

FIREFLIES

Written by

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FADE IN:

INT. SMALL CAR - DAY

CARLY (16) sits in the back seat, fastened in, and frozen.

CARLY V/O

They say in near death experiences,
we flash back to the moments in our
lives when we were most happy.

Carly's expression is blank as she turns to look out the car window.

CARLY'S POV:

Through the window, Carly sees a typical suburban backyard at dusk. YOUNG CARLY (6) and YOUNG TAYLOR (9) sit swinging on a porch swing. Fireflies float lazily through the air.

CARLY V/O (CONT'D)

Mine was when my brother and I were
little. We used to play a game.

Young Carly scrunches her nose as she closes her eyes.

Young Taylor grins mischievously as he eyes his closed hand.

After a moment, she opens her mouth slightly.

Young Taylor takes his closed fist and puts something in Young Carly's mouth.

CARLY V/O (CONT'D)

One of us would close our eyes
while the other one would force
them to try different foods and
ask.

CARLY V/O (CONT'D)

What do you taste? What do
you taste?

YOUNG TAYLOR

What do you taste? What do
you taste?

Young Carly starts to chew. Her expression is confused.

CARLY V/O

Sometimes it was good, like
cinnamon buns.

Young Carly's eyes pop open as her expression turns to horror.

CARLY V/O (CONT'D)
Other times... not so good.

Young Taylor, laughing, takes off running with Young Carly chasing after him.

YOUNG CARLY
Mom! Taylor made me eat a worm!

POV ENDS

Carly turns away from the window and is now upside down.

Drinks and half-eaten fast food float in the air in slow motion.

She looks toward the front seat.

Through the windshield, Carly sees that the car is flipping over in slow motion.

In the front passenger seat, Carly can see the back of a girl's head. She looks like she is screaming.

In the driver's seat, TAYLOR (19) looks back at Carly. He tries to give her a reassuring smile, but it doesn't quite make it to his eyes.

CARLY V/O
I think he was remembering the same thing.

Taylor opens his mouth to say something.

CARLY V/O (CONT'D)
It almost looked like he was going to ask me. What do you taste?

Taylor turns his attention back to the windshield.

CARLY V/O (CONT'D)
I wanted to tell him it was the laughter and happiness of our escapades. That even though he was a pain in the butt, I still loved him.

The car lands upside down and begins to slide head first into a tree.

Taylor turns back to look at her, panic in his eyes, just as glass begins to shatter.

Carly's eyes widen as she sees blood trickling down from Taylor's hairline.

CARLY V/O (CONT'D)
However, all I could think of to say was... blood.

INT. CAR - DAY

A five passenger sedan.

SUPER: 3 MONTHS LATER

Carly's eyes snap open. She's leaning against the window with earbuds on. Remnants of bruises and cuts are on her face, arms, and legs.

She immediately grabs the armrest on the car door as she fully wakes up.

ROGER (40s), Carly's dad, glances at her through the rearview mirror.

ROGER
Hey, about time you woke up.

Fully awake, Carly covers her unease with a groan as she rubs her neck.

NANCY (40s), Carly's mother, gives her a sympathetic smile.

NANCY
Are you okay?

CARLY
I think I slept on it wrong.

TOMMY (7), Carly's younger brother sitting beside her, stares at her intently.

CARLY (CONT'D)
What?

TOMMY
Did you know that you drool when you sleep?

CARLY
Did you know you're annoying?

NANCY
Carly!

Carly rolls her eyes.

CARLY

Oh come on. He started it. Why do you always take his side?

NANCY

Because he's seven.

Tommy grins triumphantly while Carly crosses her arms and looks away.

CARLY

Whatever.

Carly glances out the window.

CARLY'S POV: Something darts toward the car.

Carly jerks back.

CARLY'S POV: She sees that it is a squirrel which is now running away from the car.

Nancy turns to face her.

NANCY

You sure you're feeling all right?
You look a little pale.

Carly turns back to Nancy,

CARLY

(warning)
Mom...

ROGER

(quickly)
Look! Up ahead. We're finally here.

EXT. OLD SOUTHERN HOME - DAY

A two-story Southern style home with a front screened-in porch sits between two smaller houses.

A field is behind the houses, and a forest can be seen from a distance. Cicadas chatter loudly.

The Sedan parks in front of the house.

Roger, Tommy, Nancy, and Carly exit the car.

ROGER
Isn't this great?
(breathes in)
Nothing like fresh air. I haven't
been here in ages, but it's just
like when I was young.

Tommy covers his ears.

TOMMY
It's loud.

ROGER
Those are the cicadas. Just wait
until tonight. The frogs are
chatty, too.

CARLY
(under breath)
Yay... Nature.

Nancy gives her a look.

Carly ignores her as she follows the others inside.

INT. FOYER - DAY

Simple antique furniture with cobwebs hanging in corners. The family grimaces.

CARLY
What happened here?

ROGER
This place is owned by my mom's
side of the family. They haven't
been down in a while. It just needs
a little clean-up.

Nancy traces her finger across a table. She holds it up and sees a layer of dust on her finger. She winces but covers it quickly with a smile.

NANCY
We'll manage.

CARLY
(skeptically)
Really?

NANCY
This place will be spotless in no
time.

Carly sighs, looking tired. Nancy rests her hand on Carly's shoulder.

NANCY (CONT'D)

The doctor said you still need to relax and take it easy for a while. This is the perfect place to do just that.

CARLY

I guess.

ROGER

She's right.

He grabs Carly's hand and leads her upstairs.

ROGER (CONT'D)

Come on. I know just the room for you.

INT. CARLY'S ROOM - DAY

Basic bedroom setting. A big window with shutters is to the right of the bed. The bed is covered in plastic and is dusty.

Roger and Carly enter.

ROGER

It doesn't look like much but...

He opens the shutters.

ROGER (CONT'D)

The view's worth it.

CARLY'S POV:

The window shows a beautiful golden field and the forest behind it.

END POV

ROGER (CONT'D)

So? What do you think?

He looks anxious as if he's worried she won't be happy.

Carly smiles at Roger.

CARLY

It's great. Thanks, Dad.

Relaxing, he squeezes her arm reassuringly.

ROGER

I almost forgot to tell you. This town is special. There are these-

TOMMY O.S.

DAAAAAD! Mom squashed a spider! It was huge, and its guts are everywhere!

ROGER

I'll tell you later. Looks like duty calls.

Carly watches Roger leave before flopping down on the bed. The plastic on the mattress crinkles loudly as a puff of dust is unsettled.

Her smile drops as her gaze becomes unfocused.

INT. CARLY'S ROOM - NIGHT

Carly, now in a clean bed, is still staring at the ceiling. Frogs can be heard croaking.

A glowing light hits her face.

Carly sits up.

ANGLE ON: The window. It's glowing an eerie yellow color.

Frowning, Carly approaches it.

Fireflies cover the window. Their lights blink in unison creating the eerie glow in the room.

Carly groans as she turns away and heads for her door.

She only takes a few steps when the glow disappears. When she turns back, the fireflies are gone.

CARLY

(under breath)

Weird...

Carly sighs as she leaves her bedroom.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

Small country kitchen.

Carly sits down at a small table with a glass of water. She hears a creak and tenses.

Nancy enters. Her eyes are red, as if she has been crying. She quickly rubs her eyes and smiles.

NANCY
Couldn't sleep?

CARLY
Needed a glass of water. Plus, I'm having trouble getting used to all this... ambiance.

Nancy sits down beside her.

NANCY
I know what you mean.

They sit in an uncomfortable silence.

NANCY (CONT'D)
You know you can talk to-

CARLY
Mom, please. I know I'm messed up.

NANCY
That's not true. It's only been a couple of months since the ac-

CARLY
Just give me time. Please.

Nancy sighs as if this is an argument that they've had over and over.

NANCY
All right. If that's what you want.

They sit in awkward silence for a moment.

NANCY (CONT'D)
The neighbors are coming by tomorrow morning.

Carly frowns, caught off guard.

CARLY
What?

NANCY

The neighbors next door. They're bringing a hamburger casserole over.

Carly is relieved at the change in subject.

CARLY

That's... neighborly.

NANCY

Thought you would want to know.

CARLY

Thanks.

A squeak is heard.

CARLY (CONT'D)

I think we have mice.

NANCY

Don't tell Tommy. We'll never hear the end of it.

Carly and Nancy share a smile.

INT. KITCHEN - MORNING

Carly and Tommy sit at the table, half-asleep. Carly has earbuds on, and Tommy slouches in his chair.

Nancy is busy cooking a huge breakfast.

Banging can be heard from another room.

TOMMY

(half-asleep)

Is Dad going to do that all day?

Nancy walks over with two small glasses of warm water. Each glass has slice of lemon in it.

NANCY

Your father just wants to make this house more comfortable for us.

CARLY

Well, it's not very comfortable when he starts at 6 in the morning.

There is a loud bang followed by an indistinguishable angry murmuring. Nancy looks annoyed but takes a deep breath and regains her composure.

NANCY

We should appreciate what he's doing for us.

Nancy sounds like she's trying to convince herself. She sets down the glasses.

CARLY

What's this?

Nancy walks back to the stove and continues to cook.

NANCY

Warm water and lemon. I read somewhere that it's a good way to start your day.

CARLY

Are we on a health kick now?

NANCY

I just think it's never too late to start healthy habits.

Tommy winces as he shoves the glass of water away from him.

TOMMY

(to Nancy)

Can I go check out the lake?
Please?

NANCY

Maybe. If Carly will take you.

CARLY

No thanks. I'll pass.

Nancy finishes filling the plates and sets them on the table.

NANCY

(yelling to Roger)

Breakfast is ready.

The banging stops, and Roger enters.

ROGER

Smells great.

He sits down.

NANCY

(to Carly)

I wish you would take Tommy to the lake. The doctor said that fresh air and exercise will help you feel better.

CARLY

(under breath)

The doctor says a lot of things.

ROGER

You're thinking of going to the lake? It's beautiful. Me and your uncle used to fish down there when we were kids.

TOMMY

Did you catch anything cool?

ROGER

Come to think of it. We never seemed to... You should definitely go though.

CARLY

(firm)

Like I said, I'll pass.

There's a knock on the kitchen door.

NANCY

That must be the neighbors.

ROGER

The neighbors?

NANCY

I ran into them yesterday. They said they'd come over and say hi.

Nancy answers the door.

OLIVIA (30), Southern Homemaker, stands holding a hamburger casserole.

OLIVIA

Well, good morning neighbor. Hope I'm not too early.

She holds up the hamburger casserole.

OLIVIA (CONT'D)

I come bearing gifts.

NANCY

That's so sweet. Thank you. Please,
come in...

Nancy accepts the hamburger casserole from Olivia and leads her inside.

NANCY (CONT'D)

Everyone, this is Olivia.

OLIVIA

Nice to meet y'all. No one's been here for a long time. When I heard someone was coming to stay here for the summer, I wanted to come over and introduce myself.

Carly slouches in her chair while Tommy plays with his food.

ROGER

I used to come here when I was a kid. This is the first time I've been able to bring my family down.

OLIVIA

Our family's lived here for years so, if you have any questions about the town, please let me know.

(to Carly)

Actually, I have a daughter your age. I think you two will get along great.

Carly quickly stands up.

CARLY

Thanks, but Tommy and I are going to the lake this morning. Maybe later.

(to Tommy)

Let's go.

TOMMY

But I thought you didn't want to go?

CARLY

If you don't hurry, I'll change my mind.

Tommy jumps up from his chair.

TOMMY

Okay, okay. I'm ready.

