

JUST BENEATH THE SURFACE

by

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FADE IN:

INT./EXT. SUV/ROAD - AFTERNOON

A family drives down a highway going from San Diego to Chicago.

Behind the wheel sits the father, MITCH, thirty-eight-years-old brown hair and eyes, five feet ten inches tall, two hundred pounds.

Next to him sits his wife JAYLA, shoulder length blonde hair and pale blue eyes, five foot two, one hundred forty five pounds. She turns to check on the three children sitting in the backseat.

The oldest, SHERILEE, age sixteen, blonde hair, blue eyes, one hundred five pounds.

The middle child, STANLEY, a brown-haired, brown-eyed, thirteen-year-old.

SHAYLA, the youngest child, at age six resembles her mother.

Jayla slams the vanity mirror closed.

JAYLA

When you're not working at the office, you're in your study on that damned computer. You pay absolutely no attention to me at all.

MITCH

If you didn't spend so much time at your girlfriend's house, maybe I would pay attention to you.

JAYLA

Don't start this mess again. She's not my girlfriend.

MITCH

Oh, I forgot. She's your "therapist". Who just happens to have her office at her house.

JAYLA

She's semi-retired. It would be a waste of money for her to work out of an office.

MITCH

Well, I guess that bull dike look she's sportin' is also a way to save money.

Jayla looks up from the novel in her hand.

JAYLA

What?

MITCH

She never wears any makeup and her hair is shorter than Stanley's.

JAYLA

That doesn't make her a lesbian.

MITCH

If it walks like a duck and acts like a duck, it's a duck. Well, in her case, a dike.

Jayla shakes her head and goes back to reading the novel she holds.

SHERILEE

I don't see why we couldn't take a plane.

JAYLA

You know every penny is going for the move.

SHERILEE

I don't see why we left in the firsts place. Now I have to spend my last two years in high school at some hole-in-the-wall school with no friends.

MITCH

Look, if my job wants us to relocate, we relocate. I'm the head of this family and you go where I say and that's it.

Sherilee slumps back in her seat.

Stanley makes a flesh flapping sound by pulling on his cheek with his hand.

SHERILEE

Knock it off, you little pervert!

STANLEY

Why, sis, does it remind you of someone you know?

SHERILEE

The only thing it reminds me of is your perverted gross disgusting self, jerk!

STANLEY

I think it does remind you of a certain somebody back home -- a certain somebody named Thomas.

Sherilee hits Stanley on the head.

Stanley just smiles at her.

STANLEY (CONT'D)

I know you were doing him, Sher, everyone knows you were doing him. Well, everyone except Mom and Dad.

Stanley slaps the backs of Mitch and Jayla's seats.

STANLEY (CONT'D)

Oops! I think they know now.

Stanley smiles broadly.

SHERILEE

You fucking little shithead!

JAYLA

Sherilee Dixon, watch your mouth! And you, Stanley, stop needling your sister.

Sherilee slaps Stanley on the back of the head again.

SHERILEE

Jerk wad.

JAYLA

Sherilee, I said that was enough. Now pipe it!

MITCH

Holy shit!

SUV screeches to a halt.

Several vultures feast upon a carcass spread in the middle of the highway. The carcass is indiscernible.

The family watches in disgust as the scavengers rip and tear at bloody entrails and viscera.

MITCH (CONT'D)

For the love of . . .

Mitch honks the horn.

The vultures don't budge.

JAYLA

What the hell is that they're eating?

MITCH

You got me.

STANLEY

Eww. It looks like what we had for lunch in the cafeteria last week.

Stanley rolls down the window and inhales very deeply.

STANLEY (CONT'D)

Kinda smells like it too.

SHERILEE

Shut up and close the window, you moron.

MITCH

Fine. I'll just run over the bastards.

SHAYLA

No, Daddy, please. Those birds scare me. Please don't.

STANLEY

Yeah, Dad, isn't it bad luck to kill buzzards?

SHERILEE

What? What are you talking about?

STANLEY

Remember in that movie "Hud" when that guy was shootin' the buzzards and his dad said it was bad luck.

MITCH

You and that damn TV. Maybe if you didn't watch so much TV you wouldn't be a thirteen-year-old virgin.

Mitch looks around and spots a road sign to the right.

INSERT - ROAD SIGN

Discovery Road.

BACK TO SCENE

MITCH

We'll take that side road over there. It probably rejoins the highway in a few miles.

Mitch backs up the SUV and turns onto the side road.

Shayla picks up her scribble pad and crayons and draws intently on the pad.

Stanley looks over at Shayla's drawing.

STANLEY

Hey, Mom, she's drawing you know who again.

Jayla turns in her seat to look at Shayla.

JAYLA

Let me see that, honey.

Jayla takes the scribble pad from Shayla and looks at it.

INSERT - SCRIBBLE PAD

Picture of creature moving toward a little girl in her bed.

BACK TO SCENE

JAYLA

Shayla, what did we talk about?

SHAYLA

You said that the night monster isn't real.

JAYLA  
And what else?

SHAYLA  
That I'm not supposed to draw him  
anymore.

JAYLA  
That's right. So why are you  
drawing him again? He's not real  
and there's nothing to be afraid  
of.

SHAYLA  
But Mommy, he is real. He comes  
into my room at night.

JAYLA  
Shayla Marie, I told you, the night  
monster is not real and you are not  
to draw him anymore. Do you  
understand?

SHAYLA  
Yes, Mommy.

JAYLA  
I mean it now.

SHAYLA  
Okay, Mommy.

Jayla turns back around in her seat and faces front. She reaches into her purse and pulls out a bottle of prescription tranquilizers.

MITCH  
You eat those things like candy.  
Maybe if you lay off 'em, you'd be  
awake enough to give me some once  
in awhile.

JAYLA  
Give me a reason to stay awake for  
some and I might not take them  
anymore.

EXT. DISCOVERY ROAD - AFTERNOON

The SUV drives down Discovery Road, a single lane blacktop.

INT./EXT. SUV/ROAD - DISCOVERY ROAD - AFTERNOON

Mitch looks at Jayla who has immersed herself in the novel in her hand.

MITCH

So are you going to send your lesbian doctor a postcard telling her where we are?

STANLEY

(to Sherilee)

Cool, I didn't know Doc McGee was a lesbo.

JAYLA

Shut up, Stanley! She's not -- she's not one of those. Your father just has a perverted imagination.

STANLEY

Well, I don't know, Mom, there coming out of the wood work these days.

SHERILEE

Shut up, you little geek. If Mom was a lesbian, don't you think I'd know. After all, I'm a girl.

STANLEY

Oh, so you're a lesbo too, right?

SHERILEE

That's not what I said, stupid.

STANLEY

Sure it is. I've got the down low on you. Tony's dad said fags can sniff each other out.

SHERILEE

So.

STANLEY

So. Same thing goes for lesbos, duh.

SHERILEE

Shut up, you little faggot! You're so immature.

JAYLA

All right! Both of you just drop it. I'm not a lesbo and neither is Dr. McGee. Now drop the subject.

SHAYLA

Mommy, what's a lesbo?

JAYLA

Nothing, Shayla, just forget you heard that nasty word.

(To Stanley and Sherilee)

Thanks a lot, you two.

Shayla looks up from her drawing.

SHAYLA

Mommy, I'm hungry and I have to go potty.

JAYLA

Shay, you just went a half hour ago and it's not time for dinner yet. Try to hold it for a little while. It won't be too long before we stop.

SHAYLA

But Mommy, I can't help it. I really have to go.

Stanley looks down between his legs and picks up an empty soda cup. He hands it back toward Shayla.

Sherilee slaps the cup out of Stanley's hand.

MITCH

Can't you shut her up, Jay?

Jayla looks at Mitch with a contemptuous look.

MITCH (CONT'D)

We're in the middle of bum-fuck nowhere with not toilet around. So, unless the kid wants to squat behind a bush, she's gonna have to wait.

JAYLA

Some men shouldn't be fathers.

MITCH  
Wasn't my choice, lady. If I wasn't  
drunk and out of rubbers sixteen  
years ago, I'd still be playin' the  
field.

SHERILEE  
(softly to herself)  
Gee, I never felt so loved.

EXT. DISCOVERY ROAD - AFTERNOON

The family passes a billboard on the side of the road.

INSERT - BILLBOARD

George & Helen's Looking Glass Diner

INT. SUV - DISCOVERY ROAD - AFTERNOON

Mitch turns back around from looking at the billboard.

JAYLA  
If this is really the way you feel,  
then why didn't you just leave us  
in San Diego?

MITCH  
Look, there's a diner up ahead.  
We'll stop and eat and everyone can  
take a piss. Will that make you  
happy?

LATER

The road ends at George and Helen's diner, a one-story, run-  
down building.

The car pulls into the parking lot.

EXT. DINER PARKING LOT - AFTERNOON

Mitch, Jayla and the kids get out of the car.

MITCH  
Where the hell are we?

JAYLA  
Lord only knows.

SHAYLA  
Is there a potty here?

STANLEY  
Of course there is, dummy.

Shayla sticks her tongue out at Stanley.

MITCH  
What a shit hole.

JAYLA  
Well, you're the one who sniffed it out.

Sherilee and Stanley snicker to themselves.

MITCH  
As long as we're here, we all can stand a bite to eat and it'll give Shayla a chance to use the head.

JAYLA  
How apropos.

MITCH  
I guess you just bring out the best in me, puddin'.

Shayla stares up at the rundown building. A look of apprehension overwhelms her face as she cowers behind her mother.

SHAYLA  
Mommy, please don't make me go in there. This place scares me. Can't we go someplace else? I don't really have to go that bad.

JAYLA  
Mitch, maybe we should . . .

MITCH  
Yeah, well, whatever, let's get inside before the kids die of hunger or burst their bladders.

JAYLA  
What a dad.

The family walks toward the diner. As they approach the entrance, they hear a country western song playing.

Mitch looks back at Jayla, then opens the door.

INT. DINER - AFTERNOON

The family pushes their way into the diner.

Behind the counter stands the owner GEORGE a short, fat, balding man in his fifties and missing several teeth. He wears a dirty T-shirt and wields a filthy spatula.

At the cash register sits HELEN, George's wife. Also portly and relatively short in stature, head full of salt and pepper strands.

Against a bar stool leans the waitress JEANNIE, a pretty brunette who stands five foot six and weighs one hundred ten pounds.

At a table next to one of the windows sits CRAIG, a trucker in his early sixties who weighs about three hundred pounds, and has grey hair, mustache and beard. Two other truckers, Jake, mid-fifties, tobacco-chewing, long-haired, redneck and Buford, could pass as Jake's little brother, share Craig's table.

The family pushes their way through the middle of the diner looking for a place to sit.

The owner and male patrons ogle the females of the family, as they pass by, especially the six-year-old.

GEORGE  
Where you folks from?

MITCH  
San Diego, why?

GEORGE  
Just asking, fella. What part of San Diego?

MITCH  
The good part, okay?

GEORGE  
Jus' tryin' to have a friendly conversation, boy.

MITCH  
You won't find any here, pa.

GEORGE  
Guess not.

The owner's wife Helen seats the family and hands them menus. Helen gives George a stern look and motions him to return to the kitchen to cook the food.

MITCH

Okay, everyone make up your minds what you want to eat, I want to make Phoenix before midnight.

JAYLA

Mitch, there's nothing on the menu but stuff made with corn. Maybe we should find another place to eat.

MITCH

And where would you suggest we go? This is the only place I've seen for a hundred miles.

Waitress enters with order pad.

JEANNIE

May I take your order, folks?

MITCH

Don't you have any meat in this place?

(with a country accent)

Or are y'all too far out in the way for the meat truck?

JEANNIE

Well, sir, there's a shortage right now. All we have is what's on the menu.

MITCH

What's on the menu sucks. No offense to you, umm . . .

Mitch looks at Jeannie's name tag.

INSERT - NAME TAG

JEANNIE

BACK TO SCENE

MITCH

Jeannie.

JEANNIE

Well, sir, I'm sorry there's no meat, but is there anything you would like?

Mitch gives Jeannie a slow once over.

Jayla scowls at Mitch, then looks back at her menu.

MITCH

Well, I guess we'll have four bowls of corn chowder and four orders of corn bread. What do you have to drink?

STANLEY

Uh, corn juice?

JEANNIE

We have Pepsi, Diet Pepsi, Root Beer, 7UP, lemonade, milk, chocolate milk, coffee, tea, and beer.

MITCH

You mean you have Pepsi, 7UP, and beer, but no meat? What a fucked up joint.

JAYLA

Please excuse my husband for his rudeness, we'll have five Pepsis, please.

Jeannie leaves to give the order to George.

MITCH

Don't apologize for me, Jay, this is a fucked up place, with fucked up weird looking people, who don't have any fucking meat. What would you call it?

The truckers look up in offense at Mitch.

JAYLA

(softly)

Mitch, let's just eat the soup and bread and go. Otherwise we'll be listening to whining and crying all the way to the next big town.

MITCH

You're right about that.

Jeannie brings the food.

SHAYLA  
Mommy, I still have to go potty!

Jayla motions for Jeannie to come over.

JEANNIE  
Yes, ma'am.

JAYLA  
Where's the restroom?

JEANNIE  
It's down the hall first door on  
the right.

Jeannie points to the hallway.

JAYLA  
Sher, do you need to use it too?

SHERILEE  
(with a country accent)  
No, ma'am. But I reckon I will  
anyway.

JAYLA  
Knock it off, Sher. You're acting  
like your brother.

SHERILEE  
Eww! Don't compare me to that  
nasty pervert.

Stanley smiles at Sherilee, cups his hand and moves it  
sideways back and forth toward his mouth while poking his  
cheek in and out with his tongue.

