

ROCKABYE

by
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EXT. WILLIAMS BACKYARD - HOME VIDEO FOOTAGE

Nata, late 30s, holds Samantha, 2 1/2, in her arms, both in summer bathing suits. She swoops her close to the sprinkler, and Samantha lets out a yelp. Ike, late 40s, narrates from behind the iPhone camera.

IKE (O.C.)
Come on, Sammy!

SAMANTHA
No!

IKE (O.C.)
I see a smile.

Jesse, 10, hands Samantha a toy giraffe.

JESSE
Maybe this, mom.

NATA
Great idea, bud.

Samantha reaches the giraffe's head into the water stream. She giggles. Samantha reaches one hand out, feels the tickle of the water, and pulls it away.

NATA (CONT'D)
Was that funny?

Samantha shakes her head. She checks on the bows in her hair.

NATA (CONT'D)
They're still there.

IKE (O.C.)
And here he comes!

Marco barrels in as best a 2 1/2-year-old can. He sticks his face fully into the water stream and keeps it there, slurping and shaking his head.

Nata smiles at the camera.

IKE (O.C.) (CONT'D)
Jess, you think Marco likes it?

Marco takes his head out and toddles over to Ike. Ike zooms in close on Marco's beaming smile and dripping hair.

INT. TRAIN CAR-PRESENT DAY

CONDUCTOR (O.S.)
Southport station next. All doors
will open.

Nata Williams, 41, and Jesse Williams, 12, wheel the two, large shared suitcases to the exit. Ike Williams, 50, pulls a duffel and briefcase off the overhead racks and slings them over his shoulder. He scoops a sleeping Samantha Williams, 5, up in his arms and then joins Nata and Jesse.

IKE
(whispering)
Where's Marco?

Nata whips around, then back at their seat. Jesse glances down the aisle.

JESSE
Marco. Time to go.

Marco Williams, 5, squats in the aisle by a woman, petting her black pitbull puppy, giggling as it licks the leftover peanut butter snack off Marco's face.

Ike hands Sam to Nata and marches over.

IKE
I'm so sorry. Marco, you have to
ask first, remember?

WOMAN
He did. He was very polite.

IKE
This is our stop, bud. Marco.

NATA
Marco, time to go.

The train pulls up to the station.

WOMAN
I think he needs a rest now. Thanks
so much for playing with him.

The train doors open.

NATA
Marco!

The woman shifts the dog to the seat closer to the window, and Marco reaches in as he continues to lick his fingers.

NATA/IKE/JESSE

Marco!

SAMANTHA

(still asleep)

Marco.

Ike scoops him up.

MARCO

No!

Ike rushes to the train exit and meets Nata, Samantha and Jesse on the platform.

MARCO (CONT'D)

No, daddy!

IKE

I'm sorry, bud. This is our stop though.

MARCO

He was my friend!

NATA

I know. It's hard to say goodbye.
It feels sad.

Marco tantrums in Ike's arms as the train pulls away.

INT. WILLIAMS HOUSEHOLD-SPRING EVENING

The Williams family performs the kitchen dance. Nata, still in a casual dress and sweater from work plus a pair of slippers, stirs a pot of rice and punches 2:00 into the microwave. She checks on the chicken nuggets and the chicken breasts in the oven.

Behind her, Jesse pulls dinosaur placemats from a drawer and hands them to Samantha at the kitchen table. She pushes around her crayons and paper to make room for five settings. Jesse then begins passing her plates, followed by napkins and silverware.

SAMANTHA

Mom, Marco isn't helping.

JESSE

He's finishing his homework.

SAMANTHA

That's not fair. Mom, that's not fair.

NATA

Ike, can you?

Nata signals with a tilt of the head towards the kids.

Ike stands at a separate counter on his laptop. Marco sits on the counter, using his fingers to solve a math problem. Marco releases a low growl, shakes a bit and scratches out his answer. Ike keeps his eyes on the laptop, reaches over and squeezes Marco's shoulder, then rubs his back. This calms him.

NATA (CONT'D)

Jess, can you hand me--

Jesse passes her a set of oven mitts. Nata pulls both chickens from the oven, examines and then plates.

NATA (CONT'D)

Do we have water?

JESSE

I got it.

NATA

(To Samantha)
Can you reach the dressing in the fridge? The blue bottle.

SAMANTHA

We're doing everything and Marco isn't helping even a little.

NATA

(squatting down at her level)

You're right. But right now I actually need a sous chef to do some taste-testing for me.

Samantha thinks for a beat.

SAMANTHA

Why can't Marco do it?

JESSE

What do you need, mom?

SAMANTHA

I'm doing it!

Nata walks to Ike and pushes his laptop half way closed.

NATA
Hi.

IKE
Hi?

NATA
Hi.

Ike reads her face and then looks around the room. He offers Nata a peck on the lips and then scoops up Samantha in his arms.

IKE
Smells goood. (He walks over to the crayons and paper). Did you draw this! Tell me about it.

SAMANTHA
No! Not until Marco helps. I'm doing everything, and it's not fair.

JESSE
Samantha!

IKE
Jess, will you get Marco washed up. Actually, Sammy, it is fair.

SAMANTHA
I don't like Sammy.

IKE
Samantha, Marco had his OT today, which means that while you were at home finishing your homework, he was still doing extra work. And now he needs this time to finish his homework, so that we can all be ready to play together once dinner is finished.

SAMANTHA
It's still not fair.

IKE
I know, it doesn't feel like it's fair. Sometimes one person has to pull a little extra weight. That's how families work. Eventually, it evens out.

He gives her a wink. She buries her head in his shoulder. He gives her a squeeze and then plops her down in her seat and kisses her on the head. Jesse tries to do the same with Marco, but wobbles a bit under the weight. Nata comes through with a plate of chicken.

NATA

Beep beep.

IKE

Yum-my. Who wants salad?

MARCO

Yuck.

SAMANTHA

I do NOT want salad.

NATA

No?

SAMANTHA/MARCO

No.

NATA

Well you're getting it anyway.

SAMANTHA

(whining)

Mom!

NATA

Sam, who'd you sit next to at lunch today?

Samantha dunks her chicken nugget and ends of her fingers into a glob of ketchup.

SAMANTHA

I sat next to Braden. He got me in trouble with the lunch teacher, because he popped his chips open.

IKE

What did the lunch teacher do?

MARCO

My teacher had a gun today. She put it in my cubby.

Nata and Ike exchange a look, which Jesse catches. Samantha is busy licking ketchup from her fingers.

SAMANTHA

Daddy, will you be at my concert on Friday?

IKE

No sweetie, I have to work. Marco, come...come help me with something.

MARCO

The dinner rule is you don't leave until everyone finishes eating.

NATA

Daddy's away on Friday, remember? But I'll be there.

JESSE

Me too.

SAMANTHA

Please, daddy!

IKE

Mom will bring the iPad to record it. I'll be home at night though. I'm not going on my trip now.

Samantha's eyes go wide and she smiles as she licks ketchup from her fingers. Nata looks his way with confusion.

INT. IKE AND NATA'S BEDROOM-LATER THAT EVENING

Ike stands over the bed sorting laundry. Nata enters and takes out her phone.

NATA

I'm emailing the school.

She begins to type.

IKE

What did he say?

She continues to click at her screen.

IKE (CONT'D)

Nat?

NATA

He said the same thing.

IKE

She put a gun in his cubby?

NATA

Yes.

IKE

What did Sam say?

NATA

She said it never happened.

IKE

Okay. Then why are you emailing?

NATA

At the very least, he's confused about something he saw.

IKE

Come on. We've done this before. If Sam said--

NATA

Sam ignores him.

IKE

You mean avoids.

NATA

Either way, I doubt she was near the cubbies.

IKE

You believe his teacher pulled a gun out in a room full of 20 kindergarteners?

NATA

I believe he's confused about something, and we should help sort it out. He saw Mrs. Greenstein take something out of her purse--

IKE

He didn't say that at dinner.

Nata shrugs to say "so what?"

IKE (CONT'D)

What exactly did he say?

NATA

He said "My teacher took a gun out of her bag." And that she put it in his cubby.

(MORE)

NATA (CONT'D)

I asked him what it looked like,
and he knows it was black and
shiny. I asked if he was scared,
and he said "no."

Ike furrows his brow. Nata picks up her phone. Ike puts his hand over it.

IKE

Do this in the morning. We don't
want to be those parents.

Nata places her phone on top of the stack of books on the night stand and begins balling socks.

NATA

What happened to your trip?

IKE

Nothing happened. Bill and I
decided he would go.

A beat.

IKE (CONT'D)

What?

NATA

Nothing. You just made such a big
deal about how important it is.

IKE

You want me to go?

NATA

No, of course not. I love that
you'll be here.

IKE

Good.

NATA

Good.

A beat.

IKE

Out with it.

NATA

Can you not afford both of you
going?

IKE

Nat, it was just a decision about how best to use resources. Business is good right now.

NATA

You'll let me know if it's not.

IKE

I said I would. You know you can trust me.

NATA

Let's not rewrite history.

IKE

Nat. You said you'd give me a chance.
I've been good, no? (Gesturing towards a non-alcoholic beer on the nightstand)

She reaches across the bed and puts her hand on his hand. He pulls back. He takes a swig of his drink.

IKE (CONT'D)

Stuff tastes like shit

She picks up a pair of superman underwear, then tosses it and it lands perfectly on Ike's face. He lets it sit for a moment, before pulling it off and slingshotting it at her.

INT. WILLIAMS DEN-FOLLOWING MORNING

Marco is busy on the floor, lining blocks up by size order. Nata enters, carrying the landline phone. She crouches beside him.

NATA

I just spoke to Mrs. Greenstein, Marco.

He doesn't look up from his play.

NATA (CONT'D)

Marco, brain in.

Marco looks up at Nata.

NATA (CONT'D)

Mrs. Greenstein was out sick yesterday, and she said Mrs. Powers was your substitute.

MARCO

Uh huh.

NATA

There was no gun though, Marco. Did you see Mrs. Powers holding a gun, or did you hear it?

MARCO

I saw it, and I heard it.

NATA

Did you maybe see her take something out and hear a loud noise at the same time?

MARCO

I saw it.

NATA

I know it can feel a little sad when you're expecting Mrs. Greenstein, but then it's a different teacher.

MARCO

It didn't feel sad.

NATA

How did it feel?

MARCO

I don't know. I didn't like it.

NATA

That's okay. Mrs. Greenstein said she's going to be at school today. But Marco, talking about guns can make people feel scared.

Marco picks up a block and starts looking for where to place it. Nata gently takes it.

NATA (CONT'D)

I'm going to hold this. Are you 100% sure you saw a gun?

MARCO

I wasn't lying.

NATA
Not on purpose, right?

MARCO
Not on purpose.

NATA
I know.

MARCO
Can I have my blocks now?

NATA
You understand that no one at
school had a gun.

MARCO
I know.

NATA
You know what?

Marco reaches for his block, Nata pulls her arm back.

MARCO
There was no gun.

Nata hands back the block.

INT. WILLIAMS DEN-CONTINUOUS

Ike, packing his briefcase, waits for Nata as she emerges from the den.

IKE
Did he get it?

NATA
Kinda. I bribed him into getting
it.

IKE
Good enough for me.

INT. WILLIAMS DRIVEWAY-NEXT MORNING

Nata buckles Samantha into the backseat of a black Nissan Quest. Nata kisses her all over. Samantha laughs and reaches out, but is buckled too tightly. Marco is buckled at the opposite window, dressed 1/2 in school clothes, but with a Spider-Man mask and gloves on. He stares out the window.

MARCO
There's a blue jay on the house.

SAMANTHA
Where!

She tries to lean across.

SAMANTHA (CONT'D)
Point to it!

MARCO
It flew to the other house.

Samantha scrunches her face in frustration, then forgets it. Jesse bounds out of the house with a backpack swinging behind him.

NATA
The door!

Jesse pivots and reaches back to shut the front door. He then bounds into the car and climbs to the back seat. Ike puts his briefcase on the passenger seat.

MARCO
When are you coming home, Mom?

IKE
You tell me. Mom already answered that question a lot of times.

Marco growls a quiet growl.

MARCO
8.

NATA
My last student is 8. I'll be home after you go to bed, but I'll see you in the morning.

NATA (CONT'D)
Bye, Sammy.

SAMANTHA
Mom!