They head for the door.

ROGER
Have fun you two.

OLIVIA
Maybe when you get back, I can
introduce you to Lisa. I'm sure she
would love to meet you.

CARLY
(slightly sarcastic)
That would be great.

Nancy gives Carly a look of disapproval. She quickly offers a seat at the table to Olivia.

NANCY
Olivia, do you have time for a cup
of coffee?

Carly smirks before heading out the door.

EXT. FOREST - DAY

Assorted wildlife and trees.

Carly and Tommy trek through the forest. Tommy plays pretend army man, while Carly is completely absorbed in her music.

Tommy runs up to a tree and hides behind it. He peeks out at Carly.

TOMMY
The enemy is approaching. I repeat.
The enemy is approaching.

CARLY
Cut it out, Tommy.

TOMMY
It's time to attack! Attack!

He jumps at her.

Carly dodges him and continues walking.

CARLY
Keep this up, Tommy, and we'll
never get to the lake.

Tommy looks hurt. He kicks the dirt.

TOMMY
You're no fun anymore.

CARLY
What are you talking about?

Tommy stomps past her.

TOMMY
(resigned)
Nothing.

He perks up when he hears a dog barking up ahead and takes off running.

CARLY
Tommy, wait!

EXT. LAKE - DAY

The lake is enclosed by a wall of trees. It's calm, barely a ripple.

As Tommy approaches, he sees MARK (17) sitting in a beach chair, fishing.

RILEY, a German Shepherd, sits by his chair. The German Shepherd cocks his head at Tommy.

Tommy stops in his tracks.

TOMMY
Hi.

Mark looks as if he's about to respond, but Carly comes up behind Tommy.

CARLY
I thought I told you not to...
(to Mark)
Oh, sorry. Didn't see you there.

MARK
No problem.

Mark returns to fishing.

TOMMY
Can I pet your dog?

Mark seems surprised.

CARLY
Tommy, quit bothering him.

MARK
It's okay. Go ahead. He's friendly.

Riley wags his tail before going to Tommy.

Tommy smiles as he pets Riley.

Riley licks his face, and Tommy giggles.

CARLY
Do you live around here?

Again Mark looks confused.

MARK
(cautious)
For the time being...
You're new around here; aren't you?

CARLY
Yeah. We're here for the summer. Is
it that obvious?

Mark laughs slightly.

MARK
Let's just say, I know how people
act around here, and you don't act
like them.

TOMMY
I like your dog.

MARK
Thanks.

Riley trots back and lays down beside Mark.

TOMMY
Have you caught any fish?

Mark glances at the lake and shrugs.

MARK
Nope. There aren't any fish in this
lake.

CARLY
So why are you fishing?

Mark leans forward, grinning.

MARK
Because of the mysteries.

Tommy's face lights up.

TOMMY
Mysteries? What are those?

MARK
Just strange events that happen
around here. One of them involves
this lake.

Suddenly, Mark's expression saddens.

MARK (CONT'D)
I was hoping...

He snaps out of his trance and glances at them.

MARK (CONT'D)
(curt)
I've got to go.

Mark reels his line in and puts his gear away.

CARLY
Oh... well it was nice meeting you.
I guess we'll be seeing you around?

MARK
Probably not.

Carly looks startled as Mark turns away from them.

Riley trots after him as he leaves.

TOMMY
They're nice. Especially the dog.

Carly glances at him and shakes her head.

CARLY
They're weird... Come on. Let's go.

TOMMY
But we just got here.

Carly ignores him as she walks away.

Tommy sighs.

TOMMY (CONT'D)
(under breath)
No fun at all.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Carly and Tommy enter the house.

It's silent, and no one seems to be around.

TOMMY
We're home!

There is no response.

CARLY
Mom? Dad?

A creaking sound is heard.

Tommy looks at her nervously.

TOMMY
What was that?

CARLY
It's okay. Old houses make weird
sounds... Mom? Dad?

They walk toward the den.

The creaking sound is louder, followed by whispering.

Tommy shoves his hands in his pockets, shifting nervously.

TOMMY
(insistent)
Carly.

She holds up a finger to silence him. They can hear low angry
whispers up ahead.

INT. DEN - DAY

A small room with a sofa, two arm chairs, and a TV.

Roger and Nancy are off to the side whispering and glaring at
each other.

ROGER
(whispering)
What were you thinking? We're
supposed to be having family time.

NANCY
(whispering)
You're one to talk. You've been
tinkering away by yourself since we
got here.

ROGER
(whispering)
I thought it would help if I made
things look nicer here.

NANCY
(whispering)
That's not what's needed. They need
you. I need you.

ROGER
(whispering)
Then what do you want me to do...

NANCY
(loud whispering)
Don't you see? I don't know what to
do either. I don't know if I can-

They both look startled as they notice Tommy and Carly
standing in the archway.

They quickly put on smiles.

ROGER
When did you two get back?

CARLY
Just now...

NANCY
I hope you aren't too tired. Olivia
invited us over for dinner.

TOMMY
Really?

CARLY
Why?

Roger shoots Nancy a look before recovering.

ROGER

Because they're nice, and they want to get to know us. Come on. It will be fun.

NANCY

Besides, it'll be good for you.

CARLY

Are you going to say that every time you want me to do something?

NANCY

Carly, please.

Carly rolls her eyes.

CARLY

Fine. Whatever. At least I don't have to wash the dishes.

INT. DINING ROOM - NIGHT

An upscale furnished country room. Roger, Nancy, Tommy, and Carly sit around the table with Olivia, LISA (16), and FRANK (40).

FRANK

So, have you settled in yet?

NANCY

Getting there. It's very nice here. Quite different than what we're used to.

Tommy pokes at his food while Carly looks bored. Carly glances at Lisa.

Lisa looks bored as well; but, when she sees Carly staring, she smiles politely before returning to eating her food.

OLIVIA

I bet. Our little town hasn't changed much over the years. Roger, you said you used to come here?

ROGER

When I was young. My mother's family owns the house. We'd all take turns coming here during the summers.

OLIVIA

Well then, you must have told your children about the five mysteries of our little town.

Tommy places his fork down and perks up.

TOMMY

What are they? I want to know.

ROGER

I do remember something about the mysteries. Something about brownies?

Carly tries not to laugh.

CARLY

(skeptical)

Brownies? As in little people who live in your house?

Frank leans forward. He takes this seriously.

FRANK

They're similar to the ones from the stories. No one knows how they got here or why they are here, but everyone has had some experience with them.

OLIVIA

The ones that live around here are quite mischievous. They run around like mice at night. They'll whisper and giggle until you enter a room and steal the most peculiar things.

(to Lisa)

Isn't that right, dear?

Lisa looks as if she's about to roll her eyes but stops herself and smiles.

LISA

Yes, mama.

Tommy stares intently at Olivia.

TOMMY

(totally buying it)

Are they dangerous?

OLIVIA

Not at all. They're more like
pranksters.

CARLY

(sarcastic)

Yeah, sure. We'll be on the lookout
for them. Wouldn't want them to
steal something.

OLIVIA

Well, I wish you luck. They are
quite sneaky. I've yet to see one.

Carly glances at Lisa who is sneaking a peek at her
cellphone. She stops when she realizes Carly is watching.

Carly smiles at her, and Lisa relaxes.

CARLY

(to Olivia)

Really. That's surprising.

Nancy shoots Carly a warning look.

OLIVIA

One mystery we can prove is the
White Stag. Frank's actually seen
it.

NANCY

A White Stag.... sounds like a
beautiful creature.

FRANK

When I saw it, I was camping in the
woods. The stag was surrounded by
fog and seemed to float instead of
run. It watched me for a moment
before disappearing like a ghost.

TOMMY

Wow. That's so cool.

OLIVIA

The legend is that if you catch the
white stag, it will grant your wish
for one day.

CARLY

For one day? Sounds like a
cheapskate.

NANCY

Depends on what you ask.

ROGER

An albino deer. I'm surprised you don't have scientists out here trying to study it.

Frank slouches back, looking frustrated.

FRANK

We've been trying to catch it for years, but it always eludes us. That's why we hold the White Stag Festival during the summer. We want to honor the white stag and hope it appears.

Carly chokes on her food as she tries not to laugh.

OLIVIA

Are you okay, dear?

CARLY

(recovering)

Yeah, I'm fine. Sounds like you've got a real fairy tale going on around here.

EXT. OLD SOUTHERN HOME - NIGHT

Roger, Nancy, Tommy, and Carly walk toward the porch.

Roger and Tommy are walking ahead while Nancy and Carly are trailing behind.

NANCY

Why were you being so rude tonight? They were just trying to be nice and make us feel welcomed.

CARLY

I couldn't help it. They were talking about little people and ghost deer. Please don't tell me you took them seriously.

NANCY

Of course not. But that doesn't mean you have to be rude about it.

CARLY

Fine. Fine. Next time someone says something about magic deer and little people hiding in our house, I'll act like it's totally normal.

Nancy smiles slightly but tries to cover it up.

NANCY

Uh-huh. Well, that's all I ask.

Nancy squeezes Carly's shoulder.

NANCY (CONT'D)

Do me another favor? Try to get some sleep tonight.

INT. CARLY'S ROOM - NIGHT

Carly stares blankly at the ceiling. She glances at the alarm clock beside her bed. It reads 2:30.

Carly sighs before forcing herself out of bed.

EXT. PORCH - NIGHT

The frogs are croaking loudly, and fireflies are fluttering around in the field.

Carly sits down on the porch swing with a cup of tea in hand.

She takes a sip and begins to swing.

Putting earbuds in her ears, she turns her ipod on. After taking another sip, she closes her eyes.

A moment later, she opens her eyes again, annoyed.

CARLY

Why can't I sleep?

She jumps when a hand touches her.

Glancing to her right, she sees Tommy standing beside her. His face is pale.

She takes out her earbuds.

CARLY (CONT'D)

Geez, Tommy. What are you doing up? You scared me.

TOMMY
(whispering)
I think the brownies are out.

CARLY
Tommy, they're not brownies. Just mice.

TOMMY
But I can hear them whispering;
and, when I went to tell you... you
were gone. I thought...

Carly's eyes widen as she realizes what he means. She takes his arm and lets him sit down beside her before pulling him into a hug.

CARLY
The brownies aren't going to make
me disappear Tommy. Even if they
did, I'd find a way back. Trust me.

Tommy won't meet her gaze.

TOMMY
Taylor was taken away to heaven.
He's not coming back. What if the
brownies take you there?

Carly's grip tightens slightly. A look of guilt crosses her face.

CARLY
(serious)
Don't worry. They won't take me to
heaven.

They continue to swing in the porch swing.

INT. GENERAL STORE - DAY

Everything but the kitchen sink type of store: groceries, medicines, hardware, etc.

A large poster advertising the White Stag Festival is plastered on the window.

There are a couple of CUSTOMERS browsing the aisles.

Roger is up front talking to the store owner, WILLIAM (50).

Tommy and Carly browse the aisles.

Carly's earbuds are back in her ears as she listens to her music.

Tommy grabs a candy bar.

TOMMY
Can I get this?

CARLY
Go ask Dad.

Tommy runs over to Roger and hands him the candy bar.

Carly starts to browse again, but she notices something out of the corner of her eye.

She sees Riley through the screen door. He's sitting patiently.

The screen door opens, and Mark enters.

William tenses when he sees Mark. He returns his attention back to Roger, but it's obvious he's keeping an eye on Mark.

Carly watches Mark make his way back to the refrigerated section.

Tommy notices him, too, and follows Mark.

