

FADE IN:

INT. ALY'S AND MARKIE'S BEDROOM - MORNING

Fourteen-year-old ALYDA "ALY" BARRETT and her ten-year-old brother, MARKIE, are in the tiny bedroom they share in a shabby tenement apartment in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, putting books in their backpacks as they get ready to leave for school. An old CD player on a scuffed bureau by the door is softly playing Sarah Mclachlan's song *Angel*, Aly SINGING along in her extraordinarily beautiful voice.

ALY  
(singing)  
In the arms of an angel, fly away  
from here...

The DOOR BURSTS OPEN scaring the children, Aly breaking off singing. T.J. MORSI, the middle-age loser boyfriend of their mother, angrily yells at Aly:

T.J.  
Shut up that crap singing! I'm trying  
to watch T.V. out here.

MARKIE  
I think she sounds nice.

T.J. takes a step towards Markie.

T.J.  
You wanna talk back to me?

Aly gets between him and her little brother.

ALY  
Leave him alone.

T.J.  
Get outta my way.

T.J. tries to move her aside by grabbing her upper arm, but she defiantly holds her ground to keep him from getting past, his grip on her so hard his fingers will leave bruises.

He lets go of her and they face off a second, Aly with her mouth set in a hard line, her eyes blazing.

T.J. (CONT'D)  
Then you get it.

He slaps her hard across the face, her head snapping, but she doesn't budge or change expression and looks right back at him.

ALY

No!

Markie runs up behind his sister.

MARKIE

You don't hurt my sister!

T.J.

(to Markie)

I'll give you your's.

ALY

You won't.

He rears back to slap her again, Aly raising her arm to protect herself, when the children's rumped, helpless mother, KAREN, rushes in and grabs his arm.

KAREN

T.J., don't!

T.J. turns on her.

T.J.

Get off me.

KAREN

They'll be good. It's nothing.

Karen shuts off the CD player.

KAREN (CONT'D)

(to T.J.)

See, it's fine. All over.

T.J. glares at them all then stomps back out. Karen closes the door.

KAREN (CONT'D)

(softly, afraid T.J.  
will hear)

He's just upset about not having a  
job. He didn't mean anything by it.

ALY

He doesn't mean anything.

Karen tries to examine Aly's bruised face.

KAREN

Let me look.

Aly pulls away, going back to getting her things ready for school. Karen hovers a moment at a loss.

KAREN (CONT'D)  
 (to herself, not very  
 convincingly)  
 It will be all right.

Karen slinks back out, carefully closing the door. Aly stops packing and gently touches her cheekbone.

MARKIE  
 Are you okay?

ALY  
 Get your books packed.

MARKIE  
 (beat)  
 Thank you, Aly.

ALY  
 Hurry up, we'll be late.

Markie gets his things ready as Aly stares at the depressing view, outside the window and in her mind.

INT. APARTMENT LIVING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

The apartment is so small that both bedroom doors open right onto it, the entire tiny kitchen visible with its small table and four cheap wooden chairs. T.J. is sitting in his old armchair sullenly watching some inane T.V. show, already drinking beer, Karen in the miniscule kitchen.

Aly and Markie come out with their backpacks on, Aly keeping Markie close to her as they head for the door to the hallway.

KAREN  
 You have a nice day at school.

T.J.  
 (muttering)  
 Try to not come back.

Neither of the children say anything as they go out.

EXT. STREET OUTSIDE APARTMENT BUILDING - MOMENTS LATER

Aly and Markie come out the weathered doorway and head up the street in the poor area, a mix of old apartment buildings and marginal commercial attempts. Aly moves Markie to the inside of the sidewalk away from the street to keep him safe, and they turn the corner.

INT. CONVENIENCE STORE - MOMENTS LATER

Aly and Markie come into a self-built convenience store. The owner, MR. RODRIQUEZ, behind the counter smiles at them.

MR. RODRIQUEZ  
Hello Aly, hello Markie.

ALY  
Hello, Mr. Rodriguez.

MARKIE  
Hi.

She and Markie go to the cold cabinet holding small boxed meals.

ALY  
Pick the one you want.

Markie looks at the choices and opens the door and chooses one.

Aly takes it and goes to the counter, counting out change from a small change purse onto the counter to pay for it. She has a few pennies left. Mr. Rodriguez hands the lunch to Markie.

MARKIE  
I love this.

ALY  
Thank you, Mr. Rodriguez.

MR. RODRIQUEZ  
(to Aly)  
What are you getting for lunch?

Aly smiles sadly.

ALY  
I'm not hungry.

MR. RODRIQUEZ  
Go and get yourself something,  
whatever you like. And get drinks  
for both of you -- but not soda.  
Get chocolate milks.

ALY  
I don't have any more money.

MR. RODRIQUEZ  
Get deserts, too. But something  
healthy. Apples sound good.

Aly hesitates, looking at Mr. Rodriquez.

MR. RODRIQUEZ (CONT'D)  
Hurry or you'll miss Markie's bus.  
You get the chocolate milks, Markie.

Markie happily skips to get the milks as Aly looks away then goes to get her lunch, Mr. Rodriquez smiling after them as he collects Aly's change off the counter.

They come back and Aly puts the things on the counter so he can see what they've gotten, a box lunch for her, apples and the chocolate milks for both of them.

ALY  
I'll pay you when I have money.

He takes her hand and puts her change in it, folding her fingers over it.

MR. RODRIQUEZ  
Don't ever worry about that, Aly.

She doesn't quite know what to do or say.

MR. RODRIQUEZ (CONT'D)  
Whenever either of you need anything,  
you just come here. You don't need  
money.

MARKIE  
(innocently pleased)  
Thanks, Mr. Rodriquez.

Aly's unable to speak for a moment, putting the coins back into her change purse and the food into their backpacks.

As they head out, she gets back her composure.

ALY  
Thank you for everything, Mr.  
Rodriquez.

MR. RODRIQUEZ  
You're welcome, dear. Get good  
grades.

Aly smiles and nods, going out behind Markie.

EXT. STREET AT MARKIE'S BUS STOP - MOMENTS LATER

Aly sees Markie onto his school bus, waiting while he gets a seat by the window, Markie waving at Aly who blows him a kiss as the bus pulls away.

Aly hikes up her backpack and heads up the street.

EXT. ALY'S SCHOOL - DAY

ESTABLISHING SHOT of Aly's MIDDLE SCHOOL, old but valiantly maintained.

Aly joins the other kids heading in, walking by herself in the crowd.

INT. SCHOOL GYM - LATER

Aly in old shorts and T-shirt with shabby sneakers is playing volleyball with her classmates.

The gym teacher, MRS. ELLIOTT, blows the whistle stopping play, the class finished.

MRS. ELLIOTT

No lolly-gagging and behave yourselves  
while changing.

The kids head for the locker room. Mrs. Elliott walks next to Aly.

MRS. ELLIOTT (CONT'D)

Aly, wait a moment, I want to speak  
with you.

Aly hangs back knowing what's coming.

When they're alone, Mrs. Elliott sits on a bleacher and pats the seat next to her, Aly sitting and looking away.

MRS. ELLIOTT (CONT'D)

How are you, Aly?

ALY

Fine.

MRS. ELLIOTT

I noticed you have a bruise on your  
cheek.

Aly touches it absently.

ALY

I fell -- at home. It's nothing.  
It doesn't hurt.

MRS. ELLIOTT

How about these?

She touches the bruises on Aly's upper arm, very distinctly from adult fingers pressing far too hard on a child's arm. Aly looks at them and shrugs, saying nothing.

MRS. ELLIOTT (CONT'D)

Aly, I know you and your brother were in foster homes for a time -- when your mother couldn't care for you properly.

ALY

That was a long time ago. It's fine now.

MRS. ELLIOTT

Not if you're getting those.

ALY

My brother and I were playing and he grabbed me. It's nothing.

MRS. ELLIOTT

How old is your brother?

ALY

Ten.

MRS. ELLIOTT

Large fingers for a ten-year-old.

ALY

(beat)

I'm going to be late for class, Mrs. Elliott.

MRS. ELLIOTT

(beat)

All right. Go on now.

Aly hurries off.

Mrs. Elliott watches after her, not at all pleased and not done with the matter.

EXT. ALY'S SCHOOL - LATER

The kid's are leaving school, Aly coming out and heading off, still alone.

EXT. STREET BY TODD'S APARTMENT - LATER

Aly is passing a multi-story apartment building, a passageway at the far end leading to the rear on an alley. As Aly reaches the passageway, she hears a TRUMPET being played soulfully from the rear of the building. She stops and listens. She recognizes the song, *The Summer Knows* (all songs in the script subject to change by David Foster or someone like him).

She heads down the passageway.

EXT. ALLEY - CONTINUOUS

Aly stops at the end of the passageway, peering up at the back of the building on the alley.

P.O.V. ALY - CONTINUOUS

At a fourth floor window on a fire escape twenty-three-year-old TODD MORRISON sits playing to the wind.

BACK TO SCENE

Aly listens enchanted and, as he plays a solo near the end of the song (minute 2:18 in the version by Jackie Evancho on her CD *Songs from the Silver Screen*), she can't resist and begins to SING along at the proper place (minute 2:48).

EXT. TODD'S WINDOW - CONTINUOUS

Todd stops, startled by the wondrous voice suddenly coming up from below. He looks down.

P.O.V. TODD - CONTINUOUS

He sees Aly by the passageway, unable to make out any details as she sings with her head down, swaying to the music she's creating.

BACK TO SCENE

Moved, he joins in, playing to her singing, the two of them finishing the song. Just at the end, the crotchedy voice of an unseen OLD MAN yells:

OLD MAN (O.S.)  
I'm trying to sleep here!



There's the sound of a WINDOW SLAMMING.

TODD  
(calling to Aly)  
Hey, wait there! I'm coming down.

EXT. ALLEY - CONTINUOUS

Aly looks as he calls and gestures for her to wait.

TODD  
Wait for me! Don't move!

She sees him disappear into his apartment.

She turns and hurries back down the passageway.

EXT. STREET BY TODD'S APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

Aly runs across the street and up to the far corner, going around out of sight of Todd's building.

EXT. STREET AROUND THE CORNER FROM TODD'S BUILDING -  
CONTINUOUS

She stops and waits a moment then peeks around to look at Todd's building.

P.O.V. ALY - CONTINUOUS

Todd jogs up to the passageway, disappearing down it.

BACK TO SCENE

She pulls back and waits again before peeking out.

P.O.V. ALY - CONTINUOUS

Todd comes back out of the passageway looking around.

BACK TO SCENE

Aly ducks back afraid he saw her and hurries off down the street, glancing back to make sure he isn't coming after her -- perhaps some part of her hoping he is as she slows and looks back again.

EXT. STREET BY TODD'S APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

Todd stands looking around trying to find the young girl with the magical voice, but she's gone and he sighs in disappointment, slowly heading back towards the door to his building shaking his head then looking around again hoping he'll see her.

EXT. STREET WITH HILLSIDE - LATER

Aly, still wearing her backpack, is on a street where a littered hillside leads up into a ragged woods. She turns up the hillside, carefully making her way up into the trees.

EXT. WOODS - CONTINUOUS

As Aly goes through the woods that gradually slope upwards, she picks a bunch of varied wildflowers just a step above weeds, picking among the junk people have discarded, scraps of lumber and a large piece of carpet remnant among them.

EXT. GRAVEYARD - MOMENTS LATER

Aly comes out of the woods and through a broken fence into the back of a secluded graveyard, the wealthy neighborhood slightly above and beyond filled with stately old homes in contrast to her shabby neighborhood down below. She goes to a nearby grave with wilting wildflowers in a vase at the base of an exquisite, full-sized carved-stone child angel on a base marked 'AMELIA LOUISE ANDERS' with the dates of her birth and death, Aly's age when she died just three years earlier. Inscribed on the base is 'OUR ANGEL TO THE END OF TIME.'

Aly sets down her backpack and removes the old flowers and substitutes the new ones she's picked, going down to the fence to discard the old flowers into the woods then returning and sitting by the angel.

ALY

I hope you like these flowers, Amelia.  
There's not many to choose from back  
there, but I think these are pretty.

She rearranges them then takes the apple from her backpack.

ALY (CONT'D)

Mr. Rodriguez in the store gave me  
this apple and a whole lunch, Amelia.  
He wouldn't take any money for me or  
Markie. Some people are kind. I  
know you were kind. Look how much  
someone loved you.

She takes a bite of the apple looking up at the sky, peaceful and contented for the first time.

ALY (CONT'D)

On my way here, a boy up in a window  
was playing a song I love on the  
trumpet.

(MORE)

ALY (CONT'D)

He played beautifully, and I don't know what happened. I just started singing, louder than I've ever sung, Amelia. I don't know what got into me. I didn't know I could do that. But he seemed to like it. I liked it. I love singing.

She lies back and looking into the sky begins SINGING *Come What May*:

ALY (CONT'D)

Never knew, I could feel like this,  
like I've never seen the sky before...

As Aly sings, THE CAMERA RISES SLOWLY into the sky showing her lying next to Amelia the Angel, the air filling with Aly's extraordinary voice, the peaceful graveyard with the stately homes to one side and the ragged buildings of the old city to the other all made more beautiful by her angelic singing.

THE CAMERA slowly advances towards the city.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. HOUSE AND GARAGE - CONTINUOUS

ALY'S SINGING carries over to an ESTABLISHING SHOT of a decrepit garage behind a tumble-down house in a weary neighborhood, a jeep stopping behind a colorful old van advertising a band, MOJO.

Todd gets out of the jeep, takes a guitar case from it and heads for the garage.

INT. GARAGE - LATE AFTERNOON

Aly's SINGING CONTINUES as Todd comes in through a door, the garage filled with music equipment, sound insulation covering the walls, where his band sits waiting for him: JAKE, TELLY, and LOUIS. Aly's VOICE FADES as he closes the door behind him.

TELLY

The Maestro finally arrives.

They all begin getting their instruments ready, Louis going behind the drums, Todd taking out his electric guitar and plugging it in then sitting lost in thought.

JAKE

(to Todd)

What do you want to start with?

Todd sits looking off absently.

JAKE (CONT'D)

Todd?

Todd looks at them.

TODD

I had a strange experience. I was sitting by the fire escape playing *The Summer Knows* on my trumpet and this young girl down in the alley begins singing along. She had the most beautiful voice I've ever heard -- maybe the most beautiful voice anyone's ever heard. It was unbelievable.

LOUIS

Probably a CD. She was scamming you.

TODD

I know every version of that song ever recorded. She was better than any of them. I just couldn't believe it. I tried to catch her, but she disappeared. I've got to find her.

TELLY

Was she hot? Sure that's not why you want to find her?

Todd ignores the comment.

JAKE

We could use a lead singer.

TODD

I think she's too good for us. She gave me goosebumps, literally. I was almost shaking. Just out of the blue like that. I've got to find out who she is.

TELLY

Are we gonna play or just pine for this mysterious girl?

Todd reluctantly returns to the moment, playing the intro to a rock song, the others joining in, well played.

INT. APARTMENT LIVING ROOM - EVENING

Aly comes into her apartment, T.J. in his usual place in the armchair in front of the T.V. He turns on her immediately.

T.J.  
What the hell did you do? You got a  
big mouth on you.

Aly ignores him, going into the kitchen.

INT. KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Aly puts down her backpack and looks in the refrigerator, finding nothing of interest among the beers and a nearly empty vodka bottle.

T.J. comes to the entrance to the kitchen putting Aly on alert.

T.J.  
CYF called up and they're coming  
here. What did you tell people?

Aly backs up, touching a knife in case she has to defend herself from another attack.

T.J. (CONT'D)  
You keep your mouth shut, understand?

INT. APARTMENT LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Her mother comes out of her bedroom and intervenes.