JAYLA  
Okay, okay, just come on.

Jayla, Sherilee and Shayla go down the hall.

INT. DINER BATHROOM - AFTERNOON

The bathroom has peeling paint, broken tiles on the floor and  
no window coverings.

JAYLA  
You would think they would at least  
try to keep it decent for the few  
customers that do come in here.

SHAYLA

Yeah, Mommy, this is pretty bad.

SHERILEE

It's a shit hole.

JAYLA

Okay, enough already. -- both of you listen to me. Don't touch anything unless it's absolutely necessary. Put a paper cover over the toilet seat before you sit down, get a paper towel to turn on the faucet and for pete's sake, wash your hands a lot before we go back out to eat.

(to Shayla)

Don't worry, sweetie, Mommy will help you. But remember, don't touch anything.

SHAYLA

Okay, Mommy, I won't. I promise.

INSERT - FLOOR

Cockroaches scampering across the floor.

BACK TO SCENE

Jayla peeks in the first stall. The condition of the toilet causes her to grimace and gag. They check the next stall which looks okay. Sherilee goes in.

Jayla and Shayla enter the last stall. Just opposite Shayla's stall sits an open window. Her stall has no door leaving the window visible to whomever sits on the toilet.

Jayla puts down a paper toilet seat cover and sits Shayla on the toilet.

SHERILEE

Mom, can you hand me some toilet paper?

Jayla looks around and sees a roll of toilet paper sitting on top of the dispenser.

JAYLA

Sure, baby, just make sure you don't touch the side of the stall when you reach down to grab it.

SHERILEE

Eww! Don't worry, Mom, I won't.

Jayla takes the roll of toilet paper from the dispenser and hands it to Sherilee.

JAYLA

Here you go.

SHERILEE

Thanks.

Sherilee grabs the roll of toilet paper.

INT. DINER - AFTERNOON

STANLEY

You're right, Dad, this place sucks, and it's kinda spooky too, don't ya think?

MITCH

Spooky ain't the word, kid.

Craig and the other truckers gesture toward Mitch's table and laugh out loud, then Craig turns and faces Mitch.

CRAIG

Hey, Outsider, nice looking brood you got.

MITCH

What's it to you, gramps?

CRAIG

Just makin' conversation. Why, you got some kind of problem?

MITCH

I got lots of problems, tumble weed. The main one is I'm stuck in the middle of nowhere with a bunch of hayseed, I'm datin' my sister, inbred, banjo playin', Deliverance rejects with no meat on the menu.

CRAIG

Eat shit and die, outsider.

MITCH

Eat shit and live, shit kicker.

CRAIG

Keep talkin', asshole, and you'll  
find out how much shit we can kick.

MITCH

Ooohhh.

Mitch wipes his brow with his middle finger and then holds the finger out toward Craig, looking simultaneously between Craig and his finger.

The other truckers heartily laugh about Mitch's gesture.

Craig stands and walks over to the table.

CRAIG

Now wouldn't it be a shame if one  
of them nice lookin' kids came up  
missin'?

Mitch stands up to face Craig.

MITCH

What'd you say, you dusty fuck? You  
threatenin' one of my kids?

CRAIG

Take it any way you want it to,  
boy. Just remember, I don't make  
threats I can't back up or promises  
I can't keep.

Mitch starts toward Craig.

Jeannie runs in between the two men holding two mugs of beer.

JEANNIE

Come on, boys, drinks're on the  
house.

Jeannie leads Craig back to his table.

INT. DINER - BATHROOM - AFTERNOON

Sherilee raises the roll to tear off a piece. She hears a squeaking noise. She looks around to see where the noise is coming from only to realize it is coming from the roll of toilet paper. She turns the spool upright to look inside and a hairless baby rat climbs out. The baby rat is deformed and bloody.

Sherilee screams and throws the roll to the floor.

Jayla runs over and goes inside the stall to see what's wrong.

Shayla sits in her stall alone waiting for her mother to return. As she waits, she looks around apprehensively at her surroundings, then she notices the window opposite her, but quickly looks away.

SHAYLA

Mommy, I don't want to be in here alone.

JAYLA

I'll be there in a minute, sweetie.

She looks back at the window. She sees a distorted image outside the open window. Two red ovals lie within the midst of the image.

SHAYLA

(softly to self)  
What is that?

When the ovals blink Shayla realize that it is a face with a piercing pair of eyes staring at her.

Jayla carefully picks up the roll of toilet paper to remove the rat.

Shayla lets out a blood curdling screams.

Jayla throws the roll of toilet paper and runs out of Sherilee's stall.

The roll of toilet paper lands in Sherilee's lap causing the rat to fall onto her skirt, which causes her to throw the roll and scream again.

SHERILEE

Mom, what the hell is wrong with you?

Jayla enters Shayla's stall to find her in a fetal position on the toilet.

JAYLA

Shayla, what's wrong?

SHAYLA

Mommy, there's someone looking at me in the window.

Jayla turns to look but sees nothing.

JAYLA  
Shay, there is no one there.

SHAYLA  
But Mommy, I saw some eyes.

JAYLA  
Shayla, just go potty so we can go eat.

SHAYLA  
I'm trying Mommy, but I can't. It hurts to go.

JAYLA  
Try hard, please.

SHAYLA  
I'm finished, Mommy. I can't go anymore.

Jayla notices slightly bloodied urine when she reaches to flush the toilet.

JAYLA  
Shayla, are you all right?

SHAYLA  
Yes, Mommy. It just hurts to go potty.

JAYLA  
Come here, baby.

Jayla picks Shayla up to visually examine her.

JAYLA (CONT'D)  
Does it hurt inside or outside, honey?

SHAYLA  
Inside.

JAYLA  
It's probably just a little infection.

They all go to the sink to wash their hands.

SHERILEE  
Mom, can we just get the hell out of here, please?

Shayla nods her head in agreement.

JAYLA  
Okay, I think I have some wipes in  
my purse.

INT. DINER - AFTERNOON

Jayla, Sherilee and Shayla come back from restroom.

JAYLA  
God, that restroom was filthy.

SHAYLA  
Yeah, Daddy, it was gross.

SHERILEE  
Yeah, Dad, almost as gross as  
Stanley.

JAYLA  
Knock it off, Sher.

SHERILEE  
He is gross, Mom.

Mitch takes a drink of his beer and looks over at Craig.

Craig looks back at Mitch and laughs as he raises his glass  
in a toast.

Mitch turns his head and spits on the floor, puts down the  
beer and proceeds to finish his meal.

Jayla looks at Mitch, then at Craig.

Craig winks at Jayla.

Jayla looks back down at her food and continues to eat.

LATER

Family finishes eating and Jeannie comes with the bill.

JEANNIE  
Can I get you folks anything else?

MITCH  
Nope, don't think we could eat  
another bite.

JEANNIE  
Okay, that'll be thirty-three  
fifty.

MITCH

Here's thirty-four dollars. Keep the change!

JEANNIE

Thank you, sir. . . If I may, I'd like to offer some friendly advice.

MITCH

What advice could you possibly give that would do me any good.

JEANNIE

It's gettin' dark, and 'round these parts, no one goes out after dark.

CRAIG

The night can play tricks on you out there on the road.

Mitch glares at Craig, then looks back toward Jeannie.

JEANNIE

I'd advise you to stay the night here with us. . .

Mitch smiles at Jayla and cocks his eyebrows.

Jayla scowls at Mitch.

JEANNIE (CONT'D)

Or if you want to stay in your trailer, you best lock up tight and leave in the mornin'.

MITCH

Thanks for your advice, but I think we'll just mosey on down the road apiece till we find a motel or a Bed and Breakfast. Thanks for the invite though.

Mitch winks at Jeannie, then stands up to leave.

JEANNIE

Sir, I'm beggin' you, please listen to me. There's stuff that goes on here that you outsiders don't know 'bout.

Helen slams the cash register drawer shut.

Jeannie sheepishly looks over at Helen, then back at the family.

JEANNIE (CONT'D)

I can't really explain it, but it's not safe to be out after dark.

MITCH

Uh, okay. . . If you can't explain it -- then you can't explain it. So thanks for the food, and I'll be sure to nominate this place for the Annual Shit Hole of the Southwest Award.

Family exits diner.

JEANNIE

Jerk!

HELEN

Jeannie, ain't no use in cryin' over spilt milk. Some people just don't listen.

JEANNIE

Yeah, but you never wanna see somethin' happen to a family. Whole families are hard to come by these days.

HELEN

Forget it, girl. Let 'em go. They'll learn the hard way 'bout listenin' to folks that know.

EXT. DINER PARKING LOT - DUSK

Family piles into SUV.

INT. SUV - DINER PARKING LOT - DUSK

STANLEY

Gee, Dad, that really hit the spot.

MITCH

If you don't shut up, I'm gonna hit your spot.

Mitch tries to start the engine, nothing happens, neither the interior lights nor the ignition work.

MITCH (CONT'D)

What the fuck?

JAYLA

What's wrong?

MITCH

Well, I'm turnin' the key and nothing's happening.

(to Stanley)

Stan, grab the flashlight and come with me.

Mitch exits the car.

Stanley reaches into the back and grabs the flashlight.

STANLEY

Lucky me, I get to go outside and bond with Dad.

Stanley gets out of car.

EXT. DINER PARKING LOT - DUSK

Mitch and Stanley stand in front of the SUV. Mitch opens the hood.

MITCH

Hey, go get the toolbox, will ya?

STANLEY

Sure, Dad.

Stanley walks to the back of the SUV and returns a minute later with the toolbox.

MITCH

Hand me a screwdriver.

STANLEY

What kind, flat head or Phillips?

MITCH

I don't care, just hand me a goddamn screwdriver.

STANLEY

Okay, okay. Here.

Mitch scrapes the terminals with the screwdriver. Sparks fly up with each scrape.

MITCH

Okay, kid, tell Mom to start the car.

STANLEY

Sure, Dad.

Stanley walks to the driver side window and looks in.

STANLEY (CONT'D)

Hey, Mom. Dad said to start the car.

JAYLA

You couldn't reach in and turn the key, huh, Stan?

SHERILEE

No, Mom, he's a guy. He thinks woman are supposed to do everything.

JAYLA

Yeah, I know.

Jayla turns the key in the ignition, but still nothing happens.

MITCH

Are you crankin' it?

JAYLA

Yes, nothing's happening.

Mitch pulls out his cellphone, dials for roadside assistance, but can't get a signal.

MITCH

Shit.

(to Stanley)

Get back in the car, kid. Tell your mom there's no signal on the cell so I'm going inside to find out where the nearest garage is.

STANLEY

Sure, Dad.

EXT. DINER PARKING LOT - DUSK

Mitch walks toward diner. He reaches the door, shakes his head and walks in.

INT. DINER - DUSK

GEORGE

Back so soon?

MITCH

It's not 'cause of the food, pops --  
you got a phone I can use?

GEORGE

Nope. What's wrong?

MITCH

Goddamn car won't start. Need a  
mechanic or a tow.

HELEN

Everything's closed by this time.

GEORGE

Yep. Early to bed, early to rise  
'round here.

Mitch slams his fists on the counter. He pulls out his road  
map.

MITCH

Just tell me where the nearest  
garage is.

GEORGE

Nearest garage is about forty miles  
up the highway. I suppose you could  
make it there and back by mornin',  
if you run, but probably won't have  
nothin' open when you get there,  
since it'll be the middle of the  
night.

MITCH

Yeah, thank ya,  
(under his breath to  
George)  
Stupid son-of-a-bitch.

Mitch smiles and mumbles something under his breath to  
George, then looks over at Craig.

MITCH (CONT'D)

You -- you have a truck, you can  
take me, right?

CRAIG

Me? Now why would I take you  
anywhere, boy?

Mitch takes out his wallet, pulls out a couple of hundred  
dollar bills and holds them up.

CRAIG (CONT'D)

Can't do it, boy. Union rules. Can  
only drive so many hours a day.

Mitch puts his money away and his road map and turns to  
leave.

Jeannie, standing behind Mitch with a coffee pot in one hand  
and a cup in the other offers Mitch the coffee.

MITCH

Jeannie, do you have a car? I can  
really use the ride and I can pay  
you too.

JEANNIE

(flirtatiously)  
I'd like to mister, but I got no  
car. Besides, I live in the back  
room here, so there's no need for  
me to go anywhere.

MITCH

Lucky you.

Mitch storms out of the diner.

EXT. DINER PARKING LOT - DUSK

Mitch walks angrily across the parking lot to the SUV.

INT. SUV - DUSK

Mitch gets into the driver's seat of the SUV.

MITCH

Well, we may as well get  
comfortable 'cause we're not  
gettin' any help from anyone in  
there.

JAYLA

Did you offer to pay for their gas?

MITCH

Of course. I'm not stupid.

JAYLA

I didn't say you were, Mitch. I was just asking a question.

MITCH

Damn hayseeds. They wouldn't know shit if it fell on 'em anyway.

Mitch looks over at Jayla.

MITCH (CONT'D)

Well at least I have something to keep me warm tonight. That trailer gets pretty cold.

Jayla gives Mitch a sarcastic look.

JAYLA

You're not sleeping in the trailer.

MITCH

What do you mean, I'm not sleepin' in the trailer?

JAYLA

There's not enough room for all five of us back there with the luggage and all. Besides Shayla's feeling sick so she's gonna sleep with me tonight.

MITCH

So where the hell am I supposed to sleep?

JAYLA

You can sleep in here, the seats recline.

(in a country accent)

Or you can sleep in the diner with your little friend if you want to.

Jayla grabs her purse and readies herself to exit the SUV.

JAYLA (CONT'D)

Come on kids, were gonna sleep in the trailer.