TOMMY
Hi Mark!

Mark grins.

MARK
Tommy, right?

TOMMY
(pleased)
You remembered.

Carly walks toward them.

MARK
Of course. I remember all of
Riley's friends. How are you today?

TOMMY
Okay. I didn't sleep well because
we have brownies in our house.

Mark leans down toward him.

MARK

Really? Are they causing any trouble?

TOMMY

They're just loud. I don't think they took anything.

Tommy frowns as if he's thinking before nodding.

TOMMY (CONT'D)

Yeah. I'm positive.

MARK

Well, did you know that leaving a chocolate chip cookie out once a week makes brownies happy? They'll be a lot nicer to you.

Carly stops in front of them and crosses her arms.

CARLY

Please, don't encourage him. We'll have an even bigger mouse problem if he starts putting cookies out.

Mark stands up straight.

MARK

Not a believer? I'm not surprised.

He points to her earbuds.

MARK (CONT'D)

If you keep those in your ears all the time, you're bound to miss things.

Carly glares at him. Unconsciously, she takes her earbuds out of her ears.

CARLY

I don't keep them in all the time.

Mark turns back to the refrigerated section, opens the door, and pulls out a soda.

MARK

(nonchalant)

Oh well. My mistake.

Carly stares at him in disbelief. What the heck is with this guy?

CARLY
Let's go, Tommy.

Carly and Tommy turn to leave.

MARK
I've got an offer for you.

Carly turns back.

CARLY
An offer?

MARK
You look like someone who's
troubled.

CARLY
So now you're a psychic?

Mark shrugs.

MARK
I'm just telling you what I see. I
think I can help you.

CARLY
Yeah? And what do you think I need
help with?

Mark studies her for a moment.

MARK
Tell you what. Meet me at the lake
on Saturday morning at 8, and I'll
tell you.

CARLY
And what makes you think I'll come?

Mark walks toward the cash register.

MARK
I dunno. Curiosity, maybe?
See you around.

William stiffens. Mark smiles at him and places money on the
counter before leaving.

William immediately relaxes when Mark leaves.

TOMMY
What was he talking about?

CARLY
 (stunned)
 I have no idea.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Nancy, Olivia, and Lisa sit at the table.

Tommy comes bursting through the door, followed by Roger and Carly.

Nancy quickly stands up and grabs Carly's arm to prevent her from escaping.

NANCY
 Carly, glad you're back. Lisa was getting bored with us. It's a beautiful day. Why don't you two enjoy the porch while Olivia and I visit.

CARLY
 But...

Nancy gives her a warning look.

CARLY (CONT'D)
 (sarcastic)
 Sure. Why not.

EXT. PORCH - DAY

Carly and Lisa sit on the porch swing, silent.

Lisa is busy texting on her phone. Carly's hand reaches for her earbuds, but she resists.

CARLY
 So...

Carly looks around trying to think of something to say.

CARLY (CONT'D)
 (awkward)
 Is it always this hot and humid?

Lisa doesn't look up from her phone.

LISA
 Only in the summer. Drives me crazy.

(MORE)

LISA (CONT'D)
 My hair's always on the fritz. Not
 even a conditioner keeps it down.
 Stupid humidity.

She quickly eyes Carly's hair.

LISA (CONT'D)
 Not that you would care.

CARLY
 (slightly offended)
 Sorry I asked...

Lisa realizes her mistake as she puts her phone down and
 lightly smacks her head.

LISA
 Sorry. Didn't mean it like that. I
 meant it as a compliment.

CARLY
 Thanks... I guess.

Lisa turns to face her. Her hand plays with her phone as if
 it takes every ounce of willpower not to text on it.

LISA
 Look. I know this is all awkward
 and weird because our parents
 arranged us to be friends.

CARLY
 Like a play date?

Lisa's eyes widen for emphasis.

LISA
 I know, right? But, truth be told,
 you seem all right; and I never
 object to making new friends... So,
 you know, if you're looking for
 someone to tag along with and
 explore the one square mile of our
 town... I'm your girl.

Despite Lisa's shallowness, Carly can't help but like Lisa.

CARLY
 Okay. I'll take you up on it.

LISA
 (sing-song)
 Awesome sauce.
 (normal)
 (MORE)

LISA (CONT'D)

Oh, and while we're on the subject, want to hang out on Thursday at the soda shop? I can introduce you to some of my friends.

CARLY

Soda shop?

LISA

Yep. It's so retro, but it has the best sodas.

CARLY

Okay. Why not.

Lisa's phone buzzes. Lisa eyes it anxiously before turning her attention back to Carly.

CARLY (CONT'D)

You can check your texts if you want. Doesn't bother me.

Lisa looks relieved.

LISA

Thanks. My mom says I'm addicted. I say, I'm just staying well informed.

Lisa checks her texts while Carly leans back in the swing.

CARLY

Yeah. Well, my mom's not too fond of my appreciation of music either.

Lisa raises an eyebrow at a text.

LISA

So... Rumor has it you're hanging out with Mark.

CARLY

(noncommittal)

Wow, you do stay well informed.

Lisa puts her phone down.

LISA

As your new friend, can I give you a word of advice?

CARLY

Sure.

LISA
Just be careful. I've heard some
strange rumors about him.

Carly gives her a questioning look, but Lisa quickly returns
to her phone.

LISA (CONT'D)
Aww. My friend, Alex, just got a
new puppy. She sent pics.

Lisa holds up her phone, and Carly tries to smile.

INT. CARLY'S ROOM - NIGHT

Carly lays awake, staring at the ceiling.

She rubs her eyes and lets out a sigh. After a moment, she
seems to come to a decision.

EXT. LAKE - DAY

Mark waits by the lake with Riley. Hearing footsteps, he
turns and smiles.

Carly approaches him.

MARK
So, you decided to come.

CARLY
Yeah, well, I've got nothing else
to do... but this better not be a
creepy cult thing.

MARK
Not a creepy cult thing but it'll
be worth it. You'll see.

Mark begins to walk away.

MARK (CONT'D)
Let's go.

CARLY
Go? Where?

MARK
To my creepy cult headquarters...

She glares at him.

MARK (CONT'D)

I'm kidding. It's a surprise. Wait
til we get there.

EXT. HAPPY TAILS - DAY

A small animal shelter with a large field behind. The sign
has a cute dog on the front.

Mark, Riley, and Carly approach the shelter.

CARLY

You've got to be kidding me.

MARK

See. Isn't this a great surprise?

CARLY

How does shoveling up dog crap make
me feel better?

MARK

You'll see.

Mark heads inside. Carly stares at him.

After a moment, she sighs and follows him.

INT. HAPPY TAILS RECEPTION ROOM - DAY

It looks clean and has similar decor to a pre-school
classroom.

LORI (30) stands behind the reception desk typing on her
computer.

The bell rings as the door opens.

Lori looks up and sees Mark, Riley, and Carly enter.

LORI

Hey Mark! Didn't expect you in this
early.

(To Riley)

And look at you. You look happy
this morning.

Riley wags his tail.

MARK

I brought an extra pair of hands.
Figured you could use the help.

Carly reluctantly steps forward.

CARLY
Hi. I'm Carly.

Lori shakes her hand.

LORI
The name's Lori. Ever worked at a
dog shelter before?

CARLY
No. Never.

Lori gives Mark a look.

LORI
Well, I can always use the extra
help. Don't worry, you'll catch on
quick.

Lori motions Carly to follow her.

MARK
I'll be out in Lifers' Alley if you
need me.

CARLY
You're not coming with us?

MARK
No. Lori's a good teacher. You
don't need me.

He begins to walk away, and Riley follows him.

MARK (CONT'D)
See you at lunch.

He leaves.

Carly turns back to see Lori watching her, amused.

LORI
You coming?

Carly recovers.

CARLY
Yeah. Let's go.

EXT. DOG KENNELS - DAY

Dog cages are lined up on both sides and are filled with loud barking dogs.

Lori and Carly stroll down the center aisle.

LORI

Since you're new, you'll be working with the dogs ready for adoption. They're easier to handle.

Carly eyes them skeptically.

CARLY

What do I do?

Lori stops and hands her a leash, broom, and scooper.

LORI

You'll need to clean out their kennels, refill their food, and water bowls. Later, we'll take them out for a walk. Got it?

CARLY

I think so...

Lori smiles and places a hand on her shoulder.

LORI

Don't worry. You'll be fine. I'll be nearby if you need me.

CARLY

Okay.

Lori leaves as Carly approaches the first kennel.

Inside the kennel is a black and tan DACHSHUND.

He stares at her intently.

CARLY (CONT'D)

Nice doggie.

She glances at the name on the front of his cage.

CARLY (CONT'D)

I mean, Toby.

Toby wags his tail.

Carly lets herself in and grimaces.

Toby has made a mess in the kennel. Blankets are strewn about, and he's used the bathroom everywhere. Also, he is in the process of digging a hole in the far corner.

CARLY (CONT'D)
(sarcastic)
Great... this is totally going to help me.

Toby raises up on his back legs in a begging position.

CARLY (CONT'D)
Cute. Still doesn't make me feel better.

EXT. DOG KENNELS - LATER

Carly leans against one of the cages. She's sweating and tired.

LORI O.S.
How you holding up?

Carly looks up to see Lori approaching with a bottle of water in each hand.

CARLY
I'm managing.

Lori hands Carly a bottle of water.

CARLY (CONT'D)
Thanks.

Carly takes a sip of water.

LORI
So, Mark tricked you into coming here, huh?

Carly chokes on the water.

CARLY
Uh, no. Why do you ask?

LORI
We don't get many volunteers out here. I mean it's not a glamorous job, shoveling up dog poop.

Carly smirks.

LORI (CONT'D)
So, how did he convince you to
come?

Carly's gaze stays focused on the water bottle, her mood
somber.

CARLY
He said that he could help me with
something. I've tried everything
else so I figured, why not.

Lori studies her for a minute.

LORI
You're the first...

Carly looks at her curiously.

LORI (CONT'D)
(quickly)
Well, don't know if taking care of
dogs will help you or not. But if
you're lucky, you'll experience
what Mark and I did. It's what
keeps us coming back.

CARLY
And what's that?

LORI
If I told you, it would ruin the
surprise.

She motions for Carly to follow her.

LORI (CONT'D)
Come on. We'll grab some lunch.
It'll be my treat.

CARLY
Thanks, but that's not necessary.

LORI
Maybe not for you, but I spend most
of my days with dogs. It'll be nice
to have an actual conversation for
a change.

EXT. EXERCISE GROUNDS- DAY

A giant fenced-in yard with agility equipment.

Riley sits outside of the fence, waiting patiently.

Mark is inside with a PIT BULL.

The Pit Bull is on a leash with her tail tucked between her legs. She's quivering.

Carly and Lori approach.

LORI

He's working with Tonya.

CARLY

The Pit Bull?

LORI

(nodding)

She's a neglect case. Terrified of everything. We've been running her through agility training to boost her confidence.

(yelling to Mark)

Hey! How's it going?

Mark looks up at them and grins.

MARK

Just finishing up. How'd she do?

LORI

Pretty good. Come on. We're going to lunch.

MARK

Sounds good.

Mark walks Tonya out of the yard and toward the kennels.

Riley walks up to Carly and butts his head against her leg.

Carly pets him.

CARLY

Hey boy.

LORI

It's so good to see him in such good shape.

CARLY

What was wrong with him?

LORI

Riley used to be a resident here.
He came from a bible thumping
family that liked to thump more
than bibles.

Carly stops petting Riley and stares at him.