NATA
Bye, Sam. Bye, Jess.

Jesse climbs forward and hugs his mom tight.

MARCO

Wait, mom. I have a gift.

NATA

Oh, sweetie. It's going to have to be a short gift.

MARCO

There once upon a time was a little ladybug. Named Pedro. And he flew onto a sunflower. But he didn't like yellow. So he flew onto a bush, but he didn't like green.

SAMANTHA

Hey we're learning about sunflowers with Mrs. Greenstein!

MARCO

So he flew onto a tree branch, but he didn't like brown. So he flew--

IKE

Find an ending, bud.

MARCO

So he flew onto a window and saw a family inside, and that made him happy.

IKE

The end.

NATA

Aw, that was a happy gift this time.

Their neighbor, Lindsay Davis, walks down the shared driveway, briefcase and purse in hand. Her children Anna, 15, and Peter, 17, trail behind, both in school uniforms and overloaded backpacks.

IKE

Pete, what was the time last night?

PETER

I don't wanna relive it.

IKE

That rough?

PETER

5:17.

IKE
Slowing down in your old age. Too
much partying?

Ike pokes Peter's side.

Nata rolls her eyes. Lindsay ducks her head a little to peer
into the van.

LINDSAY
Hi, guys. I see Spider-Man's back.
What happened to Batman.

SAMANTHA
It was always Spider-Man.

LINDSAY
Have fun at school.

IKE
We're off. Off to fight crime.

LINDSAY
Us, too. We missed the bus this
morning.

IKE
Not driving yet?

PETER
Not yet, Mr. Williams.

IKE
Ike. Call me, Ike.

The Davis's drive off. Nata shoots Ike a look.

IKE (CONT'D)
Don't start.

NATA
You going to ask him to prom?

IKE
Stop it.

JESSE
Stop what?

IKE
Nothing.

NATA
Your dad has a crush on the
neighbor boy.

SAMANTHA
What?

IKE
It's a joke. Stop putting weird
thoughts in their head.

JESSE
(smiling)
That's gross, dad.

SAMANTHA
What's gross?

NATA
Daddy's gross.

MARCO
That's not nice.

IKE
Thank you.

JESSE
Dad and Peter sitting in a tree.

JESSE/NATA
K-I-S-S-I-N-G

IKE
We done?

JESSE
First comes love.

IKE
That's enough.

NATA
Then comes marriage.

JESSE
Then comes--

IKE
I said that's enough!

Everyone is silent.

IKE (CONT'D)
 (quieter)
 I said that's enough.

Nata rubs Ike's back. He shrugs her off. Nata whispers something in his ear. Ike closes his eyes and takes a slow, deep breath. They all watch until he opens his eyes.

JESSE
 Sorry, dad.

SAMANTHA
 Sorry, dad.

Ike takes another quick, deep breath. He blubbers through his lips.

IKE
 Off we go.

Ike hops in the front seat and drives away. Nata walks towards the other car in the back of the house.

INT. WILLIAMS HOUSE-THURSDAY NIGHT

Ike is frantically running around the house in a blazer, opening drawers while simultaneously finishing dressing.

IKE
 (on the phone with Nata)
 I don't know why she cancelled.
 ...Yes, she sounded sick.

NATA
 (O.S.; through phone)
 This is the third time.

IKE
 (into phone)
 Where's the babysitter list?

NATA (O.S.)
 I don't know, Ike. Can you just figure this out?

IKE
 You can't help me for two minutes?
 I cannot lose this account. I'll be in and out in two hours. Any names?

NATA (O.S.)
 Ike, this is exactly what we've talked about.

Ike looks out the window and notices Peter on the phone, walking around his driveway.

CUT TO:

INT. WILLIAMS KITCHEN-15 MINUTES LATER

The kids are seated, eating dinner with Peter at the table.

Ike fumbles in, fixing his tie. He is half dressed, suit on top, briefs on the bottom.

SAMANTHA

Daddy!

IKE

(playfully, looking down
at his bare legs)

Uh oh! Did I forget something?

JESSE

Dad!!

IKE

Sorry, Pete. Skype call. Business
on top.

Ike repeatedly checks his watch. He scribbles on a piece of paper and hands it to Peter.

IKE (CONT'D)

Nata's cell. Try not to call her.
But also try not to interrupt me.
Maybe call your parents over first.
(To the kids) Listen guys, this is
a very, very important call. I need
you to stay out of my office.
Pete's in charge. If I finish
early, I'll tuck you in. If you
need me, you ask Peter first.

He kisses each of the kids. He jokingly leans over to kiss Peter who pulls away with an exaggerated look of shock. Ike slaps him on the back with a chuckle.

IKE (CONT'D)

I love you all. Good night. Be
good.

Ike grabs a folder from the kitchen counter, his laptop, and then heads off towards his office.

PETER
What do we think? Kegger tonight?

JESSE
Huh?

PETER
Loosen up, Jess.

He reaches over and massages Jesse on the shoulder. Jesse squirms out of it.

INT. MARCO'S BEDROOM-LATER THAT NIGHT

Peter lays on his side on the floor, assembling a lego tower with Marco as Sam colors beside them.

Jesse walks by in boxers with a towel flung over his shoulder. Peter glances up at him for a moment.

The sound of running water, then the shower.

PETER
Hey, Marco. There another bathroom up here?

SAMANTHA
You can go in mommy and daddy's room.

MARCO
No, we're not supposed to.

SAMANTHA
He's a guest. Guests can use it.

Marco thinks on this. Samantha stands up and Peter follows. On his way out, he playfully tosses Marco's blanket from his bed over Marco's head. Marco pulls it off, giggling. He then hops up and tags along.

INT. WILLIAMS HALLWAY, OUTSIDE MASTER BEDROOM-MOMENTS LATER

SAMANTHA
In here.

PETER
This is where the magic happens, right?

No response.

MARCO

I don't think they do magic.

Samantha returns to her coloring. Peter opens the door, but it's dark.

PETER

Bathroom's in here?

Marco nods.

PETER (CONT'D)

You know where the light is?

Marco nods.

PETER (CONT'D)

Can you show me?

Marco walks in and flips the light switch.

INT. WILLIAMS BEDROOM-CONTINUOUS

PETER

Nice space.

Marco shrugs.

PETER (CONT'D)

You hear that?

MARCO

I'm going to go build.

PETER

You don't hear that?

Marco shakes his head.

PETER (CONT'D)

That spaceship!? Whoaaaah!

Peter scoops Marco up, flies him through the air and tosses him onto Ike and Nata's bed. Marco laughs then scoots himself towards the foot of the bed to hop off. Peter picks him up again and tosses him onto the pile of pillows. Marco laughs.

PETER (CONT'D)

Don't move.

Peter tosses a throw blanket over Marco's head, then walks into the bathroom.

Peter swings the bathroom door, but it doesn't shut fully. Marco, crawls towards the edge of the bed and looks towards the crack in the door. He stays put and watches the opening intently as we hear the sound of Peter peeing.

INT. WILLIAMS BEDROOM-THE NEXT MORNING

Nata and Ike are asleep in each other's arms when there is a knock on the bedroom door. They do not move. A louder knock.

MARCO (O.S.)
Daddy.

NATA
He said "daddy."

Ike groans and pulls Nata closer.

NATA (CONT'D)
Come on.

Ike slides backwards out of bed. He opens the bedroom door.

MARCO
I woke up.

IKE
I see that.

Ike squats down.

IKE (CONT'D)
What's going on?

MARCO
Where's mommy?

Nata groans.

IKE
She's sleeping.

NATA
What do you need, buddy?

MARCO
I need to tell you something.

NATA
Can you tell me from there?

MARCO
It's a secret.

NATA
You can come here.

MARCO
No.

IKE
Nat.

Nata climbs out of bed and walks to the door. Ike shrugs. He begins to pull work clothes from his closet, as Nata chats with Marco. Nata squats down, rubbing her eyes.

NATA
What's the secret?

MARCO
I did something bad. I played in your room last night.

NATA
When?

MARCO
With Peter. With daddy.

Nata looks at Ike who shrugs in response.

NATA
Were you in here with Peter or with daddy?

MARCO
Peter had to pee.

NATA
He came in here to use the bathroom?

MARCO
Yeah.

IKE
Why didn't he use the other bathroom?

MARCO
Jesse was making a shower. Samantha said he can, because he's a guest.

NATA
That's okay, bud. Right?

IKE
Don't worry about it.

NATA
But thank you for telling us.

MARCO
Okay. He was silly. He threw me on
the pillows.

IKE
Yeah, Peter's pretty silly.

MARCO
He didn't have pants on, right
daddy?

Nata looks at Ike in confusion. Ike bites his lip and
grimaces, playfully acknowledging that he was caught.

IKE
I had a Skype call. Business on
top.

NATA
In front of Peter?

Ike grimaces again. Nata rolls her eyes.

NATA (CONT'D)
What are we going to do with your
dad?

INT. WILLIAMS HOUSEHOLD-UPSTAIRS HALLWAY-SUNDAY NIGHT

It is dark and middle-of-the-night quiet, until from the
bedroom, we hear...

MARCO (O.S.)
Mom!!!! Mom!!!!

CUT TO:

INT. IKE AND NATA'S BEDROOM-45 MINUTES LATER

Nata walks in, rubbing her eyes, and crawls back into bed.

IKE
What was it tonight?

NATA
There was a black bear in his room.

IKE

What was it? The jacket in the closet?

NATA

It was nothing. You had a stranger babysit, which throws him off. You know that.

IKE

That Skype call paid for Marco's OT for the next year.

MARCO (O.S.)

Mom!!!!!!

SAMANTHA (O.S.)

Marco, be quiet!

IKE

I got it.

He climbs out of bed.

INT. WILLIAMS KITCHEN-TUESDAY MORNING

The morning kitchen dance: Ike is fixing his tie while Nata fills two travel mugs with coffee. Jesse enters rubbing his eyes. Ike tries to pat down Jesse's bed head, but Jesse swats his arm off. Sam and Marco sit at the table working through their bowls of Honey Nut Cheerios. Marco is engrossed in a book of mazes. Samantha hums quietly to herself.

MARCO

More milk.

Nata reaches for it.

IKE

Please...

Marco does not look up from his maze. Nata pours the milk in the bowl.

IKE (CONT'D)

What do you say, Marco?

Marco does not appear to hear. Ike grabs him by the shoulders, causing Nata and Sam to pause in their routine for a moment.

IKE (CONT'D)

Marco! Say thank you.

Nata takes a moment, then gently rubs Ike on the back. He steps back and takes a bite of the toast he left on the kitchen counter. Without looking up from his maze, Marco asks:

MARCO
Daddy?

IKE
Yes, buddy.

MARCO
Do you and Jesse have hair on your penis?

Nata stifles a laugh. Jesse freezes and stares at Ike in anticipation.

IKE
Um...

Samantha takes a big bite of her cheerios.

IKE (CONT'D)
We don't talk about that at breakfast.

NATA
Ike!

He shoots her a look as if to say "What do you want me to say?"

NATA (CONT'D)
Marco, what made you curious about that?

Marco keeps his focus on his maze, and he shrugs in response to Nata's question.

NATA (CONT'D)
Well baby there are all different types of bodies--

Jesse's mouth drops open.

IKE
Okay, alright. This is not a Cheerios conversation.

NATA
Ike! It's perfectly *normal* to be curious.

IKE
It's not appropriate.

NATA
It *is* appropriate. Marco, when boys get a little older and start to turn into men, their bodies start to change.

Ike leaves the kitchen in a huff.

NATA (CONT'D)
One of those changes is that they may start to grow hair in different parts of their body. Like their arms, their chest, and near their penis.

MARCO
How much older?

JESSE
I don't have hair on my penis, Marco.

MARCO
Okay. I did it!

He holds up his completed maze.

EXT. FRONT OF WILLIAMS HOUSE-SAME MORNING

Nata holds the door as Jesse, Marco, and then Sam step through with backpacks in tow. Ike is the last in line. Nata shuts the front door, and while the kids pile into the car, she pulls on his shoulder.

NATA
What was that about?

IKE
Right?

NATA
Not Marco. You. "It's not appropriate"?

IKE
It wasn't.

NATA
You shamed him.

IKE

I don't know. He doesn't have the social skills other kids have. He needs to know you don't bring stuff like that up in public.

NATA

You just pulled that explanation out of your ass.

