

Room

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Darkness. The faint background hum of a refrigerator. A light clicks on, briefly, then snaps off again.

Then on again, for a little longer.

We wake groggily with JACK (five), blinking up at MA (26). She's standing in a worn t-shirt and underwear beside a lamp, switching it on and off at apparently random intervals. She cranes up at the recessed skylight, Room's only window.

The irregular flashes of lamp-light reveal glimpses of this little world lined with cork: ten foot a side, seven foot high, gabled ceiling rising to ten foot.

Clusters of Jack's and Ma's vivid drawings are pinned all over the walls, quivering in the draft from the vents. Done with five crayons (red, yellow, blue, orange, green) and pencil on toilet tissue, lined pages or cardboard, they show dogs, trees, aliens, rocket ships, figures labelled 'Jack' or 'Ma'. Delicate mobiles (uncooked spaghetti, threads, plastics, foil, down from pillows, cloth scraps) dangle.

A wardrobe with slatted louver doors. On top, toys crafted from garbage, a Labyrinth from toilet-roll insides.

A dresser with a TV. A homemade pack of cards, papier mâché checkers and chess. A Fort constructed from vitamin and other bottles and cans. A single meagre African violet in a pot on the TV.

A round dining table, two fold-up chairs side by side.

A bath with a single small towel over the side.

A toilet, with a flotilla of homemade toy boats floating in the tank which is oddly missing a lid.

A sink, with a single worn toothbrush, toothpaste, dish soap, a broken comb, folded rags for washcloths. A small square of mirror tile hung up over it.

A small kitchen cabinet. A dish rack: two each of big and small white plates, bowls, tumblers, knives, forks, spoons (one with a melted handle), a scissors, can opener, serrated knife, wooden spoon, spatula.

A basic stove (with more folded rags on its handle, for pot holders), one frying pan and one saucepan.

A small refrigerator (more toys on top), a tiny trash.

A rocker. Above, a shelf. Ten books stacked. Homemade toys.

A reddish Persian-style rug on the floor.

A grey steel door, no handle. On the wall, a ten-digit keypad with a red light like a watching eye.

Ma looks over at Jack and sees that he's awake. She mouths 'Sh' at him, soothing him back to sleep. Keeps signalling.

Darkness again, as Jack's eyelids fall.

TITLE: ROOM

Faint light. Jack and Ma sleep face to face in a double bed under a thin quilt. Pale skin, long hair, wearing t-shirts.

JACK (V.O.)

You cried all day and left TV on till you were a zombie. But then I zoomed down from heaven through Skylight into Room -

(makes noise of descent,
then crash landing)

and I was kicking you from the inside, boom boom, and then I shot out onto Rug with my eyes wide open, and you cutted the cord and said "Hello Jack."

Jack wakes.

JACK

Ma. I'm five!

CHAPTER TITLE: PRESENTS

A little later, Ma, at the kitchen counter, measures out two small bowls of cereal.

Jack moves round Room touching things: Rug's rusty bloodstain from his birth; the scarred Table; chairs; faucets, etc.

JACK

Morning lamp, Morning rug, Morning wardrobe ..

(he looks under the bed)

(MORE)

JACK (CONT'D)

Morning Eggsnake. It's my birthday.
I'm five.

Ma puts breakfast on the table. Sits.

Jack sits, too. Ma gives him a half vitamin pill from an almost empty tub. She takes a contraceptive pill from a generic pack. They start to eat. Ma winces.

JACK (CONT'D)
Is Bad Tooth hurting?

MA
(taps her head)
Mind over matter.

He taps his head too as he chants the slogan.

JACK
If we don't mind, it doesn't
matter.

MA
Guess what we're going to make
later.

JACK
What?

MA
A cake.

JACK
A birthday cake, like in TV?

MA
But for real.

A little later, Ma is brushing Jack's teeth (with their single, frayed brush) zealously. He spits with vigor.

A little later, Ma and Jack are looking at two small piles of clothes.

MA
Come on slow poke.

JACK
You, pink soft, pink swirls.

MA
You always pick that. But I guess
it's your birthday.

She reaches for her clothes.

JACK
Me, bear and jeans.

MA
Good choice!

A little later. Ma scrubs the floor with an old cloth diaper while Jack watches TV. Both in t-shirt and jeans (Jack's with worn-out knees), but shoeless.

DORA THE EXPLORER
We couldn't have done it without you. Thanks for helping. *Gracias*.

The salsa theme tune starts.

MA
Off, please.

JACK
Just one more planet.

Ma stands up, doing a zombie impression.

MA
Too much TV will turn us into zombies ... Anyway, it's time to mark how tall you are.

This makes him switch the TV off fast and run to the door.

Ma marks his height with a tiny 5 in black pen on the cork.

Jack ducks and uses his fingers to measure the gap. Frowns.

JACK
I'm not very taller after four.

MA
Oh, that's pretty normal.

JACK
Yeah?

MA
Everything's hunky-dory.

JACK
Okey-dokey.

He touches the space between 3 (in red) and 4 (in black).

JACK (CONT'D)

That's where Red Pen died and we
got Black Pen for Sunday Treat.
Hey, what about cookies?

MA

Sorry, I already asked for jeans
for you for Sunday Treat.

He swallows his disappointment.

JACK

I'm going to grow and grow till I'm
a giant. Look, Ma. Look how big my
superpowers are already.

He makes a tiny bicep. Ma musters enthusiasm at the prospect
of him growing up.

MA

You'll be as strong as Samson soon.

JACK

(holding up his long hair)
Huger every day.

MA

Gigantic.

JACK

Enormous. Hugeormous.

MA

Good word sandwich.

He starts leaping around the room, moving gracefully between
all the familiar obstacles.

JACK

I'm going to be Jack the Giant
Giant-Killer and burst out of
Skylight into Space with my dog
Lucky and boing boing boing between
all the planets...

A little later, playing 'Track'. The rug is draped over the
table on the bed. They run back and forward on a worn C, both
of them training hard, like athletes.

Later, the furniture is back in place. Jack picks *Dylan the Digger* from his stack, which includes *Pop-Up Airport*, *My Big Book of Nursery Rhymes*, *The Runaway Bunny*, *Alice in Wonderland*. (He ignores the adult books - *The Da Vinci Code*, *Twilight*, *The Guardian*, *Bittersweet Love*, *The Shack*.)

Ma can't hide her revulsion at *Dylan the Digger* again.

MA

Come on, you can read Dylan yourself.

JACK

I can read them all but I like when you do.

Ma recites animatedly. Jack turns the board pages, not noticing that Ma's eyes are shut as she reads from memory.

MA

Heeeeeere's Dylan, the sturdy digger! / The loads he shovels get bigger and bigger. / Watch his long arm delve into the earth, / No excavator so loves to munch dirt.

Later, Jack blows the second of two small eggs, keeping the shell intact. Beating butter and sugar, Ma keeps up their Rhyme game.

MA

Our friend Table... just isn't able.

Jack pours the eggs into her bowl of butter and sugar.

JACK

Our friend Spoon, sings to the moon.

Ma beats the eggs in.

MA

Our friend Knife runs for his life.

She winces in pain, and shakes out her right wrist. Jack notices and takes over, beating the batter for her.

Later: Ma strings the shells onto the needle tongue of their Eggsnake, made of eggshells crayoned, given paper clothes, foil crowns, colored wool for hair... Eggsnake is hundreds of eggs long.

A little later. The birthday cake is small, brown, plain. Ma makes a 5 with thin white icing.

MA
Abracadabra!

JACK
Now the candles.

Reading her face, his crumples.

JACK (CONT'D)
You said a birthday cake for real.
That means candles on fire.

MA
Jack -

JACK
You should ask for candles for
Sunday Treat, not dumb jeans.

MA
Sorry. I have to ask for stuff we
really need that he can get easily.

JACK
But Old Nick gets anything, by
magic.

MA
Try your cake, I bet it's
delicioso.

But Jack is sulking. She hugs him, quietly soothing him.

JACK
Next week when I'm six you better
ask for real candles.

MA
Next year, you mean.

Later: Half the cake is eaten.

Jack is kneeling at the bath. There's a bucket with dishes in front of him. He's washing up as expertly as an adult.

Later. Steam makes Room mysterious. Jack lies on Ma in the bath, both with bubble moustaches. End of the Selkie story:

MA

But one day the mermaid finds where
the fisherman hid her comb.

JACK

Ha ha.

MA

So she runs home to the sea.

She lets her head and face sink under the water.

Jack sits up on her, upset.

Ma emerges and opens her eyes. Realizes what's wrong.

MA (CONT'D)

Of course she takes her Baby Jack
with her.

JACK

Does he drown?

MA

No, he's half-merman. He can
breathe air or water, whichever.

Satisfied, Jack leans over to scoop up the pile of clothes.

JACK

Laundry Time.

With relish, he plunges them under the water.

Laundry is hung up to dry everywhere. Ma and Jack are in their sleep t-shirts and underwear. She sits breastfeeding him and telling him a story.

MA
... and Edmond swims and swims to
the island of Monte Cristo and digs
up all the treasure, and ...

A little later Jack watches as Ma places blankets and a
pillow on the floor of the wardrobe.

JACK
Can we have more birthday cake?

MA
Tomorrow.

JACK
Just a bite.

MA
We've brushed our teeth already.

JACK
One more story?

She checks her watch nervously: getting close to nine.

MA
Jack, it's late. Come on.

Jack jumps in and snuggles down. Pictures of Dora and her
monkey Boots are glued on the back wall; this is a tiny room
within Room. Ma covers him up for the night.

She begins to sing 'The Big Rock Candy Mountain'.

A little later. Dim light comes through the slats. Jack lies
stroking the dangling clothes, the pictures glued to the
wardrobe. He freezes at the sound of the beeps that mean the
outside door is about to open.

He lies absolutely still, listening for Old Nick's entrance.
He savors the scent of fresh air, but shivers: winter.

Boom: now the door's shut again.

OLD NICK (O.S.)
Hey.

MA (O.S.)

Hey.

Jack goes up on his elbow to squint through the slats but only sees a bit of the man's down jacket as he takes it off.

OLD NICK (O.S.)

Here's the jeans.

MA (O.S.)

Thanks.

OLD NICK (O.S.)

The grapes were way too much, so I got canned pears.

Jack can see Ma as she puts groceries away.

MA

OK.

Now OLD NICK moves into view too. Forties, solidly built, blue-collar: a ordinary monster.

OLD NICK

What's that? A birthday cake?

He cuts himself a piece and eats it in a few bites.

Ma starts getting undressed.

OLD NICK (CONT'D)

Shoulda told me, I'd have brought him a present.

Jack twitches at this thrilling possibility.

Old Nick starts undressing too: like some dull marriage.

OLD NICK (CONT'D)

What's he now, four?

Jack, in the wardrobe, is all agog for Ma to correct him.

JACK

(too low to be heard)

Five.

Sounds of the adults getting into bed. The lamp clicking off.

Then the familiar creaks of the bed. Jack doesn't know what they mean but is troubled. He counts them under his breath.

(CONTINUED)

JACK (CONT'D)

One, two, three, four...

JACK (V.O.)

There's Room, then Outer Space, then Heaven. Plant is real but not trees. Spiders are real and one time the mosquito that was sucking my blood. But squirrels and dogs are just TV, except Lucky my dog that might be some day. Mountains are too big to be real and the sea.

In the dark of the wardrobe, Jack is still counting.

JACK

One twenty-eight, one twenty-nine...

JACK (V.O.)

TV persons are flat and made of colors with red mouths and clothes instead of skin but me and you are real. Old Nick I don't know if he's real, maybe half? Green beans are real and chocolate but not ice cream.

The bedsprings are speeding up.

JACK

Three hundred six, seven, eight -

A primal grunt from Old Nick. The creaking is done. Jack is asleep at the bottom of the wardrobe.

Old Nick goes over to the TV and switches on sports.

MA

Shh.

He turns down the volume. The sound of the sports broadcast overlaps with the thud of the door closing. The wardrobe door opens admitting the faint light of the L.E.D on the keypad.

We cut to a shot of Ma putting a sleeping Jack into the bed. As she starts to climb in beside we pull back and crane up.

Next morning. Jack watches a nature programme on TV: time-lapse photography of one glorious tree.

Ma is using a needle and thread to take in Jack's new, much-too-big jeans. Jack finds a trodden cigarette butt under the corner of the rug. Old Nick must have brought it in on his shoe. Jack studies it.

TV NARRATOR (V.O.)

Fallen leaves decompose and return nutrients to the soil.

MA

(to herself, referring to the jeans)

Cheap piece of ...

Jack looks at the sad African violet on the bedside table.

JACK

Why Plant doesn't make flowers anymore?

MA

Maybe she's tired.

Jack, on the bed: he squirms, twists, bounces with intense boyish energy.

Beside the bed now, he runs on the spot at maximum speed. In the background we see Ma cooking.

15 OMITTED

15

16 INT. ROOM - DAY

16

Later the same day. Ma is napping. Jack is playing on the floor. Counting things. Tracing the patterns of rug with his finger.

What was that? He stares at the floor by the stove; glimpses something.

Jack tiptoes over, but the moving thing is gone. He looks furtively at Ma then takes out the cake. He crumbles some and sets the plate on the floor. He squats and waits.

A mouse puts its nose out, sniffs and takes a crumb.

Something smashes into the stove: one of Ma's heavy books.

Jack cries out in shock and distress.

JACK

You made him gone!

Ma starts to sweep up the crumbs.

JACK (CONT'D)

He was an alive thing, he was real!

MA

They'd steal our food.

She crawls under the counter, finds the hole. Tears aluminum foil from the roll. Scrunches it.

JACK

Mouse can have my food, I'm not hungry.

MA

They'd bring in germs, bite us in the night.

(CONTINUED)

JACK

Mouse is my friend and you splatted him dead.

MA

No I didn't, he's hunky-dory.

She stops blocking up the hole to hug Jack.

JACK

Are you just tricking me?

MA

I swear, he's safe at home with his Ma in the backyard.

JACK

What backyard?

Ma, realizing her slip, tidies up instead of answering.

JACK (CONT'D)

Mouse lives in a yard in TV?

Ma holds up the aluminum foil to distract him.

MA

Hey, let's make a UFO with this.

Jack brings out the other grudge he's been nursing.

JACK

Why you didn't tell Old Nick it was my birthday?

MA

Because he's not our friend.

JACK

He said he'd brung me a present.

MA

You shouldn't hear what he - You're meant to be asleep.

JACK

I never had a present.

MA

He didn't mean it.

JACK

It might be Lucky my dog.

(CONTINUED)

MA

Jack. We can't have a dog. We don't have room -

(sees him misunderstand)
- space, enough space - cooped up in here with the barking, the scratching...

JACK

Lucky won't scratch, he promises.

MA

There is no Lucky!

JACK

Yeah there is.