CARLY

Seriously? Why would someone do
that?

LORI

I ask myself that same question
every day...

Lori perks back up.

LORI (CONT'D)

Riley came in around the same time
Mark started working here. They
became fast friends.

Riley rolls over on his belly. Lori bends down to pet him.

Carly stares at him in amazement.

CARLY

Looking at him, I'd never think
something that bad had happened to
him.

LORI

Dogs are pretty cool that way. They
can have the worst in the world
happen to them, but one kind act
and they bounce back.

Carly's gaze drops to the ground.

CARLY

(quietly)

I wish it was that easy.

Lori seems to notice. She smiles.

LORI

Of course, it could also be the
help of the brownies.

CARLY

(skeptical)

You have brownies here, too?

Lori laughs.

LORI

Of course. You can hear them scurrying about. Ever since we built the kennel here, I've made an effort to leave them presents. Seems they return the favor by helping me and the dogs in small ways.

CARLY

I thought brownies caused mischief.

LORI

Some may say its mischief. Other's may say it's entertainment. It all depends on your perspective.

CARLY

(unconvinced)

Uh-huh...

Lori waves at Mark who is walking toward them.

LORI

You ready?

MARK

Yep. I'm starved.

His gaze meets Carly's who quickly looks away.

INT. DINER - DAY

A small mom and pop diner.

Mark, Carly, and Lori enter and sit at one of the tables.

LORI

You are going to love it here. The burgers and grilled cheese sandwiches are amazing.

A WAITRESS (30) approaches them. She pulls out her pad to take their order but stops when she sees Mark.

She glances at Lori, who raises an eyebrow.

LORI (CONT'D)

Problem?

WAITRESS

No. Of course not. Can I take your order?

Carly glances curiously at Mark.

LORI

Sweet Tea.

Mark suddenly seems extremely interested in the table.

MARK

Water's good for me.

Carly is still staring at Mark.

LORI

Carly?

Carly starts.

CARLY

Huh?

LORI

Your order?

CARLY

Oh, right. Just water.

The waitress glares at Mark before leaving.

Mark picks up the menu and looks at it.

CARLY (CONT'D)

Why was she-

MARK

So the grilled cheese is good?

Carly glances at Lori, who shakes her head and gives her a leave it alone look.

Carly sighs as she turns her attention to the menu.

CARLY

Grilled cheese it is then.

EXT. LAKE - DAY

Mark and Carly are slowly walking toward the lake. They're tired and dirty from the day's work.

MARK
So, what's the verdict?

CARLY
(fighting exhaustion)
Huh?

MARK
On working at the shelter. Think
you'll want to go back?

Carly smirks as she mockingly taps her chin.

CARLY
Well, I didn't like being tricked;
but it wasn't that bad... So, sure,
why not.

MARK
Good, cause Lori likes you. She
wants you to come back later this
week if you have time.

CARLY
I've got nothing better to do.

MARK
Speaking of which, you have any
plans on Monday? Because there's
something else I want to show you.

CARLY
Does it involve shoveling more
crap?

Mark laughs.

MARK
No. This is a little cleaner. You
interested?

CARLY
Like I said. I've got nothing
better to do.

MARK
That seems to be your motto.

Carly rolls her eyes.

CARLY
Ha. Ha.

MARK

Anyway, meet me here at 5:30 Monday morning.

CARLY

Okay.

Carly does a double take.

CARLY (CONT'D)

Wait. In the morning? Are you kidding me?

Mark grins and shakes his head.

MARK

Nope.

CARLY

But that's so early.

MARK

So drink coffee.

Mark walks away and waves at her.

MARK (CONT'D)

See you!

CARLY

See you... If I don't collapse from exhaustion first.

Mark laughs.

A smile tugs at Carly's lips before she quickly covers it up.

INT. DINING ROOM - DAY

Tommy, Roger, Nancy, and Carly sit at the table and eat silently.

It's awkward, as if they feel they should be talking but don't know what to say.

Tommy's eyes dart anxiously from one person to another as if he's waiting for something.

Nancy takes a sip of water.

NANCY

Isn't this nice? All of us sitting down together and eating dinner.

Tommy looks shocked.

TOMMY
Mom, you lost the quiet game.

NANCY
(jokingly)
Oh, I didn't realize we were
playing the quiet game.

TOMMY
(confused)
I thought that's why no one was
talking.

Nancy shifts uncomfortably in her seat. Roger remains focused
on eating.

NANCY
Oh, no sweetie. You can talk as
much as you want.

TOMMY
Okay.
(to Carly)
What were you doing today?

CARLY
None of your business.

Tommy looks hurt.

NANCY
(warning)
Carly... be nice to your brother.

Carly sighs.

CARLY
Fine. I was working at a dog
shelter today. Happy?

Nancy and Roger look at her in surprise.

NANCY
Oh, that's good.

Nancy glances at Roger who nods.

ROGER
Real good.

TOMMY
Was it fun?

CARLY
I was shoveling dog sh...

Nancy narrows her eyes.

CARLY (CONT'D)
...crud all day. So, no. Not
really.

NANCY
Still, I'm happy that you've found
something to occupy your time...

Nancy looks down at her plate.

NANCY (CONT'D)
(quickly)
By the way, I think we should go to
church on Sunday.

What? ROGER Seriously? CARLY

Nancy nods her head.

NANCY
I think it would be a good idea.

ROGER
We've only gone to church on
Christmas.

NANCY
All the more reason to go more
often.

Roger and Nancy have a staring contest for a second before
Roger gives in.

ROGER
Fine. We'll go.

TOMMY
Yay! We get to go to church!

CARLY
Why are you so excited?

TOMMY
Cause we'll get to sing Christmas
carols.

CARLY
 It doesn't work that way.
 (to Nancy)
 Don't I get a say in this?

NANCY
 It's already decided. Who wants
 dessert?

Nancy stands up and heads to the kitchen, leaving Carly frustrated.

INT. CARLY'S ROOM - NIGHT

Carly lays down on her bed. She stares blankly at the ceiling and takes a deep breath.

CARLY
 Go to sleep.

She closes her eyes.

CARLY (CONT'D)
 (whispering)
 Please... go to sleep.

DREAM SEQUENCE:

EXT. ABANDONED HIGHWAY - DAY

It's foggy. Carly can barely see in front of her. The highway is deserted and in disrepair.

Carly looks around, searching.

NANCY V.O.
 (singing and haunting)
 Lullaby and good night. Go to sleep
 little baby...

Carly walks down the highway. She notices a black mass in the fog up ahead. She runs toward it.

NANCY V.O. (CONT'D)
 (singing and haunting)
 Lullaby...

The fog parts, and Carly sees a small car, turned over, and on fire. It's the same car from the car crash.

She runs to the driver's side and bangs on the window.

NANCY V.O. (CONT'D)
(singing and haunting)
And good night...

Taylor appears on the other side of the window. He bangs back, the flames creeping closer to him.

Carly yanks on the car door, but it won't budge.

NANCY V.O. (CONT'D)
(singing and haunting)
Go to sleep little baby...

Taylor gives a small smile before falling back into the flames.

Carly screams.

END DREAM
SEQUENCE

INT. CARLY'S ROOM - NIGHT

Carly sits upright and gasps for breath. She's covered in sweat and looks terrified.

Closing her eyes, she takes several deep breaths. After a moment, her breathing returns to normal.

She frowns as she hears scuffling sounds in the walls. Standing up, she exits her room.

INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT

Carly walks down the hall on her way to the kitchen.

The scuffling sounds are accompanied by barely audible WHISPERS. They sound impish, like children.

WHISPERS
Secrets... lies...

A small shadow darts in front of a light. Could be a mouse or...

Carly's frown deepens.

WHISPERS (CONT'D)
(slightly harsher)
Not good enough...

She winces as she hurries forward.

WHISPERS (CONT'D)
(even harsher)
Doubt... Doubt!

She enters...

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

As soon as she enters, the whispering and scuffling sounds stop.

Breathing a sigh of relief, she heads to the cabinets and pulls out a glass. Filling the glass with water, she is about to leave when she notices a plate of chocolate chip cookies on the table.

One of the cookies has a bite in it. Behind the plate of cookies is a handwritten letter. It reads:

To: Brownies From: Tommy.

Carly smiles.

The scuffling sounds start again. Curious, she follows the noise to...

INT. DEN - NIGHT

Carly enters.

ROGER
(barely audible)
Why can't I fix anything?

Carly looks up and sees Roger working on repairing paneling on the wall.

CARLY
Dad?

Roger jumps and hits his thumb with his hammer. He quickly stands up and faces Carly.

ROGER
(wincing)
Carly? What are you doing up?

CARLY
Getting a glass of water. You okay?

Roger eyes his throbbing finger.

ROGER
I'll live.

She points to the wall.

CARLY
Can't that wait til tomorrow?

Roger rubs the back of his neck. Carly notices the dark circles under his eyes and the worn look on his face. He hasn't slept well in days.

ROGER
I came down for some water as well;
and, since I was awake, I thought I
would get some work done.

Carly and Roger stand uncomfortably.

CARLY
(hesitant)
Is everything all right between you
and Mom?

ROGER
Of course. Why?

CARLY
You're arguing a lot lately. Ever
since...

Carly can't finish the sentence.

ROGER
Sweetie, there's nothing to be
concerned about. Everything's fine.

Roger clears his throat.

ROGER (CONT'D)
I guess I'd better go to bed then.
Don't want to wake everyone up with
my hammering.

Carly spots a crumpled up blanket on the sofa. She turns back to Roger.

ROGER (CONT'D)
(quickly)
Well. Night.

CARLY
(unsure)
Night.

Roger leaves.

Carly looks after him, concerned.

INT. CHURCH - DAY

A small Gothic style church. The sun shines through the stained glass windows.

Carly and her family sit in the middle of the church on a pew.

Nancy listens to the minister intently, while Roger tries to fight sleep.

Tommy fidgets with his suit, and Carly looks miserable.

Carly casually looks around, searching for Mark; but he isn't there.

Tommy leans toward her.

TOMMY
(whispering)
Who are you looking for?

CARLY
(whispering)
No one.

Nancy holds a finger to her lips.

NANCY
Shh!

Tommy crosses his arms and pouts.

Roger lets out a loud snore.

Tommy giggles while Carly suppresses a laugh. Nancy shoves an elbow in Roger, waking him up.

He jerks awake and gives an apologetic grin to Nancy who gives him an annoyed look before turning her attention back to the minister.

Carly looks around one last time before slouching in the pew.

EXT. CHURCH - DAY

The Congregation files out. Each thank the Minister as they leave.

Nancy approaches the Minister and shakes hands.

NANCY

I enjoyed your sermon.

MINISTER

Thank you. I'm glad that you
decided to come.

As Nancy and the Minister continue to talk, Carly spots Lisa standing under a tree fiddling with her phone.

Lisa sees her as well and gives a hearty wave. Carly waves back before walking toward her.

CARLY

Hey. What's up?

LISA

Just waiting for my mom.

She motions with her head to Olivia, who has joined in on the conversation with Nancy and the Minister.

LISA (CONT'D)

She always has to chat with the
minister after.

(sighing)

Which makes no sense, since he's my
uncle.

CARLY

Really?

Lisa nods.

LISA

Makes for interesting family
dinners.

Lisa turns to face Carly.

LISA (CONT'D)

A few of us are going to the soda
shop. Want to come?

CARLY

It's open?

LISA

Al's always open. He's like a
shark. You know, they have to keep
swimming; or they'll die. Al's the
same way.