Ike looks at his feet.

IKE

Jesse's watching us fight.

Nata brushes past him and climbs into the driver's seat.

INT. IKE AND NATA'S BEDROOM-NEXT NIGHT

Ike sits with one bedside lamp on. He holds his head in his hands. He listens to Marco's cries and screams from the other room.

SAMANTHA (O.S.)

Marco! Be quiet!!

Marco lets out one more wail and then, at last, it subsides. Nata enters, carrying Marco who is rubbing his eyes. Marco slides off her shoulder and burrows next to Ike. He immediately falls asleep.

Ike tosses a look of confusion, relief, and gratitude at Nata. She carefully places herself back in bed.

NATA

It was the only way to get him to stop.

IKE

Sam okay?

She nods.

IKE (CONT'D)

He's never going to sleep back in his own bed.

She tosses her hands in the air.

IKE (CONT'D)

Sorry. I'm just tired.

His eyes well up. She places a hand on his back.

NATA
It's been every night this week,
Ike. What's our plan?

Ike rubs his eyes.

IKE
(whispering)
Let's not wake him.

Ike leans back on his pillow and looks lovingly at Nata.

IKE (CONT'D)
Thank you.

He switches off the light.

INT. WILLIAMS HOUSEHOLD-MARCO'S BEDROOM-EARLY EVENING

Ike sits on the floor with Marco, working on a lego set.

Nata pokes her head in, carrying Sam who is wrapped in a towel.

NATA
You're up, buddy.

Marco is fixated on his legos. Ike places his hand over the pieces Marco is working on.

IKE
Marco, look at me.

Marco meets his eye line.

IKE (CONT'D)
Shower time, bud.

MARCO
No, thank you.

Ike smiles.

IKE
You want to go, or you want me to
carry you?

No response.

SAMANTHA
Marco's being difficult.

Marco throws a lego at her.

SAMANTHA (CONT'D)

Hey!

Ike scoops Marco up and puts him on the bed. Nata takes Sam out of the room.

IKE

Uh uh. Use your words.

MARCO

I want a bath.

IKE

Not tonight, buddy. It's too late. Let's go. You can bring your legos in with you.

MARCO

No, thank you.

IKE

Marco. 5, 4, 3...2...1.

Ike stands up and picks Marco up. Marco begins to cry and flail. Ike walks towards the bathroom, Nata ducks out of the way.

CUT TO:

INT. BATHROOM-CONTINUED

The shower is already running. Ike carries a crying and screaming Marco inside.

IKE

Not a choice, bud.

Marco clutches the vanity, fully resisting.

IKE (CONT'D)

Nata!

Nata comes in and surveys the scene.

IKE (CONT'D)

Can you cut the water?

Nata shuts off the shower. Marco begins to quiet as Ike puts him down on the floor.

IKE (CONT'D)

Bud, what is going on?

MARCO

I want a bath. Please, daddy. I don't want to shower, please.

IKE

You always shower. Why not tonight?

MARCO

Please, daddy. I don't want to shower.

NATA

Bud, it's getting late.

IKE

How about if I shower with you?

Marco wipes his tears and looks up at Ike.

IKE (CONT'D)

You like that idea?

Marco nods.

NATA

I'm going to get daddy's bathing suit.

Nata leaves, and Ike turns the shower on. Marco shudders, then approaches tentatively.

INT. PRINCIPAL'S OFFICE-SOUTHPORT MIDDLE SCHOOL

PRINCIPAL KENNEDY

Do you fly or drive?

NATA

We used to fly. But Marco, our other son, he has a hard time with it. So we'll likely drive.

KENNEDY

Yes, I know Marco. I met him at the last winter concert.

NATA

Oh, god, I forgot. I'm so sorry again for that.

KENNEDY

No, no, don't apologize. I swear, that's not why I mentioned it.

NATA
Not our proudest moment.

KENNEDY
In any case, we got off track. I hope you have an easy drive next month.

IKE
Thank you. We done here?

Ike jokingly goes to stand up.

KENNEDY
(laughing)
Not quite.

NATA
What's going on with Jess?

KENNEDY
He's fine. You know how much we adore Jesse here. A model student.

IKE
But...

KENN
Almost all of his teachers have touched base with me. And I wanted to spare you from being bombarded with seven separate teacher calls, so here's what we're seeing. In every class-

IKE
He's falling asleep.

KENNEDY
Yes. You knew where I was going.

IKE
Marco's been having some nightmares recently. Jess is a light sleeper, so when Marco's up, we're all up.

KENNEDY
I'm sorry.

IKE
We're on it. It's under control.

Nata scoffs.

IKE (CONT'D)

We'll get on it. Jess doesn't complain much, but we'll talk to him. And we'll figure something out.

KENNEDY

Thank you.

IKE

No, thank you.

KENNEDY

It's not just that. His homework is...subpar. (She looks at her notes). Ms. Leighton reports sloppy work with countless careless errors. His latest social studies quiz, he got an 80.

IKE

Not terrible.

KENNEDY

Believe me, I have many students where 80 is a goal we're working towards. 80 is not Jesse.

IKE/NATA

Right.

KENNEDY

Science. Ms. Lewis reported that he was snapping at his partner throughout their entire lab last week. Which I get, if he's not sleeping and more irritable.

NATA

Snapping how?

KENNEDY

Short with him. His partner knocked over one of their samples, and Jesse sort of (referring to her notes) huffed and said something like "I'll just do it." Again, not a huge deal--

IKE

But not Jesse.

KENNEDY

His latest spelling quiz. He copied off of his neighbor.

IKE

What! How do you know?

KENNEDY

They had identical errors.

IKE

I'm not defending him, but couldn't it have been the other way around.

KENNEDY

Ike, Jesse never makes spelling errors. And the other student consistently struggles with spelling.

IKE

I could kill him.

KENNEDY

Listen, I don't condone cheating. And we have to give him a zero on that quiz. But that's not my main concern.

NATA

Concern?

KENNEDY

This is not the Jesse we know. Is there anything different, any changes we should know about? I'm not prying, but-- I am a little.

They all laugh.

IKE

No. No changes. Other than the sleeping, right?

NATA

Yeah, that's all I can think of.

IKE

He takes on a lot in our house.

NATA

He does.

IKE

We'll talk to him.

KENNEDY

Good. Thank you. And listen, this may be pre-teen angst. Nothing I'm sharing with you falls outside of developmental norms. But they fall outside of Jesse's. I'm not an alarmist, and I'm not alarmed, but frankly he's a leader in our community, and we just didn't want to wait--

NATA

Is there more we should do?

KENNEDY

No, I think starting with a conversation with him is a logical next step. See what you can suss out. Listen, I'd normally allude to additional support, but it's you guys, so I feel comfortable being frank.

NATA

Please.

KENNEDY

You may want to touch base with Dr. Baker. He's very fond of Jesse.

NATA

Thank you, absolutely.

IKE

Thank you so much.

CUT TO:

INT. SCHOOL HALLWAY

Ike and Nata exit the principal's office.

IKE

There's no fucking way we're talking to Dr. Baker. That man is a dip.

Nata throws her arms up.

INT. WILLIAMS DEN-EVENING

Sam and Marco sit in their PJs, hair wet, entranced by the TV. Ike is lying down, his laptop on his belly.

Nata walks in, holding her work heels in her hand. She gives each of them a kiss.

NATA
Showered and everything. Teeth
brushed?

MARCO
Yep, teeth brushed.

Ike shakes his head. Nata smiles and plops herself down by Ike's head. She strokes his hair.

NATA
Kiddos, five more minutes, okay?

SAMANTHA
Okay.

NATA
Marco, how long?

MARCO
Five more minutes.

NATA
(to Ike)
Did he shower?

SAMANTHA
He showered.

MARCO
I saw daddy's penis.

NATA
(smiling)
What'd you think?

Ike reaches back to playfully smack her.

MARCO
What?

NATA
Why did you see daddy's penis?

MARCO
I helped him shower.

IKE
Other way around.

MARCO
He washed me.

IKE
(whispering)
He wouldn't go in.

Nata furrows her brow.

INT. WILLIAMS KITCHEN-LATER THAT EVENING

Ike sits at his laptop, finishing a non-alcoholic beer. Nata walks in. She lifts the empty bottle beside the one Ike is currently drinking.

NATA
Guess you like this stuff?

IKE
I tolerate it. The kids down?

NATA
Yep.

Nata pulls out and picks at some crackers and hummus.

NATA (CONT'D)
Did he ask for a bath again?

IKE
I wouldn't exactly call it
"asking."

NATA
You can't shower with him every
day.

IKE
What do you want me to do? He
shouldn't sleep with us every day
either.

Nata lets out a frustrated sigh.

NATA
He said he saw Peter's penis. Do
you know what that's about?

IKE
He Marcoed it. He saw my penis.

NATA

Why?

IKE

He was bugging out again. I needed to just get him in the shower.

NATA

You couldn't grab a suit?

IKE

Not really. Nat, he's seen me naked before.

NATA

When?

IKE

We used to change in front of him all the time.

NATA

Yeah, when he was 1. Why not wear your underwear in the shower?

IKE

I don't know. He was screaming and kicking. I didn't think through it, I guess. I just acted, okay?
...Okay?

NATA

It's a little weird, that's all.

Ike finishes the last of his drink. He snaps his laptop shut and places the bottle in the sink.

IKE

I'm heading up.

NATA

Ike, it's been weeks of this. We need a plan.

He walks out, leaving Nata standing at the counter with her snack.

INT. THERAPY OFFICE-DAYTIME

Dr. Melanie Gonzalez, a woman in her late 30's opens a door at the bottom of a narrow stairway to find Nata. Nata enters, shaking off and closing her umbrella. They embrace.

MELANIE

Hi! Come in. Come up.

They climb the stairs, pass through a small waiting room and then enter Melanie's private office. Melanie begins to gather some dolls from the floor and places them in a wooden basket at the side of the room. She points towards a warm, overstuffed couch.

MELANIE (CONT'D)

Have a seat. I'm sorry, I just finished a session so I didn't have a chance to clean up.

NATA

Please. This space is great.

MELANIE

Thank you. It is, right?

NATA

Everyone at Stratfield says hi.

MELANIE

Aw. How is it there? I thought you were going to escape soon after me.

NATA

I have a handful of private clients.

MELANIE

There's open office space across the hall. Just saying, girl.

NATA

You love the private life, don't you.

MELANIE

Yes. Come join me!

NATA

I don't know if I'm ready to give up the summers off.

MELANIE

Nata.

NATA

I know, I know. We'll talk.

MELANIE

Right, not why you're here. Talk to me. What's going on with my Jesse?

NATA

I don't know, Mel. He's supposed to be my easy one.

FADE TO:

NATA (CONT'D)

I was so mad. The rest isn't great, but cheating. It's bad, isn't it?

MELANIE

Nat, I gotta be honest. I think we're talking about the wrong kid here. ...Marco. Not sleeping, not wanting to take baths. Any reports from school about a change in his behavior?

NATA

No. They called the other day, because he threw something. But Mel, that's just Marco. It's just sort of something new with him every once in a while.

MELANIE

Maybe. Honestly?

NATA

Go ahead.

MELANIE

I think you've adjusted your definition of developmentally typical behavior based around Marco. Even for someone with Marco's profile, these behaviors came on suddenly. Is he in therapy?

NATA

He gets speech services in school. And OT outside.

MELANIE

Play therapy?

NATA

Ugh. I'm not opposed. It's just scheduling.

MELANIE

I think he needs to talk to someone.

NATA

(half kidding)
Can't it be me?

MELANIE

You know it can't. Same reason you can't be his speech therapist. You're-

NATA

His mom. You'll send me some names?

MELANIE

I will.

NATA

He does talk to me though.

MELANIE

Fine. ...Then get him to talk to you.

INT. CAR-OUTSIDE SCHOOL

Nata is in the front. Marco climbs in the back, staring out the window.

NATA

All buckled?

He gives her a thumbs up.

NATA (CONT'D)

Tell me about your day.

MARCO

I ate both my apples.

NATA

I gave you two?

Marco nods.

NATA (CONT'D)

Whoops. Who'd you play with?

MARCO

Um. Mr. Pinchy Claws.

NATA
Is that an imaginary friend?

MARCO
What's imaginary?

NATA
What did you play?

Marco shrugs.