STANLEY

Where are we supposed to sleep. The trailer's full of suitcases and crap.

JAYLA

We have to move all the bags into the car for tonight.

STANLEY

Sorry I asked.

Jayla looks at Mitch.

JAYLA

Are you gonna help us move the stuff?

MITCH

Why should I, I'm not sleeping back there.

JAYLA

You know, if you can't be a decent husband, at least try to be a decent father.

(to children)

Come on kids, let's go.

Jayla and the kids exit the SUV. Jayla slams the door.

EXT. DINER PARKING LOT - DUSK

Jayla and the children move suitcases from the trailer to the SUV.

INT. TRAILER - DUSK

Jayla and the children get into the trailer.

STANLEY

Man that took forever.

JAYLA

Make sure you lock the door and windows, Stanley.

STANLEY

Hey, Mom, you don't think those creeps from the diner would mess with us, do ya?

JAYLA  
What would make you think that?

STANLEY  
Oh, nothing.

JAYLA  
(facetiously)  
Don't worry, your dad's here to  
protect us.

STANLEY  
I wouldn't mind if that waitress  
came out and messed with me though.

SHERILEE  
Shut up, jerk wad.

STANLEY  
Skank weed.

JAYLA  
Both of you, hush.

Everyone gets in their nightclothes and gets in bed.

Shayla gets into her teddy bear covered pajamas.

INT. SUV - NIGHT

Mitch stirs in the seat trying to find a comfortable  
position.

INT. TRAILER - NIGHT

Everyone drifts off to sleep.

EXT. DINER PARKING LOT - NIGHT

INTRUDER'S POV

Something approaches through the darkness. It peers into the  
SUV and sees Mitch, ducks down and then moves to the trailer.  
It looks through the windows of the trailer at the different  
people inside. It sees Jayla, Sherilee and Stanley. When it  
sees Shayla, it fixes its gaze upon her.

INSERT - SHAYLA'S FACE

Shayla stirring in her sleep.

BACK TO SCENE

The intruder moves hurriedly around to the window nearest Shayla. It looks in at her again.

INT. TRAILER - NIGHT

As Shayla sleeps restlessly in her bed, the back awning opens on the trailer.

Then the window slowly opens.

INTRUDER'S POV

The intruder enters through the window and hovers close to Shayla's face.

BACK TO SCENE

Shayla rises slowly off the bed.

SHAYLA  
Stop moving, Mommy.

Shayla floats through the open window into a standing position facing in the direction of her mother.

Shayla has her hands up as if to ward off the force, but to no avail.

The invisible force carries her backward toward the diner..

Shayla awakens and screams frantically.

SHAYLA (CONT'D)  
Mommy! Mommy!

The noise wakes everyone in the trailer.

Jayla wakes up and looks around and sees that Shayla is missing.

Stanley looks out the window and sees Shayla in midair six feet from the trailer and slowly moving farther away.

STANLEY  
Holy shit! Mom, come here!

Jayla goes to the window and looks out.

JAYLA  
Oh my God. Hold on, baby, mommy's  
coming.  
(to Sherilee and Stanley)  
Go get your father now.

Jayla, Stanley and Sherilee exit the trailer.

EXT. DINER PARKING LOT - NIGHT

Everyone comes out of the trailer.

Jayla runs toward Shayla as the kids run to the SUV to wake their father.

The force carrying Shayla increases its speed to match the mother's pursuit. As they approach the diner, the force continues to lower Shayla closer and closer toward the ground.

Stanley and Sherilee reach the SUV. They shout and bang on the doors in an attempt to waken their father.

STANLEY  
Dad. . .Dad, get up. Someone  
grabbed Shay.

Mitch jolts upright.

MITCH  
Huh . . .What?

Shayla's feet reach the ground and slowly sink down into it.

SHAYLA  
Mommy! Mommy!

JAYLA  
Shayla, I'm coming.

Jayla continues frantically toward her daughter.

Mitch exits the SUV.

MITCH  
What the fuck is going on?

Shayla, now waste deep in the ground and still sinking, continues to desperately reaches for her nearing mother.

SHAYLA

Mommy! Mommy! Help me. I'm scared.

JAYLA

Damn you! Bring back my baby! Give me back my baby!

Shayla disappears into the ground right in front of the diner's steps.

Jayla arrives at the spot where her daughter disappears. She sees the hole her daughter went into and the trench leading from the trailer fill themselves in.

Mitch and the kids run toward the diner. They find Jayla on her hands and knees digging at the ground and muttering to herself.

JAYLA (CONT'D)

(frantically to herself)

Hold on, baby. Mommy's coming.

MITCH

What the hell are you doin', Jay?

Jayla ignores Mitch and continues digging.

Mitch grabs Jayla's shoulder and Jayla pushes him away.

MITCH (CONT'D)

What's wrong with your mom?

STANLEY

Dad, we told you. Someone or something took Shayla.

MITCH

What do you mean they took Shayla?

STANLEY

They took her. You know, kidnapped, abducted, whatever you wanna call it, they took her.

Mitch runs toward the trailer to look for Shayla.

MITCH

Shayla?

Mitch looks in the trailer.

MITCH (CONT'D)  
Shayla, where are you?

Mitch finds no trace of his daughter within the trailer and runs back to Jayla.

Mitch grabs Jayla by the shoulders and lifts her to her feet.

MITCH (CONT'D)  
What is going on? Where is Shayla?

Jayla, still half in shock, points toward the diner.

Mitch looks toward the diner.

MITCH (CONT'D)  
That son-of-a-bitch.

Mitch releases Jayla and runs toward the diner.

He runs up the steps and bursts through the door.

The kids collect Jayla and lead her to the diner.

INT. DINER - NIGHT

HELEN  
What in the Sam hill's goin' on?

MITCH  
Someone snatched my kid and I have  
a pretty good idea who did it.

Mitch looks toward the table where the three truckers sat earlier, but only two remain.

Mitch runs over and grabs the closest one to him.

MITCH (CONT'D)  
Where the hell's your buddy --  
where is he!

Jake pushes Mitch's hands away.

JAKE  
Take it easy, Mister. He said he  
was gonna go sleep out in his  
truck.

MITCH  
Which one's his truck?

JAKE

The black one out there with the  
shit kicker mud flaps.

Mitch takes a couple of steps back, turns and runs out the door, followed by George, Jake, Buford and Stanley.

Helen and Jeannie come over to help Sherilee calm Jayla down.

Jeannie brings a fresh pot of coffee.

JEANNIE

You want some coffee?

SHERILEE

No thanks.

JEANNIE

Oh, don't worry, it's decaf.

Sherilee gives Jeannie a look of disbelief.

EXT. DINER PARKING LOT - NIGHT

Mitch and the other quickly approach Craig's truck.

Mitch jumps onto the running board and looks in the cab. He sees no trace of Craig or Shayla.

He jumps down, picks up a large rock and throws it through the driver's side window.

BUFORD

What do you think you're doin'?

JAKE

That's breakin' and enterin'. Yo  
can't do that.

The two truckers start toward Mitch.

GEORGE

Best just leave that man be, boys.

Mitch unlocks the door, opens it and goes inside.

INT. CAB OF TRUCK - NIGHT

Mitch searches frantically throughout the cab and sleeper.

Mitch finds a spoiled, half eaten sandwich, covered in maggots, sitting atop a porno magazine.

MITCH

Sick fuck.

Mitch looks under the seat and finds a torn piece of Shayla's teddy bear covered pajamas covered in a black gooey substance.

MITCH (CONT'D)

I'll kill you, you son-of-a-bitch.

Mitch exits the cab.

EXT. DINER PARKING LOT - NIGHT

Mitch grabs Buford.

MITCH

So where's your friend? Where's  
your fucking friend?

Mitch punches Buford, sending him to the ground.

Jake runs over and grabs Mitch from behind.

Buford gets up, comes over and punches Mitch a couple of times in the stomach.

GEORGE

Ah, shit.

George runs back to the diner.

Mitch kicks Buford in the groin and sends Jake to the ground with a hip toss.

Buford clutches his groin as he falls to his knees.

Jake takes a switchblade out of his pocket and starts toward Mitch.

Jake tackles Mitch and they fall to the ground.

Jake stabs at Mitch's chest and face.

Mitch grabs Jake's hands and struggles to keep the knife from sticking him.

George returns from the diner with his shotgun. He fires a shot into the air to stop the brawl.

GEORGE (CONT'D)

Okay, break it up.

Jake stops and looks up.

Mitch punches Jake in the jaw causing Jake to drop the knife.

Mitch picks up the knife, pushes Jake to the ground, straddles him and puts the knife to Jake's throat.

GEORGE (CONT'D)

I said that's enough, outsider.

MITCH

It's not gonna be enough until I get some answers outta this fat fuck.

GEORGE

If'n you don't git offa that boy, the only answer that'll be concernin' you is whether or not there's an afterlife. Now git up offa him.

Mitch continues to hold the knife to Jake's throat.

GEORGE (CONT'D)

Now!

George takes a step toward Mitch and cocks back the hammer of the shotgun.

Mitch looks up at George, takes the knife away from Jake's throat and gets to his feet.

GEORGE (CONT'D)

Now lose the knife.

Mitch throws the knife and it sticks in the ground next to Jake's head.

Jake turns to see where the knife landed and utters a frightful sigh.

George lowers the shotgun.

GEORGE (CONT'D)

Now let's suppose you tell us what this is all about.

MITCH

All about. I'll tell you what this is all about. My daughter's been kidnapped. That's what this is about.

GEORGE  
Kidnapped?

MITCH  
Yeah, kidnapped. You know, stolen,  
taken, abducted.

GEORGE  
Why do you think it was Craig?

MITCH  
Don't be fat and stupid. You heard  
him earlier threatenin' my  
daughter.

BUFORD  
Aww. That didn't mean nothin'. It  
was all talk.

STANLEY  
Seems like more than just a  
coincidence don't ya think, him  
talkin' about it and then Shayla  
going missin' an hour later.

BUFORD  
Well, that don't mean nothin'.

STANLEY  
So where the hell is he?

MITCH  
Yeah, fat man, where is he?

Mitch starts toward George.

George raises the barrel of the shotgun again.

GEORGE  
Now hold on. I had nothin' to do  
with yer girl disappearin'. Before  
you go off on some wild tangent,  
did anyone actually see Craig take  
her.

Mitch looks at Stanley.

STANLEY  
I don't know what I saw. I just saw  
her . . .I don't know what I saw.

GEORGE  
She coulda just gone for a walk.

STANLEY

She didn't go for no damn walk. She was taken. Mom. . Mom saw what happened. She can tell you.

Mitch, Stanley and George head toward the diner with the two hurt truckers trailing behind.

INT. DINER - NIGHT

Mitch and the others enter the diner.

Mitch and Stanley head to the booth where Jayla and Sherilee sit.

MITCH

Jay, I need you to tell me exactly what happened. Who took Shayla?

JAYLA

I don't know.

MITCH

What do you mean you don't know? Was it someone from the diner or somebody else?

JAYLA

No. It was nobody.

MITCH

Nobody. What do you mean nobody? Make sense, would ya?

Mitch grabs Jayla by the shoulder and shakes her.

Jayla pushes Mitch's hands away.

JAYLA

I don't know who took her. I don't know. I didn't see anybody. I just saw her being taken away. Taken underneath this diner.

MITCH

Oh great. My daughter's missing and this bitch is outta her mind.

SHERILEE

No, Daddy, Mom's right. We didn't see who took her.

STANLEY

We just saw her being taken.

MITCH

Where is she now. Where was she taken to?

Jayla looks down and points toward the ground.

MITCH (CONT'D)

Oh shit! What the hell's that supposed to mean.

JEANNIE

I think she means the basement.

Helen slams a glass down on the counter, which startles Jeannie and draws the attention of everyone else.

MITCH

Basement? There's a basement in this place?

HELEN

Yeah, but there's no need to go down there.

MITCH

I think I'll find out for myself, lady.

HELEN

Jeannie, told you folks there's things out there that even we don't understand. You were warned an' you didn't listen.

Mitch walks toward Helen.

MITCH

Well a lot of goddamn good that does me now.

Mitch turns back toward the children.

MITCH (CONT'D)

Sherilee, you stay here and take care of your mother. And be sure to yell out if that bastard Craig comes back. Stanley, you come with me to the basement.

George pumps the shotgun and holds it across his chest.

GEORGE

Look, boy, Helen said there ain't  
no reason to go down there.

MITCH

Look, friend, my little girl is  
missing and no one knows where she  
is. My wife thinks she's in your  
basement. So that's where I'm  
goin'. You can either shoot me or  
you can help me, but I'm going.

Mitch and George face off.

GEORGE

Don't think it'll do any good, but  
if you insist. This way.

INT. DINER HALLWAY - NIGHT

Mitch and Stanley follow George to the basement door.

INT. DINER BASEMENT - NIGHT

MITCH

Don't you have any lights down  
here?

George turns on the lights to reveal an old rickety staircase  
with a splintery handrail.

They start walking down the staircase.

GEORGE

Oh if I were you, I wouldn't use  
the. . .

Stanley pulls back in hand and shakes it briskly.

STANLEY

Ouch!

GEORGE

. . .handrail. Damn splinters. Just  
kinda lean against the wall.

Mitch searches through freezers and boxes.

Stanley looks through boxes and under tables. Then he looks  
in a microwave oven.

Mitch looks at Stanley and shakes his head.

MITCH  
We're looking for your sister, not  
your lunch.

STANLEY  
Sorry, I just thought . . .

MITCH  
Yeah, well, you thought wrong.

Mitch turns back toward George.

MITCH (CONT'D)  
Well, I guess that's it.