MA

He's just made-up, in your head, he's not real.

Devastated, Jack bursts into tears.

Ma sits down beside him and strokes him.

That evening. Jack sits in Ma's lap, watching a TALK-SHOW hostess interview a one-armed war veteran. Ma is threading eggshells onto a string, hundreds of shells long. Jack gently supports the unraveled part.

Ma lets out a big yawn and discreetly rubs her aching jaw.

HOSTESS

...most poignant aspect, I can speak for all our viewers, so, so deeply moved by what you endured.

JACK

Ma. Where are we when we're asleep?

MA

Right here in Room.

JACK

But dreams. Do we go into TV for dreaming?

MA

We're never anywhere but here.

JACK
I want some.

They put down Eggsnake and Ma turns to him so he can breastfeed.

Ma lies on the bed. Jack is nowhere to be seen. Eventually his voice comes from the wardrobe.

JACK
Ma! I think Old Nick lives in TV,
like Mouse. That's where he goes
when he's not here in Room.

MA
Jack. Go to sleep.

The third morning. Jack wakes up in the bed, where Ma always carries him once Old Nick has gone.

Ma is up already, sitting at the table, staring at a shiny red truck and remote in a hard pack. The snake is in Eden.

Jack can hardly believe what's in front of him. He looks at it for a while.

MA

You can open it.

We watch as Jack opens the box. Ma tries to help him when he finds the packaging difficult.

JACK

(pulling it away from her)

I can do it.

Later, Jack is playing with his new toy. Ma watches him uneasily. We hear a faint echo of screaming ...

CHAPTER TITLE: UNLYING The screaming get's louder.

Later, Ma is standing on a chair screaming and howling at the Skylight. Jack stands in the bath screaming into the small air vent above the shelf. He holds his truck up to the vent so it can join in.

Then they hush and listen.

JACK (CONT'D)

Why the aliens never scream back?

MA

I guess they still can't hear us.

JACK

Tomorrow we'll do even louderer.

Later, Ma, preoccupied, trims mold off cheese she slices very thin and lays on brown bread. Puts it in the toaster oven.

Jack zigzags his truck around chair and table legs. Ma checks to see if the frozen peas are boiling yet. Jack drives the truck at the door: clang.

MA

Jack!

JACK
What smells bad?

Ma belatedly realizes the grilled cheese is smoking.

She burns her hand slightly on the oven, wrenching it open.

That evening. Jack, in the wardrobe, is meant to be asleep but he's still playing with his truck.

The door beeps; he kneels up for a glimpse as it booms shut.

OLD NICK (O.S.)
Hey. What's the smell?

He puts down groceries, unzips his jacket.

MA (O.S.)
Sorry, I burned some cheese.

OLD NICK (O.S.)
You need to take more care.

MA (O.S.)
I will. I wasn't thinking.

OLD NICK
Yeah, well, thinking's not your strong suit.

MA (O.S.)
I know. I'm really sorry.

Ma is unpacking the groceries.

OLD NICK
So did he like his truck?

He laughs at her speechless discomfort.

OLD NICK (CONT'D)
I know boys, I was one once.

Ma looks at the empty bag.

MA
The vitamins?

OLD NICK
Waste of money.

MA
If we had a better diet, maybe...

OLD NICK (OVERLAPPING)
Here we go again. You know instead
of complaining maybe you should
thank your lucky stars you've got a
place like this. Cosy, safe,
specially with the kid - no drunk
drivers, drug-pushers, perverts...

MA
I'm sorry.

OLD NICK
Like pulling teeth sometimes.

Ma waits for him to calm down.

OLD NICK (CONT'D)
Your problem is you have no idea
about the world of today.

MA
No.

OLD NICK
Who pays the power bills? Who pays
for everything?

She gives the required answer.

MA
You.

OLD NICK
And where do you think the money's
going to keep coming from?

MA
What do you mean?

OLD NICK
Nothing.

MA
No, but -

OLD NICK (OVERLAPPING)
Six months I've been laid off, have
you had to worry your little head?

Pause as Ma takes in the implications of this. She proceeds
cautiously.

MA

What are you going to do?

He doesn't answer.

MA (CONT'D)

Are you... looking for another job?

OLD NICK (OVERLAPPING)

What job? There are no damn jobs,
Jesus Christ!

Jack, frightened, shrinks back in the wardrobe knocking into the back panel. Old Nick turns his attention to the wardrobe.

OLD NICK (CONT'D)

Hey in there.

MA

He's asleep.

OLD NICK

Don't think so. You keep him in the closet all day as well as all night? Poor little freak has two heads or something?

He roots in his jacket pockets and produces an already opened tube of hard candy.

OLD NICK (CONT'D)

Hey Jack. You like candy? Wanna come out and have some candy?

Jack, tempted, reaches for the door...

Desperate to distract Old Nick, Ma touches his arm.

MA

Let's go to bed.

Old Nick chuckles at this unaccustomed seductiveness.

MA (CONT'D)

Now.

OLD NICK

Didn't your Momma ever teach you manners?

MA

Please.

19 CONTINUED: (3)

19

Pocketing the candy, he wraps himself round her.

They edge backwards out of view.

The lamp snaps off.

20 INT. ROOM - WARDROBE - NIGHT

20

A little later, everything is quiet. Moonlight.

Jack, asleep in a crooked position, wakes with a jump. He sits up and rubs his neck. Finds his truck. He opens the door and peeks out. Where's the candy?

21 INT. ROOM - NIGHT

21

Stepping out, holding his truck for moral support, Jack stumbles into something and gasps. He picks it up: a thick leather belt, like a cobra.

(CONTINUED)

He takes another few steps and stubs his toe on a huge boot.

Jack stares at Old Nick, asleep in the middle of the bed.

Ma is sleeping too, clinging to the far side.

Now he's come this far, Jack forgets the candy, fascinated by Old Nick, whom he's seeing up close for the first time.

Jack puts his finger out, almost touching Old Nick's face.

Old Nick's eyes open, startled. Then he grins.

OLD NICK

Hey sonny.

Ma leaps up screaming and flailing at Old Nick.

MA

Get away from him! Get away!

Jack drops his truck and races to the wardrobe.

He jumps in and pulls the door, banging his head.

Jack clutches his head, curled up in the corner of the wardrobe, because it hurts, and to shut out Ma's screeching.

OLD NICK (O.S.)

Stop that noise.

Ma is suddenly muted. The thump of Old Nick throwing her down on the bed. The lamp snaps on. Jack flinches and turns his face away from the light.

OLD NICK (O.S.) (CONT'D)

Of all the crazy...

Sound of him pulling his clothes on, kicking the truck away.

MA (O.S.)

(hoarsely)

Just leave him alone.

The door makes the three beeps.

OLD NICK (O.S.)

Just don't forget where you got him.

Sound of the door opening, then shutting with a boom. Jack waits to hear what Ma will do or say to him.

The lamp clicks off again: darkness. Jack dives out of the wardrobe.

JACK

Sorry I - sorry - sorry -

He sobs and hyperventilates by the side of the bed.

JACK (CONT'D)

Sorry I came out of Wardrobe.

Ma takes him into bed with her.

MA

It's OK.

She soothes him.

Shot of ice-crystals on the skylight. Silence: no refrigerator hum.

Jack wakes first, shivering, though he doesn't know why. He is astonished by purple bruises around Ma's throat. As if she feels his gaze, Ma wakes and musters a smile. Jack notices the white clouds of their breath in the air.

JACK

Ma, we're dragons.

Ma sits up. Registers the chill. Getting out of bed, she turns on the lamp: no light. Jack is crushed to find his Jeep, one wheel snapped off.

Ma opens the refrigerator: dark inside. She's appalled.

MA

He's cut the power.

She glances at the keypad: its little red light is out.

With a wild, illogical hope, she hurls herself at the door and claws at its edges - but it's still locked. Jack watches, bewildered: he's never seen her try to open it.

Jack is at the table reading to his injured truck from ALICE. Both are dressed in all their clothes in an effort to keep warm.

JACK

For, you see, so many out-of-the-way things had happened lat-ely -

MA

Lately.

JACK

- lately, that Alice had begun to think that very few things indeed were really impossible.

Ma comes to the table and doles out half-thawed green beans.

MA

Lunch!

JACK

No thanks.

MA

We have to use them up before they rot. Once we eat we'll feel warmer.

Jack makes himself chew a limp bean. Ma nibbles a few, with a show of enthusiasm. Jack looks at his three-wheeled truck.

JACK

When's Old Nick going to put the power back?

MA

Soon.

JACK

When's soon?

MA

Once he's not mad with me anymore.

Jack watches the bruises on her throat move.

JACK

I hope he never comes back not
ever.

MA

Jack. Think about it.

He does, with difficulty.

JACK

No Sunday Treat?

MA

No anything.

Jack tries the bean again - then spits it out quietly. Ma
watches him, kisses him, forces herself to begin telling him
the truth.

MA (CONT'D)

Hey Jack. Remember the mouse?

JACK

My friend Mouse?

MA

You know where he is right now?

Jack looks all around Room.

MA (CONT'D)

On the other side of this wall.

Jack stares hard at the wall.

JACK

What other side?

MA

Oh Jack, everything has two sides.

JACK

Not an octagon.

MA

No, that's -

JACK (OVERLAPPING)
An octagon has eight.

Ma holds up her hand flat.

MA
But a wall's like this. And we're
on the inside, in Room, and Mouse
is on the outside, see?

JACK
In Outer Space?

MA
No, in the world. It's much closer
than Outer Space.

She shows him the distance with her hands.

JACK (OVERLAPPING)
I don't see any outside side.

MA
But if we were outside in the
world, we would, we'd be looking at
the other side of this wall, and
Mouse lying in the grass with his
Ma. We'd see trees and cars and -

JACK (OVERLAPPING)
Grass is just TV.

MA
Is it, though? You know when Door
opens and the air comes in, the air
that smells fresher - that's grass.

Jack tries to laugh.

JACK
You can't smell TV.

MA
But it's not TV. It's the real
world we smell. You're so smart, I
know you've started wondering.

Jack shakes his head.

MA (CONT'D)

Where do you think Old Nick gets our food?

JACK

From TV by magic.

MA

There's no magic! Everything we see on TV - it's pictures of real stuff and real people in the world.

JACK

Dora's real for real?

MA

No, sorry, not Dora, she's just a picture, but the other ones, with faces like ours - and there's real streets and oceans, dogs, cats -

JACK (OVERLAPPING)

No way. Where would they all fit?

MA

Just out there, in the world.

Jack, tired of this, changes the subject.

JACK

Can I have a sandwich?

Controlling her exasperation, Ma gets out a half slice of bread and adds a rationed scraping of peanut butter. She sets down his food and he comes to the table to eat it.

Ma stands with her hands in her armpits to warm them. She stares around as if for proof. Cranes up at the skylight.

MA
Look! A leaf!

JACK
Where?

MA
On skylight.

She climbs up on a chair and lifts Jack onto her shoulders so he can see. His head is close to the recessed skylight. He looks at a brown, sodden half-rotted leaf.

JACK
Dumbo Ma. That's not a leaf. Leaves are green.

MA
On the trees they are but when they fall they rot, like salad, in the fridge, they -.

JACK
(interrupting)
Where's all the stuff you said?
Trees and dogs and -

MA (OVERLAPPING)
Well, we can't see them from here because the skylight looks upwards instead of sideways.

Jack suddenly struggles to get down, nearly toppling them.

JACK (OVERLAPPING)
You're just tricking me.

MA
No I'm not.

JACK
Liar liar pants on fire!

MA
Jack. I couldn't explain before, you were too small to understand, so.. I had to make up a story.
(MORE)

MA (CONT'D)

But now - it's the opposite of lying, I'm *unlying*, because now you're five I think you can understand about the world, you *have* to understand.

Jack shakes his head, not in bewilderment but in resistance.

MA (CONT'D)

Jack -

JACK

I want to be four again.

They face each other, standing with the table between them. Ma musters the energy to try again, telling him her own story this time. She picks up Jack's copy of ALICE IN WONDERLAND.

MA

You know how Alice wasn't always in Wonderland?

JACK

She fell down down down the hole.

MA

Well, I'm like Alice. I wasn't always in Room.

A heavy silence, as Jack absorbs this.

MA (CONT'D)

I used to be a little girl called Joy. I lived-

JACK (OVERLAPPING)

Nah!

MA

I lived in a house out in the world
(taps on the wall)
- with my mom and dad. You'd call them Grandma and Grandpa.

JACK

What house?

MA

The house where we lived, with a hammock in the back yard. We used to swing in the hammock and eat ice cream.

JACK

A TV house?

MA

It's not TV, Jack. Are you listening?

No answer from him.

MA (CONT'D)

And then I was nearly grown up, I was seventeen, I was walking to school and -

JACK

Where was I?

MA

Still up in heaven. So this guy ran up to me, saying his -

JACK (OVERLAPPING)

What guy?

MA

We call him Old Nick, but I don't know his real name. He pretended his dog was sick, he seemed really -

JACK (OVERLAPPING)

What's the dog's name?

MA

There was no dog. It was just a trick to get me into his truck. Old Nick stole me.

JACK

I want a different story.

MA

You need to hear this one. He put me in his garden shed.

JACK

Where?

MA

Here. Room's the shed. He's the only one with the code - secret numbers to open the door. I've been locked in here for seven years. Do you understand?

(CONTINUED)

Jack's had enough.

JACK
This story's boring.

Beat.

MA
Jack, the world. You wouldn't believe how big it is. Room's only a tiny stinky piece of it.

JACK
Room's not stinky. Only when you do a fart.

Ma sit's down. She doesn't look at Jack.

MA
OK.

JACK
I don't believe in your stinky world.

MA
(bitter, still not looking at him)
Fine. That's fine Jack.

Another long miserable pause. Jack, angry and upset, watches her for a while then sits down on the floor and takes out his toys from under the TV. He plays quietly.

Ma looks up at the skylight. As she watches a gust of wind blow the leaf away.

LATER - dusk

Ma and Jack are in bed, under the duvet in their clothes, shuddering with cold. Jack tries the lamp. Nothing. He fixes the dents in the shade then lies back down. A terrible flatness in the air. Ma is turned away from Jack. She has been crying.

26 CONTINUED:

26

27 INT. ROOM - DAY

27

Next morning, a sunny day. Jack wakes up beside Ma.

JACK
It's warm again.

But she pulls the pillow over her head.

He knows it's one of her rare catatonic Gone days.

(CONTINUED)

Later. Jack eats cereal and watches DORA (sound on very low).

DORA AND BOOTS

Where do we go next? River, Bridge,
Highest Hill. Will you check my
backpack for something to help us?

Later. TV off. Jack creeps up to Ma and studies what he can see of her bruises, which are more purple-black today.

He tries to read Ma's watch but the angle makes it hard.

