

RAILS & TIES by Micky Levy

FADE IN:

A distant whistle, then softly, CH...CH...CH... A train approaching... Over the black screen, in white letters:

Life is like a train.
Life, like a train, travels up hills and down valleys,
Life, like a train, sometimes gets off track,
The train, like life, keeps its own schedule,
The train, like life, has a final destination.
Life is like a train,
Only the train departs and returns,
But life, oh life, it never comes back.

Unknown

The train sounds fade as--

EXT. RAIL CROSSING, SIMI VALLEY - DAY

A decrepit brown Lincoln drives over ballast - track gravel - that has spilled from the track to the asphalt road below. The car stops right in front of the crossing signal. It's green. Run-down apartment buildings create a depressing backdrop behind the car. The air is so hot, it ripples.

INT. LINCOLN - DAY

LAURA DANNER, 27, neglected, oily hair, doughy skin, shuts the engine. Next to her, DAVEY DANNER, 9, cradles a scratched, black toy locomotive in his lap. Laura, drowsy, leans her head against the seat. Her speech is slurred.

LAURA
What day is it?

DAVEY
Tuesday. I told you.

LAURA
And the date.

DAVEY
August eighth.

LAURA
We'll wait, Davey. We'll wait here until it comes and then...

DAVEY
Did you know the Coast Starlight goes all the way to **Seattle**?

LAURA

(praying; eyes closed)
O God, you are my God, I wait for
You from the dawn...

DAVEY

There's two engineers on every
passenger train. They change teams
every twelve hours.

LAURA

...My soul thirsts for You, my body
longs for You... Pray with me,
Davey.

DAVEY

I already prayed.

LAURA

...My lips will praise You for Your
mercy is better than life itself.

The crossing light goes from green to a flashing red.

DAVEY

It's here!

She starts the car.

DAVEY

Wait, Mom. Don't go! It's coming.

She presses on the gas and hurls the Lincoln forward, past the signal, up the embankment, onto some gravel and then the tracks. They bounce as the car's tires jump the rail, then the ties and then the rail again. She stops the car.

EXT. RAIL CROSSING - DAY

The Lincoln sits with its front wheels over the far side of the tracks. Its rear tires slightly touch the near rail.

INT. LINCOLN - DAY

Laura locks the doors, takes the keys out of the ignition. Wide-eyed, Davey watches as she hurls the keys out the window. She turns to him.

LAURA

Time to rest now.

EXT. UNION STATION - COAST STARLIGHT - DAY

Blue letters on silver cars: COAST STARLIGHT. The shiny, majestic train is almost ready to depart.

INT. UNION STATION - HALLWAY - DAY

TOM STARK, 44, and N.B. GARCIA, a massive man, graying hair, hurry down a marble corridor - rough men who talk tough, walk gruffly and live hard.

N.B.

How you holding up, Tom? Doing alright?

The long corridor is adorned with black and white pictures depicting trains and passengers in the 30's and 40's.

TOM

My train's running in ten minutes.

N.B.

No telling with that messed-up disease. My mother-in-law, God rest her soul, was only 63--

TOM

Megan's 38.

N.B.

Take time off. I got you covered.

VINCE, 50's, another engineer, barrels toward them holding a stack of papers: train orders.

N.B.

(to Vince)
About time, Hoghead.

VINCE

Car trouble. Sorry, Tom.

TOM

What do I care?

VINCE

(nervous)
I got your train today. It's all set with the boys upstairs.

Tom studies him hard, then turns to N.B.

TOM

No. I want to work.

He pushes a door open, exiting to--

EXT. COAST STARLIGHT - PLATFORM - DAY

PASSENGERS board the train, passing a sign that reads:

UNION STATION - LOS ANGELES

An ELDERLY COUPLE waves goodbye to their SON and GRANDCHILDREN. A STEWARD, in an Amtrak uniform, points a WOMAN to her car. Tom heads to the locomotive with N.B. Vince follows close behind.

N.B.

Can I say this as your friend and not your boss? You're not dealing with it.

TOM

I'm dealing with it my way.

N.B.

Listen. I'll give you all the streaks you can handle, but you keep running away from her, you'll regret it forever.

Tom climbs into the locomotive. N.B. shakes his head and turns to Vince.

N.B.

Give him the orders.

Vince hands Tom the paperwork.

EXT. TOM & MEGAN'S HOUSE - FRONT YARD - DAY

A two-story suburban home. MEGAN STARK, 38, pale, short blonde hair, exceedingly thin, pounds the hard soil with a trowel. A palette of mixed-color impatiens sits nearby. She chooses the pink ones, entombs them in the dirt.

A car pulls in the driveway. Megan smiles and rises. A sharp pain cuts through her lower back. She GASPS, falling to her knees on the dirt.

SUSAN GARCIA, plump, in a nurse's scrubs, exits the car holding a large copper pot. Seeing that Megan is down, she puts the pot on the driveway and rushes toward her.

SUSAN
What do you think you're doing?

MEGAN
Planting flowers.

SUSAN
To work in your condition...Really,
it's insane.

She helps her up. They walk toward the house.

SUSAN
Where's Tom? I thought he was
keeping an eye on you.

MEGAN
Sometimes I feel like he can't
stand to be around me.

SUSAN
(uncomfortable with
intimate subject)
My soup!

She hurries down the black asphalt driveway to retrieve the copper pot. Megan, pensive, watches as Susan bends down to--

EXT. DINER, SAN FRANCISCO - DUSK

A black asphalt road. It cuts a dizzyingly precipitous
incline. A 50's style building sits at the top of the hill.

INT. DINER, SAN FRANCISCO - DUSK

YOUNG MEGAN, 22, adorable in a pink waitress outfit and a ponytail, and LEE, also 20's, waitress, watch YOUNG TOM, 28, from behind the counter: Shy and stiff, he sits at one booth, reading a very heavy textbook. He looks up at Megan - meets her eyes - and quickly returns to his book.

YOUNG MEGAN
What does he want?

LEE
Babe, he's been coming here twice a
day, every day, for two weeks.
(MORE)

LEE (cont'd)
Trust me. It's not for the
pancakes.

YOUNG MEGAN
You think...? Oh.

She saunters to Tom's table with a pen and pad. He looks at her, smiles. She takes the book away from him.

YOUNG MEGAN
May I?

He nods.

YOUNG MEGAN
(reading book title)
"The Railroad: What It Is, What It
Does." Straight forward. I like
that in a man.

She gives the book back, looks at him expectantly. He can't think of anything to say, but:

YOUNG TOM
Coffee please.

YOUNG MEGAN
Haven't you had enough for one day?

YOUNG TOM
You're working a double.

YOUNG MEGAN
On Wednesdays.

YOUNG TOM
Right.

She smiles. Tongue-tied, he opens his book and furtively watches her as she joins Lee behind the counter. She pours his coffee. The girls giggle, whispering. Megan turns - catches him staring again. She approaches with his cup, places it on the table and waits. He doesn't say anything, just grins. She sighs.

YOUNG MEGAN
You keep staring, but you won't
talk to me.

YOUNG TOM
I can't help it.

YOUNG MEGAN
The staring or the talking part?

YOUNG TOM

Both.

YOUNG MEGAN

You're infuriating.

YOUNG TOM

I'm sorry.

YOUNG MEGAN

I don't know if I should slap you
or kiss you. Repeat after me. I...

YOUNG TOM

I?

YOUNG MEGAN

Would like...

YOUNG TOM

(catching on)

Would like--

YOUNG MEGAN

To take you out sometime...

YOUNG TOM

To take you...You'd go out with me?

YOUNG MEGAN

Now that you've asked so nicely,
why not?

He smiles widely. She laughs.

INT. TOM & MEGAN'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - DAY

It has the easy, comfortable feeling a room gets when its
occupants have lived with each other for a length of time,
and yet the sparse furnishings make it seem transitory.

Megan, holding a glass of water, lies on the bed. Susan,
sitting by her, sips a bowl of her own homemade soup.

SUSAN

(offering soup)

Sure you don't want some?

Megan shakes her head, reaches for a pill bottle and takes
out a capsule. She swallows it with some water. An open
catalogue sits on the night stand, showing a baby grand
piano. Megan puts her glass down next to it.

MEGAN
Beautiful, isn't it?

Susan glances at the catalogue.

SUSAN
The piano?

MEGAN
I ordered it.

SUSAN
You're kidding.

MEGAN
I'm going to learn how to play.
I've always wanted to learn.

SUSAN
Oh, Megan. Megan! You have to
rest. Take it easy.

MEGAN
"Do not go gentle into that good
night...Rage, rage, rage against
the dying of the light."

SUSAN
Is that what you're doing? Raging?

MEGAN
It's a Dylan Thomas poem. Did I
ever tell you I was an English
major?

The phone rings on the night stand. Megan ignores it. It
rings again, making Susan anxious.

SUSAN
Should I get it?

She puts the soup down and hurries to the phone.

SUSAN
(into phone)
Stark residence...No, it's not, may
I say who's calling...Oh...Is he
alright?...Yes...Yes...thank you.

Shaken, she puts down the phone. Megan, puzzled, studies her.

SUSAN
Tom had an accident.

INT. COAST STARLIGHT - ENGINE CAR #1 - DAY

Dark. The noise emanating from the enormous, shiny 16-cylinder, 4200 horsepower engine is deafening. A small door, leading out of the car, opens. Daylight floods the engine. A BRAKEMAN peers inside.

EXT. COAST STARLIGHT - ENGINE CAR #1 - DAY

The Brakeman walks along the engine cars - there are three of them - for one final check up.

INT. COAST STARLIGHT - ENGINE CAR #2 - DAY

Another massive 16-cylinder engine roars.

INT. COAST STARLIGHT - ENGINE CAR #3 - DAY

The last gargantuan engine is ready. The Brakeman shuts the engine car's door.

INT. COAST STARLIGHT - LOCOMOTIVE - DAY

The roar from the three engines comes in waves. The locomotive is surprisingly small. Two GE desktop consoles occupy most of the space in the car. Each console has an elaborate instrument panel.

Tom studies the train orders, fills out paperwork. OTIS PETALAS, manning the other side of the console, is a lean, glass-wearing man in his 30's.

TOM

What the hell's today?

OTIS

Tuesday. August eighth. Sure you should be driving, Tom?

TOM

Don't you start with me too.

He scribbles the date, then signs the orders. Otis raises his hands in surrender and picks up a black phone - a radio.

OTIS
 (into radio)
 This is the Coast Starlight, and we
 are setting up and running...Wanda,
 your favorite train is leaving...

WANDA (V.O.)
 About time, Coast Starlight.

OTIS
 Come on. Don't give us a hard time
 over five little minutes...

Tom smiles.

OTIS
 ...You know you want me.

WANDA (V.O.)
 Like I want hemorrhoids. Over and
 out, Romeo.

Otis puts down the radio. Tom laughs.

TOM
Romeo?!

OTIS
 Oh, yeah. Love on a train - ain't
 nothin' like it.

Tom looks out into the already hot sun.

INT. TRAIN - FIRST CLASS COMPARTMENT - MOVING - DAWN

Pale sunrays paint the old-fashioned sleeper compartment
 silver. Young Megan, reclines on the narrow bunk. Young Tom,
 undoes her blouse. His fingers study her curves. She moans.
 He hikes up her skirt, whispering in her ear...

YOUNG TOM
 Megan...

YOUNG MEGAN
 Yes, Tom.

YOUNG TOM
 How do you feel about trains now?

YOUNG MEGAN
 I love them...

YOUNG TOM

I love you.

She pulls him toward her. They move together to the rhythm of the train.

INT. FOSTER HOME, SIMI VALLEY - BEDROOM - DAY

A Degas print, "The Dancers," hangs on one wall next to pink ballet shoes. A girl's room complete with pink curtains, a pink bedspread and a vanity. Davey stares out the open window through a dirty screen, watching--

EXT. FOSTER HOME - DAY

JUDY NEASY, very heavy, curly hair, efficient manner, and RENEE, a nervous, wiry social worker. The women walk toward the street, past a neglected front yard.

RENEE

You will be gentle with him... I think he suffers from PTSD.

(off Judy's clueless look)
Post Traumatic Stress Disorder.

JUDY

These kids don't need pity, they require structure and discipline. That's my gift to them.

RENEE

It's just that his mother--

JUDY

Stop. You already told me. Separate yourself from your job, Renee. They're not your children.

RENEE

Of course. You're right. I know you are.

They arrive at a van with a red decal parked curb side:

VENTURA CHILDREN & FAMILY SERVICES

Renee turns to the bedroom window, sees Davey. She waves.

EXT. COAST STARLIGHT - LOCOMOTIVE - MOVING - DAY

The long, massive train barrels out of downtown Los Angeles. Piles of brick, lumber and coils of sheet steel are stacked out back by their respective warehouses -- The private parts of American Industry, only visible from the train.

INT. COAST STARLIGHT - COACH - MOVING - DAY

HOWIE PUGH, the conductor, now with a headset, grins...

HOWIE

Romeo...

He checks his watch, removes the headset and gets on the intercom. PASSENGERS settle in reclining seats.

HOWIE (V.O.)

Welcome to the Coast Starlight.
We're happy to have you on board.

INT. COAST STARLIGHT - COACH - MOVING - DAY

Another packed car. An ELDERLY COUPLE holds hands. A WOMAN leafs through a fashion magazine. Her teenage DAUGHTER puts on lipstick, using a small compact.

HOWIE (V.O.)

Tom Stark, our #1 Engineer, and
Otis Petalas, the #2 Engineer will
take you all the way to Oakland...

INT. COAST STARLIGHT - LOCOMOTIVE - MOVING - DAY

Tom watches as the train speed increases on his display screen - in green letters it climbs from 5 to 10 MPH. Otis tapes the train orders to the locomotive's back wall/divider.