KAREN  
T.J., T.J., stop. We don't want any  
trouble. You know what they'll do.

Angrily, he goes back to his armchair as Karen joins Aly in the kitchen.

INT. KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Karen sits at the rickety table, Aly staying on her feet keeping a wary eye on T.J..

KAREN  
Aly, Children, Youth and Families  
wants to speak with us. Did you say  
anything to anyone about what happened  
this morning?

Aly shakes her head.

KAREN (CONT'D)

You know it was nothing, just an accident.

ALY

He slapped me.

T.J.

You did say something to them, didn't you?

ALY

(to her mother)

My gym teacher asked me about the bruises. I told her it was when Markie and I were playing, that's all.

KAREN

You sure? You know we can't have these people thinking anything happened to you. I don't want to lose you again. You'll have to convince them. It won't happen again, I promise.

ALY

I don't think you're the one who has to make promises.

T.J. suddenly gets up from his chair.

Aly stiffens.

But he storms towards the door outside.

T.J.

Ah, I've had enough of this. I hope they do take you away.

KAREN

T.J.! You'll go to jail.

T.J.

It might be better than this place.

He goes out SLAMMING the door.

KAREN

(beat)

I know this isn't the best, Aly, but  
I don't want to lose you and Markie.  
I'll do better.

Aly looks at her mother.

ALY

Why him? He's never going to be any  
good.

KAREN

No, he's not that bad. It's hard  
for a man not to have no work.

ALY

He doesn't want to work. Your having  
kids gets him welfare money.

KAREN

Aly, now...

Aly grabs her backpack, heading for her bedroom.

ALY

If he touches Markie, I'll kill him.

KAREN

Aly, you don't mean that. Please...

Aly opens the bedroom door and goes in, shutting it behind  
her.

Karen sighs with helplessness.

INT. ALY AND MARKIE'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Markie is lying on his little bed playing with a cheap game  
device.

MARKIE

You're late. How's Amelia?

ALY

She says hello.

MARKIE

Does she really talk to you, Aly?

ALY

I think she does.

She sits next to him and looks at his game.

ALY (CONT'D)  
Are you ever going to finish that  
level?

Markie sticks out his tongue and she pretends she's going to grab it, making him pull it back in quickly.

ALY (CONT'D)  
(beat)  
We have to tell CYF it was an accident  
when we were playing -- get our story  
straight. I don't want us split up  
again.

Markie keeps playing his game, frowning.

ALY (CONT'D)  
Markie?

MARKIE  
Okay. I hate him, but I don't want  
to be away from you.

Aly gives him a hug and they concentrate on the game.

INT. TODD'S APARTMENT - AFTERNOON

Todd's apartment belongs to a musician, instruments and equipment everywhere in the mess. He's set up large speakers and a high-end tape recorder by the back window of his living room. He turns it on and it plays a trumpet piece he recorded to *Pure Imagination* and he listens, marking the place near the end in his mind. He rewinds the tape to the proper place and prepares his trumpet, looking at the clock showing just before the time when Aly showed up. He goes to the window.

EXT. TODD'S WINDOW - CONTINUOUS

He sits on the windowsill and looks down at the passageway in the alley. He begins to play his trumpet, keeping one eye peeled on the passageway.

EXT. STREET BY TODD'S APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

Aly is walking back from school on the opposite side of the street from Todd's building, watching discreetly as she approaches it. As she gets opposite the passageway, over the sounds of the street she can hear the trumpet PLAYING. She stops and smiles. She takes a few steps further then changes her mind and, at a break in the traffic, hurries across the street and into the passageway.



EXT. TODD'S WINDOW - CONTINUOUS

As Todd plays, getting lost in the music, he jumps when Aly's voice suddenly breaks in SINGING at the lyric "If you want to see, magic-land..." He looks down.

P.O.V. TODD - CONTINUOUS

He sees her again at the end of the passageway singing with the purest tone he's ever heard to some accompaniment inside herself.

BACK TO SCENE

He smiles as he listens to magic-land then moves back a bit out of the window and picks up the song as Aly continues.

When the song gets to the proper place, he switches on the tape recorder which picks up at the place he broke off. He swings inside and lets the machine play.

EXT. ALLEY - CONTINUOUS

Aly continues singing and in a few moments Todd rushes in to the passageway, slowing his walk and catching his breath as he quietly approaches and stands behind her, listening spellbound. As she finishes on the sustained high note, so lovely, he begins CLAPPING sincerely.

TODD

Bravo, bravo!

Aly jumps and looks back at him. She's confused, looking up at the window where she thought he was, then feels a bit embarrassed and frightened, not knowing what to do. She shrugs and smiles and begins walking away down the alley.

TODD (CONT'D)

Wait, wait, you're not getting away this time.

He hurries and joins her as she walks.

ALY

I'm sorry. I...

TODD

Sorry? You have the most beautiful voice I've ever heard. What's your name?

Aly doesn't reply.

TODD (CONT'D)

C'mon, I'm a musician. I have a band. I've never heard anyone sing like you. You're so young, but you have such a mature voice. Are you a professional?

Aly keeps walking and Todd gets in front of her and walks backwards for a few steps.

TODD (CONT'D)

I'm not trying to harass you or hurt you. Please talk to me. You sing classical crossover to showtunes. I love them, but how do you know those songs?

Aly looks at him a bit warily, but he seems okay.

ALY

My mother likes to watch musical movies.

Todd smiles and walks next to her again.

TODD

And you know all the lyrics. You must like them, too.

Aly shrugs.

ALY

I like the drama.

TODD

I'll say. Are you taking lessons?

Aly shakes her head.

TODD (CONT'D)

But you've taken lessons.

ALY

No.

TODD

Never? That's unbelievable. You sing like that naturally?

ALY

I just like singing and you play really well.

TODD

(laughs)

That voice tells me I play well.

He puts out his hand to shake.

TODD (CONT'D)

I'm Todd Morrison.

Aly considers then shakes his hand.

ALY

Aly -- Alyda.

TODD

I'm so glad to meet you, Aly. You go to school around here?

ALY

I have to get home.

TODD

Where do you live? I can give you a ride.

ALY

It's not far.

They walk, Todd trying to think of what to say.

TODD

Aly, you have an extraordinary voice -- the best I've ever heard and I've heard them all. You can do something with that.

They reach the end of the alley and Aly turns onto the street towards her home.

EXT. STREET AROUND THE CORNER FROM TODD'S BUILDING -  
CONTINUOUS

TODD

There are people I know who would love to hear you sing. I'd like to introduce you to them.

ALY

I don't think so. I just like to sing for myself.

TODD

No one's heard you sing, ever?

ALY

Not really.

TODD

Well, I've heard you and I'm not kidding when I say you have a voice like no one else. Famous singers would kill to have that voice.

ALY

Thank you.

TODD

(beat)

Oh boy, what do I do here? I can't let you walk away. Give me your phone number.

Aly shakes her head.

ALY

I don't know you.

TODD

I can talk to your parents.

She frowns and looks away.

ALY

It's not like that.

He doesn't know what that means.

TODD

Well, give me your email. That's safe.

ALY

I don't have an email.

Todd thinks she's putting him off.

TODD

Look, I'll give you my card.

He reaches for his wallet and realizes he doesn't have it.

TODD (CONT'D)

I don't have my card. They're in my wallet. Do you have something to write with?

Aly shakes her head.

TODD (CONT'D)

I mean it, Aly. You could be famous with that voice. Right now, not in ten years or something. I know what I'm talking about. I go to the Music Institute downtown. My professor has to hear you.

(beat)

You go this way from school? You go to school around here?

She doesn't respond.

TODD (CONT'D)

God, I'm making a fool of myself here, but... Am I going to have to kidnap you?

ALY

(makes a face)

I hope not.

They're passing Mr. Rodriguez's store, the sign on front reading "RODRIQUEZ'S CONVENIENCE."

TODD

Aly, I have to at least record you. Let me get something to write with. If you won't give me your number, I'll give you mine and my email -- for when you change your mind. You know where I live. Apartment 408 in that building.

Todd gets in front of her again and puts out his hand to stop her.

TODD (CONT'D)

Let me get a pen and paper in this store and you'll call or email me when you're ready. This could be great for you.

She stands still as he backs into the store.

ANGLE ON

Mr. Rodriguez watches out the window with a frown on his face.

TODD (CONT'D)

Okay? Just wait here a moment, I'll be right out.

When he gets out of sight inside, she moves slowly and then runs, disappearing around the corner.

Todd comes out writing with a pen on a piece of sticky notepad to find her gone. Todd runs down the street to the corner.

EXT. STREET OUTSIDE APARTMENT BUILDING - CONTINUOUS

Aly is nowhere to be seen. Todd slumps.

TODD

Damn!

He heads back towards his apartment building, Mr. Rodriguez coming out pretending to sweep the sidewalk as he makes sure nothing bad is happening with Aly. Todd stops and gives him the pen, crumbling the paper and stuffing it in his pocket.

TODD (CONT'D)

Thanks anyway.

Mr. Rodriguez nods but looks at him suspiciously, watching as Todd walks away, Todd looking back quizzically, wondering what the guy's problem is.

INT. APARTMENT LIVING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Aly comes in to find Markie and her mother sitting in the living room with LINDA WESTON wearing a badge identifying her as a Case Worker, Allegheny County Department of Human Services (DHS), Office of Children, Youth and Families (CYF).

KAREN

Ah, here she is.

Linda gets up and smiles at Aly who takes off her backpack. Linda shakes Aly's hand.

LINDA

Hello, Aly. I'm Linda Weston from Human Services, Children, Youth and Families. I was just talking with your mother and your brother. It's a pleasure to meet you.

ALY

Nice to meet you.

Aly sits and waits. Linda sits back down.

LINDA

Aly, I guess you know that your school had some concerns about you -- your physical well-being.

ALY

I told them it was just an accident when Markie and I were playing. It wasn't anything.

LINDA

Yes, so I've heard. But you understand we have to make certain everything is all right. We intervened before to keep you and Markie well taken care of, and I'm glad things improved enough that you both can be back with your mother. But we keep in touch, make sure it's all going well.

ALY

It's going fine.

LINDA

I'm glad to hear that.

(beat)

Could I see the marks on your arm?

Reluctantly, Aly pulls up the sleeve of her blouse to expose the finger marks.

LINDA (CONT'D)

And you say those are from you and Markie playing?

ALY

I was teasing him by keeping his game away and he squeezed too hard. It's not anything.

LINDA

And your face?

ALY

I fell trying to get away. I hit the bedframe.

(she smiles at Markie)

I should have beat him up, but he's too little.

Markie says nothing, looking frozen.

LINDA

All right, I do have to take some photographs for the record, so if you'll accomodate me Aly.

Linda gets out a digital camera and stands.

LINDA (CONT'D)  
Can you hold your sleeve up for me,  
please?

ALY  
It was nothing, this is silly.

LINDA  
Yes, just for our records.

Aly holds up her sleeve and Linda takes two photographs from slightly different angles, reviewing them.

LINDA (CONT'D)  
And now the face -- if you'll hold  
back your hair and look that way for  
me, Aly.

Aly does as instructed and Linda takes two more photographs and checks those.

LINDA (CONT'D)  
That will do it. Thank you so much  
Aly -- Karen, and you Markie.  
(to Karen)  
And, of course, I'll need to speak  
with Mr. Morsi.

KAREN  
Yes, I'm sorry T.J.'s not here. He  
just couldn't put off that job  
interview.

LINDA  
You'll please contact me when he'll  
be available -- soon. If it's more  
convenient, he can come to my office.  
The address and my number are on my  
card.

She gathers her things, Karen getting up, clearly relieved.

LINDA (CONT'D)  
It was a pleasure meeting you all.  
We'll be in touch.

KAREN  
Pleasure meeting you. Glad everything  
is okay.

Linda looks like that may be a premature conclusion.

LINDA  
Have a nice day.



KAREN

And you, too.

Karen holds the door as Linda goes out, leaning against the door after she closes it.

KAREN (CONT'D)

Thank god. You did good, kids.

ALY

She may be able to hear you through the door.

Karen turns and looks alarmed, Aly getting her backpack and going into her bedroom, Markie following, Karen staring with her usual defeated expression.

INT. ALY AND MARKIE'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Aly switches on her CD player that begins playing *I See the Light*, Aly going to sit on her bed looking out the window. Markie gets his game device but looks over at Aly.

MARKIE

What's going to happen, Aly?

ALY

I don't know. I don't really care except that we stay together.

MARKIE

I love you, Aly.

Aly turns and smiles at him sort of sadly.

ALY

Maybe it won't always be like this.

She listens to the song then begins to SING along softly to the lyrics "...just how blind I've been." She stops but her VOICE CONTINUES SINGING as she ponders a moment.

ALY (CONT'D)

(to herself)

Maybe it doesn't have to be like this.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. STREET BY TODD'S APARTMENT - AFTERNOON

HER SINGING CONTINUES as Aly (different day, different outfit) stands across the street from Todd's building, looking at it.

She takes a deep breath and crosses the street, hesitates a moment then goes through the doorway inside.

INT. TODD'S APARTMENT BUILDING - CONTINUOUS

Aly comes off the stairs on the fourth floor and finds apartment 408, standing before the door. With the lyrics "...all at once, everything looks different, now that I see you..." her SINGING ENDS.

She steels herself and knocks. There's no response and she starts to leave, almost relieved. The door opens, of course, and Todd comes out. Aly stops and looks back at him.

TODD  
(happily)  
Aly Alyda.

ALY  
I shouldn't be doing this.

TODD  
You're going to be famous -- and happier than I am right now which is really really happy. C'mon in.

ALY  
I told my brother where I was going and who you are.

TODD  
And you're smart -- of course. You have nothing to worry about. But if you're not comfortable, we can go somewhere else and talk. I want to record you singing though.

Aly considers then goes down towards his door.

INT. TODD'S APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

Aly stops just inside and waits a bit nervously while Todd closes the door and smiles at her.

TODD  
What can I get you? You want a soda? Milk? Water? You hungry? Want a cupcake?

Aly relaxes a little, shakes her head and looks around, instruments and equipment everywhere.

ALY  
You play all these?

TODD

Some better than others. You know I like the trumpet. And the piano and guitar. That's what I mostly play in my band -- Mojo. Have you heard of us?

ALY

I don't think so.

Aly follows Todd into the living room.

TODD

Almost no one has, but we have a CD. I'll give you a copy. You play any instruments?

ALY

Nope.

TODD

Great singers usually don't -- not very well anyway. So sit, sit. You've got to have something. What would you like?

ALY

I'll have a soda I guess.

He hurries to his fridge as she finds a seat.

TODD

Ginger ale?

ALY

Okay. I don't think I've ever had one.

He takes out two cans and gives one to her, having one himself, both opening them, Todd sitting across from her.

TODD

I'm so glad you came by. When you disappeared the other day...

ALY

I'm sorry. I was just...

TODD

It's okay. But I'm thrilled you changed your mind. You really have the most unbelievable voice, Aly. Such a gift. You can't waste it.

She smiles and sips her soda.

ALY

I've never known a musician before.

TODD

I hope we're friends forever.

Aly looks at him with a growing appreciation that kind of surprises and intrigues her.

ALY

Well, you seem really nice. And I love the way you play.

TODD

We'll see if you say that after you perform with the greatest musicians in the world -- because I think that's where you're going, Aly.

She takes a breath.

ALY

I hope you're not just crazy.

TODD

Believe me, I'm not. I know what's going to happen, and it's going to be great for you.

ALY

That sounds nice. We could use some good luck.

Todd looks at her with some concern.

TODD

So, your family... You live around here. You and that brother that knows about me and...?

ALY

My mother...and her boyfriend -- if you want to call him that. My real father's dead.

TODD

That's too bad. I'm sorry.