GEORGE  
See, I told you t'weren't nothin'  
down here.

Mitch and Stanley follow George upstairs.

INT. DINER - NIGHT

JAYLA  
Anything?

MITCH  
Nothing. Not a goddamn thing.

Mitch walks up to Jayla and leans over her.

MITCH (CONT'D)  
Look. I need answers that make some  
sense. Now get your shit together,  
woman, and tell me exactly what you  
saw.

JAYLA  
You won't believe me.

MITCH  
Give me a try.

JAYLA  
I saw Shayla being carried away  
through the air. She was holding  
her arms out toward me and  
screaming my name. As I ran toward  
her, she went into the ground under  
the diner and the ground covered  
itself back up. That's exactly what  
I saw.

JAKE

Sounds like she's been hittin' the shine.

SCREAMS suddenly pierce the silence.

JAYLA

Shayla! That's Shayla! It's coming from the basement! I told you she was down there.

MITCH

I'm going back down.

JAYLA

I'm going with you.

STANLEY

Hey, wait a sec. You're not leaving us up here with Uncle Jed and Jethro.

The family heads toward the basement.

George starts after them.

Helen grabs George's arm.

HELEN

No, no. You stay here in case Craig comes back. Jeannie and I'll go this time.

INT. DINER BASEMENT - NIGHT

Mitch, Jayla, Stanley, Sherilee, Jeannie and Helen enter the basement.

Jeannie and Helen grab two flashlights before following the family to the basement.

They follow the sound of the screaming to the rear of the basement.

They come to a row of freezers

JAYLA

It sounds like it's coming from behind there.

Mitch goes over and tries to move the freezers.

MITCH

Stanley, come here and give me a hand.

Stanley comes over and helps Mitch move the freezers revealing a four-foot bone door held together with bits of leather with an ancient symbol on it.

Mitch pulls the door to the side to expose a passageway.

The screams become louder.

INSERT - PASSAGEWAY

Long narrow passageway.

BACK TO SCENE

JAYLA

Shayla, Mommy's coming.

They make their way through the stench filled, dark passageway.

They come to another bone door.

Mitch opens the door.

INT. INNER CHAMBER - NIGHT

Mitch and the others enter the inner chamber at the end of the passageway.

They all gag from the stench as they fumble through the darkness.

SHERILEE

Geez. What's that smell.

STANLEY

I didn't do it.

Jeannie and Helen slowly scan their flashlights around the room revealing tables, shelves with jars on them and ancient symbols on the walls.

On the tables lie skeletons of what appear to be children.

INSERT - TABLES

Tables with skeletons on them.

INSERT - EMPTY TABLE

The empty table at the end of the row.

BACK TO SCENE

MITCH

What the hell is this shit? What are you people into?

HELEN

We ain't into nothin', boy.

MITCH

Then how do you explain this?

HELEN

Your guess is as good as mine.

MITCH

Naw, you assholes know something.

JEANNIE

I told you before, we don't have any explanation for what goes on. We just know that there's somethin' out there.

INSERT - JARS ON SHELVES

Jars full of human reproductive parts.

BACK TO SCENE

MITCH

Jay, kids, feel around the walls, maybe there's another passage or something.

Stanley feels around the walls and at the end of the room he finds a two-foot bone door leading to a cold, damp crawl space that emits a stronger more foul odor.

STANLEY

Hey, Dad, I think I found something.

Mitch and the others walk to where Stanley is standing.

Jeannie shines her flashlight on the bone door.

Mitch pushes the door open.

SHERILEE

Do we have to go through there?  
Isn't there another way?

Sherilee cringes as she looks toward the small opening.

HELEN

I think I'm gonna turn back.  
There's no way I can make it  
through there with my rheumatism.

MITCH

Oh, is that what you call fat in  
these parts?

Helen scowls at Mitch, then turns and heads back.

Mitch enters the crawl space. He crawls on his belly and uses his Zippo lighter to light his way.

MITCH (CONT'D)

Okay, you guys, come on.

INT. CRAWL SPACE - NIGHT

Mitch leads the others through the crawl space, which smells worse than the passageway.

They hear growling and scratching all around them.

Mitch's Zippo lighter keeps going out due to the dampness in the crawl space.

Mitch reaches the end of the crawl space and apprehensively open another bone door.

EXT. DESERT - NIGHT

Mitch pushes the door open and crawls through to find himself outside.

Mitch stands up and looks around then helps the others out of the crawl space.

MITCH

What the . . . Where are we?

JEANNIE  
Looks like desert to me.

MITCH  
No shit, Sherlock.

JEANNIE  
Didn't you just ask. . .

MITCH  
It was a rhetorical question or  
don't you know what that means?

JEANNIE  
T'ain't no reason to get nasty.

Jeannie walks over and stands next to Sherilee and Stanley.

MITCH  
There's no reason to be stupid  
either.

JAYLA  
Shut up both of you. We're out here  
to find Shayla. Remember?

MITCH  
Yeah, Jay, you're right.

Shayla's screaming pierces the silence

JAYLA  
Mommy's coming, baby.  
(to Mitch)  
Don't just stand there, find her  
dammit.

MITCH  
What the hell do you think I'm  
trying to do? Can the hysterics,  
they're not helping a damn thing.

SHERILEE  
Would you two knock it off for five  
minutes and find my sister. You  
guys may not care about her but I  
do, so cut the shit and find her.

STANLEY  
(meekly)  
Yeah.

Mitch walks over and scowls at Sherilee and Stanley.

While still facing Sherilee and Stanley, Mitch snatches Jeannie's flashlight from her hand.

Mitch scans the area with the flashlight.

Mitch spots a cave some distance ahead of them.

STANLEY (CONT'D)

Holy crap. You don't think she's in there, do you?

They hear Shayla screaming again.

JAYLA

Sweetheart, Mommy's here. I'm coming, baby.

They hurry across the desert floor to the cave.

EXT. CAVE ENTRANCE - NIGHT

Mitch and the others reach the cave entrance which spans six feet across and stands eight feet high.

Mitch shines the flashlight inside the cave. The light barely manages to pierce the darkness.

Mitch gags and takes out his handkerchief covering his nose and mouth trying to block out the stench coming from within the cave. Jayla and the others also cover their faces

JAYLA

In God's name what is that stench?

STANLEY

Damn. It smells like the ass end of Hell in there.

MITCH

What the hell is this?

Jeannie walks slowly toward the cave, pauses, then turns toward Mitch and the others.

JEANNIE

We're not exactly sure. Some say it's the cave where a thousand Indians were gathered and sealed in so they died of suffocation and starvation.

(MORE)

JEANNIE (CONT'D)

Some say it's where an old church  
used to stand before the preacher  
went crazy and started performing  
evil rituals so God made the church  
sink below ground.

Jeannie turns and looks into the cave.

JEANNIE (CONT'D)

I've even heard tell this is the  
spot where Satan fell to Earth  
after being cast outta Heaven.

MITCH

Which do you think it is?

JEANNIE

I don't know. I just know I don't  
want nothin' to do with it.

MITCH

Well, whichever it is, it's the  
most likely place to start  
searching.

Mitch looks at the family.

MITCH (CONT'D)

Come on. This way.

JEANNIE

Sorry, but this is where I stop. I  
don't know what's in there and I  
don't wanna find out.

MITCH

I don't remember asking you along  
in the first place.

Mitch turns and walks toward the cave. Jayla, Sherilee and Stanley follow him leaving Jeannie standing by herself in the dark.

Jeannie gives a sad look then walks hurriedly back to the crawl space entrance before the light from the flashlight disappears.

INT. CAVE - MAIN CAVERN - NIGHT

Mitch enters the main cavern. Jayla, Sherilee and Stanley catch up to Mitch. They all walk slowly and notice a steady decline as they go forward into the main cavern.

INSERT - FLASHLIGHT

Mitch wielding flashlight.

BACK TO SCENE

Mitch shines the flashlight on each family member and finally shines it on himself.

MITCH

Okay. Everyone stay together.

Shayla's screaming stops.

Moments later, the sounds of CHANTING, HOWLING, GROWLING and CRUNCHING erupt through the darkness.

STANLEY

Maybe this isn't such a good idea after all.

SHERILEE

For once I agree with El Jerko here. Maybe we should go back and get the fat guy's shotgun.

MITCH

Shut up and keep moving.

The family pauses as the decline of the main cavern levels into a basin.

About fifty yards ahead of them, they see a figure standing in the darkness.

JAYLA

What the hell is that?

Mitch holds the flashlight steady on the figure.

MITCH

(to figure)  
Hey you.

The figure does not answer.

MITCH (CONT'D)

Hey, I'm talking to you.

The figure still does not respond.

Mitch turns toward Jayla and the kids.

MITCH (CONT'D)

You guys sit tight, I'm gonna go see who it is.

SHERILEE

Be careful, Daddy.

Mitch approaches the figure, As he draws nearer, Mitch notices blood, chunks of flesh and black goo covering the figure.

Mitch comes within five feet of the figure. After a few seconds, he recognizes the figure as Craig, the trucker from the diner.

MITCH

You fuck. What the hell did you do with my kid?

CRAIG

Whoa, Whoa! Hold on mister. I haven't seen your kid. I went out to the truck to go to sleep for the night and next thing I know I'm in here covered in shit.

Mitch notices a piece of Shayla's teddy bear pajamas hanging from Craig's belt.

MITCH

You lying son-of-a-bitch!

CRAIG

Now wait a minute. It's not like I'm the only one thinking dirty thoughts about your little girl. Like butterin' that sweet little muffin. But at least I ain't done nothin' to her -- yet.

MITCH

You sick mother. . .

Mitch grabs Craig and a violent struggle ensues.

Mitch shoves Craig and the two men fall in opposite directions.

The flashlight crashes to the ground, breaks, and goes out.

Mitch reaches in his pocket for his Zippo lighter, pulls it out and drops it.

Mitch drops to the ground and feels around for the lighter. As he fumbles around for the lighter, he hears Craig CRY out in pain.

Mitch finds the lighter, lights it and discovers Craig stuck to the wall in the pattern of an inverted cross.

INSERT - CRAIG'S BODY

Craig's body hangs upside down on the wall. His intestines dangle from his body and drip out black goo. He has no eyeballs and black goo oozes from the empty eye sockets.

BACK TO SCENE

Mitch reels back.

MITCH

Fuck me.

Jayla, Sherilee and Stanley catch up to Mitch.

JAYLA

Why'd you leave us back there in the. . .

MITCH

Don't come any closer.

Jayla and the others ignore Mitch's warning and continue toward him. They notice Craig's body on the wall.

Jayla GASPS, Sherilee SCREAMS and Stanley takes a few steps back and pukes.

MITCH (CONT'D)

I told you not to come over here.

JAYLA

What. . .What did you do to him?

MITCH

I didn't do anything to him.

JAYLA

Then who did?

MITCH

I don't know. When I found him he was fine, except he was covered in some kind of shit.

STANLEY

Dad, you said he was already covered in stuff when you found him.

MITCH

Yeah?

STANLEY

You don't think. . .

Sherilee hits Stanley hard on the back.

SHERILEE

Shut up, idiot.

MITCH

Look he said he didn't touch her.

JAYLA

And you believed him?

MITCH

What fucking choice do I have now, Jay, the man's hanging upside down on the fucking wall gutted. Should I try to question him again?

JAYLA

So now what are we going to do? We may never find her. This bastard may have hidden her somewhere and now that he's dead. . .

MITCH

Knock it off, okay. We'll find her. . . We'll find her.

Mitch, Jayla, Sherilee and Stanley continue walking slowly, moving deeper and deeper into the cave. They stay close to the wall because of the dim light emanating from the lighter. Black goo and what looks like blood cover the walls and the stench inhibits their breathing.

Mitch hears MUFFLED VOICES.

Mitch turns to Jayla

MITCH (CONT'D)

Did you hear that? There's someone else in here.

SHERILEE

Do you think they see us?

JAYLA  
Maybe it's Shayla.

Jayla starts toward the VOICES.

MITCH  
What are you doing? Let me go. Stay  
here with the kids.

JAYLA  
Oh no. You're not leaving us back  
here in the dark again.

MITCH  
Will you just shut up and do what I  
tell you for once.

Mitch lowers the lighter and looks around. He sees something sticking out of the wall. He reaches down and pulls it out. He shakes off the black goo to reveal human forearm bones with the hand still attached.

SHERILEE  
Eww, gross.

Mitch hands the lighter to Jayla.

MITCH  
Hold this a second.

With his free hand Mitch feels in his pockets. Mitch sees Stanley's long sleeved shirt, grabs Stanley by one shoulder and rips one sleeve off the shirt.

STANLEY  
God, Dad.

MITCH  
Shut up.

Mitch ties the shirt around one end of the bone, retrieves the lighter from Jayla and lights the torch.

Mitch tries to hand the torch to Jayla. Jayla backs away.

Mitch hands the torch to Stanley.

STANLEY  
Gee, thanks, Dad.

MITCH  
Now do what I tell you this time  
and stay here.

Mitch walks slowly toward the sound of the VOICES. He comes to three corridors in the basin.

MITCH (CONT'D)

The voices seem to be coming from the middle one. I'm gonna go check it out. I'll be right back.

He chooses the middle corridor and walks slowly into it.

INT. CAVE - MIDDLE CORRIDOR - NIGHT

After Mitch covers about fifty yards the VOICES stop.

Mitch passes the light to the left, then to the right and back to the front.

Mitch stumbles on something and drops the lighter. He picks it up, lights it, and sees the two figures standing right in front of him.

Mitch rears back.

MITCH

Shit. Where the hell did you guys come from?

OFFICER DAVIS

Sir, are you the one with the missing child?

