH  
I know you did.

She shoots a grateful look at Linda. Deja hangs back.

BETH (CONT'D)  
Uh uh, Deja. You can be mad at us  
again tomorrow. But today, I need  
all my babies in my arms right  
here.

Deja's smile is brief, but relieved. She joins the group hug.

A quick blare of a siren catches everyone's attention.

Kevin comes out of the house. Grins when he sees the police  
cruiser rolling up the driveway. Randall gets out.

TESS  
Daddy!

The girls run to Randall. He meets them more than halfway.

Overcome, Beth stays on the porch. Tears of joy stream down  
her face.

Rebecca puts a supportive arm around her.

Officer Woodard gets out of the cruiser. Stands next to Linda  
to watch the reunion.

Randall hugs the girls.

RANDALL  
I think a night in jail has finally  
given me some street cred.

DEJA  
There aren't enough jails in the  
world to give your corny self  
street cred.

She hugs him.

KEVIN  
No one who actually has street cred  
ever talks about having street  
cred. Welcome home.

Kevin and Randall embrace.

As a group, they all approach Beth.

He drinks in the sight of her.

RANDALL

Hi.

She can't respond. Just throws her arms around him and pulls him close.

Rebecca impatiently waits her turn. Squeezes him so tight just like Beth did with the girls.

REBECCA

Are you all right?

RANDALL

Yes, Mom.

He looks at his family all gathered around him.

RANDALL (CONT'D)

All your kids are.

He drapes an arm around Beth. Everyone heads inside.

RANDALL (CONT'D)

So. What did I miss?

INT. BETH & RANDALL'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Another rowdy game of Monopoly is underway. This time, Deja takes part. Kevin and Rebecca laugh along with the girls.

INT. GRUBBY APARTMENT - NIGHT

Violet screams and throws things at Spyder while Officer Woodard puts cuffs on him.

Jason hides behind Linda and watches.

INT. WOODARD HOME - NIGHT

MAGGIE WOODARD sits on the hearth in front of a roaring fire. Sweat beads on her brow and she holds on to an ultrasound printout. Just as she's about to toss it into the fire --

OFFICER WOODARD (O.S.)

Sweetheart?

She turns to see Officer Woodard standing in the doorway with Jason clinging to his hand. Linda stands behind them.

OFFICER WOODARD (CONT'D)

There's someone I'd like you to meet.

INT. BETH & RANDALL'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Randall watches from the doorway. Beth joins him.

RANDALL

I think these kids are gonna be all right.

Beth rests her head on his shoulder while they enjoy the sight of their family enjoying themselves. Together.

THE END.