NATA (CONT'D)
Bud, I want to ask you something.
You've been acting a little funny
lately. Do you know what I mean?
When I say you've been a little
funny?

MARCO
I'm always funny.

NATA
You are always funny.

MARCO
Mommy, I tried peanut butter today.

NATA
You've had that before, bud.

MARCO
This had lumps in it.

NATA
Crunchy peanut butter. ...Hey,
Marco, can I have a gift?

MARCO
Maybe tonight.

NATA
Remember bud that daddy and I
aren't home tonight. Colette is
babysitting tonight.

MARCO
Maybe a short gift.

NATA
Long or short.

MARCO
I don't want Colette to babysit.

NATA
You're usually so excited for
Colette.

MARCO
I don't think she should use your
bathroom.

NATA
Does she usually?

MARCO
Peter does.

NATA
Right. You told me about that. That
was okay.

MARCO
Mommy?

NATA
Yeah, bud?

MARCO
I looked at Peter's penis.

NATA
You said that before. Remember you
saw daddy's penis in the shower. I
think it got a little mixed up in
your head.

MARCO
I saw daddy's penis, and I saw
Peter's penis. When he peed.

NATA
Did Peter know?

Nata glances at Marco in the rear view mirror. He continues
to watch the scenery outside.

MARCO
Mommy?

NATA
Yes, Marco?

MARCO
I didn't like it.

NATA
His penis?

MARCO

Huh?

NATA

What didn't you like?

MARCO

The crunch peanut butter.

INT. CAR-LATER

Nata pulls into the driveway. She parks the car, unbuckles then turns back to look at Marco. He unbuckles his booster.

NATA

Just one minute, bud. How come--why did you see Peter's penis?

MARCO

Will you be mad?

NATA

No, I won't be mad.

MARCO

I sat on your bed. It was just me alone. And Peter was peeing. He didn't know I saw.

NATA

The door was open?

MARCO

A little open. And I looked.

NATA

I see. You know, Marco, it's normal to be curious--

MARCO

Then suddenly one time, somebody else came in, and she sat on the bed too. And you know what happened, mommy? He peed a little.

NATA

Samantha.

MARCO

The boy.

NATA

I thought you said it was a she.

MARCO

No, it was a he. He touched my penis. And then he peed.

NATA

This sounds like a silly story. Remember what we decided about talking about private body parts.

MARCO

No it's not a silly story, mommy. It's a real story.

NATA

Okay...

MARCO

He peed on the bed. But it was white pee. Like Spider-Man, but it came out of his penis.

NATA

Spider-Man peed on the bed?

MARCO

No, mommy. Peter. When I touched his penis.

NATA

You touched his penis?

MARCO

No, she touched my penis.

NATA

Who?

MARCO

Spider-Man.

A beat.

MARCO (CONT'D)

Mommy, I want to go now.

INT. IKE AND NATA'S BATHROOM

Nata stands in a bathrobe, hair thoughtfully pulled half back. She finishes with her mascara just as Ike calls to her from the bedroom.

IKE (O.C.)

Nat!

Nata places down the mascara and steps out of the bathroom.

NATA

Almost ready.

Nata pulls a dress from her dresser and begins to change.

IKE

You're fine. We've got ten minutes.

NATA

You picked up Colette?

IKE

Yeah, she's downstairs with them.
She got in early decision
to...shit. She just told me.
Vassar? I don't know. I'm losing my
memory already.

NATA

Or you weren't paying attention.
Listen, I had a weird conversation
today. With Marco.

Ike pulls his sweater up over his head. He brushes the fuzz off the button down that's underneath. He shows her two ties.

NATA (CONT'D)

The blue one.

Ike tosses the red one on the bed. Nata pulls a bracelet from a silver box on her dresser. She walks over to Ike and holds out her wrist. He starts working on the clasp.

IKE

What did Marco say?

NATA

He was a little all over the place.
He said he was in our bedroom with
a boy.

IKE

Jesse?

NATA

Actually first he said it was a
girl, then a boy. Then Spider-Man.

Ike chuckles a little. He continues to struggle with the clasp.

IKE

Do you have to wear this?

NATA

I'll work on it in the car.

She tosses the bracelet in her clutch. Then slips a necklace over her head. Ike ties his tie. It's crooked. He starts over.

NATA (CONT'D)

He said he was on the bed with Spider-Man, he touched Spider-Man's penis, and that he touched his penis.

IKE

What's with the penis?

NATA

Hang on. He said he peed white pee.

IKE

That's...what?

NATA

Weird. I thought maybe Marco wet the bed or something.

Ike stands up from sitting on the bed.

NATA (CONT'D)

I already checked. Plus, he said it was white pee. But then when I asked who peed, he said Peter.

IKE

Peter? Peter Parker?

NATA

Who?

IKE

That's Spider-Man's real name.

NATA

Huh. I didn't know that. I like that better.

IKE

Who did you think?

NATA
I thought Peter Davis.

IKE
Peed our bed?

NATA
He said white pee.

IKE
Oh, Nata.

NATA
I know.

IKE
You think Peter jerked off on our
bed?

Nata shutters at this.

NATA
I hadn't really gotten that far. I
just...I'm confused.

IKE
I don't know. He also said his
teacher pulled a gun out of her
bag. And that bears live in his
closet.

Nata squints her eyes at him.

IKE (CONT'D)
We gotta go.

NATA
Ike, this is weird. Why is he
suddenly talking about Peter's
penis?

IKE
You're the one who said it's normal
for him to be asking body
questions. Freaking jumped down my
throat for "shaming" him.

NATA
I'm worried.

IKE
I wouldn't read that much into it.
I love the kid, but tell me a day
when he hasn't said some weird
shit.

Nata chuckles, then stifles it.

NATA
Can you talk to him? See what he
says to you?

IKE
Fine, I'll talk to him.

NATA
Now?

Ike looks at his watch.

IKE
We're going to be late.

NATA
Now.

INT. CAR-SAME EVENING

Nata sits in the driver's seat, eyes closed with Springstein playing. Ike runs in front and hops in the passenger seat. She starts the car.

NATA
So?

FADE TO:

INT. CAR-SAME EVENING

NATA
So, no Spider-Man this time.

IKE
No Spider-Man. And I asked if he
meant Peter Parker or Peter Davis.

Nata looks at him for the answer.

IKE (CONT'D)
He said Peter Peter.

NATA
Did you ask what that means?

IKE
No.

NATA
Why not?

IKE
Because. I was picturing my
employees sitting at a table,
waiting for their boss to walk in.

NATA
Did you ask about...all the penis
stuff?

IKE
No. He didn't bring it up, so I
didn't want to plant anything. He
said they were in the bedroom, and
they played a game of tag.

NATA
That was it?

IKE
That was it. He said Jesse was in
the shower. Did he tell you that
part?

NATA
(unfazed by the new info)
No.

IKE
Left here.

NATA
I'm going up Richmond.

IKE
By the church?

NATA
Yeah.

IKE
Ridgemonnd.

NATA
Richmond. I think we should talk to
him together.

IKE
Nata.

NATA
What?

IKE
I think we should drop this.

NATA
Are you kidding?

IKE
What? What are you worried about?

NATA
I don't know. It's still a puzzle to me. We need to help him get his story straight.

IKE
Have you met our son? Have you heard him tell a story before?

NATA
This isn't the same. What is the harm in some clarification?

IKE
What is the point of clarifying a made up story?

NATA
Best case scenario is it's nonsense.

IKE
And worst?

NATA
I don't want to think about that.

Ike is silent.

NATA (CONT'D)
What?

IKE
I think you're overreacting.

NATA
Don't-

IKE

Nat-

NATA

Don't make me feel nuts here.

IKE

I think you're sleep deprived.

NATA

As are you.

IKE

If this is something to worry about, he will tell us.

NATA

What if this is him telling us?

INT. DR. GONZALEZ'S WAITING ROOM

Ike and Nata sit silently, Ike on his phone, Nata fidgeting. Melanie's office door opens, and we see Marco lining figurines up on her rug. Melanie and a woman in her late 60s, Dr. Lapine, come out and leave the door open a crack. They take a seat. Ike finishes up a work email until Nata taps his arm. He puts the phone inside his blazer. They whisper.

MELANIE

Something happened. He's a bit confused on some of the details, but he was touched by this boy Peter.

IKE

How can you know? (He catches himself and returns to a whisper)
How can you know for sure?

MELANIE

As much as it's possible to know for sure, I know for sure. You can get another opinion, but--

DR. LAPINE

I'm the other opinion. I've been doing this for a very long time, Mr. Williams. You don't have to believe us--

NATA

We believe you.

MELANIE

Nat, I'm sorry.

Nata remains stoic.

IKE

What did he say?

MELANIE

He said that he played a game with Peter.

NATA

(looking ill)

Please.

MELANIE

He was on your bed and Peter--the boy came in. Marco said he, meaning Peter, wanted to play a game. He took off his pants and told Marco to take off his. He touched Marco's penis, and he asked Marco to touch his. Marco said it got bigger. He said white stuff came out of it.

Ike puts his hand up.

IKE

That's enough.

Nata pulls Ike's hand down and directs Melanie with her eyes to continue.

MELANIE

He said Jesse was in the shower, so he couldn't play the game too. And Samantha couldn't play, because she's a girl.

IKE

So he feels...he thinks of it as a game.

DR. LAPINE

He describes it as a game, because that's what he was told.

MELANIE

And he understands that word.

DR. LAPINE

But he feels that something was wrong.

(MORE)

DR. LAPINE (CONT'D)

The night terrors, the fear of intense sensory experiences, like the shower, those are not uncommon signs.

IKE

Marco has always been overwhelmed by loud noises.

NATA

He's--(her voices catches in her throat, but she powers through)--
He's always taken showers.

IKE

What about Spider-Man?

DR. LAPINE

It's not uncommon for children to blur the line between reality and fantasy. With trauma-based play therapy, he'll be able to develop a clearer narrative.

IKE

I need to hear *him* say it.

DR. LAPINE

I understand.

NATA

Do you do the trauma therapy?

DR. LAPINE

I do.

IKE

That's convenient.

NATA

Ike.

DR. LAPINE

Mr. Williams, with all due respect. I know this is not what you want to hear, but I have no stake in this. I have a full and thriving practice. I will gladly help you with your son, and I will gladly refer you elsewhere if that would make you more comfortable. To do nothing would be neglectful. I have no doubt you're wonderful parents. But Marco will need help.

IKE
We'll think about everything you
said.

CUT TO:

EXT. DR. GONZALEZ'S OFFICE PARKING LOT

Marco climbs into the back of Nata's car. Ike starts to walk
towards his. She shuts the door.

NATA
Ike!

Ike and Nata whisper shout to each other.

NATA (CONT'D)
You were an asshole.

Ike paces briefly. He looks up, successfully rolling the
tears back. He holds himself still, looks at his feet, looks
at Nata.

IKE
This is a nightmare.

Nata takes his hand. Ike gives her shoulder a squeeze, then
turns and heads back towards the office.

NATA
Where are you going?

IKE
To apologize.

INT. NATA'S CAR-MOMENTS LATER

MARCO
Mommy?

NATA
Yeah, baby?

MARCO
My seatbelt is itching my neck.

NATA
I'm sorry.

MARCO
Can I take it off?

Nata swallows hard.

NATA
No. It's not too long a ride.

MARCO
Mommy, do you want to hear a
coincidence?

Nata swallows. She smiles a smile, partly broken and
strained.

NATA
That's a big word.

MARCO
I played with Stephanie today. I
never played with her before.

NATA
(holding back tears)
Oh yeah?

MARCO
Yeah, never. She had stinky breath.

She continues to hold in tears.

NATA
Oh no.

MARCO
I didn't tell her.

She continues to struggle, but keeps her tears in.

NATA
Good.

MARCO
Maybe tomorrow.

NATA
No, bud.

MARCO
Why not tomorrow?

Nata takes a slow breath.

NATA
(holding back tears)
You don't say that. It--it could
hurt her feelings.

MARCO
It's just breath.

EXT. WILLIAMS HOUSEHOLD--SAME DAY

Nata sits on the front steps. Despite the clouds, she wears sunglasses, but they don't hide the tear stains on her cheeks. A car pulls up, and Jesse and Sam empty out with their backpacks. Nata waves a "thank you" at the carpool driver.

Samantha bounds up the walkway and hugs Nata. Jesse offers a high five.

SAMANTHA
We have no homework today!