MITCH

Yeah. . .Who the hell are you?

OFFICER DAVIS

I'm Officer Davis and this is my partner Officer Jensen.

Officer Davis, a tall slender dark-haired man, in his forties, about one hundred eighty pounds.

His partner, Officer Jensen, a blond-haired, blue-eyed twenty-year-old.

MITCH

How did you know where to find us?

OFFICER DAVIS

We got a call from George, the owner of the diner. He said you were out here looking for your daughter.

MITCH

And just how did he know where we were? And how did you end up in here ahead of us?

OFFICER DAVIS

Sir, please calm down. We're here to help.

MITCH

Help, my ass. You're probably in on this shit too.

OFFICER DAVIS

Sir, we're just out here to investigate a report of a missing child.

Mitch looks the officers up and down.

MITCH

Where did you guys come from anyway? I didn't see a town around here, let alone a police station.

OFFICER DAVIS

Sir, our office location is not important. Finding your daughter is the priority here, don't you think?

MITCH

Yeah, but you still haven't explained how you knew to look in here and how you got here first.

Officer Davis and Officer Jensen look at each other and then back at Mitch.

MITCH (CONT'D)

Who the hell are you guys. Real cops wouldn't be out here without flashlights or walkies.

OFFICER DAVIS

Sir, calm down.

Officer Davis reaches out and grabs Mitch by the shoulder.

Mitch shoves Officer Davis' hand away.

MITCH

Fuck you! I'll calm down when my kid is found.

Officer Davis puts his hand on his holster.

OFFICER DAVIS  
Sir, get down on your knees and put  
your hands behind your head.

MITCH  
No thanks, I don't swing that way.

OFFICER JENSEN  
Yeah, Davis, he looks like more of  
a 288 to me.

OFFICER DAVIS  
You're right, he looks like he's  
into the young'uns.

Mitch sports a look of confusion.

OFFICER JENSEN  
Sir, have you ever hurt your  
daughter?

MITCH  
What. . . What the Hell are you  
talking about?

OFFICER JENSEN  
Have you ever hurt your daughter,  
physically or otherwise?

MITCH  
You're fucking crazy. Get the Hell  
out of my way so I can find my kid.

OFFICER JENSEN  
Come on. You can tell us. We won't  
tell.

MITCH  
Fuck you, cop.

Mitch hears Officer Jensen approaching from behind him.

Officer Jensen tries to grab Mitch, but Mitch spins around  
and throws Officer Jensen into Officer Davis.

Mitch drops the lighter extinguishing the flame.

Officer Davis' and Officer Jensen's SCREAMS ECHO in the  
darkness.

Mitch feels around for the lighter, grabs it and lights it.

One police officer hung in an inverted cross pattern and the other in an indiscernible heap on the floor.

INSERT - FIRST POLICE OFFICER

Officer Davis' body hanging upside down on the wall.

INSERT - HEAP OF MANGLED FLESH

Remains of Officer Jensen's body.

BACK TO SCENE

Mitch turns and walks slowly toward the family when something large and hairy attacks him and he drops the lighter again.

Sounds of PUNCHING, GROWLING, BITING, and SLAPPING resound out of the darkness.

Mitch SCREAMS.

LATER

Mitch slowly gets up. He fumbles around for the lighter, finds it and lights it. The light from the lighter reveals his bruised and bloody face

Mitch starts back toward the family.

INT. CAVE - MAIN CAVERN - NIGHT

Jayla, Sherilee and Stanley stand in the light of the torch, listening to the CHANTING, GROWLING, HOWLING and CRUNCHING that still echoes through the main cavern.

Mitch emerges from the darkness.

JAYLA

Oh my God. Are you all right?

MITCH

You see me movin' don't cha?

JAYLA

Who was that and what happened to you?

MITCH

I wouldn't even know where to begin.

Mitch looks around as the CHANTING, GROWLING, HOWLING and CRUNCHING gets louder.

MITCH (CONT'D)

How long has that been going on?

STANLEY

Since a couple minutes after you left us.

MITCH

Well, that's the way we should go, toward the sounds.

STANLEY

Uh uh. I'm not following those sounds.

JAYLA

Stanley, your sister needs us.

STANLEY

If she's with whatever's making that sound, she's probably dead already.

Jayla slaps Stanley across the face.

JAYLA

Don't say that.

STANLEY

I'm sorry. I just don't wanna die too.

MITCH

Shut up and grow some balls. We're going.

Mitch, Jayla, Sherilee and Stanley walk toward the three corridors. They pause as they try to distinguish the origin of the sounds.

MITCH (CONT'D)

You can forget the middle one. It's either the right or the left.

(to Stanley)

Which one do you think we should go through.

STANLEY  
The right one.

MITCH  
Okay, we'll go left.

Mitch grabs the torch from Stanley.

As Mitch, Jayla, Sherilee and Stanley move down into the left corridor the CHANTING, GROWLING, HOWLING and CRUNCHING diminish.

MITCH (CONT'D)  
Wait. The sound's stopping.

STANLEY  
Hey, Dad, it sounds like it's coming from behind us.

MITCH  
Okay, everyone back out. Let's go.

Mitch and the others emerge from the left corridor.

SHERILEE  
Dad, it sounds like it's coming from the right corridor.

JAYLA  
Yeah, Mitch, she's right.

Mitch, Jayla and Sherilee go into the right corridor and the CHANTING, GROWLING, HOWLING and CRUNCHING increase in volume.

Stanley follows slowly behind the family.

STANLEY  
See, I told you we should go right.

INT. CAVE - RIGHT CORRIDOR - NIGHT

Mitch, Jayla and the kids walk down the corridor. The deeper they go into the corridor, the louder the sounds get.

The corridor narrows as they continue walking.

Mitch stops abruptly.

STANLEY  
What's wrong, Dad.

Mitch holds the torch down revealing a three square foot patch of maggots on the corridor floor.

SHERILEE

Oh, no way. There's no way I'm walking over that.

MITCH

Come on. It's no big deal. It's just a few maggots.

Mitch straightens up and proceeds to walk over the patch. With his first step he sinks to the top of his head.

Jayla and Sherilee SCREAM.

The torch, which Mitch still holds in his right hand, swings back and forth out of the maggot pool.

Jayla runs up and grabs the torch.

JAYLA

How are we gonna get him out?

SHERILEE

Are you sure you want to?

JAYLA

Stop it. That's your father.

As the family tries to decide how to get Mitch out of the maggot pool, he pulls himself out on the opposite side.

Mitch stands up and curses as he brushes maggots from every part of his body.

MITCH

Goddamn, son-of-a. . .Cock suckin, mother. . .

STANLEY

You okay, Dad?

Mitch glares at Stanley.

MITCH

I swear you're not my kid.

Mitch finishes shaking himself down and dusting himself off. He turns to the deeper part of the corridor and notices the increasing volume of the CHANTING, GROWLING, HOWLING and CRUNCHING.

MITCH (CONT'D)

Come on, let's go.

SHERILEE

Are you crazy? I'm not taking a worm bath.

MITCH

Just jump over it, dammit.

STANLEY

Even you can make that, Sher.

SHERILEE

Shut up, dill weed. You'll probably be the one to fall in.

MITCH

If you two don't stop your shit, I'm gonna leave you all here to rot. Now move it!

Sherilee leaps over the maggot pool, followed by Stanley.

Before she jumps over the maggot pool, Jayla tosses the torch to Mitch.

The family proceeds down the corridor which widens again after a few yards.

As they venture forth, the torch flickers.

SHERILEE

What's that?

MITCH

The torch is going out.  
(to Stanley)  
Hey, Stan, come here.

Stanley walks up to Mitch.

STANLEY

Yeah, Dad.

Mitch rips off Stanley other long sleeve.

STANLEY (CONT'D)

Glad I could help, Dad.

MITCH

Hold this.

Mitch hands the torch to Stanley. Stanley holds the torch as Mitch attempts to tie the shirt sleeve to the lit end of the torch.

Shayla SCREAMS.

SHAYLA (O.S.)  
(SCREAMING)  
Mommy! Mommy!

JAYLA  
Oh my God! My baby. She's up ahead.

Jayla runs toward the sound of Shayla's SCREAMS.

MITCH  
Jay, wait a minute.

Stanley tries to hand Mitch the torch.

MITCH (CONT'D)  
I'm not ready yet.

Mitch pushes the torch back toward Stanley. The torch falls and goes out.

Jayla SCREAMS.

The sound of clothes RIPPING and teeth GNASHING erupt through the darkness.

Mitch fumbles around on the ground for the torch, finds it, pulls out his lighter and lights it.

Mitch, Sherilee and Stanley start toward Jayla.

Mitch reaches Jayla first and finds her lying in a fetal position, battered and bloody. He reels back from the stench.

The children catch up to Mitch and see their mother in a heap on the ground. They rush to her side.

STANLEY  
Jesus, Mom, are you okay?

SHERILEE  
Mom, what happened? Who did this to you?

Sherilee and Stanley help as Jayla struggles to sit up. She coughs as she wipes the blood and goo from her face.

JAYLA  
I'm not sure. One minute I was running toward the sound of Shayla's voice. The next thing I know, I was attacked by this smelly, hairy thing.

MITCH

That sounds like the same thing  
that jumped me.

Jayla and the kids turn toward Mitch.

JAYLA

What? You mean you knew there was  
something down here and you didn't  
tell us? Wasn't it important for us  
to know or were we all supposed to  
find out the hard way like you did?

MITCH

Look, I fucked up. Okay? I didn't  
tell you because I didn't want to  
scare you. It's over. Let's go find  
the kid.

Mitch starts toward the sound of Shayla's continual  
SCREAMING.

Sherilee and Stanley help Jayla to her feet.

JAYLA

Oh, by the way, I'm fine, Mitch.  
Thanks for asking.

Jayla and the kids follow Mitch down the corridor toward the  
SCREAMS.

The cavern narrows once again into a small corridor. Mitch,  
Jayla and the kids follow the corridor to the end. At the end  
of the corridor they find a five-foot by four-foot seven-  
sided curtain of a thin flesh like pinkish material.

MITCH

What the Hell?

SHERILEE

Eww, Dad. What is that?

Mitch walks up to the curtain. He reaches up with his right  
hand and rubs it from top to bottom.

MITCH

It feels slimy and -- warm.

Shayla's SCREAMS sound louder than ever before.

Mitch turns to his family.

MITCH (CONT'D)  
 This is where the sound's coming  
 from. Behind here.

Mitch hands the torch to Jayla.

Mitch takes his hands and rips the curtain open. As he does,  
 Shayla's SCREAMS intensify.

SHAYLA (O.S.)  
 (SCREAMING)  
 Mommy! He's hurting me. Please  
 don't let him hurt me anymore,  
 Mommy.

JAYLA  
 Don't worry, baby. I'm coming. I'm  
 coming.

INT. CAVE - INNER SANCTUM - NIGHT

Mitch climbs through the torn opening, followed by Jayla and  
 the kids. Mitch grabs the torch from Jayla and moves it  
 around to reveal a small domed ceiling cul-de-sac. As he  
 moves forward, the light reveals the shape of a little girl.  
 The little girl's naked body appears drenched in blood and  
 black goo similar to that on the walls of the cave.

MITCH  
 There she is.

JAYLA  
 Oh thank God.  
 (to Shayla)  
 Sweetie, Mommy's here.

Shayla continues screaming at a deafening volume.

SHAYLA  
 Mommy! Please help me, Mommy.

Jayla moves slowly toward the figure of the little girl. As  
 she nears, light from the torch reflects off her blood and  
 goo covered body.

JAYLA  
 Shayla, turn around, baby, Mommy's  
 right here.

SHAYLA  
 Mommy! Mommy!

SHERILEE  
Why doesn't she turn around?

JAYLA  
Maybe she's in shock.

Jayla reaches the figure of the little girl, grabs her by the shoulder and turns her around.

SHAYLA'S POV

Jayla reels backward with a look of horror on her face.

INSERT - SHAYLA'S FACE

Shayla stands in a state of catatonia. Her screams still echo throughout the chamber despite the fact that her mouth remains tightly shut. Her wide-eyed stare reaches past the family into oblivion.

BACK TO SCENE

The family huddles together in horror.

STANLEY  
What the Hell's going on? Is that Shayla or isn't it? If it is then where's the yelling coming from?

SHERILEE  
I don't know. I just want to get out of here and go home.

MITCH  
Everyone just shut up.  
(to Shayla)  
Shayla. . .Shayla?

Mitch moves slowly toward Shayla.

MITCH (CONT'D)  
Shayla, honey, it's Daddy.

Mitch puts his hands on both of Shayla's shoulders.

Shayla immediately snaps out of her catatonic state and screams for her mother.

SHAYLA  
Mommy. Help me. Don't let him hurt me.

Mitch shakes Shayla in an attempt to curb her screams.

MITCH

What's wrong with you? It's Daddy.

Stanley runs up and grabs Mitch's arm.

STANLEY

Dad, what the Hell are you doing?

Mitch lets Shayla go and she immediately runs to her mother.

Jayla kneels down and embraces her daughter.

JAYLA

It's okay, baby. Mommy has you now.

Jayla hugs and caresses the child as they sob in each other's arms.

SHAYLA

See, Mommy, it's the night monster.  
I told you he was real.

JAYLA

No, baby, that's not the night  
monster. It's Daddy.

SHAYLA

No, it's the night monster and he's  
gonna hurt me again. Help me,  
Mommy, please.

JAYLA

Don't worry baby, nothing's going  
to hurt you anymore.

Jayla looks apprehensively at Mitch.

Mitch returns a questioning look.

JAYLA (CONT'D)

Stanley.

Stanley walks over to Jayla.