ALY

He died just after my brother was born. I only remember him a little.

TODD  
Always lived in Pittsburgh?

She nods.

ALY  
But we move around a lot, different  
apartments, nothing special.

TODD  
I think that's going to change.  
(beat)  
Unfortunately, I've got to be  
somewhere in a little while. But I  
have to record you. Are you ready  
to sing now?

She shrugs.

ALY  
I'm always ready. It's the only  
thing I really love to do.

TODD  
And you do it so beautifully.

Todd goes to his tape recorder and begins getting it ready.

TODD (CONT'D)  
What songs do you know?

ALY  
All of them.

Todd laughs.

TODD  
What's your favorite?

ALY  
*Lovers from The House of Flying  
Daggers.*

TODD  
Really? I don't know the song or  
the movie.

ALY  
That's all right. What do you know?

Todd laughs again.

TODD

You asking me that. I may be out of my league here.

(thinking)

I don't know. Showtunes. How about *Reflection*. You know that one?

ALY

It's about me. I love it.

Todd picks up his guitar and straps it on and switches on the amp, giving Aly a mike to the tape recorder. She holds it a bit self-consciously, never having used one before.

TODD

You ready?

Aly takes a sip of the ginger ale.

ALY

This stuff is weird.

TODD

You want something else?

ALY

No, it's good. Just different.

TODD

Just like you. Let me know when you're ready.

She sets down her drink and nods, holding the mike. Todd switches on the recorder then plays the intro and she begins.

As Aly SINGS, Todd can barely play listening and feeling both of them depart the cluttered apartment to the magical place her singing creates.

As she moves, she faces a poster behind glass on Todd's wall.

P.O.V. ALY - CONTINUOUS

Aly is looking at herself singing in the dark reflection in the glass of the poster as she sings the lyric "Who is that girl I see, staring straight, back at me, when will my reflection show, who I am inside."

There's NO SOUND as the CAMERA MOVES IN ON ALY'S REFLECTION while she continues to look at herself singing a song that feels as if it's about her secret self. The CAMERA SINKS INTO THE DARK GLASS.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. TODD'S APARTMENT - MOMENTS LATER

Aly SINGING the lyric at the end of the song "I won't pretend that I'm, someone else, for all time," the lyric then repeating "When will my reflection show, who I am, inside."

Todd has tears in his eyes, wiping at them as he shakes his head. She smiles a bit self-consciously, sitting down again and sipping at her ginger ale.

TODD

Aly... You made me cry. That song doesn't make me cry, but your voice -- the feeling, the emotion you convey.

ALY

You just recorded yourself saying that.

TODD

I'm not ashamed. You're unbelievable. I can't describe what your singing does. It's different than anything I've ever experienced. It's mystical.

Aly smiles, almost embarrassed but still pleased.

TODD (CONT'D)

You pick one, something you love.

ALY

How about *Music of the Night* from *Phantom*?

TODD

The Phantom sings that.

ALY

So I'll be the Phantom.

Todd smiles.

TODD

But you would be the Phantom of Heaven.

ALY

I have my own darkside.

Todd wonders, thinking it possible but not very dark.

TODD

That needs a piano, I think.

She stands again as he goes to his electric piano and begins the song, watching spellbound as she SINGS, moving to what's inside her.

The MUSIC SWELLS TO AN ORCHESTRAL ACCOMPANIMENT.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. CONCERT HALL - EVENING

Aly is beautiful in a gorgeous gown, singing in a concert hall on an elaborately dressed stage with a full orchestra, Todd near her playing the grand piano, the darkened audience spellbound listening to her sing with an emotion that carries everything away with her -- apparently Aly imagining, but actually what she does near the end of *Angel*.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. TODD'S APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

The MUSIC RETURNS to Todd as Aly finishes on that gentle note floating at the distant edge of the sky.

They both finish and Aly remains lost in thought as Todd looks at her with amazement, starting the tape rewinding.

TODD (CONT'D)

I can't believe this is happening.  
You hit notes like an arrow into the  
face of the sun. Your phrasing and  
tempo, a winding river. Your mahogany  
tone. But it's the feeling you put  
into it. How can you be doing that?

ALY

I'm feeling glad I met you.

TODD

I could listen to you for the rest  
of my life. But, I'm going to be  
late now meeting my professor at the  
institute. He's going to love hearing  
this. I'd ask you to come along,  
but I'm driving him to the airport  
pretty late, so...

ALY

I should get going anyway.

TODD

(smiling)  
Don't want that brother of your's  
wondering what I did with you.



Aly smiles and Todd begins packing up the recording.

TODD (CONT'D)  
How old is your brother?

ALY  
Ten -- Markie.

TODD  
How old are you, Aly?

ALY  
Fourteen.

TODD  
Fourteen with that talent. You are going to be something for the ages.

ALY  
What happens now?

TODD  
Good question. Professor Anders is connected everywhere, does music in Hollywood -- that's where he's flying to tonight. He's won Grammys. He's going to want to meet you.

He opens his wallet and takes out a colorful card advertising his band, giving it to Aly.

TODD (CONT'D)  
That's my card for the band with my info on it -- phone, email, website.

ALY  
Okay.

TODD  
Can I get your info -- name, phone, address, email?

ALY  
I don't have an email. We don't have a computer -- and no one to contact.

Todd is concerned again for her situation.

TODD  
That's... Okay.

He takes out another card and finds a pencil and gives them to her.

TODD (CONT'D)

Just put the other stuff there.

Aly writes on the back of it as Todd gets his things ready, handing it back to Todd who reads it then laughs.

TODD (CONT'D)

I thought your name was Aly Alyda. That's why I couldn't find you in the phone book or the Internet. Aly Barrett. No one's ever going to forget that name.

ALY

If you call, talk only to me. That's my mother's phone. I don't have one and she isn't very good with things like this. So don't say anything to her about...anything. And if a guy answers, hang up. Try again later.

Todd looks at her with that concerned expression again.

TODD

Is everything okay at home? You sound kind of... I don't know, when you talk about it...

ALY

It's okay. It could be better.  
(beat, then decides  
to trust)

My brother and I were in foster homes for awhile, but... My mother tries.

TODD

Oh Aly, I'm so glad you came by. Things are going to change, that's for sure. You have a unique talent that everyone's going to recognize. You're going to have anything you need or want.

ALY

That would be nice, I guess.

Todd nods and puts his hand on her shoulder.

TODD

Aly, I couldn't be happier that I know you.

ALY  
 You're getting to be my favorite  
 friend, I'll tell you.

They head out.

EXT. GRAVEYARD - LATER

Aly vaults the fence and comes spinning to Amelia's statue,  
 happy for the first time.

ALY  
 Amelia, you won't believe what's  
 happened. My friend Todd says I'm  
 going to be famous for my singing.  
 We'll have everything. Amelia, I  
 wish you could be with me.

She kisses the statue.

ALY (CONT'D)  
 I love you, Amelia. You're my sister  
 in heaven and we'll be together  
 forever.

EXT. GRAVEYARD ROAD - CONTINUOUS

Mr. Rodriguez and his wife are at a grave up from Amelia's,  
 their car parked behind them on the cemetery road. His wife  
 is tending the grounds while he looks towards Aly as she  
 lets go of the statue and spins around, falling on the grass  
 all stretched out.

MR. RODRIQUEZ  
 (to himself)  
 What's she doing here?

His wife looks.

MRS. RODRIQUEZ  
 Who?

MR. RODRIQUEZ  
 Aly Barrett. A little girl that  
 comes in the store. She's over there  
 by that grave with the angel.

MRS. RODRIQUEZ  
 Maybe it's a relative.

MR. RODRIQUEZ  
 Maybe. She has a younger brother,  
 Markie. They're sweet.  
 (MORE)

MR. RODRIQUEZ (CONT'D)

They have nothing. I think I'll see  
if she's all right.

He heads towards her.

EXT. GRAVEYARD - MOMENTS LATER

Aly is SINGING *When I Fall in Love* and she doesn't see him  
as he comes up and stops a bit off to listen, looking  
surprised as she sings "...and the moment I, can feel that,  
you feel that way too, is when I fall in love, with you."

As she stops, he startles her by calling:

MR. RODRIQUEZ

Aly.

She sits up quickly and he approaches.

ALY

Mr. Rodriguez. You scared me.

MR. RODRIQUEZ

I'm sorry, I didn't mean to. I saw  
you down here and wanted to make  
sure you're all right.

ALY

Oh yes, I'm fine.

MR. RODRIQUEZ

That was lovely singing you were  
doing.

She's a bit embarrassed.

ALY

Just a song I like.

He looks at the angel.

MR. RODRIQUEZ

Is this someone you knew? Someone  
you're related to?

ALY

Oh no. I just like it here. It's  
so peaceful and pretty.

MR. RODRIQUEZ

It is. Better than our neighborhood,  
huh?

Aly nods.

ALY

Do you like to come here for the quiet, too?

MR. RODRIQUEZ

I do. But my wife's father is buried over there. She's just cleaning up.

ALY

Oh, I'm sorry.

MR. RODRIQUEZ

It's okay. He had a good long life.

He looks at the base and inscription on Amelia's grave.

MR. RODRIQUEZ (CONT'D)

I'm glad this young girl wasn't someone close to you. So tragic.

ALY

Amelia. She was my age when she died just three years ago.

(beat)

I feel like we're sisters. I think she likes it when I sing to her.

MR. RODRIQUEZ

(smiling)

You are a dear girl, Aly. Can we give you a ride home?

ALY

Oh, I can walk okay.

MR. RODRIQUEZ

No, I don't want you walking alone through the neighborhood when you don't have to. We'll stop on the way and get you something. Get something to bring to Markie, too. C'mon now. I want to introduce you to Mrs. Rodriguez anyway.

He starts back up, looking back as Aly gets up and follows, calling back to Amelia.

ALY

Bye Amelia, I'll see you soon.

Mr. Rodriguez smiles and waits as she catches up.

EXT. GRAVEYARD ROAD - CONTINUOUS

Mrs. Rodriguez looks at them coming and smiles as she sees her husband and the vibrant young girl talking like old friends.

EXT. THE MUSIC INSTITUTE OF PITTSBURGH - AFTERNOON

ESTABLISHING SHOT of the classical buildings of the Music Institute.

INT. PROFESSOR ANDERS OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Todd and BRIAN ANDERS, his mature professor at the Music Institute, sit in Brian's comfortable office with his two Grammys on a shelf, listening intently to the end of the tape Todd made, leaning towards the speakers. When Aly finishes, Todd shuts off the tape and starts it rewinding as Brian sits back in his chair staring off.

TODD

I don't really need to ask what you think, do I, Brian?

BRIAN

She's fourteen? No training? No one's heard her before?

TODD

She's unbelievable, isn't she? And it couldn't be better. She's got some sort of screwed up family life. She and her brother were in foster homes for awhile. This is going to carry her away from all that.

BRIAN

That voice is going to do that for certain. I want to meet her as soon as I get back. Can I take this tape? I want to play it for Williams.

TODD

Terrific. She's smart and pretty, too. She'd be great in films.

BRIAN

I think you really discovered something here, Todd. Take good care of her.

TODD

It looks like she could use some help. This is good in every way.

INT. APARTMENT LIVING ROOM - EVENING

Aly comes into the apartment with a plastic bag holding the sub-sandwiches Mr. Rodriguez insisted she have. T.J. yells at her immediately.

T.J.

You really did a number on me, didn't you?

Aly ignores him, going directly into her bedroom.

INT. ALY AND MARKIE'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Markie's reading a comic book.

MARKIE

Hi, Aly.

ALY

Hi, bedbug.

MARKIE

Boy, T.J.'s been yelling about you for hours.

ALY

Like I really care. Mr. Rodriguez bought us sub-sandwiches. Remember to thank him. I got meatball for you, meatball.

MARKIE

I thought I was a bedbug?

ALY

Kind of half-and-half.

Before Aly can get out the sandwiches, there's a soft KNOCK on the door and it opens and Karen comes in, closing the door behind her.

KAREN

Aly, we're going to have to do something. CYF thinks T.J. is abusing you.

ALY

Guess they're not stupid.

KAREN

This is serious, Aly. T.J. could go to jail.

ALY  
We can only hope.

KAREN  
I could lose you again.

MARKIE  
I don't want to be away from Aly.

KAREN  
I don't either -- from both of you.

Aly looks out the window, frowning.

ALY  
Then get rid of him. He doesn't do anything for us.

KAREN  
Oh, Aly...  
(beat)  
You have to convince them he's fine, everything's fine.

ALY  
Everything's not fine.

KAREN  
I know that. I'll make sure he's good. But you have to do this.

ALY  
I tell everyone there's nothing wrong. If they don't believe me, what can I do?

KAREN  
You have to convince them. I'll try to have that woman come back when T.J. is here, you both be friends, show affection...

ALY  
I don't know if I can act that well. I'm sure he can't.

KAREN  
Aly, please. I want us to be a family, together. I know it's not the greatest that we are. I'm sorry. But I love you and Markie. I can't lose you.



ALY

But you don't want to lose him,  
either.

Karen opens her mouth, but there are no words.

KAREN

Aly, please?

ALY

I'll say what you want me to say,  
all right? Lies. But he'd better  
not touch me again, and especially  
not Markie. That will be the end.

KAREN

He won't. He understands.

ALY

Too bad he doesn't care.

KAREN

It's just his temper because he  
doesn't feel good. He can be really  
nice.

ALY

Enough. I don't want to hear it.

KAREN

We'll have a better life soon, I  
promise.

ALY

We might. We'll see.

Aly looks at her mother.

ALY (CONT'D)

It was good you love those movies.

Her mother looks puzzled then comes to give her daughter a hug, Aly enduring it but not hugging her back. Karen hugs Markie who does hug her then she goes out.

Aly gets out the sandwiches, Markie opening his enthusiastically, Aly ignoring hers looking glum until her thoughts are carried to the hopeful that's finally happened in her life. She smiles and says mostly to herself:

ALY (CONT'D)

Friends forever.

She looks at Markie as he takes a big bite of his sub. She SINGS softly the lyric from the song *Somewhere*:

ALY (CONT'D)  
There's a place for us, somewhere a  
place for us, peace and quiet and  
open air...

She stops and smiles.

MARKIE  
(his mouth half-full)  
Aly, you sing so pretty.

ALY  
That really is fried bedbugs you  
know.

MARKIE  
But tasty bedbugs.

He smacks his lips, making Aly smile broadly. She begins to unwrap her sandwich.

EXT. DOWNTOWN STREET - DAY

ESTABLISHING SHOT of Todd driving his jeep along a downtown street.

INT. TODD'S JEEP - CONTINUOUS

He has an earpiece connected to his cellphone. A phone he's called is RINGING.

INT. APARTMENT LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

The cellphone on the scuffed coffee table in front of the sagging couch RINGS. T.J., enthroned in his armchair clutching his scepter of beer, makes no move to pick it up, Karen finally coming from the kitchen drying her hands to answer it.

KAREN  
(almost fearfully)  
Hello?

INT. TODD'S JEEP - CONTINUOUS

TODD  
Hello. This is Todd Morrison. I'd  
like to speak to Aly, please.

INT. APARTMENT LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

KAREN  
You're calling for Aly?

TODD (O.S.)  
(over phone)  
Yes. Is this Mrs. Barrett? I'm a  
friend of Aly's. Is she there?

KAREN  
I guess so. Just a minute.

She shrugs at T.J. who just scowls and guzzles as she goes to the bedroom door and knocks softly.

ALY (O.S.)  
(inside her bedroom)  
What?

Karen opens the door.

INT. ALY AND MARKIE'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Aly is on the bed reading a romance novel, Markie not there.

KAREN  
There's someone on the phone for  
you. Some boy named Todd Morris.