(MORE)

LISA (CONT'D)

I'm pretty sure that if he did close for a day, he would die... or the apocalypse will occur. Depends on who's telling the story.

CARLY

Good to know who to blame if the apocalypse happens.

LISA

So, you in?

CARLY

Yeah. I'm in.

ROGER O.S.

Carly, are you ready?

Carly turns to Roger, who is approaching with Nancy and Tommy.

CARLY

Lisa's going with some friends to the soda shop. Do you mind if I go?

Nancy and Roger try to hide their excitement but fail miserably.

NANCY

Of course not. Have fun.

Tommy tugs on Nancy's dress.

TOMMY

Mom? Can I go, too?

CARLY

(curt)

No.

TOMMY

(whining)

But I want to go.

Nancy and Roger look conflicted.

ROGER

Maybe we'll take you later.

LISA

It's fine. Bring him.

Carly opens her mouth to protest, but Nancy beats her to it.

NANCY

If you're sure you don't mind, that
would be great. Thank you, Lisa.

Carly shoots her parents an annoyed look which they ignore.
Tommy smiles.

LISA

No problem, Mrs. Smith.

She motions to the parking lot.

LISA (CONT'D)

Come on. Let's go.

Carly glares at Tommy as they follow Lisa. Tommy continues to
smile enthusiastically.

INT. SODA SHOP - DAY

50's style soda shop with a real working soda fountain behind
the counter. It has a red and white checkered floor with red
spinning bar stools at the counter. Booths line the walls.

A jukebox blasts 50's music from the corner.

Lisa, Tommy, and Carly enter the restaurant.

AL (50's), a burly man with a military demeanor, walks out of
the back and nods at them.

AL

They're waiting for you in your
usual spot.

LISA

(sing-song)
Awesome Sauce.

She motions for Tommy and Carly to follow her.

LISA (CONT'D)

(to Al)
Send us over some menus when you
get a minute.

He gives a gruff nod before heading to the back of the store.

Lisa walks toward a booth where two girls, CLAIRE (16) and
ALEX (16) are waiting for them.

CLAIRE

Hey girlie! Who'd you bring?

Lisa sits down on the opposite side with Carly and Tommy.

LISA
My new neighbors. Carly, Tommy,
meet Claire and Alex.

CARLY
Nice to meet you.

Tommy gives a polite smile.

ALEX
(joking)
Ah, the infamous new neighbors. How
are you faring in our small,
pinprick on a map, town?

CARLY
It's nice. Very laid back.

CLAIRE
Boring, more like it.

Lisa is texting on her phone again.

LISA
(distracted)
True story.

CARLY
It's not so bad here.

ALEX
You don't have to be polite. We
know our town's not amazing.

TOMMY
I like the frogs.

LISA
Yeah. Trust me. They can get old
real fast.

A WAITRESS comes and hands them menus.

CLAIRE
So, there's you and Tommy... do you
have any other siblings?

Carly's and Tommy's demeanors sadden. Lisa kicks Claire under
the table and shoots her a glare.

ALEX
Smooth.

CLAIRE

Ow. What?

LISA

You know what.

Claire glances at Carly and winces.

CLAIRE

Oh. Right.

CARLY

It's okay. I had an older brother.
He...

Carly winces as if it hurts her to say the next part.

CARLY (CONT'D)

...passed away.

They awkwardly sit in silence for a moment.

The Waitress returns.

WAITRESS

What do you want to drink?

Tommy turns toward Carly and tugs her sleeve.

TOMMY

Can I get a chocolate soda?

Everyone looks relieved at the change of conversation.

CARLY

No. Mom wouldn't want you to have
it.

TOMMY

(whining)

I won't tell Mom. Please.

Carly can't resist Tommy's puppy-dog eyes.

CARLY

(to Waitress)

A coke for me. And a chocolate soda
for him.

Tommy pumps his fist in the air, and Carly resists the urge to smile.

As the others order, Lisa puts her phone away and turns her attention to Carly.

LISA

Alex says she saw you hanging out
with Mark the other day.

The waitress leaves as the others turn their attention to the
conversation.

ALEX

Yes. Give us the details.

CARLY

Not much to tell. We went to the
dog shelter to work and had lunch
afterwards with Lori.

CLAIRE

(under breath)

Yeah. Probably part of his
community service.

Alex kicks Claire in the shin.

CLAIRE (CONT'D)

Ow. Would everyone quit doing that?

CARLY

What are you guys talking about?

Alex eyes Lisa.

ALEX

You didn't tell her?

Lisa gives them a leave it alone look.

CLAIRE

You should. After all, he's
considered one of the mysteries.

Carly turns to Lisa who looks uncomfortable.

CARLY

Tell me what?

LISA

Look. It's something we don't like
to talk about.

Lisa finally meets Carly's stare.

LISA (CONT'D)

Just trust me when I say this.
Hanging out with Mark can only lead
to trouble.

Carly frowns.

TOMMY
What about Mark?

Lisa smiles at him.

LISA
Don't worry about it. How about we
talk about something less
depressing.

Carly sighs but relents. Her expression is conflicted.

INT. CARLY'S ROOM - MORNING

It's still dark outside.

Carly slips on her clothes and quietly exits her room.

EXT. LAKE - MORNING

The first rays of light are crossing the horizon.

Carly approaches the lake. She sees Mark standing by the lake with Riley by his side.

Mark turns and waves at her.

MARK
You made it just in time.

Carly suppresses a yawn.

CARLY
How do you function at this hour?

MARK
You just need the right motivation.

He steers her to a position beside the lake.

CARLY
(grumpy)
What am I supposed to be looking
at?

MARK
Just wait for it.

The morning sun peaks through the trees. When the sun's rays hit the lake, silver lights dart across like fish.

CARLY
(in awe)
Whoa.

MARK
For some reason, when the morning
sunlight hits the water, it creates
this illusion.

CARLY
I'm guessing this is one of the
mysteries everyone keeps talking
about?

MARK
Yep. Funny thing about this lake is
that there are no fish here. They
died out a long time ago. No one
knows why.

The light flickers making the fish look as if they are
splashing around.

MARK (CONT'D)
I guess these ghost fish are meant
to make up for it. People say
they're the ghosts of fish past.

He grins.

CARLY
Really?

MARK
You know like Christmas past.

CARLY
No. I get it. But really?

MARK
It's funny. Come on. You know you
want to laugh.

Carly raises her eyebrows.

MARK (CONT'D)
A little smile?

Carly smirks before catching herself.

CARLY
Wait. Weren't you fishing here when
I met you?

MARK

The legend is, if you can catch a fish, it'll show you your favorite memory. I figured it was worth a shot. You never know.

CARLY

Really? You actually believe that?

MARK

I believe that there are a lot of things that can't be fully explained or seen. Doesn't mean it isn't true. All it means is that we're too scared to admit there are things we don't know. Things that are out of our control.

CARLY

Seems like this whole town is full of superstitious nonsense.

MARK

You'd be surprised how close this town is the unexplained. Mysterious events occur here often. You never know what might actually be true.

Carly drags her foot across the dirt, suddenly self-conscious.

CARLY

Speaking of which, I heard something interesting.

MARK

And what's that?

CARLY

(casually)

That you happen to be one of the five mysteries. Is that true?

The sun passes over the tree tops, and the fish vanish. The lake has returned to normal.

Mark refuses to meet her gaze.

MARK

(curt)

I'd rather not talk about it.

CARLY
(cautious)
If we're going to be friends, I
think I have a right to know.

Mark's face hardens.

MARK
Just drop it. Okay? I'll tell you
later... just not right now.

CARLY
But-

MARK
(hint of desperation)
Drop it... Please.

They're silent for a moment. Neither will meet each other's
gaze.

MARK (CONT'D)
Lori wanted me to ask if you could
come in on Tuesday to help.

CARLY
(quietly and curt)
Sure.

Mark sighs as he finally turns to face her.

MARK
Look, I'm sorry. Okay? It's just
something I don't like to talk
about. I'm trying to put it in the
past.

CARLY
I get it. Probably more than you
know.

They turn their attention back to the lake.

CARLY (CONT'D)
Thanks for showing me this. It was
nice.

MARK
I thought you might like it.

CARLY
Oh? Why?

MARK

Because, during those brief moments when the fish appear, it feels as if anything is possible. Sometimes you need to be reminded of that.

CARLY

Yeah... I think I know that feeling.

They continue to stare at the lake in silence.

INT. KITCHEN -DAY

Carly enters. She's startled when she sees Nancy and Roger sitting at the table, waiting for her. Cold coffee sits in front of them. They've been there for a while.

CARLY

Something wrong?

NANCY

We need to talk.

Carly frowns as she sits down.

CARLY

What about?

ROGER

We don't think you should hang out with Mark anymore.

Carly stares at them in disbelief.

CARLY

Wait. First, you say it's great that I'm hanging out with him; but now, suddenly, it's wrong?

NANCY

That was before we knew about his past.

CARLY

(frustrated)

And what is so bad about his past?

Nancy and Roger trade glances.

ROGER

He was involved in the death of a local girl.

Carly freezes, surprised.

CARLY

What do you mean involved?

NANCY

We don't know the details...
Apparently a girl drowned, and
alcohol was involved.

Carly leans back in her chair, trying not to let the news affect her.

CARLY

That sucks and all. But, it sounds
like an accident. What's that got
to do with me hanging out with him?

ROGER

He's dangerous and possibly a bad
influence.

Carly stands up.

CARLY

(angry)

He's been nothing but nice to me.
How can that be a bad influence?

NANCY

Now Carly, that's not what we-

CARLY

You keeping telling me to get out
and do something. I like hanging
out with him, and you can't change
my mind.

NANCY

But he could lead you down a dark
path...

CARLY

Oh. So now I'm fragile? I'm so
messed up I can't take care of
myself?

Roger shoots Nancy a glare. Nancy bites her lip, knowing she's said too much.

ROGER

That' not what we-

But, Carly won't listen. She storms off before they can finish.

INT. CARLY'S ROOM - NIGHT

Carly lays in her bed, wide awake.

There's a light tap on her window.

Frowning, Carly sits up.

There is a tap on her window again.

Curious, she approaches her window and looks out.

CARLY'S P.O.V.: Mark stands underneath her window. There are pebbles in his hand. He waves with his free hand.

Carly takes a step back and debates for a moment before going back to the window and opening it.

CARLY

(hushed)

What are you doing here?

MARK

(hushed)

Messing with your rem sleep. Come on. I want to show you something.

CARLY

(hushed)

You couldn't just call me?

MARK

(hushed)

I thought this would be more fun.

He takes a step forward.

MARK (CONT'D)

(hushed)

But if you want, I can knock on your door instead...

CARLY

(raised voice)

No!

She winces, looks toward her bedroom door and turns back to Mark.

CARLY (CONT'D)
(hushed)
No. Just give me a sec.

EXT. FIELD - NIGHT

It's dark. Mark and Carly can barely see in front of them.

CARLY
What are we doing here?

MARK
Just wait and see.

Mark throws a pebble in the air and catches it. With a grin, he hurls the pebble into the field.

As soon as the pebble hits the ground, fireflies scatter into the sky. They light up, looking like a flock of birds darting around in the sky.

MARK (CONT'D)
This is another one of the
mysteries. The fireflies gather
here in the summer.

CARLY
And that's not normal?

MARK
No, but it's the amount of
fireflies that's amazing. You know
how the sky darkens when a flock of
birds are migrating? It's the exact
opposite here. When the fireflies
take flight, they light up the sky.

Carly stares at the fireflies.

CARLY
They're pretty, I guess.