JAYLA (CONT'D)

Take the torch and lead us out of  
here.

STANLEY

Okay, Mom.

Jayla turns toward Sherilee.

JAYLA  
 Sher, give me your coat.

SHERILEE  
 But I'm cold.

JAYLA  
 Just give me your damn coat.

Jayla grabs Sherilee's coat, wraps Shayla in it and picks her up.

JAYLA (CONT'D)  
 Mitch, cover our backs in case that  
 thing's still running around.

Mitch doesn't answer and still sports a questioning look.

JAYLA (CONT'D)  
 Mitch, you with us?

MITCH  
 Yeah, yeah, right, I got your  
 backs.

Stanley leads the family toward the cave entrance with Mitch bringing up the rear.

INT. CAVE - MAIN CAVERN - NIGHT

Family emerges from the right corridor.

STANLEY  
 Come on, guys, the exit's up ahead.

The family moves toward the exit.

Mitch slows down, turns around and looks behind him.

MITCH  
 Wait a second. Quiet.

The family stops and looks at Mitch.

STANLEY  
 What's wrong?

MITCH  
 It's coming.

STANLEY  
 What's coming?

They hear the sound of deep GROWLING coming toward them.  
Mitch turns toward the family.

MITCH

That.

JAYLA

Everybody run for the exit now.

Everyone hurries toward the exit, except Mitch.

Mitch turns back around and looks toward the sound of the GROWLING.

Sherilee, Stanley and Jayla hike up the incline toward the exit.

Jayla struggles up the incline carrying Shayla in her arms. She looks back and notices Mitch still standing in the center of the main cavern staring back toward the sound of the GROWLING.

JAYLA (CONT'D)

Mitch, come on.

Mitch continues standing still without acknowledging Jayla.

JAYLA (CONT'D)

Mitch!

Mitch turns, looks at Jayla and starts toward his family.

The GROWLING increases in volume as Mitch follows the others up to the exit.

EXT. DESERT - NIGHT

The GROWLING continues as the family emerges from the cave.

STANLEY

It's still after us.

SHERILEE

Let's just hurry and get back to the diner.

STANLEY

Sounds good to me.

Stanley looks around but cannot find the diner.

STANLEY (CONT'D)  
Where the Hell is it?

The rest of the family looks around but find nothing. The sound of GROWLING intensifies as it nears the exit of the cave.

SHERILEE  
It's getting closer. What do we do?

Jayla looks around again and sees the bone door that leads to the crawl space.

JAYLA  
We're going back the way we came.

Jayla and the others head toward the crawl space.

INT. CRAWL SPACE - NIGHT

Jayla and her family enter the crawl space and make their way to the examination room. They hear GROWLS and see glowing eyes all around them.

STANLEY  
It sounds like we're being surrounded.

INT. EXAMINATION ROOM - NIGHT

Stanley emerges from the crawl space and helps everyone else out.

Shayla begins to scream again.

SHAYLA  
No! No! Stop! Stop! Don't hurt me!  
(to Jayla)  
Mommy! Please make him stop.

SHERILEE  
Stop it. Make her stop it.

STANLEY  
Chill out, Sher.

SHERILEE  
She's the reason we're in this mess in the first place.

JAYLA  
Both of you just shut the Hell up.

Jayla kneels down and hugs Shayla.

JAYLA (CONT'D)  
 Shayla, it's okay, honey. Mommy's  
 right here. You're safe now. No  
 one's gonna hurt you anymore. I  
 promise.

Shayla's screaming dulls to a whimper.

The family hears the door to the crawl space open as the  
 GROWLING nears.

MITCH  
 We gotta get outta here now.

Mitch leads the family through the passageway and into the  
 basement.

INT. PASSAGEWAY - NIGHT

Mitch hurries the family along.

MITCH  
 Keep moving.

INT. DINER BASEMENT - NIGHT

Mitch walks out of the passageway and starts toward the  
 basement stairs.

STANLEY  
 Hey, Dad. Shouldn't we block the  
 door?

Mitch pauses for a second and goes back to help his son.

Stanley and Mitch move the freezers against the wall blocking  
 the door.

STANLEY (CONT'D)  
 Do you think that'll . . .

A loud BANGING sounds from the other side of the door. The  
 intensity of the BANGING rocks the freezers back and forth.

STANLEY (CONT'D)  
 Holy shit!

MITCH  
 I gotta get outta here.

Mitch heads across the basement and up the stairs leaving his family behind.

Jayla and the others look at each other then follow Mitch upstairs.

INT. DINER - NIGHT

The family emerges from the basement.

STANLEY  
You have a key for this door?

GEORGE  
Uh, yeah. What do ya need it . . .

STANLEY  
Just give me the key, fat man.

George tosses the keys to Stanley and Stanley locks the basement door.

Mitch rushes to the counter.

MITCH  
Gimme a beer.

Stanley and Sherilee make their way to separate tables and sit down.

Jayla stands there holding Shayla as Jeannie brings Mitch his beer.

HELEN  
I see you found yer daughter.

JAYLA  
Jeannie, go get some wet washcloths and dry towels, so I can clean up my daughter.

JEANNIE  
Yes ma'am.

Jeannie hurries to get the washcloths and towels.

JAKE  
Damn, that kid looks like somethin' the cat drug in.

BUFORD  
Geez, Jake.

Mitch gulps down the last of his beer.

MITCH  
 (to Jeannie)  
 Bring me another.

Jayla carries Shayla to a table and sits down.

MITCH (CONT'D)  
 Oh yeah, do ya mind if we use yer  
 phone now?

GEORGE  
 What phone?

MITCH  
 The phone you used to call the  
 cops. They said you called when we  
 were in the cave.

GEORGE  
 Cave? Cops? Boy, what're you goin'  
 on about?

MITCH  
 The cave -- the big fucking cave  
 behind the diner.

GEORGE  
 Boy, I don't know what the hell  
 you're talkin' about. I've been  
 roundabouts this diner for near  
 forty years and I ain't never seen  
 no cave.

Jeannie enters with towels and washcloths, and Mitch's other  
 beer.

Mitch grabs the beer out of Jeannie's hand.

MITCH  
 Ask the waitress, she was out  
 there.

GEORGE  
 Jeannie May, do you know what he's  
 talkin' about?

Jeannie looks at Helen, then back at George.

JEANNIE  
 No. I just showed 'em the basement  
 then came right back up here.

SHERILEE

How can you say that? You were there.

JEANNIE

I'm sorry but I don't know what y'all're talkin' about.

MITCH

You're a goddamn liar.

GEORGE

Look, I know you folks have been through a lot, but there ain't nothin' in the basement, and there ain't no cave.

Mitch turns and faces George

MITCH

Mister, don't piss down my back and tell me it's raining.

GEORGE

Well why don't we go down and you can show me.

STANLEY

Okay. You wouldn't happen to have another flashlight, would ya?

George reaches behind the counter, grabs a flashlight, and throws it to Stanley, who clumsily catches it.

George and Stanley walk to the basement door and go downstairs.

BUFORD

Could be sun spots, or solar flares.

(softly)

They make some folks hallucinate.

JAKE

Yeah, Buford, like when you saw the Pope's face in yer bowl of corn flakes.

JAYLA

I've had enough of this. I'm going to the next town come sun up and bring back the sheriff. Maybe he can get some answers out of you

JEANNIE

We done you no wrong. Like Mama  
told you, we do know how to explain  
it, but. . .

SHERILEE

Mama? You mean that's your mom?

JEANNIE

Yes ma'am.

SHERILEE

I thought you just worked here.

JEANNIE

I do. I have all my life. I ain't  
ever been no place else since I was  
borned.

Jeannie looks over at Helen. Helen nods and continues  
cleaning the countertop.

INT. BASEMENT - NIGHT

Stanley leads George to the freezers which block the  
passageway.

STANLEY

There. It's behind there.

Stanley and George move the freezers to expose the bone door.

STANLEY (CONT'D)

See, it's right there.

George reaches to open the door.

STANLEY (CONT'D)

No. Don't open it.

George pulls the bone door open.

GEORGE

See, boy, it's just a wall. I done  
told you t'weren't nothin' there.

STANLEY

What the hell?

Stanley examines the wall.

INT. DINER - NIGHT

Shayla, wrapped in a towel sits on the bench next to her mother. Jayla wipes her daughter's face with a wet washcloth.

Jayla opens the towel slightly and inserts the washcloth to clean Shayla's torso. Shayla whimpers. Shayla reaches down to her groin and brings up a handful of blood.

JAYLA

Baby, who did this to you?

SHAYLA

It was the night monster.

JAYLA

Shayla, please tell me who did this to you?

SHAYLA

I'm not supposed to tell.

JAYLA

Who said you're not supposed to tell?

Shayla looks at Mitch, then back at Jayla.

SHAYLA

Daddy.

Jayla looks over at Mitch who gulps the last of his beer. Mitch returns Jayla's glance, then looks at Shayla.

SHAYLA (CONT'D)

Daddy's the night monster. He hurts me and he makes me bleed down there.

Shayla points down to her groin.

SHAYLA (CONT'D)

He hurt me lots of times, Mommy. Don't let him hurt me anymore, please, Mommy, please.

JAYLA

(to Sherilee)  
Finish cleaning up your sister.

Sherilee gets up from the other table, walks over and sits down next to Shayla.

Jayla gets up and starts toward Mitch. She picks up a glass sugar holder off the table and throws it at him. The holder just misses Mitch's head.

Mitch stands up.

MITCH

What the fu. . .

Jayla kicks Mitch in the groin.

Mitch doubles over, then Jayla knees him in the face.

Mitch reels back and falls to the floor.

Jayla jumps on Mitch. She scratches and tears at his face and eyes, and pounds him with her fists.

JAYLA

You sick fuck. . . She's just a baby. . .Your own flesh and blood.

MITCH

Get off me, you crazy bitch.

JAYLA

I'll kill you. . .I'll kill you.

George and Stanley grab Jayla and try to pull her from atop Mitch.

Jayla elbows George and pushes Stanley away. Mitch uses his right leg and pushes Jayla to the ground.

Jayla lands next to the bar where George keeps his shotgun. She grabs it, then walks to Mitch and aims it at his face.

Mitch looks up into the barrels.

Jeannie screams.

GEORGE

Now, wait a minute, Missy, let's not do somethin' you'll regret in the mornin'.

STANLEY

Mom. . .

MITCH

Wait, Jay -- wait. You don't want to do this. Just tell me what this is all about.

JAYLA

It's about you molesting my baby girl.

MITCH

What are you talking about? I never touched her.

JAYLA

She told me you did.

MITCH

Jay -- she's been traumatized. She doesn't know what she's saying.

SHERILEE

(weepingly)

Oh yeah, I think she does.

MITCH

Sherilee, you keep your mouth shut!

SHERILEE

(weepingly)

I wish I would've said something before, maybe Shayla would be okay right now.

MITCH

Shut the fuck up, girl!

Jayla pushes the shotgun's barrels close to Mitch's face.

JAYLA

No, you shut up!

(to Sherilee)

What are you trying to say?

SHERILEE

He did the same thing to me when I was Shayla's age.

Tears stream down Jayla's face.

JAYLA

(voice cracking)

Both my little girls.

Jayla pulls the hammer of the shotgun back.

MITCH

(in a low voice)

Wait, wait, I can explain.

Jayla presses the barrel of the shotgun against Mitch's forehead.

JAYLA

Okay. Explain.

Mitch opens his mouth to speak, then pauses as an evil look covers his face.

MITCH

(sarcastically with heavy  
southern accent)

Truth be, if you'd been doin' your  
wifely duty, I wouldn' been strayn'  
from our bed at night.

Jayla slowly lowers the barrel and points it directly at Mitch's groin.

Mitch closes his eyes.

The sound of a double barrel shotgun blast resounds through the diner.

Jayla shoots a hole in the floor of the diner just below Mitch's groin.

Mitch opens his eyes and snickers.

MITCH (CONT'D)

(with heavy southern  
accent)

I knew'd you couldn't. . .

Jayla uses the butt of the shotgun and bashes Mitch in the jaw, knocking him out.

Jayla walks back to the table and sits down across from Sherilee and Shayla.

Mitch comes to, then slowly gets to his feet. He stares Jayla, and she stares back at him.

Mitch turns to leave the diner and falls in the hole in the floor.

Mitch gets up and stumbles out of the diner.

George walks over and rubs his jaw as he looks at the hole in the floor.

BUFORD

Hey, George, you gotta hole in yer  
floor.

GEORGE  
I got eyes, ya damn fool.

EXT. DINER PARKING LOT - NIGHT

Mitch gets in the SUV and tries to start it. It won't start.

Mitch leaves the keys in the ignition, then gets out of the vehicle and walks away from the diner.

INT. DINER - NIGHT

Jayla takes Sherilee's hand.

JAYLA  
Sherilee, why didn't you tell me?

SHERILEE  
Daddy said not to. He said you'd be mad at me if you knew.

JAYLA  
I am so sorry.

Jayla releases Sherilee's hand and buries her head in her arms and cries.

SHAYLA  
It's not your fault, Mommy. You didn't hurt us. You love us.

Jayla takes Sherilee and Shayla by the hands.

JAYLA  
I promise I'll never let anything or anyone hurt you again.

SHAYLA  
Even Daddy?

JAYLA  
Especially Daddy.

LATER

INT. DINER - DAWN

Jeannie approaches and hands Stanley a bag of food.

JEANNIE

Here's a little somethin' for the  
road.

Jayla picks up Shayla and she and the older children walk to  
the bar to pay for the food.

George walks over and tries to take the shotgun from Jayla.  
Jayla snatches it back from him.

Jayla walks to the bar and grabs the box of shotgun shells.