He plays at switching Ma on with the remote.

Later. Jack plays chess (with their homemade papier mâché set) against his truck.

Later. Kicks a shrivelled red balloon to keep it in the air.

Later. It's turned cloudy. Jack nibbles a bagel at the table.

Later. He makes a tour of his domain, his friends.

JACK (V.O.)

Eggsnake's our longest friend and
fanciest. Meltedy Spoon's the best
to eat with because he's more
blobbier. Labyrinth is the
twistiest and she hides things so I
don't know where. Toilet's the best
at disappearing poo. Lamp's the
brightest except when the powercut.

(glances at Ma)

You're the best at reading and
songs and lots except if you're
having a Gone Day. I'm the best at
drawing and jumping and growing and
nearly everything.

He examines the truck's broken axle. Yanks on another wheel until it snaps off. Then the last two. He twists the doors off. Stuffs the truck, its parts and remote in the trash.

Later, light fading. Jack lies beside Ma, longing to breastfeed. Lifts the edge of her t-shirt, but doesn't dare.

He sits up, rests his hand on the bump of Ma's foot.

Next day. Ma (apparently normal again) and Jack finish their cereal.

MA

Apple?

He takes a big bite and hands it back to her.

Ma bites in, winces. She reaches into her mouth and pulls out a tooth.

MA (CONT'D)

About time.

JACK

Bad Tooth? Can I have it?

MA

Sure, if you want it.

A little later. Jack is watching wildlife while Ma cleans up from breakfast: baby turtles emerging from shells and heading down the beach.

Tying up the trash bag, she finds the truck, and realizes that Jack has destroyed it because it came from Old Nick.

JACK

Are turtles real?

Ma's head shoots up: this is the first sign that he's starting to believe her about the world.

MA

Totally real. I had a pet turtle.

DAVID ATTENBOROUGH

Crocodiles, sharks, and hungry fish are all waiting in the shallows.

JACK

Crocodiles and sharks -

MA

They're all real.

Curious, Jack switches channels: a 1970 BBC mini-series, THE SIX WIVES OF HENRY VIII.

ANNE

Oh, my lord...

HENRY

(eyeing the child)

Not while he plays here...

ANNE

(smiling)

I'll send him away -

JACK (OVERLAPPING)

Real?

MA

Ah, they're real people playing dress-up, pretending to be people from hundreds of years ago.

Jack is puzzled by that.

He switches channels: TOM AND JERRY.

JACK

Just TV?

MA

You're getting it!

He watches the slapstick violence with relish.

JACK

When Old Nick comes back, I'm going to kick him in the butt.

This suddenly punctures her mood.

MA

Jack.

Ma marches over and turns off the TV, startling him.

MA (CONT'D)

One night I stood behind the door with the lid of the toilet tank -

Jack looks towards it, confused: what lid?

MA (CONT'D)

- it used to have a lid, it was the heaviest thing in Room. When he came in I tried to smash it down on his head. But I messed up, Jack. He shoved the door shut and grabbed me by the wrist - that's why it's sore now.

JACK

We could wait till he's asleep and kill him dead.

MA

Yes we could, but then we'd have no more food - and we wouldn't know the code, on the door, to get out.

JACK

The Grandma and the Grandpa could come.

MA

They don't know where we are, Jack. Room's not on any map.

His eyes slide to the blank screen.

JACK

Can I have more TV?

MA

Jack, I want you to listen to me.
Jack!

He looks at her.

MA (CONT'D)

You're old enough now and we can't
wait any longer ... Jack you are
going to help me trick Old Nick
like Jack in the stories is always
tricking the giant.

A little later, Water boils in a pot on the stove. Jack lies
on the bed.

MA

I'm going to make your face so
scorching hot that Old Nick will
take you to the hospital in his
truck, and the minute you get there
you'll tell the doctors, 'Help!
Police!

JACK

You can tell it.

MA

I'll write you a note to give them.

JACK

You can give them.

MA

I won't be in the hospital, I'll be here.

Jack jumps up, rigid with panic.

JACK

No. No.

MA

It'll be OK.

JACK

With you!

MA

He won't take us both. You'll go first, just to the hospital so you can tell the police, and then...

Her conviction falters at this point, but she fakes it.

MA (CONT'D)

Then you'll come rescue me.

He shakes his head.

MA (CONT'D)

We'll be free. Go on hikes, see birds. Ride in cars and trains and planes. I'll teach you to swim. We'll have friends. And a dog - we'll call him Lucky. A party with a cake with candles, our friends singing.

Jack thinks.

JACK

Maybe next year when I'm six.

Ma's face falls. Then hardens.

MA

Tonight.

Jack starts shaking his head frantically.

MA (CONT'D)

It has to be tonight.

Jack flees to the wardrobe, to shut himself in.

MA (CONT'D)

Listen to me.

She stops him before he can slam the louver doors.

MA (CONT'D)

I'm going to tell him the powercut
made you so cold, you got a fever.
We might not get another chance.
It's a miracle he didn't come last
night.

JACK

Tomorrow.

MA

I'm your Ma. Sometimes I have to
pick for both of us.

Slowly, she pulls, till his small hands release the doors.

Later. Jack is back on the bed, his face red. Ma holds a
cloth wrung out with hot water over his forehead.

JACK

Ow!

MA

You need to feel hot when he
touches you.

Jack starts crying at the prospect. Ma strokes him as she
presses the bag to his forehead.

MA (CONT'D)

Crying's good, it makes you look
sicker.

Then she moves the bag to each cheek in turn.

MA (CONT'D)

And stay floppy, remember? You're
too weak to move or say a word.

She shoves her fingers down her throat to make her retch.

JACK
What are you doing?

Ma manges to vomit a little.

She rubs it on the pillow beside Jack, which horrifies him.

MA
Makes you smell sick.

Ma checks her watch, and presses the cloth to his face.

MA (CONT'D)
Remember when you get to the
hospital you give them the note.
Show me how you hold it out.

Jack fumbles in his pocket for the edge of the note.
Something falls out with it.

MA (CONT'D)
What's that.

She picks it up. Her bad tooth. She gives it back to him.

MA (CONT'D)
See, that's a bit of me you have
with you all the time.

JACK
I'm scared.

Ma strokes his face.

MA
I know.

The door beeps, startling them both.

Ma shoves the wet rag and the pot of hot water under the bed. Jack hides his red face in the pillow, goes limp.

The door opens and Old Nick steps in with a grocery bag.

MA (CONT'D)

There you are!

He scowls at her, and shoulders the door shut.

OLD NICK

You know the drill: not a peep out of you till the door's shut.

MA

Sorry, just - Jack's really bad.

Old Nick puts the groceries down, grimacing at the smell.

MA (CONT'D)

It was so cold.

OLD NICK

You brought that on yourself.

MA

I couldn't keep him warm, and now he's burning.

OLD NICK

Give him one of those painkillers.

MA

I've tried, he pukes them back up.

Old Nick comes up close to Jack.

MA (CONT'D)

Don't -

He elbows her out of the way lays his hand across Jack's forehead.

Jack lets out a whimper of fear that passes for pain.

OLD NICK

I'll get him something stronger.

MA

He's only five! Dehydrated,
temperature this high, he could go
into convulsions any minute.

OLD NICK (OVERLAPPING)

Shut up and let me think.

MA

He needs antibiotics.

OLD NICK

I'll bring something tomorrow
night.

MA

Tomorrow night? You have to take
him to the ER right now.

OLD NICK

Enough with the hysterics.

MA

I'm begging you. Please!

Old Nick taps the code into the keypad, hiding his hand. Ma
clings to him.

MA (CONT'D)

If you're even halfway human -

As the door opens he thrusts her away and she stumbles.

When the door booms shut, Jack lifts his head. Their trick
didn't work... and he's relieved. Ma is crumpled against the
wall where she fell.

Jack sleeps sweetly and peacefully in Ma's arms in bed.

She stares into the dark.

Next morning, Jack is eating his cereal cheerfully. Ma,
hollow-eyed, hasn't touched hers.

MA

So Edmond pulls his friend's body out of the bag and hides it, and he climbs into the bag, and lies super still until the guards come.

Jack nods, enjoying the familiar story.

MA (CONT'D)

And that's what you're going to do.

He stops eating.

MA (CONT'D)

See? It's even tricksier than pretending to be sick: this time you're going to be dead.

Jack looks over at the folded paper grocery bags.

JACK

(with relief)

Our bags are too small for being dead in.

Ma shoves the table and chairs away to one side.

JACK (CONT'D)

Is it time for Track?

Ma starts hauling up the rug, testing how it bends.

MA

Rug's going to be the bag, see?

JACK

I don't want to be dead.

MA

Pretending to be dead, that's all. Wrapped up so Old Nick can't see that you're alive. But not floppy this time. All stiff like a robot. And not a sound. And I'll be in your head, talking to you all the time.

(she taps Jack's head)

(MORE)

MA (CONT'D)

He's going to carry you outside,
all rolled up in Rug, and he'll put
you in the back of his pick-up and
drive somewhere to bury you -

JACK (OVERLAPPING)

No!

MA

It's OK. You'll wriggle free and
jump out of the truck. You'll -

JACK (OVERLAPPING)

I don't like this trick.

MA

Come on, Jack, let's try rolling
you up.

JACK

Uh uh.

MA

Please Jack, try just for a minute.

JACK

Half a minute.

MA

OK.

A little later: He's lying down on the rug.

MA (CONT'D)
Okey-dokey.

She rolls him up. We're with Jack inside the rug.

MA (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Can you hear me? Can you breathe?

JACK
Yeah.

MA (O.S.)
Excellent! He'll pick you up - stay
stiff as you can.

Jack holds himself rigid as Ma lifts him up.

MA (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Then he'll put you in his truck.

Set down awkwardly, Jack bites his lip, but stays quiet.

MA (O.S.) (CONT'D)
The second you hear the engine -

She makes engine noises and shakes him.

MA (O.S.) (CONT'D)
- that means Old Nick's busy
driving, so that's your chance to
start wriggling out. Now, Jack.
Wriggle out.

JACK
I can't. I'm stuck.

He bursts into loud tears.

MA (O.S.)
Remember your superpowers.

Jack cries harder. Ma unrolls him fast and hugs him. Then
takes a long breath.

MA (CONT'D)
Ok, it's too many turns. Up, up.
I'll fold the end over like this.
(She folds the end of the
rug to make it narrower)
Now lie down and fold your arms
like this.

She folds them across Jack's chest, elbows sticking out.

MA (O.S.) (CONT'D)
There, Now push up your arms.

JACK
I can't.

MA
Push, Jack.

His elbows scrape through and his fingers clasp hers.

MA (CONT'D)
Now roll.

Jack makes a feeble try, barely moves. Pants, sobs.

MA (CONT'D)
OK. Take a breath.

JACK
Get me out.

MA (O.S.)
You're getting yourself out.

JACK
Out!

MA (O.S.)
If you panic, Old Nick will hear
that you're alive, and he'll be
mad.

Jack groans.

MA (O.S.) (CONT'D)
I know you, Jack. I know you can do
this.

Jack clenches his teeth and starts to writhe and roll side to side.

He rolls over face down, and gets his butt slightly in the air, bending the cylinder of the rug.

He rolls the other way, sits up: the rug opens. He claws his way out, his face red and smeared. Ma is looking almost as distraught as him, but she grins.

MA (CONT'D)
You did it! You're the banana!

JACK

I hate you.

The first time he's ever said it: they're both shocked.

MA

That's OK. I brought you here to Room. I didn't mean to but I did, and I've always been so glad. And now it's my job to get you out.

Later. Jack's lying half rolled in the rug. He's been waiting for hours. Ma crouches beside him drilling him in the plan.

JACK

Truck, wriggle out, Jump, Run -

MA

Wait till the truck slows down at the first stop sign - if you jump when it's going fast you might -

She stops talking so as not to cry. Checks her watch. Stares at the door as if she can will it to open.

MA (CONT'D)

So Truck, Wriggle Out, Jump when it Slows Down...

Jack struggles to remember the list.

JACK

Somebody, Run -

MA

Jump, Run, *then* shout to Somebody and show them the Note.

Jack checks the for note in his pocket.

MA (CONT'D)

Tell them your Ma is Joy Newsome and -

JACK
Who is Somebody?

MA
Anybody - the first person you see.

JACK
An actual real person.

Ma nods, worried by his lingering confusion.

JACK (CONT'D)
What if Old Nick unwraps me?

MA
He's not going to -

Ma falters, puts her head in her hands. She collects herself.

MA (CONT'D)
You got Bad Tooth in your pocket?

Jack points to his cheek.

JACK
It's in here so I don't lose it.

Beat

MA
You're going to love it.

JACK
What?

MA

The world. Living in the hammock
house with your Grandma and
Grandpa...

JACK

And you.

We see that Ma doesn't believe she'll get out, but she nods.
Bends over and hides her face by putting it against his.

JACK (CONT'D)

Sing.

Ma kneels back up into position.

MA

One evening as the sun went down
and the jungle fire was burning,
down the track came a hobo hikin',
and he said "Boys, I'm not turning.
I'm headed for a land that's far
away, beside the crystal fountains.
So, come with me, we'll go and see
the Big -

The door beeps, and Ma rolls Jack up, very fast. We're in the
dark with him, the rug pressing close.

Sound of Old Nick stepping in. Proud of himself.

OLD NICK (O.S.)

Antibiotics.

The door shuts with a boom.

OLD NICK (O.S.) (CONT'D)

Are you nuts, wrapping a sick kid
up in that?

Ma's voice is very close because she's bent over the rug.

MA (O.S.)

He got worse in the night.

She waits, giving Old Nick time to figure it out.

In the rug, Jack lies frozen except for his flickering eyes.

MA (O.S.) (CONT'D)

He wouldn't wake up.

(CONTINUED)

OLD NICK (O.S.)
Are you sure?

She lets seven years of rage pour out.

MA (O.S.)
Am I sure?

In the rug, Jack blinks in fright.

OLD NICK (O.S.)
Ah gee. That's - Poor girl.

His self-justification kicks in right away.

OLD NICK (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Guess it must have been serious,
pills wouldn't have worked anyway.

MA (O.S.)
You killed my baby.

OLD NICK (O.S.)
Take it easy. Let me -

Jack's eyes squeeze tightly shut: total darkness.

MA (OVERLAPPING)(O.S.)
Keep your hands off him!

OLD NICK (O.S.)
OK, OK.

Jack opens his eyes again, inside the rug.

OLD NICK (O.S.)(CONT'D)
He can't stay here, you know.

MA
Where will you take him?

OLD NICK (O.S.)
I don't know. I'm thinking.

MA (O.S.)
Not here. I'd feel him. I'd know.

OLD NICK (O.S.)
OK.

MA (O.S.)
Drive him somewhere nice, somewhere
with lots of trees.

OLD NICK (O.S.)
Trees, sure.