HOWIE (V.O.)

...For those of you continuing to
Seattle, lean back, relax and enjoy
the ride...

INT. TOM & MEGAN'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Tom, deeply sad, watches as Megan, in T-shirt and jeans, goes to the closet. She takes out a nightgown.

TOM

There's going to be a hearing. I have to be here to find out when.

MEGAN

(sarcastic)

Good. An official excuse.

TOM

It's not an excuse. If I'm absent at the hearing, I'll lose my job.

MEGAN

You're like sand, Tom. The harder I try to hold you, the quicker you slip through my fingers.

She exits to--

INT. TOM & MEGAN'S HOUSE - BATHROOM - NIGHT

Megan takes off her T-shirt, tosses it in the laundry bin. She opens her bra. A white sponge falls to the tile floor. She picks it up and puts it on the counter. She studies her image in the mirror. A mastectomy scars her left side. In comparison, her remaining breast is supple and young.

She turns on the water. She grabs a washcloth, wets it and rubs her face, her arms, her breast. She scrubs harder and harder as if trying to scrub away her illness.

INT. TOM & MEGAN'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Tom studies the light filtering into the room from under the bathroom door. He hears the water running, then muffled sobs.

INT. TOM & MEGAN'S HOUSE - BATHROOM - NIGHT

Tom enters, sees Megan crouched on the floor, crying. He kneels by her side and pulls her tightly to him.

INT. COAST STARLIGHT - LOCOMOTIVE - MOVING - DAY

The back door, connecting to the train, opens. Tom and Otis turn. Howie, the conductor, enters with a tray of doughnuts and coffee. He puts it down on a side table. The ride is so smooth, the coffee doesn't even stir.

HOWIE
 (to Otis)
 Breakfast, Lover Boy.

Tom grins. Otis frowns.

HOWIE
 (doing a feminine voice)
Romeo, oh, Romeo, my asshole's
 itchin' - Could it be love?...

OTIS
 Shut your trap, Jerk. Were you
 eavesdropping on my radio again?

HOWIE
 Darn! I forgot my preparation H...

He sends Otis an air kiss and leaves. Tom takes a doughnut.

OTIS
 I'm gonna file a complaint. I'm
 nailing that nosy bastard.

TOM
 Relax. You still taking classes?

OTIS
 Sure I am.

TOM
 Accounting 101?

OTIS
 Intermediate Accounting III. If
 you were smart, you'd be going too.
 Trains. It's a dying business.

INT. HOSPITAL - OFFICE - DAY

DR. OFFENBERGER, 50's, glasses, sits opposite Megan. She's
 in scrubs. Framed certificates hang on the wall behind her.
 The doctor takes a pause before speaking.

DR. OFFENBERGER
 I can't answer that.

MEGAN
 I won't hold you to it. Give me
 your best guess.

DR. OFFENBERGER
You sure you want to know?

MEGAN
Please, Doctor.

He meets her eyes.

INT. FOSTER HOME - BEDROOM - DAY

Davey roughly wipes away tears from his eyes and looks around the pink bedroom. He takes down the Degas print that hangs on one wall next to pink ballet shoes. He stares at it a brief moment, then CRASH!

He pounds the print with his fist as hard as he can. The glass breaks, cutting his hand. Blood trickles over the paper dancers. The pain is almost a relief. He chooses one large shard and uses it to cut the window's screen. He removes the pink pillowcase, wrapping it around his hand to stop the bleeding. With his good hand, he grabs his train from the bed and crawls out the window.

EXT. TAPO CANYON ROAD, SIMI VALLEY - DAY

Davey runs by this main thoroughfare, typical of Simi Valley precisely laid-out, spiritually bereft streets. An ambulance, sirens blasting, barrels down the street. He's so lonely, it hurts.

EXT. COAST STARLIGHT - DAY

Desert. The train is approaching a wide curve on the tracks.

INT. COAST STARLIGHT - COACH - MOVING - DAY

Howie gets on the intercom...

INT. COAST STARLIGHT - SIGHTSEER LOUNGE - MOVING - DAY

PASSENGERS enjoy this second level lounge, surrounded by glass windows affording 360-degree views on all sides.

HOWIE (V.O.)
Hello Train Riders...

INT. COAST STARLIGHT - LOCOMOTIVE - MOVING - DAY

Tom puts the dynamic brake in reverse to slow down the train because of the turn.

 HOWIE (V.O.)
 ...We're approaching beautiful Simi
 Valley on schedule.

Otis watches as the train speed gradually decreases on Tom's display screen - it drops from 65 to 58 MPH.

EXT. CENTER FOR INTUITIVE MEDICINE - GARDEN - DAY

A pond spurts water into the blue sky. Trees and rose bushes with white blooms surround this secluded, pastoral consultation area.

Megan, in the cotton dress, is on a garden chair next to Tom. She flips through a brochure: "CENTER FOR INTUITIVE MEDICINE"

 MEGAN
I tried to plant flowers yesterday.
 I didn't do a very good job. We
 should water the yard more often.
 The dirt out there is so hard.

 TOM
 This is a good place, you'll see.

 MEGAN
 See what, Tom?

 TOM
 Chemo and hospitals are not our
 only options.

SHEILA, 30's, an attractive woman wearing a sharp pantsuit, approaches and sits with them. She offers Megan her hands.

 SHEILA
 Megan? I'm Sheila, it's a pleasure
 to meet you. Peace and love.

 MEGAN
 Hi.

 SHEILA
 Hi, Tom.
 (to Megan)
 Tom thinks we can help you.
 (MORE)

SHEILA (cont'd)

He was very convincing on the phone. Did you browse through our brochure?

MEGAN

Briefly.

SHEILA

We're a center for alternative approaches to treat or ameliorate disease. We offer applied kinesiology, cupping, and even electromagnetic therapy.

MEGAN

Can you cure me?

SHEILA

We're one of the best centers in the country.

MEGAN

You didn't answer my question.

SHEILA

Tom tells us you're a nurse. As a professional from the medical field, you know there are no guarantees. However, we can try to rejuvenate your system, teach you a number of relaxation techniques.

MEGAN

I don't want to relax. I want to live.

TOM

For Christ's sake Megan, will you just listen to her?

SHEILA

That's alright, Tom. Of course you want to live, Megan, but--

MEGAN

And I intend to spend the rest of my life doing exactly what I want. Electromagnetic therapy is not on my list.

She rises and leaves. Tom, upset, looks at Sheila.

SHEILA
 (smiling patiently)
 Give her time. She'll come around.

EXT. COAST STARLIGHT - LOCOMOTIVE - MOVING - DAY

The engine enters the curve. The long train follows. Cars barrel over the turn in the road.

INT. COAST STARLIGHT - SIGHTSEER LOUNGE - MOVING - DAY

PASSENGERS doze off. A TEENAGER rocks with his Walkman. A FATHER and his CHILD watch the front portion of the train, as it negotiates the curve. Squalid apartment buildings go by.

CHILD
 Where are the trees and deer?

FATHER
 We'll see lots of trees after we cross the desert.

CHILD
 What's that? Over there...

The child points ahead. There's something on the tracks.

INT. LINCOLN - DAY

Laura holds onto Davey, trying to subdue him with the last morsel of energy she can muster.

DAVEY
 No, Mom! No!

LAURA
 Shh...Shh... It'll be over soon.

DAVEY
 Let go!

He tries to pull up the lock on his door, but it won't budge.

LAURA
 I wish you would stay with me...

He reaches to her side and presses the "unlock" button. A CLICK sounds. The locks pop open.

Wriggling himself free of his mother's grasp, he opens the car door, grabs his train and jumps out onto the tracks.

INT. COAST STARLIGHT - LOCOMOTIVE - MOVING - DAY

Otis pours himself a glass of milk. Tom finishes his doughnut, puts down his coffee cup and looks ahead.

TOM
Object on the tracks.

Otis squints. The Lincoln is a blur on the tracks ahead.

OTIS
Jesus Christ.

Tom reaches for the air brake, takes it down a notch and stops on "SERVICE APPLICATION." The PSI drops on the screen: 5 pounds, 10 pounds... Otis gets on the radio.

OTIS
(into radio)
This is the Coast Starlight
approaching HWY 6. We have an
object on the tracks, I repeat...

INT. HOSPITAL - LABOR & DELIVERY UNIT - DAY

A glass enclosed room with neat rows of babies peacefully sleeping in bassinets. Megan, in a nurse's scrubs, cradles a BABY BOY wrapped in a blue blanket. Susan, sad, also in scrubs, enters. Megan places the baby back in the bassinet. She softly kisses his forehead.

MEGAN
I'll miss them.

EXT. TOWNSHIP AVENUE, SIMI VALLEY - NIGHT

Davey runs. An industrial nightmare. Pick-up and semi trucks drive by. A warehouse. A hose, pitched on the side of the building, drips. Davey, sweaty and heaving, finds the faucet and turns it on with his good hand-his left. He drinks from the hose. A quarter winks at him, shining on some gravel next to his feet. He picks it up. A truck with huge headlights exits the warehouse. The DRIVER notices him.

DRIVER
Hey kid! What you doing there?

Davey throws the hose. Frantic, he runs across the dark highway toward a neglected small park. The headlights throw off slivers of light, taking him back to:

INT. LAURA & DAVEY'S CONDO - LAURA'S BEDROOM - DAY

Slivers of light filter into the room through cheap blinds. The windows are shut. The air is stuffy, sour. Davey enters, carrying a plastic tray with a plate of scrambled eggs and burnt toast. Next to the plate, a coffee mug reads: "#1 Mom." He blinks, adjusting to the relative darkness.

DAVEY
Breakfast is ready, Mom.

Laura is covered in thick blankets in spite of the hot day.

LAURA
Did you say your morning prayers?

Davey pushes away an array of liquor bottles, making room for the breakfast tray on the night stand. He goes to the cheap, white blinds and rolls them open, just so.

DAVEY
Eat your eggs before they get cold.

He returns to the bed and puts the sad tray on her blanket.

LAURA
I don't want it.

DAVEY
Mom, you have to eat something.

She places the tray back on the night stand and sits up in bed enveloped by a sense of purposefulness.

LAURA
Kneel, Davey.

DAVEY
I said my prayers.

LAURA
We'll say them again.

He kneels reluctantly and clasps his hands.

LAURA
 O God, come to my aid.
 (to Davey)
 I can't hear you.

LAURA
 O Lord, make haste to help
 me. Glory be to the Father
 and to the Son and to the
 Holy Spirit, as it was in the
 beginning, is now, and ever
 shall be, world without end.
 Amen.

DAVEY
 O Lord, make haste to help
 me. Glory be to the Father
 and to the Son and to the
 Holy Spirit, as it was in the
 beginning, is now, and ever
 shall be, world without end.
 Amen.

LAURA
 Alleluia.

She pushes the blankets away revealing a housedress that has
 seen better days.

DAVEY
 It's after ten. You slept so hard,
 I didn't want to wake you.

LAURA
 I feel stronger, praise the Lord.

DAVEY
 I knew it! I told you you'd get
 better. I told you!

LAURA
 It is Friday, Davey?

DAVEY
 No, Mom. It's Tuesday.

LAURA
**Tuesday's a good day. How long
 before the train gets here?**

DAVEY
 (checking clock on
 dresser)
 Thirty-six minutes.
 (realization)
 We're going to see the train?

LAURA
 Yes, Davey.

DAVEY
 You mean it?

She puts her feet on the floor. Shivering, she reaches for a pill bottle on the night stand.

DAVEY

We don't have to. If you don't feel good...

She opens the pill bottle and spills out the remaining pills. There are only five left. She gives two to Davey.

LAURA

Two for you and three for me.

DAVEY

What for?

LAURA

To make us happy. Here. I'll take mine first.

She drinks them down. Davey puts the pills in his mouth.

LAURA

Good boy.

INT. TOM & MEGAN'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Tom sits on the edge of the bed, waiting with a pill bottle. Megan enters from the bathroom in a white nightgown. He takes two pills from the bottle, gives them to her. She swallows the medicine quickly like a practiced patient would.

MEGAN

I'm leaving to San Francisco tomorrow. Alone.

She pulls an empty suitcase out of the closet and leaves it lying on the floor. Exhausted, she crawls under the blankets.

TOM

Wait until the hearing. I'll come with you.

MEGAN

No, you won't. You'll sign up for more shifts.

TOM

Let me make it up to you.

MEGAN

What for? A tour of duty? A last
goodbye?

She kills the light, turns her back to him, as a train horn
prelaps and takes us to the--

EXT. RAIL CROSSING - DAY

Tracks. Davey runs to Laura's side of the car. The train is
growing larger. Its horns sound like a thousand wails.

EXT. COAST STARLIGHT - MOVING - DAY

The brake pipe reduction is applied - Air flows out from the
air reservoir on each car to the brake cylinder causing the
train to slow down.

INT. LOCOMOTIVE - MOVING - DAY

Tom and Otis watch the speedometer. The speed goes down from
58 to 52 MPH. The oppressive hiss from the brakes
infiltrates the cab, making it even hotter. Otis looks ahead
in disbelief. The car is clearer now. The train's horn is
so loud, he has to scream over it.

OTIS

A goddamn car!

TOM

Shit. Shit!

OTIS

...Playing chicken with a train.

Tom closes the throttle. The locomotive vibrates violently.
He eyes the EMERGENCY APPLICATION on the air brake gage.

TOM

How many cars are on the turn?

OTIS

How should I know? Ten?

TOM

GET HOWIE ON THE RADIO! DO IT!
NOW!!