GEORGE

What about my gun?

JAYLA

I'll mail it to you.

Jayla, Sherilee and Stanley head toward the exit.

GEORGE

What about my floor?

JAYLA

Plug it up with your ass.

Mitch stumbles back into the diner at the same time.

JAYLA (CONT'D)

Get out of my way, Mitch, or this  
time I won't miss.

MITCH

Mitch? I beg your pardon, ma'am.  
You must have me mixed up with  
somebody else.

JAYLA

(scoffingly)  
You don't know me. . .

Jayla motions to the children.

JAYLA (CONT'D)

Or them?

Mitch shrugs his shoulders and shakes his head.

Jayla puts Shayla on the floor and aims the shotgun at Mitch.

JAYLA (CONT'D)

I should just kill you where you  
stand.

Shayla tugs at Shayla's arm.

SHERILEE  
Mom, let's just go.

JAYLA  
I hope you rot in Hell.

Jayla lowers the barrel of the shotgun.

Jayla picks up Shayla again and turns to walk out the door.

Mitch quickly moves to the side to let the family pass.

Stanley opens the door of the diner to the females go out ahead of him.

HELEN  
Come back and see us soon.

JAYLA  
Fuck you.

The family walks out. The door slams behind them.

GEORGE  
That girl's got a nasty mouth.

EXT. DINER PARKING LOT - DAWN

Jayla and the children walk to the SUV and they climb inside.

INT. SUV - DAWN

Jayla tries the key in the ignition and the engine fires up.

JAYLA  
Well, what do you know?

Jayla pulls the car out of the parking lot onto the highway and they drive away.

INT. DINER - DAWN

Mitch walks to the counter, stepping around the hole in the floor and sits on a barstool.

Jeannie approaches with a pot of coffee.

MITCH  
Who was that woman with the kids?

JEANNIE

Sir, don't worry 'bout her, she's gone now. Would you like some coffee?

MITCH

Sure. Sounds great.

JEANNIE

Would you like somethin' t'eat?

MITCH

What do you have?

JEANNIE

Here's the menu, sir.

MITCH

No meat?

JEANNIE

Sorry 'bout that, sir, but the meat truck ain't been by yet this week.

MITCH

Oh well, I'll have some pancakes, milk and my coffee.

JEANNIE

Comin' right up, sir.

Jeannie walks away to give the order to George.

Mitch looks at the hole in the floor.

MITCH

(to George)

Hey, Mister.

GEORGE

Yeah?

MITCH

You gotta a hole in your floor.

Mitch takes a sip of coffee.

INT./EXT. SUV/ROAD - MORNING

JAYLA

He deserves to be castrated. The judge should cut off his balls and stuff them down his throat. Better yet, I'll do it.

Sherilee points to Shayla in the back seat.

STANLEY

Mom?

JAYLA

Yes, Stanley.

STANLEY

Where are we going?

JAYLA

To the next town and a hospital to have your sister checked out.

STANLEY

What about after that?

JAYLA

I don't know.

SHERILEE

Maybe we can all stay with Grandma and Grandpa.

JAYLA

No thanks. I don't feel like hearing "I told you so's" about marrying your father.

SHERILEE

They wouldn't do that. They love you.

Jayla looks at her reflection in the rearview mirror.

EXT. HOSPITAL PARKING LOT - AFTERNOON

The SUV pulls into the parking lot of the hospital in the town.

INT. HOSPITAL EMERGENCY ROOM - AFTERNOON

The family enters and makes its way to the front desk.

Behind the desk sits NURSE NANCY, an older woman with grey brown hair and dark rimmed glasses.

Jayla approaches the front desk.

JAYLA

Can someone please help us?

NURSE NANCY

What is the problem, ma'am?

JAYLA

My daughter has some unusual heavy bleeding. Can someone take a look at her?

NURSE NANCY

Take a seat, ma'am, you have to wait your turn.

JAYLA

Wait my turn? What the hell are you talking about? My daughter was hurt, she needs help right now.

Jayla looks around to find no one else in the waiting room.

JAYLA (CONT'D)

Besides, there's no one else here.

NURSE NANCY

I'm sorry, Ma'am, but. . .

JAYLA

Haven't you been listening to me? My daughter needs help. Now!

NURSE NANCY

Ma'am, I'm going to have to insist that you sit down before I call the police.

JAYLA

Look, Nurse. . .

Jayla looks down at Nancy's name tag.

JAYLA (CONT'D)

Nancy. Either you get a doctor to help my daughter, or they'll have to get a doctor to help you.

Nancy gives Jayla a contemptuous look, then picks up the phone.

NURSE NANCY

Dr. Edwards. Report to the ER stat.  
I repeat, Dr. Edwards, report to  
the ER stat.

Nurse hangs up phone.

NURSE NANCY (CONT'D)

Okay, Ma'am. The doctor's on his  
way. You'll be seen as soon as he  
gets here.

JAYLA

(sarcastically)  
Thank you.

Jayla walks back to the waiting area and sits down resting  
Shayla on her lap.

JAYLA (CONT'D)

Everything's going to be all right,  
baby. The doctor's coming and he's  
going to make you all better.

SHAYLA

I'm scared, Mommy.

JAYLA

There's nothing to be scared of.  
Mommy's here and I'm not going to  
let anything happen to you. Okay?

SHAYLA

Okay, Mommy.

Jayla and Shayla embrace.

DR. EDWARDS, a man in his thirties and of average height and  
build enters the lobby and approaches the desk.

DR. EDWARDS

Why did you page me, Nancy?

NURSE NANCY

I'm sorry, Doctor, but this woman  
insisted on seeing you immediately.

Jayla picks up Shayla and hurries to the nurse's desk.

JAYLA

My little girl is bleeding from the  
groin area and needs to be seen  
right away.

DR. EDWARDS

Okay, let's take her into the  
examination room and check things  
out.

Dr. Edwards leads Jayla to the examination room.

Jayla turns to Sherilee and Stanley.

JAYLA

You kids stay here. We'll be back  
as soon as we can.

SHERILEE

Okay, Mom.

INT. EXAMINING ROOM - AFTERNOON

Shayla sees the table and begins to cry.

SHAYLA

Mommy, I don't want to get on the  
table.

INT. DINER BASEMENT - EXAMINATION ROOM - NIGHT - FLASHBACK

Shayla lying on stone examination table, bound, with shadows  
looming over her.

END FLASHBACK

SHAYLA

The table is bad. That's where I  
got hurt.

DR. EDWARDS

Now, now, young lady, there's no  
reason to be afraid.

INT. DINER BASEMENT - EXAMINATION ROOM - NIGHT - FLASHBACK

Shayla lying on stone examination table, screaming, with  
shadows looming over her.

END FLASHBACK

SHAYLA

No table. No table.

JAYLA

Shayla, it's all right, Mommy's right here with you. I'm not going to let anyone hurt you ever again.

SHAYLA

Mommy, no table. I hate the table.

DR. EDWARDS

Shayla, Mommy needs to put you on the table so I can take a look at you and make sure you are all right.

INT. DINER BASEMENT - EXAMINATION ROOM - NIGHT - FLASHBACK

Shayla lying on stone examination table with shadows moving closer to her.

END FLASHBACK

DR. EDWARDS

I wouldn't hurt you. I'm here to make you all better.

SHAYLA

Leave me alone. You're a bad man. You're going to hurt me.

JAYLA

Shayla, Dr. Edwards is trying to help you.

DR. EDWARDS

Let's get her on the table.

Jayla sits Shayla down on the examination table.

SHAYLA

I don't want him to touch me, Mommy. Please don't let him touch me.

JAYLA

Shayla, that's enough. The doctor has to find out how badly you're hurt. Now lie down and be still.

SHAYLA

But Mommy. . .

JAYLA

Now look, sweetheart, I'm right here. I promise I won't let him hurt you.

Shayla lies down on the table and she immediately curls up in a fetal position and starts whimpering.

JAYLA (CONT'D)

Doctor, isn't there something you can give her to calm her down?

DR. EDWARDS

I would prefer her to be awake during the examination, but maybe a sedative would facilitate things.

Shayla continues to cry as Dr. Edwards prepares the anesthetic.

DR. EDWARDS (CONT'D)

Okay. You need to hold her still, we wouldn't want to break the needle off in her arm.

INSERT - NEEDLE

Hypodermic needle

BACK TO SCENE

Shayla's cries increase in volume.

SHAYLA

No, Mommy, no! No shot!

DR. EDWARDS

Ma'am, you are going to have to hold her very still or I can't sedate her.

Jayla lays gently across Shayla's body pinning her arm to the bed.

SHAYLA

AAAHHH!

DR. EDWARDS

Okay, now, that wasn't so bad, was it?

SHAYLA  
 (in Dr. Edwards face)  
 Yes it was!

Jayla sits at the head of the examination table stroking Shayla's hair.

Shayla fades in and out of sleep until she finally dozes off.

Dr. Edwards puts Shayla's feet in the stirrups and starts his gynecological examination.

DR. EDWARDS  
 Ma'am, I'm sorry to tell you this,  
 but your daughter has been  
 violated. And from the looks of the  
 scarring, it's been going on for  
 quite a while.

JAYLA  
 (to her sleeping daughter)  
 Baby, it's all right, Mommy's here  
 now.

Dr. Edwards continues his examination.

DR. EDWARDS  
 What the. . .Wait a minute.

Dr. Edwards turns on the examination light and pulls it down toward the table.

JAYLA  
 What it is, doctor?

DR. EDWARDS  
 I found the cause of the bleeding.

Dr. Edwards looks up at Jayla, then down at Shayla, then back at Jayla

JAYLA  
 Well, Doctor, what's wrong with  
 her?

DR. EDWARDS  
 Ma'am, your daughter has had her  
 reproductive organs removed from  
 her body.

JAYLA  
 Oh my God!

Jayla, teary-eyed, looks down at Shayla.

DR. EDWARDS

That's not all. It appears that her internal wounds were cauterized and not properly sutured or sterilized. Unfortunately, she is still bleeding and I need to operate on her and properly clean and stitch the wounds.

Jayla sobs to herself.

Dr. Edwards shines the light on Shayla again.

DR. EDWARDS (CONT'D)

I don't know for sure, but this looks to me like an old-fashioned hysterectomy.

Jayla passes out and falls on the table on top of Shayla.

LATER

Jayla wakes to find herself on a bed in the emergency room. The staff monitors Jayla's condition with heart, blood pressure and oxygen monitors.

SHERIFF JEFF COLLINS, slightly passed middle-age but has a very muscular physique, steps up to the bed next to Dr. Edwards.

DR. EDWARDS

This is the woman Nancy called you about.

SHERIFF

Ma'am.

JAYLA

It's Mrs. Dixon. Jayla Dixon.

SHERIFF

Mrs. Dixon, I think we should talk about what happened to your daughter.

DR. EDWARDS

Hold on, Sheriff, I have to take care of this first.

(to Jayla)

Mrs. Dixon, your daughter needs surgery, but before we can do anything, I need your consent.

JAYLA  
Yes, you have it.

DR. EDWARDS  
No, I mean in writing. I need you  
to sign these papers.

Dr. Edwards hands Jayla a clipboard and pen. Jayla signs the papers and hands the clipboard back to Dr. Edwards.

DR. EDWARDS (CONT'D)  
Okay, the OB doctor is on his way.  
We'll do the surgery as soon as he  
gets here.

JAYLA  
Thank you, doctor.

DR. EDWARDS  
How do you feel? Do you feel up to  
talking to the sheriff?

JAYLA  
Yeah, I can talk.

DR. EDWARDS  
I'll leave you two alone.

Dr. Edwards exits the room.

SHERIFF COLLINS  
As I was saying, why don't you tell  
me what happened to your daughter.

JAYLA  
We were travelling cross-country to  
my husband's new job.

SHERIFF COLLINS  
You have a husband? Where is he  
now?

JAYLA  
I don't know. Can I just finish my  
story?

SHERIFF COLLINS  
Sorry, ma'am, please continue.

JAYLA  
Like I said, we were travelling  
cross-country and we stopped at  
this diner.

SHERIFF COLLINS

Do you remember the name of the diner?

JAYLA

Yes. It was called The Looking Glass.

Sheriff breaks the lead on his pencil and tosses the pencil in the trash can.

SHERIFF COLLINS

One sec. . .

JAYLA

We stopped in. . .

SHERIFF COLLINS

One second.

Sheriff Collins reaches into his pocket and pulls out a pen.

SHERIFF COLLINS (CONT'D)

Sorry, please continue.

JAYLA

Like I said, we stopped in for a bite to eat. When we went out to leave, the car wouldn't start. My husband went in to use the phone, but they said they didn't have one. They said we couldn't get any help until the morning, but we should spend the night in the diner and we shouldn't be out after dark or some nonsense like that. So the kids and I got in the camper and my husband slept in the SUV.

SHERIFF COLLINS

Why did your husband sleep in the SUV?

JAYLA

What does that matter?

SHERIFF COLLINS

It matters, ma'am.

JAYLA

We got in a fight, so he slept in the car, okay?

SHERIFF COLLINS  
Yes, ma'am, please go on.

JAYLA  
While we were sleeping, my daughter  
was abducted by God knows who and  
was missing for several hours  
before we found her.

SHERIFF COLLINS  
Excuse me, ma'am, but how do know  
she was abducted?

Jayla has a puzzled look on her face.

JAYLA  
Because we saw her being taken.

SHERIFF COLLINS  
So, you saw the perpetrator?

JAYLA  
No.

SHERIFF COLLINS  
What do you mean "no"?

JAYLA  
I mean, I didn't see who took my  
daughter.

SHERIFF COLLINS  
You mean she was taken right before  
your eyes, but you didn't see who  
took her.