MA (O.S.)
Keep him wrapped up. Swear you
won't even look at him with your
filthy eyes.

OLD NICK (O.S.)
I swear.
(thinks)
It'll be dark in an hour.

MA
(screams at him)
Now. I can't bear it.

OLD NICK
OK, OK.

Jack feels himself being scooped up by Old Nick.

MA (O.S.)
Gently!

OLD NICK (O.S.)
Get back and turn around.

Jack is tilted head down as Old Nick taps the code. Ma starts to moan quietly. A swaying motion as he carries Jack outside.

Ma's voice is cut off by the boom of the door.

We're with Jack; glimpses of twilight sky, shrubs, hedge through the end of the carpet.

A terrible pause as Old Nick contemplates the back yard. Then walks on. Jack is heaved face-down into the flatbed of an old pick-up.

A pause - Jack senses a light going on nearby. Then the clang of a shovel being dropped onto the bed of truck beside the rug.

Old Nick's footsteps, heading for the driver's seat. Sound of the truck rumbling to life.

Sound and shaking: the truck roars along too fast.
We're with Jack, stunned, face-down in the darkness.

At last he remembers that he's meant to be wriggling out.

He writhes, but the rug has tightened in transit.

With an effort, Jack manages to roll over. No better.

The engine quietens as the truck slows. Jack is not sure if that's his signal and anyway he's still trapped in the rug.

The truck doesn't stop at the stop sign, only slows.

Jack remembers his arm. He forces it above his head, wincing as the rug scrapes the skin off his elbow. Jack puts all his misery into movement, thrashing about, kicking, jack-knifing like a dying fish.

The truck's engine lulls as it makes a rolling stop.

Jack feels the rug slide a little across the flatbed, which gives him just enough momentum that he bends, with a deep grunt, and the rug starts to roll open.

He bursts out, on hands and knees: like a birth. Elbow and lip bloody, face covered in hair, snot and tears.

The world hits Jack: street lamps, wind in his face, shocking colors of the sunset. Trees and houses looming and then receding, like a rollercoaster.

His glance falls on the shovel meant for his grave.

Jack's eyes focus on the cab of the truck and what he realizes must be the back of Old Nick's head, driving.

Old Nick slows at the third stop, and swings right. Jack is flung headlong, banging his leg on the left of the flatbed.

The truck screeches to a stop, because Old Nick heard the noise and glimpsed Jack in his rearview mirror.

He flings the driver's door open.

Jack scrabbles over to the opposite side.

Old Nick jumps down and strides around the truck.

Jack leaps down to the tarmac, bloodying his left knee. His jaw smashes into his right knee. He picks a direction at random and tears away from the truck, stumbles, keeps going.

A large dog on a long leash, emerges from a yard.

DOUG(a big man in his forties) and his 2-year-old daughter CARRIE, both in winter outdoor clothes, follow.

Jack runs into the man, finds himself on the ground with the dog snarling at him.

DOUG

Boomer!

He pulls the dog away by the collar.

Old Nick catches up, and scoops Jack up with one arm.

Pinned in the air, Jack lashes out in soundless terror. Old Nick strides back towards the truck with him.

DOUG (CONT'D)

Excuse me? Hey.

Old Nick puts Jack down but holds his shoulders.

Jack cringes, eyes on the ground.

DOUG (CONT'D)

I'm so sorry. Is your little girl OK?

OLD NICK

It's under control.

Doug stares at Jack's bloody knee, elbow, lip.

DOUG

She been in some kind of accident?
You want me to call someone?

OLD NICK

I'll take care of it.

Jack can't speak, but pulls out the note. Old Nick snatches it out of his hand, scrunching it.

DOUG

What's that you got there, honey?

OLD NICK (OVERLAPPING)

Why don't you mind your own
business and I'll mind mine?

DOUG

OK, I don't like this.

He pulls out his cellphone and dials. Old Nick picks up Jack again and hurries to his truck.

Doug waits impatiently for the emergency operator.

DOUG
(shouts after Old Nick)
I've got your plates, mister! K93 -

Old Nick drops Jack in the street and breaks into a run.

DOUG (CONT'D)
Hey! Hey!

Jack, lying in a heap, hears the driver's door slam.

Then the engine starts. Jack looks around: the truck is barreling towards him. Confused and dizzy, he crawls towards the sidewalk. The truck roars past: a getaway, not attempted murder.

Jack watches the truck zoom through the next stop.

He collapses and blinks up at the vast evening sky. After a beat, Doug, leaning in, interrupts the view. The dog is there, too.

DOUG (CONT'D)
It's OK, Honey.

Jack curls himself up in a ball.

A patrol car pulls up at the scene. Doug leaves the still curled up Jack and hurries to the car to talk to the emerging OFFICER GRABOWSKI.

Jack, shuddering with cold notices Carrie staring at him.

He feels his lip, touches the blood, looks at it, tastes. Then sees an oval on the ground. He picks it up: a leaf.

OFFICER PARKER, a female officer, hunkers down beside him.

OFFICER PARKER
Hey there, I'm Officer Parker.
What's your name?

There's something reassuring about her and Jack forces himself to talk to one of these alien beings - but barely whispering, and he can't look her in the eye.

JACK

Jack.

OFFICER PARKER

Jackie?

JACK

Jack.

She leans in to hear him better. Jack flinches away.

Officer Grabowski comes closer now, on his walkie-talkie.

OFFICER GRABOWSKI

We have a disturbed female
juvenile, possible domestic -

OFFICER PARKER (OVERLAPPING)

Male.

He does a double-take.

OFFICER GRABOWSKI

Correction, male juvenile.

OFFICER PARKER

You must be freezing, Jack.

With a jerk of the head, she sends Grabowski to the car.

OFFICER GRABOWSKI

(on the walkie-talkie)

That's negative. White male, six
feet, forties, fifties, beard, red
pick-up, Ford, nineties F150,
maybe, no state partial plate K93.

OFFICER PARKER

Do you have another name? Jack?

He jumps, not realizing she was talking to him again.

OFFICER PARKER (CONT'D)

Do you know how old you are?

Jack nods. Peeks at her buckle, badge, gun, not face.

OFFICER PARKER (CONT'D)

How many fingers?

JACK

(nonplussed)

Ten.

(CONTINUED)

OFFICER PARKER
(incredulous)
You're ten years old?

JACK
Ten fingers.

He spreads his two hands. He still can't meet her eye but he's desperately trying to communicate.

OFFICER PARKER
No, I meant show me with your fingers how old you are.

JACK
I'm five.

He spreads one hand, in case she doesn't get it.

OFFICER PARKER
Five, great. And your address?

Jack doesn't know what this means, so ignores it. Back with a blanket, Officer Grabowski addresses Parker.

OFFICER GRABOWSKI
Guess we should get onto Child Protection?

She makes a 'wait' gesture and wraps the blanket around Jack, who stiffens.

OFFICER PARKER
Where do you sleep at night, Jack?
Where do you go to bed?

JACK
In Wardrobe.

OFFICER GRABOWSKI
In a wardrobe?

OFFICER PARKER
You have a Mom, Jack?

JACK
Ma.

OFFICER PARKER
Is that her real name, Jack?

JACK
She used to be Joy.

OFFICER PARKER

Is there another name, after Joy.

Jack struggles but can't remember 'Newsome'.

OFFICER PARKER (CONT'D)

Where's your Mom right now?

Jack suddenly realizes that Old Nick - furious because Jack's alive and has escaped - might be heading back to hurt her.

JACK

Room.

OFFICER PARKER

What room? Where's the room?

JACK

Not on any map.

Officer Parker's questions come faster as her concern grows.

OFFICER PARKER

The man with the truck, that your dad? Ma's boyfriend? You know him?

JACK

Old Nick.

OFFICER GRABOWSKI

Speak up!

Officer Parker glares at him: he's not helping.

JACK

(louder)

Old Nick. But that's not his name.

OFFICER PARKER

Did this Nick guy hurt you?

She goes to touch his lip, but he flinches away.

JACK

I bit me by accident. And the, the, the -

He pats the ground to remember the word.

JACK (CONT'D)

The hard of the street. I jumped and smashed my knee.

(CONTINUED)

He remembers Bad Tooth and takes it out of his mouth.

OFFICER PARKER
What's that, Jack?

JACK
A bit of Ma.

Both officers peer at Bad Tooth, and exchange a dark look.

Inside the moving police car. Jack's head jerks as he tries to make sense of the passing images. He flinches as a car passes in the other direction. Bewildering signs: YIELD, HIDDEN DRIVEWAY.

OFFICER PARKER
So, Jack? You see anything?

JACK
Everything.

OFFICER PARKER

No, but anything you recognise?
Your room, Jack, is it in a
bungalow - all one level? Or
stairs? What's outside the room?

JACK

Space.
(corrects himself)
The world.

He plucks at the seat belt, which is too high for him and
pressing uncomfortably on his neck.

OFFICER GRABOWSKI

You reckon the kid's on something?

OFFICER PARKER

Jack, when you step out the door -

Jack shakes his head anxiously.

OFFICER PARKER (CONT'D)

You don't like to go outside?

JACK

We don't know to open the door.

OFFICER GRABOWSKI

My money's on some kind of cult.
The tooth, the long hair...

OFFICER PARKER

Is there daylight in your room?

Jack nods.

OFFICER PARKER (CONT'D)

How many windows?

JACK

Zero.

He makes a circle with his finger so she'll understand.

OFFICER PARKER
Then how does the sun come in?

JACK
Through Skylight.

OFFICER PARKER
Excellent.
(on her walkie-talkie)
Check the satellite. Sounds like
his mother's being held in a house
with a skylight.

OFFICER GRABOWSKI
Needle in a haystack...

JACK (OVERLAPPING)
Room's not a house.

OFFICER PARKER
OK.

JACK
It's a...

OFFICER PARKER
Yeah?

JACK
It's a...

OFFICER GRABOWSKI
Might get more out of him when he's
had some sleep.

OFFICER PARKER
(to Grabowski)
Tom, give me a break.

JACK
(overlapping)
Room's a... a shed.

OFFICER PARKER
A shed! You're doing great, Jack.
Now, after you got in the truck -

Jack shakes his head.

JACK
He putted me - I wasn't meant to be
alive.

(CONTINUED)

OFFICER PARKER
What made you jump out of the
truck, Jack?

JACK
Ma said in my head.

He taps it.

OFFICER PARKER
What did she say, exactly?

JACK
Jump when it Slows Down. But I
couldn't, I was all...

He's remembering being trapped in the rug.

OFFICER PARKER
So what did you do?

JACK
The third time, I got banged.

OFFICER PARKER
The third time of what?

JACK
The third slow, everything went
sideways -
(mimes being flung across
flatbed)
- and then it stopped and I jumped
and -

OFFICER PARKER (OVERLAPPING)
Gotcha!

She closes her eyes and fixes the geometry of Jack's journey
in her mind.

OFFICER PARKER (CONT'D)
(on her walkie-talkie)
Control. Listen carefully. South on
Maple, three stop signs from the
junction with Beach, look for a
garden shed with a skylight.

Officer Grabowski, impressed, swings the car around.

Minutes later. Outside an unlit house, with a Police van and a back-up, unmarked car parked facing the other way. A plain clothes OFFICER is knocking on the front door of the house. Jack watches through the car window as Officer Parker consults with an OLDER WHITE MALE OFFICER, also plain clothes. Parker and the older officer start to poke around the side of the house, disappearing for a moment before running back. Officer Parker takes what looks like a crowbar from the trunk of the car. She draws her weapon. Grabowski moves to leave the car.

OFFICER PARKER
Stay with the boy.

She disappears around the back of the house. Jack hyperventilates, thinking about Old Nick and Ma.

OFFICER GRABOWSKI
(eyes Jack in mirror)
You OK, kid?

We hear shouting, a crack of splitting wood. Jack starts clawing at the car door, can't find the handle.

OFFICER GRABOWSKI (CONT'D)
Hey, hey, take it easy.

A figure hurtles towards the car: Ma. She can't get the door open either because of the lock.

Faces pressed to the glass, she and Jack almost touch. Then, at last the door is open and Jack is in her arms.

A little later. Jack and Ma, in blankets, hold each other as the police cruiser moves through the night.

Jack does a huge yawn, utterly exhausted now the adrenalin is gone.

JACK
Can we go to Bed now?

MA
We can do anything. They'll find us somewhere to sleep soon.

JACK
No, but Bed. In Room.

40 CONTINUED: 40

Ma realizes he thought their escape would be temporary. She hugs him as he drifts off to sleep.

40A INT. HOSPITAL - EMERGENCY ROOM - NIGHT 40A

Still in Ma's arms, Jack half wakes to find himself carried through a hospital emergency room. They are being hustled along by Officers Parker and Grabowski, A FEMALE PLAIN CLOTHES DETECTIVE, a DOCTOR, a NURSE and a HOSPITAL SECURITY GUARD. A woman in her 50s, is beside them, her arm around MA. This is NANCY, Ma's mother. It's like a strange dream to Jack. Through the group around him he can make out other figures waiting in chairs. He can hear a drunk shouting, phones ringing.

JACK

Ma.

Ma shushes him, stroking his hair. He drifts back to sleep.

41 OMITTED 41

42 OMITTED 42

43 OMITTED 43

44 OMITTED 44

45 INT. HOSPITAL - MA AND JACK'S SUITE - DAY 45

Next morning. A bright hospital room. Jack and Ma share the fancy hospital bed. A cot bed, unused, has been set up to one side. Jack is awake but content to lie close to Ma for a while - studying the dials and switches on the wall above his head. He looks at Ma, asleep, bruises fading to yellow-green. He sits up and pulls back the sheet. He's wearing only a pair of underpants from Room which look particularly wretched in this new antiseptic environment. He touches the part of the mattress he's being lying on. It's damp. He examines a bandage on his knee. He gets up. On a side table, he sees a plate with the remains of some toast on it and a half drunk cup of tea. He sniffs at the food. There are two surgical masks there, also. He walks slowly to the opposite wall, his little figure silhouetted against the translucent blinds. He stops in front of the one window which has its blind drawn. The hospital suite is high up and the view is spectacular.

(CONTINUED)

From the back we study Jack's small figure and beyond it the vast world below.

Coming around on Jack's face we see that he is trying to make sense of what he's seeing. It takes him a moment to realize what he's looking at and how high above ground he is. His breathing quickens and he turns and scurries back to bed.

He shakes his mom.

JACK

Ma. Ma.

She begins to wake.

MA

Good morning sleepy head. I was waiting so long for you to wake I fell back asleep.

JACK

Is this another planet?

MA

Same one, just a different bit.
It's a room -
(hears the word)
A bedroom in a hospital.

Jack thinks about this.

JACK

Are we sick for real or pretend?

MA

We're not sick. We're the opposite of sick.

Beat.

JACK

How long are we staying?