Aly doesn't bother to correct her, laying the book on her lap and gesturing for the phone. Her mother hands it to her then waits. Aly covers the phone and stares at her mother who reluctantly turns and goes out, closing the door.

ALY  
(into the phone,  
cheerfully)  
Hello.

INT. TODD'S JEEP - CONTINUOUS

He smiles just to hear her voice.

TODD  
Hello. Hope I'm not interrupting  
anything.

INT. ALY AND MARKIE'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

ALY  
Well, I was just having the circus  
perform for me, but I have a minute  
while they bring out the elephants.

She hears him laugh over the phone and she smiles.

ALY (CONT'D)

I'm glad you called. What's up?

INT. TODD'S JEEP - CONTINUOUS

TODD

Aly, I played your tape for my professor and he's taking it with him to Disney in Hollywood. He's going to play it for people he knows there.

INT. ALY AND MARKIE'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Aly sits up on her bed stunned, the romance novel falling to the floor unnoticed.

TODD (O.S.)

Aly?

ALY

Are you kidding me?

TODD (O.S.)

I told you, you're going to be famous.

INT. TODD'S JEEP - CONTINUOUS

TODD

But that's not why I'm calling -- well, it is sort of. My band is playing a club tonight, Dive, and I'm hoping you can sing with us.

INT. ALY AND MARKIE'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Aly is suddenly scared.

TODD (O.S.)

My band thinks I'm crazy, but they'll change their minds when they hear you. And so will our audience, I'm sure. What do you say?

ALY

You want me to sing with you in front of people?

TODD (O.S.)

This is how it is, Aly.

INT. TODD'S JEEP - CONTINUOUS

TODD

You don't have to worry. You'll be nervous at first, but I've seen you sing. Your wings take you someplace else. You won't even know anyone's there. I really want you to do this, Aly. You need to jump in. And you'll love it, you'll see. I promise.

INT. ALY AND MARKIE'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Aly bends and shuts her eyes tightly as she tries to summon her courage.

TODD (O.S.)

It's at eight. I can pick you up around seven, get you back by ten. Is that too late? I could speak with your mother, assure her it's safe. Maybe she'd like to come and watch -- bring your brother.

Aly sits up and looks resolute.

ALY

(emphatically)

No.

(beat)

What should I wear?

INT. TODD'S JEEP - CONTINUOUS

He punches the air in victory.

TODD

It doesn't matter. We're not into grunge, but we don't dress up. Slacks and a blouse will be fine. So I'll come by about seven?

INT. ALY AND MARKIE'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

ALY

No, don't come here. I'll meet you at your building. I'll come there.

INT. TODD'S JEEP - CONTINUOUS

He has that worry again about Aly's home life.

TODD

You sure?

ALY (O.S.)  
I'll be there before seven.

TODD  
Okay. This is going to be great,  
Aly. Thank you so much.

INT. ALY AND MARKIE'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

ALY  
I think I should be thanking you.  
So thank you.

TODD (O.S.)  
Then I'll see you later.

ALY  
Yes. And thanks again. No one's  
ever done anything like this for me.

TODD (O.S.)  
You're doing me the favor, Aly. I'm  
looking forward to it. Good-bye.

ALY  
Good-bye.

Aly waits for Todd to hang up before shutting off the phone. She lies back imagining the possibilities, making her stare with a smile for a moment. Then a thought makes her jump up, pick up and put the book on the bed by the phone, and go to her closet to search through her few things for something to wear, rejecting one thing after another.

KAREN (O.S.)  
Aly, are you all right?

She grabs the phone and opens the door a crack to give it to her mother.

KAREN (CONT'D)  
Who was that boy?

ALY  
Just a friend.

KAREN  
He sounds kind of old for you.

T.J.  
Got a name for the baby yet?

Aly's scowls and shuts the door, going back to smiling as she continues to search for an outfit.

EXT. DIVE - EVENING

ESTABLISHING SHOT of the club, small but nice and popular, cheerful people going in.

INT. BACKSTAGE AT DIVE - CONTINUOUS

Telly, Jake and Louis are sitting in a lounge when Todd comes in with Aly.

TODD  
We all set up?

They get up and stare at this unlikely young girl with Todd.

TODD (CONT'D)  
This is Aly Barrett. Aly, this is Telly, Jake and Louis the halfwit -- a life of drums has scrambled his brains.

ANGLE ON

Louis crosses his eyes with a goofy expression that changes into a warm smile.

They all say hello to Aly who shyly says hello to them.

TODD (CONT'D)  
I've got a set list.

He hands out the sheets, the others scanning the selections.

TELLY  
(doubtfully)  
You think they're going to go for these?

TODD  
Wait until you hear her. But she knows an unbelievable number of songs. What do you think, Aly? Would you like to sing some classic rock?

She shrugs.

ALY  
I like lots of songs, but I think I sing these better. They're more for my kind of voice.

TELLY  
Kind of Barbra Streisand, huh?

TODD

Better range. You won't believe it.

ALY

I hope I don't screw up. I've never done this. Todd is the first person I ever sang for.

(softly, almost to herself)

Except Amelia.

TODD

Who's Amelia?

Aly shakes her head.

TODD (CONT'D)

Look Aly, if you get nervous or forget, don't worry about it. We're there for you. We'll cover while you get on track. Whatever happens, don't worry about it. This is just practice. It doesn't mean anything, so just relax and have fun.

JAKE

That's right. From what Todd says, you sing great and we're looking forward to doing this. It will be fun, something new for all of us.

LOUIS

If anyone's likely to screw up, it will be me, so if my beat is off don't yell at me.

JAKE

You look beautiful, too.

Aly is appreciative of all of them. Todd looks at his watch.

TODD

Showtime.

TELLY

For showtunes, a first. Let's hit it.

They head for the stage, Todd putting his arm around Aly's shoulder to guide and encourage her. She's nervous and takes a deep breath but walks confidently.



INT. DIVE - CONTINUOUS

The upbeat, chatting crowd in the club claps as the band appears, Todd going to the front with Aly as the others take their places. Todd speaks into the stand mike.

TODD

How are you all doing tonight? Ready to rock this place?

The crowd is enthusiastic.

TODD (CONT'D)

We've got something new for our opening set for you -- a little different but world-class. This is Aly Barrett, a young singer you are most definitely going to hear about for the rest of your lives. And you'll know that you were there in the first audience who ever heard her sing. Believe me, you will brag about it and never forget. She sings classical crossover. Few have the voice for it, but she does. You are all very, very lucky to be the first to hear her. So give her a big hand for her very first public performance -- Aly Barrett!

The audience claps politely, only the more drunk showing any enthusiasm. Todd lowers the mike to her level, looks at her encouragingly then goes to the electric piano to begin.

ALY

(into the mike)

Hello. I hope you all enjoy it and forgive me if I make any mistakes. I just hope I don't blow it.

She smiles and they clap again, a bit more appreciatively as she's so obviously sincere and sweet.

Aly takes a deep breath, looking up at the ceiling so she doesn't have to see all the people staring at her. The amazing change comes when the band starts in on the first song, Aly going off to some special place. After a moment of her SINGING, the whole place goes quiet, the maturity and beauty of her voice stunning them.

ANGLE ON

Todd looks at his band members who look back as disbelieving as everyone else.

The song is familiar to most of the audience, but Aly's voice and the drama of her expressions as she sings puts the song across as no one has ever heard or seen it before.

When she concludes, she thinks it went okay and returns to being a young girl, shyly hoping they all liked it.

AUDIENCE GUY

Holy crap!

The audience goes wild, clapping, yelling and whistling as they've never done.

ANGLE ON

In the back, the owner of the club, DUTCH VOGLE, gestures at Todd that he did good.

Todd acknowledges his gesture, smiling and mouthing the words: "I told you."

They move into the next song and everyone shuts up quickly, moving closer to witness something they've never imagined.

INT. DIVE - LATER

Todd is playing guitar, the crowd even closer and more captured, giving Aly another huge hand. And she's more relaxed, doing a charming little curtsy and waving at them.

AUDIENCE GUY

(calling out request)

*Landslide*, Stevie Nicks, Fleetwood  
Mac. I've got to hear you sing it.

The crowd claps and encourages her. Todd looks at Aly to see if she knows it, Aly nodding. He checks the band and they begin.

She SINGS and without effort does the song more movingly than it's ever been done.

At the conclusion, the audience couldn't be more appreciative, some calling out her name, "Aly, Aly, Aly!"

Todd comes to the mike, bending to speak.

TODD

What did I tell you? Aly Barrett,  
ladies and gentlemen.

He steps back and gestures at Aly, the crowd going wild, Aly really enjoying it, waving at everyone.

Todd finally steps up and speaks over the noise.

TODD (CONT'D)

Aly's only fourteen if you can believe it, and she has to be getting home so we're taking a break. We'll be back -- if you care to hear us without her. You can thank Dutch Vogle, the owner of Dive, for giving Aly this chance that I think she pulled off.

ANGLE ON

Dutch smiles and waves from his perch at the back as the crowd applauds him.

TODD (CONT'D)

(smiles at Aly)

She definitely did not blow it.

The crowd applauds enthusiastically as Aly waves once more and heads off with Todd and the band.

AUDIENCE GUY

Aly, we love you!

She laughs and waves at him as she leaves.

INT. BACKSTAGE AT DIVE - CONTINUOUS

The band members surround her.

JAKE

Aly... There are no words.

TELLY

The best. The best ever.

LOUIS

Did you like my drumming?

Aly laughs.

ALY

Not once off tempo.

LOUIS

Oh good. Will you marry me?

They all laugh.

TODD

All right, I've got to get her home. Don't get too drunk.

TELLY

I'm already drunk on that voice.

ALY

You all played so nicely. Thank you so much. I had a great time.

JAKE

And how can you be so nice? You should have an ego the size of the earth. I want to always remember you like this.

Jake hugs her.

Aly is walking on the moon as she and Todd head out.

INT. TODD'S JEEP - LATER

They drive along quietly for a moment.

ALY

What if I never met you?

TODD

Wouldn't have mattered. With that voice, Aly... It could never be denied. You would have made it sooner or later.

(beat)

How can your family not know? Do they have ears?

ALY

I never sang like that for them -- for anyone, except you.

TODD

Well, they're going to know soon. I'm thinking I should come up and talk with them. They know you were singing tonight?

Aly shakes her head.

ALY

No, not now. It's... They're weird.

Todd looks at her with his concern.

TODD

It scares me when you talk about them, Aly. Are you sure you're okay there?

ALY

Yeah, it's just...messed up. I'll handle it.

He looks at her and sighs.

TODD

Aly, don't take this the wrong way -- I love you -- like you're my younger sister. If you need anything, anything at all, I'm here for you. I want you to know that. If there's any trouble... You're precious. You have me on your side, forever.

Aly is moved. She leans over and kisses him on the cheek.

ALY

I never thought I could be so lucky.

Todd smiles crookedly.

TODD

Me, too.

They both ride quiet in their cocoon.

Aly looks out the window up into the night sky with a private smile on her face.

P.O.V. ALY - CONTINUOUS

The silver bright full moon, growing bigger.

DISSOLVE TO:

An alien world with alien monsters.

PULL BACK

INT. MOVIE HOUSE - AFTERNOON

Aly and Markie are in a theater watching the movie that Markie likes, lost in the film as he scarfs down popcorn from a large tub of it on his lap, a big drink in the holder on his seat. His big sister looks over at him and smiles.

EXT. STREET OUTSIDE MOVIE HOUSE - LATER

Aly and Markie and others come out of the movie, the younger kids like them walking with parents, Markie imitating battles he saw in the movie as they walk.

MARKIE

That was great, Aly. Let's get a soda.

ALY

You just had one with that giant popcorn. We have no more money.

MARKIE

We could go to Mr. Rodriguez's.

ALY

No, we couldn't.

MARKIE

He said we could.

ALY

We're not going there. It costs him money. He's nice. You don't need soda.

MARKIE

I could get a chocolate milk.

Aly grabs him with a playful shake.

MARKIE (CONT'D)

Should we visit Amelia?

Aly considers that, but it's getting on and...

ALY

I want to see if anyone called me.

MARKIE

Your boyfriend?

ALY

I don't have a boyfriend. I have a friend who's a boy -- a man. He's not my boyfriend.

MARKIE

Mom didn't like him calling you.

ALY

I don't care what she likes.

MARKIE

Yeah, she's not the boss of us.

ALY

I can't wait until we grow up, Markie.  
I'll take us out of all this.

MARKIE

We'll have our own house and all the  
soda and popcorn we want.

ALY

And peace and quiet.

MARKIE

I'm glad you're my sister, Aly.

ALY

I'm glad you're my brother.

They bump fists.

EXT. STREET OUTSIDE APARTMENT BUILDING - LATER

As they come up on their building, there's a small yellow rental truck out front, T.J. wheeling the last of their things into it, leaving the dolly inside as he jumps down and puts the ramp back underneath.

Aly looks with a frown.

ALY

What's this? I hope he's moving  
out.

MARKIE

He's taking all our stuff.

Aly sees Markie's right, everything from the apartment in the truck. Karen comes out of the building with a box that T.J. crams in the truck before going back in the building. Karen sees the children and waves to them.

KAREN

Hurry up!

They walk without hurrying, Aly with a sinking feeling.

KAREN (CONT'D)

(to the children)

A great big adventure. We're moving.  
Everything's packed.

ALY

That's why you let us go to the  
movies.

KAREN

How was it? Bet it was better than packing.

ALY

You didn't even tell us.

KAREN

Well, I wanted you to have a nice day and packing is no fun. Now we're just on our way. You couldn't have come at a better time.

ALY

I don't want to go. Where are we supposed to go this time?

KAREN

To the country. Trees and animals. It's beautiful, you'll love it.

ALY

No, I won't. Why are you doing this?

Karen tries to get serious, speaking quietly.

KAREN

We have to go. CYF is after T.J. and they might take you if we don't. I'm not going to let that happen again. T.J. got a place from his brother, a real nice trailer in the country. It's going to be much better than here. You really will love it there and we'll stay together. It will be good, you'll see.

ALY

What about my school -- Markie's school?

KAREN

The year's almost over. You don't have to go to the finish. We'll get you into new schools next year. You can just play and have a good time. But you can't tell anyone why we're there or where we came from. We came from out-of-state -- Florida.

MARKIE

What if they ask questions? I've never been to Florida.



KAREN

That's good, smart. I'll show you books on Florida so you can tell them what it was like.

ALY

I don't want to lie anymore. I'm sick of lying. Lots of people don't have to tell lies all the time.

KAREN

Aly, I know it's a big change. But it's for the best. We'll be together. That's what matters.

T.J. reappears at the doorway with a box. Aly shoots him daggers with her eyes.

ALY

If you got rid of him, we could stay here and not have to lie anymore.

Karen attempts to take command for a change.

KAREN

I can't do that. We have to do this and we're going to do it. Now get in the truck.

Markie starts to obey then sees Aly not moving and stops. T.J. puts in the final box and pulls down the gate.

T.J.

Get your asses in the truck like your mother told you. Move!

Aly looks around thinking of running off but then looks at Markie. She might lose him again. She gives in and heads for the cab, helping Markie get up in the small rear seat.

From the building, an older man, the SUPER, comes out.

SUPER

Have a safe trip.

Karen smiles at him while T.J. ignores him, the super smiling at Aly and Markie, his smile disappearing when he sees how glum Aly looks. He turns and heads down the street, looking back once with a concerned expression.

INT. MOVING TRUCK - CONTINUOUS

Aly gets in next to Markie, staring out the side window looking angry and determined.

Karen and T.J. get in and he starts the truck. Aly reaches over and puts on Markie's seat belt then her own.

KAREN

Well, here we go on our big adventure.

ALY

Thanks for reminding me about our seat belts. Want to be safe, after all.