EXT. FOSTER HOME, SIMI VALLEY - DAY

Renee's white van drives away, its red decal showing:

VENTURA CHILDREN & FAMILY SERVICES

INT. FOSTER HOME - BEDROOM - DAY

Davey turns away from the window as Judy Neasy, the heavy efficient foster mom, enters carrying a plate with a thick slice of roast beef. She puts it on the pink vanity.

JUDY

Used to be my girl's room. We asked for a girl, but you were an emergency.

(beat)

We like boys. We have two here already. They're brothers. You're an only child, aren't you?

(beat)

You want some clean clothes?

Not waiting for an answer, she opens the large closet, takes out a girl's pink T-shirt screened with cheerful, red hearts.

JUDY

This will have to do for now.

(beat)

We eat together, but we already had our lunch. I'll leave it here for you. We'll talk later.

And she exits, closing the door behind her.

INT. COAST STARLIGHT - LOCOMOTIVE - MOVING - DAY

Tom watches as the speedometer drops to 48 MPH. He turns to Otis who gets off the radio.

TOM

What did he say?

Otis seems stricken.

TOM

WHAT DID HE SAY?

OTIS

Seven cars need to make the turn.

TOM
Son-of-a-bitch!

They both automatically turn to the EMERGENCY APPLICATION.

WANDA (V.O.)
Coast Starlight? What the hell is
going on there?

INT. FOSTER HOME - KITCHEN - DAY

Davey carries in his plate. He didn't touch his food. He goes to the sink and dumps the roast beef down the garbage disposal, rinsing his plate conscientiously. A small TV is perched on the counter. He turns it on and turns up the volume on the Channel 4 NEWS REPORTER:

NEWS REPORTER
The senior engineer driving the train, Tom Stark, and his partner, Otis Petalas, **have been suspended pending an investigation.** Sources say there's some dispute as to--

Judy enters briskly and shuts the TV. She's angry.

JUDY
Kitchen is off limits between meal times. TV privileges are with permission only. Understood?

DAVEY
Yes.

JUDY
Yes, ma'am. As long as you live here, you will play by my rules.

DAVEY
Listen to your own rules.

JUDY
Go to your room. Now.

DAVEY
You should stay out of the kitchen.

JUDY
You're bad. I knew it the moment I saw you.

She grabs his arm and leads him out.

INT. FOSTER HOME - HALLWAY - DAY

Judy roughly pulls Davey down the hall. A door off to the side opens and a seven-year old BOY peeks out.

JUDY
In your room!

The Boy shuts the door as Judy hurls Davey inside "his" room.

INT. FOSTER HOME - BEDROOM - DAY

Judy shoves the girl's pink T-shirt into Davey's arms.

JUDY
Put it on and go to bed.

She heads to the door, then turns.

JUDY
No wonder your own mom tried to
kill you.

She leaves, slamming the door behind her. Davey's eyes sting with tears. He roughly wipes them, then he turns to the Degas print on the wall and...

INT. TOM & MEGAN'S HOUSE - GARAGE - NIGHT

Tom, in front of one section of the platform, pricks his finger on the jagged roof of a miniature farm house.

This is Tom's own railroad: An expansive undulating wooden platform runs around the inside of the garage. Shiny model trains sit on miniature rails and ties, complete with plastic passengers, station houses, and "scenery."

Blood trickles from the cut in Tom's finger. He picks up the "farm house," puts it in his palm and studies it. CLOSE on house:

MARY (V.O.)
Happy birthday, Tom.

INT. HOUSE, FRESNO CALIFORNIA - LIVING ROOM - DAY

MARY STARK, in a blue 1960's factory uniform dress, puts a homemade cake with a single burning candle on the Salvation Army table. LITTLE TOM STARK, 9 today, blows the candle.

She gives him a short hug and grabs her purse. He looks away, trying to hide his disappointment, but she sees it anyway.

MARY

Next year we'll have ourselves a real party.

A quick kiss, and she hurries out. He follows, standing at the doorway, watching Mom run down the dirt driveway - the ragged hem of her dress flapping against her pantyhosed legs - flagging a passing bus. It stops a few feet ahead. Mom climbs aboard. He waits for the bus to disappear, then runs out.

EXT. TRAIN - DAY

Gray plumes of smoke billow into the hazy afternoon air. The rusted cars of a WESTERN PACIFIC freight train roll over the tracks flanked by orange groves on both sides. Little Tom emerges out of the orchard running, his clothes covered in leaves and dirt. He chases the train and reaches for the handrail on the side of one car, sprinting with all his might. He grabs the rail and swings onto the ladder at the back of the car.

He clings to the narrow iron ladder, panting and laughing, high on endorphins and youth. The train, as if rebelling against his intrusion, moves faster. But the boy climbs and slowly lets go of the ladder, crawling onto the roof of the freight car. He lies on the warm steel, raises one palm up and up and spreads his fingers wide, feeling the wind rush through them.

MEGAN (V.O.)

You drive that damn train all day...

INT. TOM & MEGAN'S HOUSE - GARAGE - NIGHT

Tom turns away from the tracks toward Megan. She stands in the doorway.

MEGAN

...then you come home and build your own train.

TOM

I've seen him before - the boy from the accident. He hangs out at the Simi Valley station always asking a million questions about trains.

MEGAN

How sad.

TOM

I didn't ask his mother to pick the Starlight.

MEGAN

What if I were lying on the tracks.
Would you have stopped the train
for me?

EXT. RAIL CROSSING - LINCOLN - DAY

Davey opens the driver's side door. He tries to pull his mother out.

DAVEY

It's coming, Mom. We have to go!

She sinks into oblivion. Her head falls on the passenger seat. He turns, frantic. The massive train is growing larger.

He crouches, fumbling on the gravel trying to find the keys.

DAVEY

Where are the keys? Where'd you
throw them?

He looks around. Crying, he goes to her and shakes her.

DAVEY

Don't sleep! Oh, God! Wake up,
Mom! Wake up!

INT. COAST STARLIGHT - LOCOMOTIVE - MOVING - DAY

Otis and Tom can see Davey clearly now.

OTIS

A boy?

TOM

Fuck! Goddamnit!

OTIS

Stop the train!

Otis reaches for the EMERGENCY APPLICATION on the air brake. Tom pushes him away.

TOM
Our tail is on the turn! We'll
derail!

OTIS
We have to try!

TOM
Not with hundreds of passengers on
board!

EXT. RAIL CROSSING - LINCOLN - DAY

Davey tries to drag Laura out, but she is like an oversize rag doll -- Her entire body has gone limp. He turns. The train barrels toward him. Desperate, he looks around.

DAVEY
Help! Somebody! Help me!

But there's no one.

INT. LAURA & DAVEY'S CONDO, SIMI VALLEY - KITCHEN - DAY

Davey's train stands on the grimy kitchen counter. Davey spits two pills into the sink which is crammed with dirty dishes. He turns on the faucet. The water washes the pills down the drain. A phone rings.

LAURA (O.S.)
Davey?

DAVEY
(calling toward bedroom)
I got it, Mom!

INT. LAURA & DAVEY'S CONDO - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Squalid, filthy, messy - only years of neglect can do this. Davey gets the phone.

DAVEY
(into phone)
Hello?
(trying to sound like a man and keep his voice down at the same time)
Yes, we know David hasn't been in school...Well, see his mother died...That's okay...Thank you.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Davey rinses the dishes with a worn-out sponge.

DAVEY
 (whispering; to himself)
**O God, dear God, forgive me
 for lying to the principal, but I
 have to be here to take care of my
 mother. Thank you, God. Amen.**

EXT. RAIL CROSSING - LINCOLN - DAY

Davey, clasping Laura's shoulders and arms, pulls with all his might.

INT. LOCOMOTIVE - MOVING - DAY

TOM
 We're following procedure.

OTIS
 We're gonna hit!

TOM
 There's nothing we can do about it!

OTIS
 Christ!

EXT. RAIL CROSSING - LINCOLN - DAY

Davey has managed to get Laura's head and shoulders out of the car. But it's not nearly enough. Crying, he turns. The train is huge, looming over him like a giant steel monster.

DAVEY
 MOOOOMMMM!

INT. COAST STARLIGHT - SIGHTSEER LOUNGE - MOVING - DAY

Glass windows affording 360-degree views on all sides. Horrified Passengers scream as they see the boy and the car. The Father takes his Child away from the window. Passengers grab chairs, walls, anything solid, bracing for the impact...

INT. COAST STARLIGHT - LOCOMOTIVE - MOVING - DAY

Tom and Otis. The train is inches away from Davey.

OTIS
God forgive us.

EXT. RAIL CROSSING - DAY

With a horrific SCREECH, the train plows into the Lincoln dragging it forward as if it were a toy.

FADE TO BLACK.

INT. J & G CONSTRUCTION - FRONT OFFICE - DUSK

A shabby, wooden shack with a tin roof converted into two offices -- front and back. Laura, four years younger, her hair in a ponytail is on the phone, standing opposite a small window. Trucks are parked outside on the unpaved road.

LAURA
(into phone)
I know the holidays are coming,
Mrs. Klein...Jeff personally told
me, he'll be there tomorrow...

JEFF STEEL, 40's, potbelly, comes out from the back, heading to the front door. He checks out Laura's behind.

LAURA
(into phone)
...We'll finish your driveway by
Christmas, I promise...

He places a black, steel toy locomotive on her desk. He then puts his hand on her ass. She squirms away from him.

LAURA
(into phone)
...Call me tomorrow if they don't
show up...Okay, bye.

He grabs her ass again. She hangs up and slaps his hand away.

LAURA
Stop it. I don't fool around with
married men no more. I go to
Church now. Every Sunday, Jeff.

JEFF
 (sarcastic)
 Salvation is near, I'm sure.

LAURA
 You gonna finish her driveway? The
 old bag's been calling every day.
 (noticing toy locomotive)
 What's that?

JEFF
 For your boy.

He exits.

EXT. J & G CONSTRUCTION - DUSK

The shabby office is located on a large, fenced lot. Jeff
 heads to one of the pick-ups. Laura follows.

LAURA
 (re: train)
 I can't give it to him. Davey
 hates you, you know.

JEFF
 He doesn't hate me.

LAURA
 You bet he does. He's seen me
 crying every time you leave.

JEFF
 Don't tell him it's from me then.

LAURA
 Who am I supposed to say it's from?

JEFF
**Make something up. Tell him his
 dad left it for him.**

She throws the toy to the ground.

LAURA
 You dirty bastard! You son-of-a-
 bitch!

JEFF
 For a Christian woman, you got one
 hell of a mouth.

He goes to her. She spits on the ground.

JEFF

What are you so mad about? It's a great idea. 'Specially when you don't know who his lousy dad is.

LAURA

Don't you talk to me like that.

He picks up the train and puts it in her hand.

JEFF

Try and have yourself a nice holiday, Laura.

He heads back to his truck, gets in, drives away. Tearful, she cleans the dirt from the toy train in her hand.

EXT. LAURA & DAVEY'S CONDO, SIMI VALLEY - BALCONY - DAWN

The sun burns its way through the pale, orange skies. Clothes hang to dry on the steel railing hemming the bare, second floor balcony.

Davey puts his black, steel toy locomotive on the rail, sharing the sunrise with it as if it were an old friend.

MRS. BROWN, an oddly formal English woman, sporting curlers, leans over from a neighboring apartment, feigning surprise.

MRS. BROWN

(British accent)

Why, hello there, Davey. How's your poor mother, bless her, on this lovely **Tuesday** morning?

DAVEY

She's okay.

MRS. BROWN

Up and about, is she?

DAVEY

Not yet, but soon.

MRS. BROWN

If you want me to drop by and fix you two some tea--

DAVEY
(impatiently)
Later, Mrs. Brown.

He runs inside.

INT. TOM & MEGAN'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - DUSK

Tom enters. Megan sits at the round kitchen table.

MEGAN
What happened?

TOM
**They suspended me to decide if we
followed procedure.**
(changing subject)
You saw the doctor?

Restless, he sits opposite her.

MEGAN
Susan brought us some soup.

TOM
I'm not hungry. You have to do
chemo again?

Her nurse's uniform lie neatly folded on the table.

MEGAN
My scrubs. Won't be needing them
anymore. This kitchen is my
favorite part of the house. You
know, it's the only room we've
fully unpacked.

TOM
What did the doctor say, Megan?
What are our options?

MEGAN
We don't have options. We have
days, weeks, maybe months. The
tumor has metastasized to my bones.

TOM
Christ. Oh, God. I'm sorry.
Shit. I'm sorry.

MEGAN
It's okay.

He rises and steadies himself against the kitchen counter.

TOM
We'll treat it again. It's going
to be hard, but--

MEGAN
It's over.

TOM
What do you mean? We've got to
fight it. We have to.

MEGAN
I'm done fighting. Chemo made me
sick. My cancer is too advanced.
And I refuse to spend what is left
of my life in a hospital room with
tubes, syringes and oncologists.

TOM
There must be something--

MEGAN
There's nothing.

TOM
We have to try! We've got to find
a way to deal with...with...

MEGAN
Death. Say it.

EXT. RAIL CROSSING - SITE OF ACCIDENT, SIMI VALLEY - DAY

News and camera CREWS swarm in the peripherals recording the
irritated, confused PASSENGERS who wait in long lines to
board the blue busses of California Amtrak.

Yellow tape isolates the accident scene from the media. The
car, or the mangled piece of metal that is left of it, is
still attached to the train's grill like a deformed, giant
bug. DETECTIVES work around it, retrieving evidence.

Tom and Otis step out of one car each holding a plastic cup
with a urine sample. Otis avoids looking at the mangled
Lincoln as he and Tom hand their samples to a POLICE OFFICER.

TOM
Let me know if I'm pregnant.

The Police Officer smiles awkwardly and takes the samples. N.B. and OFFICIALS from the Federal Railroad Administration, mill nearby under the hot sun. Tom joins them. Otis stays a few feet away.