MA

Not long. Grandma saw us last night and she'll take us when they say we're OK.

JACK

And Grandpa.

MA

He was away at work but he's getting on a plane to come home.

Beat.

JACK

I wetted the bed ... before. I'm
sorry.

(CONTINUED)

MA
That's OK.

The bedside phone bursts to life, frightening Jack. Ma picks it up.

MA (CONT'D (CONT'D))
Yes, just now. OK ... if that's OK,
thank you.

Ma hangs up as Jack starts tugging the sheets off the bed. She stops him.

MA (CONT'D)
Don't worry about that. Someone
will wash it. Come on, we have to
get ready.

Ma steps out of bed. She's wearing a robe. It says 'Tyler Forest Hospital'

JACK
What's that?

MA
Do you like it? There's one for
you, too.

She picks up a robe from beside the bed, puts him in it - it's way too big, then she begins to take off his damp underpants.

45A INT. HOSPITAL - BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

45A

Ma and Jack come into the bathroom. Ma throws Jack's underpants in the trash.

JACK
That's waste.

MA
We'll get new ones.

JACK
For Sunday Treat?

MA
There are going to be so many
treats, not just on Sundays.

Jack looks around.

(CONTINUED)

JACK

Where's the bath.

MA

It's a shower instead. Splashier.

Ma notices a large mirror. This is the first time she's seen herself properly in 7 years. She studies herself - bares her teeth. She points out their reflections to Jack.

MA (CONT'D)

Jack, look. It's us.

This is the first time Jack has ever properly seen himself.

JACK

Ma, will he find us.

MA

No, he will never, ever come again.

Ma and Jack are in the shower. Jack is pressed to the door, as far away as possible from the powerful jet of water.

JACK
Bath before Bed.

She can't hear him over the noise of the water.

MA
What?

JACK
Bath before Bed, that's the rule.

MA
There aren't any rules now, Jack.
We can do what we like!

Jack is unnerved by all this.

Ma groans with pleasure as she lets the water hit the back of her neck.

JACK
Are you hurting?

Ma laughs. Jack edges into the water and she washes him with a hand towel.

Both in robes with wet hair. While Ma looks out the window Jack noses around the room taking in the strange experience of an unknown space. He opens a drawer, then another. Empty.

A very light tap at the door which only Jack hears.

JACK
The door's ticking.

The door opens a little. Ma jumps. Jack hides behind his mother as a man's head - wearing a surgical mask - appears around the door.

DR. MITTAL
Hello there, I hear we're all woken up.

MA
That's right.

Jack's buries his head in.

MA (CONT'D)
It's OK, Jack.

DR. MITTAL (thirties/forties) come further into the room. A nurse pushes in a breakfast trolley then leaves.

DR. MITTAL
Hi there, Jack. I'm Dr. Mittal. You were asleep when I cam in this morning.

Jack won't make eye contact.

DR. MITTAL (CONT'D)
You must be hungry?

No answer. Dr. Mittal moves the breakfast trolley in front of Ma and Jack. Ma removes the plastic domed lids and foil. Jack stares at the strange food. He runs his finger around the BLUE RIM OF HIS PLATE and looks at it to see if the color has come off. Ma eats.

DR. MITTAL (CONT'D)
So, I have some things for you both.

He hands 2 pairs of sunglasses to Ma.

DR. MITTAL (CONT'D)
You may find it more comfortable to wear these if you go outside. Some sunscreen.

Holding up a surgical mask.

DR. MITTAL (CONT'D)
For Jack.

MA

Is that really necessary?

DR. MITTAL

Lots of germs in the air to get
used to.

(taking out some pills)

My colleague has prescribed these
for the pain in your wrist until we
can schedule a surgery.

(handing over a last
bottle)

And something to help you sleep.

MA

OK. Thanks.

(to Jack who is still
playing with his food)

Try it, it's *delicioso*.

Jack's not convinced.

DR. MITTAL

Have you thought any more about
what we discussed this morning?

MA

Thanks for the offer but we're
going to go home.

DR. MITTAL

You know my view. After what you've
experienced, and to assess Jack
properly. And just to soften the
transition -

MA

(interrupting)

Nothing happened to Jack.

DR. MITTAL

I understand, but even at a
cognitive-sensory level - depth
perception, auditory processing ...

MA

But he's OK, right?

DR. MITTAL

The most important thing you did
was to get him out while he's still
plastic.

JACK
(whispers to Ma)
I'm not plastic.

DR. MITTAL
What's that, Jack.

MA
He says he's real, not plastic.

Mittal laughs.

DR. MITTAL
I can't argue with that, Jack. Real
and very brave.

We hear voices arguing outside the door. One voice cuts through.

VOICE (O.C.)

Oh for God's sake ...

DR. MITTAL

We can talk about this again later.
It sounds like you have more
important things to do right now.

The door opens and Nancy enters (we met her briefly in the emergency room) carrying an overnight bag. She is followed by a man in his sixties, rumped from travel. This is ROBERT, Ma's father.

MA

Dad!

ROBERT

My darling.

They hug, the masks are quickly discarded. Dr. Mittal watches from the back of the room.

NANCY

We couldn't wait any longer.

Jack, forgotten, is frightened by what he sees. He curls up. Eventually, Ma notices him.

MA

Jack, Jack it's OK. This is your
Grandma and Grandpa.

NANCY

Hello, Jack.

Jack hides his face.

NANCY (CONT'D)

That's OK. Thanks for saving my
little girl, Jack.

Robert tries to smile but he is very uneasy around Jack.
Nancy lifts the small bag she brought.

NANCY (CONT'D)

I hope I didn't forget anything.
I'm sure I did.

Hospital roof garden. Jack sticks close to Ma. She is dressed in track-suit bottoms and her old warm winter coat. Jack has pajamas under his robe and a warm coat which doesn't quite fit. Ma has a pair of her old boots on, Jack has trainers. They wear tinted glasses against the brightness of the day. Jack is a strange sight, the part of his face not covered by his mask (the others are unmasked) or woollen hat is smeared in heavy sun screen. They sit with Robert and Nancy. Nancy smokes a slim cigarette. Jack watches her cigarette for a while, then his attention is snagged by a nurse pushing an old woman in a wheelchair. He is also fascinated by the sky reflected in the mirrored glass of the building.

Ma runs her hand along her coat.

NANCY

(off Ma's clothes)
I kept everything.

Jack is finding his shoes - the first he's ever worn -
irritating. He starts to take them off.

MA
Leave them, Jack, you'll get used
to them.

Pause.

ROBERT

You're here.

They hug again. Letting go at last they smile at each other for a long moment. We feel a history of great closeness between them. Ma wipes away her tears.

MA

So, what's in Michigan?

Robert and Nancy exchange glances.

MA (CONT'D)

(sensing something)

OK.

She waits.

ROBERT

I'm working out of the Grand Rapids office.

Beat.

ROBERT (CONT'D)

I live there now.

NANCY

Oh, Sweetie... There have been a lot of changes in our lives since you've been gone. Your dad and I... losing you, was very hard on us. And he and I...

ROBERT

We had to go our different ways. It was what we had to do.

Jack doesn't understand any of this but hates the tension.

MA

Whoa. This is not what I thought was happening.

NANCY

Your father felt we had to accept that you were...

She stops herself. Robert suppresses his anger.

ROBERT

People deal with things in their own way.

(CONTINUED)

NANCY

I knew you'd come home one day.

They sit.

MA

Wow.

NANCY

I'm so sorry, I didn't know how to tell you. They said we should talk to you together.

Nancy is upset.

ROBERT

The Doctor mentioned this other place where they could help you, because it's hard, you know, to suddenly -

MA

(interrupting)

He has no idea what we've been through. Nothing could compare to that.

Robert and Nancy sit with this.

MA (CONT'D)

I told him we're going home.

(to Nancy)

Unless, you'd prefer us ...

NANCY

Of course not.

Again a look passes between Robert and Nancy.

NANCY (CONT'D)

Honey, there's something else I have to tell you. After your father and I separated I got close to someone else. Actually someone you know.

ROBERT

(in quickly)

Leo.

Beat.

MA

OK, this is a lot of stuff.

NANCY

Yes it is.

Nancy is upset.

ROBERT

Leo's a good guy. Your mother is much happier. It's a good thing.

Jack tugs at Ma.

MA
(a hint of irritation)
What, Jack?

But he won't say it loud and she has to lean down to him.

JACK
It's too big here.

MA
It's OK.

JACK
I want some.

He starts to burrow under her coat. Robert is horrified.

ROBERT
What .. what's he doing?

Ma is surprised by her father's reaction. She barks at Jack.

MA
Just wait a moment. We'll go inside
in a moment.

Nancy tries to calm her.

NANCY
It's OK.

MA
I need to go back now, anyway.
There are things we need to do
inside.

Ma pulls Jack to his feet. Jack risks a look at his grandparents. Robert looks down, can't look Jack in the eye. Ma notices Jack has taken his shoes off. She starts to fuss with them, then gives up and lifts Jack into her arms to bring him inside.

Ma and Jack, still masked, walk through the hospital corridor accompanied by A NURSE and a POLICE GUARD. Jack is fascinated as they pass a nurses station, a man rolling a drip on a stand, the door to a day room where several patients sit playing cards, reading.

49A INT. HOSPITAL - MA AND JACK'S ROOM - DAY 49A

Jack lies on the bed listening to music on headphones. In the background Ma talks to two DETECTIVES. They show her images on a laptop which is turned away from Jack.

50 INT. HOSPITAL EXAMINATION ROOM - DAY 50

Jack being weighed and measured.

(CONTINUED)

Jack getting his shots.

Blood being taken. Jack is left with a little cotton swab fixed to this inner elbow with a thin band-aid.

51 INT. HOSPITAL - MA AND JACK'S SUITE - NIGHT

51

Later. Quiet at last. Ma and Jack alone, shoes and masks off. Out of the big window as the last of the sun fades.

Ma picks at something plain from their dinner tray, while Jack breastfeeds. In the background the TV news.

NEWS ANCHOR (V.O.)

Which the major utility companies say they will not cover. Tenants' organizations have said they will fight this decision, if necessary at the federal level.

Beat

NEWS ANCHOR

And now to developments in the case of the young woman, believed to be Joy Newsome,

(a picture of a smiling Ma as a teenager comes on screen)

who was rescued last night, along with her child, from a garden shed having allegedly been held captive there for over seven years.

We are getting unconfirmed reports that an individual has just been arrested, after what one witness has called a 'short stand-off' at a house on the east side.

Footage of Old Nick's house.

The room phone starts to ring. Ma picks up.

MA

I know, I'm watching it right now. I can't believe it. I just want to be home now.

NEWS ANCHOR (V.O.)

Both victims are understood to be receiving medical attention at an unknown location.

(MORE)

51 CONTINUED:

51

NEWS ANCHOR (V.O.) (CONT'D)
The child, of unknown gender, was
described by one eyewitness as
unable to walk ..

MA
Wait, wait a second.

She switches off the set.

52 OMITTED

52

53 INT. CLINIC - FOYER - DAY

53

Ma, Jack (masked, with sunglasses on), Nancy and Robert move
towards the doors of the hospital where the Resident FBI
agent waits for them. Robert is carrying the small bag that
contains all of Ma and Jack's possessions.

Ma puts her sunglasses on as they go through the doors.

DR. MITTAL
You have your schedule of
appointments, and your medications.
Please completely finish the course
of antibiotics.

MA
I understand.

DR. MITTAL
You have my number.

MA
Got it.

DR. MITTAL
If you need anything, if you just
want to talk, you use it, alright?

Ma nods.

They pause at the doors until they're beckoned by FBI agents.

(CONTINUED)

Ma accompanies Jack through the door.

POLICE and HOSPITAL SECURITY are outside along with FBI agents, a VICTIM LIASON person and Ma's LAWYER.

As Jack again takes in the scale of the outside world the adults get caught in the logistics of who goes in which car, who will take Ma's bag, what will happen at the other end of the journey. Jack observes the little clusters of people with their overlapping voices raised in clarification, reassurance...

Ma and Jack are led to one of the waiting cars. Jack bumps his head getting in.

We watch the convoy pulling away from the hospital and out into the world.

A little later. Driving through a better, neater neighborhood than Old Nick's.

Jack grips Ma's hand, watches the world pass.

JACK (V.O.)

I've been in the world nineteen hours. I've seen pancakes and stairs and a cat and windows and hundreds of cars and birds and police and doctors and Grandma and Grandpa, and persons with different faces and bigness and smells talking all at the same time. The world's like all TV planets on at the same time so I don't know which what to look and listen. Doors and doors and behind all the door there's another inside and another outside and things happen-happen-happening, it never stops. Plus the world's always changing brightness and hotness and there's invisible germs floating everywhere. When I was small I only knew small things but now I'm five I know everything.

She takes his mask off over his head.

They turn onto a residential street of low houses and well-groomed lawns.

It's all familiar to Ma yet utterly strange: a crowd of media (national and international) is set up across the road from her house behind temporary barricades. There are neighbors and well-wishers carrying helium balloons, flowers, toys, and signs. POLICE keep order.

MA

(under her breath)

Jesus.

Ma tidies her hair.

Nancy, Robert and a LAWYER emerge from the first car. Nancy manages an apologetic smile and half-wave to the neighbors who are watching from their own yards.

RESIDENT AGENT leans in the driver's window to address Ma.

RESIDENT AGENT

Ready for this?

Ma adjusts her shades and undoes her belt and Jack's.

MA

(to Jack)

Ready?

JACK

Steady - go.

They climb out, heads down, shielded by FBI agents. Jack stumbles, almost falls. Now they're outside they can hear a news helicopter overhead: it sounds like a war zone. Nancy joins them, taking Jack's hand, and they rush for the front door.

REPORTER 1

Joy! Joy! Any message for your well-wishers? What's it like to be home?

REPORTER 2

Jack! Jack! Look this way.

REPORTER 3

Jack! How do you like the world so far?

RESIDENT AGENT

You're doing great.

REPORTER 2

Joy! What do you say to your captor?

Robert and the Lawyer approach the cluster of reporters being held back by the Police.

LAWYER

At this time ... excuse me, please ... at this time I will read a brief statement from the family after which I would ask you to respect their privacy. I'm sure you can understand this is a very -

Nancy, Ma and Jack step into ...

The hallway of Nancy and Leo's house. The Resident Agent is with them.

RESIDENT AGENT

The back of the property is well screened, and we've added to that where necessary, so if you keep these drapes closed you'll have complete privacy. We'll be right outside if there's anything at all you need.

NANCY

Thank you. Thank you so much.

The Resident Agent leaves. Nancy, Ma and Jack stand in the stillness. Curtains drawn, lights on.

NANCY (CONT'D)

My goodness.

(beat)

Are you OK?

Ma nods. From out of the kitchen comes an man in his late 50s. This is LEO, Nancy's partner.