T.J. just glares and pulls away, Karen putting on her seat belt smiling back at the children as she tries to look upbeat, not succeeding very well.

EXT. STREET OUTSIDE APARTMENT BUILDING - CONTINUOUS

The truck rattles away down the street.

INT. PROFESSOR ANDERS OFFICE - AFTERNOON

Brian and Todd come into Brian's office talking.

BRIAN

They were enthusiastic to say the least. We have to get her in the studio, get an audition video. I'd love her to do some concerts. And she needs to be checked out by Dr. Fogerty, make sure those vocal chords are in good shape.

TODD

They're in great shape. You should have heard her in the club. No one could believe it. Dutch Vogle wants her to sing every weekend.

BRIAN

That isn't going to happen.

TODD

No, I know -- just how knocked over he was. She did *Landslide* like you never heard. She could do a whole album of pop.

BRIAN

Todd, this girl could be the best of all time. She could do anything -- La Scala. She's only fourteen. No one has ever sounded like that at fourteen.

(MORE)

BRIAN (CONT'D)

The sky's the limit here, and maybe that's too low. Can you get her and bring her in today?

TODD

Well, I have her address, but...

BRIAN

What?

TODD

She's jumpy about her family. Like I told you, it's some screwed up situation. She always puts me off having any contact with them.

BRIAN

Todd, she's a minor. They're going to have to be on-board about this.

TODD

All right, let me call her.

Todd takes out his cellphone and uses contacts to dial her number. Brian fiddles as he waits expectantly. Todd frowns and hangs up.

TODD (CONT'D)

It said the account is no longer active.

BRIAN

You have her parent's number?

TODD

That's her mother's phone. Aly doesn't have one.

BRIAN

Fourteen year-old girl without a phone?

TODD

I told you, it's messed up.

BRIAN

Maybe they couldn't pay the bill. You should go by there. Her parents should be thrilled when you tell them what's happening. The girl is going to be rich and famous.

TODD

Guess I'll have to. It might be good. I've been worried about her at home.

BRIAN

You're attached to her, aren't you?

TODD

More than you know.

BRIAN

(sadly)

I know. I had a daughter.

Todd nods and puts his hand on Brian's shoulder.

TODD

What until you meet her. You'll love her, too.

INT. UPSTAIRS HALLWAY OF ALY'S APARTMENT - LATER

Todd goes down the hallway scanning the apartment numbers and finds the one on the card Aly wrote on, the door cracked open which concerns him. He opens it a bit and looks in at the bare living room then opens the door wide and steps in.

INT. APARTMENT LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

It's apparent someone moved out in a hurry, detritus strewn about. He goes and looks into the bedrooms, saddened by the place which couldn't have looked much better with furniture.

TODD

Oh, Aly... This has got to change.

He hears a KNOCK on the door.

LINDA (O.S.)

Hello?

He goes to the door to find Linda Weston there looking around.

LINDA (CONT'D)

Where are the Barretts?

TODD

I don't know. I was looking for Aly, their little girl. Looks like they've moved.

Linda gets a grim expression.

LINDA  
(to herself)  
Escaped is more like it.

TODD  
I'm sorry. I'm Todd Morrison, a  
friend of Aly's. You're...?

Linda shakes his hand.

LINDA  
Linda Weston from Human Services,  
Children, Youth and Families. You  
don't know where they've gone?

Todd shakes his head.

TODD  
She didn't say anything about them  
moving.

LINDA  
We'll see about this. Thanks.

She turns to leave.

TODD  
I really need to reach Aly. Their  
phone was shut off, too. Can I give  
you my card if you find anything?

LINDA  
I can't give out any information.

TODD  
Maybe you could just tell her to  
give me a call if you reach her.  
Just let her know I'm looking for  
her? It's important.

Linda considers and nods.

TODD (CONT'D)  
Thanks, that would be great.

He gets out his card and gives it to her.

TODD (CONT'D)  
Thanks again. It's really important.  
She's singing for me and I have great  
news for her.

LINDA  
Singing for you?

TODD

She has a world-class voice and things are happening that could change her life.

LINDA

Really? That's interesting.

TODD

I really need to reach her to tell her the news, so..

LINDA

If I talk with her, I'll pass on the message. Nice to meet you.

Linda turns to leave.

TODD

I'll walk with you.

Todd closes the door and they both head out.

INT. FIRST FLOOR HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER

TODD

Maybe the super knows something.

He scans the mailboxes and finds the super's apartment and they go and knock on the door. It's opened by the super.

SUPER

Looking for an apartment?

TODD

No, we're looking for the Barretts. Their apartment is empty.

SUPER

Yeah, they moved.

TODD

When? Where did they go?

SUPER

Yesterday. Said something about Florida.

LINDA

Just Florida?

SUPER

That's all Karen said.

(MORE)

SUPER (CONT'D)

Hardly ever spoke to the boyfriend,  
never got his name except for T.J..  
Why you looking for them? They owe  
you money? They don't have none.  
Welfare paid for their place or I'm  
sure we would have gotten stuck.

LINDA

(grimly)  
T.J.

SUPER

Yeah, it's like that when you give  
credit. Sorry. Anything else?

LINDA

No, thanks for your help.

They start moving towards the doorway and the super starts  
to close his door until Todd calls back:

TODD

Hey, one more thing.

The super opens the door again and looks at him, Todd going  
back to the doorway with Linda following.

TODD (CONT'D)

How did they move? Did they have a  
rental truck?

SUPER

They did -- a small yellow one.  
They didn't have that much stuff.

TODD

A yellow rental truck.

SUPER

Yeah. I don't know the company, but  
one of those yellow ones. Good luck.

TODD

Wait a minute.

Todd takes a twenty dollar bill out of his wallet, giving it  
to the super. He takes out one of his band's cards and gives  
him that as well.

TODD (CONT'D)

There's more if you hear anything.  
(MORE)

TODD (CONT'D)

That's my phone and email through our website. Ask around, see if anyone knows where they went exactly.

SUPER

Okay, but they kept to themselves pretty much. No friends I know of. The kids... They didn't look too happy about moving. I feel bad for them.

LINDA

We all do.

TODD

Maybe I can change it if I can find them, so if you hear anything.

SUPER

I'll try.

TODD

Thanks.

LINDA

Thank you.

The super nods and Todd and Linda head out, the super closing his door.

EXT. STREET OUTSIDE APARTMENT BUILDING - CONTINUOUS

TODD

I'm going to search for them. If I find anything, I'll let you know.

LINDA

Thank you.

(beat)

A singer. That's something.

TODD

She's going to be famous.

Linda looks amazed.

LINDA

The only hopeful news I've heard.  
Good luck.

They shake hands and Linda walks towards her car. Todd looks up at the building.



TODD

I'll find you, Aly. Hang in there.  
It will be all right. Trust me.

EXT. TRAILER PORCH - EVENING

Aly and Markie are sitting on folding chairs on the enclosed porch of a shabby trailer in a trailer park in the country, the trailers well spaced with woods behind them, an old tire hanging from one of the trees for a swing. Karen comes out and sits, trying to appear happy.

KAREN

This is nice, isn't it? You can play in the woods, you have that swing with the tire. And there's a lake not far. But you be careful, don't go there yet. We'll have to take you to the Y and get you swimming lessons. This is nice, right?

ALY

(sarcastically)  
Delightful.

MARKIE

I kind of like it. It's better than the city.

KAREN

See, I told you. We're going to have a wonderful time here. And you both have your own bedrooms for a change. And your own bathroom, nice privacy at your end of the trailer. This is much better

ALY

Except he's still around.

KAREN

(lowering her voice)  
Now don't make trouble, Aly. I'm sure he'll be in a better mood here. You'll see, things will change.

ALY

How will we pay for this? Welfare can't know where we are.

KAREN

It's his brother Ralphie's. He's helping out, he has a car.

(MORE)

KAREN (CONT'D)

He can drive us to town for groceries and whatnot. It will be fine.

ALY

You tell him, if he touches either of us again, I'll turn him in so he does go to jail.

KAREN

Aly, not so dramatic. And remember, we want to stay together. If they take him, they take you. We need to stay together. Try to cheer up.

Aly gets up and goes into the trailer.

INT. TRAILER - CONTINUOUS

Aly goes into her bedroom and sits on her bed, the bare bulb overhead rather unpleasant. She lies back and ponders, finally turning and facing the wall, her body beginning to shake with her quiet sobs.

ANGLE ON

Markie comes by heading to his little room and sees his sister crying.

BACK TO SCENE

He lies on the bed next to her.

MARKIE

It will be all right, Aly. We're together.

She wipes her eyes, turns and they hug one another.

EXT. RENTAL AGENCY - DAY

ESTABLISHING SHOT of BRAUNY RENTALS, yellow trucks parked about. Todd's jeep pulls in and parks and he gets out and heads into the office.

INT. BRAUNY RENTALS OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

The RENTAL CLERK joins Todd at the counter.

RENTAL CLERK

How can I help you?

TODD

Some friends rented a truck two days ago and I'm trying to find them since they left their laptop at my place and I know they need it. I've misplaced their cell number and I really have to get in touch with them. My friend's name is Karen Barrett, the guy was T.J., they rented a small truck like the ones outside.

RENTAL CLERK

I'm sorry, we don't give out information like that.

Todd takes out his wallet and a hundred dollar bill.

TODD

I know how it is, but I'll make it worth your while. They really need the computer, they've got all their personal records on it.

RENTAL CLERK

Well, maybe they'll get in touch with you when they find it's missing.

TODD

So they did rent here? It's near their apartment and I figured T.J. would stay close. If you could tell me where they were going or give me a cell number...

He holds out the one-hundred dollar bill. The clerk shakes his head.

RENTAL CLERK

All our information is confidential. I'm sure you can appreciate that.

TODD

I could do better.

RENTAL CLERK

Sorry, I can't.

TODD

But they did rent here?

RENTAL CLERK

You'll have to wait for them to call you. Sorry, really.

Todd puts away the bill.

TODD

Okay. To tell you the truth, it's nice to find integrity.

RENTAL CLERK

Well, thank you. Keep us in mind if you need a rental.

Todd nods and starts out.

RENTAL CLERK (CONT'D)

And you might get a better story why you're looking for them.

Todd smiles, shrugs and goes out.

EXT. BRAUNY RENTALS OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Todd looks anxious as he heads for his jeep.

TODD

Call me, Aly. Please call me.

He gets in the jeep and pulls away.

EXT. TRAILER - EVENING

Aly is pushing Markie in the tire swing when an old car pulls up with its headlights on and makes a weaving U-turn to park in the yard heading out.

T.J. and his brother, RALPHIE, stumble out of the car completely drunk, Ralphie lugging a twenty-pack of beer while T.J. heads around the car empty-handed, staggering so only bumping the trunk keeps him from falling. They're so drunk they left the engine running and the lights on, the doors standing open. T.J. looks at the children then calls out slurring his words.

T.J.

Get the bag in the back there.

Aly ignores him and keeps pushing Markie.

T.J. (CONT'D)

Did you hear? Get the damn bag!

Aly just glares at T.J., but Markie jumps out of the tire and heads for the car, Aly following him.

T.J. (CONT'D)  
(to Ralphie)  
Freakin kid. Got a smart mouth on  
her, too.

RALPHIE  
(equally drunk)  
You gotta set her straight, bro.  
Costing you money.

T.J.  
A waste down the line.

They go inside and Aly and Markie go to the car.

INT. RALPHIE'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

Markie takes the sagging plastic bag from the back and starts for the trailer while Aly climbs across the front seat and turns the ignition key shutting off the engine, leaving the key in the ignition. She searches for the headlight switch and turns them off, getting out on the driver's side towards the trailer.

EXT. TRAILER - CONTINUOUS

Aly kicks the driver's door shut then heads around to close the passenger door.

INT. TRAILER - CONTINUOUS

Ralphie's fumbling in the kitchen area trying to get the beer in the fridge while T.J. holds the clicker to search the TV for something to watch. Karen isn't present.

Markie trips as he comes in and swings the bag as he tries to catch himself, a CRASH OF BREAKING GLASS as the bag hits the edge of the TV stand.

T.J. drops the clicker on the wooden table with the cheap wooden chairs around it and staggers to look in the bag as Ralphie looks on from the kitchen, wavering in his drunkenness. T.J. picks at the wet bag with the broken bottle.

T.J.  
A fifth of vodka!

Markie gets up rubbing his elbow where he fell by the doorway.

EXT. TRAILER - CONTINUOUS

Aly approaches the porch.

T.J. (O.S.)  
You clumsy little moron!

She looks with concern through the open door into the trailer.

P.O.V. ALY - CONTINUOUS

She sees T.J. grab a terrified Markie by the arm and fling him hard into the table, Markie CRYING OUT in pain as he hits it with his arm and falls to the floor, grabbing his arm and beginning to cry.

BACK TO SCENE

Aly sprints up the porch stairs.

INT. TRAILER - CONTINUOUS

T.J. steps towards Markie.

T.J.  
I'll give you something to cry about.

Aly flies into the trailer and straight into T.J., shoving him with all her might. He goes flying and topples over the coffee table in front of the sofa, falling to the floor, taking down a floorlamp with him. Ralphie stands watching from the kitchen.

RALPHIE  
Sassafras!

Aly bends to Markie who is sitting on the floor crying as he clutches his arm.

ALY  
Markie!

Karen rushes out of the bedroom.

KAREN  
What's going on? What happened?

T.J. is struggling to get untangled and upright again, his drunkenness making it difficult. Aly gently tends to Markie.

ALY  
Don't move your arm. Just hold it  
where it is.

Markie keeps bawling but does as his sister tells him, holding his arm in place. Karen comes and bends down.

KAREN

You fell?

Aly stands up and glares at T.J..

ALY

He threw him!

She grabs the clicker off the table and flings it at T.J. on the floor, hitting him with it.

T.J.

Ow! What the... I'm going to whip your ass.

ALY

No, you're not.

She grabs a chair from the table and tosses that at T.J., not very successfully though he gets tangled in it.

RALPHIE

Whoa there, girl.

KAREN

Aly, Aly!

T.J.

You've had it this time.

Karen is helping Markie get up by his broken arm, Markie SHRIEKING in pain as she moves it.

Aly pulls her hand off Markie's arm then grabs another chair and runs up to T.J. who's crouching to get up and really bashes him, the chair splintering as it hits him and the table, T.J. going down and out of it for a moment.

ALY

I hope you die!

KAREN

Aly, Aly, stop!

RALPHIE

Let's calm down here.

Aly moves behind Markie, pushing on his back to move him towards the door.

ALY

Run Markie, run! Outside. Hurry, hurry!

Karen moves to stop them and Aly pushes her violently backwards so she staggers into Ralphie who's coming from the kitchen, dragging her down with him as he unsuccessfully tries to keep himself upright, the two falling flat.

ALY (CONT'D)

Run, Markie!

Markie keeps crying holding his arm, but he heads out.

Aly buys a few more moments by tipping the coffee table over on T.J. and stamping on it then turns and runs out the door.

EXT. TRAILER - CONTINUOUS

Aly jumps down the porch stairs, Markie in the yard wondering what to do, his crying lessening. Aly gently moves him towards the car.

KAREN (O.S.)

(calling)

Aly, Aly!

Aly opens the driver's door.

ALY

Get in, Markie. Go!

Markie carefully does as he's told, Aly behind him looking back at the trailer.

P.O.V. ALY - CONTINUOUS

She sees her mother at the doorway, calling.

KAREN

Aly, stop, stop.

BACK TO SCENE

Markie has slid across the seat and Aly gets in behind him, pulling the door shut.

INT. RALPHIE'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

Aly gets her fingers on the ignition key and looks back at the trailer as she starts the car.

P.O.V. ALY - CONTINUOUS

She sees T.J. trying to get past Karen who is turned and holding him back.