TOM

It's a suicide. No doubt about it. We followed the book. The feed recorder will tell you.

N.B.

Tom, we know you did. This is a complicated situation.

TOM

There are fifty train suicides every year in LA alone. It's not complicated. It's routine.

N.B.

Not with a woman and a young boy involved.

OFFICIAL #1

You're suspended until the hearing.

TOM

Some asshole puts himself in front of a train, and it's my fault?

N.B.

We don't have a choice on this one. No one remembers Victor Lopez but everyone knows who Susan Smith is.

TOM

What the hell does that mean?

OTIS

Victor Lopez -- the homeless man who dived under my train in Oxnard.

They all turn to him, surprised to hear him speak.

N.B.

No one cares about some wacko who decides to end his life under a train. But everyone feels for a mother and her child.

TOM

Son-of-a-bitch. Shit!

He walks away. They watch him go. N.B. follows.

N.B.
 (to Official #1)
 I'll talk to him. He'll cooperate.
 (turning)
 Tom! Tom! Wait!

Tom, upset, stops a short distance away. He watches the Detectives as they work on the car. N.B. catches up.

N.B.
 We're talking about a week. Ten days max. Let us prove you guys did everything right.

TOM
 You know we did.

N.B.
 There's a public image to consider. I don't have to tell you that every publicized train accident fuels a new Amtrak budget cut debate.

RENEE (O.S.)
 Come on, David.

Tom and N.B. turn and see--

Renee, the wiry social worker, escorting Davey to a parked van with the red decal: "VENTURA CHILDREN & FAMILY SERVICES." The boy suddenly looks up and clashes into Tom's eyes. He stares, transfixed. Then, he screams across the way--

DAVEY
YOU DIDN'T STOP!

Tom looks away, out into the distance.

INT. HOUSE, FRESNO CALIFORNIA - DAY

Fairly dark in spite of the bright day outside. The door opens. Little Tom, 9, barrels in with a tattered school bag. AUNT ROSE and UNCLE ADAM rise from the dilapidated couch. They're ordinary Fresno farmers and look it, except that Aunt Rose's eyes are red and puffy.

LITTLE TOM
 Aunt Rose!

AUNT ROSE

Oh, Tom...

She goes to him and holds him tight, sobbing. Uncle Adam holds his hat in hands, uncomfortable with this blatant display of emotions.

LITTLE TOM

Why are you crying?

She's too distraught to answer. He notices a frayed suitcase at Uncle Adam's feet.

LITTLE TOM

Where are we going?

UNCLE ADAM

There was a fire at the factory Tom, and your mother, well, she...

LITTLE TOM

Mom?

UNCLE ADAM

You'll be living with us now. Come on, Son. Rose. We need to be on our way.

He picks up Tom's suitcase and goes to the door. The boy looks around, stunned.

LITTLE TOM

Mom?

He runs to the kitchen. Aunt Rose rises in tears. Little Tom comes back in.

AUNT ROSE

She's gone, Tom.

LITTLE TOM

MOM!

INT. TRAIN STATION, SIMI VALLEY - NIGHT

A sign reads:

WELCOME TO SIMI VALLEY

Clean and lit, almost homey. PASSENGERS, on waiting-area benches, eat, read and talk. Nearby, Davey, clutching his train, scans the fair chart. One entry on it informs:

"SIMI VALLEY TO LOS ANGELES: \$10.00 ONE WAY. \$20.00 ROUND TRIP."

It might as well be a million. His gaze wanders aimlessly around the station when he spots his answer: SHARON, a pierced, tattooed teenage girl sleeping against a duffel bag on one bench. She sticks out like a stain on a Sunday suit.

He moseys over and plumps down next to her, or more exactly next to her army-style boots. He furtively glances over. The girl is sound asleep. A wallet sticks out from her back pocket, attached to her jeans with a silver chain. He inches his way toward her wallet. He checks the terrain. No one notices. No one cares. He gently yanks the chain, pulls out the wallet and opens it.

SMACK! Sharon hits his hand, very awake.

SHARON

Way too slow. That's your problem.

Alarmed, he tries to hightail it, when the girl grabs his shirt, planting him firmly on the bench.

DAVEY

I was only gonna borrow it.

SHARON

(glib)

Sure, you were gonna give it back.
Think the cops will buy your story?

DAVEY

Please don't call them.
(taking out the quarter
from his pocket)
Take it. That's all I have.

She glances at the quarter in his hand, unimpressed and lets him go. She pulls out a cigarette. He's too scared to move.

SHARON

Want one?

DAVEY

You can't smoke here.

SHARON

Look who's talking. Tony Soprano
of Simi Valley.

She lights the cigarette and finds a bag of Twinkies in her backpack. She puts it on the bench between them. He slowly reaches for it. She notices the deep cut in his right hand:

SHARON

What happened to your hand?

He takes a Twinkie, nearly swallowing it whole.

DAVEY

If you give me ten dollars, I'll send them back when I get to Los Angeles.

SHARON

What are you going there for?

(he shrugs)

Come on. It's a secret? Level with me. You a runaway?

(he nods)

Mother or father?

DAVEY

Foster home.

SHARON

(grinning)

No shit. Join the frickin' club.

She rises, tosses the cigarette on the floor and squashes it with her boot. She traverses the short distance to the ticket window. Davey watches her while eating the other Twinkie.

Sharon returns to the bench, holding a ticket. She hands it to him. He takes it, speechless.

SHARON

You welcome. It's good karma.

(beat)

Well? The last train leaves in five minutes.

DAVEY

I'll pay you back.

SHARON

Tell you what. Send it to my sister. She's in a foster home too.

She takes out a pen from her bag.

SHARON

Give me that ticket.

He does -- reluctantly. She scribbles an address on it and gives it back, much to Davey's relief.

SHARON

Good luck.

EXT. APARTMENT BUILDING, SIMI VALLEY - DAY

Megan, in a summery cotton dress, gets out of the car and inspects the barely-readable address on this miserable-looking building, ironically named:

SIMI VALLEY ROYALE

INT. APARTMENT BUILDING - DAY

Megan studies the rusty mail boxes. She finds what she wants: "Danner. 202."

INT. APARTMENT BUILDING - HALLWAY - DAY

Megan carefully advances down the dreary hallway. She gets to 202. It's just a door with grease spots and yellow police tape. What was she expecting to find anyway?

Spent, she leans against the door; it narrowly opens. Someone forgot to lock up. She pushes the door in, exposing the squalid, filthy living room - only years of neglect can do this. She takes in the ruin of Laura and Davey's life.

MEGAN

Jesus.

MRS. BROWN (O.S.)

(British accent)

I fancy they're long gone.

Startled, Megan turns. Mrs. Brown, the oddly formal British woman, frowns at her.

MRS. BROWN

The officers. They collected their evidence and left.

MEGAN

You knew them?

MRS. BROWN

Laura and Davey? I suppose so.
You look a bit pale, deary.

MEGAN
I could sit for a moment.

MRS. BROWN
Lovely. I'll fix us a cupper.

INT. TOM & MEGAN'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Tom opens the door. It's Otis.

OTIS
Hey, Tom. Sorry to disturb you at home. Can we talk?

INT. TOM & MEGAN'S HOUSE - GARAGE - DAY

Tom installs a piece of track. Otis, surprised, checks out the model tracks.

OTIS
I had no idea you were into model trains.

TOM
Something wrong with that, **Romeo**?

OTIS
No, and I don't need anybody's shit right now.

Tom puts the tracks down. He goes to the door.

TOM
Let's get out of here.

EXT. MONUMENT PARK, SIMI VALLEY - NIGHT

Davey climbs up a slope speckled with tall weeds. Something moves behind him. He freezes, then quickly turns. Every tree and bush is ominous and sinister.

A lonely bird lands on a branch nearby. It watches him. He stares back.

DAVEY
(scaring the bird)
AHHH!

It doesn't move. He bends, picks up a small rock from the ground and throws it at the bird.

He misses by an inch, but the stubborn thing won't budge or even flutter. A shiver runs down his spine. He looks around.

DAVEY
(whispering)
Mom?

The bird flies away. He shakes his head, dismissive, and continues up the incline. He settles on one spot and carefully sits, unraveling the pink pillowcase wrapped around his hand. He flinches. The cloth has stuck to a deep, open wound; it now removes pieces of his skin as it comes undone.

INT. MRS. BROWN'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - DAY

It's a bit like a doll's house with doilies and whatnots occupying every available corner. Megan, uneasy, is perched on the sofa. Mrs. Brown enters with a teapot and cups. She sits, puts a cup in front of Megan and takes one for herself.

MRS. BROWN
We'll let it brew a while.

MEGAN
You're very kind.

MRS. BROWN
I've lived next door to Laura for five years. We were no bosom buddies, but you live next to someone for that long, you get to know them in an intimate way.

MEGAN
She ever mention suicide to you?

MRS. BROWN
You ARE a nosy one. Poking! Snooping! How did you find us? Who sent you!

MEGAN
Laura is listed. Call information if you don't believe me.

MRS. BROWN
Oh, dear...dear...dear...
(giggling)
Trying times, indeed. Cookies?

MEGAN
No, thanks. Really.

But Mrs. Brown is already up and on her way to the kitchen. Megan is impatient...

MEGAN
(calling toward kitchen)
You were saying, about Laura...

MRS. BROWN (O.S.)
I looked after her son here and there. Bless her.

Mrs. Brown returns, munching on butter cookies. She sets the plate on the table. Megan smiles cordially.

MRS. BROWN
Couldn't help but notice all the men coming and going out of her apartment. Of course, no one's been around in ages, but they used to flock to her like hungry birds.

MEGAN
They stopped coming?

MRS. BROWN
She had a breakdown. A nerves disease. Monstrous, isn't it? The tricks our mind plays on us... Tea?

MEGAN
You think she wanted to die, then?

Mrs. Brown pours imaginary tea from the pot. First in Megan's cup, then in hers. Megan watches her, baffled.

MRS. BROWN
Hard to say, isn't it? Maybe she did. Maybe she didn't.
(sipping imaginary tea)
Quite good. Don't be shy. Try it.

MEGAN
(beat)
My cup is empty.

MRS. BROWN
Nonsense. Don't be scared, Love. I made it me-self.

MEGAN
(rising)
I should go.

MRS. BROWN
You haven't had your tea!

MEGAN
("sipping" her tea...)
Mmmm... Very good.

MRS. BROWN
Lovely.

INT. UNION STATION - NIGHT

Davey looks up at a large sign:

WELCOME TO UNION STATION, LOS ANGELES

A cavernous marble hall with tall ornate ceilings, black marble floors and fabulous chandeliers. Davey furtively passes a tall ticket counter. The two CLERKS inside are busy talking. He continues down to one door: "Authorized Personnel Only."

INT. UNION STATION - HALLWAY - NIGHT

Davey makes his way down the marble hallway carefully examining the pictures that adorn the wall: Union Station in the 30's and 40's. N.B. comes out of one office with an ENGINEER. Davey hugs the wall.

ENGINEER
Tough break. Tom loves his train.

They go into another office without noticing him. The door closes behind them. Davey continues down to the--

EXT. UNION STATION - PLATFORM - NIGHT

Davey, holding his train, is face-to-face with a real, live docked train. He runs his fingers along one car. He sees the ladder in the back and places his toy engine on the ground.

EXT. COAST STARLIGHT - MOMENTS LATER

Davey gets to the end of the ladder. He looks down at the tangle of wires and steel connecting his car to the next one. He steps off the ladder and onto the roof, careful not to put too much pressure on his injured right hand.

Slowly, he straightens himself and takes a few steps. It's scary. From his vantage point he can see the gigantic station building and more trains. Docked trains, resting like beached whales on their track.

He continues to walk. Faster and faster. He stumbles, loses his balance and almost slips off of the car. Determined, he straightens up and looks ahead. He runs. He gets to the end of the car - jumps.

He just makes it, landing hard on the adjacent car's roof, his body slamming against the cold, hard metal. Victorious, he rises and looks up at the dark sky.

DAVEY

I'm not scared of you! Do you hear me? I'M NOT SCARED!

INT. CAR - MOVING - DAY

Tom and Megan in the cotton dress.

TOM

What do you want? What do you want me to do?

MEGAN

What happened to us?

TOM

What are you talking about.

MEGAN

You heard me.

TOM

Meggie...

MEGAN

Don't "Meggie" me. I'm not some fragile thing!

TOM

What do you want from me!

MEGAN

I WANT TO KNOW WHY WE NEVER HAD CHILDREN!!

He pulls over to the curb. They sit there a moment, treading on dangerous ground now.

TOM
We didn't find the right time.

MEGAN
You kept moving us around. Fourteen homes in fifteen years of marriage.

TOM
That's what trainmen do. They move with the trains.

MEGAN
Not all of them! It's not a rule. It's what we did. Who could have a child like that?

TOM
You got sick.

MEGAN
You're blaming me?

TOM
I'm not blaming anyone. It just happened that way.

She absorbs his words, swallowing the lump in her throat.

MEGAN
I thought I had all this time. To be a woman, a nurse, a mother. Then I found out I didn't. Things that weren't urgent before suddenly took on a whole new meaning.

TOM
I was never sure I'd make a good father.

MEGAN
I'm not afraid to die but to think I haven't lived, that terrifies me.

EXT. COAST STARLIGHT - PLATFORM - DAY

PASSENGERS board the train, passing a sign that reads:

UNION STATION - LOS ANGELES

Vince, the engineer, heads to the locomotive.

INT. COAST STARLIGHT - BATHROOM - DAY

Davey, washing his face and hair in the small sink, tries to make himself presentable. He's careful with his right hand that has the nasty, deep cut. His clothes are filthy.