JAYLA  
That's exactly what I'm saying.

SHERIFF COLLINS  
Ma'am, how is that possible?

JAYLA  
Look, she was taken out of the  
window of the camper and was  
carried across the parking lot.

SHERIFF COLLINS  
Carried? But I thought you said you  
didn't see who took her.

JAYLA

I didn't. She was being dragged backward while at the same time being suspended in mid-air. . .

Sheriff Collins puts the pen and notepad in his pocket and sigh and folds his arms across his chest.

JAYLA (CONT'D)

You're not listening to anything I'm saying. My daughter was taken. We found her in a cave that was full of blood and slime and this sticky black stuff. There was a trucker in the cave that got into a fight with my husband, next thing I know, he was gutted and hanging upside down on the wall. Then we found Shayla deeper in the cave. She was naked and screaming. She just kept screaming over and over again and she wouldn't stop. She just wouldn't stop.

Jayla breaks down in tears.

SHERIFF COLLINS

I tell you what, we'll call it a night, I'll have my deputy escort you to our local motel, and you can come down to the station in the morning and finish this up.

Jayla nods.

SHERIFF COLLINS (CONT'D)

Okay then, I'll send the deputy over and when you're ready, he'll escort you to the motel and you can get some rest. Maybe that'll help you clear your head. A good night's sleep and a hot breakfast in the morning, then we can sort everything out.

Jayla pulls a handkerchief from her purse and dries her tears.

JAYLA

Okay and thank you, Sheriff

SHERIFF COLLINS

Good night, ma'am. See you in the morning.

JAYLA  
Good night.

Jayla remains sitting in the chair as the sheriff turns to leave.

Jayla looks up suddenly and jumps to her feet.

JAYLA (CONT'D)  
Wait, Sheriff.

Sheriff turns around.

SHERIFF COLLINS  
Yes, ma'am?

JAYLA  
There's something very important I  
have to tell you.

SHERIFF COLLINS  
Yes?

JAYLA  
You'd better take out your pad and  
pencil.

Sheriff reaches into his pocket and pulls out his pad and pen.

SHERIFF COLLINS  
Okay. What is it?

JAYLA  
After we found Shayla and brought  
her back to the diner, Shayla told  
me that my husband. . . Mitch was  
molesting her.

Sheriff looks up from his notepad in shock.

JAYLA (CONT'D)  
And my oldest daughter told me that  
he was doing the same thing to her  
as well.

Sheriff Collins looks back down and continues to write.

JAYLA (CONT'D)  
After I confronted him and he  
admitted to it, I put a shotgun to  
his head.

SHERIFF COLLINS  
Where'd the gun come from?

JAYLA  
It belonged to the owner of the  
diner.

SHERIFF COLLINS  
Go on.

JAYLA  
I didn't shoot him, but I did cold  
cock him with it. After he came to  
he left the diner for a few hours.  
When he came back, he was acting  
like he had amnesia or something.  
He didn't know who he was or who we  
were or anything else. After that,  
the kids and I got in the car. I  
managed to start it and we left.  
And that's the last I saw of him.

Jayla looks toward the operating room.

JAYLA (CONT'D)  
I want you to get him.

SHERIFF COLLINS  
You mean you want him in jail?

JAYLA  
I want him under the jail.

SHERIFF COLLINS  
Okay, ma'am. One of my deputies  
will go to that diner and see if  
he's still there. I'll post a  
deputy outside your daughter's room  
here just as a precaution.

JAYLA  
Thanks again, Sheriff.

SHERIFF COLLINS  
Don't worry, ma'am. We'll get 'em.

Sheriff exits the hallway.

Jayla goes into the lobby.

JAYLA  
Come on, kids, we're going to a  
motel to get some sleep.

SHERILEE

What about Shay?

JAYLA

The doctor says she needs an operation, but he can't do it until morning. He said he'd call if anything happened.

SHERILEE

Mom, are you sure you want to go to a motel? Maybe at least one of us should stay here.

STANLEY

I think Sher's right, Mom.

JAYLA

The baby'll be fine. The sheriff said he'd post a deputy outside her door until morning. Now let's go.

As Jayla, Sherilee and Stanley walk toward the exit, they find the deputy waiting for them.

DEPUTY

Mrs. Dixon?

JAYLA

Yes?

DEPUTY

Sheriff Collins said I was to escort you and your kids to the motel.

JAYLA

Okay.

They exit the hospital.

INT./EXT. SUV/ROAD - AFTERNOON

They drive to the motel in silence.

EXT. MOTEL PARKING LOT - DUSK

They arrive at the Hideaway Motel. They drive past several blocks of buildings that look abandoned before they get to their destination.

The deputy gets out of his car and walks toward the SUV.

Jayla and the kids exit the SUV.

DEPUTY

Okay, ma'am, once you get to your room, stay there.

JAYLA

What do you mean, stay there? We haven't eaten yet.

DEPUTY

It's for your own safety, ma'am. Besides, we don't go out after dark in this town.

Jayla and the kids turn and look at each other.

DEPUTY (CONT'D)

Call it an informal curfew. Besides there ain't no eating places open this time of night.

JAYLA

Okay, we'll stay put.

DEPUTY

Okay, good night, Mrs. Dixon.

JAYLA

Good night.

Jayla and the children enter the motel lobby.

INT. MOTEL LOBBY - DUSK

Jayla and the children walk to the front desk.

JAYLA

Hello. I'd like a room for the night, please.

CLERK

Yes, ma'am. You Mrs. Dixon?

JAYLA

Yes, I am.

CLERK

Sheriff called 'bout you earlier. Your room's all ready. It's number 1. Everything should be in order. If you need anything, just ring the desk.

The clerk hands Jayla the key to Room 1.

CLERK (CONT'D)

And remember, stay in after dark.

Stanley and Sherilee look at each other and then back at the clerk.

JAYLA

Why does everyone keep telling me that? What is wrong with being out after dark?

CLERK

Ma'am, don't rightly know 'bout the wrong that goes on, it's just our way.

JAYLA

Great. What about food. My kids and I are hungry.

CLERK

I can have the cook fix you up somethin' from the kitchen and bring it to you straight away. Is that all right with you.

JAYLA

That'll be fine.

Jayla and the children leave the office and head for their room.

INT. MOTEL ROOM - DUSK

Jayla and the children enter the motel room and close the door.

Jayla sits on one of the beds and the children sit side by side on the other.

SHERILEE

Mom, this place is just as creepy as the diner.

STANLEY

Yeah, Mom, do we have to stay here?

SHERILEE

What do you think? Shayla is in that creepy hospital, remember? We can't go anywhere without her.

STANLEY

I know that, Sher, I just thought maybe we could stay in the trailer or somethin'. This motel is weird and it's freakin' me out.

SHERILEE

Same here.

Sherilee gets up and walks to the window and draws back the curtains.

A look of terror covers Sherilee's face as she sees several dark figures outside the window. These figures stand motionless as they stare toward the family's motel room.

Sherilee throws the curtains closed.

SHERILEE (CONT'D)

Mom, come here.

JAYLA

What is it, Sher, I'm very tired.

SHERILEE

There's a bunch of freaks outside the window.

Jayla walks to the window and draws the curtains back to find only darkness.

JAYLA

I don't see anybody.

SHERILEE

Mom, there are people out there.

JAYLA

If there were, they're gone now, so let's try to get some sleep.

SHERILEE

I'm telling you they were out there by the car. Maybe they were messin' with it.

STANLEY

I'll go check it out.

JAYLA

No! I'll go. You two stay here. I'll be right back.

SHERILEE

Mom, don't go out there.

STANLEY

Yeah, Mom, don't leave us here.  
Take us with you.

JAYLA

Look, we can't let anything else  
happen to the car. And I want you  
two to stay here where it's safe.

STANLEY

But Mom. . .

JAYLA

Don't worry. I'm just going to go  
check on the car. I'll be right  
back.

Jayla leaves the room.

EXT. MOTEL PARKING LOT - NIGHT

Jayla walks toward the car.

Sherilee screams.

Jayla runs back toward the room.

INT. MOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

Jayla rushes back into the motel room and finds it empty. She  
rushes to the bathroom and closet frantically searching for  
Sherilee and Stanley, but to no avail. Jayla then runs to the  
phone to call the Sheriff but the phone does not work.

EXT. MOTEL PARKING LOT - NIGHT

Jayla races to the office and bangs on the door but finds the  
Closed sign in the window and the lights off.

Jayla runs to her car, gets in and speeds to the hospital.

EXT. HOSPITAL PARKING LOT - NIGHT

A deputy stands at the hospital entrance.

Jayla jumps out of the car and rushes over to the deputy.

DEPUTY

Ma'am, I thought I told you to stay  
at the motel.

JAYLA

I need your help. My children have  
been taken.

The deputy takes his hat off, rubs his head, then puts his  
hat back on.

DEPUTY

If you wouldn't have left them  
alone, you're children would be  
safe in bed right now.

JAYLA

What?

DEPUTY

We told you not to go outside.

Jayla slowly backs away from the deputy as he looks at her  
with a crooked smile. She runs past him into the hospital to  
search for Shayla.

INT. SHAYLA'S HOSPITAL ROOM - NIGHT

Jayla finds her daughter still asleep. She picks her up and  
exits the hospital room.

INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT

Jayla runs down the hallway carrying Shayla.

Dr. Edwards approaches Jayla.

DR. EDWARDS

What's going on here?

JAYLA

I'm taking my daughter out of here.

DR. EDWARDS

Now look, Mrs. Dixon, I told you  
she can't be moved.

JAYLA

The hell she can't.

DR. EDWARDS

She needs surgery. I must insist  
that. . .

Dr. Edwards grabs Jayla by the arms.

Jayla knees Dr. Edwards in the groin. He grabs his groin and doubles over. Then Jayla knees him in the face and rushes out of the hospital.

EXT. HOSPITAL PARKING LOT - NIGHT

Jayla bursts out of the ER doors and runs across the parking lot to the SUV.

Jayla opens the back door of the SUV and gently lays Shayla on the backseat and covers her with a coat.

Someone grabs Jayla from behind and she reels around to see Sherilee and Stanley standing there.

JAYLA

Sherilee, Stanley, thank God.

She hugs the two children.

Stanley doesn't reply.

SHERILEE

Come on, Mom, let's go.

JAYLA

But Sher, what happened to you  
guys?

SHERILEE

I can't talk about it. Let's just  
go. Now.

INT./EXT. SUV/ROAD - NIGHT

Jayla drives down the highway as the children sit in silence.

JAYLA

Don't worry kids, we're not  
stopping for anything until we  
reach a town that has a lot of  
lights and people.

The children say nothing.

JAYLA (CONT'D)  
Well, I know you're hungry,  
Stanley?

Stanley does not reply.

JAYLA (CONT'D)  
I wish you two would tell me what  
happened.

Sherilee and Stanley continue to sit in silence.

They drive on in silence until they see a familiar billboard.

LATER

They come to a large city with familiar restaurants and motels.

EXT. GAS STATION - NIGHT

Jayla pulls into a gas station, fills the tank and slides her credit card in the machine to pay for the gas.

JAYLA  
Well, kids, is it a tacos or  
burgers?

The children give no response.

JAYLA (CONT'D)  
I'll tell you what, why don't we  
find a nice motel and order some  
room service?

Still no response.

JAYLA (CONT'D)  
Yeah, we'll do that.

Jayla drives away from the gas station and pulls into the Holiday Inn parking lot.

EXT. HOTEL PARKING LOT - NIGHT

Everyone exits the car.

They walk into the hotel lobby.

INT. HOTEL LOBBY - NIGHT

The HOTEL CLERK, a short Asian man with dark hair and black-rimmed glasses stands at the front desk.

CLERK  
May I help you?

JAYLA  
Yes, I'd like a single room with  
two double beds, please.

CLERK  
Yes, ma'am.

Jayla fills out the hotel register.

CLERK (CONT'D)  
Number 506.

Jayla hands the clerk her credit card.

The clerk processes the card and hands it back to Jayla along with the room key.

JAYLA  
Thanks.

Jayla turns to leave.

CLERK  
One moment please.  
(to Bellhop)  
Bellhop. Take Mrs. Dixon and her  
family to their room.

Bellhop leads the family to the elevator.

INT. HOTEL HALLWAY - NIGHT

The family follows the bellhop down the hallway toward the elevator.

The bellhop presses the UP button. The doors open and they all enter. The doors slowly close.

INT. HOTEL HALLWAY - FIFTH FLOOR NIGHT

The doors open and the family exits the elevator along with the bellhop.

The bellhop leads the family down the hallway to their room.

INT. HOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

The bellhop unlocks the door to the room and ushers everyone inside. He stands waiting.

Jayla hands the bellhop a five dollar bill and then he leaves, closing the door behind him.

Jayla and Shayla get into one bed and Stanley and Sherilee get into the other.

Jayla hugs Shayla and rubs the top of her head with her hand, then looks over at Sherilee and Stanley.

JAYLA

I think we're going to be fine. I'm going to do everything I can to make the hurt go away.

The family is disturbed by a knock on the door.

Jayla walks to the door and puts her hand on the doorknob.

SHAYLA

(in a frightened voice)  
Mommy. Don't.

Jayla releases the doorknob and looks out the peek hole.

JAYLA

It's okay, baby, it's just the bellhop again.

Jayla opens the door.

The bellhop stands with his head down.

JAYLA (CONT'D)

Yes?

CLERK

By the way, don't go out after dark.

The bellhop raises his head to reveal himself as Mitch. Jayla reels back from horror. Mitch closes the door and turns out the lights.

The sound of BITING, GROWLING and SCREAMING echo through the room.

FADE OUT.

THE END