BACK TO SCENE

Aly looks how to get it in gear. She pulls the gearshift to drive and the car lurches forward.

EXT. TRAILER PARK ROAD - CONTINUOUS

As they pull onto the trailer park road, a MAN walking a LARGE DOG looks with concern into the car as it slowly turns past him.

P.O.V. MAN - CONTINUOUS

Aly looks intent driving the car with a concerned expression, Markie next to her holding his arm and crying.

BACK TO SCENE

The man is alarmed and looks as T.J. staggers across the yard yelling, Karen frantic behind him, Ralphie weaving along.

T.J.

Stop that car, you little bitch!

KAREN

Aly, come back! It's my fault!

RALPHIE

I don't have no insurance.

The dog GROWLS then SNARLS and leaps on his leash as he SNAPS at them, making them all stop in alarm as the man gets out a cellphone and dials 911 as he watches the car slowly move away.

INT. RALPHIE'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

Aly has to sit up as high as she can on the edge of the seat to reach the gas and see over the wheel. She slowly follows the trailer park drive heading for the exit, turning on the headlights and trying to keep everything together as she drives for the very first time. She tries the brake and they jerk forward, Markie crying out.

ALY

I'm sorry, Markie. Hold on. We'll find a hospital.

MARKIE

It really hurts, Aly.

ALY

It will be all right, you won't die from that. We'll get it fixed.

MARKIE

I hate him.

ALY

Don't worry. We'll never see him again. That's finished.

Aly isn't driving too badly though she's going slowly.

MARKIE

Can you drive us, Aly?

ALY

It's just like your racing game except you turn this...

She swivels the wheel a little, the car swerving slightly back and forth.

ALY (CONT'D)

...instead of pushing the buttons.

They reach the two-lane highway with no traffic and Aly slows and looks then turns the wheel to cross to the far side.

ALY (CONT'D)

I just don't want to hit anything.  
(glances at Markie)  
We'll skip the seat belts with your arm.

EXT. HIGHWAY - CONTINUOUS

The car carefully pulls onto the highway and straightens out, moving slowly on the far edge of the lane.

INT. RALPHIE'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

MARKIE

I think he broke my arm Aly. It really hurts.

ALY

Don't move it any more than you have to. Just hold it in place like that. It's not bleeding, that's good. It didn't break the skin. They can put it in a cast. And he'll go to jail where he belongs.

Tears come to her eyes and she carefully wipes them away, keeping one hand on the wheel and one eye watching while she wipes each in turn. They drive along slowly, Aly staying at the edge of the road.

MARKIE

I don't want us to get split up,  
Aly.

ALY

We won't. I promise. I won't let  
that happen. My friend Todd can  
help us this time. He'll help us.  
He said he would. He will. We won't  
split up. I promise.

There are headlights coming up behind them, Aly adjusting  
the mirror so she can see out the back.

P.O.V. ALY - CONTINUOUS

In the mirror, the other car slows behind them, matching  
their speed a moment before FLASHING LIGHTS come on and a  
SIREN gives a few short bursts.

BACK TO SCENE

Aly bumps onto the shoulder making a jerking stop, carefully  
putting the gearshift into park and turning off the ignition.

ALY

Tell them everything that's happened,  
Markie. No more lying. And I won't  
let them split us up.

She turns in the seat to look out the back.

P.O.V. ALY - CONTINUOUS

The TROOPER coming up, his flashlight shining in her eyes.

BACK TO SCENE

She turns and opens the door.

EXT. HIGHWAY - CONTINUOUS

The trooper is alarmed by the door opening and stops, his  
hand on his gun until he sees this little girl get out and  
face him, barely holding it together.

ALY

We need an ambulance. He broke my  
brother's arm. His name is T.J.  
Morsi and he's my mother's boyfriend  
in that trailer park back there. He  
threw my little brother and broke  
his arm! And he was going to hit  
him again!

The trooper approaches her, glancing back down the road.

P.O.V. TROOPER - CONTINUOUS

Another set of flashing lights is down the road speeding their way.

BACK TO SCENE

The trooper shines his light on Markie.

TROOPER  
(to Markie)  
You okay, buddy? We got the call.  
Help is coming.

Markie nods, sniffing his tears.

TROOPER (CONT'D)  
(to Aly)  
How about you?

She stares as her mouth starts to tremble and then she bursts into tears, clamping her hands over her eyes as all the pain she's been holding in from the life she's endured floods out to at last be swept away.

The trooper puts a hand on her back to comfort her.

TROOPER (CONT'D)  
Hey there, it will be all right.

Aly puts her head against him, her hands still covering her eyes as her body shakes with her sobbing.

TROOPER (CONT'D)  
It's all right, don't worry.

He crouches and hugs her.

TROOPER (CONT'D)  
It's all okay.

She throws her arms around his neck, her head against his as she sobs.

TROOPER (CONT'D)  
You're safe now, darling. You're safe.

He holds her as her tears slow, her breath coming in gasps.

CLOSE UP of Aly's face next to the trooper's head.

TROOPER (CONT'D)

You're safe now. Don't cry. You're safe. You're safe.

Her crying subsides and she opens her eyes as she hangs on with her cheeks glistening from her tears, her body shaking a few times as she stares into the distance of her thoughts.

FADE TO BLACK:

FADE IN:

INT. HOSPITAL HALLWAY - DAY

Aly, Todd and Linda Weston come down a hallway and turn into a ward. Todd is carrying a wrapped present.

INT. HOSPITAL WARD - CONTINUOUS

Markie is in a bed with his arm in a cast, his fingers sticking out, an I.V. taped into his other arm as he watches a TV on the wall. He lights up when he sees his sister.

MARKIE

Aly!

She runs over to him on his good side and gives him a kiss.

ALY

I want to be the first to sign your cast.

MARKIE

It's pretty cool, isn't it? I could bash people with this.

ALY

Won't have to bash anybody anymore. Markie, this is my friend Todd, and you remember Mrs. Weston.

TODD

This is for you, Markie.

Todd hands him the wrapped present.

MARKIE

For me? Wow.

He holds it with the fingers of his broken arm and rips the paper with his good hand.

NURSE KELLEY approaches them.

NURSE KELLEY  
Hello, I'm Isobel Kelley.

TODD  
Todd Morrison. This is Markie's  
sister, Aly. And this is Linda Weston  
from Human Services.

LINDA  
Children, Youth and Families.

They all shake hands.

NURSE KELLEY  
Well, the arm set with no problems,  
the infection is responding, but we  
want to watch for at least a couple  
of days before releasing him. He's  
a bit malnourished as well.

LINDA  
(frowning)  
Humm.

ALY  
Big surprise.

NURSE KELLEY  
Well, I'll leave you with him. If  
you need anything...

TODD  
Thank you.

Markie has the high-end game device out and is thrilled, the  
nurse smiling at him as she leaves.

MARKIE  
This is awesome.

ALY  
Todd got it for you.

MARKIE  
(to Todd)  
Thank you so much.

TODD  
You're welcome. Got to have something  
to do lying around here.

MARKIE  
I've never had anything like this.

As they watch him play with it, Aly mouths the words "Thank you" to Todd and he smiles at her.

LINDA

Markie, Aly has told us all about what happened, but I'm wondering if you can tell me in your own words?

Markie looks at his sister.

ALY

Just tell everything, Markie. Remember, no more lies.

He nods.

MARKIE

(to Linda)

But I want to stay with my sister. I don't want us split up again.

LINDA

Of course we'll do our best to keep you together. We'll see about that.

Aly doesn't like the sound of that. Linda looks at Todd.

LINDA

I think it would be best if Markie and I just talked alone a bit.

TODD

We'll wait in the cafeteria. When you're finished ring me on my cell?

She nods and Todd smiles at Markie.

TODD (CONT'D)

We'll come back and you can show Aly how to play that thing.

MARKIE

I'll crush her.

ALY

In your dreams, cripple.

Aly kisses him again and she and Todd head out while Linda goes to get a chair, Markie intent on his new toy.

INT. HOSPITAL CAFETERIA - MOMENTS LATER

Todd and Aly choose snacks and fruit drinks and put them on their trays, Todd pays, and they take seats at a table.

TODD

I'm glad he's okay. He's a really nice kid.

ALY

He is. He's always upbeat. I love him.

(beat)

Thanks so much for coming.

TODD

You have no idea how relieved I was when Linda called -- despite all this. Anything could have happened. I was sick when I found your apartment empty and met Linda there. Nobody could tell me where you went, I had no idea how to find you. I tried to bribe people, but no one would tell me anything.

(beat)

How are things going with you? Is it okay?

ALY

It's all right. I'm in a group home for girls. It's not bad.

(beat)

I don't know what's going to happen.

TODD

It's going to be better than what you had, Aly. That was dangerous. I'm so glad you're out of all that.

She nods.

TODD (CONT'D)

And you're on your way to your new and exciting life. My professor came back from Hollywood and they were knocked over by your singing. He wants to have you make an audition video, and maybe do some concerts if you're up for it, events to introduce you to the world.

ALY

Wow.

TODD

Wow is right. Your life is never going to be the same, Aly.

(MORE)



TODD (CONT'D)

It's going to be quite a ride to rich and famous -- not that I know personally, but you can tell me about it.

ALY

I wonder if that would really change things?

TODD

I don't think it's going to change you -- who you are, thank god. But you'll be able to have whatever you want, go wherever you like, see the world.

ALY

I can pay back people I owe -- you for one.

TODD

You won't owe me anything. I'm going to owe you.

ALY

I'd like to give Mr. Rodriguez something.

TODD

Who's that?

ALY

The store around the corner from my apartment, where you went in to get that pen when I ran off? He was always kind to me and Markie.

TODD

That guy in the store? I thought he was giving me the evil eye that day.

ALY

He'd give us free food. One time he and his wife gave me a ride home from Amelia's and bought sandwiches for me and Markie. People like that should be remembered.

TODD

You really are a nice person, Aly.

(MORE)

TODD (CONT'D)

If someone had to get that gift of the voice you have, I couldn't be happier it was someone with your soul. You deserve the best.

Aly smiles but still looks a bit sad.

ALY

What's going to happen to my mother?

TODD

I don't know. It's not good she let this happen. I don't think she'll get to raise you guys again.

ALY

She wasn't bad, just weak.

(beat)

I'll never have foster parents. I'm too old. Markie might, but even him... We'll never end up together.

TODD

C'mon Aly, you don't know that.

She shrugs.

ALY

What will be, will be. I can't control it.

TODD

Que sera, sera. You know that song? You could sing it.

ALY

I think it was in some old movie my mother liked. She's the reason I do sing, so that was something.

TODD

That was a lot -- though your voice was a gift from god. You're very special, Aly.

ALY

I don't feel so special.

TODD

Give it some time. Just take things as they come right now. You did great. Saved Markie, saved yourself.

(MORE)

TODD (CONT'D)

Like I said, anything could have happened in that situation you were in, something really bad. This is okay.

Aly looks at Todd.

ALY

You have no idea how glad I am I know you.

TODD

I feel the same about you, Aly. I just hope you don't forget me when you get famous.

ALY

I don't forget anything -- even things I'd like to.

Todd puts his hand over hers and they look at one another, Aly smiling though it's going to take awhile for the sadness to depart.

INT. RECORDING BOOTH - DAY

Aly is standing in a recording booth before a filtered mike, headphones on, SINGING in Italian the song *SE*.

INT. RECORDING CONTROL BOOTH - CONTINUOUS

The TECHNICIAN at the mixer, Brian and Todd watch as she sings on the other side of the glass, her voice and the music coming through speakers. They are captivated.

TECHNICIAN

I never thought I'd hear anything like this.

BRIAN

How can this be? She doesn't even know what the words mean.

TODD

But she knows what the song should convey. Look at that expression on her face.

P.O.V. TODD, BRIAN AND TECHNICIAN - CONTINUOUS

Aly has her eyes shut, her arms up against her chest, her head slightly tilted, her brow furrowed as her voice trembles with the vibrato of crystal notes.

BACK TO SCENE

Brian puts his hand over his mouth, staring as he slowly lets his hand fall.

BRIAN

She's like an angel.

TODD

I think she may be one -- sent to show us how to rise from the depths into God's heaven.

ANGLE ON

Aly stares as she listens to the music, looking at them in the control booth but not seeing them, far distant somewhere. Then she sings again.

EXT. HUMAN SERVICES BUILDING - DAY

Aly's SINGING CONTINUES into ESTABLISHING SHOT of the downtown building for the Allegheny County Department of Human Services (DHS), a red no parking zone in front. SINGING FADES.

INT. LINDA WESTON'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Todd is sitting before the desk of Linda Weston in her office.

LINDA

I wish I could help you, Todd. But being young and single, a musician with no steady income... I might say yes knowing how much you love those children, but it's not going to fly with the powers that be.

TODD

I've got to do something. Aly's in that group home, Markie's in a place where they're keeping him just for the money. I made Aly promises, Mrs. Weston. I can't let her down.

LINDA

I understand, I really do. I feel for them, too. But there are rules and realities. The economy is in the dumps, things are tight. It's going to take awhile to get straightened out. The important thing is they're being cared for properly.

(MORE)

LINDA (CONT'D)

We were fortunate to get them away with as little as a broken arm. I've seen a lot worse, believe me. It will work out, eventually. Trust me.

TODD

That's what I keep telling Aly and it's getting to feel like a broken promise. I can't do that to her.

LINDA

You've done incredibly for her, Todd. She owes her future to what you did.

TODD

I want her future to start now, Mrs. Weston, not some imaginary time to come.

LINDA

Patience, Todd. Things will change. You'll see.

(beat)

I'm sorry, I have an appointment...

They both stand up.

TODD

Thanks for considering it. I'm going to ask around, hopefully find someone who will be acceptable to the rules and realities. Aly won't accept being apart from Markie. That was why she did all this -- to protect her little brother and I'm going to see she gets that chance.

LINDA

She's so lucky to have you. I'll be here whenever you need me.

They shake hands and he heads out, Linda watching him go, truly wishing she could do more, then turning to the pile of other cases on her desk, sighing as she contemplates them.

EXT. GROUP HOME - LATER

ESTABLISHING SHOT of a large house in an okay neighborhood. Todd's jeep pulls up and he gets out and heads for the door.

INT. GROUP HOME - MOMENTS LATER

Todd is shown into the living room by the administrator, Aly jumping up to hug Todd while her new friend DANI gets up staring at Aly's friend, the TV forgotten. The administrator leaves them.

TODD  
How's it going?

ALY  
Great, great, I'm so glad you're here.

DANI  
Hi.

TODD  
(to Dani)  
Hello.

ALY  
Todd, this is my friend Dani. Dani, this is Todd.

DANI  
You're hot.

Todd smiles.

TODD  
Well, it's warm out today.

DANI  
No, I mean...

ALY  
He knows. He's kidding. Leave him alone.

Dani thinks she's stepping on Aly's ground and backs off. They all sit, Dani pretending to watch the television though she keeps glancing at Todd.

TODD  
Aly, I'm going to give you the bad news first.

ALY  
They wouldn't let you take me and Markie. I knew they wouldn't. I've been in this system long enough.

TODD

The good news is that Brian and I are driving to New York to meet with Jack Foster, a top agent at Double-Eye Gee, International Imagination Group. They take you on, it will be a rocket-ride.

DANI

To the top of the topper-most. I read The Beatles used to say that when they were nobodies.

TODD

It will happen.

ALY

Will that put Markie and me back together?

TODD

I'm going to start asking around for someone who can take you both. CYF wants someone older and more responsible than I am apparently. I'm sorry I couldn't make it happen right away. Mrs. Weston is on your side, though. But the way things are right now...

ALY

You don't know them. You may think they care, but they don't really. They just don't want to get in trouble with their bosses. If we're out of the danger zone, they're satisfied. They'll keep their jobs.