LEO
Welcome home, honey. I'm very very
happy to see you.

He has tears in his eyes but he gives Ma her space, doesn't
move to embrace her.

MA
Leo.

NANCY
Jack, this is Leo.

LEO
Hey there, sport.

Jack takes in this new person. Nancy leads them through to
the main room where the curtains to the back yard are open.

LEO (CONT'D)
What can I get you? Anyone hungry?
We have everything.

NANCY
People have been so kind. We won't
use it all. Jack, would you like a
drink?

Jack sticks close to Ma.

MA
Jack, Grandma's asking if you'd
like something to drink.

Jack pulls her down to whisper in her ear.

MA (CONT'D)
Juice?
(to Nancy)
Just some juice. I'm fine.

LEO
Coming right up.

Nancy disappears into the kitchen with Leo. Ma and Jack sit
on the sofa. Jack looks at cards and flowers arranged on a
table.

JACK
(whispers)
What are they for?

MA

They're from people saying they're happy that we're safe and back home.

JACK

What people?

MA

Just people.

Ma, like Jack, speaks quietly. It's as if they were in a doctor's waiting room or a stranger's house trying to make a good impression. All so unreal.

Ma gets up and looks out the window into the back yard. Jack follows.

JACK

Where's ice cream in the hammock?

MA

(calling out)

Mom, what have you done with the hammock?

NANCY

(from the kitchen)

I guess it must be in the basement.

Jack looking at his feet, sees a small dog toy on the floor. He presses it with his foot. It squeaks, giving him a fright.

Nancy and Leo come in with loaded trays - juice, water cookies, cake.

LEO

Just in case.

MA

A dog?

NANCY

Oh. It's Leo's dog, Seamus.

MA

You don't like dogs.

NANCY

Oh no. I've come to love Seamus. He's won me over.

(CONTINUED)

LEO

He's on furlough at the moment,
with a pal of mine out of town.
Living the country life.

NANCY

The hospital said to avoid pets,
until your immunity is back up ...
and there's so much to take in.

LEO

I told him he was a health hazard.
Gotta sling your hook, buddy. He
didn't take it too well.

Silence. No one has any idea what to do next. We hear the front door open and close. Robert appears, he looks shaken having taken questions from reporters. He looks for a seat, chooses one far from Jack.

NANCY

You OK?

He rubs his face, nods.

ROBERT

Lawyer says they are expecting a plea but can't rule out a trial. He wants to get into everything, I said it could wait.

NANCY

Good.

ROBERT

He thinks most of the press will move on in a couple days. I made it clear there'd be no more contact, statements. To respect the family.

Robert has to hide his face.

ROBERT (CONT'D)

I'm sorry.

Jack watches, as Robert collects himself.

LEO

Can I get you a drink, Bob?

ROBERT

Thank you, yes. I'd like that very much. Scotch... whatever you have.

(CONTINUED)

LEO

Sure.

NANCY

(to Ma)

Is there anything you'd like, or
like to do?

(CONTINUED)

MA
Just rest.

NANCY
Sure.

Ma and Jack move towards the stairs. Ma carries a small bag with their belongings. Nancy follows. At the foot of the stairs Jack stops. He's never had to climb stairs before. Ma shows him how to grip the rail and he starts up.

58 INT. NANCY AND LEO'S HOUSE - UPSTAIRS HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER

Reaching the top of the stairs, they walk the quiet, carpeted hallway. Jack takes it all in.

59 INT. NANCY AND LEO'S HOUSE - MA'S OLD ROOM - DAY 59

Ma and Jack enter Ma's room. They absorb the decor of Ma's adolescence - preserved by her mother.

NANCY
This is your Mom's room, Jack.

Jack looks around. He pulls a strand of his long hair out of his eyes.

NANCY (CONT'D)
Hey, maybe tomorrow we can cut that hair. What do you say, Jack?

Jack shakes his head. Whispers to Ma.

MA
Jack says that's where his 'strong' is.

NANCY
Ah ha.

Jack walks over to the bed and sits down. We are with him as he takes in the band posters, track trophies, pictures - including pictures of his Mom as a young, happy girl. In the background Nancy and Ma watch him.

NANCY (CONT'D)

I'll let you rest. We'll be downstairs.

Before she leaves, Nancy talks quietly, insistently to Ma, we only catch fragments of what she's saying.

Conventional things, promising she is there, that there's nothing Ma can't say to her, how much she loves her. Ma is quiet, a little shell-shocked. Nancy leaves.

Struck by the sight of her music keyboard, Ma tries it: dead. She kneels down, finds the plug and puts it in the outlet.

MA

You didn't know I could play piano.
Guess this tune...

But after a few notes of 'Home on the Range'/'Big Rock Candy Mountain' she stumbles. Tries again, and messes it up. Stretches her stiff hand. Then she sits on the bed, suddenly limp. Checks her watch. It's gone; an old habit. Both Ma and Jack are subdued.

JACK

How long do we have to stay here?

She takes out her bag of meds.

MA

(getting the tablets she
needs)
We live here now.

She swallows her antibiotics and painkillers without water. She lies down. We stay on Jack's face as he continues to take in his surroundings and digest what Ma has said. After a little while he lies beside her and lifts her shirt so he can snuggle up and breastfeed.

We repeat a sequence of shots from life before their escape ending in a mother & child portrait. In the little bedroom, they could be in Room.

60 INT. NANCY AND LEO'S HOUSE - KITCHEN / DINING ROOM - NIGHT 60

Ma, with Jack pressed close to her, sits at the dining table with Nancy, Robert and Leo. Desert. Jack is eating his first bowl of ice-cream. He takes a big mouthful and holds his hand to his head. He tugs at Ma and she leans down so he can whisper to her.

JACK

(whispering to Ma)
Ice cream hurts.

LEO

You got a brain freeze there, Jack?

(CONTINUED)

MA
Eat it slower.

Small talk as food is passed around. Ma puts her fork down, she is beginning to get upset. Nancy watches her, puts a hand on hers. After a little while Ma calms.

They eat quietly, the adults aware of the complexity and strangeness of the situation. Jack, oblivious, chomps away at his ice-cream. Robert watches him.

ROBERT
I'm going to turn in.

Beat.

MA
Is there something wrong?

ROBERT
No.

MA
Why are you in such a hurry?

ROBERT
It's been a long day.

Beat.

MA
You haven't said one word to Jack.

Unlike Ma, Nancy hasn't put two and two together about Robert's awkward bearing around Jack.

NANCY
Joy.

Robert looks haunted, torn.

ROBERT
We don't have to talk about this now.

From the carefulness and awkwardness of Robert's reply Nancy begins to understand.

NANCY
My God.

MA
(to Robert)
Yes we do. Look at him.

Robert can't. Ma's anger deserts her.

MA (CONT'D)
Dad.

NANCY
Robert.

MA
Please.

Jack is bewildered by this low-key catastrophe.

ROBERT
I can't, I can't... I'm sorry.

MA
He's my baby.

ROBERT

What that bastard did to you.

LEO

Come on, Bob. Let's all just give
this a little time.

Ma stands up.

MA

Come on, Jack. Time for bed.

As Ma pulls Jack out of the room.

ROBERT

(to Nancy)

I'm so sorry. I shouldn't be here.

Jack lies awake beside his sleeping mom.

He hears footsteps. The door cracks open and a convoluted shadow appears, rimmed in light. The door opens wider and the shadow resolves into Robert, watching his daughter and grandson sleep. Jack burrows into his pillow pretending to sleep. The door closes and soon he sleeps.

Ma and Nancy sit with coffees. Jack has some cereal. The house is very quiet. No one talks for a while. Eventually ...

JACK
(quietly to Ma)
Where's Grandpa.

Beat.

NANCY
He had to go home for a while.

MA
(holding Jack's face
gently)
Hey Jack, you want play with your
new toys?

Jack shakes his head.

A few minutes later: Nancy is cleaning up in the kitchen as Ma breastfeeds Jack. She looks out on the bare winter back yard.

Through a chink in net curtains of a car pulling up outside Nancy and Leo's house. The Lawyer gets out. We see that the press has thinned out substantially. There are a few curious MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC with nothing better to do, a UNIFORMED POLICE OFFICER and a POLICE CAR.

NANCY (O.C.)
Jack! Come away from there.

We are in the lounge. Jack turns away from the window as Nancy goes to greet the Lawyer, keeping herself hidden as she opens the door.

NANCY (CONT'D)
Come in.

LAWYER
Thank you. Automatic door.

NANCY
Yes.

LAWYER
Let me take my shoes off here.

The LAWYER and Nancy watch Ma filling out some forms. She is subdued. Jack has some blank paper in front of him. He is staring at a large open box of Crayola pencils; every shade of every color. He carefully selects 5 pencils - the 5 colors he's used to from Room - and begins to draw.

Jack occasionally glances at Leo, drawn by his natural warmth.

LAWYER

The other thing we need to talk about is coming up with some kind of media strategy. I know you're not thinking about that right now. But there's a lot to decide about in that category.

NANCY

I don't think we're ready for talking yet. Not like that.

LAWYER

There are certain to be expenses going forward and a prime time interview, one prime time interview, means a lot of money. Donations are coming - and I'll need some account details, better in yours than mine, right? - but it wouldn't amount to enough for, you know, open ended support.

Beat.

LAWYER (CONT'D)

There's huge interest.

Ma notices that Jack is using only the same small set of colors for his drawing that he had in Room.

MA

Jack, you have all those colors. Why don't you use them. You could draw a picture of Jack the giant slayer, with every color.

Jack keeps drawing.

63A INT. NANCY'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

63A

Ma, Jack, Nancy and Leo eat supper, watching TV. Jack is drawn to look at Leo who does the old thumb trick for him.

64 INT. NANCY AND LEO'S HOUSE - MA'S BEDROOM - MORNING

64

Ma is still asleep. Jack sits on the bed beside her, bored. He looks towards the half-open door to the landing.

65 INT. NANCY AND LEO'S HOUSE - LANDING - DAY

65

Jack sits on the landing with a favorite toy from the pile in the sitting room. From where he sits he can see the open door to his and Ma's bedroom. It's dark inside. Eventually, Leo walks into view with a male DETECTIVE and a female VICTIM LIASON OFFICER. He shows them to the door.

LEO

Thank you again.

He lets them out, closes the door behind them, then peeps through the closed curtains. As he turns away, he spots Jack, gives him a salute and then busies himself in ways calculated to raise the interest of a 5-year-old. Tidying up, he picks up a ball from the floor, spins it on his finger, bounces it. Wanders off out of view, whistling, muttering about how particularly bouncy this ball is, etc.

Jack starts down the stairs. He goes down on his backside not yet confident enough to do it standing.

Jack wanders cautiously into the brightness of the living room, finding Leo who smiles at him, then gets back to whatever he's pretending to be doing.

Jack is silent.

LEO
(to himself)
Gee, am I hungry.

He pads into the kitchen.

LEO (CONT'D)
Let's see what we have here.

Jack follows him in. Leo takes some cereal out of a well stocked cupboard, he opens the fridge for milk. Jack takes in all the produce it contains.

Jack and Leo, at opposite ends of the counter, eat cereal.

LEO
Pretty good, right?

Jack nods.

LEO (CONT'D)
I like this kind, too. Kind of
sweet, but pretty good.

Jack looks at Leo, not answering, but not bolting. He keeps eating. After a moment.

JACK
You have a dog?

This is the first time Jack has initiated any conversation with an adult other than Ma.

LEO

I do. Named Seamus. He's very small. Not very smart. You'll have to meet him sometime. He'll shake your hand.

JACK

I had a dog called Lucky. But he's not real.

LEO

Yeah?

JACK

In Room.

Leo takes this in.

LEO

You ever play catch, Jack?

Jack and Leo walk out into the garden. Jack is wearing his hat and glasses but no sun-cream.

The back yard is a simple rectangle of grass bounded by barkdust and shrubbery with a few small trees. But to Jack it is a new cosmos. He wanders tentatively into the open space. Jack kneels to investigate the dirt and grass. He smells deeply.

A little later, Leo and Jack throw the ball between them. Jack's shoes are irritating him.

JACK

I hate shoes.

LEO

I hear what you're saying, but ...

Leo drops the ball and kicks it to Jack who manages to kick it back.

LEO (CONT'D)

They've got their uses. Am I right?

Jack nods. They play awhile, getting farther apart.

NEIGHBOR BOY

(OS)
Hey.

Jack and Leo look over. The NEIGHBOR BOY is standing at the fence.

NEIGHBOR BOY (CONT'D)

I have a ball like that.

LEO

(wary, but open)
No kidding. It's a nice ball, isn't it?

NEIGHBOR BOY

I got mine for my birthday.

LEO

Fantastic. You hear that, Jack? He got this same ball for his birthday.

NEIGHBOR BOY

Why's he wearing those glasses.

LEO

He's got sore eyes.

The boy thinks about this. Decides it's an acceptable answer.

NEIGHBOR BOY

(to Jack)
Did you get that ball for your birthday?

Jack shakes his head

NEIGHBOR BOY (CONT'D)

What *did* you get for your birthday?

JACK

I got a truck but it broke and Ma got me a cake.

NEIGHBOR BOY

A cake's not a present.

JACK

Yes it is.

(CONTINUED)

NEIGHBOR BOY

That's weird. A cake's just something to eat. No way is it a present.

Jack looks at Leo and bursts into tears. He flees. Leo and the neighbor kid watch him go.

69

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY - MOMENTS LATER

69

Jack runs through the house...

70

INT. MA'S OLD BEDROOM - MOMENTS LATER

70

... and slips into the bedroom where Ma is pacing around on the house phone. She has a smart-phone in her hand which she is trying to set up.

JACK

Ma. Ma.

MA

(waving Jack off)

I already gave all this information to the last person.

(covering the mouthpiece)

What, Jack?

JACK

Is a cake a present?

MA

What?

She turns away, deep in her own frustration.

MA (CONT'D)

(into phone)

Hold on ... I don't understand the words you are using, so why do you keep repeating them?

(pause)

I have done that three times already.

Jack sits quietly on the bed. Ma looks at him again, notices that his face is a little red. She covers the phone.

MA (CONT'D)

(to Jack)

Have you been outside?

Ma opens the door of Leo's den. Jack is beside her, his face smeared with camomile lotion.

MA

Leo, please don't ever take Jack outside again unless you know what you're doing. He can be seriously hurt by the sun.

LEO

I'm so sorry. It was overcast.

MA

He has never had any UV. This is serious stuff, OK?

Jack gazes out the window, not wanting to go outside anymore. In the background, we can hear Ma noisily preparing something in the kitchen.

Ma has boxes spread out all over the room. She is morbidly engrossed in some old papers and memorabilia.

Jack sits down. She keeps reading, looking.

MA

Look at this.

She shows him an old photo. Four girls in track uniforms.