INT. COAST STARLIGHT - COACH CAR - DAY

Howie, in conductor's uniform, goes by. Davey exits the bathroom with his train and sees him. He follows.

DAVEY
You the conductor?

HOWIE
(turning)
Yeah?

DAVEY
I'm looking for my Uncle Tom.

HOWIE
Never heard of him.

DAVEY
He drives this train.

HOWIE
You mean, Tom Stark? I didn't know he had relatives.

DAVEY
He has a sister. I want to surprise him.

HOWIE
Sorry, Kid. Tom's off duty because of the accident.

DAVEY
(playing dumb)
The accident?

A middle-aged MAN, a bit lost, hands Howie his ticket stub.

HOWIE
(to Man)
Two cars down.
(to Davey)
Tell you what, I'll take you to Tom's place.

DAVEY

Really?

HOWIE

Sure, catch a ride with us. Tom's nephew is my nephew.

INT. BAR - DUSK

A working man's joint. Country music plays in the b.g. TRUCK DRIVERS wash down the road at the bar. Tom and Otis are at one table. ROSANNA, cheap highlights and expensive cleavage, serves Otis a coffee and puts a beer in front of Tom.

ROSANNA

Anything else?

TOM

We're good.

She gives Tom a sultry smile and leaves.

TOM

I think she likes you.

OTIS

Not my type.

TOM

I didn't know you had a type.

OTIS

You thought about it?

TOM

About what?

OTIS

The accident. I'm having a hard time with it.

TOM

Keep it to yourself. I don't want to hear it.

OTIS

I'm going to talk to N.B. I'm giving my notice.

TOM

You do that now and you'll make it look like we did something wrong.

OTIS
But we did, Tom.

TOM
We didn't have a choice, damn it.

OTIS
We didn't?

TOM
If we had put the train on
emergency, the wheels would have
flattened. We would have derailed.

OTIS
We'll never know for sure.

TOM
No. We won't. It was a judgment
call, and I made it.
(trying a different tact)
Look, you don't have it so bad.
You're good at what you do. You're
barely thirty-five and you're
driving the Starlight.

OTIS
And the guys hate me for it.

TOM
Screw them.
(to BARTENDER; re: beer)
Can I get another?

OTIS
We killed a human being - a person.

TOM
It was a suicide!

OTIS
The homeless man was my first one -
Victor Lopez.

Tom shakes his head. A heavy weight on his shoulders.
Rosanna puts another beer on the table, gives Tom another
sultry smile and leaves.

TOM
(desperate)
Why don't we talk about something
else.

(MORE)

TOM (cont'd)
Tell me, what's it like being a bachelor nowadays? You pick up the girls in accounting class?

OTIS
It was right before the end of the shift. We had a smooth ride for ten hours. I was looking at the clock and thinking that we were making good time, might even be fifteen minutes early coming into LA. Then I see him. Standing on the tracks, gazing up at the sky, clear as day in the spotlight, and we blow the horn and ring the bell, but he ignores us.

TOM
They turn us into executioners.

OTIS
You know what he did right before we hit him? He smiled at us.

TOM
He had a death wish. Some people do. Other people don't want to die and they die anyway.

This wasn't easy to say. He drinks. Otis pauses, then:

OTIS
I'll wait until the hearing's done. I'll give N.B. my notice then.

TOM
Fine. Do that.

He rises. Otis does too.

OTIS
Don't be an asshole.

TOM
I have no need for a quitter.

He throws some money on the table.

OTIS
Everything in your life is dying and you just can't deal with it.

Tom punches him. Hard. Otis falls to the floor. His glasses break.

He springs up and tries to hit Tom, but misses. Tom punches him in the stomach. Otis doubles over. Tom is ready to pounce on him when the very LA Bartender runs over with a golf club.

BARTENDER

Get out! Now!

EXT. BAR - NIGHT

A strip mall. Otis gets into his car. Tom is blinded by rage.

TOM

You talk about my wife again, I'll kill you.

OTIS

At least I'm alive. You're already dead inside and everyone knows it.

INT. TOM & MEGAN'S HOUSE - GARAGE - DAY

Tom, face distorted in rage and sorrow, rises from the floor and looks at his railroad. Shiny model trains sit on miniature tracks. He sends his fist into the tracks. CRASH!! Bits of plastic and metal go everywhere. A plastic "passenger" plunges to the floor.

He turns to another section. CRASH!! The "mountain scenery" behind the tracks breaks in two. A yellow WESTERN PACIFIC model train tumbles down. Methodically he goes around the tracks breaking section after section. He stops to study the destruction. The chaos that is his life.

INT. TOM & MEGAN'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - DAY

Megan closes a suitcase. She takes a last look around.

INT. TOM & MEGAN'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Megan carries the suitcase down the stairs. The stark room is empty except for open and closed moving boxes that are scattered throughout. She knows where to find her husband.

INT. TOM & MEGAN'S HOUSE - GARAGE - DAY

Megan enters with the suitcase. Tom sits on the floor margined by his broken railroad. She puts her suitcase down and takes in the ruin around them. He rises.

TOM

I was scared of losing you because everyone I cared about left me.

MEGAN

It's too late, Tom.

TOM

I thought if I didn't get comfortable, if I kept us on the move and didn't settle down it wouldn't be so hard if you left me too.

She goes to him and gives him a hug. Then:

MEGAN

Walk me to the door?

He nods, choked-up, and takes her suitcase. They walk out.

INT. TOM & MEGAN'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Megan and Tom enter. He stops.

TOM

I can't let you go.

MEGAN

Tom...

TOM

What's going to happen when you get worse. Who's going to take care of you there?

MEGAN

I'll figure it out.

A KNOCK. Tom puts down the suitcase, goes to open the door.

Davey stands in the doorway clutching his train. Tom blanches and takes a step back. Davey advances into the house, staring at him with accusing eyes.

Megan sees them.

MEGAN

Tom?

Mad with anger and grief, Davey unleashes a barrage of punches on Tom.

DAVEY
You didn't stop!

Shocked and helpless, Megan watches as Tom fends off Davey's blows. She notices the boy's bruised hand.

MEGAN
(to Tom)
Don't hurt him.

Tom manages to pin Davey against the wall.

DAVEY
You had time! You didn't stop!

MEGAN
Tom! Let him go.

He does. Tom and Davey, at a stand off, glare at each other.

MEGAN
Why are you angry with Tom?

DAVEY
He killed my mother!

TOM
She killed herself.

MEGAN
(realization)
Oh, God.

DAVEY
What were you doing? 60? 70?

TOM
58.

DAVEY
58!

TOM
I don't owe you an explanation.

DAVEY
Yes, you do!

MEGAN
Tom. Please.

TOM

(beat)

My tail was on the curve.

DAVEY

That doesn't matter.

TOM

It does! I was still making the turn!

DAVEY

How many cars?

TOM

Seven.

MEGAN

Show him the book.

INT. TOM & MEGAN'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - SOON AFTER

Davey's train is perched atop the table. Davey hovers over Tom's tattered, thick Rule Book, reading intently. Tom watches him, tense. Davey looks up at him.

DAVEY

It doesn't say.

TOM

(pointing to book)

Right here. If you can picture a train going very fast--

DAVEY

You mean if it runs over 50 MPH.

TOM

Right. And the engineer decides to use the emergency brake instead of slowing it down, then--

DAVEY

There's a 60% chance the train will derail. That's what it says?

TOM

Yeah.

DAVEY

But that's not for sure.

TOM
It was a chance I couldn't take.

DAVEY
Because your tail was on the turn?

TOM
And I had three hundred passengers.
The train was packed.

Davey pauses, conflicted between his love for trains and his rage for Tom.

DAVEY
It almost always is.

TOM
It's a popular route.

Megan joins them at the table with an alcohol rub and a bandage. She cleans Davey's wound expertly. He winces.

MEGAN
It will only hurt for a second.

She quickly fans it with her hand to soothe his pain.

MEGAN
What do they call you?

DAVEY
Davey.

MEGAN
That's a nice name.

TOM
How did you find me?

DAVEY
I went on the train.

TOM
What train?

MEGAN
Who's taking care of you now?

DAVEY
No one.

MEGAN
Don't you have any family?

DAVEY
They put me in a foster home.

TOM
(to Megan)
We should call the police.

A KNOCK. They exchange tense glances.

TOM
If they're not here already. Shit!
He rises. Davey looks at Megan, alarmed.

MEGAN
Don't go anywhere. It'll be okay.

INT. TOM & MEGAN'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Megan and Tom, confused, stare at two husky WORKMEN. A large, covered object rests behind them. A truck is parked in the driveway.

WORKMAN
Megan Stark?

MEGAN
Yes.

WORKMAN
We have your piano.

MEGAN
My...piano?
(giddy with relief)
Of course! My piano!

He hands her an invoice. She happily takes it.

WORKMAN
Where do you want it?

She points to a corner by some moving boxes.

MEGAN
There. Thank you.

TOM
What piano?

MEGAN
I ordered it a few days ago.

TOM

Oh.

They watch as the men carry the piano inside.

MEGAN

What are we going to do?

TOM

Get him out of here.

MEGAN

Let him stay.

TOM

What?

MEGAN

Just for one day.

TOM

They'll fire me. I can't have contact with a victim's family.

MEGAN

Did you see his clothes? Did you see his face? His mother just died.

TOM

Someone must be looking for him.

MEGAN

Tom, if he's leaving now, I'm going with him.

She returns to the kitchen, leaving him to watch the workmen as they uncover a black, baby grand piano.

WORKMAN

Congratulations. It's a nice one.

INT. FOSTER HOME, SIMI VALLEY - BEDROOM - DAY

Judy enters. Davey's not around. She goes to the closet.

JUDY

Ready to say you're sorry?

She opens the closet door. He's not there. Now she notices the shattered glass. The open window... She hurries out.

INT. TOM & MEGAN'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

Davey tries to eat his eggs politely, yet he's so hungry he can't chew fast enough. Megan, sitting opposite him, smiles.

MEGAN
More?

DAVEY
No, thank you.

Having scrubbed the plate clean, he rises, taking his dishes to the sink. He opens the faucet. She watches him, surprised.

MEGAN
What are you doing?

DAVEY
Washing my dishes.

MEGAN
I'll do it.

DAVEY
I don't mind.

MEGAN
It's okay. Really.

INT. TOM & MEGAN'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM

Tom, edgy, leafs through the newspaper on the couch. Megan enters. Davey follows cautiously. He is drawn to the piano.

MEGAN
Do you play, Davey?

He shakes his head "no." Tom stares at him. Megan takes Davey out of the room.

INT. TOM & MEGAN'S HOUSE - BATHROOM

Davey soaks in a bubble bath. His train is on the floor next to him. Megan opens the door slightly.

MEGAN
How are you doing in there?

DAVEY
Good, ma'am.

MEGAN
Call me Megan.

She puts some clothes on the floor and closes the door. He takes a sponge and scrubs himself.

INT. TOM & MEGAN'S HOUSE - TOM'S OFFICE - DAY

It's really the storage room. A few boxes are stacked on the desk. Others are scattered throughout. Megan covers the futon with colorful sheets. Tom peers in the doorway.

TOM
Where is he?

MEGAN
Taking a bath. He's so polite.

TOM
Strange kid. Too grown-up.

She pushes some boxes out of the way. He helps her.

MEGAN
You can't imagine how he was raised.
(off Tom's puzzled look)
I went to see his home yesterday.

TOM
Whose home?

MEGAN
Davey and Laura's. In Simi Valley.

She goes into one box, takes out pictures of Tom with steam engines and freight trains. He stares at her in disbelief.

TOM
Why would you do that?

MEGAN
To find out if she really wanted to die.

TOM
She put her car on the tracks, didn't she? Goddamnit, Megan!

MEGAN

It was important to me. A woman died, and you seemed to only care about your suspension... Tom, you should have seen their home. It was awful. Terrible.

She places the train photos on the empty bookcase. He takes one and studies it in a gesture of reconciliation.

TOM

Where'd you find them?

MEGAN

They've been here. I think he'll like them.

Davey enters in one of Tom's T-shirts. He holds his train and stands there, awkward. Megan smiles. Without the layer of dirt, Davey is a handsome boy.

INT. DEPT. OF CHILDREN AND FAMILY SERVICES - OFFICE - DAY

The wiry social worker is at her messy desk, on the phone.

RENEE

(into phone)

...I'll notify the police,
Judy...Thanks.

Aggravated, she slams the phone, digs in her drawer, takes out a cigarette and lights it. She inhales, then:

RENEE

Crap.

Since the desk doesn't have an inch to spare, files are stacked on the worn carpet. She bends to the floor and finds a folder there: DAVID DANNER.

INT. TOM & MEGAN'S HOUSE - LAUNDRY ROOM - DAY

Megan puts Davey's clothes in the washer and starts it. She picks up his sad, torn sneakers, wipes them clean.

INT. TOM'S OFFICE - DAY

The room is neater now. Davey studies a train photo just like Tom did. Megan enters with a mug of hot chocolate.

MEGAN

We better put you in bed.

Reluctantly, he goes to the futon.

DAVEY

No one sleeps in the daytime unless they're sick.

MEGAN

Tom sleeps during the day.

DAVEY

He does?

MEGAN

If you don't fall asleep, we'll think of something to do.

He gets in bed, sitting up. She gives him the hot chocolate. He sips from it.

DAVEY

You're not gonna make me pray?

MEGAN

Pardon?

DAVEY

My mom liked me to pray a lot.

MEGAN

You can if you want to.

DAVEY

Not right now.

She caresses his hair.

MEGAN

That's alright.

INT. TOM'S OFFICE - LATER

Davey sleeps. Megan watches his every breath. Tom opens the door and peers in.

MEGAN

He's sleeping.

INT. TOM & MEGAN'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DUSK

Tom removes a stereo from one of the moving boxes. He installs it next to the TV. Megan takes out a tall vase from another box.