NATA
(tears in her throat)
That's great. Lucky you.

Samantha hears this and looks at Nata.

SAMANTHA
Mommy?

Nata pauses a moment to gather her voice. Sam and Jesse take notice.

NATA
Yes?

JESSE
Sam, maybe go put your backpack--

SAMANTHA
Mommy, I'll eat all my veggies
tonight. I won't be a pill.

NATA
Thank you, baby.

INT. IKE AND NATA'S BEDROOM--EVENING

IKE
It's none of our business.

NATA
None of our--

IKE
You know what I mean.

NATA

I don't actually. They have a right to know. I would want to know if my son did something that awful--

IKE

If they marched over here and accused Jesse--

NATA

It wouldn't happen.

IKE

You'd just say "thank you," no questions asked.

NATA

I don't know.

IKE

They'll hate us.

NATA

I don't care.

IKE

Let's take a breath here. Let's, we're not going over right now. So let's think a bit.

NATA

Fine.

She leaves the room.

EXT. WILLIAMS HOUSEHOLD--LATER THAT EVENING

Nata sits on the front stoop. Ike comes out and hands her a glass of wine. He stands behind her with a hand on her shoulder. She leans back on his legs.

Nata looks out at the street: the child's bicycle propped against the Goodman house across the street; the minivan in the Peterson's driveway; the tree house visible in the Porter's backyard. The Ryan's porch light flicks on. Annie Ryan, 7 yo, walks out with her brother Charlie, 9, and their new puppy. Annie bounds down the steps, thrilled with the novelty of the chore of walking the new dog. They walk down the street on their own, only half a block before Mr. Ryan steps out onto the porch to monitor them from afar.

Nata stands up.

NATA
I'm telling them. With or without
you.

EXT. DAVIS' PORCH-NEXT EVENING

Ike and Nata stand at the front door.

NATA
Should I have brought something?

IKE
I don't know Nata.

NATA
Is it too late to grab wine?

The front door starts to open.

IKE
I'd say yes.

CUT TO:

INT. DAVIS LIVING ROOM-LATER THAT EVENING

Lindsay and Liam Davis sit in twin arm chairs, across from
Ike and Nata on a blue sofa. Lindsay and Liam are holding
hands. Almost in unison, they lean back into their chairs,
taking a moment to process.

An uncomfortable silence hangs in the air.

IKE
We can go...if you need some
time...

Lindsay looks to Liam.

IKE (CONT'D)
You don't have to--

NATA
Just. Shush for a second.

Lindsay leans forward in her chair.

LINDSAY
How do you know? For certain?

IKE

Yeah. Fair question. They're kids, so there's never a "for certain," but--

NATA

He was evaluated. The psychologist confirmed this. With certainty.

LINDSAY

Right.

LIAM

How did you find this doctor? Or this psychologist?

NATA

Through a former colleague, who is also a psychologist. They both evaluated him together.

LIAM

Is that typical? For two people to...to co-

LINDSAY

To co-evaluate? That seems like it could, they could influence each other's thinking. No?

IKE

I think the idea is to get two people's interpretations--

NATA

It's quite typical.

LINDSAY

Did you think about getting a second opinion?

NATA

We did. There were two people--

LINDSAY

Right, two interpretations.

NATA

Analyses.

LINDSAY

And a former colleague? That's not a conflict of interest or something?

NATA
No, it's not.

IKE
Easy.

Ike puts a hand on her knee, she brushes it away and leans in.

NATA
Look, I get it. For both our sons,
I don't want this to be true
either.

LINDSAY
Did this psychologist know Marco?

IKE
One of them did.

LIAM
I think what Lindsay's asking--

LINDSAY
Marco's different. So I would think
that could play a factor--

NATA
We know. He is different, but--

LINDSAY
That should be considered, no? His
imagination. Don't get me wrong,
it's wonderful. But as far as being
a reliable reporter--

LIAM
I mean any kid can fabricate--

NATA
Something happened. I'm sorry. I
really...I hate this, you have to
know.

IKE
Guys, we love Peter. And we always
will.

Nata reacts.

IKE (CONT'D)
We just want him to get help, if he
needs help.

LINDSAY

With all due respect, what about your son? Is he getting help?

IKE

Of cour--

NATA

Is that your business?

IKE

Nata?

LINDSAY

Should we, I mean should we be having this conversation, without a lawyer?

NATA

That's not who we are.

LIAM

I think you should leave.

IKE

We're not suing you, that's not why we're here. This isn't an accusation.

NATA

It's a fact.

LINDSAY

A fact?

She stands up, and Liam follows her lead.

LINDSAY (CONT'D)

Thank you for coming over.

Nata rolls her eyes and slaps Ike on the arm.

NATA

I think we got off track. We just want to make sure this doesn't happen to any other kids.

LIAM

Excuse me?

IKE

Maybe you'd let us talk to Peter?

LIAM
Talk to--?

LINDSAY
Liam, stop talking.

CUT TO:

EXT. DAVIS PORCH

The front door slams behind Ike and Nata.

NATA
That went well.

IKE
Now what?

NATA
Do we go to the police?

IKE
Maybe we should have brought wine.

NATA
This isn't a joke.

INT. WILLIAMS KITCHEN-MORNING

Nata is packing a reusable grocery bag with papers and books. Jesse stands by the stove, working on an omelette. Marco gets up from the table and puts his cereal bowl on the counter.

NATA
Go brush.

Marco salutes Nata. In doing so, he knocks the handle of the omelette pan, it flips over and he's splashed with raw eggs.

SAMANTHA
Marco!

Nata turns to see what happened. Jesse takes a breath in frustration, then immediately gets a sponge to start mopping the mess.

NATA
What happened?

SAMANTHA
Marco did it!

MARCO

I didn't!

JESSE

It was an accident.

Marco begins to cry. Nata wets a washcloth and tries to wipe him down.

NATA

Okay, we need to get you cleaned up.

SAMANTHA

I'm hungry! This isn't fair.

JESSE

I'll make cereal.

SAMANTHA

I don't want cereal!

NATA

Jess, you got this?

MARCO

I don't need to get cleaned.

SAMANTHA

No! You promised special eggs. Marco always ruins things.

NATA

Hey!

Samantha freezes, startled. Her eyes begin to water. Jesse crouches down.

NATA (CONT'D)

Upstairs, bud.

She picks up Marco and marches upstairs.

JESSE

(whispering to Samantha)
Marco needs mommy. I know it's unfair, but he's having a hard time right now. You want special cereal?

SAMANTHA

I want daddy.

JESSE

Yeah. We have to be responsible
though. And we have to help Marco.
But I'll help you.

Samantha nods.

JESSE (CONT'D)

Will you help me pour the milk?

Samantha shrugs.

JESSE (CONT'D)

Will you get the chocolate chips?

Samantha smirks. Jesse shrugs his eyebrows, playfully.

CUT TO:

INT. BATHROOM-MOMENTS LATER

Nata puts on the shower while Marco gets undressed.

MARCO

No, no.

NATA

Marco, I'm late. We don't have time
for a shower.

MARCO

I don't want to shower.

NATA

A bath, I mean. I'll wait here the
whole time.

MARCO

No, mommy!

Marco turns. Nata lunges and slams the bathroom door. Marco
begins to cry louder. Nata takes a deep breath.

NATA

Marco, we're late, buddy. Just for
today. I'll hold your hand even.

MARCO

No! Please, mommy.

Nata, agitated, begins pulling his clothes off of him.

MARCO (CONT'D)

No! Mommy!

NATA

Marco, we don't have time for this!

MARCO

Ow! You're pulling my hair!

Nata yanks at his sleeve. This causes Marco to fall into her, which sends Nata falling backward. They crash against the wall. A loud knock on the door.

IKE (O.C.)

We okay?

Nata snaps out of it.

IKE (CONT'D)

Nat?!

NATA

Fine. We're fine.

She gently pulls Marco's shirt off and brushes the tears from his eyes.

NATA (CONT'D)

You don't have to shower.

His tears and breathing slow. Nata wets a washcloth and begins to wipe the egg from his face and his arms.

NATA (CONT'D)

Can you do your legs?

Marco nods. He begins to wipe the egg from his legs.

MARCO

Yuck.

Nata stands up. She pulls a fire engine step stool to the sink, and she tests the water temperature of the sink. Nata takes the washcloth from Marco.

NATA

Come here, bud.

Marco steps up to the sink. She guides his head under the faucet and begins to wash his hair.

NATA (CONT'D)

This okay?

MARCO

Uh huh. ...That was scary, mom.

Nata washes his hair gently and carefully. She wipes her eyes with the back of her hand.

EXT. WILLIAMS NEIGHBORHOOD

A perfect, sunny day. Nata walks through the picturesque neighborhood with Sam and Marco. Sam holds Nata's hand, skipping while Marco walks ahead, dressed in his Batman cape.

Nata calls ahead to him.

NATA

Not too far!

Marco turns back, realizing how far ahead he got, then sprints back in a panic. He clutches Nata, who strokes his hair. A woman approaches with her German Shepherd in tow. Marco seems to relax.

NATA (CONT'D)

Ask first.

MARCO

Can I play with your dog?

WOMAN

Of course. He may give you kisses though.

Marco looks up at Nata for clarification.

NATA

He might lick you.

Marco sits down to pet and hug the dog who immediately showers him in kisses.

WOMAN

He's never met Batman before.

MARCO

I'm not Batman. It's just for pretend.

The woman smiles at Nata.

NATA

30 more seconds, bud.

WOMAN

I don't mind.

NATA

We're headed to the park. He could do this all day.

WOMAN

Don't want to miss the park!

Marco stands up and pats the dog one more time.

MARCO

Bye, bye.

NATA

What do you say?

MARCO

Thank you.

They walk on.

At the end of the block, they turn the corner and enter the neighborhood park on their right.

NATA

Look who it is.

SAMANTHA

Jesse!!

Jesse, across the park, dribbles a soccer ball by himself. He pauses and waves back. Samantha skips to the jungle gym. Marco darts to the tire swing. Nata follows to push him. Marco spins, head back, relaxed and content. Nata keeps one eye on Samantha who explores more cautiously.

FADE TO:

Nata scans the crowded park and takes in the other children and families at play. At a small distance, she clocks and freezes on Peter, stretching post-run with a fellow, female classmate. As they stretch their quads, Peter playfully pushes her over so she loses her balance.

Nata spins the tire, her eyes darting between her children and Peter. She looks down at Marco then back up and sees Jesse's soccer ball has rolled over to Peter. Peter pretends to toss it back to Jesse who flinches. Peter claps Jesse on the back. He then takes the soccer ball and begins bouncing it on his knees. Peter says something to Jesse and then hands the ball back. Jesse starts to bounce the ball on his knees. He fumbles, Peter offers feedback, and Jesse does it again.

MARCO

Mom. Mama.

Nata tunes back in to see Marco tugging at her shirt.

MARCO (CONT'D)

Spin me again.

NATA

One second.

Nata marches half way towards Peter and Jesse.

NATA (CONT'D)

Jesse! Time to go.

Jesse squints in confusion.

PETER

Hey, Mrs. Williams! How's the Mr.?

NATA

Jesse! I said let's go.

CUT TO:

EXT. WILLIAMS FRONT YARD-SAME DAY

Samantha releases Nata's hand and runs ahead, jumping into Ike's arms. Marco follows shortly behind her but runs ahead and through the front door.

IKE

How was the park?

SAMANTHA

Great!!

NATA

Go wash up for lunch.

Samantha skips inside.

IKE

All good?

NATA

I want to call the police. I want to make a report.

CUT TO:

INT. WILLIAMS HOUSEHOLD-DEN/OFFICE-CONTINUOUS

Nata walks in with purpose, Ike behind her, and begins shuffling through the desk drawer.

IKE

Nat--

NATA

Ike. We have to. I'm calling.
Where'd you put that number?

IKE

What num--?

NATA

Melanie gave it to us. The officer
who speaks at the pre-school.
Where'd you put--

IKE

I didn't touch it.

Nata pulls a card from the desk.

NATA

Here. Officer Morse.

Nata and Ike pause as she stares at him hard.

IKE

Okay. I'll take care of it this
week.

He reaches for the card, she pulls back.

NATA

Tomorrow.

Ike takes a deep sigh.

NATA (CONT'D)

I'll do it.

IKE

No. I'll do it, I'll do it.