MARK
(teasing)
You guess?

Carly makes a face.

CARLY
Fine. They're pretty. I'm certain.

Mark grins as he throws another pebble into the field, causing the fireflies to dart around again.

MARK

When you look at the stars in the sky, what do you see?

CARLY

Come again?

Mark points to the sky.

MARK

You heard me. What do you see?

CARLY

(matter of fact)

Stars that already died millions of years ago.

MARK

That's morbid.

CARLY

It's true.

Mark studies the sky for a moment.

MARK

I see fireflies.

Carly stares at him in disbelief.

CARLY

Is that supposed to be some sort of metaphor?

MARK

Only if you want it to be.

They watch the fireflies as they swoop around.

CARLY

My parents don't want me hanging out with you.

MARK

That so?

CARLY

They say it's because you were involved in the accidental drowning of a girl.

Mark's expression darkens.

MARK

I thought I told you I didn't want to think about it, much less talk about it.

Carly winces at his tone but remains firm.

CARLY

Well, I do. Why are they blaming you for a girl drowning?

MARK

(angry)

Do you really want to know? Fine.

The fireflies scatter at the sound of his voice.

CARLY

(taken aback)

Mark...

Mark gazes at the fireflies.

FLASHBACK TO:

EXT. RIVER - NIGHT

The same fireflies float lazily above the river. Mark and MEGAN (17), vivacious and beautiful, lounge by the river drinking beer. There's a haze to the scene as if it were a recalled memory.

MARK V/O

She was my girlfriend and the minister's daughter. We went to a nearby river to drink and hang out.

Megan gets up to her feet, a little unsteady. She giggles as she glances back at Mark who lays on the ground, on the verge of falling asleep.

MARK V/O (CONT'D)

She wanted to go swimming, and I was too wasted to follow her.

At the edge of the river, Megan glances back at Mark and smiles.

MARK V/O (CONT'D)

The current was strong that night. Why it was, no one knows. It swept her away. One minute she was there, then the next...

Mark sits up. Megan is gone. There's no one around except the fireflies.

END FLASHBACK

EXT. FIELD- NIGHT

Mark glances at the ground as he unconsciously swats a firefly away.

MARK

She probably called for help, but I was too wasted to hear.

Carly stares at him in shock.

CARLY

Mark. That's terrible...

She leans toward him.

CARLY (CONT'D)

...but it was an accident. It wasn't your fault.

Mark laughs bitterly.

MARK

Try telling that to the town. Everyone thinks I corrupted her... That I was the reason she was by the river drinking that night. I don't blame them though. I should have saved her.

Carly reaches out to place a hand on his shoulder.

CARLY

Mark, I'm-

Mark whirls around and glares at her.

MARK

You're what? You're sorry? You should have trusted me and waited until I was ready to talk about it.

Carly looks taken aback for a moment before she becomes angry.

CARLY

I do trust you. I just want to know the whole truth. Not just the bits and pieces.

MARK

The truth is that it doesn't matter what happened. We can't remain stuck in the past. That's what I've been trying to show you.

Carly laughs harshly.

CARLY

Trying to show me? How can you expect me to believe you when you're still living in the past yourself?

MARK

What are you talking about?

CARLY

You let the town push you around for something they don't know anything about. You won't talk about it.

MARK

My case is different than yours. You didn't kill your brother.

Carly looks close to tears.

CARLY

Yeah, well why do I feel like I was the one who was supposed to die in the crash instead of him?

MARK

(stunned)

Carly...

Her eyes widen as she realizes what she has just said.

CARLY

I've got to go.

Carly runs away.

MARK

Carly. Wait.

She doesn't stop.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

Carly quietly sneaks into the kitchen. It's obvious she's been crying.

As she closes the door, she turns around to see her mother waiting for her.

Nancy looks slightly disheveled.

NANCY
Where did you go?

Carly hastily wipes away the straggling tears.

CARLY
Out.

Carly tries to pass Nancy, but Nancy stops her.

NANCY
Were you with that boy?

CARLY
Mom. I really don't want to talk about it right now. I just want to go to bed.

Nancy won't move.

NANCY
I thought we told you to stay away from him.

CARLY
Get off my back. You can't monitor every aspect of my life.

NANCY
Watch your tone, young lady.

Carly becomes more frustrated as she tries to get by.

CARLY
Just let me go to bed.

NANCY
No. I don't like your attitude or your behavior since we've arrived. We're going to stay here until you tell me what's going on.

Carly glares.

CARLY
I don't want to.

Nancy sighs.

NANCY
Why are you being so frustrating?

Carly clinches her fists.

CARLY
Well, why don't you admit that you
don't like anything about me? I bet
you wish I died instead of Taylor.

NANCY
(horrified)
Carly! Why would you ever think
that?

Nancy places her hands on Carly's shoulders.

NANCY (CONT'D)
I love you. You are more precious
to me than you can imagine.

Carly sees an opening and makes a break for her room. She
pauses for a second but doesn't turn around.

CARLY
Look. I'm just tired. That's all...
so just, let me be.

NANCY
Carly!

Carly ignores her as she continues to walk away.

INT. CARLY'S ROOM - NIGHT

Carly slams the door after her and slides down against it
until she's sitting on the floor.

She can hear Nancy's footsteps approach the door. There's a
hesitant knock.

Carly doesn't move. She hears someone sit down and lean
against the door on the other side.

Carly brings her knees up to her chest and buries her face in
her arms.

DREAM SEQUENCE

EXT. ABANDONED HIGHWAY - DAY

It's foggy. Carly can barely see in front of her. The highway is deserted and in disrepair.

Carly looks around, searching.

NANCY V.O.
(singing and haunting)
Go to sleep little baby...

Carly walks down the highway. She notices a black mass in the fog up ahead. She runs toward it.

NANCY V.O. (CONT'D)
(singing and haunting)
Lullaby...

The fogs parts and Carly sees a small car, turned over and on fire. It's the same car from the car crash.

She runs to the driver's side and bangs on the window.

NANCY V.O. (CONT'D)
(singing and haunting)
And good night...

Taylor appears on the other side of the window. He bangs back, the flames creeping closer to him.

Carly yanks on the car door, but it won't budge.

NANCY V.O. (CONT'D)
(singing and haunting)
Go to sleep little baby...

Taylor gives a small smile before falling back into the flames.

Carly screams.

She keeps yanking at the car door, desperate.

It finally opens.

Carly attempts to enter, but she is pushed back as a surge of fireflies escape the car.

She falls down on the road as the fireflies swarm around her.

They take on the form of Taylor.

Carly reaches out to him, but they immediately scatter and fly up into the sky, becoming stars.

Carly glares up at them.

CARLY
(yelling)
Why! Why did you leave me here?

INT. CARLY'S ROOM - DAY

Carly wakes up still leaning against the bedroom door. She groans as she slowly sits up and rubs her neck.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Carly enters. She's groggy.

She only takes a couple of steps into the kitchen before she stops and stares.

Nancy is in the kitchen, baking with Lisa and Olivia.

Nancy looks up at Carly when she enters. She's happy to see Carly but quickly remembers her anger.

NANCY
Oh, good. You're awake. Come help us.

CARLY
With what?

Nancy smiles at Lisa and Olivia.

NANCY
Could you excuse us for a moment?

OLIVIA
Of course, we'll get the cookies in the oven.

Nancy leads Carly out of the room.

INT. DEN - DAY

Nancy and Carly enter.

CARLY
Since when did you become the head of the bakery club?

NANCY

The church is having a baked goods booth at the White Stag festival. We're helping.

Carly crosses her arms.

CARLY

I've already got plans.

NANCY

(clipped)
Not anymore, you don't.

CARLY

You can't keep me locked up in here.

NANCY

Don't take that tone with me young lady.

CARLY

(slightly raised)
Why are you doing this? It's not fair.

NANCY

(agitated)
Keep your voice down. They'll hear you.

CARLY

Look, if this is about last night-

NANCY

It's not that. It's...

Nancy sighs.

NANCY (CONT'D)

Look. From now on, I think it will be a good idea to help with some of the chores around here. Today, you're going to be helping me with the baking.

CARLY

Punishing me won't change things.

NANCY

Carly...

CARLY
(raised voice)
You can't change anything. Doing
this isn't going to help me.

NANCY
(raised voice)
I'm not going to lose-

Nancy catches herself. She calms back down.

NANCY (CONT'D)
Well, what you're doing doesn't
seem to be working either. So for
the time being, humor me.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Lisa and Carly are at the table working, while Olivia and Nancy are by the stove.

As they pack the baked goods, Lisa keeps glancing up at Carly.

CARLY
What?

Lisa looks startled.

LISA
Nothing.

Carly sets her bowl down and faces Lisa.

CARLY
Why do you keep staring at me?

LISA
(embarrassed)
You seem upset. My offer still
stands, you know, if you need a
friendly ear... Do you want to talk
about it?

CARLY
(bitter)
Talk about what?

Lisa winces.

LISA
Ouch. Sorry. Just trying to be
helpful.

Carly sighs.

CARLY

No, I'm sorry. My mom's on my case,
and it's starting to get to me.

LISA

Trust me. I know that feeling.

Olivia approaches them.

OLIVIA

Are you two done?

Startled, Lisa and Carly turn back to the baked goods and nod.

OLIVIA (CONT'D)

We're going into town to get more
supplies. Finish packing the
pastries while we're gone.

She points to the kitchen where several batches of cinnamon buns are cooling.

LISA

Will do.

Olivia leaves.

Nancy is about to follow, but she stops at the table.

NANCY

Your brother is upstairs. Keep an
eye on him.

Carly doesn't meet her gaze.

CARLY

(short)

Sure.

Nancy hesitates, as if she's unsure of what to say.

NANCY

Stay here while we're gone. Okay?

Carly shrugs.

Nancy reluctantly leaves.

Lisa turns to Carly who returns to packing the baked goods.

LISA
Now do you want to talk about it?

CARLY
We've been here already.

LISA
I've seen that road sign before.

Carly sighs.

CARLY
It's just frustrating. I find something that keeps my mind off my problems, and they decide I can no longer do it.

Lisa turns away.

LISA
You're talking about Mark. Right?

CARLY
It doesn't matter though. Turns out he's just as messed up as I am.

Carly hesitantly glances at Lisa.

CARLY (CONT'D)
The girl who died. She was your cousin; wasn't she?

Lisa nods reluctantly.

CARLY (CONT'D)
Why does everyone hate him when it was an accident?

Lisa turns her attention to the tupperware she's filling with cinnamon buns.

LISA
Megan was not only my cousin, but she was the town sweetheart. Everyone loved her. But then she started dating Mark. He was wild, reckless, lived life to the fullest. I think that's why she liked him so much. She may have been the town sweetheart, but she wanted to escape this town. Like the rest of us.

CARLY

Mark, wild? Are you sure we're talking about the same person?

LISA

Trust me. Looks can be deceiving. She was in love with him... the idea of him. So, no matter the risk, she would follow.

Lisa's expression hardens.

LISA (CONT'D)

And then he let her drown in the river because he said he was too drunk to save her.

CARLY

I'm sure he would have tried to save her if he could.

Lisa sets the tupperware down hard.

LISA

That's the point. Mark should have saved her. Sometimes I wish it was...

Lisa catches herself and looks uncomfortable.

CARLY

Him instead of her? Yeah, I know the feeling.

Lisa's expression is guilty.

LISA

What do you...

She is cut off by a loud crash in another room.

CARLY

Great. What did he do now?

INT. DEN - DAY

Carly enters.

She sees Tommy sprawled out on the floor, a shattered vase beside him.