MEGAN

I guess we're staying a while.

TOM

I think we will.

His eyes drift to her packed suitcase. It still sits by the door. A wordless understanding passes between them.

She watches, as he carries her suitcase up the stairs.

INT. SIMI VALLEY POLICE DEPARTMENT - DUSK

Spacious, clean, well-funded. POLICE OFFICERS chat, drink coffee and file reports. Crime is under control in Simi. Renee, anxious, cradling her own Styrofoam cup of coffee, sits with DETECTIVES ANN CRANE and CHRISTIAN FOX.

RENEE

Judy Neasy has been a foster parent for three years. She has an excellent reputation with us. Alright. She's a disciplinarian. But I got him on such short notice, and I thought that after...well, after living with a psychotic mother, discipline might be good for him.

ANN

I'm sure you meant well.

CHRISTIAN

Do you have a picture?

Renee opens her folder, takes out a school photo of Davey and hands it to Christian.

ANN

We'll circulate it to our patrol units.

RENEE

You will find him, won't you?

Christian and Ann exchange glances.

RENEE

Maybe you could start with train stations. After the accident he was holding this little toy train--

ANN

Renee. May I call you Renee?

RENEE

Yes. Please.

ANN

In 2004 alone, over one hundred thousand children were reported missing in California. Most of them were runaways.

RENEE

I'm a social worker. You think I don't know the statistics?

CHRISTIAN

Then you should realize chances are we'll never find him. Never.

INT. TOM & MEGAN'S HOME - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

It's starting to look like home. Megan, taking a break from unpacking, sits at the piano. Tom, standing next to her, smiles encouragingly. She makes random sounds softly touching the keys.

MEGAN

I don't want to wake him.

TOM

You won't.

She caresses the keys with her fingers.

MEGAN

It's so beautiful.

He puts his arms around her full of yearning.

TOM

I'm glad you didn't...

MEGAN

I know. I know.

INT. RENEE'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Renee, eyes red, smokes a cigarette. Guilt-ridden, she stares at Davey's photo lying on the desk. A JANITOR enters with a vacuum cleaner. Renee rises.

RENEE

I was just leaving.

Her eyes drift to Davey's photo. Instead of leaving, she sighs and sits down again. The Janitor turns on the vacuum.

EXT. TOM & MEGAN'S HOME - TOM'S OFFICE - DAWN

Megan sleeps on a chair opposite Davey - she's obviously been there all night. Tom, standing at the window, watches the August sun lazily make its way up the sky. He turns, meets her eyes.

TOM

Good morning.

She smiles widely, glowing like a young girl again.

INT. TOM & MEGAN'S HOME - GARAGE - DAY

Tom works on the tracks. Megan watches him.

MEGAN

I wish we could keep him.

TOM

You promised - one day.

MEGAN

He needs us.

TOM

We would be breaking the law. Isn't it like kidnapping or something?

MEGAN

So?

TOM

So?! They won't reinstate me if they find out he was here even for one day.

(different tact)

We could get in big trouble!

MEGAN

I don't care. I'm asking you to do this for me.

TOM

If I don't work on the rails, I'm nothing.

MEGAN

You're my husband.

INT. TOM & MEGAN'S HOME - KITCHEN - DAY

Megan watches as Davey, in his now clean clothes, drowns his eggs in ketchup.

DAVEY

I slept for almost a whole day. I was so tired, and I didn't even know it. Where's Tom?

MEGAN

Working on his railroad.

DAVEY

He's got a railroad?

MEGAN

In the garage. You can join him when you're done.

DAVEY

(jumping up)
I'm done.

INT. TOM & MEGAN'S HOME - GARAGE - DAY

Megan lets Davey in. Tom works on a broken track section.

DAVEY

Wow!

He follows the tracks along the wall, not daring to touch them.

DAVEY

They're broken.

TOM

I'll fix 'em in no time.

DAVEY

So big... Station houses and people
and the tracks - they are so real.

TOM

Yes, well, I've been at it a while.

(to Megan)

You ready?

INT. TOM & MEGAN'S HOME - KITCHEN - DAY

With a trembling hand, Megan jots something down on a piece
of paper. She folds it neatly and gives it to Davey.

MEGAN

That's our number. If you need
anything, just call me, okay?

DAVEY

I don't want to go back there.

MEGAN

You can't stay. They won't let us
keep you.

DAVEY

Because of the accident?

MEGAN

Yes.

She hugs him.

Tom enters and watches her. She releases Davey, hurries out.

TOM

Megan...

She turns to him. There's nothing he can say to make it
better. She leaves. Davey turns to Tom. They go to the door.

EXT. TOM & MEGAN'S HOME - DAY

Tom and Davey head to the car parked in the driveway.

INT. TOM & MEGAN'S HOME - TOM'S OFFICE - DAY

Megan, distraught, tears the linens off of the futon. She
hears the CAR starting outside. She drops the sheets and
goes to the window.

INT. CAR - DAY

Davey puts on his seat belt. Tom looks out the car window--

INT. TOM & MEGAN'S HOME - TOM'S OFFICE - DAY

Megan, at the window, watches as Tom pulls out the driveway.

INT. CAR - MOVING - DAY

A NEIGHBOR, walking her dog on the sidewalk, blocks Tom's way. Distracted, he brakes just in time and turns to Davey.

TOM
Put your head down.

Davey bends low in his seat. The Neighbor waves, while her dog relieves himself on the driveway. Tom waves back.

DAVEY
What are you afraid of?

TOM
Nothing. I don't want anyone
seeing you, is all.

He turns to the boy - Davey clasps the scratched toy train that's sitting in his lap. It moves Tom. He looks at Davey.

INT. TOM & MEGAN'S HOME - TOM'S OFFICE - DAY

Megan, at the window, takes a step back. She runs out.

INT. TOM & MEGAN'S HOME - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Megan runs in, sees Davey and Tom. One look at her husband's face tells her everything she needs to know. She rushes into his arms, sobbing. He holds her.

She wipes her tears, releases Tom and looks at Davey.

MEGAN
Everything is going to be alright
now.

INT. TRAIN STATION, SIMI VALLEY - NIGHT

A sign reads:

WELCOME TO SIMI VALLEY

Clean and lit, almost homey. PASSENGERS wait on benches. Renee tentatively hangs a flyer with Davey's picture under the heading:

MISSING: DAVID DANNER

She looks around, expecting someone to reprimand her. No one does. No one cares.

INT. TOM & MEGAN'S HOME - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Three plates are set on the table. Tom sits opposite Davey.

DAVEY

When did you start driving trains?

TOM

Many years ago.

DAVEY

How old were you?

TOM

I don't know. Maybe thirty.

DAVEY

I'll be ten in January.

Megan, a bit anxious, sets a grilled chicken on the table. Tom cuts the bird.

MEGAN

(to Davey)

I hope you like chicken.

DAVEY

I do.

(deliberate; to Tom)

My mom used to make it all the time.

Tom, tense, pushes his chair back, rises.

TOM

Excuse me.

He leaves. Davey bites his lip and looks at Megan. She smiles compassionately.

DAVEY
You're not mad?

MEGAN
It's okay to miss your mother.

INT. TOM & MEGAN'S HOME - TOM'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Davey sleeps. Megan adjusts his blanket.

INT. TOM & MEGAN'S HOME - GARAGE - NIGHT

Tom roughly handles the tracks. Megan enters.

MEGAN
He doesn't know any better.

TOM
He did it on purpose. To spite me.

MEGAN
I'm taking the car.

He turns to her. Concerned.

TOM
Where are you going?

MEGAN
To buy him some clothes. He can't keep wearing your T-shirts.

TOM
I'll go.

She looks at him, surprised.

TOM
Give me the keys already. You've been going nonstop.

MEGAN
Make sure to get everything.

She hands him a list and hugs him.

TOM
What the hell are we doing?

MEGAN

I'm not sure, but I feel good.
Better than I have in a long time.

INT. TARGET STORE - NIGHT

Soft pop MUSIC plays as Tom meanders down the aisle with a shopping cart. He stops at the boy's clothing department. He takes a pair of boy's jeans from the rack. He adds them to his cart then takes a few more pairs in varying sizes, just in case.

INT. TOM & MEGAN'S HOME - TOM'S OFFICE - DAY

The August sun bathes the room with light. Megan takes out new clothes from "Target" bags. She gently folds one of the shirts, puts it in the dresser.

INT. TOM & MEGAN'S HOME - GARAGE - DAY

Tom works on his railroad. Davey watches him, clutching his toy locomotive. Tom turns. Davey looks away. Tom resumes working. Davey resumes staring. Tom sighs.

TOM

(relenting)
Want to help?

DAVEY

Yeah.

Tom hands him some "trees."

TOM

You decide where your waiting
passengers could use some shade.

He goes back to fixing the rails. Davey puts his train aside and approaches the tracks.

TOM

Careful.

Davey nods and installs the "trees."

DAVEY

What do you call your railroad?

TOM

The Stark Special.

DAVEY
Good name for a train.

TOM
I like to think so.
(re: Davey's train)
Nice engine you got there.

DAVEY
My mom gave it to me.
(lying)
She was like Megan. She cooked a
lot and cleaned and helped me with
homework every day.

TOM
Yeah. I'm sure she was Mother of
the Year. We're done here.

He puts down the tracks. Davey, upset, runs out.

TOM
Shit.

He exits.

INT. DEPT. OF CHILDREN & FAMILY SERVICES - HALLWAY - DAY

Renee, with a stack of "Davey" flyers, hurries to the door.
Her supervisor, AARON, enters. He sees her and stops.

AARON
I thought you had a hearing this
morning.

RENEE
Yes, well, I asked Richard to cover
for me.

AARON
(seeing flyers)
What are these?

RENEE
Flyers.

AARON
I know what they are, Renee. What
I don't know is what you're doing
with them.

RENEE
Going to trains stations.

AARON
Come again?

INT. TOM & MEGAN'S HOME - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Megan and Davey, in his new clothes, eagerly sit next to a thin, seriously perspiring PIANO TEACHER. He takes out some sheets of music and sets them.

MEGAN
That won't be necessary.

PIANO TEACHER
No?

MEGAN
I want you to teach me one tune.
Something...simple.

He thinks a moment and plays a haunting piece by Badarzewska.

MEGAN
(moved)
What do you call it?

PIANO TEACHER
"The Maiden's Prayer."

INT. DEPARTMENT OF CHILD SERVICES - AARON'S OFFICE - DAY

Folders are neatly stacked on the spotless desk. Renee sits opposite Aaron. A citation for excellency proudly hangs directly behind him: "AARON LAPIDOS - FOR A DECADE OF DEDICATED SERVICE."

AARON
Now and then we make bad calls.
What's important to remember is
that we did our best under
difficult circumstances.

RENEE
I completely agree, but--

AARON
To say the boy had a troubled
history would be an understatement.
(MORE)

AARON (cont'd)
 He probably wouldn't have made it
 with any family. Any. His flight
 wasn't surprising. It was
 inevitable. Are we clear?

RENEE
 Very.

INT. CAR - MOVING - DAY

Tom drives. Megan is next to him. Davey sits in the back.

MEGAN
 You've really never seen one?

DAVEY
 They don't have them in Simi.

TOM
 They're large, blue and wet.

MEGAN
 (glib; to Tom)
 You're such a poet.

EXT. VENICE BEACH - DUSK

The hazy orange sun, hidden behind distant summer clouds,
 diminishes as it dips into the ocean. Davey, barefoot, kicks
 the water. He turns to Megan and Tom, big smile on his face
 and runs along the shore, hopping and jumping on the surf.

Tom turns to Megan. She looks pale.

TOM
 You alright?

She nods. He puts a tentative arm around her shoulders.

INT. VENICE BEACH - COFFEE SHOP - DUSK

A busy joint on the Venice boardwalk. Megan and Tom,
 drinking sodas, and Davey, eating chocolate ice cream, sit by
 large windows overlooking the ROLLERBLADERS outside as they
 zoom by. A BAND plays on a small dais.

A wedding party, BRIDE and GROOM in tow, enter the coffee
 shop happy, young and carefree. Some buy ice cream. Some
 sit. The Bride, barefoot, and Groom, in sandals, get on the
 dance floor.

In their honor, the Band plays a sweet, slow tune. Megan turns to Tom. One look, and they rise and go to the dance floor. Davey, eating his ice cream, watches with a shy smile.

Megan whispers something in Tom's ear. He returns to the table and sits. Megan gestures to Davey.

TOM

Never keep a lady waiting.

Davey hesitates, then rises and goes to Megan. She dances with him. Tom eats Davey's ice cream.

EXT. LAPD - HOLLYWOOD - NIGHT

Renee parks her van at the curb, tosses her cigarette butt out the window.

INT. LAPD - WILCOX STATION, HOLLYWOOD - NIGHT

Dirty and under-funded. Busy POLICE OFFICERS work at cramped desks. Renee sheepishly pins a "Davey" flyer on one wall.

A wall already crowded with dozens and dozens of missing young faces that assemble in a heartbreaking collage.

INT. TOM & MEGAN'S HOME - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Tom and Megan sleep. Davey stands in the doorway, watching them. Megan opens her eyes. Startled, she sits up. Davey backs out. She rises.

INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT

Davey sits on the floor rocking to and fro. Megan approaches.

MEGAN

Davey? You need something?

He shakes his head.

MEGAN

Come on. Let's get you back in bed.

INT. TOM'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Megan tucks Davey in.

MEGAN
You want to talk about it?
(beat)
Was it a bad dream?

DAVEY
I was pretending.

MEGAN
Pretending what?

DAVEY
That you're my mother, and we were
like a family. I told Tom my mom
was like you. That she cooked and
helped me with homework, but she
didn't. Not in a long time.