Nata still withholds the card, until...

IKE (CONT'D)

Tomorrow.

Nata hands it over. She walks out of the den and into...

INT. WILLIAMS LIVING ROOM-CONTINUOUS

Jesse is waiting for her.

NATA
You startled me.

JESSE
What are you guys doing?

NATA
Nothing. I was just telling him
about the park. And your dribbling.

IKE
I heard you're getting really good.
Maybe that'll go better than
basketball went--

JESSE
You were really rude to Peter, mom.

NATA
Was I?

JESSE
Why did you make us leave so fast?

NATA
It was just time to go, that's all.

Jesse looks skeptical.

JESSE
Then I want to go back. Peter was
teaching me things.

NATA
No.

JESSE
Why?

IKE
Because your mother said.

JESSE
What?

NATA
Ike.

IKE
Your mother and I need to talk.

JESSE
You're being weird.

A beat.

IKE
We just don't want you hanging
around Peter. That's all.

JESSE
Why not?

Nata takes a deep sigh.

NATA
Peter was--

IKE
Nat.

She puts up her hand.

NATA
He wasn't very nice to Marco when
he babysat.

JESSE
What did he say to him?

NATA
He didn't say anything. He just, he
just

IKE
He made Marco feel uncomfortable.

NATA
Yes.

JESSE
Did he touch him?

NATA
Why do you ask that? Has Peter
touched you?

JESSE
Yeah sometimes.

NATA
What?

IKE
Why didn't you tell us?

JESSE

Sorry. I didn't think it was a big deal.

NATA

Jess, that's--

IKE

How did he touch you?

JESSE

He rubs my shoulder sometimes. Kinda the way dad does to people. But I felt a little uncomfortable too, I think.

NATA

Did he touch you anywhere else?

JESSE

I guess. My back maybe a little.

IKE

Where was this?

JESSE

In the kitchen.

NATA

Just your back and your shoulder?

JESSE

Yeah. Sorry, I would have told you. I didn't think it mattered that much.

IKE

It's ok.

JESSE

Marco said he did it to him too.

NATA

Yes. So that's why he can't babysit again.

JESSE

Okay. I'm going to go shower. ...Maybe, you guys would let me babysit. Sometime.

IKE

We can talk about that.

Jesse nods and smiles.

INT. WILLIAMS HOUSEHOLD-NEXT EVENING

Nata and the kids are clearing the dinner table. Nata places a full plate covered in foil in the microwave. She spots Ike's headlights, pulling into the back driveway.

NATA

Jess, I'll be right back.

Jesse nods and smiles at his mom.

CUT TO:

EXT. WILLIAMS HOUSEHOLD-BACK DRIVEWAY

Ike steps out of his Nissan. He grabs his briefcase and turns towards the house, gasping as he spots Nata waiting in the driveway.

IKE

Fuck me.

NATA

Sorry. The kids are in there, and I couldn't wait. How'd it go?

IKE

They need to speak to Marco.

NATA

Why? What did he say?

IKE

To take any action, they'd need to speak to Marco.

NATA

When?

IKE

When? It's not happening.

NATA

Why not?

IKE

Because. We're not trying to traumatize him.

NATA
This isn't about Marco.

IKE
It isn't?

NATA
I mean, it's bigger than just him.

IKE
Nat, come on. The kid can't take a shower. He can't go upstairs alone anymore.

NATA
Exactly.

IKE
Exactly. You don't think talking to a police officer will freak him out?

NATA
He's already freaked out.

IKE
Yes, right. So let's work on that.

NATA
Let's also make sure this creep doesn't get away with this.

IKE
Get away?--I'm not--I'm not putting Marco through this.

NATA
Putting him through--? How scary is this cop?

IKE
He's not scary. He's--Marco is *not* talking to him. Understood?

Nata flinches, taken aback. Ike brushes past her. Nata grabs his arm.

NATA
"Understood"?

Ike stares at her. Nata releases her grip and puts her hands up in surrender.

NATA (CONT'D)

Wait.

IKE

Nat, I'm tired.

NATA

I'm telling the neighbors. The ones with little kids.

IKE

Fine. Tell the neighbors.

INT. WILLIAMS HOUSEHOLD-KIDS' BATHROOM

Nata goes to empty the wastebasket. She almost gags at the smell. Nata carefully sifts through, and then shutters in disgust. She pulls out some wadded toilet papers, tosses them in the toilet and flushes.

CUT TO:

INT. MARCO'S BEDROOM

Marco works methodically on a lego set. Nata knocks on his open door as she walks in.

NATA

Bud?

MARCO

Yeah?

NATA

Can you look at me for a minute?

Marco looks up at her for a moment, then back at his legos. Nata puts a hand over his.

NATA (CONT'D)

Marco? ...I found some toilet paper in the trash can. Some used toilet paper.

MARCO

That wasn't me.

NATA

Buddy, I talked to Jesse and Sam and they also said it wasn't them. It's okay if it was you.

Marco bites his lip, then tears up.

NATA (CONT'D)
Why didn't you throw it in the
toilet like you usually do?

MARCO
I just forgot. It was an accident
maybe.

NATA
You're not in trouble.

Marco starts to quietly cry. Nata cradles him.

NATA (CONT'D)
You're not in trouble, buddy. You
usually always throw your toilet
paper in the toilet, so I was just
curious why you didn't this time.

MARCO
I did one time. The flush is scary
sometimes.

NATA
Yeah? It didn't used to scare you.
It used to make you laugh,
remember?

MARCO
It's scary, mommy. It's loud.

He cries harder.

NATA
That's okay. It's really important
you throw it in the toilet though
okay?

MARCO
I'm scared, mom.

NATA
Peter's not going to babysit
anymore.

MARCO
I didn't like when he and daddy
babysat.

NATA
Peter and daddy?

MARCO

Uh huh.

Nata holds him as he cries quietly.

INT. POLICE STATION

Nata sits in a waiting area, Marco beside her, working on a book of mazes. A female officer approaches.

OFFICER

Mrs. Williams?

NATA

Yes.

OFFICER

(extending her hand)

Nice to meet you.

NATA

Sorry, I was hoping to meet with an Officer Morse.

OFFICER

Yes, I'm Officer Morse.

NATA

But my husband said--

Nata freezes.

OFFICER

Everything okay?

Nata nods, as her face reads confusion turning to realization about Ike's lie.

INT. WILLIAMS HOUSEHOLD-MORNING

Ike stands at the bottom of the stairs, on the second to last step. Marco is half way up the stairs, looking down at him. Sounds behind them of the family in the kitchen.

MARCO

Come up!

IKE

I'll come up one more step. You go up three.

Marco steps up one. Ike steps up one. Marco steps up another, then looks back.

MARCO
Come up. I'm saying please.

IKE
Three.

Marco tentatively takes one more stair. He looks back.

IKE (CONT'D)
You're there! Go on.

MARCO
Daaad!

IKE
I'm not going up with you, Marco.
Batman goes upstairs alone.

MARCO
I'm not Batman!

IKE
Okay, okay.

Nata pokes her head out of the kitchen, Ike waves her off.

IKE (CONT'D)
I'm going to tell you a story, so
you can hear my voice the whole
time you're upstairs.

MARCO
Come. Up.

Marco takes two steps down toward Ike.

NATA
Do not go up there.

IKE
Marco, stop. You can be brave.

Jesse comes out of the kitchen.

JESSE
I can get his backpack.

IKE
No.

JESSE
I need to get my stuff.

IKE
No. Wait.

MARCO
Dad! Come up!

IKE
Marco, look at my eyes.

Marco starts to cry.

MARCO
Come up!

IKE
Marco--

NATA
Bud, listen.

IKE
I got this.

JESSE
Dad, I'm gonna be late.

IKE
Just wait.

Marco sits down on the steps and begins to tantrum.

IKE (CONT'D)
Marco, Marco--

Nata stretches her head back in frustration. Ike takes a deep breath. He walks up one more step and reaches his hand out to touch Marco's knee. Marco shudders and clutches his knees towards his chest. Nata notices and eyes Ike.

NATA
Forget it. Jess (she nods towards
the stairs).

Jesse walks up the stairs. He pats Marco on the head as he walks by. Ike throws his hands in the air and walks away, past Nata--

IKE
(to Nata)
Now what?

INT. DR. LAPINE'S OFFICE

Dr. Lapine sits in a leather arm chair, Ike and Nata across the area rug on an overstuffed sofa. Dr. Lapine references her notes.

DR. LAPINE

The night terrors, the showers,
going upstairs. What else?

IKE

The bathroom.

NATA

Oh, right. He won't flush. He wipes
and then puts it in the trash can.

DR. LAPINE

Does he say why?

NATA

He's scared of the sound. I think.
He's scared of the flush. I assume
it's the sound.

DR. LAPINE

Are there other sounds he's afraid
of?

Nata looks to Ike to see if he knows of any.

IKE

You didn't tell me about the
flushing.

NATA

I didn't? I thought I did.

IKE

No.

DR. LAPINE

When did that start?

NATA

I only noticed the other day.

IKE

Why didn't you say something?

NATA

I thought I did.

DR. LAPINE
Ike, what did you mean?

IKE
Huh?

DR. LAPINE
You had also said the bathroom was
an issue.

IKE
If I go to the bathroom he wants to
come in.

Nata looks at him in confusion.

IKE (CONT'D)
You knew that.

NATA
No.

IKE
You just said before, he can't be
alone.

NATA
Yes, but the bathroom is different.
I didn't know that.

DR. LAPINE
So does he go in with you?

IKE
No.

Nata looks at him, eyebrows raised.

IKE (CONT'D)
No. He stands outside, and I leave
the door open.

NATA
So he's watching you go?

Ike looks at Dr. Lapine for support.

DR. LAPINE
I sense this is a point of
contention.

NATA
It can't be, he didn't tell me.

IKE

I showered with him once before,
and she gave me hell for it.

NATA

I thought it was weird. I don't
think a grown man should have his
dick out in front of his son--

IKE

Nat.

NATA

Excuse me, Doctor.

DR. LAPINE

Leah, please.

NATA

I thought it was weird, that's all.

DR. LAPINE

Look, it is going to be important
that you work together on this,
because consistency will be key.

IKE

Fine, what do you suggest, Nat?

Nata looks towards Dr. Lapine.

DR. LAPINE

How would Marco react if, let's
say, you talk to him through the
closed door while going to the
bathroom?

IKE

We've done that.

NATA

When?

IKE

With the stairs. And with the
shower.

NATA

We tried it once or twice.

IKE

I've tried it a lot.

NATA

Yes, but you don't stick with it.
We're not consistent.

DR. LAPINE

Okay, just take a second. It's not uncommon for a challenge such as this one to cause tension between partners.

NATA

It's not?

DR. LAPINE

It's quite normal, in fact. This is very hard, and what this says to me is that you're not taking your feelings out on Marco. And that's good.

IKE

It's not getting us anywhere.

DR. LAPINE

Ike, can you look at me?

Nata hits his side.

NATA

Ike.

DR. LAPINE

Ike, this is a long process.

IKE

What do you suggest?

DR. LAPINE

I think the three of us work together, and we develop a menu of strategies. What works one day may not work the next. And the more tools you have in your arsenal, the more likely you are to feel in control of a situation, like Marco refusing to go upstairs, and move through it with success.

Ike tries to interrupt--

DR. LAPINE (CONT'D)

--Over time. That's part one. Part two is I think we need to add a another weekly session for Marco.

IKE
Twice a week?

DR. LAPINE
Ike, I need you to hear this. Marco learned at a very, very young age a difficult truth.

Ike and Nata wait.

DR. LAPINE (CONT'D)
His parents cannot protect him from the world.

NATA
How do we teach him that we can protect him?

IKE
We can't. We didn't.

Dr. Lapine nods.

DR. LAPINE
Our goal is coping. Not unlearning.

FADE TO:

EXT. DR. LAPINE'S OFFICE

Nata and Ike walk through the parking lot. Ike presses the button on his key to unlock the car. He pulls a cigarette out of his jacket pocket.

NATA
Really?

Ike shrugs.

Nata shuffles through her purse, then notices Ike is walking an unnecessarily long distance into the grassy area ahead of the car. He stops, his back to the car, and lights his cigarette. Nata watches for a moment, then reaches into her purse and pulls out her phone. She dials.

NATA (CONT'D)
Hi, Jess. Just wanted to let you know we'll be home in about 15 to 20.