Todd wonders if she may be wiser about such things than he.

TODD

Well, they're never getting rid of me bothering them. They'll get so sick of me they'll make it happen.

Aly jumps and hugs him.

DANI

Aly, you are so lucky.

She sits back and smiles at Dani. Dani smiles back, the two of them thinking of the secret plans they've made.

TODD  
So, you guys have boyfriends here?

DANI  
All girls, the sadists.

Todd laughs. He thinks everything is okay.

EXT. THE ANDERS' STREET - EVENING

ESTABLISHING SHOT of the Anders' large, expensive, older brick home on Ellesmore against the cemetery Aly visits. Brian, driving a costly, high-end four-door car, turns into the driveway.

EXT. REAR OF ANDERS' HOME - MOMENTS LATER

Brian comes out of the separate garage at the back, another expensive car next to his, and walks towards the rear door to the house as the garage door comes down. As it closes with a thud, he stops in the quiet and looks through the shrubbery at the back towards the cemetery, the light fading. He stares a moment, lost in sad thought, before sighing and heading inside.

INT. ANDER'S HOME - MOMENTS LATER

Brian comes into the kitchen where his wife, PAULINE, is in a colorful apron preparing dinner. They kiss and she goes back to work.

PAULINE  
How was your day?

BRIAN  
Good, really nice. What are you making?

PAULINE  
Steak Diane. We haven't had that for awhile and Siracusa's had gorgeous filet mignon.

BRIAN  
That sounds delicious.

PAULINE  
With brussel sprouts -- fresh.

BRIAN  
My favorite.

She smiles at him then keeps working.



He sits at their expensive kitchen table set with a lovely vase holding fresh flowers. He absently touches the flowers and glances at his wife.

BRIAN (CONT'D)

Todd Morrison came by to get ready for our trip. Children, Youth and Families turned him down about taking in the children.

PAULINE

Well, he is a bit young and struggling for that kind of responsibility.

BRIAN

That's what they thought.

(beat)

He suggested perhaps we could take them.

She doesn't look, slowing her work and then stopping, staring down.

PAULINE

I half expected that sooner or later.

BRIAN

This girl is a phenomenal talent. It's not right she suffer like this. They have her in that group home, separated from her younger brother she dearly loves. She's so sweet.

PAULINE

Brian...

BRIAN

I know, I know. But it's got to pass sooner or later.

Pauline suddenly has tears, wiping them away, keeping her head turned.

PAULINE

Three years and it feels like barely a second's gone by.

BRIAN

It might be what we need.

PAULINE

(slightly bitter)

Something to replace her?

BRIAN

Nothing will replace her.

(beat)

That's not what this would be. We'd be doing something good for someone else, children who need a family.

Pauline comes and sits, wiping her eyes again. She takes his hand in hers.

PAULINE

You're so good, Brian. But you've got to understand. I'm too vulnerable now. I saw what can happen. It's a lovely day, she laughs and goes out to play in our yard, and...

Tears come to both their eyes. They break apart and sit back, both quiet a moment.

PAULINE (CONT'D)

I can't open myself to feel that depth of pain again. If we had children here, I'd be terrified every moment.

BRIAN

Life's a risk. We know that. Bad things can happen. But good things, wonderful things, happen, too. We had her for a time, it was magical. We'll never lose that. She's here forever. And this could be more wonderful times. And they would last. This child is remarkable. Double-Eye Gee is going to sign her, that I know. She's going to have the world, but it could come too late if she and her brother have to grow up without each other. I'd like us to be there for them, parents who would really care.

Pauline gets up and goes back to preparing dinner.

PAULINE

Let's not talk about it now. Let's just eat. Let me consider things.

BRIAN

All right. Certainly. But think about it. Don't just dismiss it.

She nods and keeps working.

He goes to the fridge and gets a beer, looking back at her.

P.O.V. BRIAN - CONTINUOUS

Pauline braces herself on the sink as she stares out the window towards the cemetery.

BACK TO SCENE

Brian heads out of the kitchen, weighted with his memories.

EXT. GEORGE WASHINGTON BRIDGE - DAY

AERIAL ESTABLISHING SHOT of the bridge with the soaring heights of New York City beyond, Brian's car crossing it.

INT. JACK FOSTER'S OFFICE - DAY

Jack Foster has an office at the top of the food chain in Manhattan. He, Brian and Todd are sitting on thick chairs before a teak coffee table by a ceiling-to-floor window with a view to die for, elaborate pastries and Fiji water with crystal drinking glasses on the table.

On the wall a huge flat screen TV is playing Aly's audition video of her SINGING *My Heart Will Go On*, almost beyond belief, the three of them captured as she draws them into the emotion of what she's singing so beautifully.

She ends and Jack clicks off the TV and sits back. Brian and Todd look at him.

BRIAN

I get more amazed every time I hear her.

JACK

Yeah, she's pretty good. A bit raw, but possibilities.

Todd looks incredulous, but Brian laughs.

BRIAN

Sure, fourteen, a bit raw. Give me a break, Jack. I know what you're thinking -- the same thing we're all thinking.

JACK

Lots of kids start out as contenders and don't make it. Does she have the discipline? She's some kind of raggedy ward-of-the-court...

TODD

(angrily)

None of that is her fault. She didn't choose her parents.

JACK

Maybe not, but there's a reason they say the apple doesn't fall far from the tree.

TODD

Oh, give me a break...

Brian puts up his hand to stop Todd.

BRIAN

I can see his reasoning, Todd.

(looks at Jack)

Maybe she's not for you.

(turns to Todd)

What do you think? We could represent her ourselves. A new gig, but it could be fun and profitable.

Todd gets the play.

TODD

Sure. We could go by Sony today. You know people there, don't you?

BRIAN

I do.

Jack laughs.

JACK

But I am concerned about this ward-of-the-court thing. I'll have to have legal look into that angle. It shouldn't be any big problem, but we have to know who has authority to sign for her. Some judge I'm guessing, unless one of you wants to take her in.

TODD

I tried, but they told me no.

Brian says nothing.

JACK

Well, no sense working up an offer until we clear that up, but I'm

(MORE)

JACK (CONT'D)  
 guessing you and whoever will be  
 satisfied when it's time. We want  
 her. She's a cute kid and real  
 talent. Thanks for bringing her to  
 me, Brian. I won't forget it.

They shake hands, Todd left out but looking pleased. Jack  
 stands to usher them out, Brian and Todd following his lead.

JACK (CONT'D)  
 What say we take in a show tonight?  
 Orchestra seats for the hottest thing  
 on the Great White Way. One of our  
 guys did the music. You aren't  
 heading back right away, are you?

BRIAN  
 Limited budget, the Bosley. That  
 sounds like a treat.

JACK  
 Great. I'll come by at seven. I'm  
 going to have legal draw up a letter  
 of intent even though it won't mean  
 much since you're not her guardian,  
 but better than nothing.

BRIAN  
 You know me, Jack.

JACK  
 I sure do. I'll pick you up at seven.

Jack shows them out and turns to look out the window, nodding  
 his head at the possibilities.

EXT. BROADWAY - LATER

Brian and Todd walk in Times Square.

TODD  
 Double-Eye Gee. She's on her way.  
 Her name is going to be up in lights  
 here someday.

BRIAN  
 And it couldn't have happened to a  
 nicer kid.

TODD  
 Who needs it.  
 (beat)  
 I hope you'll think more about them.

Brian is quiet for a moment, Todd wondering.

BRIAN

It's complicated. I'd do it in a heartbeat, but Pauline... It scares her after what happened.

TODD

I understand. That was terrible.

BRIAN

Let's leave that. Give it a little time. She may change her mind.

Todd nods though Brian doesn't see him do it, lost in his thoughts as they dodge through the anonymity of the crowded streets.

INT. GROUP HOME - NIGHT

In the dark, Aly dressed and wearing her backpack, Dani in pajamas, sneak down the stairs from the upper floor.

INT. REAR OF GROUP HOME - CONTINUOUS

They tiptoe up to the back door and speak in low whispers.

DANI

You have everything?

ALY

I feel bad taking your money. I'll pay you back a thousand times, I promise.

DANI

When you're rich and famous and come for me.

ALY

I'll come for you whatever.

DANI

You're special, Aly. It will happen for you. Just don't forget me.

ALY

Never.

DANI

I'm going to miss you.

They hug briefly, Aly turning towards the door.

DANI (CONT'D)

Don't let the bastards grind you  
down.

Aly's never heard that and looks puzzled.

ALY

Okay.

DANI

You're so naive -- one of the things  
I love about you.

Aly suddenly has tears and hugs Dani again.

ALY

You're the best friend I've ever  
had. I love you.

DANI

I love you, too, Aly.

They finally break their hug and Aly quietly undoes the chain  
and door lock and opens the door, Dani holding it.

ALY

Don't lock the door behind me so  
they won't know anyone helped me.

DANI

You're so smart you won't need luck,  
but good luck anyway. And you call  
me sometime. I want to hear  
everything.

ALY

I will. Good-bye.

They hug once more then Aly goes out. Dani has tears as she  
watches her friend move off into the darkness.

P.O.V. DANI - CONTINUOUS

Aly sneaks across the yard towards the shrubbery, disappearing  
into the darkness.

BACK TO SCENE

DANI

(softly)  
Bye, Aly.

Dani wipes her eyes and closes the door then heads for her  
room, her best friend gone.

EXT. STREET OF MARKIE'S HOUSE - LATER

A car drives down a darkened residential street, passing some bushes and moving off.

Aly emerges from the bushes and watches cautiously as she walks down the sidewalk looking for the numbers on the houses. She stops at a large house then goes up the driveway towards the back.

EXT. REAR OF LARGE HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

She comes into the dark rear yard and goes to the door with glass panes in it. She takes a deep breath and peeks in.

P.O.V. ALY - CONTINUOUS

It's dark and quiet inside until suddenly Markie's face with a distorted expression pops up against the pane.

BACK TO SCENE

Aly is startled and jumps back then scowls.

ALY  
(whispering)  
Markie!

The door opens and Markie slips out, all dressed with his backpack, quietly closing the door.

MARKIE  
(gleefully)  
I scared you.

ALY  
Sssh. C'mon.

They sneak off around the house.

EXT. STREET OF MARKIE'S HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

They walk along, Markie excited, Aly cautious.

ALY  
If anyone sees two kids walking around  
this late they'll call the police,  
so any car comes we have to hide.

MARKIE  
This is great.



ALY

It's going to be hard and we have to be on our toes. But we have more money than I thought. My friend Dani gave me all her savings. I love her.

MARKIE

I got almost four dollars.

ALY

I looked up the bus fares and with one kid fare we can get to Florida -- Orlando where Disneyland is.

MARKIE

Cool. Can we go to Disneyland?

ALY

We'll have almost nothing when we get there. I'll have to get a job right away. Maybe I can sing at Disneyland. We have to have a good story, too. I'm going to be older. I'm eighteen now and you're fourteen. At eighteen you can do what you want. Figure out what year you were born in case anyone asks. We're going to our father's house in Orlando, Florida. He lives at 4500 Ruby Circle. His name is Adam Barrett, our real father's name. I'll write it all down and you'll have to memorize it. He doesn't have a phone, he's deaf that's why you can't call him.

MARKIE

Boy, you figured it all out, Aly.

ALY

I told you we wouldn't be apart. How's your arm?

MARKIE

Better. It hardly hurts at all.

ALY

Good. We're going to make our own life now and it will be what we want, not what everybody else wants.

MARKIE

That's right. We're the bosses of  
us now.

Aly smiles and puts her arm around him as they walk off into  
the darkness.

INT. BRIAN'S CAR - DAY

Todd is driving as he and Brian head back along the  
Pennsylvania Turnpike.

TODD

Her singing stuns because it stops  
your thinking and brings you right  
to that place at that moment with  
all the wonder of it. It's like  
coming upon an unexpected sunrise,  
with the landscape beginning to glow,  
the few sounds just emphasizing the  
vast quiet. The sheer beauty envelops  
you and paralyzes the monkey mind.  
You feel inside yourself the  
unconditioned and eternal where  
thoughts come and go like momentary  
insects on a window pane. For a  
moment, you're aware of the mystery  
that's your true home. Aly's selfless  
singing brings you there. That's  
why people are mesmerized by her.

BRIAN

That's kind of lovely itself.

They're brought back as Todd's cellphone rings and he answers  
it.

TODD

Hello?

(beat)

Oh, Mrs. Weston, hi. What's...

He begins to look shocked and concerned as he listens to  
what she's saying.

TODD (CONT'D)

I have no idea. Professor Anders  
and I were in New York making  
arrangements for Aly's representation.  
We're on our way back now. This is  
terrible. You don't suppose the  
mother's kidnapped them, do you?

Brian looks at Todd with alarm.

TODD (CONT'D)

(beat)

I didn't know she was still in there.  
I'm really worried. This is awful.

(beat)

Yes, as soon as we're there. It  
will be a couple of hours. If I  
think of anything, I'll let you know  
right away. And please, let me know  
anything you hear.

(beat)

Right, thank you. We'll be there as  
soon as we can.

He clicks off the phone and turns to Brian.

TODD (CONT'D)

Aly and Markie have disappeared.  
They were gone from their houses  
this morning. The police are  
searching, the other kids say they  
don't know anything.

BRIAN

Oh my god.

Todd slaps the steering wheel, his fear making him angry.

TODD

I knew she wouldn't leave Markie.  
She always said she wouldn't. She  
must have gotten him and run off.  
They're on the streets. Anything  
could happen. This is terrible.  
Why didn't they let me take them!

BRIAN

It'll be all right. She's tough, we  
know that. And smart. They'll be  
okay, and two children aren't going  
to get far. The police will find  
them.

TODD

Hasn't this kid had enough? What  
kind of life is this for her? I  
won't let this happen again if I  
have to kidnap them myself.

BRIAN

Go faster. We'll take the tickets.

Todd swings out and accelerates past another car.

EXT. PENNSYLVANIA TURNPIKE - CONTINUOUS

Brian's car shrinks as it zooms away down the turnpike.

EXT. HUMAN SERVICES BUILDING - LATER

Brian's car comes up to the Human Services building in downtown Pittsburgh and screeches to a stop in the red zone, Todd and Brian jumping out and rushing inside.

INT. LINDA WESTON'S OFFICE - MOMENTS LATER

Todd and Brian come in and Linda gets up to meet them.

TODD

So you let them get away again?

LINDA

Well, we didn't let them, but they're all right. The bus clerk tried to get them to wait while she went and called the police, but they vanished before anyone could stop them. That little minx.

TODD

(bitterly)

But you people wouldn't let me be with them. I couldn't care for them properly.

BRIAN

Todd, Todd, calm down. It will be okay.

TODD

Yeah? What if the clerk was a halfwit and sold them the tickets? That little girl and her brother would be alone on their way to Florida right now with no one the wiser. Anything could have happened. They could be on some plane to anywhere right now.

LINDA

The police have alerted all transit to be on the look-out for them. They're not going anywhere. They'll be found soon.

TODD

And then what? They go into some locked juvenile facility?

(MORE)

TODD (CONT'D)

That's what they need? They need a family that loves and protects them. That's what they need and never had. A little girl has to watch over her brother because no one else will.

LINDA

I understand your anguish, Mr. Morrison -- Todd. This is awful, I agree. But we're doing our best with what we have.

TODD

That's not good enough.

He turns and storms out. Brian gestures at Linda in apology, but she understands. Brian goes out.

EXT. HUMAN SERVICES BUILDING - MOMENTS LATER

Todd is furious, pacing on the sidewalk as Brian comes out. Brian looks at the car in the red zone.

BRIAN

No ticket anyway.

TODD

What are we going to do?

BRIAN

What can we do? Let's drive around and look for them. We'll start down by the bus station and expand out.