MEGAN
I'm sure she did her best for you.

DAVEY
She tried real hard.

MEGAN
I know. Go to sleep now.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Megan, exhausted, takes off her robe. She gets in bed. Tom turns to her.

TOM
Everything okay?

She buries her head in his chest. He strokes her hair. She hugs him tightly.

INT. TOM'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Davey gets out of bed, holding his train. He goes to the bookcase and carefully positions it on top.

EXT. BOOKSTORE - DAY

The sign on the front window announces: "BACK TO SCHOOL SALE." Megan exits with a large bag.

INT. CAR - DAY

Megan gets in, puts the bag on the passenger seat. She starts the car, then digs in the bag and takes out children books. She leafs through them.

INT. TOM & MEGAN'S HOME - DAVEY'S ROOM - DAY

Tom and Davey paint the walls blue in Tom's office. It's now officially Davey's room. Tom notices Davey's engine on the bookcase. Davey follows his gaze.

DAVEY

My dad asked my mom to give it to me for Christmas when I was six. He must have really liked trains.

(beat)

Did your father like trains?

TOM

I never knew him.

DAVEY

I didn't know mine either.

Tom takes that in. Davey dips his brush in black and paints a shape over the blue. Tom quizzically watches him.

DAVEY

It's a bird.

INT. TOM & MEGAN'S HOME - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Tom watches Megan and Davey play "Chopsticks" together. Davey POUNDS the keys hard. Megan does the same - even harder. Davey laughs. Tom smiles.

INT. TOM & MEGAN'S HOME - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Megan enters. A single rose lies on her pillow. She goes to the bed and takes it. Tom enters from the bathroom, his hair combed back. He strikes a pose at the door. She laughs.

TOM

Sexy stuff, huh?

MEGAN

Irresistible.

He goes to the bed, collects her in his arms.

TOM
I want to be your man.

MEGAN
Silly. You are my man.

TOM
Will you be my woman?

He takes an elongated box from the night stand and hands it to her. She opens it. A delicate necklace lies inside.

MEGAN
Tom! We can't afford this.

TOM
Repeat after me: Happy...

MEGAN
(smiling)
Happy.

TOM
Anniversary.

MEGAN
Anniversary... The years went by so fast, yet certain moments are so clear in my mind.

TOM
The first time you talked to me at the diner.

He gently lays her down. He kisses her, passionately.

MEGAN
Our first train ride. You remember?

TOM
Every detail. I love you so much, my Meggie.

He unbuttons her blouse. They kiss. His fingers study her body carefully, like a man discovering virgin land.

EXT. TOM & MEGAN'S HOME - DAWN

Sunrays dry the morning dew from the impatiens.

INT. TOM & MEGAN'S HOME - KITCHEN - DAY

Megan listens, as Davey reads from Jack London's, *The Call of the Wild*.

DAVEY

(reading)

"...instincts long dead became
alive again..."

(to Megan)

What are, "instincts"?

MEGAN

A feeling you get in your stomach
when something is right or wrong.

Tom enters with the mail. He goes through the envelopes and opens an official-looking one from the National Transportation Safety Board.

DAVEY

(showing off for Tom)

"...The domesticated generations
fell from him..."

But he stops reading, noticing that Megan is studying Tom's face as he scans the official-looking letter.

MEGAN

What is it?

TOM

I have five days.

Upset, he leaves the letter on the table and...

TOM

I'll be in the garage.

He exits. Megan takes the letter, looks it over.

DAVEY

Five days for what?

MEGAN

Tom's hearing. To decide if he did
the right thing in the accident.

DAVEY

What if they decide he didn't do
the right thing?

MEGAN

Then he won't be an engineer anymore. That's okay. Tom's capable. He can do many things.

DAVEY

There's nothing like driving a train.

INT. TOM & MEGAN'S HOME - GARAGE - DAY

Tom and Davey work on the railroad. The broken tracks have been mended. The "scenic scenery" behind the tracks is coming together. Davey picks up a model steam engine.

DAVEY

What do you call this one?

TOM

UP 2-4-0.

DAVEY

It's real nice.

TOM

Uh-huh.

Davey carefully puts it down and goes back to installing a "mountain" behind the tracks.

DAVEY

I could tell 'em she wanted to die.

Tom turns to him, perplexed.

TOM

Huh?

DAVEY

I could say that at your trial.

TOM

It's a hearing and, no, that's alright.

DAVEY

You don't want me to tell 'em?

TOM

It doesn't matter if your mother wanted to die, what matters is if I handled the situation correctly.

DAVEY
 (beat)
 I forgive you.

TOM
 Forgive me, for what? She took
 away my options, when she put her
 car in front of me.

DAVEY
 Yes, she did.

TOM
 It just so happened that she chose
my train.

DAVEY
 Yes, I know.

INT. UNION STATION - DUSK

A sign reads:

WELCOME TO UNION STATION, LOS ANGELES

A cavernous marble hall with tall ornate ceilings, black
 marble floors and fabulous chandeliers. Renee walks past
 PASSENGERS waiting for their train or loved-ones.

INT. UNION STATION - REST AREA - DUSK

Vending machines, chairs, tables. ENGINEERS, STEWARDS and
 other TRAIN EMPLOYEES eat, read the paper and gossip. Renee
 hangs a flyer on the wall. She looks around. Everyone pretty
 much ignores her.

Howie, the conductor, and Vince, the engineer, enter. Howie,
 brightening up, checks out Renee. He and Vince exchange
 glances: Fresh meat! They approach.

HOWIE
 What's a pretty girl like you doing
 in a train station all alone?

She hands them a flyer. Vince takes it, pretending to study
 the photo.

RENEE
 I'm looking for a missing boy.
 Maybe you've seen him?

VINCE
 (teasing)
 Oh, yeah. We saw him. When'd we
 see him, Howie?

HOWIE
 (glancing at flyer)
 Oh, he just left...

She's not stupid. She snatches the flyer away from Vince.

RENEE
 (sarcastic)
 Thanks a lot.

VINCE
 Sure...

The smile leaves Howie's face. He reaches for the flyer.

HOWIE
 Give me that.

He looks closely at Davey's photo. She watches him.

HOWIE
 It's Tom's nephew.

RENEE
 Who's Tom?

EXT. RESIDENTIAL STREET - NIGHT

The neighborhood is eerily quiet. Tom and Megan take a walk.

TOM
 He said he forgave me for killing
 his mother. It used to be so
 simple. There was the right thing
 to do and the wrong thing to do. I
 mean, we're talking about trains.
 It's mechanics. There shouldn't be
 a gray area.

MEGAN
 Life is a gray area.

TOM
 Not always. Some things you know
 with certainty.

He looks in her eyes, kisses her.

INT. TOM & MEGAN'S HOME - DAVEY'S ROOM - NIGHT

Megan tucks Davey in.

MEGAN

Good night, sleep tight, don't let
Davey out of my sight...

She tickles him. He giggles.

MEGAN

That's my prayer. You like it?

DAVEY

It's good, but you're supposed to
say "amen" at the end.

MEGAN

(serious; clearing throat)
Amen.

DAVEY

Megan? I've been meaning to talk
to you about something.

MEGAN

Shoot.

DAVEY

This girl bought my train ticket to
LA, and I promised I'd give her the
money back. It's ten dollars.

Megan, touched, is speechless. Davey misreads her expression.

DAVEY

I'll work for it. Clean the yard,
do the dishes, whatever you need.

MEGAN

I'll go get it.

DAVEY

Wait.

He rises and takes his train. He fishes out the ticket stub
from the toy engine, and gives it to Megan. The address
Sharon jotted is on the back.

DAVEY

Send it here. It's for her sister.
She's in a foster home too.

MEGAN

I'll do it first thing tomorrow.

He puts the train back on the bookcase and gets back in bed. She kneels next to him and kisses his forehead.

DAVEY

(clasping hands in prayer)
God, dear God, take care of my mom, her name is Laura Danner, and she sleeps a lot and drinks a lot, but she's really a good woman, and she likes You very much. Amen.

INT. TOM & MEGAN'S HOME - HALLWAY - NIGHT

Megan closes Davey's door and wipes away tears.

EXT. TOM & MEGAN'S HOME - DAWN

Sunrays dry the morning dew from the impatiens.

INT. TOM & MEGAN'S HOME - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Tom and Davey watch as Megan practices "The Maiden's Prayer." Suddenly, she stops and doubles over. Tom rushes to her side. He helps her up and walks with her to the stairs.

DAVEY

What's wrong?

TOM

Nothing. She's fine.

INT. TOM & MEGAN'S HOME - BATHROOM - DAY

Megan throws up violently in the toilet. Tom wipes her face with his hand. She sits for a moment, then throws up again.

INT. TOM & MEGAN'S HOME - BEDROOM - DAY

Megan and Tom lie tangled in each others arms. He caresses her wet, sweaty hair and pulls her to him.

Davey sheepishly enters.

DAVEY

There's someone outside.

Tom rises, looks out the bedroom window: Renee's van is parked outside. He can see the red sticker.

TOM
Shit!

MEGAN
Tom! Watch your language.

TOM
Department of Children and Family Services. At our door.

MEGAN
Goddamnit.

INT. TOM & MEGAN'S HOME - DAY

Tom opens the door for Renee.

RENEE
Tom Stark?

TOM
Yeah?

RENEE
I'm Renee. From Ventura Children and Family Services. We didn't actually meet, but I remember seeing you at the scene of the accident.
(beat)
Can I come in?

Tom opens the door wide. Renee enters.

INT. TOM & MEGAN'S HOME - STAIRWAY

Davey, eavesdropping from the stairs, makes a fist.

RENEE (O.S.)
Thank you. What a lovely home.

INT. BEDROOM

Megan slowly rises from the bed. Every move hurts. She puts on a robe, takes a deep breath.

INT. LIVING ROOM

Tom and Renee are seated. Tom returns a "Davey" flyer.

TOM
I know who he is.

RENEE
You haven't seen him since the
accident?

He avoids her eyes.

TOM
No.

She notices Jack London's, *The Call of the Wild*. She picks
it up and opens it.

RENEE
Great book. Do you have Children,
Mr. Stark?

INT. STAIRWAY

Davey, panicked, turns to Megan. She's right behind him.

DAVEY
(whispering)
I forgot my book!

MEGAN
(whispering)
Take my hand.

He does. She leads him to her bedroom.

TOM (O.S.)
It's my wife's.

INT. LIVING ROOM

He's defensive, and Renee senses it. She rises.

RENEE
Would you terribly mind if I look
around?

INT. BEDROOM

Megan and Davey enter. He turns to her:

DAVEY
It's the woman who put me in that
foster home!

INT. STAIRS

Renee heads up the stairs to the second floor. Tom follows.

RENEE
He ran away from his foster home.

TOM
What's it to me?

RENEE
Mr. Howie Pugh? The train
conductor? He told me David was on
the train, looking for you.

INT. HALLWAY

They reach the top of the stairs.

RENEE
He claimed to be your nephew.

TOM
My nephew?

INT. BEDROOM

Megan and Davey can hear the approaching footsteps. She desperately looks around, then:

MEGAN
Under the bed!

INT. HALLWAY

Renee looks at Davey's room / Tom's office.

RENEE
Do you mind?

TOM
Sure I do. This is my home.

RENEE
I'm sorry. It's a terrible
imposition.

Nonetheless, she looks inside...

INT. DAVEY'S ROOM

Davey is a neat boy, as no clothes are lying around. Renee take a quick inventory from the door: Train pictures, blue walls, sheets on the futon...Victorious, she sees Davey's engine on top of the bookcase just when:

MEGAN (O.S.)
Tom? What's going on?

She turns to--

INT. HALLWAY

Megan, in her robe, is at the end of the hall. She closes the bedroom door behind her and takes a few steps down toward Renee and a tortured Tom.

TOM
(to Renee)
My wife. Megan.

RENEE
Sorry to barge in like this. I'm
looking for a missing boy.

MEGAN
Oh?

RENEE
(re: Davey's room)
I couldn't help notice that the bed
in this room is made and the walls
are freshly painted.

Megan, shivering, leans against the wall. Tom, genuinely alarmed, goes to her. Renee, curious, studies Megan.

RENEE
Are you okay?

Megan nods.

TOM
She's sick.

MEGAN
I have metastatic cancer. In my
case it means the cancer has spread
to my bones.

Renee is shocked. Megan's short hair, pale skin, thin frame,
take on a whole new meaning...

MEGAN
I have trouble sleeping at night.
And when I do, I go into the spare
room. I don't like disturbing my
husband. As for the walls, blue
always cheered me up.

RENEE
I'm sorry.

TOM
(pointedly)
You said that already.

MEGAN
(to Renee; re: main
bedroom)
Want to look inside?

Renee, torn, looks at Davey's room then back at Tom and
Megan. She shakes her head.

RENEE
No. That's okay.
(to Megan)
I hope you feel better.

She turns and leaves quickly, going down the stairs. SLAM!
Megan and Tom hear the door closing behind her. The bedroom
door opens. Davey peers out.

TOM
She's gone, Kid.

INT. VAN - DAY

Renee reaches for her cigarettes, then crumples the pack and
tosses it in the passenger's footwell. She digs in her bag,
finds a business card and her cell. She dials.

POLICE DISPATCHER (V.O.)
Simi Valley Police...Hello...
Hello?...Anyone There?

Renee hangs up. She looks out at Tom and Megan's house. She starts the car.

INT. TOM & MEGAN'S HOME - BEDROOM - DAY

Megan, in bed, holds a thermometer in her mouth. Tom takes it out and checks it.

TOM
Still high.

MEGAN
We should tell him I'm sick.

TOM
Not yet. He's not ready.

MEGAN
I'll call Susan. She can make dinner.