She pauses as she looks on at Ike. A look of confusion comes over her face.

NATA (CONT'D)

--what? Sorry, I got--Yeah, that's fine. They can watch whatever. I'll see you soon.

Nata hangs up the phone and leans forward. She sees Ike's shoulders moving up and down. Then more severely, as Ike weeps. Ike screams, and she lurches back, startled. He scoops up a handful of dirt and gravel and hurls it, it sprays out in front of him. He claps the dirt off his hands, turns and walks back towards the car, head down, wiping at his face.

IKE

I shouldn't have let him in our house.

NATA

Maybe not.

Ike looks up, hurt. They duck into the car.

INT. NATA'S CAR-NEXT WEEK

Marco steps in and hands Nata his backpack, which she places on the passenger side. Marco kneels on the booster seat, facing backward and looking out the window.

NATA

Buckle, and then I'll give you snack.

Marco turns around and straps himself in.

MARCO

How come Sam isn't coming?

NATA

Nikki's mom is picking Sam up today.

MARCO

How come?

Nata passes Marco a snack pack. Marco digs in.

MARCO (CONT'D)

How come, mom?

NATA

We are going to see Dr. Lapine today.

MARCO

No. That was yesterday.

NATA

That was Monday. And again today.

MARCO

I want to go to Nikki's.

NATA

Sam isn't going to Nikki's. Her mom is just dropping her off at home.

MARCO

Why?

NATA

What did I say?

MARCO

Why do I have to go again?

NATA

Dr. Lapine thought it might be a good idea to see her two times this week.

A beat.

MARCO

Why? Was I bad?

NATA

No.

She reaches her hand back.

NATA (CONT'D)

No, bud, you weren't bad. Do you not like Dr. Lapine?

MARCO

She's nice. She's so far away.

NATA

How about you get to watch a show in the car when we go to Dr. Lapine's? Would that make it better?

MARCO

I don't know. Mom, do I have to go again because of Peter?

NATA
What do you mean?

MARCO
Dr. Lapine said Peter was bad.

NATA
Okay...

MARCO
I like Peter.

NATA
I know, bud. But Peter did
something babysitters shouldn't do.

MARCO
With daddy and me? Will Peter get
in trouble.

NATA
What do you mean with daddy?

MARCO
In your room. Will he?

NATA
What happened in my room?

MARCO
Will Peter get in trouble?

NATA
No. I don't know. Who was in my
room with you, Marco?

MARCO
He might get in trouble?

NATA
No. He won't. Marco, who was in the
room? That night with Peter?

MARCO
But you said you don't know. I
don't want Peter to get in trouble.

NATA
He won't. He won't get in trouble.
Marco--

MARCO

But Dr. Lapine said Peter was bad.
Why won't he get in trouble? I
always get in trouble when I'm bad.

Nata pulls the car over. She turns around in her seat.

NATA

Marco, this is an important
question. That night, that night
Peter touched you, who was there?

Marco looks back, blankly.

NATA (CONT'D)

You said "daddy and me."

MARCO

Uh huh.

NATA

Was daddy there?

MARCO

Daddy was home.

NATA

Where?

MARCO

I don't know.

NATA

Try to remember, bud.

Marco looks out the window. Nata waits.

MARCO

How come Peter won't be in trouble?

Nata turns back forward.

NATA

He will be. I made a mistake
before. I was distracted.

She pulls back onto the road.

INT. DR. LAPINE'S WAITING ROOM

Nata busies herself on her phone. The office door opens, and we see blocks and dolls strewn about the floor. Marco walks out.

NATA
Hey. Help clean up, bud.

Marco ignores the request and climbs into the waiting room chair, excited for his ritual of playing with the buttons that cause the chair to recline.

NATA (CONT'D)
Marco.

DR. LAPINE
We actually made a deal today, so he's off the hook.

NATA
No. You sure?

DR. LAPINE
Absolutely. He worked hard today.

NATA
Let me at least help out.

DR. LAPINE
It's not necessary, but thank you.

NATA
I insist.

Dr. Lapine welcomes her in. With one eye on Marco in the waiting room, they begin to tidy the office.

NATA (CONT'D)
I actually had a quick question.

DR. LAPINE
Please.

NATA
The book you lent us, it talks about patterns. Of abuse. What does that- how does that play out?

DR. LAPINE
Not exactly a quick question.

NATA
I mean the cycle. What's--how does someone--how common is it for this to repeat? Or be passed down, I mean?

DR. LAPINE
You're asking if Marco would do
this to someone else?

NATA
It's not that. Not just that.

DR. LAPINE
I'm not used to you shying away
from a question.

NATA
What about Peter? Do you think
someone did this to him?

DR. LAPINE
Oh, I don't have any idea about
that. Maybe. Not necessarily.

NATA
But probably?

DR. LAPINE
I can't say that.

NATA
Okay.

DR. LAPINE
Yeah?

NATA
Does Marco ever talk about that
night?

DR. LAPINE
Yes, all the time.

NATA
Really?

DR. LAPINE
In his way.

Nata stares back, a look of confusion.

DR. LAPINE (CONT'D)
It's not a linear, coherent
account, but fortunately he's a
story teller so he knows how to
express himself. He'll talk through
these-

She picks up the dolls.

DR. LAPINE (CONT'D)
He'll draw. I've shown you.

NATA
Does he say exactly what happened?

DR. LAPINE
He says enough.

A beat.

DR. LAPINE (CONT'D)
Everything okay?

NATA
Yes. Fine.

DR. LAPINE
You want to use the dolls?

Nata laughs. They both stand, and Nata heads for the door.
She pauses.

NATA
Does he mention Ike?

DR. LAPINE
Sure.

NATA
He does?

DR. LAPINE
He talks about both of you. Jesse,
Sam.

NATA
No, that's not--
Does he talk about Ike being there?

DR. LAPINE
Being where?

NATA
There. That night. Involved.

DR. LAPINE
No. Why do you say that?

NATA
He said something to me once.
Marco. I don't know. He says so
many things. Never consistent.

DR. LAPINE
Is that what you believe or what
you want to believe?

Nata takes a deep breath.

DR. LAPINE (CONT'D)
Nata, I'm a mandated reporter. If
there's something you suspect-

NATA
No. No, he's safe.

DR. LAPINE
You're putting me in a difficult
position here.

NATA
He's safe.

Dr. Lapine looks at her intently.

DR. LAPINE
I'll see you and Marco Monday. I
need some assurance by then or I'll
have to ask more questions.

INT. WILLIAMS BEDROOM-MIDDLE OF THE NIGHT

Nata lies asleep as Ike carefully sits up and out of bed.
While untying the drawstring of his pajamas, he makes his way
out of the room. Silence.

MARCO (O.S.)
Mom!

Nata stirs but stays asleep.

MARCO (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Mom!

She does not wake at first. Then she blinks her eyes as she
starts to come to.

MARCO (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Mom!

Nata sits up. She looks over and sees that Ike is gone. Nata
lurches from the bed.

CUT TO:

INT. MARCO'S BEDROOM

Nata bursts through the door. She finds Marco awake, sweating, Samantha has her arm around him. Marco wipes his tears. Samantha looks up at Nata and holds her index finger to her lips.

NATA
(whispering)
What happened?

Marco starts to cry. Nata sits models deep breathing for him. Samantha joins her. Marco slowly calms down.

NATA (CONT'D)
Was it a bear?

Marco is still tearful.

NATA (CONT'D)
Shhh. Shhh.

MARCO
There was a man. The man in the
hat.

NATA
Where?

Marco points. Samantha turns on a lamp and shows him his room is clear. Nata continues to rock him as his breathing slows.

Ike appears in the doorway, retying his pants. She waves him away.

INT. WILLIAMS BEDROOM-MINUTES LATER

Nata reenters and crawls into bed. Ike is sitting up, reading.

NATA
Where were you?

IKE
In the bathroom.

NATA
Took you long enough.

IKE
I had my fuckin' pants around my
ankles. What did you want me to do?

NATA
Nothing. Sorry. I'm just tired.

IKE
Yeah? So am I.

NATA
Ike, I need to ask you something.

IKE
Okay?

NATA
Were you--

She bites her lip.

NATA (CONT'D)
Why were you in the kids' bathroom?

IKE
I didn't want to wake you.

NATA
You always use ours.

IKE
Well...I've had the shits all
night. That better?

NATA
Hmm.

IKE
You need some sleep.

She nods, then shuts the light and rolls over.

INT. WILLIAMS BATHROOM-NEXT EVENING

Marco sits in the bathtub, toys floating around him. Ike uses the toilet as a chair and works on his iPad. He puts it down and walks to the tub.

IKE
Hey, bud, let's try something. I'm
going to turn the shower on, but
you can stay sitting in the tub.

MARCO
No, thank you.

IKE

It will be just like when we pour
the watering can over your head.

Marco thinks.

MARCO

That's clever thinking.

Ike winks at him. He runs the faucet a moment, feels the water temperature, and then switches on the shower. Marco scoots himself all the way back, so the water doesn't reach him. He watches the water fall.

IKE

What do you think?

Ike reaches his hand in. Marco does the same. Ike reaches to close the curtain.

MARCO

No!

IKE

The floor is getting a little wet
though, bud. But I'll sit right
here. Right outside.

MARCO

No! Turn it off!

IKE

Okay, okay. I'll leave the curtain
open.

Ike sticks his head into the shower stream, he pulls it out, shakes off, and makes a silly face. Marco cracks a smile then returns to his toys.

MARCO

Daddy? Mommy said that Peter won't
get in trouble.

IKE

Okay?

MARCO

But I told on him.

IKE

We don't want Peter to get in
trouble. But we want him to learn
that what he did wasn't okay.

(MORE)

IKE (CONT'D)

It wasn't nice. Mommy and daddy are trying.

MARCO

But what about the police. I thought when you tell on someone to the police, they get in trouble. No matter what.

A look of confusion comes over Ike's face.

INT. IKE AND NATA'S BEDROOM-SAME EVENING

IKE

We decided we wouldn't talk to the police.

NATA

I should have told you.

IKE

Why didn't you? Why'd you do it?

NATA

Ike.

IKE

What?

NATA

You lied to me.

IKE

What?

NATA

You said you called the police.

IKE

I...

NATA

You didn't. Officer Morse is a woman.

A beat.

NATA (CONT'D)

Why didn't you call?

A beat.

NATA (CONT'D)

Ike?

IKE

I don't know.

NATA

Ike.

IKE

I don't know! I couldn't. That's all I've got. I just--I couldn't. I don't know why. I don't know.

NATA

Okay.

He looks down. She reaches across the bed.

NATA (CONT'D)

It's okay. We're a team. Just talk to me. Tell me things.

IKE

Okay.

NATA

Tell me everything.

Ike pulls back from her embrace.

NATA (CONT'D)

Where were you that night?

IKE

Where was I?

NATA

Marco said that you were here.

IKE

I was here.

NATA

What?

IKE

I was in the office on a call. I'm sure I told you.

NATA

I would have remembered that.

IKE
So I was here?

NATA
You didn't tell me.

IKE
Fine. You didn't tell me you took
him to the police station.

NATA
Where were you? When Peter touched
him?

IKE
I told you. If you don't think I
already feel guilty enough--

NATA
I'm not guilting you.

IKE
Then what are you doing?

NATA
Our son seems to think you were
here.

IKE
Our son also thought his teacher
pulled a pistol out of her bag.

NATA
That's different.

IKE
How?

NATA
Because when has his teacher ever
done that? When has any teacher?

IKE
What are you implying?

NATA
I'm not--

IKE
I did not touch our son.

NATA
Why would you say that?

IKE
Oh, please.

NATA
All I'm saying--

IKE
What are you saying?

NATA
All I'm saying is that--

IKE
What?

NATA
You know about the cycle more than
anyone--

IKE
Exactly! And I know more than
anyone how this can nearly destroy
a life.

NATA
I have to ask you one question.

IKE
Nata.

NATA
You've made mistakes before.

IKE
Different ones. Very different.

NATA
Ike, he's my son. I have to ask.

IKE
I was sober. I was completely sober
that night. I'm eight fucking years
sober!

NATA
You're six months sober.

IKE
That was one slip. One week.

NATA
That was a scary week.

IKE

Come on.