TODD

That was hours ago. They could be anywhere. I'm really scared Aly's smart enough to get them out of the city to somewhere. What if she tries hitch-hiking? Oh my god!

BRIAN

Todd, coming unglued isn't going to help. We can only do what we can. Let's drive.

They both get in the car, Todd still driving.

INT. BRIAN'S CAR - MOMENTS LATER

They both scan the streets.

BRIAN

She must have seen the bus clerk was suspicious. She'd be worried about trying another thing like that. Maybe they just took local buses. No one would stop them from that. But where would they go?

TODD

She might go to my place. She must know I'd help her.

BRIAN

Good idea.

EXT. RANDOM STREET - CONTINUOUS

Brian's car flies around a corner and disappears.

EXT. TODD'S APARTMENT BUILDING - LATER

Todd and Brian come out of the passageway next to his building.

TODD

Right back there in that grungy alley I was the first to hear the most beautiful voice of all time. And now she's god-knows-where.

They look up and down the street then head down to Brian's car parked in front of the door.

TODD (CONT'D)

I'm going to leave a note on the front door in case she does come here.

BRIAN

I've got paper.

Brian opens the trunk of his car and from his briefcase among the luggage he takes a notebook and gives it to Todd with a pen. As Todd writes, Brian gets a roll of duck tape and shuts the trunk. Todd finishes the note, tears it out and takes the tape from Brian, giving him the notebook.

TODD

Thanks.

He tapes the note to the front door and breaths out.

TODD (CONT'D)

Aly, please let me help you.

Brian takes the tape.

BRIAN  
We'll find them. Let's try their  
apartment.

They get back in the car, Todd driving, Brian throwing the tape and notebook in the back seat.

EXT. STREET OUTSIDE APARTMENT BUILDING - LATER

Todd and Brian come out of Aly's building, still scanning as they get in the car and it pulls away.

INT. BRIAN'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

BRIAN  
Do you know where her school is?

Todd shakes his head as he turns the corner.

TODD  
We'll ask someone.

He looks as he passes Mr. Rodriguez's store.

P.O.V. TODD - CONTINUOUS

The sign reading "RODRIQUEZ'S CONVENIENCE."

BACK TO SCENE

Todd hurriedly pulls over.

BRIAN  
You going to ask here?

TODD  
Aly told me about the guy in that store. He would give them free food. She said he gave her a ride from her friend Amelia's and bought sandwiches for her and Markie. She might have gone to this Amelia's.

BRIAN  
(poignantly to himself)  
Amelia.

They hurriedly get out of the car.

INT. CONVENIENCE STORE - MOMENTS LATER

Mr. Rodriguez, having no idea what's happened, is stocking the shelves as Todd and Brian come in.

TODD

Mr. Rodriguez?

Mr. Rodriguez doesn't remember Todd.

MR. RODRIQUEZ

Yes?

TODD

Do you remember me? I was with Aly Barrett that day when I asked you for a pen and paper?

His expression darkens.

MR. RODRIQUEZ

Oh yeah. You.

TODD

I don't know if you knew, but Human Services took Aly and Markie from their mother and put them in homes.

MR. RODRIQUEZ

(concerned)

Oh, no. I just heard they moved.

TODD

Now they've run away from the homes they were in. They're wandering around somewhere.

MR. RODRIQUEZ

(shocked)

What?

TODD

The police are looking for them and so are we. She told me you gave her a ride from some friend's house named Amelia. Where is this Amelia's?

MR. RODRIQUEZ

A friend's house named Amelia? No. My wife and I once drove her from the cemetery on Ellesmore.

(MORE)



MR. RODRIQUEZ (CONT'D)  
 My father-in-law is buried there and  
 I saw Aly singing down by the grave  
 of a little girl named Amelia. That  
 must be who you're thinking of.

Brian staggers against one of the shelves, Todd looking with  
 alarm at his ashen face.

TODD  
 Brian, are you all right? What?  
 Your heart?

BRIAN  
 (gasping)  
 That's my daughter's grave -- Amelia,  
 my little girl.

MR. RODRIQUEZ  
 With the beautiful stone statue?

Todd puts his arm around Brian.

TODD  
 Are you all right?

Brian nods.

MR. RODRIQUEZ  
 She told me she felt as if Amelia  
 was her sister and she sang to her.

BRIAN  
 Oh, my lord.

MR. RODRIQUEZ  
 She liked it there because it was  
 peaceful and pretty.

TODD  
 (to Mr. Rodriguez)  
 Thank you.  
 (to Brian)  
 You okay to go?

Brian nods and they start out.

MR. RODRIQUEZ  
 Hey, I want to give you my number  
 and you give me your's. You let me  
 know what's happening, if I see  
 anything I'll call you.

Brian goes on out as Todd hurries and gets out his card while Mr. Rodriguez writes his info on a notepad and gives the sheet to Todd.

MR. RODRIQUEZ (CONT'D)  
I'm going to walk around the  
neighborhood, see if I can find them.

TODD  
Great. Thanks again. We'll be in  
touch.

He goes out as Mr. Rodriguez starts to lock up.

EXT. GRAVEYARD ROAD - LATER

Brian is driving as he and Todd pull up on the road by Amelia's grave, jumping out and hurrying down to it, looking around. There's no one there.

Brian looks at the statue and the inscription then at a new bunch of fresh wildflowers in the vase, not the ones Aly left earlier. He looks with love at the statue. He kisses his fingers and touches the angel's lips.

BRIAN  
Amelia...

TODD  
I'm so sorry, Brian.

BRIAN  
Life.

TODD  
Do you need a moment alone?

Brian looks around.

BRIAN  
Her refuge was this graveyard -- her  
best friend a stone statue.

He looks at Todd.

BRIAN (CONT'D)  
I want to find this living angel.

Todd takes a deep breath as he looks around.

TODD  
(anguished)  
Where do we go?  
(MORE)

TODD (CONT'D)

It's going to be dark soon and they're still out there somewhere.

BRIAN

We keep looking until they're found, that's all.

They start back for the car when they hear it -- Aly's heavenly SINGING suddenly drifting in the air: "When you wish upon a star..."

They stop and look around as she continues singing.

"...makes no difference who you are..."

TODD

The woods!

They both run for the woods, scrambling through the rickety fence and plunging in.

EXT. WOODS - CONTINUOUS

They follow her voice through the trees and see ahead of them between two trees a lean-to built of the scrap lumber and carpet remnants left in the woods. Aly's voice is coming from behind it.

They slow and stop to listen a moment, taken in despite everything. They look at one another in wonder at that unbelievable voice.

Aly pauses and they step around the lean-to.

Aly and Markie jump in fright, ready to flee, but then recognize who has found them.

TODD

That was beautiful, of course.

Aly slumps in resignation.

ALY

That dream is over. What now?

Before Todd can reply, Brian says determinedly:

BRIAN

Come with us. You'll see.

Todd doesn't know what Brian has in mind, but it has to be good because he won't allow anything else.

TODD

We go.

Markie looks to Aly who begins gathering up their things, stuffing them in the backpacks, Markie moving to help, looking apprehensive while his sister is resigned.

They get up and they all move through the trees back towards the graveyard, Brian leading with Aly behind him, Todd bringing up the rear.

EXT. GRAVEYARD - MOMENTS LATER

Brian has his cellphone out as he and Aly wait while Todd helps Markie through the fence and then follows him through, Brian staring off at his daughter's grave. Todd and Markie join them.

BRIAN

(to Todd)

Go on ahead, I'll make the call.

As Todd leads the children up towards Brian's car on the roadway, Aly looks back at Brian.

P.O.V. ALY - CONTINUOUS

Brian has his head down, his back turned as he holds the cellphone to his ear.

BACK TO SCENE

Aly frowns and says to Markie:

ALY

Back to our jail cells.

Markie doesn't like it either.

ANGLE ON

Aly looks over at Amelia's angel statue.

ALY (CONT'D)

Goodbye, Amelia.

MARKIE

Bye, Amelia.

ALY

I'll still bring you flowers, don't worry.

Todd looks at her and puts his arm around the children's shoulders as they walk in a group.

EXT. GRAVEYARD ROAD - MOMENTS LATER

As Todd holds the back door of the car for Markie and Aly to get in, he looks back at Brian talking on the phone.

P.O.V. TODD - CONTINUOUS

Brian is by his daughter's grave looking at the angel as he talks intently on his cellphone.

BACK TO SCENE

When the children are in and seated, their backpacks on the floor, Todd carefully closes the door and gets in the front passenger seat.

INT. BRIAN'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

Todd turns to face the children in the back, both of them staring listlessly out their windows.

TODD  
 You two knuckleheads really scared  
 us. You can't do that again.  
 (beat, to Aly)  
 Florida? Really?

Aly looks at him.

ALY  
 You know about that.

TODD  
 You are something.

ALY  
 We don't want to be split up.

Todd nods.

TODD  
 I know. I know.

Aly idly picks up the role of tape next to the notebook.

TODD (CONT'D)  
 I used those to leave a note for you  
 on my door. I would have never  
 stopped looking.

Despite her gloom, Aly has to smile.

ALY

I was going to call you after we got settled.

TODD

Had your apartment and all.

Aly nods, making Todd smile, Aly noticing his amused skepticism.

ALY

Yeah, it probably wouldn't have worked anyway. I wish I was older.

MARKIE

You tried, Aly. That was good.

She appreciates her brother's approval and they bump fists.

Brian comes up and gets in the car, glancing at Todd and nodding. He starts the car and begins heading out.

Aly looks at her brother and shrugs, resigned to the inevitable.

EXT. THE ANDERS' STREET - MOMENTS LATER

Brian's car pulls out of the graveyard onto his street, going just a short ways before turning into his driveway.

INT. BRIAN'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

They stop outside the garage. Aly and Markie are looking quizzically, impressed by the house.

ALY

Where are we?

Brian turns to face them, Todd looking on.

BRIAN

This was your friend Amelia's home.

ALY

Amelia the angel?

Brian nods, a bit sad.

BRIAN

She was our daughter -- Mrs. Anders' and mine.

Aly is shocked, looking at the imposing house, then remembers her manners.

ALY  
I'm sorry. I think she must have  
been very nice.

MARKIE  
Me, too.

BRIAN  
Thank you. She was very nice. We  
loved her very much.

He looks at Aly and Markie and his mood brightens.

BRIAN (CONT'D)  
C'mon.

EXT. REAR OF ANDERS' HOME - CONTINUOUS

Brian and Todd get out and the children follow their lead,  
leaving their backpacks since they expect to be coming back,  
closing the doors after getting out.

Brian opens one of the back doors and picks up both packs  
before leading the way inside.

INT. ANDERS' HOME - CONTINUOUS

Brian sets down the backpacks.

Pauline comes in and smiles at her husband and Todd then the  
children.

BRIAN  
Children, this is Mrs. Anders, my  
wife, Pauline.

ALY  
Hello, Mrs. Anders.

MARKIE  
Hello.

PAULINE  
It's very nice to meet you both.  
(to Aly)  
I understand you were Amelia's friend.

Aly nods.

ALY  
We're so sorry you lost her. I didn't  
really know her, of course. But I  
always tell her I love her and she's  
my sister in heaven.

PAULINE

Oh, my. Thank you very much. I know she hears you and loves you, too.

She looks at her husband and he nods.

She goes and gets down in front of the children, taking one of each of their hands, Aly and Markie puzzled but polite.

PAULINE (CONT'D)

Children -- Aly, Markie -- I want to tell you that when you're comfortable with it, when you're ready and you feel as if it's natural, I want you to call me Mom -- because this is your new home. You're going to live here with us until you go off to college.

The children are stunned, Aly not quite believing it, looking at Brian and Todd grinning at her. She looks at Pauline.

ALY

Are you sure?

PAULINE

We couldn't be more sure. You both are home right now, together, for as long as you need us -- forever, I hope.

Markie turns to Aly.

MARKIE

Oh, Aly. You did it!

Pauline lets go of their hands, and Aly and her brother hug each other.

Aly turns and throws her arms around Pauline, saying:

ALY

Thank you, thank you...

Aly pulls back and looks at her.

ALY (CONT'D)

...Mom.

Pauline gasps, having her life returned to her in one instant by this little girl, pulling Aly against her so tightly Aly has to bite her lip.



Markie exclaims:

MARKIE

This is better than Florida!

They all laugh and begin hugging one another, all tangled up together.

ORCHESTRAL MUSIC RISES, the intro to *Can You Feel the Love Tonight*.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. CONCERT HALL - EVENING

Aly's dream come true, beautiful in a gorgeous gown on an elaborately dressed stage with a full orchestra, Todd near her playing the grand piano as she SINGS "There's a calm surrender..."

She sings the entire song.

Aly ends on that note that pierces the heart to receive an enthusiastic standing ovation in the packed concert hall, some in the audience wiping tears as Aly charmingly acknowledges the applause.

Clapping in the front row center are Jack Foster with Linda Weston next to him then Pauline with Markie next to her dressed in a suit and tie, Brian on his other side with Aly's friend Dani next to him followed by Mrs. and Mr. Rodriguez.

Markie is clapping crazily for his big sister on the stage who points at him and blows him a kiss that he returns to her, Pauline and Brian smiling down at him.

Pauline looks at her husband with a completely happy expression and he smiles at her with his own heart healed.

Aly looks over at Todd who wistfully looks at her with his head slightly tilted as he thinks of all that's happened, Aly bowing to the audience to cover her emotion.

INT. BRIAN'S CAR - DAY

As they ride in Brian's car, everyone is dressed in casual clothes, Brian driving, Pauline next to him, Todd in the back seat with Markie in the middle next to him and Aly on the other side, the children more relaxed and polished than they've ever been as they pass the cemetery entrance heading for the Anders' home, now all four of the happy family.

Aly looks out the window into the cemetery down towards Amelia's grave.

ALY

Hi, Amelia. We're home.

The others in various ways also greet Amelia cheerfully.

Brian and Pauline look at one another and smile, their sadness having been taken away with the joy of these children who make it seem as if Amelia is back with them again as well.

EXT. THE ANDERS' STREET - CONTINUOUS

The car turns into the driveway of the house, Todd's jeep parked in front.

INT. BRIAN'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

As they pull up to the back, Aly recites their new home-coming ritual:

ALY

Home again, home again...

They all join in:

EVERYONE

...hippity hop!

They all laugh.

Brian parks before the garage and, as they unbuckle their seat belts, Pauline turns to address Aly and Markie, Brian and Todd smiling at the children.

PAULINE

Before we go in, I have something to tell you. We have a new housekeeper who's going to live with us and help take care of you. But we don't want anyone who isn't acceptable to you. So you have to decide. You give her a try, make a decision together, but don't say anything to her. You let us know one way or the other, and we'll take care of it. You have to like her for her to stay. But if you do, she's here forever.

Aly is puzzled and looks at Markie who shrugs.

ALY

Okay.

MARKIE

Yeah, okay.

PAULINE

Fine. I think you'll love her.

They all get out, Todd and Brian exchanging knowing glances as they all head inside.

INT. ANDER'S HOME - MOMENTS LATER

They come inside and the children suddenly stop, staring at the woman waiting for them, their mother, her appearance much improved.

KAREN

Hello Aly, hello Markie.

They stand a second then run and clutch her.

Karen has tears as she gets on her knee so they can all hold each other.

KAREN (CONT'D)

I'm so sorry. It was all my fault.  
I'm so sorry.

Aly and Markie wipe their eyes and look at her a moment then both kiss her, Karen ecstatic.

The others are moved watching the scene.

Aly turns and runs to Pauline who bends so Aly can kiss her then Brian and then Todd.

She steps back and looks at everyone with gratitude.

ALY

I'm happy, truly happy. And when  
I'm happy...

She begins SINGING, more beautifully than anyone has ever sung.

SOAR OUT

THE END