MA (CONT'D)

You know who that is?

JACK

You?

MA

Me and Stacy Benton and Heather Noel and Laura Sullivan. That's how people did their hair. We were the relay team. I was the anchor. I was fast. We did track together.

JACK

Real track?

MA

Real track. On a field. We were fast. Best in the district. You know what happened to them?

JACK

No.

MA

Exactly. Nothing. They just lived and nothing happened. Look ...

She picks up her old laptop from the floor by the bed. She has been looking through her friends pages on Facebook. She clicks on a couple of pages showing the same girls as they are now, then loses interest, closes the laptop.

JACK

Show me more when you were young.

MA

No. I don't want to see any more. I don't want you to look at any more right now. Let's just be quiet for while. Okey dokey?

They sit. She stands and paces the room, gnawing her lips, wincing, trying and failing to keep her despair out of view.

74

INT. MA'S OLD BEDROOM - NIGHT

74

Jack wakes from a nightmare with a start. No Ma beside him. He gets out of bed. The only light is coming from the hallway through a crack in the door.

JACK

Ma?

He leaves the bedroom, stands blinking on the bright landing. He hears noises from downstairs, raised voices, a high pitched squeal.

JACK (CONT'D)

Ma?

He goes downstairs. We follow him into the living room.

75

INT. NANCY AND LEO'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - LATER

75

We enter with Jack to find Nancy, Leo and Ma. Ma and Nancy are hugging. The lawyer is on speaker phone.

(CONTINUED)

LEO
Not at all, we'll all sleep better.

LAWYER (SPEAKER)
I thought you'd want to know.

LEO
That's right

LAWYER
It's a good day.

NANCY
Thank God.

JACK
You were gone!

Ma turns. She's been crying but she comes over to Jack smiling broadly. She kneels so her face is level with his.

MA
Do you want to hear something
really good?

In the background Leo ends the call.

JACK
You were gone.

MA
Hey listen. Old Nick is going to
jail for a really long time.

JACK
I know Old Nick is in jail.

MA
But now he'll be there for ever and
ever. And I don't have to see him
ever again or talk to the judge or
any of those scary things. Isn't
that great?

Jack nods, not really understanding.

MA (CONT'D)
We can stop worrying now and start
to do all the things we want.

She picks him up and hugs him.

76 INT. NANCY AND LEO'S KITCHEN - DAY 76

Ma is on her phone, furiously texting. Jack watches. He's bored. Just the sound of tapping thumbs.

JACK
What are you doing?

MA
I'm talking to people.

She keeps texting, not explaining further.

77 INT. MA'S OLD BEDROOM - DAY 77

Jack sits on the bed, watching Ma at her dressing table. She is smartly dressed, her hair is fixed nicely.

JACK
Why do you look like that?

MA
I'm dressed to go out, that's all.

He watches MA force earrings through the healed piercings in her ears. It looks painful.

JACK
I don't like it.

MA
It's just some clothes and makeup.

77A INT. NANCY'S HOUSE - STAIRS - MOMENTS LATER 77A

Jack follows Ma downstairs.

MA
Come on, we need to get you ready.

We follow them into ...

77B INT. NANCY'S HOUSE - KITCHEN 77B

Nancy cleans up in the kitchen. Ma and Jack come in. Ma finds the sunscreen and starts to apply it.

(CONTINUED)

NANCY

Maybe it's too much for him right now.

MA

It's not too much for me. I need to go out, get some air.

Ma starts to apply sunscreen to Jack.

MA (CONT'D)

(to Nancy)

You could have a better attitude, you know.

With some effort, Nancy holds her tongue.

MA (CONT'D)

You could support me in this. That's all I'm asking. I'm trying to take a step.

NANCY

You don't have to do it so soon. You could wait and we could go together.

Ma wipes her hands, dials a number on her phone.

78 OMITTED

78

79 EXT/INT. STREET/LAURA'S CAR - DAY

79

A car is waiting. Inside, a young woman smiles and waves. Ma - holding a booster seat - cracks the door.

MA

Oh my God!

LAURA

Oh my God!

The girls hug.

LAURA (CONT'D)

You look... Amazing. I can't believe you're here.

MA

(fastening Jack)

I know. I know.

LAURA

I've missed you so much. I can't believe you're actually here. And look at Jack! What a sweetheart! He is so cute!

Ma gets into the passenger seat.

MA

This is too weird, sitting in this car right now.

LAURA

You are such an amazing person, Joy. I have thought about you so much.

(MORE)

LAURA (CONT'D)

And I am so happy you are here with me now. I cannot even tell you.

MA

I'm happy, too. And a little freaked out.

LAURA

You just sit back. Relax. We'll take it nice and slow.

We watch from the sidewalk as the car pulls away.

The girls talk...

LAURA

...Tracy is doing so good. She got her teaching certificate and now she's teaching in Milwaukie, loving it. I saw her last summer and she is still so fun.

MA

I always liked her even though we never really hung out.

LAURA

She liked you too.

(to Jack)

Your Mom was very popular in school.

MA

That's actually not true.

LAURA

If you weren't popular, I don't know who was.

MA

Susan Torrey.

LAURA

That's true.

The girls laugh. Laura's phone rings and she answers.

LAURA (CONT'D)

Hey, I'm driving.

Something pert/flirtatious comes into her tone.

LAURA (CONT'D)

(pause)

We'll see.

(pause)

You'll just have to, won't you?

She hangs up.

MA

Who was that?

LAURA

Just someone I met at work. Not serious.

MA

What work do you do.

LAURA

Real estate. I mean I graduated Environmental Studies and I'm still super passionate about that - like what we're doing to this planet, but the whole property thing is exploding.

The car drifts around, eventually finds a spot. Ma, Jack and Laura emerge. Jack is facing away from the mall. He is held by the big open view of the car park and road network beyond.

MA

(taking his hand)

Jack. This way. Just hold my hand.

They start to walk towards the entrance. Ma stops and crouches down. Puts her hands on Jack's shoulders and speaks tenderly.

MA (CONT'D)
You're going to be fine. OK?

They walk through the whooshing doors of the mall and step onto the ascending escalator. In the atrium, mobiles, banners, skylights. Teenagers, families, everyone scanning the myriad goods on display. At the top of the escalator Jack sees a huge array of fruit and vegetables outside a supermarket.

Further along, they pass a bookstore. Jack spots a display of new Dylan the Digger books. He grabs one.

JACK
Ma, it's Dylan!

MA
You can't take that, Jack.

JACK
Why?

MA

It doesn't belong to you.

She takes the book from him and dumps it back in the display.

MA (CONT'D)

Come on. If you're good we can get another book, a new one on our way out.

The girls cart Jack into the store among the hanging clothes and mirrors.

They tear through the racks. Techno music throbs. The mannequins leer.

For a moment Jack loses track of the girls. The clothes are everywhere.

JACK

Ma! Ma!

She reappears from behind a rack.

MA

I'm here. OK? Just calm down.

JACK

I was scared!

MA

(doing her best to be reassuring)

Don't be. This is normal. This is what people do.

JACK

I don't like it!

MA

Remember your superpowers, alright, have fun. And no whining, OK?

A clerk appears.

CLERK

Hi, there. Anything I can help you with?

MA

I need some... (she looks around desperately)... some shoes.

CLERK

Great. Shoes are all over there. Just let me know if you need anything else, okay?

Ma goes and stares at the shoe display. Many colors, many styles. She's paralysed. Jack is close beside her.

MA

I don't know.

JACK

Can we get Dylan now?

MA

Please, Jack.

LAURA

These ones are kind of cute.

MA

No. I definitely don't want any of these. I'd never wear these.

She grabs Jack's hand and drags him out of the store. Laura follows looking weirded-out.

The trio hurries through the mall. Ma looks nervous, Laura concerned, Jack bewildered and angry.

MA

(barely paying attention)
Are you hungry, Jack? You want something in the food court? They've got, I don't know, pizza and stuff.

JACK

I want Dylan. You said.

MA

I said if you were good.

LAURA

I could run and get it for him.

MA

No. I said no, so he has to understand.

They pass a Cinnabon outlet.

MA (CONT'D)

Jack, you want a Cinnabon? You smell that?

JACK

No.

MA

Cinnabon is good. You might like it.

LAURA

I think we should just go.

JACK

I want Dylan. I want Dylan now. You said.

MA

You are being really naughty Jack.

Jack starts into a full on tantrum.

MA (CONT'D)

Suit yourself.

She grabs him to carry him out, but he pulls away. All the noise has drawn the attention of the people around them. A couple of TEENAGERS approach Jack.

TEENAGER

(to Jack)

Hey, are you that kid from the TV.

MA

Get the fuck away from him. Get the fuck away.

Ma, Jack and Laura clamber into the car.

LAURA

Oh my God. Oh. My. God.

MA
Shit, shit, shit. Those assholes.

LAURA
Buckle up, Jack, all right?

JACK
I... I...

He looks around, not knowing what to do.

MA
Jesus Christ. Just buckle it, all right?

She leans over the seat and jerks the buckle on.

MA (CONT'D)
That's how it works, all right?

JACK
I don't like you in the world!

MA
Well maybe I don't like you either!

Laura pauses, Ma glowers.

MA (CONT'D)
(angrily to Laura)
Just go!

Laura backs out of the parking spot.

Jack sits with Nancy and Leo in the quiet room, playing Candyland.

LEO
Oh, you got me on that one.

NANCY
You guys want to start again?

They set up the board again. Nancy spins the dial and moves her figure.

NANCY (CONT'D)
Here we go. My turn.

They play.

NANCY (CONT'D)

You know, it can be tough to be a Mom. Sometimes it's really tough, and you can get angry, but it doesn't mean you don't love your baby.

Jack takes his turn.

88 INT. NANCY AND LEO'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY

88

Jack sits with Dr. Mittal. After a little while, Nancy comes in.

NANCY

I'm sorry.

Dr. Mittal stands.

DR. MITTAL

OK. Let her rest. I'll see you again next week, Jack.

Mittal and Nancy leave. Jack hears them talking quietly in the hall. Nancy describing Ma's behavior, sharing her worries.

89 INT. BEDROOM - DAY

89

Jack sits on the floor beside the bed watching Dora on Nancy's smart phone. Ma's who's been dozing sits up.

MA

Jack. Please turn that off.

Jack keeps watching.

MA (CONT'D)

Now. I mean it. Now.

JACK

I want to watch!

MA

Jack! Please. Please. I'm begging you, please turn that off.

Jack looks at her. She is twisted in pain at the sound of the show.

Jack switches it off.

(CONTINUED)

MA (CONT'D)

It reminds me too much of Room. I
can't have it.

(CONTINUED)

Jack ignores her.

MA (CONT'D)

You've got so many other things to play with. You should try something else.

He won't respond.

MA (CONT'D)

Come on. Let's look at all your stuff.

She drags him down to the living room.

She points to a pile of boxes in the corner.

MA

Look at all these toys. Most kids would love that stuff. You've barely even looked at them.

JACK

I don't want to.

MA

Come on, Jack.

He shuffles to the pile. Ma crouches - finds and rips open a box of Lego.

MA (CONT'D)

It's pretty cool, right? You like it?

Nancy steps in beside her daughter.

MA (CONT'D)

He needs something real to do. I'm getting worried about him with the phone.

NANCY

He's fine.

MA

I don't give him my phone so please don't give him yours.

NANCY

OK.

MA

I just want him to connect to something. You know?

NANCY

He's really doing fine.

Ma's aggression deserts her. She is distressed, afraid. She screws up her face, hides it in her hands.

MA

I'm sorry, I don't know what's happening to me. I can't feel anything. Even for ...

Her hand flings towards Jack. She chokes her words back.

NANCY

Joy, please.

MA

Don't judge me. You have no right. People walk around like the world is fine and normal but it's not.

Nancy tries to put her hand on Ma's arm.

MA (CONT'D)

Don't! I can't bear it. I thought this would be heaven, but it's worse. Can you understand that?

NANCY

You just need to rest.

MA

(recovering, closing the crack of vulnerability)
No I don't! That's not what I need.

NANCY

That's what the Doctor...

MA

(wiping away tears)
No! That's not what he said. You don't know what he said. That's confidential and you don't even know. Just forget it.

(CONTINUED)

NANCY

I feel like you're impossible to talk to right now.

MA

Oh, I'm sorry!

NANCY

No, you're not sorry.

MA

You think you know what's in my head. Trust me, you couldn't handle it.

NANCY

Tell me and see. I've asked you.

MA

So you're seeing that every time you look at me? Great.

NANCY

You're my daughter, that's what I'll see.

MA

Yeah, well you seemed to get on OK without me.

NANCY

How can you say that? You think you're the only one whose life was destroyed?

MA

Actually, that's exactly what I think.

NANCY

How would you feel if somebody took Jack from you?

MA

Shut up.

Go easy.

LEO

Jack puts his hands over his ears.

NANCY (CONT'D)

Look at him. You should be thinking about him.

MA

Don't you ever tell me how to look after my son. I'm sorry if I'm not 'nice' enough for you. Maybe if you hadn't been in my head saying 'be nice' that day I wouldn't have gone to help him.

Nancy is horrified.

MA (CONT'D)

(storming out)

This isn't even my house anymore. I don't know what this is.

Ma leaves. Jack shakes his head. Holds back tears.

NANCY

I'm sorry, Jack.

Nancy moves to hug him but she sees Jack stiffen and she stops.

91 EXT. BACK YARD - DAY 91

Jack wanders the back yard.

92 INT. MA AND JACK'S BEDROOM - DAY 92

Jack wanders in. Ma is sitting on the bed. She seems calmer.

MA

Come here, Jack.

He goes over and she wraps her arms around him. He cuddles into her.

MA (CONT'D)

You know, Jack, we're going to have to move away from here someday. We're going to have to get our own house. And a yard. We're going to have to do all kinds of things.

93 EXT. HOUSE - DAY

93

Cube vans rolling up. He sees a woman, slick, driven, 50s get out of an SUV. This is the Hostess, the same one we saw on TV in Room.

94 OMITTED

94

95 OMITTED 95

96 INT. DINING ROOM - DAY 96

Jack is fascinated by the machinery. The boxes, cords, tripods and lights.

He stands near the camera crew, listening to them talk, watching them set up their gear.

97 INT. LIVING ROOM - LATER 97

Jack, looking through the back window, watches the camera crew follow his mom and the hostess around the yard. They pretend to talk. Ma is dressed in her best outfit. Nancy approaches Jack.

NANCY

Time for you to go upstairs, Jack.
Remember what your Mom said.

98 INT. LEO'S DEN - LATER 98

The house is quiet apart from two muffled voices. Jack looks over to see Leo asleep in a chair.

99 OMITTED 99

100 INT. HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS 100

Jack creeps out of the room and down the hall. He walks down the stairs - gingerly, but on his feet.