He grins sheepishly up at her.

TOMMY

Oops.

CARLY

Oops? Tommy why are you so clumsy?

TOMMY

(hurt)

It wasn't my fault. I slipped and hit the table, and it just fell off.

Carly grabs a broom and begins to sweep up the broken pieces.

CARLY

Don't you know I'm in enough trouble as it is with Mom and Dad? Are you trying to get me grounded for life?

Tommy juts his lip out.

TOMMY

Why are you being mean to me again?

CARLY

I'm not being mean. You just need to grow up.

Tommy stands up and stamps his foot.

TOMMY

No. You need to grow up.

CARLY

(warning)

Tommy.

Tommy shakes his head.

TOMMY

You're not the only one who misses Taylor.

CARLY

Of course I know that, I-

TOMMY

You won't hang out with me anymore. I miss the old you. I hate the mean you.

Carly slams the broom against the floor.

CARLY
That's enough.

TOMMY
You never listen to me anymore.

Tommy takes off running out of the room.

CARLY
Tommy, wait.

He doesn't stop.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Carly enters and sees the kitchen door wide open.

Lisa stands looking bewildered.

CARLY
Did he go outside?

LISA
Yeah. Is something wrong?

Carly rushes past her.

CARLY
It's nothing. I'll deal with it. Be
back in a minute.

EXT. OLD SOUTHERN HOME - DAY

Carly races outside, but Tommy is nowhere in sight.

CARLY
(yelling)
Tommy! Where are you?

There's no response.

CARLY (CONT'D)
(more desperate)
Tommy, quit hiding. This isn't
funny.

Lisa exits the house.

LISA
What's going on?

CARLY
(upset)
Tommy's run off.

LISA
Okay. Calm down. Where does he usually go?

CARLY
I don't know. I haven't really...

Her eyes widen with a realization.

CARLY (CONT'D)
I haven't spent much time with him lately.

LISA
Maybe we should call your parents.

CARLY
No.
(then)
Not yet. This is my fault. I need to fix it.

Lisa places a hand on Carly's shoulder.

LISA
All right. But at least let me help you look for him.

CARLY
Go into town. He may have gone to check on the setup of White Stag festival. I'm going to go look for him in the forest and by the lake.

Lisa whips out her phone and begins to text.

LISA
I'll get Alex and Claire to help. We'll cover more ground that way.

CARLY
Thanks, Lisa.

Lisa nods, and they both head out in opposite directions.

EXT. FOREST - DUSK

The sun is beginning to set. It's drizzling.

Carly frantically runs through the forest.

CARLY
(yelling)
Tommy? Tommy! Please answer me.

She stops for a moment to catch her breath. With resignation, she starts to dial her parents.

TOMMY O.S.
(faint)
Carly?

Carly freezes. She scans the area but doesn't see him.

CARLY
Tommy? Where are you?

TOMMY O.S.
(faint)
Down here.

Carly walks forward to the edge of the trees.

CARLY'S POV:

She approaches the edge of the trees and finds that it drops off into a hole.

Inside the hole is Tommy. He looks a little dirty, scared, and wet. He also looks as if he's about to cry.

END POV

TOMMY
I fell in.

CARLY
Are you hurt?

Tommy shakes his head.

CARLY (CONT'D)
Don't worry. I'll get you out.

Carly turns back to look around for something to pull him out but finds nothing.

TOMMY
Carly?

She turns back and smiles at him.

CARLY

I'm going to call Mom and Dad and see if they can bring a rope.

She starts to dial the number when, suddenly, there's a cracking sound.

Carly freezes. Then suddenly, the ground gives way; and she's tumbling into the hole.

TOMMY

(frantic)

Carly? Are you okay?

Carly winces as she sits up. She's covered in mud.

CARLY

Yeah, I think so.

She notices her phone a few feet away from her. Picking it up, she winces.

The phone is damaged. She tries to turn it on but is unsuccessful.

CARLY (CONT'D)

Great. Just great.

Tommy crawls over to her.

TOMMY

(starting to panic)

Is your phone broken? How are Mom and Dad going to find us?

Carly frowns, slightly annoyed.

CARLY

Give me a minute. I'm thinking.

TOMMY

(near breakdown)

But what if they can't find us. What if we're stuck here forever?

CARLY

(curt)

Tommy, quit it. You're not helping.

Tommy looks hurt.

Carly notices and sighs.

CARLY (CONT'D)
I'm sorry. That's not what I meant.

TOMMY
Yeah, it is.

Tommy pulls away.

They're silent for a moment.

CARLY
When did we drift apart?

TOMMY
When you became a meanie.

Carly laughs slightly.

CARLY
Yeah, I haven't been very nice;
have I?

Tommy focuses his attention on the ground.

TOMMY
I feel like I lost you when I lost
Taylor.

Carly looks at him in surprise.

CARLY
What do you mean?

Tommy traces his finger in the mud.

TOMMY
You've changed since the accident.
I thought you weren't feeling well,
but when you came here, you still
didn't change.
(quietly)
I thought you hated me.

Carly leans over and hugs him.

CARLY
I could never hate you.

TOMMY
Then what's wrong? Mom said it's
because you saw Taylor go to
heaven.

CARLY
(hesitant)
In a way, yes. I just didn't
understand why Taylor died and not
me.

Tommy looks at her in shock.

TOMMY
Why? Then you wouldn't be here
either, and I'd be alone.

CARLY
(unsure)
I guess... It's just... never mind.

They sit in silence.

Carly glances at her phone again and tries to turn it on.

TOMMY
Maybe you're supposed to be here,
you know.

CARLY
What?

TOMMY
They say it on the TV all the time.
You didn't go with Taylor because
it's not your time. Like you still
have something to do.

CARLY
You think?

TOMMY
Why not?

Carly smiles.

CARLY
Yeah, why not.

Carly ruffles his hair.

CARLY (CONT'D)
You're a lot smarter than you look.

Tommy winces as he pulls away. He tries to look annoyed, but there's a slight smile on his face.

TOMMY
Cut it out.

Tommy glances up, his frown returning.

TOMMY (CONT'D)
Do you think they'll find us?

CARLY
Are you kidding? Mom's going to
have a cow once she realizes we
aren't home.

TOMMY
Good.

After a moment, Tommy hesitantly snuggles up to Carly.

TOMMY (CONT'D)
(quietly)
I'm glad you came after me.

CARLY
(quietly)
Me, too.

They lean back against the dirt wall and look up.

INT. HOLE - NIGHT

Carly and Tommy are asleep. The rain has stopped, and the temperature has dropped. Their clothes are still wet.

Carly wakes and glances at the opening to the hole. Shivering, she rubs her hands together and glances at Tommy.

He's asleep and seems unaffected by the cold.

The sound of footsteps approaching the hole causes Carly to look up.

She gasps.

A white stag stands at the edge of the opening. Fireflies float lazily around it. The stag glances down at them with curiosity.

CARLY
(whispers)
No way. It's real.

The stag leans its head into the opening and paws the ground.

CARLY (CONT'D)
Can you find my parents?

The stag cocks its head but doesn't move.

CARLY (CONT'D)
Worth a try anyway.

She stares at the stag for a moment.

CARLY (CONT'D)
They say you can grant wishes.

The stag bobs its head up and down.

Carly frowns for a moment but shakes off the coincidence.

CARLY (CONT'D)
Don't suppose you have a ladder?

The stag blankly stares.

CARLY (CONT'D)
Didn't think so. If you aren't here
to help us get out, then why are
you here... Or are you here to help
me with my other problem?

The stag blinks before backing away.

CARLY (CONT'D)
Figures.

Tommy groans in his sleep.

TOMMY
(sleepily)
Carly, who are you talking to?

She turns to Tommy.

CARLY
Thought I saw something. Don't
worry about it. Just go back to
sleep.

TOMMY
(sighing)
Okay.

He immediately falls back to sleep.

Carly leans back as she glances up. She almost screams.

The stag is now in the hole with her. This time, though, it has someone with it.

It's Taylor. Light is glowing around him, and he looks pale.
Carly stands up.

Tommy readjusts but doesn't wake up.

CARLY
(disbelief)
Taylor? Is that really you?

He smiles at her.

CARLY (CONT'D)
How can you be here?

She steps forward to hug him, but she can't hold on to him.
Taylor smiles sadly.

TAYLOR
I'm not really here. Just in
spirit.

He smirks.

TAYLOR (CONT'D)
I know. Bad joke.

Carly lets out a hiccup laugh. She is almost delirious with
happiness.

CARLY
You have no idea how happy I am to
see you. We've all missed you so
much.

TAYLOR
I don't have long. I just came to
deliver a message.

Carly's eyes widen as she tries not to panic.

CARLY
What message?

TAYLOR
That it's okay.

His voice is echoing now, as if he's slowly fading away.

CARLY
What are you talking about?

TAYLOR
It's okay to live.

A tear runs down Carly's cheek.

CARLY
But it's not fair. How can I when
you don't get to live, too?

TAYLOR
Life isn't always fair... but I'm
glad at least you were given a
second chance. Don't waste it.

Taylor begins to fade away.

TAYLOR (CONT'D)
So make me proud.

CARLY
No, Taylor, wait!

But he's already gone.

Carly turns to the stag. She opens her mouth as if to say something, but the stag stomps the ground. The sound is like a thunderclap.

INT. HOLE - MORNING

Carly's eyes snap open.

She looks up at the opening, but no one is there.

Glancing back at Tommy, she sees he is still asleep. She nudges him.

CARLY
Come on, Tommy. Wake up.

Tommy groans.

TOMMY
(sleepily)
Can't I sleep a little longer?

Carly shakes her head.

CARLY
Nope. You need to get up. We need
to figure out how to get out of
this hole.

Tommy yawns and rubs his eyes.

TOMMY
(slightly worried)
They haven't found us yet?

CARLY
Don't worry. We're going to get out
of here.

MARK O.S.
(yelling)
Carly!

Carly and Tommy look at each other.

CARLY
(to Mark)
We're down here.

The sound of barking is heard as Riley appears at the opening, followed by Mark.

MARK
Hold on a sec.

He disappears for a moment, then reappears with rope.

He throws one end down to Carly.

MARK (CONT'D)
Climb up.

EXT. FOREST - DAY

Mark pulls Tommy up. Carly follows soon after.

CARLY
How did you find us?

MARK
Your parents have the whole town
looking for you. I overheard Lisa
mention you might still be in the
forest. I figured it would be the
last place they'd look because no
one comes here when it rains. This
place is notorious for the ground
giving way.

He holds up the rope.

MARK (CONT'D)
Which made me think of bringing
this.

CARLY
Thanks... Mark, I-

Tommy tugs on her shirt.

TOMMY
Can we go home now? I'm hungry.

Carly gives Mark an apologetic smile.

Mark smiles back.

MARK
(to Tommy)
Yeah. Let's go get some grub!

Tommy pumps his fist in the air.

TOMMY
I'm so hungry I can eat a whole
elephant.

Carly and Mark laugh.

EXT. CARLY'S HOUSE - DAY

Roger and Nancy stand in front of the house with a group of
PEOPLE including Lisa, Olivia, the Priest, and Frank.

TOMMY
(yelling)
Mom! Dad!

Tommy rushes to them. Mark and Carly are trailing behind.

ROGER
Carly! Tommy!

Nancy scoops Tommy up into a hug.

Carly smiles at Lisa, who gives her a relieved look.

NANCY
Thank goodness, you're all right.

Roger gives Carly a quick hug before pulling back to examine
her.