NATA

It scares me Ike that I can't even tell when you're drunk. We'd have seemingly coherent conversations, and then I come to discover you have no recollection of them. It took a fall down the stairs and a sprained ankle for me to notice.

IKE

I know I fucked up. I know it's six months. But I have to tell myself eight years. I have to.

NATA

We don't need to go back to that.

IKE

Thank you.

A beat.

NATA

That wasn't my question though.

IKE

Stop it.

NATA

Listen. I'll only ask once.

He takes her by the shoulders.

IKE

Stop it! What are you doing?

NATA

I'm--

IKE

What!

NATA

I'm trying to protect our son.

IKE

From me? From me? From me?

They lock eyes.

IKE (CONT'D)

Listen to me close. I love our children very, very much. They all need us right now. Both of us. Together. And you're treading on some dangerous ground here. Do you trust me?

A beat too long.

IKE (CONT'D)

Got it.

He grabs a pillow. Nata reaches for him, but he blows past her and out the room.

INT. WILLIAMS LIVING ROOM-NEXT MORNING

Ike ties his sneakers. Nata comes down the stairs and sits down across from him.

NATA

Where are you going?

IKE

To talk to the police.

NATA

Really?

IKE

Yes, really. Maybe put those away before the kids see.

He gestures to the blanket and pillow set up on the couch from last night. Nata nods.

NATA

Thank you.

IKE

I'm doing this for me. I've got nothing to hide, you follow?

Ike walks out the front door.

EXT. WILLIAMS FRONT PORCH-AN HOUR LATER

Nata sits on the front step, sipping coffee. Ike pulls up in the minivan. He approaches, red faced, a light sweat on his face. He stands on the yard in front of her.

IKE
I drove there.

NATA
Okay.

IKE
I...I didn't get out. I dunno, Nat.
Just seemed like too much. Like it
makes it all permanent. And real.

She nods.

NATA
Come inside.

IKE
Are the kids up?

NATA
Not yet. Just come in.

Nata reaches her hand out.

IKE
I think we should tell the
neighbors.

NATA
Okay. Not today. Just come in,
we'll sort it out.

Ike walks past her hand and into the house.

INT. WILLIAMS LIVING ROOM-MORNING

Ike folds the blanket and pillow on the couch. He makes to
sneak it back upstairs but runs into Jesse.

IKE
What are you doing up?

JESSE
It's nine.

Jesse eyes the bedding.

IKE
I couldn't sleep. Didn't want to
wake mom.

Jesse nods. Ike brushes past and continues up the stairs.

INT. WILLIAMS BEDROOM—MOMENTS LATER

Nata is dressed. Ike enters and drops the bedding in a corner of the room.

NATA
You ready?

IKE
Yeah. Just need a minute.

NATA
I'll meet you down.

EXT. WILLIAMS STREET—A FEW MINUTES LATER

Nata and Ike approach a neighbor's white door and ring the bell. She puts her arm on his shoulder, Ike slips out of it.

Ned Bergman, 40s, answers the door and greets Ike and Nata with friendly surprise.

NED
Morning. To what do I owe the pleasure?

NATA
Can we chat for a minute?

NED
Uh oh.

FADE TO:

EXT. WILLIAMS STREET

Ike and Nata stand on the porch of their across the street neighbors. They chat with Jen Riley.

NATA
We just felt you should know. We're talking to everyone.

Jen has tears in her eyes.

JEN
Okay. Thank you?

IKE
Look, Jen, we're not trying to stir stuff up.

(MORE)

IKE (CONT'D)

We felt like everyone needed to know. And to not have him babysit, of course.

JEN

Right...
Ike. I already told you all of this.

IKE

Sorry?

JEN

Ike, please.

Ike shakes his head to show his confusion.

JEN (CONT'D)

Peter did the same thing to Teddy. I told you this.

She wipes tears from her eyes.

Nata turns directly to Ike.

IKE

What?

JEN

I made this same house call. Maybe, what 5 or 6 months ago...when did you hurt your ankle? I remember you were on crutches.

Ike turns white. Nata registers his horror.

IKE

(to himself)

I didn't remember. (to Nata) I didn't remember.

Ike walks off the porch and down the front path.

INT. WILLIAMS KITCHEN-LATE EVENING

The house is quiet. Nata tidies the kitchen. Her phone rings. She looks down, breathes a sigh of relief and then picks up.

NATA

Where are you?

CUT TO:

INT. MCSORLEY'S PUB-CONTINUOUS

Ike sits at the bar on the phone.

IKE
I'm at McSorley's.

INT. WILLIAMS HOUSEHOLD-CONTINUOUS

Nata's face drops.

NATA
Did you drink?

IKE (O.S.)
I really want to.

NATA
I'm coming to get you. Ike? Ike?

IKE (O.S.)
How are the kids?

NATA
Just stay there.

IKE (O.S.)
What's wrong?

NATA
Nothing. The kids are fine. They
don't know anything.

IKE (O.S.)
Okay.

NATA
Ike. I believe you.

IKE (O.S.)
I'm going to stay at the office
tonight. I'm sorry.

NATA
No, Ike. Ike?

She looks at her phone and sees that he is gone.

EXT. PARK-ONE MONTH LATER

Ike sits on a bench, watching Marco and Sam play. Jesse sneaks up behind and playfully startles Ike.

Nata is a few steps behind. She leans on the bench to stretch out her quads.

IKE
How was your run?

NATA
Great. This one's getting too fast for me.

JESSE
Getting?

Jesse runs off to push Sam on the swings. Nata sits down on the bench.

NATA
How's the apartment hunt going?

IKE
Nothing yet. All 2 year commitments.

NATA
Mmm.

IKE
Unless that seems right to you?

NATA
I was thinking. I didn't tell you this, but I hit Marco.

Ike snaps to look at her.

NATA (CONT'D)
You won't use this against me, right?

Ike smiles.

NATA (CONT'D)
Maybe two months ago. Three? We were late. He wouldn't get in the bath. Again. I didn't hit him exactly. Just sort of yanked him I think. I don't even know. But he started to cry.

IKE
Don't beat yourself up.

NATA

No, that's not it. I mean of course I cried too. I'm just saying that-- I haven't so much as hugged our children too hard in 12 years. I haven't wanted to. I'm just saying-- I lost myself, in all of this. Did some things. Said some things. To you. Thought some things. I just was thinking about that, that's all.

She smiles at him. He half smiles back and puts his hand on hers.

IKE

Look at him.

A concerned look comes across Nata's face.

Marco slows his swinging on the tire swing. His gaze fixed. He tumbles off the tire swing, picks himself and runs across the park to a woman and her dog.

Nata and Ike watch as Marco asks permission, hugs the dog and runs around with utter glee.

Jesse returns to the bench.

JESSE

Ready?

IKE

Ready.

JESSE

He's different around dogs, you know?

They all watch Marco a moment longer. Ike puts his arm around Jesse and they walk off.

INT. WILLIAMS HOUSEHOLD--MORNING, WEEKS LATER

A knock at the front door. Nata opens it, and Ike walks in. He kisses her on the cheek, she briefly rubs his back before pulling back. She notices his small duffel.

NATA

Gym?

IKE

Right.

He flexes, then pats his stomach.

IKE (CONT'D)
Just swapping out some clothes.

NATA
Gotcha. As long as you need to.

IKE
I know.

He touches her back.

NATA
Come check this out.

She leads him up the stairs. They stand outside the bathroom, the sound of the shower audible through the door.

IKE
Yeah?

NATA
Second time now.

Jesse walks out of his bedroom into the hall and spots them listening. A bark is heard through the door. Ike gestures towards the door.

IKE
That's all you, bud.

JESSE
It was just an idea.

Nata pulls Jesse in for a kiss. The shower turns off.

MARCO (O.C.)
(singing)
Inch by inch, row by row.

Nata swats at Jesse and Ike, prompting them to scatter. They end up clustered at the top of the stairs, when the bathroom door opens. Out shoots a black mutt, frantic, friendly and kind. Marco follows in his underwear, pulling playfully at her tail.

IKE
Good shower, Elton?

Samantha runs out of her room and jumps into Ike's arms.

SAMANTHA
Daddy!

IKE

What do you think about your new dog?

She whispers in his ear.

SAMANTHA

He's Marco's doggy.

Ike kisses her cheek. The family plants themselves on the floor as Elton licks faces, wags her tail, and wriggles her way through each of them.

EXT. SUMMER SATURDAY MORNING—WILLIAMS DRIVEWAY

Ike pulls the minivan into the driveway. Jesse, Sam, Marco and Elton (now a bigger puppy) spill out. Nata meets them on the porch, exchanging kisses and hugs. As the kids walk inside, Nata meets Ike at the car window.

NATA

Thanks for being flexible with the time. We're checking out the Devil's Den hike. It's farther than I thought.

IKE

Of course.

NATA

How'd he do?

IKE

He did good. He was up for maybe half hour.

NATA

The bear again?

IKE

Yeah. New bed, maybe.

NATA

Maybe. He still wakes up most nights here though. He showered again.

IKE

Gettin' there.

NATA

Getting somewhere. How about you?

IKE
I'm okay. I hate not being here
with all of you.

She reaches through the window to put her hand on his cheek.
He closes his eyes for a moment. Then opens and takes his
hand in hers.

IKE (CONT'D)
What would you think about me
coming--

NATA
Ike-

IKE
Just a trial even. Three nights a
week.

NATA
I--

IKE
Two then.

No response. He hands her hand back to her.

Nata walks back towards the house as Ike begins to roll up
the window. Just before it fully closes, Nata turns back.

NATA
Feel like a hike today?

IKE
Just a hike?

NATA
That's the offer. Take it or leave
it.

They look at each other through the mostly shut car window.

INT. DR. LAPINE'S OFFICE

DR. LAPINE
That's wonderful. Wonderful
progress.

NATA
Do you see it too?

DR. LAPINE
I see it too.

IKE
What about the night terrors?

DR. LAPINE
It's a process.

IKE
And the stairs.

DR. LAPINE
I thought he was going upstairs on his own now. Or with...Elton?

NATA
He is.

IKE
I guess you're right. But he runs. He scurries, ya know, from room to room.

NATA
Sometimes, yes. I see that too. If we're not close by, he does dart if he has to get from one place to another.

IKE
When will that stop?

DR. LAPINE
I wish I had an answer. It takes time.

IKE
How much though?

DR. LAPINE
Ike, it's-

IKE
A process, I know. (laughing)
Ballpark?

DR. LAPINE
Listen, I'm thrilled with Marco's progress. And so pleased with your ability to co-parent. I'm not sure I did a very good job though explaining what I meant when I said this is a process.

We continue to hear Dr. Lapine as the following scenes unfold:

DR. LAPINE (V.O.)

Marco will continue to make strides. With the support you've given him and the supports you've put in place, he'll most certainly go on to lead a marvelous life.

INT. POLICE STATION

Nata, Ike, their neighbor Jen, and two additional neighbors sit in Officer Morse's office, sharing their accounts of Peter's abuse.

Nata places her hand on Ike's shoulder. He pulls away.

INT. WILLIAMS CAR

Nata sits in the driveway at the back of the house. In her rear view mirror, she watches Peter and his parents finish packing up his car for college. His mother hands him a small gift bag. Peter pulls out a LOYOLA baseball hat. He hugs his mom as his dad places it backwards on Peter's head.

FADE TO:

EXT. SUMMER SATURDAY-HIKING TRAIL

We continue to hear Dr. Lapine as we see the scene unfold.

DR. LAPINE (V.O.)

And also...this is something Marco will carry. As he grows up and begins to understand it in new and different ways, he'll respond in different ways. Deeper understanding will help settle him. And it may bring up other demons. It's not uncommon for this to resurface in adolescence as anxiety or depression. He was robbed of peace of mind. I don't say this to hurt you, but you must manage expectations. Keep an eye on him. He may, to an almost full extent, overcome this. But it doesn't go away. There's not a cure. For now though, trust in the progress he has made. Because it seems that you have your son back.

One by one, we see the family members, walking the trail, a steady incline ahead. First is Samantha, with Jesse by her side. Marco shortly behind, a stick in one hand, Elton, larger, tugging on the other end. Nata a few paces behind, surveying. They walk with purpose and energy. A glare from the sun shifts and we see Ike round the corner behind them.

Marco drops the stick and runs ahead splashing through a puddle. Elton follows.

NATA

That's far enough! Marco!

Marco waves, as he and Elton continue to run ahead.

THE END