101 INT. LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS 101

Jack edges into the living room, finding an enthralling circle of lights and cameras focussed on his mother and the hostess in their chairs.

The center of the room is shadowless and ultra-vivid, exposed by many bounces and fills. Ma and the Hostess face each other in two armchairs brought in for the occasion.

HOSTESS

You are an amazing, inspiring,
courageous, beautiful young woman.
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

HOSTESS (CONT'D)

I know all our viewers are amazed
by the intelligence and poise and
endurance and inner strength you
displayed during your ordeal.

(MORE)

HOSTESS (CONT'D)

Truly, an amazing test of character.

MA

Thank you. Thank you so much. I hope they all know how much their thoughts and prayers have meant the last few weeks. To our whole family.

Jack is enthralled.

HOSTESS

And Jack. Your son. By all accounts he is a normal, high-functioning, happy little boy. Amazing.

MA

He is. He's my life. I never could have survived without him.

HOSTESS

You made life as normal and nurturing as you could given the environment. You gave him a childhood. How did you manage to do that?

MA

I... I didn't think about it. I didn't plan it. When I found out I was pregnant with Jack, it just seemed like a terrible joke. You know? To bring someone into that place, it just seemed so wrong. I was in a very scary frame of mind. I thought the devil was controlling my life. In a way he was.

Ma makes an effort to control her emotions.

HOSTESS

Are you okay?

LAWYER

(interjecting)

I'm getting the feeling my client needs to -

Without taking her eyes off Ma, the Hostess holds her palm out to the lawyer. Her tone is brusque, matter of fact.

(CONTINUED)

HOSTESS

Just a minute, please.

MA

Then, everything was different once Jack came, because he was so beautiful and I had to keep him safe.

Ma, calmer, pulling herself together.

HOSTESS

When he's older will you talk to him about his father.

MA

Jack's not his.

The Hostess thinks she's getting an astonishing scoop.

HOSTESS

I beg your pardon, are you -

MA (OVERLAPPING)

A father's a man who loves his kid.

HOSTESS

So true, in a very real sense, but the genetic relationship -

MA (OVERLAPPING)

That's not a relationship. Jack's nobody's but mine.

The Hostess decides to change tack.

HOSTESS

You breastfed Jack for five years - in fact, viewers may be startled to learn that you still do.

MA

In this whole story, that's the shocking detail?

The hostess looks over a a colleague, down at her notes.

HOSTESS

Did it ever occur to you to ask your captor to take Jack away?

MA

Away?

HOSTESS

To leave him outside a hospital,
say, so he'd be found.

MA

Why would I -

HOSTESS (OVERLAPPING)

So Jack could be free. The ultimate
sacrifice, of course, but for him
to have a normal childhood...

MA

He had me.

She starts to stand, dragging her mic pack with her. The
lawyer steps in. Chaos.

102 INT. NANCY'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - EVENING

102

Later. Hushed. Jack eating at the table. Leo reads the
sports pages nearby, a silent companion.

Jack can hear Ma, in the lounge, talking low to Nancy. He
recognizes low sobs: Ma is crying.

Jack stops eating halfway through a mouthful, can't swallow.

103 INT. NANCY'S HOUSE - MA'S OLD ROOM - NIGHT

103

Night. Jack wakes, sensing himself alone. No Ma in the bed:
he touches the mark her body's left. No Ma in the room.

104 INT. NANCY'S HOUSE - LANDING - MOMENTS LATER

104

Jack walks on tiptoe down the landing.

The last door is the bathroom, and there's a crack of light.

Jack taps very quietly on the door, remembering the rule.

JACK

Ma?

He goes to the top of the stairs and considers descending.

Then he creeps back to the bathroom, whispers a bit louder.

JACK (CONT'D)

Ma?

(CONTINUED)

He tries the handle, but the door opens only a few inches. Frightened he starts to bang on the door.

JACK (CONT'D)
(shouting)
Ma! Ma!

An adult torso, Leo's, comes into the frame, driving with full force against the door which gives a little. Jack puts his face to the gap and sees Ma's hair spread out on the floor.

A little later. Jack gets glimpses of chaos: on the bathroom floor, TWO PARAMEDICS working on Ma (who responds just enough that we know she's not dead), Nancy in the bathroom doorway, Leo trying to calm her.

But no sound. It's as if Jack has been deafened by an explosion.

Later: as Ma is carried out in the background, Jack sits on the floor. We push in on him; he is hypnotized by the flashing ambulance lights on the wall.

JACK (V.O.)
There's so much of place in the world, there's less time because the time has to be spread extra thin over all the places like butter, so all the persons say hurry up, let's get going, pick up the pace, finish up now. Ma was in a hurry to go boing up to heaven but she forgot me, Dumbo Ma, so the aliens threw her back down craaaaaaash and broke her.

Next morning. Jack in a ball on the bed. He opens his fist; Bad Tooth, all he has of Ma.

In the background we hear the phone ringing.

LEO (O.S.)
(from hallway)
Hello?
(pause)
Jack, come here. It's for you.

Jack arrives. Leo holds out the phone. A pause then Jack takes it, holds it too far away: his first call.

NANCY (FILTERED)
Hi, Jack. I've got someone who
wants to talk to you...

MA (FILTERED)
Is he there? Put him on.

LEO
He's on. He's waiting.

MA (FILTERED)
Jack?

JACK
Ma?

She struggles to get control of her voice.

MA (FILTERED)
Are you doing OK?

Jack is stumped by this question.

JACK
Come back.

MA (FILTERED)
What's that?

JACK
(louder)
Come back now.

MA (FILTERED)
I wish I could. I just need to -

JACK (OVERLAPPING)
I pick. I pick for both of us.

107 CONTINUED: 107
Ma breaks down in sobs.
Jack hands the phone to Leo who talks to Nancy in murmurs.

107A INT. MA'S OLD BEDROOM - CUBBYHOLE - EVENING 107A
Jack sits in the space under the roof in Ma's bedroom playing with Lego.

107B INT. NANCY'S HOUSE - LOUNGE - NIGHT 107B
Jack watches TV with Nancy and Leo

107C OMITTED 107C

107D INT. NANCY'S HOUSE - DOWNSTAIRS VARIOUS 107D
Jack mopes around the house. Nancy and Leo give him space.

107DA INT. MA'S OLD BEDROOM - DAY 107DA
Jack wakes up alone.
Minutes later we see him enter Ma's walk-in closet. Sounds of things being shifted around inside.

107E INT. NANCY'S HOUSE - LANDING 107E
Jack walks out to the landing with Ma's box of memorabilia. Moments later, journals and photos are spread around him. He examines her year-books, photos of her as a child his own age.

108 EXT. NANCY AND LEO'S HOUSE - DAY 108
A week has passed and the outside of the house is completely clear of press/onlookers. Nancy's car pulls up. She get's out, let's Jack out of the back seat and the two of them carry shopping bags to the front door. A NEIGHBOR waves.

NEIGHBOR
Been shopping.

NANCY
Yes we have. We're making cupcakes.

Nancy and Jack bake companionably in the kitchen. Jack stands on a chair.

NANCY

You know how to beat eggs, Jack?

JACK

Sure. I did it before. In Room.

NANCY

Did you? Wow. What else did you do there.

JACK

Lots of things. I miss it sometimes.

NANCY

Wasn't it awfully small.

Jack shakes his head.

JACK

Uh uh, it went every direction all the way to the end. It never finished. And Ma was always there.

NANCY

OK.

JACK

It was small in wardrobe.

NANCY

What did you do in wardrobe?

JACK

Sleep. When Old Nick came.

Beat.

JACK (CONT'D)

I want to see Ma.

NANCY

I know. She just needs to be on her own a little while.

We hear the front door closing.

LEO (O.S.)

Hey Jack. There's someone here who'd like to meet you.

Jack hops down from his chair.

Jack walks out into the hallway and stops dead. Leo is standing there holding a small terrier dog.

LEO

Jack, meet Seamus. Would you like to pet him?

Jack approaches cautiously, reaches a hand gingerly to pet the dog, withdraws, reaches again and pets him. Nancy appears in the background. Jack sees her.

JACK

I could just go in and tell her about Seamus. Only for a minute. Or I could just look at her.

LEO

Come on, let's get this guy some air after being all stuffed up in the car.

112 EXT. PLAYGROUND - DAY 112

Jack tentatively climbs on a frame in a playground. Leo watches, with Seamus on a leash.

113 INT. FRONT LIVING ROOM - DAY 113

Nancy is reading. Jack enters.

JACK
Grandma.

NANCY
Yes?

JACK
I need the scissors.

NANCY
What for?

JACK
For cutting my hair.

NANCY
You really want to do that?

JACK
I want to send it to Ma.

NANCY
Why?

JACK
She needs my strong more than me.
So I want to send it to her. Or you
could take it to her.

Nancy is moved.

NANCY
I can help you if you'd like.

JACK
That would be great.

(CONTINUED)

NANCY

Okay. Let's do this right. I've wanted to cut that hair a very long time.

114 INT. NANCY'S KITCHEN - LATER

114

Jack sits in a chair with a sheet around his neck.

Nancy clips his hair.

NANCY

I used to cut your mother's hair all the time. And your Grandpa's hair. I've still got it.

JACK

You think this will work? Can my strong be her strong too? I'm not really sure if it works that way.

NANCY

Of course it does. We all help each other stay strong. No one is strong alone. You and your mom, you help each other through, don't you?

JACK

Yes.

NANCY

And you and me. And you and Leo. And Leo and me. We all have the same strong.

JACK
I guess we do.

NANCY
Ok, here goes.

Jack closes his eyes as Nancy cuts off his pony tail.

Jack is leaning his head back on the round lip of the bathroom sink. She turns on the water.

NANCY
Now lean back.

The water is nicely warm now.

NANCY (CONT'D)
This is the best part.

She pours water over his head, and shampoos him.

NANCY (CONT'D)
Feels good, doesn't it?

He closes his eyes and nods. She pours more water. And more. His face is rosy with the heat.

JACK
I love you, Grandma.

NANCY
I love you, Jack.

116 INT. NANCY'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY 116

Jack is drawing a multicolored picture.

He uses all the colors of the crayon box.

The picture of a house grows in colors and dimensions. The door is green. The windows orange. The roof red.

117 EXT. NANCY AND LEO'S HOUSE - BACK YARD - DAY 117

Jack plays with the Neighbor Boy and Seamus in the garden. He hears a tap tap tap and looks round. Ma is watching him through the glass back door. He runs to her as she opens the door. They greet each other with nervous joy, without words.

118 INT. NANCY AND LEO'S HOUSE - MA'S BEDROOM - SOON 118

Jack and Ma sit beside each other on the bed.

MA

I'm sorry, Jack.

JACK

That's OK.

He thinks.

JACK (CONT'D)

Don't do it again.

MA

I promise.

JACK

Are you better now?

MA

Starting to be.

She strokes his short hair then reaches into her bag and takes out his ponytail.

MA (CONT'D)

I'll always keep this with me,
Jack.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

MA (CONT'D)

I will never, ever let it go. When Grandma brought it to me, I... I knew I could get well. You saved me. Again.

They sit placidly a moment. He reaches for her shirt.

JACK

Can I...?

MA

Sorry. There's none left.

Jack think for a bit, accepts the new situation.

JACK

OK.

MA

I'm not a good enough Ma.

JACK

But you're Ma.

MA

I am.

She puts her arm around him. They sit in a gentle silence.

JACK

I'm going to play with Aaron now.
He's my friend.

Ma hugs him hard before he leaves.

Ma and Jack look out to sea.

JACK (V.O.)

When I was four I didn't even know about the world and now me and Ma are going to live in it forever and ever till we're dead.

120 INT. NANCY AND LEO'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - DAY 120

Ma and Jack water their new African Violet.

JACK (V.O.)

This is a street in a city in a country called America on the earth that's a blue and green planet always spinning so I don't know why we don't fall off. Then there's Outer Space, and nobody knows where's heaven.

120A INT. NANCY'S HOUSE - LOUNGE - NIGHT 120A

Ma and Nancy are curled up together on the sofa. Leo is there, too. The adults laugh as Jack fools around with Seamus.

121 INT. NANCY'S CAR - DAY 121

Ma and Jack are parked outside a Mom & Pop Burger Joint. They eat in the car.

JACK (V.O.)

Ma and I have decided that because we don't know what we like we get to try everything.

122 EXT. SUBURBS - NIGHT 122

Jack and Ma walk in the darkness through quiet suburban streets.

123 EXT. NANCY AND LEO'S HOUSE - DAY 123

Ma and Jack sit in a hammock in the back yard. The weather is turning warmer.

JACK

We have so many things to do.
Flying in an airplane.

MA

Definitely. Making new friends.

Pause.

(CONTINUED)

JACK
Can we go back to Room?

Ma looks concerned.

JACK (CONT'D)
Just for a visit.

A police car pulls up outside Old Nick's. Jack, Ma and Officer Parker get out. They stare at the house, still surrounded by crime-scene tape.

OFFICER PARKER
Follow me, guys.

The car port is now sealed off and the only way out back it through the house. Jack follows Ma and Officer Parker inside. It's tidy (except for a desk ransacked by police), anonymously banal: a leather suite, a cross-trainer, a flat-screen TV.

They step out into the back yard. Jack's gaze moves to the grey shed. A double-take: it's Room.

With an enormous bulldozer beside it.

JACK
(to himself)
Dylan!

Ma heads for the shed, Jack right behind her.

Officer Parker stands nearby. There's a MALE OFFICER there also, guarding the scene.

They step in. Drawings stripped off the walls, furniture shifted: the magic's gone. Jack stares and sniffs the air.

JACK
This isn't Room. Has it gotten
shrunked? Our friends...

MA
Taken away for evidence.
(explaining)
Proof that we were here.

Jack retraces their track marks around the bed. He draws a J in the fingerprint powder on the table.

Their Plant is all shrivelled. Jack strokes it.

Under the bed, he finds Eggsnake; touches the needle tongue.

He comes back to the doorway, where Ma stands frozen. He measures his height with his hand: an inch over the 5.

He hears bird song from the yard; patter of rain.

JACK
It's because Door's open.

MA
What?

JACK
It can't really be Room if Door's
open.

MA
Do you - would you like it closed?

Jack shakes his head.

MA (CONT'D)

I have to go now. Is there...
anything you need?

Jack looks around at the detritus of his childhood. Then he walks to the wall behind the bed and pats it.

JACK

Bye-bye.

MA

Jack -

He goes around Room fast, whispering his bye-byes.

MA (CONT'D)

Please, Jack.

He looks up at the skylight, rain running down it. He climbs onto the table.

JACK

Bye-bye.

(to Ma)

Say bye-bye to Room.

Ma says it but on mute.

Crane up as Jack and Ma emerge from the shed, hand in hand, and walk away without looking back.

FADE OUT.