ROGER
What happened? Are you hurt?

CARLY
I'm fine. Tommy and I fell in a
hole. Mark found us.

Roger and Nancy look at Mark.

Mark shifts uncomfortably under their gazes.

ROGER
(sincere)
Thank you.

Mark nods.

Nancy ushers Tommy and Carly away from the crowd.

NANCY
Come on. Let's get you two inside.

Carly gives Mark one last backwards glance. There so much she
wants to say but she doesn't have the time.

He smiles at her and nods his head in understanding.

INT. DEN - NIGHT

Roger finishes up work on the paneling.

He looks up as Nancy enters.

NANCY
I just put Tommy to bed.

ROGER
How's he doing?

Nancy thinks for a moment.

NANCY
Good. Surprisingly good.

Roger stands up and pulls her into a hug. She relaxes in his
arms.

When they pull back, they smile at each other. It's the first
time they have felt comfortable around each other in a while.

There's a knock.

They both turn and see Carly standing in the entrance to the room.

CARLY
Mind if we talk for a minute?

Roger and Nancy trade surprised glances.

ROGER
No, not at all. Come on in.

Nancy and Roger take seats.

Carly enters but remains standing.

CARLY
I just wanted to say I'm sorry.

NANCY
(confused)
For what?

Carly takes a deep breath.

CARLY
For being a jerk. I know I haven't been nice to you lately.

ROGER
You've been through a lot.

Carly holds a hand out to stop him from talking.

CARLY
But it doesn't give me an excuse to treat you the way I did. I know it's been hard for you as well. Tommy was the one who made me realize that I was too caught up in my own guilt, and I took it out on all of you.

NANCY
The accident wasn't your fault.

CARLY
Even so, I always felt like it wasn't fair that I lived, and he died. He had so much going for him and I... well. Not so much.

Nancy and Roger pull her into a hug.

NANCY

Honey. You know we love you, and you're just as important to us as Taylor.

CARLY

I know but...

ROGER

Do you think it would be any different if Taylor had survived, and you didn't? We'd still be grieving. Taylor especially.

NANCY

Would you have wanted Taylor to feel guilty that you died, and he lived?

Carly cries.

CARLY

No...

ROGER

I know it's hard, but we'll get through this. We have to.

Carly nods, still crying, but looks slightly relieved. Like a burden has finally been lifted off her.

BEGIN DREAM
SEQUENCE:

EXT. FOREST - NIGHT

Carly opens her eyes to find herself in the forest.

Fireflies float lazily through the trees.

She hears footsteps behind her and turns to see the white stag approaching her.

CARLY

What are you doing here?

The stag motions with its head to follow before bounding off into the forest.

CARLY (CONT'D)

Hey, wait!

She chases after the stag.

EXT. FIELD- NIGHT

The stag waits for her in the field.

She approaches and watches Taylor appear before her.

CARLY
So, I'm dreaming again?

TAYLOR
Maybe.

CARLY
Well, this is better than the other
dreams.

Taylor chuckles.

CARLY (CONT'D)
By the way, what's with the stag?

TAYLOR
Not quite sure. He's not much of a
talker.

The stag ignores them as it continues to graze.

CARLY
Ha, ha.

They're silent for a moment.

CARLY (CONT'D)
So, are you all right?

TAYLOR
I will be when I know you are.

CARLY
I don't know what you mean.

Taylor raises an eyebrow.

TAYLOR
I wouldn't be here if you were
okay.

CARLY
(sighing)
Moving on means letting go. I
shouldn't do that.

TAYLOR

I told you not to feel guilty. You should listen to your older and wiser brother.

Carly rolls her eyes.

TAYLOR (CONT'D)

Hey, don't be like that. I'm trying to have a serious brother/ sister moment here.

CARLY

Oh, really.

Taylor grins.

TAYLOR

Really... I'm serious. Stop feeling guilty.

CARLY

It's not that easy. I feel terrible for making you take me that night.

TAYLOR

You were just being a normal annoying younger sister.

CARLY

But if I hadn't gone...

TAYLOR

I would have decided not to go with my girlfriend to the movies? You seriously believe that you going changed the inevitable?

CARLY

I don't know... I just feel like you should be here.

TAYLOR

Well then, think of it this way. If you had died, everyone would still be sad; and Tommy needs you. If you hadn't been there, do you think Tommy would have survived the night?

CARLY

You would have found him.

TAYLOR
Maybe, but not as quickly as you
did. You know him better than
anyone.

CARLY
I guess... but, if I let go, you'll
disappear again.

TAYLOR
Technically, yes.

CARLY
Then I'll have to accept you're
gone forever.

TAYLOR
I won't be really gone because I'll
still be there.

He points to her chest.

TAYLOR (CONT'D)
Always.

Carly smirks.

CARLY
That's a little corny.

TAYLOR
So corny. Just let me have my big
brother moment.

Carly smiles genuinely.

CARLY
I'm going to miss you. But I'll
try. I promise.

TAYLOR
I know you will.

Taylor nudges her playfully.

TAYLOR (CONT'D)
You're going to be all right.

The White Stag stomps its hoof before fading away. At the same time, Taylor becomes transparent. Then suddenly, his image distorts as he transforms into a thousand fireflies that take flight.

This time Carly watches them with a bittersweet smile on her face.

END DREAM
SEQUENCE

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Nancy is sipping coffee when Carly enters. There's a plate of half-eaten cookies on the table.

NANCY
Feeling better?

CARLY
A little.

Nancy fiddles with a half-eaten cookie.

Carly hesitates.

CARLY (CONT'D)
I know I'm still grounded, but can
I ask you for a favor?

NANCY
And what's that?

CARLY
I promised to work at the kennels
today. Is it okay for me to go?

Nancy relaxes.

NANCY
Yeah. Go ahead.

CARLY
Mom. Sorry... for, you know...

Nancy nods.

NANCY
You don't have to keep apologizing.
You've been through a lot. We all
have, and I think it's time we
forgive ourselves.

They both smile.

CARLY
I'd like that.

She turns to leave.

NANCY
And about the grounding.

Carly turns back.

CARLY
Yeah?

NANCY
Let's just say you've already had
time served.

CARLY
Thanks, Mom.

As she heads out the door, there is a scuffling sound.

WHISPERS
Hope... Future... Free...

CARLY
Did you say something?

NANCY
No. Why?

CARLY
It's nothing.

Carly smiles.

EXT. KENNELS - DAY

Carly works in one of the kennels. Lori straightens up
supplies in a corner.

LORI
How ya doing?

CARLY
Almost done.

She finishes scooping dirt into a pile and glances at the
dog, a ROTTWEILER.

He's cocking his head to one side.

Carly holds out a hand.

CARLY (CONT'D)
Hey boy.

The dog wags its tail and approaches her.

CARLY (CONT'D)
Want to be friends?

The dog licks her hand.

MARK O.S.
Well, look at you.

Carly looks up and sees Mark standing outside the cage.

MARK
You're becoming a dog whisperer.

CARLY
Ha. Ha.

Lori smiles at them.

LORI
I'm going to check the front desk.
Be back in a bit.

She leaves.

Mark leans against the wall.

Carly puts her shovel aside and exits the dog kennel.

MARK
So, what are you doing here?

CARLY
What does it look like I'm doing? I
said I would be here today.

MARK
Yeah. You did. I'm just surprised
you still came after yesterday.
How's Tommy doing?

CARLY
Same as always. He's never fazed by
anything. To him, it's one big
adventure... that keeps getting
bigger every time he tells it.

MARK
And how about you?

Carly sighs.

CARLY
Honestly. Not sure.

Mark watches her, waiting for her to continue.

CARLY (CONT'D)
Okay. This is going to sound weird,
but down in the hole... I think I
saw the white stag.

Mark straightens up.

MARK
You saw the white stag?

CARLY
Yeah, I know. It sounds crazy, but
you know what's really crazy? I saw
my older brother there as well.

Mark's expression is unreadable.

MARK
You did?

CARLY
He... said for me to quit feeling
guilty and move on.

She winces as she glances at Mark.

CARLY (CONT'D)
Sound strange?

MARK
Sounds right.

Carly smiles.

CARLY
Yeah. Well. I guess you could say
that it was a release to hear him
say that.

MARK
So you're admitting you're a
believer of our mysteries?

CARLY
Not admitting, but they may have
grown on me.

Carly fidgets as she suddenly looks awkward.

CARLY (CONT'D)

Speaking of which, are you going to the White Stag Festival later today?

Mark suddenly looks uncomfortable.

MARK

I don't know if that would be a good idea. They aren't too fond of me.

CARLY

Seriously? You saved Tommy and me. They should give you a medal.

MARK

It's not that simple.

CARLY

(growing frustrated)
It can be.

MARK

Just drop it. It's not going to happen.

Carly's had enough.

CARLY

You know what I think? I think you walk around acting like you are guilty. The reason the town won't forgive you is because you won't forgive yourself.

MARK

Carly...

CARLY

You said you could help me. Now you need to help yourself.

Carly walks past him. Mark hesitates.

CARLY (CONT'D)

I'll be at the White Stag Festival if you change your mind.

EXT. MAIN STREET - DAY

The street has been transformed into a carnival-like atmosphere. White banners decorate the streets with symbols of the white stag.

Vendor stands are set up on the sidewalks, and the street has been blocked off from cars. The festival is crowded with people.

Carly and Tommy are meandering through the stalls.

TOMMY

Let's get cotton candy!

CARLY

You don't need any more sugar.

Tommy gives her a puppy dog look.

TOMMY

(begging)

Puh-lease!

CARLY

All right. But after this, no more sugar. Deal?

TOMMY

Deal!

Tommy rushes toward a stall. Carly pays as the VENDOR hands Tommy the cotton candy.

LISA O.S.

There you are!

Carly turns and smiles as Lisa walks toward them.

CARLY

Hey! What's up?

LISA

Been looking for you.

Tommy takes a bite of his cotton candy.

TOMMY

I got cotton candy!

LISA

Good for you.

(to Carly)

Glad to see he's okay. And you?

CARLY

Better.

Lisa freezes as she looks at something behind Carly.

CARLY (CONT'D)

What's wrong?

Carly turns and sees Mark walking toward them. He looks uncomfortable. Riley trots behind him, tail wagging.

Tommy waves at him.

TOMMY

Hey, Mark!

Mark reaches them.

MARK

(uncomfortable)

Hey buddy.

CARLY

Glad to see you made it.

MARK

Decided to take your advice.

They all turn to Lisa who's studying Mark. After a moment, she sighs and nods her head.

LISA

Care to join us?

Mark relaxes, relief washing over his expression.

MARK

Yeah. I'd like that.

Lisa motions for them to follow her.

LISA

Then follow me. I know the best places at the festival to raid.

They all begin to follow her, except for Carly. She watches them and takes in the whole lively chaotic atmosphere.

CARLY V/O

I used to dream of death and sorrow. I used to dream that, like the stars, I was just a shadow of myself. That I died a long time ago in that crash.

She glances to the right; and, for a brief moment, it looks as if Taylor is standing among the crowd. He smiles.

Carly smiles back at him. A MAN walks in front of Taylor, blocking Taylor from Carly's field of vision. When the man passes, Taylor is gone.

MARK O.S.

You coming?

Carly turns to see Mark and the others waiting for her.

CARLY V/O

But now, for some strange reason, I
only dream of fireflies.

Carly nods as she quickly runs to join them.

ANGLE ON: A street lamp. As Carly passes, we see a firefly resting on the lamp's pole.

The firefly's light winks at the audience before it takes flight.

FADE OUT.

THE END