TOM
Don't worry about dinner!

MEGAN
Tom...

TOM
What?

MEGAN
It's going to be okay.

He lays his head on her chest. She picks up the phone, dials.

INT. TOM & MEGAN'S HOME - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Susan cooks dinner while intently glancing at Davey and Tom who sit at the kitchen table.

SUSAN
(re: pot on stove)
Almost done.

INT. TOM & MEGAN'S HOME - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Susan administers cold compresses to Megan's burning forehead. Tom, worried sick, stands by the bed. Susan looks at Megan and then back at Tom.

SUSAN

This is the single craziest thing
I've ever heard.

MEGAN

We know.

SUSAN

I mean, really.

TOM

Yes. It's pretty bad.

INT. DEPARTMENT OF CHILD SERVICES - RENEE'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Renee trashes the flyers in the waste basket. She takes Davey's folder from her desk. She opens a cluttered drawer, puts the file in. The Janitor enters. She shuts the drawer.

RENEE

I was just leaving.

And she does.

EXT. GRIFFITH PARK - DAY

A green, lush park. Megan, under a tree, sits on a colorful blanket watching KIDS play ball.

DAVEY (O.S.)

Megan! Megan! Look!

She turns. Davey, following Tom's instructions, holds on tightly to a kite. The kite goes high and even higher.

Davey, giddy, and Tom watch it go when a strong gust snaps the kite out of Davey's hands. Tom and Davey give chase.

Megan looks on as Tom and Davey, further away now, run after the kite. A sharp pain cuts through her spine. She digs in her bag, finds the pills. She dry-swallows one, lies down on the blanket, watching the blue sky above.

INT. MICHELLE'S FOSTER HOME - BEDROOM - DAY

MICHELLE, 9, sits on the bottom bunk bed. She opens an envelope addressed to her: A \$100 bill falls in her lap, then a note: "FROM DAVEY AND YOUR SISTER."

INT. TOM & MEGAN'S HOME - BEDROOM - DAY

Tom sits on the bed, holding his head in his hands. Megan puts her arms around him.

MEGAN

You have to go.

TOM

Let's not kid ourselves. As soon as they hear about Davey, I'm out of a job.

MEGAN

If you won't testify, you'll never know for sure.

TOM

I did the right thing.

MEGAN

Then tell them. I don't want you to have any regrets. Not because of me.

He turns to her and strokes her hair.

TOM

I won't.

MEGAN

I'll come with you.

TOM

No. You're not well enough. And what about Davey? You can't just leave him here.

MEGAN

He'll come with us. You've done so much for me. Let me do this. I want to.

INT. NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD - HALLWAY - DAY

Tom sits on one of the benches outside large double doors. The doors open. Otis comes out. N.B. appears behind him.

N.B.
(to Tom)
They're ready for you.

Otis walks away. Tom calls after him.

TOM
Hey Otis! You gonna be the sexiest accountant in town.

Otis can't help but smile. Tom goes in.

INT. NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD - HEARING ROOM

Fluorescent lights and chairs. Tom's in the hot seat across from five ADMINISTRATORS from the National Transportation Safety Board and the Federal Railroad Administration. A few spectators speckle the room: Amtrak PERSONNEL, N.B.

ADMINISTRATOR #1
This is an unofficial hearing, Tom. The goal of these proceedings is strictly to determine whether an official investigation is required.

TOM
I understand.

ADMINISTRATOR #1
For the record, were you Senior Engineer on August eighth, the date of a fatal incident?

TOM
I was.

ADMINISTRATOR #1
Describe for us what happened that day to the best of your recollection...

EXT. NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD - PARKING LOT - DAY

A two-story, nondescript administrative building. Tom and Megan's car is off to one side, at the end of the lot.

DAVEY (V.O.)
I wish I could go in.

INT. CAR - DAY

Megan, in the passenger seat, clutches her side. She turns to Davey, who's in the back, and gives him a brave smile.

DAVEY
Why do we have to hide? Why can't
I just tell the social worker I
want to stay with you?

MEGAN
It doesn't work that way, Davey.

DAVEY
But why?

She leans her head against the seat.

MEGAN
People like to follow rules. Us,
keeping you, goes against that.

INT. NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD - HEARING ROOM

Tom is still in the hot seat.

ADMINISTRATOR #1
What was your first reaction when
you saw the car?

TOM
I went for the emergency brake.

ADMINISTRATOR #2
But you didn't use it.

TOM
I decided not to. Nothing would
have stopped that train on time -
not even the emergency mode.

ADMINISTRATOR #2
Your partner thinks the impact
might have been prevented.

TOM
I disagree. At that speed, on a curve, we probably would have derailed.

ADMINISTRATOR #2
If you could do it all over again, would you do anything differently?

Tom stares into space.

ADMINISTRATOR #1
Mr. Stark?

TOM
I can't do it all over again.

ADMINISTRATOR #2
But if you could.

Tormented, he casts his head.

TOM
No. I wouldn't do anything differently.

EXT. PARKING LOT - DAY

Tom approaches. Davey jumps out of the car. He runs to him.

DAVEY
What did they say?

TOM
They're talking it over.

Megan exits the car. Tom automatically checks her forehead.

DAVEY
Are you feeling sick again?

MEGAN
I'm okay.

She leans against the car, enjoying the sunlight, and smiles at Tom.

MEGAN
You better get back.

TOM
Yes, yes.

INT. NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD - HALLWAY - DAY

Tom marches down the hall. The doors open. Tom rushes toward the hearing room.

The Administrators and the Amtrak personnel trickle out. A few give Tom a courteous nod. N.B. approaches. Relieved, he shakes Tom's hand.

N.B.

No official investigation. You did everything by the book, my friend.

(Tom nods; overcome with emotions)

What's wrong? I thought you'd be jumping up and down.

TOM

I'll see you later...Thanks.

He hurries away.

N.B.

How's Megan?

TOM

Everything's fine.

He's almost running now, out, toward the exit.

N.B.

Hang on! When are you coming back on the job?

But Tom's out the door. N.B. looks after him, puzzled.

EXT. PARKING LOT - DAY

Davey kneels by the car's passenger side.

DAVEY

Megan...Megan...

Tom runs over. He sees Megan passed-out on the car seat.

DAVEY

I didn't do anything...She...She...

TOM

Get in the car.

INT. HOSPITAL - ONCOLOGY WAITING AREA - DAY

A sitting area with a television set. Tom, standing, looks out the large, 8th floor windows. He turns to Davey. The boy's waiting next to him.

TOM
Megan is sick. She has cancer.

DAVEY
Can't they cure her?

TOM
They did. Twice. It came back.

DAVEY
Can't they cure her again?

They stand there in silence, digesting the painful truth.

DAVEY
Is Megan going to die?

Tom can't answer that one. Dr. Offenberger enters.

TOM
Can I see her?

DR. OFFENBERGER
Tom, she wants to go home.

EXT. TOM & MEGAN'S HOME - DUSK

Susan, in scrubs, waits in front of the house.

Davey exits the car in the driveway.

Tom carries Megan out.

INT. TOM & MEGAN'S HOME - HALLWAY - DUSK

Tom carries Megan into the bedroom. Susan follows. Davey, in shock, goes into his room.

INT. TOM & MEGAN'S HOME - BEDROOM - DUSK

Susan hooks Megan to an IV. Tom gives his wife a faint smile.

EXT. TOM & MEGAN'S HOME - NIGHT

Tom walks Susan to her car.

TOM
Thanks.

INT. TOM & MEGAN'S HOME - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Tom enters deeply sad. He opens the piano and touches one of the keys.

THUD!! It's coming from upstairs. He rushes up.

INT. DAVEY'S ROOM - NIGHT

Davey, kneeling by his bed, smashes his head against the frame of the futon over and over again. Tom sees him and runs over. He holds him.

TOM
Stop! Stop!

Davey, crying, his forehead bleeding, wriggles free and runs to the door. Tom grabs him.

TOM
What are you doing?

DAVEY
Let go!

TOM
Look at me. Look at me!

DAVEY
NO!!!

He tries to wriggle free. Tom won't let him.

DAVEY
I can't be here! I can't...I'm bad.

TOM
What did you do?

DAVEY
No! I'm bad.

TOM

Davey, whatever it is...

DAVEY

I killed her. I killed her! I'm
so sorry, Mom...I'm sorry....

He sobs, hysterical.

TOM

Easy, Davey. Take it--

DAVEY

I told the principal my mother was
dead. I wanted to see the train...

TOM

You lied, is that what you did?

DAVEY

I knew she was sick. I saw her take
the pills...God is punishing me. He
knows everything...And now Megan's
going to die too.

TOM

Megan's been sick for a long time.
Before she ever met you.

DAVEY

I should have stopped her.
Shouldn't have let her out of the
house... I knew she was sick... I
wanted to see the train.

TOM

It's alright.

DAVEY

We were on the tracks, I tried to
pull her out. I tried real hard,
but I couldn't...

(talking to his mom)

Mom, I couldn't. I'm sorry. I
couldn't. The train was coming and
I jumped away and you...You died...

(seeing Tom again)

She died.

TOM

You did the right thing.

DAVEY

NOOOO!!!

TOM
Listen to me--

DAVEY
I should have--

TOM
No.

DAVEY
Should have--

TOM
There was nothing--

DAVEY
But--

TOM
Nothing you could have done.

DAVEY
She was heavy, too heavy!

TOM
It wasn't your fault.

DAVEY
Megan's dying.

TOM
Because she is sick.

DAVEY
God is punishing me.

TOM
It wasn't your fault, Davey.

Davey cries. Tom hugs him.

TOM
It isn't your fault.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Megan watches Tom sleeping on a chair by her side. She turns to look at Davey. He's next to her in bed.

DAVEY
Please don't die.

INT. TOM & MEGAN'S HOME - KITCHEN - DAY

Tom puts breakfast on the table for him and Davey. He drowns his potatoes in ketchup. Davey follows suit.

INT. BEDROOM - LATER

Megan sleeps. Tom and Davey sit by her side.

INT. BEDROOM - DUSK

Tom watches as Susan checks Megan's IV.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DUSK

Tom walks Susan to the door. She's crying. Davey enters and sees her. She wipes her tears, goes to the boy and hugs him.

INT. KITCHEN - DUSK

Davey eats at the table. Tom can't touch his food.

TOM

Why don't you go see Megan now?

Davey rises and leaves. Tom, alone, weeps at the table.

INT. BEDROOM - DUSK

Megan's eyes are tired, drowsy. Davey enters.

MEGAN

Come sit by me.

He does.

MEGAN

I wish we had more time. I'd like to take care of you for just a little while longer.

DAVEY

If you think hard about it, you could stay.

MEGAN

I love you, Davey. And I will stay with you.

(pointing to his chest)

Here.

She hugs him with the little strength she has left in her body. Tom stands in the doorway. Megan and Davey see him.

DAVEY
I love you too, Megan.

He leaves.

Tom enters, sits by her side and takes her hand.

MEGAN
Promise me.

TOM
Anything.

MEGAN
Fight for him. He's so much like
you. Promise.

TOM
Whatever you want.

MEGAN
Promise...

TOM
I promise.

He buries his face in her chest. She smiles.

EXT. TOM & MEGAN'S HOME - NIGHT

Davey sits outside watching the stars, trying to make his
peace with God.

EXT. TOM & MEGAN'S HOME - DAWN

Sunrays dry the morning dew from the impatiens.

INT. TOM & MEGAN'S HOME - BEDROOM - DAWN

Tom opens his eyes. Megan's eyes are closed. He puts his
head to her chest. She's not breathing.

TOM
Oh, God. Megan...

He rises and stares at her lifeless body.

TOM
Oh, no... Not my girl. Not my
Meggie.

Davey enters.

Tom tries to pull himself together.

TOM
She's gone.

Davey shakes his head. Tom goes to him and hugs him. Davey cries on his chest. They cry together.

MONTAGE:

1. A graveyard high in the mountains. The San Francisco Bay shines below like a thousand diamonds. Tom, Davey and Susan watch as Megan's casket is lowered into the ground.

2. Davey and the Piano Teacher play the piano. Tom reads the newspaper in the kitchen. He stops reading. He listens.

3. Tom and Davey work on Tom's railroad, installing lights all over the track.

4. Davey's photo still hangs on the police station's wall; a wall crowded with dozens and dozens of missing young faces.

END MONTAGE.

EXT. CEMETERY, SIMI VALLEY - GRAVE SITE - DAY

The letters on a modest cross read: LAURA S. DANNER. Tom and Davey put flowers on Laura's grave.

Davey wipes the dusty cross then kneels, clasping his hands in prayer.

INT. TOM & MEGAN'S HOME - GARAGE - DUSK

Davey, sprawled on a blanket, looks up at the railroad around him. He clutches a large remote control. Tom stands next to the light switch.

TOM
All set?

DAVEY
Yes.

Tom turns off the light and lies down next to Davey.

TOM
Hit it!

Davey hits the power on his remote and the railroad above them comes to life. It's a bewitching sight. Lights shine from the miniature station houses and trees around the track.

Davey's engine, also lit, swirls and makes his way around the track elegantly. Davey laughs in joy. Tom smiles.

"The Maiden's Prayer" begins, bringing Megan's presence into the room. Surely, she's smiling from above.

EXT. PARKING LOT - DAY

It's drizzling. Summer is almost over.

Tom pulls into one spot.

INT. TOM'S CAR - DAY

Tom shuts the engine and turns to Davey. He gives him a reassuring look, smiles. The boy nods.

EXT. DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN & FAMILY SERVICES - DAY

Tom gets out of the car. Davey exits the passenger side.

Both pause to study the sign on the building:

DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN & FAMILY SERVICES

Tom takes Davey's hand. They walk to the building.

FADE OUT.

THE END